

Recognizing Prior Learning

You live. You learn. It *all* counts.

Saskatchewan RPL Network Newsletter

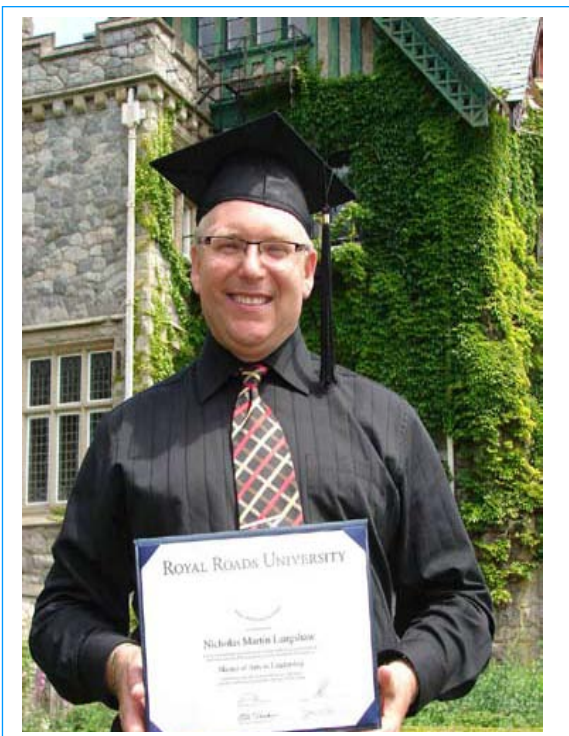
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Learner Receives Recognition and Completes Masters Degree!

You may have heard Nick Langshaw speak at the March 2008 Recognizing Prior Learning Conference, where he sat on both the employer and learner panels. Nick recently completed his Masters in Leadership from Royal Roads University (BC) and is currently employed as the

Leader, Business Process Improvement (Human Resources) for SaskPower.

Nick was recently [interviewed](#) about his experience at Royal Roads and his story demonstrates the powerful impact the portfolio process can have on learning.



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Portfolios; What they are and Why they Work

People learn every day, through work experience, household responsibilities, community involvement, traveling, and in the classroom. This learning can open doors to new opportunities (1).

Portfolio learning is a process that assists a person to take a look at their life experiences and their learning, usually for the purpose of self-awareness and setting short and long term goals.

STRENGTHS of PORTFOLIO LEARNING

A chief strength of the portfolio process is its capacity to assist the individual in recognizing their strengths and the skills, knowledge and attitudes they have demonstrated in their life. The process builds confidence and motivation, identifies strengths and abilities, clarifies future employment possibilities, and develops learning and action plans to participate more fully in economic and civic life (2).

Recognizing the learning that a person has achieved through their life, work and school experience has a transformative effect on confidence, motivation and sense of self-efficacy. At the same time, the identification and recognition of learning assets and strengths naturally leads participants to identify areas where they see opportunities for further growth, on a personal or professional level.

Taking a holistic approach to learning helps reduce the sense of intimidation that may be felt by people planning to enter formal education or training programs — especially for those who have been marginalized or who face sudden and unexpected transitions.

WHAT IS A PORTFOLIO?

Portfolios are purposeful, organized collections of materials that summarize, highlight, and validate who people are, their learning, their interests, and their goals. Portfolios are evolving, dynamic “works-in-progress” that grow and change with the learner.

**A portfolio is
a CONCEPT,
a PROCESS
and
a PRODUCT**

CONCEPT – The concept of portfolio development reflects a specific way of thinking about learning. Portfolios emphasize the value of *all learning*, regardless of where the learning happened.

PROCESS – The process of portfolio development involves a systematic (step by-step) way to identify, think about, document, organize and demonstrate the learning resulting from life experiences.

PRODUCT – The portfolio is a purposeful selection of work, presented in a way that demonstrates the story of our learning, gifts, talents, and goals.

[Tips for Facilitators of a Portfolio Learning Process](#)

[Basic Steps in a Portfolio Process](#)

[Portfolio Learning Testimonial](#)

[Canadian Studies on Portfolio Learning](#)

References

1. [A Journey of Self Discovery](#): Facilitator's Guide to Reflection and Portfolio Development, Saskatchewan Learning, 2005.
2. [Achieving Our Potential](#): An Action Plan for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) in Canada, PLA Centre, Halifax, 2008.

Saskatchewan Success Stories; RPL Making a Difference

Portfolio Learning for Health Employees

In 2004, the Northern Inter Tribal Health Authority (NITHA) initiated activities to explore career pathing in the Northern First Nations Health Organizations. This project began in conjunction with the Career Pathing Pilot Project under the leadership of the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO).

The project explored ways to develop an innovative and flexible sector-wide career pathing model, to support employees in professional development and career planning. Various methods were explored with the goal of linking participants to career planning, education and training, as well as employment opportunities.

Although this initially appeared to be an efficient process, it proved insufficient to meet the needs of many northern employees. Issues of self-esteem, self-awareness and historic trauma affected employee readiness and additional support for personal, as well as career development were required. For this reason, one of the central components of the project has been the delivery of a series of holistic portfolio development sessions to support the personal and professional development of the health centre staff.



Incorporating a holistic learning process in the career pathing project has been very positive.

Francis Clarke (above) was a participant in the NITHA Career Pathing Project and was recently interviewed. Francis' experience with holistic portfolio development, including her personal and professional experiences, are highlighted in the [interview](#).

Highlights of RCG Activity

The Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG) met in Regina on October 29, 2009. The agenda included the following:

1. Reports from the five RPL projects that received grant money from the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour in 2008-09.
2. The 2008 report: [Achieving Our Potential: An Action Plan for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition \(PLAR\) in Canada](#). The Ministry was asked by the author of the report (the PLA Centre in Halifax) to provide a response and the RCG was invited to include their feedback.
3. The RCG was also invited to provide feedback about priorities for the newly established Pan-Canadian Strategic Advisory Panel for RPL.
4. The Ministry provided an update about the Division's Reorganization and the RPL files being moved to the *Program Innovation Branch*. The Ministry also heard from stakeholders about the most meaningful ways to move the RPL agenda forward in Saskatchewan.

Reports, Resources and Links

- The CCL report, [Securing Prosperity through Canada's Human Infrastructure: The State of Adult Learning and Workplace Training in Canada](#) examines how investments in "human infrastructure"—or skilled workers—can offer more powerful and lasting benefits than investments in physical roads, buildings and equipment. In fact, the report finds that these human investments can be three times as important to economic growth in the long run.
- [Taking Account: a Report on the Number of PLAR Assessments Conducted by Public Post-secondary Institutions in Canada, CCL](#). Although some institutions do not collect data or declined to contribute data, the results are very interesting. Congratulations go to SIAST!
- The federal Foreign Credentials Referral Office has published [resources](#) for employers.
- A website has been [designed](#) to provide businesses and employers with HR resources and tools to assist them in hiring and retaining immigrants.
- [11th International Conference on Experiential Learning](#)
- [Employer Investment in Workplace Learning CCL CPRN](#)
- The Directorate for Education of OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) has released [Education Today: the OECD Perspective](#).
- Responding to various learner supports, Millennium Scholarships released interim research findings that focus on retention rates for learners in post-secondary institutions.