

# TANIA

Tania worked for the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority in a low-paying, demanding job for 8 years. Her marriage was breaking down; she was feeling stressed, was emotionally abused, and lacking in self-confidence.

Tania ran a day care for two years, until a combination of her house flooding and complications from an accident forced her to close it.

She wanted to avoid going on welfare because, as she said, "I don't want other people controlling my life." So, she sold her house, moved in as a renter with her mother and sisters, and attended a program for battered women twice a week for a year. But all the while her future path still ended with a question mark.

While running the day care, Tania had contact with a woman attending Horizons Learning Centres. After talking with her, she realized attending the ALC would help her secure employment at significantly more than minimum wage, and allow her to move out of her mother's home.

Then, one day, she saw the Horizons phone number on a roadside sign and made her decision to enrol. That night, she went to her first meeting at the learning centre still thinking, "Maybe I'm not smart enough for this. Maybe I'm not ready to take this on."

However, with the encouragement of the staff, Tania settled in to what she described as a warm, adult-friendly environment.

"I quickly realized my decision was the right one," said Tania. "It never felt wrong and I never looked back."

A key element to her success at Horizons was a family pact. The family agreed to do all they could to help her to get her Grade 12 diploma. Her mother helped with encouragement and, along with Jessica, Tania's oldest daughter, looked after her children, Sydney and Sadie.



Times were tough, particularly in the midst of her divorce, but the support was there when she needed it.

“Sarah [her teacher] was always there to give me an ear and a shoulder to lean on,” said Tania. “She brought out the good in everything and taught me how to contain my feelings, and Moe [another staff member] pushed me to reach for more. ‘Go be a teacher’ he would urge.”

Tania's confidence grew and she began to excel at school. She enjoyed learning by doing and became very adept at computer work, which in turn led to another self-confidence builder – a part-time job at Horizons.

But this is not just Tania's story. Her decision to attend Horizons led to three generations of her family following her there.

The first to follow was her sister Cheryl who, with Tania as a model, enrolled and graduated the year after Tania completed her studies. During that year, Tania's daughter Jessica decided to follow her mother's example and enroll at Horizons.

To add a final flourish to the story, Tania's own mother Karen enrolled at Horizons with the family's encouragement. She graduated and to the family's great credit crossed the podium at the same time as her granddaughter Jessica to pick up their Grade 12 certificates.

Currently, Tania is in the third year of her bachelor of education studies at the University of Winnipeg. Aboriginal studies and inner city issues are her academic interests. She hopes to become a teacher and give back to the community where she has grown up.

Her advice to anyone thinking of going back to school in an adult learning centre is:

“Make that big decision, take the chance, enroll and you'll find a warm, welcoming atmosphere and staff willing to help you to overcome your difficulties.”



*In the end it's commitment that unlocks the doors of imagination, allows vision, and gives us the right stuff to turn our dreams into reality.*

*James Womack*