



PLAR

PLAR Stories from Manitoba

training

experience



Knowledge

Skills for Life-Long Learning



What is PLAR?

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process used to identify, document, assess and recognize skills and knowledge.

Learning takes place in many situations including:

- work
- hobbies
- family and life
- military
- volunteer activities
- travel
- independent study
- formal education
- workplace training

In PLAR, individuals prove learning in a variety of ways.



Tom | Urban Circle Training Centre

Tom was in his early 20's when he arrived at a Winnipeg Aboriginal training centre with no confidence in his own abilities and no idea of what he wanted or could do for employment. PLAR assisted him to progress to where he is now attending the Self-Governance program at Red River College and plans to return to work in his Reserve community.

Through PLAR, Tom realized and documented skills gained while working on the Reserve and in the Band office, including very marketable abilities in proposal writing and administration. Everybody had told him he wouldn't succeed but PLAR helped him see he already had experienced success, and could continue to do so.

"He knows he has a place in society, he knows he has a lot of gifts to offer his community and he knows he can make a difference."





Holly | Winnipeg Technical College

Holly was enrolled in the Mature Student Diploma and needed one credit to complete the diploma this year before her baby was born. She had formal training at a private hairstyling school and several years experience in the field. Through several comprehensive exams and a practical test, Holly was able to demonstrate her ability to meet the required competencies. She was able to use the WTC credit to fulfill the credit requirement for her diploma.



Wendy | Red River College

Owning and operating a licensed Family Day Care home, provided Wendy with a variety of knowledge and skills related to the early childhood profession. To enhance these skills and to work towards attaining the Early Childhood Education Diploma, Wendy completed many courses through Red River College's Continuing and Distance Education.

A full-time two-year program involves numerous courses, and the content of many courses was already familiar learning to Wendy. Rather than relearning content in the classroom, Wendy accessed PLAR to challenge for credit in courses where she felt that she had already acquired the learning. Instead of taking courses, she proved through a variety of PLAR processes that her knowledge and skills were equivalent to the expectations for traditional students. Wendy believes in "the learning process, and promoting better ways to teach children". She successfully completed the ECE Diploma and attained a position on the Dean's Honour Roll in June 2003.

PLAR allowed Wendy to complete her program of study in a shorter period of time. By challenging for credit in courses, Wendy moved through the program rapidly. As a part-time student, she graduated six years earlier than she would have following the traditional part time diploma studies path. This has provided the motivation for continuing to learn. Next on Wendy's learning agenda is the Post Diploma Program for Studies in Special Needs Child Care, which she plans to begin in the fall of 2003.



Susan | University of Winnipeg

An active Early Childhood Educator since 1980, Susan has translated her work experience into credits towards a Bachelor's degree at the University of Winnipeg. Susan has vast experience in child care - working as a supervisor and director of a variety of Day Care Centres, a part-time instructor at a college program in Early Childhood Education, and as a day care coordinator for the provincial Child Daycare Office. As well, Susan has presented several workshops at the Annual Manitoba Child Care Association Conference.

Through **PLAR**, she has received three course credits - Observation and Evaluation Techniques, Parents, Family and Professionals, and Interpersonal Communication and is continuing towards her goal of a B.A., major in Developmental Studies.



Erin | Employment Projects of Winnipeg

A Winnipeg woman is using PLAR to assist with her transition from electrical shops teacher to accounts receivable clerk. Trained as an electrician, Erin earned her papers as a journeyman electrician before pursuing further education to become a teacher.

More recently, Erin underwent a complete career change. As a mother of two, including a child with disabilities, she wanted a job that enabled her to be home more, with predictable hours and located closer to her home.

Erin attended Employment Projects of Winnipeg for help with the transition. Through a PLAR process, she was able to document what she knows and can do, including her knowledge and skills in math. When Erin heard about a job opening in an accounts receivable office, she had the confidence to apply, and the ability to articulate and define the skills she could bring to the job.

Erin is not sure where her career path will take her next. She knows that the self-awareness gained through PLAR will assist her in continuing to document her lifelong learning as skills transferable to the workplace.



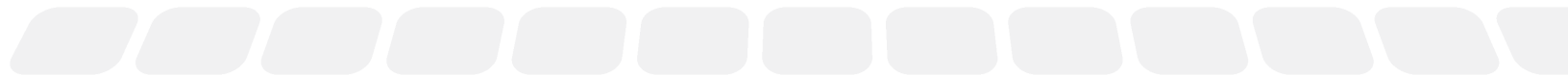
John | Brandon University

An accomplished individual with experience in the Canadian Forces as a Psychiatric Nurse, and as a boxer and boxing coach, John is translating his life long learning towards a year of university credit that enables him to enter a Masters of Education program.

John had already earned his three-year Bachelor degree in Native Studies from Brandon University. He believed that knowledge and skills gained through work and life experience could be equivalent to the required fourth year of university credit.

John's portfolio features his workplace learning including operating his own counseling and consulting company, his community service and his accomplishments and recognition as an athlete and coach.

John began PLAR at an early and experimental time at the university. He persisted and over a period of three years was gained conditional admittance to the M.Ed. program and successfully completed some of the courses required for his Master's degree.





Nasir | Employment Connections

Motivated through an employment-focused prior learning assessment and recognition advisory process at Employment Connections, a recent immigrant woman has opened many doors that are helping her adjust and prepare for a successful life in Canada.

Nasir arrived at a Winnipeg employment centre frustrated because she did not know how to get a job. Nasir didn't think she knew much of anything and didn't believe she had many skills. She also knew her limited English was holding her back.

During the PLAR process, Nasir has worked on having her secondary and post-secondary education accredited, developed a resume that highlights her skills and work experience and sought out and attends English as a Second Language training at a local church. She is auditing a science course at the University of Manitoba in preparation for her eventual return to master-level studies. As well, she volunteers regularly at a local hospital to assist her in gaining and documenting employment-related skills and experience.



Darlene | University of Winnipeg

The availability of PLAR is helping a Calgary woman obtain her B. Ed. from the University of Winnipeg in less time and with fewer costs.

Darlene, who has a college diploma in Vocational Industrial Teacher Education, currently lives in Calgary and teaches costume sewing and design, and theatrical makeup at a high school. She is already a mobile learner - attending classes at the University of Calgary as a visiting student and traveling back to Winnipeg in the summers to pick up courses towards her degree. The availability of PLAR is enabling her to gain credit toward her degree by submitting a portfolio that documents her work experience.



Eric | Red River College

Eric is closer to achieving his goal of becoming a General Manager of a hotel or resort, after he translated his 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry into credits toward a college diploma in Hotel and Restaurant Administration.

Over the past twenty-five years, Eric has progressed from a dishwasher to restaurant manager to Operations Manager of a rural resort and conference centre. He has also attended two years of university, taken a range of industry-related training and has done independent study.

Through a PLAR process, Eric's extensive learning and experience has been documented and credits granted towards the recognized college diploma. "Although I feel I have amassed a wealth of knowledge in my 25 years in the restaurant and hotel industry and earned the respect of my peers, my work will be validated through the formal diploma. I also see this credential as a stepping stone to further education."



Bob | Horizons Adult Learning Centre

Bob, in his mid-20s, wanted to further his training and career in accounting.

Although he is a university graduate with a degree in business administration, Bob was unable to enroll in accounting - he had enrolled in University as a mature student without ever attaining his Grade 12 math.

Through **PLAR**, Bob was able to prove his prior learning attained in business and through his university studies. He demonstrated and/or successfully tested for all but part of a module for Grade 12 math. In short, **PLAR** saved Bob time and money in achieving his plan to enroll in accounting courses at Red River College.



Chris | University of Winnipeg

Identifying and organizing prior learning experiences through a PLAR process has helped a Winnipeg woman enrolled in a university Joint Communications Degree/Diploma to save time, money and energy.

Chris had been in business for 15 years preparing written communications for business, individuals, and students when a car accident ended her ability to carry on with the physical demands of her business.

Through a PLAR process she successfully challenged the mandatory academic writing course and received 12 unallocated hours of credit. During the PLAR process, she discovered that the value of her life experiences provided her with the confidence to enter university as a 'late bloomer'. The insights gained continue to help her as she juggles education with family and employment responsibilities, and rehabilitation. Although it will take her four years to complete the degree, without the credits achieved through PLAR, her physical limitations would extend that period considerably.



Allen | Winnipeg Technical College

Allen had some related formal training from another college and has worked privately as a freelance artist on stage and television for many years. Through a series of interviews and examining Allen's work in his portfolio he was able to obtain $2\frac{3}{4}$ out of 10 program credits in Production Art. The PLAR process and flexible program at WTC has allowed Allen to gain credit for what he knows and to attend in a way that supports his family situation.



Elaine joined the staff of Red River College in 2001, having partially completed the Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) Program at the University of Manitoba.

Since college faculty are encouraged to complete the Certificate in Adult Education (CAE) offered through Red River College, Elaine changed direction slightly and focused on attaining the RRC credential. To begin the process, Elaine registered for and completed Course Implementation and Evaluation. She then applied for a transfer of credit to the CAE for the courses completed through the University of Manitoba.

Elaine was an experienced adult educator who had taken advantage of numerous professional development opportunities. She had developed expertise in a wide range of adult education principles and practices. Through her involvement with Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), Elaine had assisted numerous candidates in preparing and presenting evidence of prior learning. By developing and presenting portfolios of evidence to prove knowledge and skills, Elaine was able to attain credit for three more (CAE) courses. The PLAR Foundation course was an elective in the CAE Program. Elaine was confident of her knowledge of both PLAR theory and application and successfully challenged for credit. During the summer of 2003, Elaine completed the final course for her Certificate in Adult Education.

Although gathering and generating evidence for portfolios was time consuming, Elaine felt that the benefits outweighed the drawbacks. In approximately 13 months, using PLAR methods involving transfer credit; portfolio assessment; and challenge processes, Elaine was awarded credit for five of the seven CAE courses. She completed the two remaining courses at Red River College and attained her CAE certificate.



Tyler | University of Winnipeg

PLAR has assisted a computer service technologist translate his extensive work experience into two courses towards a B.A., major in Business Computing.

Tyler, in his work with a large corporation in the Advanced Internet Operations department, was responsible for the continued stable operation of many systems, both hardware and software. Based on his knowledge and experience in computer networking and in distributed client/server applications, he was given credit for two courses - Computer Architecture and Systems Software, and Intro to Unix. As a part-time student, he is now pursuing PLAR in two more Business Computing courses.



Karen began taking courses in the Business and Administrative Studies Certificate Program at RRC in 1997. Over the next six years, while working full-time, Karen completed 10 out of the 12 courses through part-time evening and weekend studies.

During the process, Karen learned of an experiential learning option, available to individuals in management positions who managed at least six employees over a period of five years. By providing supporting documentation in the form of verification letters, resume and current job description, Karen was granted a credit for the experiential learning option in the Business and Administrative Studies Certificate.

With one credit course remaining, Karen contacted the RRC PLAR Advisor for advice on the PLAR processes, to receive a course outline for the Report Writing course and the specific guidelines for developing a portfolio. In her job, Karen wrote reports on a regular basis and felt that she could prove her knowledge and skills by documenting and presenting samples of her work. In June 2003, Karen submitted her portfolio to a College faculty assessor and was awarded credit for the Report Writing course.

When Karen saw the light at the end of the tunnel, PLAR allowed her to complete the Business and Administrative Studies Certificate on her own terms. Karen was able to demonstrate her prior learning by systematically working through the portfolio process at home instead of driving to the College following a busy work day for an additional four hours of class time. She gained personal satisfaction through the acquisition of credits granted for learning acquired through work experience!



Naomi | University of Winnipeg

PLAR is making post-secondary education more accessible to a mature student recovering from a car accident.

After completing a three-year arts degree at the University of Winnipeg, Naomi has accessed PLAR to keep her on track towards a goal of graduate studies. PLAR allowed her to apply her experiences as a care worker for young unwed mothers to social science courses, resulting in the completion of two full courses in one term, bringing her 12 credit hours closer to completing a four-year undergraduate degree.

PLAR has allowed Naomi to reduce the costs of her education and to work from home so she can maintain her studies and keep her appointments with various doctors. For Naomi, PLAR has enabled her to bridge the gap between formal education and life experience and ease the path to a university education.



Stewart | Apprenticeship Branch

Stewart and his family came from England to Canada in the summer of 2001 to visit relatives. They fell in love with Manitoba and the opportunities for a better life. Towards the end of their vacation they decided to approach the Manitoba Provincial Nominee Program and inquire about the possibility of them becoming new Canadians.

Stewart was an industrial electrician by trade in England and was informed that their chances for qualifying into the program would increase greatly if his City of Guilds certification was recognized here in Manitoba. After contacting the Apprenticeship Branch and a lengthy personal interview and verification of documentation with the Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Coordinator, Stewart received a letter stating his British certification qualified him to challenge the Inter-provincial Certification exam for the trade of Industrial Electrician.

Stewart and his family did qualify for the program and came to Manitoba in the summer of 2003. He has since written the certification exam and was successful. Stewart now has a job as an industrial electrician with a large company in Selkirk, Manitoba.

Rick | McLeod Adult Learning Centre



A computer animator with a major corporation, who did not finish high school, is now able to qualify for internal management postings through a combination of courses and PLAR with McLeod Adult Learning Centre, a part of River East Transcona School Division.

Rick signed on for the Grade 12 English and Mathematics courses offered at his company's training site through a partnership with McLeod Adult Learning Centre. It quickly became apparent that Rick, the senior computer animator with the firm, is a true lifelong learner with on-the-job experience and outside training that could be recognized for high school credit.

McLeod has developed a system for granting credit for prior learning even for courses that are not taught onsite. For example, in Rick's case, McLeod's Director approached a multi-media teacher at Miles Macdonnell Collegiate and arranged for an assessment of Rick's advanced multi-media skills against the courses offered at that school. Rick's skills closely matched two Senior 4 courses, and he achieved 95% and 100% respectively. These credits, the credits completed through his company, plus previous high school credits, meant that he was able to graduate with his Mature Student Diploma in June 2003.

Now for the unique twist to this story. Soon after Rick's PLAR assessment, the Director was looking for a teacher for a Multimedia Flash course in the general interest Continuing Education program she also manages. Rick's PLAR assessor enthusiastically recommended Rick to teach the course - and then enrolled in it herself as a professional development experience! So, who is the "teacher" and who is the "student"? An example of adult education at its finest made possible by PLAR.

Find out more about PLAR by telephoning the following:

Post-Secondary Institutions

Red River College of Applied Arts, Science and Technology	(204) 632-2065 / (204) 632-3094
Assiniboine Community College	(204) 725-8700 (ext.) 6615
Keewatin Community College	(204) 677-6674
Winnipeg Technical College	(204) 989-6519
Brandon University	Institution Contact (204) 727-7413 Student Contact (204) 571-8533

Collège universitaire de Saint Boniface	(204) 233-0120 ext. 402
University of Manitoba	(204) 474-6685
University of Winnipeg	(204) 786-9767

Advisory Services

Adult Learning Centres	(204) 945-3556 / 1-800-282-8069 ext. 3556
Employment Centres	(204) 945-8341

Industry

Industry Prior Learning Assessment	(204) 945-1682
Apprenticeship	(204) 945-3337
Settlement and Labour Market Services	(204) 945-5978

Or visit our Websites at:

www.edu.gov.mb.ca/aet

www.plarinmanitoba.ca

www.wplar.ca

