

2018 Phyllis Pitre Bursary winners tell their amazing stories

by Gloria Welton

At the age of 48, on November 21st, 2011, Phyllis Pitre passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. She lived in Charlottetown and was formerly of Tignish Shore.

In honour of the late Phyllis Pitre, former Chair of the Career Development Association of PEI Inc. (CDA of PEI) a bursary was established. The awards are for adult learners on PEI who are 30 years of age or older and are working towards completing a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree.

In August, CDA of PEI hosted a reception attended by Phyllis's family to meet the recipients of this year's bursaries and hear their stories and how the bursary impacted their lives. "Phyllis would have been so proud of each of the recipients," says **Florence Gallant**, sister of Phyllis. "She loved to see people grow into who they were meant to be."

This year, CDA of PEI was pleased to offer the 2018 Phyllis Pitre Bursary of \$500 each to **Walaa Nasry**, **Tracy Enman**, and **Julie MasIsaac**.

For more about **CDA of PEI** and the annual bursary, visit www.cdapei.ca



Recipients' stories

Working on settling into a career on PEI

I immigrated to PEI in 2011 with my two daughters, who are now 14 and 15. I am a medical doctor with 10 years of practice and experience in Egypt, including four years residency in Pediatrics and Neonatology, but my license is not presently approved to work on PEI.

I took the initial examinations to be licensed on PEI. However, I was not able to complete all the stages because I need the clinical aspect and would have to move off-Island to do so. My children have been through so much, and I want to keep them on PEI because they are now rooted here.

By 2013, I used up all of my financial resources and decided to apply to UPEI with a plan to study a profession related to my field and get other credentials.

Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC), Department of Pathology and Microbiology accepted me even though I had no experience with animals. I did a Master's program under the supervision of Dr. Chelsea Martin and co-supervisor Dr. Rodriguez-Lecompte researching cancer in cats and comparing this work to cancer in humans. After graduating, I still could not find a job. I am told many times that I am overqualified.



Walaa Nasry, originally from Egypt, now living in Charlottetown.

I was encouraged to apply for the Graduate Student Stipend Scholarship at AVC to earn a PhD, which could take three to five years. The scholarship awards me \$15,000 a year for three years. My PhD, under the supervision of Dr. Chelsea Martin, investigates blueberry extracts as an alternative therapy to conventional treatment.

At this point, I have very little money, I am a single mom, I do not have any family on PEI, and I am not sure how I will get through supporting my family. I am nervous, but when I was told that I received the bursary from Career Development Association of PEI, it encouraged me. I finally felt accepted here on PEI.

I realize that I stand out and people may not be comfortable with me because of my appearance and accent. Making friends here on PEI has been very difficult, and getting a job and starting a career has been very challenging. I am trying to be flexible and confident, and I am open to any suggestions, especially for work. I can work part-time through the week and on weekends. After finishing my laboratory work in the PhD program, I can work full-time.

I have made many connections in the community, and I am just waiting for something to materialize in the line of work I have studied. I have no choice but to keep trying for the sake of my family, and I hope my career will one day start on PEI.

I am grateful to Dr. Fred Kibenge (the chair), in my department and AVC for giving me the opportunity to restart a new career on PEI. I would also like to thank the Phyllis Pitre family and CDA of PEI for giving me this great opportunity to be one of the recipients of the bursary.

The journey from Canadian Armed Forces to post-secondary education

After much contemplation, I decided to release from the Canadian Armed Forces after over 20 years at the rank of Major. While I will sincerely miss working with today's youth and being part of such a fantastic program as the cadet movement, it was time for me to move on and try something new.

Tracy Enman, from Summerside.



In May of this year, I decided to go back to school. Up until this year, I spent 10 weeks every summer in Gagetown, New Brunswick, or elsewhere in Canada, so being home has been a nice change.

I am very excited for the opportunity to return to school. I believe change is good, no matter what stage of life you're in; one just needs to embrace it.

I decided to enroll in the one-year administrative program in Alberton, and I'm considering continuing with university afterwards.

I found out about the bursary through Career Development Services in Summerside, and the staff were fantastic. I am very grateful for this financial support, as every little bit helps.

The career path from cosmetology to social work

I want to thank all who made this bursary available. I also want to say how fortunate Phyllis was to have such a supportive family. I grew up in the foster child system, so it is so nice to see such a close family. I came to the Island when I was eight after living with abuse in my life. Thanks to my foster family, I was able to overcome depression and become a successful hair dresser.

For the last 20 years, I have been in the cosmetology industry, and I now operate a hair salon business in Charlottetown. I am also a full-time student at UPEI working towards a Bachelor's Degree with a double major in psychology and history with a minor in English.

Going back to post-secondary as a mature student has been difficult. But I felt it was time to take on this adventure.



Julie Maclsaac, from Charlottetown area.

As I listened to my clients over the years, I realized that my ability to help them was limited, and this sparked an interest in returning to school.

It has been a challenge to keep up with technology such as doing PowerPoint projects and dealing with the responsibility of keeping up with online assignments. My children have helped me greatly in that area.

UPEI has great staff who have been amazingly supportive. I don't consider myself a strong academic student, but I am determined and am working hard. Becoming a Social Worker is my end goal, and I will graduate in 2019 with an undergraduate degree. From there, I will go on to earn a Masters of Social Work.

I have applied for many bursaries, and this is my first one I have received, which is very encouraging. This bursary will help me finish my degree, and I am so thankful for this help.

I started at UPEI in 2008, but in 2014 I had to take a year off because of personal difficulties. With the support from my family and friends and from UPEI staff, I am so happy to say that I will be earning my degree in 2019.

For a full list of **bursaries**, **scholarships** and **grants** available on PEI, visit www.employmentjourney.com/bursaries-awards-scholarships-2018/



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