Learning for Life by COLTON KROON

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How will my future be different because of the Adult Learning Program?  That's a question that I often ask myself.  The truth is it is my hope that this essay might afford me the opportunity to not only answer that question for you the reader, but to gain a better understanding of that rejoinder myself.  Machiavelli once said, "Whoever wishes to foresee the future must consult the past."  I believe that to be true.

When I was fourteen years old I was involved in an altercation that would forever change my life.  It was a high school fight that I still regret to this day; an incident that was so unremarkable most people would probably have forgotten it as soon as it concluded. Unremarkable in the sense that it was a fight not much different than any other teenage dispute.  Although it might have appeared insignificant from the outside looking in, it was perhaps the most significant event in my life to that point. I ended up receiving twelve months probation and lost any interest I had left for school.  That next year I ended up dropping out of high school due to an inability to concentrate and an ever growing chip on my shoulder.

By the time I was eighteen my own mother had all but given up.  Over the course of those three years I had been in and out of juvie and that chip on my shoulder had only gotten bigger.  I had become a full fledged alcoholic and the only time that I was at peace was when I was under the influence.  My mother, in a sort of last ditch effort, took the time to explain where I was headed.  She told me that if I didn't shape up she would have to cut me out of her life, and even at the time I didn't blame her. The thought of losing my mother was enough to make me smarten up a little bit. Even though I still continued to get in trouble with the law, and struggled with addiction I had started to make an effort to change.

At the age of twenty-one I moved out west and started working full time.  After a couple of years of that I realized that without and education it was going to be an uphill battle.  Working manual labour isn't a terrible job for the short term, but over the long term it can definitely take its toll.  Last year I found myself in a good place to start sorting some things out and entered the Adult Learning Program.

Six months later and I've successfully finished four out of five tests.  Hopefully in six days I'll have passed my final exam and will fast be on my way to having the kind of life I so desire. This program has given me the opportunity to learn many new skills, such as advanced mathematics and a deeper understanding of the English language.  It has also given me the chance to become a better critical thinker and to sharpen the tools I already possess.

So, how will my future be different because  of the Adult Learning Program?  In all honesty, if life has taught me anything it is the uncertainty of tomorrow. Yesterday's gone ant tomorrow is never promised as they say.  It is simply my hope that I can use the tools that the program has provided me as a means to a better life.  A future that's filled not with worry and uncertainty, but rather ans existence occupied with happiness, joy and a little peace of mind.

I know this essay is supposed to be about how improving my literacy has positively changed my life.  The truth is I've had a natural way with words and have always been a competent reader.  My mother claims to have read to me since I was nothing more than a mere blastula.  Apparently, an English teacher told her it would give me a leg up and it seems to have been a genuinely accurate suggestion.  Since I've always been quite proficient at reading and writing, I would like to explain how it has positively impacted me over the years.

Writing has always helped me unwind.  Even as I sit here now after a long and stressful day I can feel my body becoming calmer and me mind becoming more relaxed with every word I write.  Perhaps writing brings back memories of my mother's calm voice precisely going over every last word of my favourite children's book, or the many novels that transported me to another place where none of my problems even existed. In any case, as a person who suffers from anxiety it's always nice to know that I can sit down, start writing and almost instantly feel better.

If I really want to lose myself and completely omit what's going on I'm my life, reading a good book has invariably been my preference. Don't get me wrong, writing certainly does calm me, but when I need to absolutely shut out what's going on around me, nothing beats picking up a good novel. I honestly don't know how many times I've sat down feeling completely stressed out and frankly overwhelmed, only to be transported to a place where none of that matters.  That to me is the true power of reading. It gives one the chance to so vividly paint a picture in your mind that you somehow forget where you are.

Reading and writing have always provided me with an escape; a quiet place in my mind where I can find peace.  Literacy has given me the ability to both express myself in a meaningful way and understand others just as clearly.  I would encourage anyone who can not fluently read or write to pick up a book or start writing more frequently.  In my opinion, the ability to competently read and write far outweighs any time you might spend learning.  If you're lucky, it might just provide you with life long solace.  I know that's been the case for me.