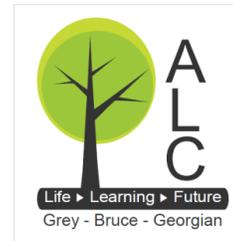


The Adult Learning Centres: Grey-Bruce-Georgian



Summary Report for Bridges *out of Poverty* and Getting AHEAD

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INTRODUCTION:

Over the past 6 years there has been a targeted effort to engage the community at all levels in Bridges *out of* Poverty. The following is an outline of the work that has been accomplished by the Adult Learning Centres: Grey-Bruce-Georgian in partnership with Grey County Social Services. It is with pride that we can claim to be the second county in Canada to work towards becoming an engaged Bridges community.

THE BEGININGS:

In May of 2009, the Adult Learning Centres: Grey-Bruce-Georgian sent 2 staff to attend the Bridges *out of* Poverty and Getting AHEAD training event in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Grey County Social Services was also expressing an interest in the Bridges work at the same time. Tim Nicholls Harrison, then manager of the Adult Learning Centres and Barb Fedy, Director of Grey County Social Services discussed a plan to begin delivering Getting Ahead.

In collaboration with Grey County Social Services, The Adult Learning Centre and the Y Employment Services, started the first Getting Ahead in January of 2010. Within 6 years, we have completed 21 Getting Ahead groups in 6 different communities in Grey County. There are 159 graduates with a retention/graduation rate of 89%.

The first 3 Getting Ahead groups was a pilot project. After interviewing the graduates and seeing how it had changed their lives, Grey County Social Services Committee built funding into their annual budget to support 3 groups per year. This was achieved during a time of fiscal budget restraint. This was a landmark decision to change how our community would support people living on social assistance. It was widely acknowledged that social assistance funding, legislated by the province of Ontario, was only 2/3 of what people and families required for basic needs.

In the most recent groups, investigators from Bruce County were included. It was with persistent communication and encouragement from Grey County Director of Social Services, Barb Fedy to Bruce County Director of Social Services, Christine MacDonald to achieve this goal.

September 2015 was a landmark occasion for Getting Ahead. Christine Alderman was an investigator in 2012, a co facilitator in 2013 & 2014 and now is a trained facilitator in 2015. She recently completed the on-line training with you in September. Her group #20 graduated in November. She did an amazing job! The program has come full circle!



WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED:

This graphic represents the work of the Adult Learning Centres: Grey-Bruce-Georgian's commitment to Bridges in partnership with Grey County.

YTD stats indicate an **89%** retention rate from beginning the group to graduation



	Date & Location	Facilitators	Attendance True Colours- Class - Graduates
1	Jan – April 10: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Brittany Brenndorfer	11-8-8
2	June – Aug 10: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Bev Elliott	7-7-6
3	Oct – Nov 10: Hanover	Brittany Brenndorfer / Kandice Graver	15-10-10
4	Oct – Dec 10: Meaford	Mary Jane Murray / Joan Rideout	7-7-7
5	Mar – May 11: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Lisa Greve	12-11-10
6	July – Aug 11: Hanover	Brittany Brenndorfer / Annette Baker	8-7-7
7	July – Aug 11: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Mitzi Flood	16-7-6
8	Oct – Nov 11: Meaford	Mary Jane Murray / Jacqueline Banks	8-6-6
9	Jan – Mar 12: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Jill McFadden Bartley	17-17-13
10	Apr – Jun 12: Dundalk	Mary Jane Murray / Jill McFadden Bartley	12-8-8
11	Sept – Oct 12: Durham	Jill McFadden Bartley / Mike Hallatt	5-5-5
12	Feb – Apr 13: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Claire Tolmie	13-12-10
13	Sept – Nov 13: Markdale	Jill McFadden Bartley	7-5-3
14	Sept – Nov 13: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Christine Alderman	8-8-6
15	Feb – Apr 14: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Misty Schonauer	10-10-9
16	July – Aug 14: Owen Sound	Mary Jane Murray / Jill Umbach	9-9-8
17	Oct – Dec 14: Meaford	Mary Jane Murray / Lori Brooks	6-6-6
18	Oct – Dec 14: Hanover	Jill Umbach / Christine Alderman	8-7-6
19	Apr – June 15: Markdale	Jill Umbach / Christine Alderman	6-5-5
20	Sept – Nov 15: Owen Sound	Christina Alderman / Gerald McCulloch	8-7-7
21	Sept – Nov 15: Hanover	Jill Umbach / Suzanne Kaye	14-11-9

PROGRAM STRUCTURE:

In this collaborative project, Grey County caseworkers selected from their clients people who were ready to make changes in lives. The Adult Learning Centre staff (Mary Jane Murray or Jill Umbach or Christine Alderman) facilitated the 15 sessions. Y Employment Services deployed staff member Marie Krauter to present the True Colours introductory day workshop. The introductory day allowed the participants to get to know each other in a fun, constructive and learning environment. Also it was a selection process for the facilitators to determine which participants would continue on with the group. The True Colours workshop has been such an integral part of the program that we will not start a group until Marie is available.

True Colours:

Each new group starts out with a day of True Colours programming to build teamwork and to help the group bond. This is the corner stone of the program.

Personality Dimensions is all about the participant and the people around them. It is a workshop designed to facilitate understanding through a self-discovery process where participants learn through discussion and sharing and that in turn, allows them to discover insightful information about themselves and others. It is about the role that they play in a group, at work and in their community and home. They have the opportunity to discover which of the four colours/temperaments (Inquiring Green, Organized Gold, Authentic Blue, Resourceful Orange) is their base colour/temperament and how that colour/temperament relates to others.

This supportive workshop gives everyone an opportunity to describe their positive qualities, strengths and weaknesses and stressors in a safe and respected manner.

Individually they work through a series of cards and a worksheet to determine their colour and then they break into their like-colour group and discuss as a group things that make them happy, sad, mad and what they are like when stressed and they present this back to the group.

Through this exercise, they learn they are complex, adaptable and unique individuals, capable of drawing on other aspects of their personality and experience to function effectively in challenging and conflicting situations. As well, they are exposed to the fundamental differences in others' approach to the same topic and from that, it is intended they will gain a greater understanding and tolerance of others' behaviours and some ideas on how to deal with it. Also they gain an awareness that because we approach situations differently in fundamental ways, these differences can create natural barriers to interpersonal communications.

They learn everyone is a spectrum of colours and all of us operate in a series of roles every moment of our lives. Thus, our roles are constantly changing depending on the context in which we are behaving and our self-esteem and tolerance of others is constantly being influenced by the variety of roles we play.

The goal is that they learn to understand and respect themselves and in turn, they can understand and respect others and with this framework established it encourages communication and communication is critical in the success of future group meetings.

MANUAL:

We have followed the manual very faithfully as we have found that it works. The activities are very relevant and successful. We do incorporate local financial statistics and data to make the material reflective to each community's situation. Some communities that we work in have over 50 resources while some have only 4. We are geographically challenged by the lack of transportation options between the communities.



As the map indicates Grey County has pockets of need and bringing the GA sessions to these smaller communities is driven through the requests by the Mayors who sit on the Social Services Committee championed by the chairs, Brian Milne and Dwight Burley.

We have introduced some activities to facilitate the investigation and resource building process. We have found that the investigators experience different learning styles. Also we have encountered learning disabilities and / or low reading skills. We incorporated more hands on methods of presenting the material; including additional mental models, visual aids and Jodi's Stories videos. One of the most popular new activities is the *"Ring of Fire"* which brings to life the Theory of Change.

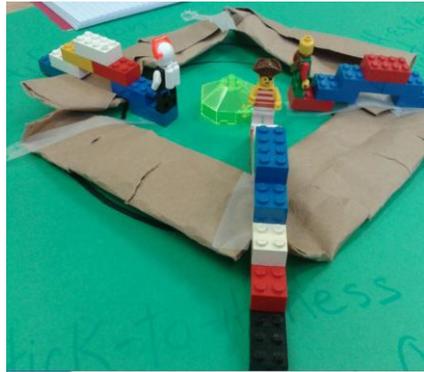
The Theory of Change in 3 D: The Ring of Fire.

This activity was presented to senior staff of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and Ministry staff. The Getting Ahead investigators agreed to allow the visitors to view their work on the Theory of Change. The MTUC funds the Adult Learning Centres, Colleges and Universities in the province of Ontario. *We knocked their socks off!* At the debriefing meeting they requested a copy of the Getting Ahead manual.

Activity:

Find a way to move from the inner circle to the outer circle overcoming your barrier.

You must help all your team mates out of the inner circle to their chosen destination beyond the rim of the outer circle.



1. Draw an inner circle on your paper and name it *What Life is Like Now*
2. Draw a larger circle around it
 - Yellow: put an 8ft wall around your inner circle
 - Blue: put an raging river with rocks and waterfalls around your inner circle
 - Green: put a ring of quicksand around your inner circle
 - Orange: put a ring of fire around your inner circle
3. Draw small circles around the outside rim of the large circle to indicate your destination
4. Put all your (Lego) people in the inner circle
 - As a group decide how you are going to get out
 - Decide what skills, tools, resources you need
 - Send one person to the resource table to select items
 - Build your resources
5. **Write down** your plan
6. **Write down** your procedural steps:
 - step 1
 - step 2
 - step 3
7. Report back to the larger group your strategies

The Plan:

In preparation for completing The Plan we have incorporated this activity. It allows the investigators to mentally shed all the things in their lives that were holding them back. It was a silent solitary activity that encouraged investigators to really consider what was important in their lives.

Activity:

You are going on a Journey

1. Close your eyes for a moment of contemplation
2. You are going on a journey. You can only go forward....there is no going back
3. Draw four squares on your page
4. Write down the following in each square

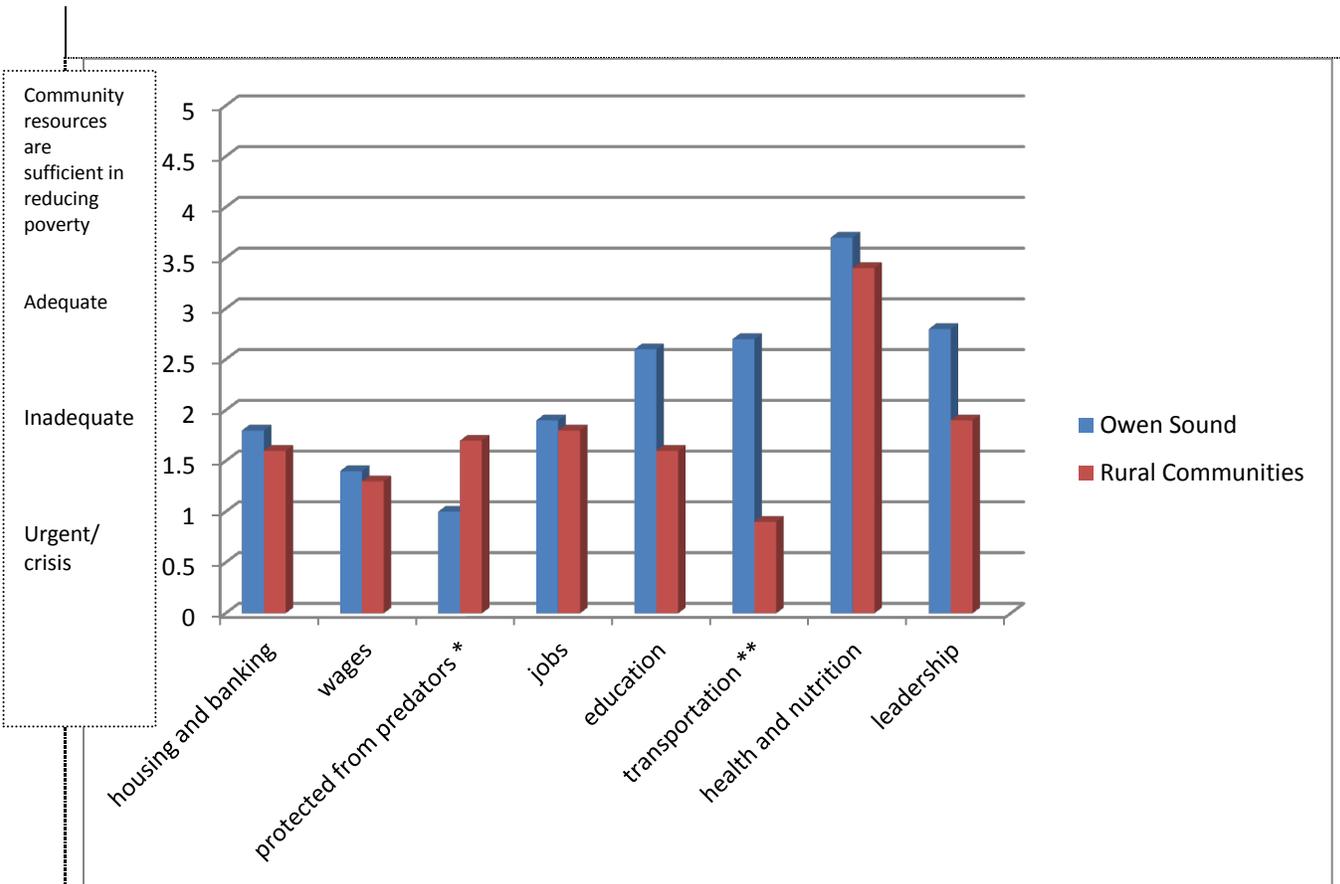
Who will you take? (name each person)	What will you take? (name each item)
What skills/talents /expertise do you have? (list everything)	Where do you want to be? (location, economic stability/education, peace of mind, etc.)

What will you do differently to make this happen?

The most difficult square to complete was listing all the skills/talents /expertise. We had discussions about areas of competency that the investigator never even considered.

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SUMMARY 2013:

Following the manual exercise on assessing community resources investigators discovered some “aha” moments about their communities.



Notes:

- The assessment information was based on the “Community Assessment” format in the *first addition manual*.
- The results were a culmination of investigations by 105 investigators who graduated from Getting Ahead 2010 through to 2013.
- The assessment results were based on how people living on low income viewed their communities and services.
- Rural communities included: Dundalk, Durham, Hanover, Markdale, Meaford and Owen Sound.
- The manual had some questions that reflected American services only; where applicable we translated them into Canadian terminology and assessed them on our criteria.
- *Predators referred to businesses that were designed to exploit people living on low income.
- **Transportation assessment was made prior to the changes & reduced services to the bus system in Owen Sound.

GRADUATION:

What a celebration! The first Getting Ahead graduation set the stage for all subsequent ceremonies. We invited all the dignitaries in our area: the Member of Provincial Parliament, the Mayor or designate, the Executive Directors of key agencies, Directors of Social Services, the Warden of Grey County and all our collaborative community partners. The amazing thing was that they all come! Now, they will skip out of council meetings to join us for the luncheon, the speeches and the presentation of certificates. It is very inspiring (and emotional) especially hearing the comments from the graduates. *"I have never graduated from anything before"; I have never had new clothes before"; Getting Ahead has changed my life".*

My life was directionless. 

Realizing where I wanted to be in life was the first step but not the final one.

I discovered through this workshop; it is only the beginning of my journey. 



The cake was made by one of the graduates

Christina – group 16 Owen Sound

I graduated from my program not to long ago. It's probably the best thing I ever did in my life!

Before group:

I was overweight. Didn't eat properly. Hardly exercised. Trying to "save" an abusive relationship. Smoking. Drinking. Playing video games. No "real" friends. Highschool drop out. No job. And pretty much no life.

Since group:

I'm healthy. I eat regular meals. I walk everywhere 😊! I have the healthiest relationship I've ever been in with the love of my life. I'm coming up on 4 months quit smoking. I don't drink. I don't touch video games (games on my phone don't count :p). I met some amazing friends (Tanya among others). I will be a high school graduate come the summer! I've just been hired on at McDonald's!!

Pretty much this group, and everything it taught me saved my life!! Much thanks to MaryJane Murray and Jill EUmbach. I honestly can never repay you!!

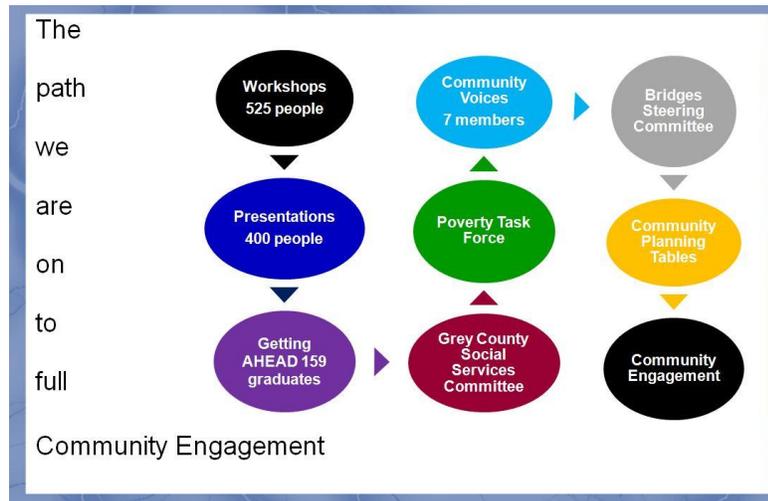
We have created a closed Facebook page for Getting Ahead grads. This is a way of staying in touch as Circles is not part of the continuing supports to the investigators.

People post messages to support each other, to seek advice, to share additional resources or simply to look for the daily quote.

Often we see testimonials about how Getting Ahead has changed lives.

GOING FORWARD:

Many community agencies have been working towards becoming more engaged with Bridges *out of* Poverty.



The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force :

We work together with key community stakeholders and networks to eliminate poverty and enhance our common understanding of poverty-related issues through solution-based research, knowledge development and information sharing.

*The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force is made up of 5 sector-based Action Groups: **Income Security, Food Security, Housing, Transportation and Bridges Action Group**. These sub-groups of the Poverty Task Force dig deeper into the root causes of poverty in our communities and take action.*

*The **Community Voices** group of the Poverty Task Force makes up a 6th Action Group that examines the causes of poverty from the perspective of people with lived experience. Members of the Community Voices have graduated from the **Getting Ahead** program and are advocates for change within their own communities.*

Jill Umbach, United Way Bruce Grey, co ordinates and chairs the Poverty Task Force

Bridges Action Group:

We work with community agencies to engage certified Bridges out of Poverty trainers in Grey Bruce to facilitate full day workshop presentations.

Monica Benz, Public Health Unit Grey Bruce, chairs the Bridges Action Group.

COMMUNITY VOICES:

This community first met in Sept 2013. The fall was a time to set the stage for the committee's role and participation in events. It has become a voice for the realities of people with lived experience.

Since January 2014 the Community Voices has had an interesting year.

- Attended Community Open House roundtable discussion in January 2014
- Reviewed the Bruce and Grey Counties Utilities Document
- Attended the *Circles* workshop in February
- Met with *MPP Bill Walker* on the rising costs of utilities
- Met with The Sun Times newspaper on the *Faces of Poverty* project
- Met with Brad Drake from the Labour council, Munroe Warren, YES office, Deb McKauge, Chamber of Commerce in reference to *precarious work situations* in our community
- Participated in the *Photo Essay display* for the Healthy Communities Conference
- Attended the *Healthy Communities Conference* hosted in Owen Sound
- Attended the screening of *Poor No More* in Port Elgin, Bruce County
- Engagement with the Municipal, Provincial and Federal elections
- Attended the workshop with *Deidre Pike Advocating for Change*
- Attended the *Housing Forum* in November
- Suggestions for the marketing campaign through the United Way Bruce Grey for *15 Wishes for 2015* presented to Kathleen Wynne Premier of Ontario
- Created and mailed *Christmas Cards* from Community Voices
- Participated in the *Housing Standard Survey* initiated by the Public Health Unit Grey Bruce
- Participated in the *Owen Sound City Survey*
- Engaged in *community action* to stop the planned reduction of bussing services in Owen Sound
- Created *power point presentations* on important community issues
- Invited *Mayor Ian Boddy* to the April Meeting (accepted the invitation)
- Invited Liberal candidate *Kimberly Love* to the May meeting (accepted the invitation)
- Participating in the *Bridges out of Poverty* full day workshop in May 2015
- The committee is formulating a terms of reference for their participation in public events and as guest speakers
- Invited Conservative Candidate *Larry Miller*, current MP, to the June meeting (accepted the invitation)
- Participated in the Community Voices Strategic Plan event in September
- Invited NDP candidate *David McLaren* and the Green candidate *Chris Albaniti* to the September meeting (accepted)
- Two committee members have been invited to participate on the Regional Committee for Affordable Housing RentSafe (invited by the Public Health Unit Grey Bruce)
- Participated in the Random Acts of Kindness event in Nov 6 through the Community Foundation

Community Voices has gained a voice and professionalism to their approach to community issues that affect people living on low income. The committee is an essential part of the Poverty Task Force. Funding for this committee has been renewed for the next year through the United Way and the Community Foundation Grey Bruce.

CONCLUSION:

At the Adult Learning Centres we work with people from all walks of life and all income levels however we noticed that many of our students were living in the "tyranny of the moment". To better understand how to work with our students Bridges *out of Poverty* was introduced. We found that the constructs resonated with us and connected the dots to answer so many of the "why would you do that?" questions. Grey County Social Services took the lead and in discussions with the Adult Learning Centre the vision of Getting AHEAD become a reality.

KEY PLAYERS:

Barb Fedy

Director of Grey County Social Services

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Tim Nicholls Harrison

CEO Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library

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Kelly – group 2 Owen Sound

Francesca Dobbyn

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Jill Umbach

Getting AHEAD Facilitator

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I would just like to say Thank You. Due to Getting Ahead I have been able to accomplish so much. I have met some amazing people and have developed a strong, safe, educated and understanding support system. It is the best feeling in the world to have people who support me and don't hold me back. I love that I can pick up the phone and call someone when I need advice and support. It seems like such a small thing now but I remember I had no one I could count on to support me in a safe, positive way. Again, THANK YOU so much.

Christine Alderman

Getting AHEAD Facilitator

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