

PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS

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AMY

Amy lives in a remote community in Atlantic Canada. She is an Indigenous woman who has three children. She is deeply devoted to her family and her children were her source of motivation to complete high school and apply and get her driver's licence. For them, she told herself that *"I gotta stop saying next week, maybe next month, and just do it now and get it over with."*

Despite this strong desire to move forward, Amy had been unable to find reliable child-care within her community. It's been a major contributor to her employment difficulties, *"the reason why I haven't really done anything in a while or found a job is because it's so hard for me to find a reliable babysitter."* Amy also experiences a high level of anxiety, which had held her back in the past, but which she is now determined to overcome, *"I have really bad anxiety, and panic attacks. So a lot of it had been holding me back from doing things and I said, I can't use that as an excuse anymore."*

Amy's experience of the IM&M+ program was two-fold: it helped her make the link between her skills, strengths and interest and career options and it also helped her

build the confidence to try something new. *"At the end of it, it showed us what type of job would suit us finding out our skills and our strengths and, you know, and I didn't think it would, but it certainly did."*

Specifically, Amy has decided to pursue a career in the skilled trades. From IM&M+, she registered in a program that explores different trades. *"Recently,"* she said, *"Heavy Equipment Technician caught my eye."* Her intention is to continue exploring different possible trades until she finds a good fit, complete the training for her chosen career path and, in the long term, find employment in the town where she lives.

Beyond career exploration, Amy experienced numerous personal improvements in after completing the IM&M+ program. For example, she reported that she now has more confidence and an increased willingness to enter and stick with new experiences. In her own words,

Before the program, I doubted myself, I didn't think I can accomplish anything or, you know, and during the program, I learned to find myself and me and just build up the confidence and, you know, just find that encouragement to show up

and find encouragement to be present every day.

I don't like to apply for anything unless I know someone that's going to be there as well. But after having completed this program, I don't feel like that anymore. I just feel like I can go apply for something. And I don't need to have someone I know that's going to be in a program or school or job ... in order to apply for all these sorts of things.

Amy also noted that, although IM&M+ did not eliminate her anxieties, her experience in the program has helped her to manage those anxieties:

It didn't really lower anxiety. It is still at the same level as it has been before. I'm learning to not let it control me or take over me and, right. ... Before the program, it controlled me and I was, I didn't like to be out because I'm kind of a shy, nervous person around a lot of people. But during the program, I learned to not let that control me or bother me anymore, and just try to overcome it and work through it.

Amy also explained that IM&M+ helped her to let go of interpersonal relationships were having a negative impact on her life and, instead, to focus on maintaining relationships that are more supportive.

Now, it's not as hard for me to say "no" to my friends or family. And just to cut off all negativity out of my life, just in order for me and my children to be happy and push forward in life. I mean, I can't have all these family and friends that got toxic negative energy around me, to get where I want to be in life ... I'm just surrounding myself with people who also are happy for me when I don't think [negative] things in life and they have confidence in me, and

they helped me push to get to my knowledge.

SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF THE IM&M+ PROGRAM

Although Amy had difficulty remembering the names of many of the activities that she took part in while in the IM&M+ program, she recalls that several components of the program were useful in building her sense of confidence and helping her to identify her own strengths. She was particularly proud of participating in the community project, which was focused on advocating for accessible public transport in her community. She explained,

I've never been so proud to have come up with this idea with the other women in my program. I mean, if it does happen, I could proudly say, I helped with this. I was a part of this. I really do hope it goes ahead ... I mean, I myself don't have a vehicle of my own. I have my license, but I struggled with transportation amongst everybody else. And so I'm really hoping it does go ahead. And I can proudly say, "Yes, I helped bring this into our town."

Shortly after this interview was conducted, Amy and her group, along with several other community members, were successful in advocating for a public transportation pilot in their community. The pilot was successful and now there is a bus running in her community.