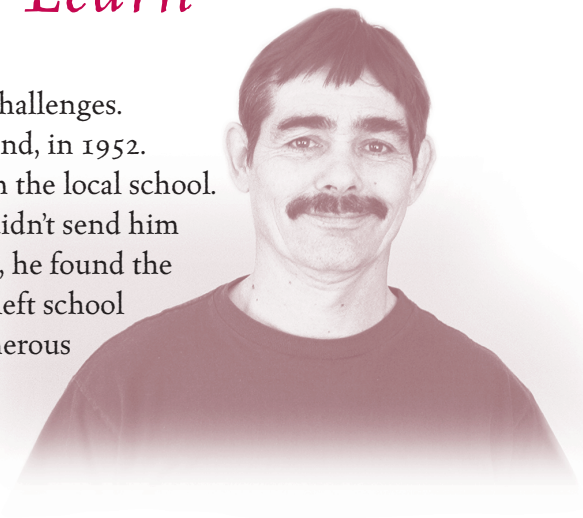


## Never Too Late to Learn

**JIM BARRY** has had his share of challenges. Jim was born in St. Fintan's, Newfoundland, in 1952. His home was a great distance away from the local school. As he was small for his age, his mother didn't send him to school until he was seven. Once there, he found the lessons difficult, especially reading. Jim left school after finishing Grade 7. Jim has had numerous jobs including fishing, logging, and working on a farm.



In 2002, Jim applied for a casual position as a resident counsellor at Tapestry. It's a facility for autistic youth and adults operated by Family and Children's Services in Bridgewater, NS.

"When Jim met with me to discuss employment with our agency, I was impressed by the warmth, common sense, and life experiences Jim demonstrated," says Brenda Peters, the team leader at Tapestry. "I felt Jim would be an asset to not only our clients but our staff team as well. He was eager, had a sense of humour, and was willing to work."

Before long, Brenda realized that they needed to address Jim's lower level of reading and writing skills. She also felt Jim lacked confidence. Brenda looked into a number of education opportunities for him.

She came across the Older Worker Learner Success Story project through the Workplace Education Initiative with the Nova Scotia Department of Education. Brenda asked him if he'd like to get involved. Jim responded enthusiastically.

Jim then met with Ivy Cousin, the program tutor, to discuss his learning goals. They decided to focus on reading and writing to help Jim with the documentation his job required. His other goal was to improve his oral communication skills.

"I liked this course because it gave me a chance to improve my quality of life through learning how to communicate better with others," says Jim. The training has had a positive impact not only on Jim but on his co-workers and family members, too. He can communicate better with his family and now does most of the decision-making at home. "If there is a problem, I try to be the one to solve it."

“Throughout the experience with this project, it has been fascinating to see Jim evolve into being able to communicate his thoughts and ideas in written form,” Brenda says. Jim has also become more assertive and self-confident. He has found that many of his previous job experiences and interests can be incorporated into his job at Tapestry.

It wasn't an easy decision for Jim to upgrade his education. Fortunately, his wife and family encouraged him every step of the way.

“I feel this program has been a great learning experience for me,” says Jim. “I have learned so much. My reading, writing, and spelling skills have improved greatly. Also, through this program, my self-esteem has been boosted and I find I am better able to communicate with others.”

**I** *f there is a problem, I try  
to be the one to solve it.*

Jim realizes it's never too late to learn. He also knows that the more he learns, the more he wants to learn. He recently enrolled in a computer course and is thinking about earning his Grade 12 diploma.

Submitted by *Ivy Cousin*  
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