

From the College to the Mall and Back Again

The Nova Scotia Community College
and
PLA Centre Partnership



In the beginning...

- 1996 PLA Centre opened
- 1999 NSCC created its first strategic plan in having become an independent, board governed post-secondary institution separate from the NS Department of Education



NSCC Strategic Plan

Strategic Direction One 1999

- Nova Scotia Community College program offerings will move from focusing solely on the traditional delivery of training, to a range of options that builds upon a student's planning and portfolio development

- 1999 the PLA Centre, NSCC and Department of Community Services meet to discuss the use of the PLA Centre Portfolio course for professional development within our institutions
- Advising and PD at the Centre with post-secondary cohort continues

- 1999 saw the first delivery of portfolio at NSCC for internal capacity building
- The partnership agreement allowed for delivery of Portfolio course by PLA Centre recognized facilitator and the cost covered in-house use of course materials

In the beginning....

- In 1996, the PLA Centre was established as an independent, collaborative, community-based centre to provide advising and assessment services to adult learners in transition
- NSCC was one of its initial signatory sponsors



- The PLA Centre, through its chosen PLAR methodology - Portfolio Development, cultivated significant learning related to the benefits - indeed, the 'power' of portfolio
- In 1999, NSCC became the first PSE sponsor to become actively committed to and supportive of Portfolio Learning and the PLA Centre



THE PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

- 8 – 12 individuals and a facilitator meeting together for 3 hours per week over a 10-week period – with assignments and individual work between sessions

- Systematically and comprehensively designed to assist participants to recall, identify, reflect upon, articulate and provide evidence for the range of skills and learning they have acquired both ‘experientially/informally’ and through formal education and training

- Participants' understanding of their own skills and knowledge strengths leads to self-determination of learning gaps and 'next steps', but with significantly increased confidence and motivation to address them

THE PLAR PRACTITIONER PROGRAM

- Involves ‘experiencing’ the portfolio process and then undertaking a guided practicum by delivering it to clients, students or colleagues, and subsequently articulating and supporting what the practitioner candidate has learned from the entire experience

Rationale

- ✓ Supports the principle of 'learning by doing'
- ✓ Establishes a base for future career development for participants
- ✓ Deepens and strengthens understanding of possible applications of PLAR and portfolio learning

Along the way...

- 2001 all incoming core students at NSCC had portfolio as a graduation requirement

The Learning Portfolio Program Impact Evaluation Study 2002

- “..two clear directions emerge...one is for the PLA Centre to function primarily as a lead agency responsible for capacity building, train-the-trainer functions...

A variety of other agencies, including NSCC...might provide portfolio programs to their own clients...with reliance on the PLA Centre for policy and technical support.”

- Practitioner numbers at NSCC began to grow to meet the requests for the portfolio course
- NSCC begins to develop a student guide
- Partnership expands to Digby project, CorCan and later CCA program

Benefits of the MOU for NSCC

- Faculty and staff feel more comfortable and confident speaking to learners about portfolio after they'd done their own
- We have real community in Community College
- Ongoing intensive dialogue

- “What a valuable tool the Portfolio turned out to be. Everything they asked me for was there at my fingertips. Keep encouraging your students to invest in their portfolios.”

June Carter, NSCC grad

Challenges of Portfolio at NSCC

- Geographic reality
- 5 schools and over 100 programs
- Privacy issue
- Change agenda

Along the way . . .

- In addition to previously identified client groups, the PLA Centre, through the leadership capacity building and the PLAR Practitioner Program, has since worked with the following broad diversity of individuals and groups:



- ✓ Unemployed and underemployed persons
- ✓ Low literacy adult learners
- ✓ Persons with disabilities
- ✓ Women trying to re-enter the workforce
- ✓ Mid-career public service professionals seeking admission to a graduate studies program on the basis of their experiential skills and knowledge
- ✓ Male and female prison inmates
- ✓ Persons facing systemic barriers such as the aboriginal and African NS communities

- All that the Centre learned from these shared endeavours has contributed to the Centre's expertise in the field of PLAR

SUBSEQUENT MOUs

- Involve annual licensing agreements for the use of the PLA Centre's copyright materials and guides, NSCC participation in several provincial PLAR symposia and professional development workshops and several community orientation/consultation sessions

SPECIAL JOINT PROJECTS

Corrections Canada

- Initial link through CorCan consultation with ACCC and CAPLA for innovative and effective learning support for inmates
- Report pending, but overall results extremely positive and encouraging
- PLAR Practitioners now certified in all five regional institutions
- On-going delivery through Licensing Agreement with the PLA Centre



Continuing Care Assistants Project

Department of Health

Collaborative consortium-type initiative involving

- Health Sector Council
- CCA Association
- NSCC's School of Health & Human Services
- PLA Centre



- PLAR Process developed involving day-long intensive workshop sessions linked by a series of individual advising and support services

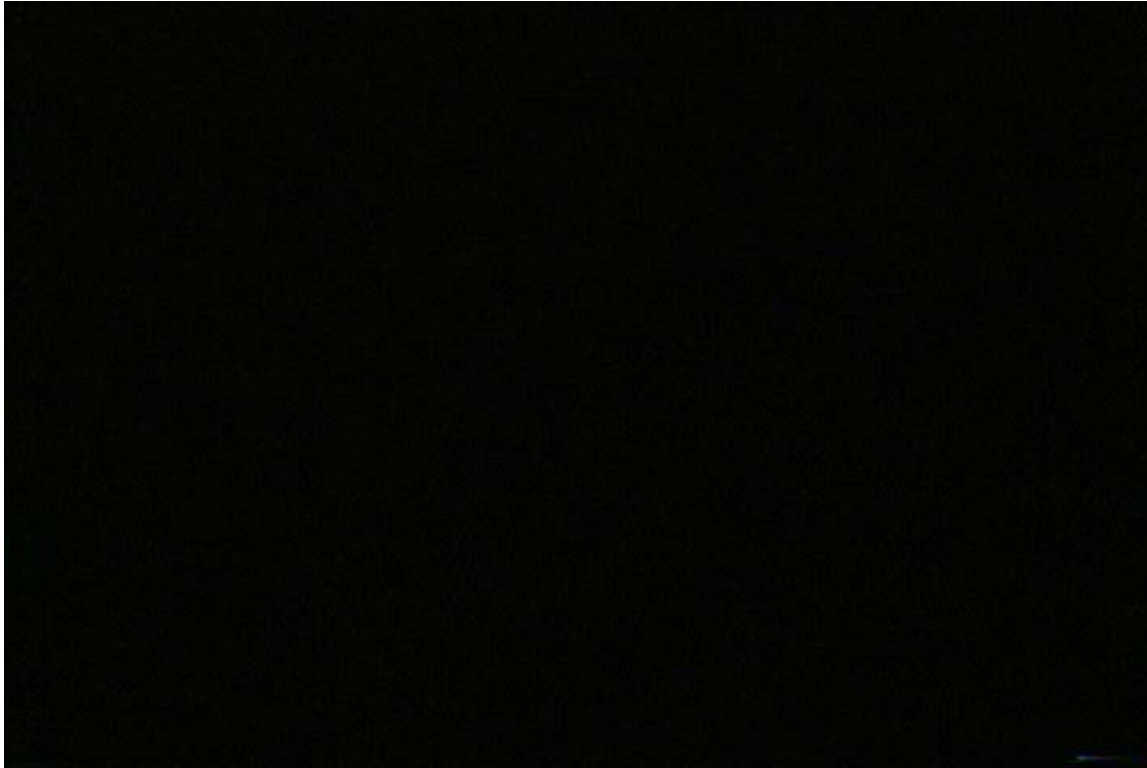
For more information . . .



- Model may be widely applicable to other areas facing upgrading and 'professionalization' challenges

And now...

- Over 800 faculty and staff have taken portfolio development course
- Over 50 NSCC practitioners
- Student Portfolio Guide
- New strategic plan for Canada's Portfolio College



And now...

- This historical partnership has inspired another post-secondary institution to partner with the PLA Centre
- In 2005, the PLA Centre changed status from a registered non-profit NS 'Society' to a non-profit corporation in order to pursue its independent and pan-Canadian sustainability capacity
- While PSE institutional representation is no longer required, NSCC representation is still very desirable

