

## CYCWAM Provincial Conference June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Recharge, Recreate, Reconnect: Rebuilding Relationships Through Interaction & Creativity

#### The Journey from CYC Student to CYC Educator: Jennifer Lopez

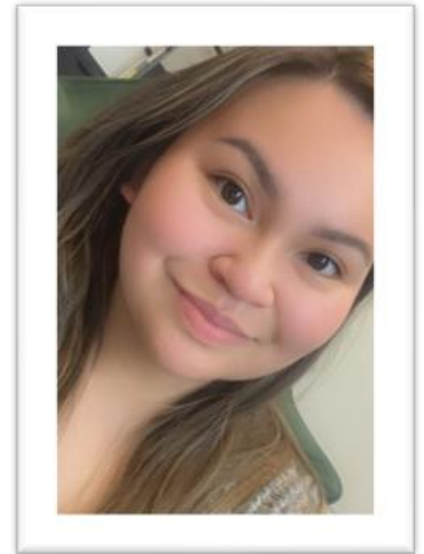
"I did it"! After I left my last practicum meeting when I finished all my hours, these were the very words that left my mouth. After three long years of trying to get my diploma in Child and Youth Care, I finally accomplished my goal. It didn't take long for me to realize the journey it took for me to get to that point. From dealing with Covid which completely stopped practicum placements and in person classes, and disruptions in my home life, the journey to finish seemed impossible for me. Yet here I am today, and I can finally say, with great satisfaction, I finished the CYC diploma program.

My journey to becoming a child and youth care practitioner was not an easy one. Not just as a student learning to become the best CYC I can be, but also becoming the best human being possible. A child and youth care practitioner in training requires a great deal of work in many aspects. This includes deep reflections as an individual and understanding our very needs, values, and biases and how it can affect the work we do. If there was anything that I took away from this program that I valued the most, it was being able to do that inner work and figure out who I am as a person. This ultimately helped me become a better child and youth care practitioner.

The path from being a student to being in the field, I have experienced working in residential group home settings, specifically working in homes with young women who have faced sexual exploitation; and in school settings where I had the opportunity to work with elementary students through their educational journey. All these experiences have helped me become a better CYC. In my current role as the Educational Assistant in the CYC Certificate program at Ndinawemaaganag Endaawaad Inc. (Ndinawe), I continue to learn everyday how to improve and enhance my skills as a helper and CYC. It is not every day where one has the opportunity to help, support and be part of other students' journey in the same program from which you graduated. It is not every day, you can watch from day one, students make it to the finish line and finally say, "I did it!"

At the end of the day, as like any CYC, we are here for it all. The stressors, the lessons, the tears...you name it. But we are present for the journey and willing to fully experience this journey alongside the people with whom we work. And I think that is a beautiful thing in the life of a CYC and the work we do!

Jennifer Lopez, CYC Diploma RRC Polytech  
Educational Assistant, CYC Certificate Program, Ndinawe  
CYCWAM Board Member



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## Reflections on CYC Practice MCFCS Youth Program:

Kathryn Compton, Ndinawe CYC Student

As part of my studies as a CYC, I had the chance to listen to guest speakers from Metis Child, Family and Community Services. The presenters discussed the many different programs that the agency has implemented for the youth that are aging out of care. It made me think about the lack of resources when I was younger compared to now. I had my daughter at the age of 16 and because of that, I had to have a Child and Family Services file open, just because of the fact I was a young mom and from what I can remember I would only see my worker once a month for a quick check in. I had multiple workers and the majority of them did not even seem to care to see me; it was more like they had to connect with me as it was mandatory. After listening to the programs MCFCS has developed, I am happy to see that there have been many improvements within the system since then and the relationships they have been building with the youth and supporting youth to get in touch with their culture is impressive.

I feel if I had these types of programs when I was younger, life would not have been so hard. If it was not for my teachers at school, I would not have learned all the basic living skills that most adulting youth with children need. The struggles I had, did help me become the resilient adult I am now, and I believe that resilience and empowerment that youth will get from MCFCS programs is something that they can carry into the future. Youth need their connections like the ones I got from my teachers in high school, to be able to build a future for themselves. Like how the lifelong connections would develop for the youth that enter MCFCS programs. It makes me think about how many people could have been spared if things were different, how many people could have been saved from the streets and addictions if they had put in these programs into effect much earlier. It truly shows that impact of the lack of cultural teachings and awareness has had on the various government systems in previous years. It created another generation that has to deal with traumas that these systems were supposed to help fix. Instead of helping they would rather get by with doing the bare minimum and only putting band-aids on situations.

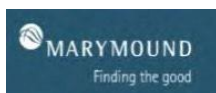
The guest speakers made me feel hopeful about heading into this field of work. I already knew about the high burn out rate, due to the fact that we will have to deal with high stress situations on a daily basis. I could only imagine what the workers of 10 or 20 years ago had to endure in comparison and how hard it would have been with the lack of essential resources and knowledge. I feel that the implementation of culture for today's youth will help them find that sense of self that they have lost. It gives you a feeling of pride as a First Nations person learning about the past and new teachings. It helps build that foundation of finding meaning in one's life. I know as a struggling youth finding my meaning which at time was my daughter, was key to helping me change my life around. It was a motivator to push towards sobriety and finish my education.

This led me to the next question of the assignment: How does what the speakers told you make you want to change in your practice of youth work? To quote Pat Horsley: "giving youth the ability to dream and think about the future" for some people that gets hard to do because of how bad life can be to you sometimes but when you find it; it truly does give you the motivation to want more out of life. I want to be able to do that and I honestly believe I can from my learned experiences from living a hard life and from the people that helped me when I was younger and needed it. I remember as a youth, having those days when you feel hopeless, and you sit there and think everything is so hard and I wish someone would just help me. I want to be that person that helps them. One of the speakers, Danielle Semko, spoke about finding your purpose, I think that is mine.

We respectfully recognize that the places we work are located on original lands of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the homeland of the Métis Nation.



Jessie Home



Neecheewam



The Child and Youth Care Workers' Association of Manitoba invites you to the  
2023 Provincial Conference

# Recharge, Recreate, Reconnect: Rebuilding Relationships Through Interaction & Creativity

Featuring Keynote Speaker:

**Dr. Elder Mary Wilson**

**June 7, 2023**

Viscount Gort Hotel  
1670 Portage Avenue  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Please visit [www.cycwam.org](http://www.cycwam.org) for registration details

Registration Fees:

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Non-Association Member .....	\$150.00
Corporate (Group of 10) .....	\$1000.00
Student .....	\$50.00

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