

Good Evening

RELAX

BREATHE

I'm incredibly honoured tonight to be representing the Graduating Class of Humanities 101,2012. ^{I have been going through some withdrawals lately} ~~Good evening every one,~~ I new I was sick but I never in visioned that I would have the attention of so many Doctor's. ^{Fortunately} I have been having hockey withdrawals so I was happy to watch the movie Miracle, ^{if you have never seen it} that was shown on television the other day. It stars Kurt Russel, he portrays the coach of the 1990 US Olympic hockey team Herb Brooks, Herb is quoted as saying between periods, to the highly regarded underdogs, **"Great moments are made from great opportunity, get out there and take it."** The Americans went out and beat the heavily favourite Russians and then went on to win the gold medal game the following day.

~~Humanities has certainly created great moments.~~

In my addiction, my vision for myself was very limited, I never liked who I was and especially what was to become of me. Each day, I went through the same routine: getting, using and finding ways to get more. That was all I could reasonably expect for the duration of my life. Had I lived long enough to see a pension, my vision and the vision of those who new me, would have possibly seen me living out of a cardboard box and eating cat food.

February 7th I made an admission that my life had become unmanageable and that I was powerless over drugs and alcohol. I had made this admission to myself and God many times in the past 30 years but never to another human being. Not knowing where to seek help and knowing my life was on the line, I called an unlikely source for help, my boss. Had that initial conversation went in any other direction, I don't believe I would be standing here before you. So thank-you Bruce for saving my life, you are no longer just my boss, you are a great friend. What you have done for me will never be forgotten. Since that day many important people have helped me make the necessary changes that I needed to make in order to continue down this road of recovery. Aaron Leiterman, my councillor at Crossroads, although I haven't always been cooperative, especially in the beginning, has helped me immensely to get to know Dan. His work is not complete *→ To help me break through the surface* ~~and I hope to know~~ ~~me as well as he knows me~~. I would also like to thank Kevin Dawson for his work in treatment with intense study of myself, this work with the staff at Crossroads and the Smith Clinic has helped break down the armour I once ~~and in it~~ wore. Through Kevin it was made possible for me to attend Humanities class here at Lakehead. Not knowing what to expect and a bit apprehensive of my

ability, and by that I mean the ability to pay attention to things that don't interest me. ^{School was never my thing.} Well that was soon put to rest, the very first day in class with Christina's introduction of the course and particularly her introduction of herself. It was heart felt and you could really see she cared. Then she introduced Dr. Roger Delaney who spoke with such conviction and enthusiasm. He spoke to me when he said "you can never take back the pain you cause someone." and that "we need to work extra hard to unlearn" it was this class that got me thinking of how I can turn my self centred life around and instead of causing pain, to possibly care like the people I'm surrounded by today. Thursday after Thursday for the following 14 Thursday would prove to be no different. Each speaker spoke of things that were personal and dear to their hearts and enlightened me of things that are important if you want to change and make a difference. Delores Wawia spoke of native hardships and open my eyes to their culture and the importance of their heritage. Dr. Gerald Walton spoke of his personal pain and has turned that around to educate someone like me, that class will for ever change me. I will try to constantly choose my words and check my motives. Some where along the way I had lost my faith **in humanity, in God, and in myself**, but through

the people in this room tonight and a number of others who couldn't be here, I have gain much hope and strength. I must also thank Kristy Holmes for the education at the art gallery, she was ill that night and fought through and made the experience exciting and educational. Dan Bartholemew-Poyser with his big personality and love of music, broadened my love of music. The experience with the Thunder Bay Symphony Orchestra was a night I will never forget. I was grinning foolishly that evening and hope to go back again. I always imagined the symphony was for the upper class but that changed when violinist Susanne Hou spoke briefly and gave a touching introduction of her fathers first friend upon immigrating to ^{Thunder Bay}~~Canada~~ and he stood up wearing a tuxedo t-shirt, that image is priceless to me. Through-out each class each speaker stimulated thought and encouraged the class to look deep within our selves. And I believe the class responded with flying colours. The presentations given were signs of courage and each one touched my heart and left me with a lesson. David Marler of Marler and Associates thank you, if I ever have a billion dollar class action suit against the federal government I'll know where to find you. Thank-you Dr. John Hodson and Shane Strickland you both truly love your work and share that gift so well. The reading

assignment Diary of a Part time Indian was incredibly thought provoking and has awakened my love of reading, so thank-you Kathy Kortess-Miller. We missed what I'm sure would have been a great class by Dr. Gillian Siddall, Dean of Social Sciences And Humanities hope your feeling better. Fortunately for the class we received an incredible lecture from James Czank. James has really went the extra mile for me and has inspired me to further my education. Ten months ago I never would have dreamed that I would be discussing Plato's Allegory of the Cave. I never heard the word allegory and my only memory of play-do was ^{as a child} forming little dinosaurs and then rolling it up into a ball to form a truck. Thank you for your support James and allowing me the privilege of sitting in on your classes. The last class was with Dr. Jane Nicholas who spoke so eloquently about history and how it shapes us. Our history helps us to make better decisions if we can stay open to positive change. Bruce Barton once said **“when your through changing, your through.”**

Finally I need to thank Riley and Nadine for all the work they put into facilitating Humanities and making it even more rewarding with their presence. Big thanks to Vanessa, for her encouragement and words of wisdom. And lastly to all the staff from our pathways session for your help

and support. I will be visiting some of you again. I'm currently taking grade 12 English and hope to enroll next fall in Social Work Program. So thanks again to Christina van Barneveld, her children *Avery* and Owen ,all the volunteers and graduates for creating great moments for me and leading me to great opportunities. I would like to close finally with a poem by Frank Outlaw.

WATCH YOUR THOUGHTS;
THEY BECOME YOUR WORDS.
WATCH YOUR WORDS;
THEY BECOME YOUR ACTIONS.
WATCH YOUR ACTIONS;
THEY BECOME YOUR HABITS.
WATCH YOUR HABITS;
THEY BECOME YOUR CHARACTER.
WATCH YOUR CHARACTER;
IT BECOMES YOUR DESTINY.”

THANK-YOU