



Lives with the mantra
that if you really want
something bad enough,
you'll find a way to get it.

Meet Raina Flexhaug

Raina came to Pembroke from Calgary, Alberta when she was 17 years old. After graduation, she moved out on her own thanks to help from Community Living.

For Raina, the connection to Community Living has been one that has really allowed her to fulfill the potential she had always felt was within her.

"It has given me a voice to be able to share and to advocate for myself," she says. "I also was able to meet people who were the same as me, and build new friendships."

When Governor General David Johnson visited the region in 2013, Raina was the person who welcomed him. She called the experience "a privilege."

Raina is in her first year of studies at Algonquin College in Pembroke. She is taking the Early Childhood Educator (ECE) program, and is stretching it out in order to graduate in 2017. Like many first-time college students, the experience has been an eye-opener.

"I think a lot of students are not prepared to make the transition from high school to college," she says. "It is a lot of change. You are on your own for learning and there is not a lot of transition time to make that adjustment. I had a classmate who dropped out because she couldn't handle it."

The ECE program is not only a challenge for its expectations on students, but for Raina, it connected her with some strong recollections of a childhood that was not supportive.

"Many times in class the topics are really sensitive and bring back a lot of memories," she says. "I mean, you want to learn it, but you don't want to look at it because it's too close to you. But, I push through and remember that I am striving for that goal of walking across the stage to get that diploma. I struggle so much, but the perseverance is worth it."

Despite being so young, Raina has a perspective that is wise beyond her years. She says that she works hard, and if she needs to, she reaches out for support. Some days, she just has to work on relaxing to alleviate the stress, and other days she just stops and says she will try again tomorrow.

As a graduate, Raina hopes to return to western Canada and work with children. She has been around children as one of six in her own family, and then in her time with the foster care system.

"I don't really see my life without children," she says.

Raina is Community Living.

