



*Don't Tell Me It's Impossible*



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# Don't Tell Me It's Impossible



As I sit here looking over the exams, essays and tests that I have completed over the last 7 months, I find myself filled with a quiet satisfaction thinking about what I have accomplished in such a very short time. I never would have believed that I was capable of achieving the grades I have obtained of late, such as 92% in HTML and Web Design, 94 % in Business Management, 91% in Computer Concepts, not to mention becoming certified in A+ Hardware as well as Microsoft Certified Professional Windows XP Professional. Now, for the first time in a very long time, I am beginning to catch a glimpse of a very bright future that awaits me. As I continue attending classes, studying every night, writing exams, etc., I find myself getting closer and closer to realizing my main goals: becoming MCSE certified by Microsoft, getting a

Network Engineer diploma from 107-year-old Willis College and receiving a Business Management Program Certificate from the University of Winnipeg. All of my above-mentioned successes are due largely in part to having joined a program called **TeKnoWave**. Without TeKnoWave and having met some wonderful people such as Rima Aristocrat, Linda Zaluska, Glenn Myatt, John Leggitt and Shellie Matthews, I am not sure where I would be right now. These people have helped me to continue believing in myself and have encouraged me to persevere when I simply wanted to throw in the towel. Now, I cannot wait for the future, and I feel ready to conquer anything. "Don't tell me it's impossible!" I did not always believe that statement, but the TeKnoWave program has given me an incredible opportunity and has changed my mind and spirit.

My journey began a few years ago when I was feeling down, and my life was going nowhere. I quit university to stay with my mother who was sick and needed to be cared for. She was a very strong and spiritual woman who taught me about kindness, how to find the good in any situation, spirituality and to have and maintain a firm pride in whom I was as an individual. Although I was not improving myself academically at that time, we spent many a great moment talking with one another. This time with her will have an impact on me for the rest of my life. I became very complacent and satisfied in my little niche until one day her illness got the better of her. While holding her in the hospital, she looked me square in the eye and at that moment; I could see the love she felt for me. There was nothing I could do to help her as the life left her body and her skin went cold in my hands. The next day I scattered her ashes into a river alongside where we used to walk and talk. As the current washed her away, I remember feeling

that there was something that I must do for her. Most people would say that it was impossible to have helped her at this point. “Don’t tell me it’s impossible.”

Shortly after my mother’s death, I got a call informing me that my father had fallen ill with cancer. I immediately rushed to Montreal to be by his side. My father was a tough but kind man who taught me that you only get out of life what you put into it. He also told me that what you do today will have a direct affect on what will happen to you tomorrow. I always aspired to be like my father. He was a successful man who got that way with no help from anyone else but himself. It was very difficult to sit by and watch him lose weight and strength. I watched his illness transform his strong, proud body into a skinny, brittle shell, which I had to carry to and from the bathroom. Before he died, he told me that he knew I would eventually do something significant with my life. He said that he wasn’t sure what, but that he envisioned great things for me. As I stared at him in his coma, I thought of what I could do to live up to his expectations. Should I do something for him? Should I do something for my mother? Should I do something for myself? So many thoughts invaded my mind as the life slipped from his body and he lay dead in my arms. I felt like I couldn’t handle anything after this. I simply did not have the strength or the desire. I thought it was impossible! At that moment, I could hear my father’s voice ringing in my head: “Don’t tell me it’s impossible.”

After his death, I returned to Ottawa and moved into a tiny shed in the back of a downtown heritage building. In exchange for board, I worked there very meagerly as the on-site property manager for the summer and into the fall. I tried to make the best of it, but my sadness gripped me tightly and as I sank into depression, my drinking got out of hand. The room did not have any heat or insulation, but I somehow felt as though this was all that I deserved at this junction in my life. I finally decided to seek assistance from the Odawa Native Friendship Centre. It is there that I met a wonderful woman named Linda Zaluska. She informed me of a pilot project that was just about to start, and she thought I would be the perfect candidate for it. The program was **TeKnoWave**, Canada’s first National Aboriginal Information Technology program. I can say now, with the utmost certainty, that if not for having met Linda, my life would be significantly different right now. She definitely went above and beyond what was expected or necessary in order to help someone she had never even met before. She is the one who led me to Willis College where I was fortunate enough to meet Rima Aristocrat, President of Willis College and founder of the TeKnoWave initiative. After completing a few tests, I was accepted into the program, which began September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003. I cannot put into words how grateful I am to have met Rima. Her kindness and willingness to help everyone around her inspired me to be a better person.

Once the course began, I ran into so many obstacles that I began to think that it would be impossible to continue my studies and complete the program. Although I often lost faith, Rima never altered her belief in me. I was evicted in November, as my landlord refused to heat, or insulate my tiny shed as previously promised due to an insurance concern. He gave me two days notice to leave, so I suddenly found myself homeless, without enough money to live, no food and enrolled in a full-time course. The money I was receiving for my living allowance was not even enough to rent a room in the city. I believed that my future was doomed as I roamed from shelter to shelter in the city. I thought about quitting several times, and if it were not for Rima and her constant support and willingness to help, I would have. She gave me hope and pointed me in the direction of people like Shelley Hill at OFIFC-GREAT Initiative. She did everything she could in

order to help me through my crisis. I have an enormous amount of respect for Shelley Hill. She is a firm supporter of the **TeKnoWave** program and its students, and she is a true friend. With all that was going on in my life, people were telling me that it would be impossible to finish my course under such conditions. I think back to what they said to me and find myself saying the words, “Don’t tell me it’s impossible!”

It’s now the month of March and although things remain difficult, I continue to persevere. I have overcome the obstacles that faced me and have come out on top. I now live with a young woman named Shellie Matthews who saw much more in me than a homeless Aboriginal. I love her with all my heart and I foresee a long and wonderful future together. School is going well, and I am starting to feel that nothing can stop me, no matter what comes my way. I believe that the challenges and adversity I have faced have made me stronger and more dedicated both as a person and a student. There is very little that I am afraid of anymore. I feel as though I can now handle whatever the future has in store for me and will be able to overcome anything. TeKnoWave has grown into something that I could never have dreamed of. It is now a non-profit organization. The Pilot students are developing through TeKnoWave business opportunities of our own. With Willis College’s Entrepreneurship Centre mentorship, we are forming an Aboriginal corporation, voting on things such as who will be president, vice president, head of the IT department, etc and participating in business simulations.

TeKnoWave began as a course and is now becoming a way of life and opening doors to a future for me as well as everyone else involved. The people that I have met, have been an integral part of my journey and I credit the **TeKnoWave** program for giving me the opportunity to have a future that looks brighter each day. If there is anyone out there that is feeling discouraged and thinks that things are just too tough to handle, I have just one thing to say to you; “Anything is possible!”

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TeKnoWave at 3<sup>rd</sup> National Connecting Indigenous Peoples in Canada Forum



왼쪽부터 김지은, 필립, 김상훈, 안젤라(지난 7일 부산 웨스틴 조선호텔에서 열린 캐나다 대사관 주재 유스포럼 만찬에서 한국대표 학생들과)

TeKnoWave Students as Canadian Youth Ambassadors  
ITU Telecom Asia 2004 Youth Forum