

## A Career with Staying Power

When Ellen Davies decided to reenter the workforce after having her four children, she knew she would need to retrain. Upgrading her skills to return to the career she had left behind in the corporate offices of the up-again-then-down-again oil industry did not appeal to her. She wanted a career that would have staying power and would not be at the mercy of the ebb and flow of the oil patch. Both Davies' mother and grandmother worked in the health professions and encouraged her to consider the health sector. Davies contacted a friend who was a recent graduate of the Northern Lakes College Practical Nurse (PN) program and liked what her friend had to say about the program and the College.

The PN program is competitive, with waitlists at each intake, but Davies was accepted into the second intake for which she applied. The online delivery aspect of the program appealed to Davies. She could access her courses from home then commute to the Peace River campus for her labs. This flexibility allowed her to balance family life with her studies. Nonetheless, the demands of the PN program meant sometimes sacrificing weekends with her family. "There were times when I couldn't be 'Mom' for a weekend and would have to send my kids to be with family," she recalls. This option would not have been available had Davies had to move out of the region to access the PN program.

Davies cannot say enough about the incredible flexibility that the program offered. When her family relocated to Grande Prairie, the program was able to accommodate this move. She continued to study from home but, because Northern Lakes College has a PN program site in Grande Prairie, Davies was able to write her exams there. "Everyone was super-accommodating," enthuses Davies. "Anything that needed to be done to make the situation work for me, my instructors did. This personal touch would not exist at a larger institution."

Reflecting upon her clinical experiences during the PN program, Davies is extremely grateful for the "wicked learning opportunity" provided to her by "excellent clinical instructors." "Most of what I draw on today in my work, I learned then. PNs are utilized to their full scope at the Northwest Health Centre in High Level due to the nature of being a northern, full service hospital with a fully functioning Operating Room."

Davies graduated from her program in June 2018 and was selected to deliver the student address at the traditional Capping and Pinning ceremony. She now works at the Valleyview Health Centre in Acute and Long Term Care and has secured a permanent position with Alberta Health Services. "There is no shortage of work for PNs," she states. Davies' plans for the future include obtaining a leadership role in Public Health. She would also love to teach in the PN program at NLC someday. She feels poised for success. "I always knew my life would start at 40! Going back to school was a turning point in my life. I make awesome money and can provide for my kids. Make no mistake; it was not easy. There were a lot of tears, but it was worth it!"