Demonstration of Learning (DoL)

Content warning Sensitive Topics. Located under Applied Knowledge and Skills.

Communication

Communication has been a huge part of my life, not just in my work, but in how I've built relationships, solved problems, and taught others. Over time, through trial, reflection, and necessity, I've come to understand that communication is about so much more than just "getting your message across." I've learned how to tailor language, tone, and format depending on the audience, the context, and the pressure in the moment. I've learned to listen better, to simplify without talking down, and to ask the right questions so people feel heard and understood. All of this has allowed me to build trust, create clarity, and make people feel seen and understood.

One way I've learned to tailor non-verbal communication for different audiences was through a project I led involving USB pens for the Economic Development department. At the time, I was handling new resident inquiries on the economic development side, as well as new business onboarding through business licensing. Because I was the front-line contact for both, I had a clear window into what people were asking and what kind of information they were missing.

As I reviewed surveys from our Welcome Packages and fielded questions from newcomers and business owners, patterns started to emerge. That gave me the foundation to design two customized sets of USB pens—one for residents and one for business owners—with content specifically curated to each group. I included things like local service guides, startup checklists, bylaws, permit information, and community resource links, depending on the audience. I ran everything past the Economic Development Manager, who was supportive of the direction.

We had to work within a tight city budget, so it was also a lesson in balancing cost with impact. USB pens were a smart, reusable format that felt professional and a bit different from the

usual brochure. They also had the city logo on them, which helped with brand consistency. The feedback we got—through surveys and in-person comments—was overwhelmingly positive. People appreciated not just the delivery method, but the fact that the information was useful and felt relevant to them.

What I took away from that project was how important it is to approach communication as a strategy, not just an output. I learned how to gather insights from the ground up, translate them into meaningful tools, and match format with function. It also reinforced how critical it is to think about the user experience, especially when you're trying to make someone feel welcome, informed, and confident as they settle into a new community or start a new venture.

Later on, working in Development Services, I built on my communication skills in a whole new way. I was often the first point of contact for people trying to navigate zoning bylaws, business licensing, and development processes—many of whom had no background in planning or municipal rules. Every day meant adjusting how I explained things based on who I was speaking to. With experienced developers, I could use technical language and industry terms because they understood the system and the local process. But with homeowners or first-time applicants, it was a different story. I had to explain complex policies in plain language without ever sounding condescending. I learned how to break things down step by step, using real-world examples and analogies to help people feel like they could understand and manage the process, even if it was brand new to them.

One of the clearest examples of how I used communication to improve both public service and internal workflows was the Property Search Request process, which I developed from the ground up. It started after a legal training session with a municipal lawyer, where I asked questions about homeowners' rights to access their own property records. I followed up

with our Corporate Officer, who confirmed that FOI requests weren't always the best fit for that kind of information. I brought the idea to my manager – proposing a faster, more straightforward way to give people access to their property's building and permitting history. He supported it, and I moved forward.

I created the form, wrote plain-language instructions, and built the process around transparency and ease of use. There was some pushback at first, mostly around the fee, $75 compared to the $10 FOI charge. But once people realized they'd receive more complete information and get it three to four times faster, the reaction shifted. The feedback became overwhelmingly positive. Staff time was better accounted for, the Corporate Services department wasn't bogged down with misdirected FOIs, and homeowners and realtors had a new, efficient way to access what they needed.

That experience taught me a lot about how front-line communication can directly shape policy and process. I saw how clear, accessible language and a willingness to ask the right questions could spark meaningful improvements, both for the public and for internal systems. It also reinforced something I've seen again and again: when you take the time to communicate clearly, respectfully, and with the audience in mind, you build trust. And that trust makes everything work better—from council-level decisions to a homeowner finally understanding what their zoning means.

Outside of work, some of the most meaningful communication I've done has been as a single parent. I made it a priority to talk to my daughter about real-life topics like taxes, RRSPs, politics, and credit – basically all the "boring adult stuff" no one really teaches you, but you absolutely need to know. I quickly learned that these conversations had to be engaging, or I'd

lose her. So I kept things casual, added humour whenever I could, and always made sure she knew there was no such thing as a dumb question.

The tone shifted depending on what we were talking about. If we were discussing RRSPs, I might joke about being old and wanting to enjoy my money while I could. If we were diving into politics, I'd sometimes poke fun at the more ridiculous ideas floating around in party platforms, but then bring it back to what really mattered so the message didn't get lost in the humour. I wanted her to think critically, not just repeat what she'd heard. I always emphasized that her choices were hers to make. My role was to give her the tools to understand things, not to decide for her.

Over time, our conversations evolved. When she was younger, I'd use analogies or examples from her own world, like comparing budgeting to how she spent her birthday money. As she got older, I shifted into more of a guide than a teacher, letting her take the lead and ask questions, even the awkward or "obvious" ones, without ever making her feel like they were silly. That safe space built her confidence. One of those proud "she really got it" moments was when she came home and told me how she'd been talking to her friends about voting, explaining the different political parties and telling them they needed to figure out what mattered to them—not just vote the way their parents did. That's when I realized she wasn't just parroting facts—she understood the deeper value of independent thinking.

Teaching her taught me just as much. It reminded me how important it is to communicate in a way that empowers, not just informs. With adults, like colleagues or the public, I'm usually more direct and assume a base level of knowledge. But with kids or anyone unfamiliar with a topic, you have to slow down, read the room, and build that understanding piece by piece.

Parenting showed me how humour, empathy, and genuine respect go a long way, especially when you're trying to explain something complex without making someone feel small.

One of the most powerful tools I've developed is the ability to ask the right questions. Whether I'm working with coworkers, the public, or my family, I've learned that a well-placed, non-leading question can reveal more than a whole paragraph of explanation. It's something that's helped me resolve issues faster, understand people more clearly, and make others feel genuinely heard. I didn't realize at first how much skill this took, but over time, I've learned to slow down and really listen, to wait before speaking, to notice what's not being said, and to check for understanding rather than just push through a conversation. It shows people you're truly paying attention and not just waiting for your turn to speak.

Evidence Supporting Communication:

1.1 Redesigned city form (property search request)

1.2 Screenshots of USB Pens for Port Alberni residents

1.3 Email to residents regarding short-term rentals

1.4 Written reflection on parenting and household management

Teamwork and Leadership

I've never been the kind of person who chases leadership titles. Most of the time, I've found myself in leadership roles not because I asked for them, but because I saw something that needed doing, or someone who needed support, so I stepped up to the plate. Over the years, I've learned that leadership isn't about being the loudest or most senior person in the room. Leadership is about trust, communication, follow-through, and knowing when to guide and when to listen.

One of the most humbling and impactful experiences I've had around teamwork and leadership came from my time as a volunteer firefighter. I was strong when it came to written tests and understanding protocols — I could follow instructions to the letter and grasp the technical "why" behind the methods we were being taught. But physically, I struggled to keep up with some of the others on my crew, especially during drills in full gear. It was hard not to feel like I was falling behind, but what stood out in that environment was how we supported each other through our weak spots instead of being left to sink or swim.

There was a guy on my crew named Josh who had the opposite problem — physical strength came naturally to him, but he found the written tests and technical concepts frustrating. I started working with him one-on-one, helping him break down the theory behind the tasks and walking him through how to approach the material. At the same time, another crew member, William, stepped up to support me. He met me at the fire hall at 4 a.m., four days a week, just to help me build up my endurance. I'd be out there in full gear before a full day's work, pushing through the physical side of the job, with his steady encouragement keeping me going.

That experience stuck with me because it taught me what real teamwork looks like. It's not just about doing your part — it's about recognizing where others need support and offering

what you can, while being willing to receive help without shame. It also showed me that leadership can happen outside formal roles; William never held a leadership title, but the way he showed up for me shaped how I approach mentoring and team dynamics to this day. Since then, I've tried to bring that same mindset into my other roles—whether I'm supporting a co-worker, training staff, or creating space for people to grow, I lead with the belief that everyone brings strengths to the table, and good teams are built when we balance each other out.

When Melanie joined our department, she had no background in government work — in fact, she didn't even realize that municipal jobs were part of a level of government. That meant I wasn't just teaching her a job; I was introducing her to a whole new system: how cities function, how departments connect, and how seemingly small tasks fit into larger public processes. I approached her onboarding with intention. First, I focused on the basics — showing her the workflows, documents, and tools I had developed from scratch — but I quickly realized that if I wanted her to succeed, I had to go beyond task training.

I observed how she worked and gave consistent, constructive feedback. When I noticed patterns in where she got stuck — especially in areas that required reading between the lines or anticipating what a permit applicant might need — I'd help her reframe the problem so she could find the answer herself. For example, one day she was visibly frustrated over a confusing zoning request. Instead of stepping in with the solution, I walked her through how to isolate key details in the bylaw, then asked guiding questions that brought her back to her own reasoning. That moment shifted something. She didn't just get the answer — she got her confidence back.

Over time, I saw her grow more independent. When her probation review came up, I participated in the evaluation process and provided insight to management — because I was the only one who had trained her day-to-day and knew the scope of her development. By then, she

had gone from unsure and overwhelmed to capable and steady. What I learned through that process was that leadership through teaching isn't about control or handholding — it's about creating the right conditions for someone to rise. My role was to hold space, ask the right questions, and step back at the right moments so she could build her own capacity. That's a mentoring style I've continued to use with other casuals, coworkers, and even in how I raised my daughter — building people up by helping them find their own footing.

A few years ago, a friend and I started the Port Alberni LGBTQ+ Meetups Facebook group because we wanted more ways for queer folks in our area to connect in person — not just online. I've been the main admin ever since, organizing events, posting updates, answering questions, and making sure it remains a welcoming space for everyone. I've planned all kinds of gatherings to reach different people — BBQs, potlucks, games nights, hikes, dances, even nerf battles for families with kids — all with the goal of helping people feel like they belong.

One of the biggest challenges I faced in that role came during the federal election. Political posts started flooding in — some of them angry, some deeply divisive — and it quickly threatened the tone of the group. I didn't want to shut people down, but I also knew that if the space stopped feeling safe and inclusive, it would stop working for the very people we were trying to bring together. I consulted with my co-admin first, then drafted a clear, respectful post explaining a new "no political content" policy. I outlined why we were implementing it and made sure the message struck the right tone: firm but kind, and focused on the original purpose of the group. I then removed all political posts to reset the tone.

That moment taught me a lot about my own leadership values — especially the importance of setting boundaries, communicating with care, and leaning on teammates when a decision affects the wider group. I've learned that I lead best when I'm able to listen first, take a

step back, and then step forward with clarity and confidence. Leading an online community might not look like traditional leadership, but it's sharpened my ability to bring people together, navigate conflict, and protect the kind of spaces I believe are worth building.

As a co-organizer for the first Pride Parade in Nanaimo, I took the lead on volunteer coordination, event layout, and liaising with the City about road closures. It was a big undertaking that involved a mix of logistical planning and relationship management. One of the most important leadership lessons I learned during this time was the value of strategic delegation. I realized early on that I couldn’t do everything myself — and more importantly, that I didn’t need to. Instead of stretching myself too thin trying to chase sponsorships, I hired a marketing coordinator to approach local businesses. That decision paid off. We ended up securing over $20,000 in support — more than we’d seen in the previous five years combined. It taught me that good leadership isn’t about doing it all — it’s about knowing when to bring in the right people and trusting them to deliver.

Internally, the planning wasn’t always smooth. Our committee included people with very strong personalities and opposing ideas about what the parade should look like. One member in particular tended to dominate conversations and push others away. I found myself in the role of peacekeeper — facilitating meetings in a way that allowed everyone to speak without shutting each other down. I leaned heavily on my ability to listen, reframe heated comments, and help people step back and see where others were coming from. That wasn’t easy, especially with tensions running high and people threatening to walk away. But by staying calm and focused on the shared goal, I was able to hold the group together and keep the project moving forward.

That experience shaped how I handle group dynamics to this day. It showed me that leadership isn’t just about organizing—it’s about protecting the energy and connection within a

team. I've since applied those same skills while running the LGBTQ+ Meetup Facebook group: finding ways to maintain respectful dialogue, respond early to conflict, and make space for different perspectives without letting the space fall into chaos. The Pride planning taught me that keeping people united requires patience, emotional steadiness, and the willingness to step into uncomfortable conversations without avoiding them — something I now see as core to my leadership style.

Whether I've been in an emergency, a workplace, a volunteer role, or a creative setting, I've found ways to lead and to be a supportive teammate. I've learned when to step up, when to share the spotlight, and when to get out of the way so someone else can grow. I've learned that leadership is less about directing and more about lifting people up, and that strong teams are built when people feel trusted, heard, and valued.

Evidence Supporting Teamwork and Leadership:

2.1 Internal instruction guide created for casual staff

2.2 Reference letter from casual City of Port Alberni employee, Melanie Croteau

2.3 Screenshots from LGBTQ+ Facebook group

Information Gathering and Organization

Information gathering has always been foundational to how I approach work. Whether I'm streamlining city forms, helping new entrepreneurs navigate grant processes, or managing my own small business, I rely on the ability to sort through complex information, identify what matters, and present it in ways that are clear, practical, and usable. Over time, I've come to see that information is only powerful when it's organized well, and that organizing it well often requires more than logic. It takes empathy, curiosity, and the ability to see something from multiple perspectives.

To keep information accessible and efficient, I used clearly labeled folders (both digital and physical) while using consistent file names. I often used spreadsheets and simple reference charts which made it easy for others to find what they needed without delays.

When I started in Development Services, I quickly realized our permit application forms were causing a lot of confusion, for both the public and staff. People kept submitting incomplete forms, missing documents, or calling in unsure about what to do next. A lot of the forms were outdated and hard to follow, and because I was often the one dealing with the fallout, I could see firsthand where things were breaking down. Instead of just making a few edits, I decided to take a step back and really look at what wasn't working. I paid attention to the questions we got most often, the sections that were left blank, where applicants were getting stuck, and where we were lacking the needed information. I talked to coworkers in planning and building, took notes during conversations with the public, and looked for patterns in the mistakes people were making.

Then I started reworking the forms from the ground up. I rewrote instructions in plain language, grouped related questions together, and created templates that could be used across different applications. I tested drafts with staff and applicants, made adjustments based on

feedback, and kept the layout consistent to avoid confusion. After we launched the new forms, things improved. We saw fewer errors, fewer follow-up calls, and smoother internal processing. That experience really showed me how powerful clear, well-organized information can be. It's not just about checking boxes – it's about helping people succeed and creating systems that actually support the work being done.

As the Economic Development Assistant, gathering and organizing information was at the heart of nearly everything I did. I supported programs, responded to public inquiries, and helped shape how information was shared between departments and with the community. It wasn't just about collecting data – it was about making sense of it and turning it into something usable. One of my responsibilities was assisting businesses with the Facade Improvement Program. I reviewed grant requirements, translated them into clear, step-by-step guidance, and updated documents to reduce confusion. If I noticed repeated questions or errors, I'd revise the materials to be more intuitive. It taught me how to look at information not just from a policy lens, but from the end user's point of view.

I also developed welcome packages for new businesses and new residents, pulling together information from different departments. I tracked changes, kept materials current, and customized what I included based on common questions we were receiving. Internally, I helped with research, created summaries, prepared presentations, and uploaded materials to the City website – making sure they were accurate, relevant, and easy to follow.

I was also part of the Agricultural Committee and helped coordinate vendors for the Island Agricultural Show. This required detailed spreadsheets, layout planning, and organizing setup schedules, all of which had to run smoothly on event day. I learned to build repeatable systems, double-check the fine details, and stay calm when plans shifted last minute.

One smaller but equally relevant example came from my home life. I created a welcome guide for new roommates that included Wi-Fi details, garbage day, cleaning expectations, shared space etiquette, and more. It started as a casual effort but quickly turned into a living document I update regularly. It's helped avoid miscommunication, eased transitions, and created a more respectful living environment. Even outside of work, I use information gathering and organization to make people's lives easier.

What stuck with me most was how much strong organization makes or breaks a project. The ability to gather, sort, and communicate the right information at the right time is a skill I now bring into every job I do, whether that's building workflows at city hall or helping others navigate complex processes.

When I started my janitorial business, I had to build everything from the ground up – figuring out what clients needed, how to market my services, and how to organize the business in a way that actually worked day to day. I spent a lot of time researching – reading reviews of other cleaning companies, comparing service offerings, looking at competitor pricing, and identifying common complaints people had. That early information shaped how I positioned my business – what services I offered, how I structured policies, and how I communicated with clients.

I built a website myself, organizing it carefully so visitors could easily find the services I offered, rates, and answers to common questions. At first, it was exactly what I needed to grow. But over time, I started noticing that I was getting overwhelmed by the volume of inquiries, which were directly through the website. I reviewed my site analytics and compared it to how many clients my business was realistically able or willing to take on. That's when I made the intentional decision to take the site down. It wasn't because it wasn't working – it was because it

was working too well, and I didn't want to expand the business beyond the scale I could comfortably manage. That decision came directly from tracking and organizing information about client volume, timing, and where leads were coming from.

Internally, I used a professional software program to manage quotes, invoices, and client notes. I didn't create the templates, but I chose a system that kept everything consistent, organized, and professional. When I hired staff, I created policies around safety, professionalism, and client expectations – drawing from industry standards, sample documents, and personal experience. I updated these anytime a new situation came up, using real examples to shape how the business operated.

When COVID hit, I researched public health guidelines and wrote a simple but thorough protocol that outlined cleaning requirements, PPE, and what to do if someone felt unwell. I wanted my staff to feel informed and my clients to feel safe. Each policy was carefully built and stored so it could be updated or shared easily.

Running my own business taught me how to turn information into action – whether it was marketing, planning, or policy-making. I learned that organizing and applying information effectively can shape not just how a business runs, but how well it adapts when things change.

What I've learned across all these roles is that information gathering and organization is a form of problem-solving. It's not about perfection – it's about precision, relevance, and empathy. I've learned to identify what's missing, ask better questions, and build tools and documents that make other people's jobs easier. I now bring that same mindset into every new project, whether I'm building a new business, planning internal workflows, or helping someone clarify a messy process. The ability to analyze, organize, and communicate information clearly has become

second nature to me—and it’s one of the skills I’m most confident in transferring to new environments.

Evidence Supporting Information Gathering and Organization

3.1 Submission Guidelines for Permits

3.2 Redesigned city form (building permit and business licence)

3.3 Roommate Guide

3.4 Internal Economic Development Assistant Job Description

3.5 Business card and branding materials for Platinum Pro Services

3.6 Workplace policy samples from Platinum Pro Services

Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

Problem-solving and decision-making have shown up in every role I've taken on – whether formal or informal – and I've learned that the most effective solutions often come from staying calm, listening closely, and knowing how to break a problem down into manageable steps. I don't approach issues with a formula. I look at the people involved, the context, the risks, and then decide what needs to happen next.

When I'm working through a decision, I usually start by getting clear on what the real issue is – what's causing the problem, who's involved, and what the constraints are. I think through the options, weight out the pros and cons, and consider how each choice might affect others down the line. I often talk things through with the people closest to the situation, especially if it helps me see something I might have missed. Whether the call is small or high-stakes, I've learned that slowing down just enough to look at the full picture leads to better outcomes.

At the City, one of my most meaningful contributions was creating new public pamphlets for the building department. Before I joined the team, the handouts – which were only a few – we gave out were a mix of outdated instructions, jargon-heavy explanations, and forms that didn't match current municipal, provincial, and federal bylaws and regulations. I saw applicants getting frustrated and staff spending time re-explaining the same issues. Instead of waiting for someone to assign it to me, I started updating the documents myself. I gathered feedback from staff who also handled inspections, permits, and zoning questions, and I paid close attention to the types of inquiries we got at the front counter. I rewrote the pamphlets in plain language, added flowcharts and pictures to explain processes visually, and made sure the steps aligned with how we actually did things, and not just how they were written years ago. I even created new

handouts for areas we hadn't covered before or just didn't have handouts for, like site plan requirements and mobile vendor permitting. These guides didn't just make things easier for the public – they reduced errors, helped with public knowledge, made counter conversations shorter, and improved staff consistency. What I learned from that was how solving even small communication gaps can shift how an entire system functions and how important it is to involve both users and team members in that process.

Internally, I developed spreadsheets that became essential for tracking and managing our permit and licensing workflows. For building permits, I created a tool that showed exactly where each permit was in the process – whether it was in intake, plan review, inspections, or waiting for more info. It included timelines, status updates, and notes from various staff, all in one place. This made it easier for our team to provide consistent updates and prevented permits from slipping through the cracks. I also built a spreadsheet for tracking business licences, including application dates, outstanding requirements, planning review status, inspection statuses, and correspondence history.

Another spreadsheet I built was specifically for the building inspectors. We kept running into situations where an inspector would have a detailed conversation with an applicant before a permit was even submitted, and then a different inspector would get assigned once the application came in – with no idea that the other conversation had even happened. This led to confusion, mixed messages, and wasted time trying to track down who said what. I created a pre-application tracker where inspectors could log the address, date, who they spoke to, what was discussed, and any advice given. It gave everyone a quick, shared reference point and cut down on duplicate work and crossed wires. It was a simple solution, but it made a real difference in how we communicated and stayed on the same page as a department.

These tools helped streamline communication across departments and saved time by reducing duplicate work and confusion. Building them wasn't just about plugging data into boxes – it meant thinking critically about what information was needed, how people used it, and how to organize it in a way that made sense across different roles. These systems filled a major gap in our internal process, and I'm proud that they're still being used today.

Even in my free time, I gravitate toward challenges that make me think strategically. I've completed over 250 in-person escape rooms and more than 20 in VR, and I don't just enjoy solving them – I study them. I reflect afterward on what worked, what didn't, and how the designers structured each puzzle. I look at where we got stuck, how group dynamics affected performance, and how certain clues could've been clearer. This has sharpened my ability to spot gaps in logic, work through patterns quickly, anticipate where others might get lost, and break down complex problems under pressure. I've applied that same problem-solving mindset in real life – especially when leading volunteers, designing workflows, or heading training. What started out as a fun hobby has genuinely sharpened how I think, collaborate, and adapt – and I've brought that mindset into every professional challenge since.

One of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make was in my janitorial business, when a long-time client reported a theft after a cleaning. I didn't panic or make assumptions. I gathered information carefully – talked to the client, reviewed scheduling, and privately spoke to the employee involved. I approached it with fairness and an open mind, but also with firm expectations. Eventually, the employee admitted to the theft. I helped the client recover their loss, and I sat down with the staff member for a long conversation about integrity, consequences, and how to make things right. It wasn't just about protecting my business – it was about responding in a way that upheld my values and treated everyone like a person. That situation

taught me a lot about boundaries, ethical leadership, and how sometimes the best solution is one that balances accountability with empathy. It also led me to rework staff onboarding materials and clarify expectations around trust, professionalism, and client responsibility.

During a city-wide power outage, I was called in to help run the Emergency Reception Centre. There wasn't a lot of instruction – just a fast-moving situation and a room full of people looking for answers. I quickly became the point of contact between the public, city staff, and emergency managers. I had to listen carefully to updates, translate complex logistics into simple explanations, and respond to people who were scared, frustrated, or overwhelmed. I remember one family with small kids who showed up unsure of where to go. I guided them calmly, connected them with volunteers, and helped them settle into a quiet space. What I learned in that moment was that decision-making isn't always about big policies. Sometimes, it's about tone, timing, and reading what people need. That experience made me more confident in how I handle emergencies where staying calm, adapting quickly, and making sure people feel supported even when the answers aren't perfect yet, is more important than just following a set of instructions.

All of these examples – whether they were behind a desk, on a cleaning site, in a puzzle room, or during an emergency – taught me that good problem-solving is about more than just being clever. It's about listening, noticing what isn't working, and being willing to step in with a solution even if no one asked you to. It's about choosing the best action, not just the easiest one, and learning from what happens next so you're even better prepared next time.

Evidence Supporting Problem-Solving and Decision-Making

4.1 Redesigned city form (building information sheets)

4.2 Internal building permit spreadsheet

Numeracy

Numeracy shows up in more areas of my life than I realized until I started reflecting on it seriously for this portfolio. It's not just about numbers – it's about making informed decisions, tracking patterns, understanding risk, and being able to pivot based on what the data is telling me. Whether I'm reviewing property plans, making investment decisions, building DIY projects, organizing fundraisers, or quoting a job, I've learned that confidence with numbers isn't just technical – it's personal. It shows up in how well I can plan, problem-solve, and adapt to change.

When I organized a 50/50 draw for Valley Cats, a local cat rescue organization that I also foster for, I had to go beyond simply planning an event. I researched multiple online platforms, compared fees, analyzed service reviews, and considered user experience from both an organizer and public standpoint. I wasn't just looking for the cheapest option. I wanted something reliable, transparent, and accessible to all kinds of supporters. After choosing the platform, I used their built-in spreadsheets to track digital ticket sales and payouts, but also created my own Excel tracker for in-person cash sales. That spreadsheet included detailed logging of when I received cash, when I input it into the system, and who had sold each batch of tickets. Keeping this information accurate and up-to-date helped me cross-check discrepancies and prepared me in case of an audit. On the administrative side, I was responsible for ensuring our organization met all the BC gaming and licensing requirements. That meant gathering our society's incorporation documents, submitting board meeting minutes, and confirming our non-profit was in good standing. These forms required accurate historical and financial reporting. I had to think like both a treasurer and a project manager, with paperwork I did not initially have access to. The experience taught me how important precision and documentation are when handling money on

behalf of a cause. It also showed me how to organize financial workflows that others could step into and understand quickly.

I also apply numeracy every day in managing my personal investments. I use a self-directed brokerage account that includes a mix of mutual funds, ETFs, individual dividend and growth stocks, GICs, and government bonds. I've built a diversified portfolio that aligns with both my short-term goals and long-term plans for financial independence. I regularly review how my money is spread across different types of investments, check how they're performing, and keep an eye on how the market is moving. I read analyst reports, review financial statements, and keep track of quarterly earnings trends. While I haven't built spreadsheets myself, I regularly use the brokerage's built-in tools to check on my portfolio's performance, review dividend returns, and see long-term projections. Earlier in my investing journey, I was more reactive and emotion-driven, but now I use a rational approach grounded in data and long-term forecasting. One moment that stands out is when I reallocated funds out of a low return mutual funds into ETFs with better performance after comparing historical growth and calculating the difference over 10 years. That alone made a significant impact on my projected returns. I've come to see numeracy as essential to autonomy with understanding the numbers gives me confidence in planning for the future and knowing when to adjust.

Running my janitorial business also gave me practical, hands-on numeracy experience. I wasn't just cleaning businesses – I was managing budgets, setting rates, adjusting pricing structures, and forecasting cash flow. I used professional invoicing software that logged quotes, client histories, invoice status, and income reports. I studied those reports regularly to track seasonal trends, identify high-performing services, and determine where to cut costs. I started by researching the going rates in my area, then compared that against supply costs, labour hours,

and travel time. As the business grew, I had to adjust for things like wage increases, rising material prices, and fuel costs. I created formulas that helped me calculate time-per-clean estimates based on square footage and service type. When I realized that the volume of website inquiries was outpacing my capacity, I reviewed analytics and pulled data on lead conversion from the website to determine how many clients my business could realistically handle without expanding anymore. That led to the strategic decision to shut down the website – not because demand was low, but because the business had grown beyond what I wanted to manage. That level of data-driven decision-making helped me avoid burnout and operate within sustainable limits. Initially, I created internal documents that tracked repeat service dates, supply orders, and payroll hours. When I hired staff, I updated policies and reworked service timing templates to reflect real-world performance instead of estimates. This kind of trial-and-error learning helped me develop strong systems for quoting, scheduling, and profitability.

One example of a more detailed calculation was when I was adjusting pricing for my janitorial services. I built a simple spreadsheet that factored in square footage, type of cleaning, labour time, and travel distance to generate accurate quotes. I tested the formula by plugging in real client data, then compared the projected margins to actuals over a few months. That helped me tweak the formula for better accuracy and made quoting way faster and more consistent. I also had to consider things like rising supply costs and wage increases, so I added variables to make updating the numbers easy when those factors changed.

One of the most directly applicable areas of numeracy in my city job came through blueprint reading and zoning analysis. I took a blueprint reading course that deepened my understanding of scale conversions, layout orientation, and square footage measurements. That course gave me confidence to interpret development plans, verify building coverage and

setbacks, and apply BC Building Code regulations correctly. I regularly review plans that require numerical analysis – calculating floor area ratios, determining parking stall requirements based on occupancy type and building use, and confirming lot coverage percentages. I've had to correct submissions when I notice discrepancies between reported and actual measurements, and I've guided applicants on how to meet minimum code standards using math-based solutions. One example is reviewing a permit application where the developer miscalculated gross floor area in relation to their secondary suite requirements, which affected the ability to have a secondary suite in the first place. I caught the error, confirmed it using measurement tools, and helped the applicant submit a corrected plan meeting the square foot requirements. This reinforced how essential numeracy is to effective governance – it affects safety, accessibility, and legal compliance.

What I've realized is that numeracy isn't about memorizing equations – it's about being able to break a problem down, think logically through each piece, and verify your assumptions. It's also about knowing when to question a number, when to recalculate, and when to simplify for clarity. In every part of my work and personal life, I rely on this skill to make better decisions, communicate clearly, and create systems that others can follow. My comfort with numbers didn't come from one course – it came from years of applying them to real-world challenges and learning from the results. I now see numeracy as a tool for clarity, confidence, and leadership.

Evidence Supporting Numeracy

5.1 Client quote for Platinum Pro Services

5.2 Client invoice for Platinum Pro Services

5.3 Client payment records for Platinum Pro Services

5.4 50/50 fundraiser documentation (registration)

5.5 Blue print course certificate

Critical and Creative Thinking

Critical and creative thinking has quietly shaped everything I do – not just how I solve problems, but how I observe, adapt, and create. I've come to understand that it's not only about coming up with new ideas or finding solutions to complex issues, but also about recognizing patterns, challenging assumptions, thinking from multiple perspectives, and having the courage to act when the path ahead isn't clear. Whether I'm working with people, processes, or animals, I rely on these skills to navigate ambiguity, bring structure to chaos, and find meaning in the details.

When I'm faced with a complex issue, I usually start by stepping back and asking, "What's really going on here?" I try to separate emotion from fact, look at things from different angles and challenge my first assumptions. From there, I think through possible approaches – what could work, what the risks are, who it affects and how to explain it clearly. Sometimes it's about finding the smartest fix, and other times it's about choosing the one that builds the most trust or long-term benefit. I try to keep an open mind until I've had a chance to really think it through.

Fostering feral kittens pushed me to make fast, thoughtful decisions in high-stress, unpredictable situations. I once received a mother cat and her extremely young litter with almost no notice. I wasn't properly set up for such fragile animals, but I quickly adapted by rearranging furniture, blocking off areas for safety, warming the space with heating pads, and creating a secure, low-stimulation environment. That moment taught me that staying calm and focused is often more important than being fully prepared. Over time, I became better at observing subtle changes in both behavior and health. Many kittens arrived with fleas, ticks, worms, or more serious conditions. One kitten arrived with a lung worm infection. I noticed its labored breathing

early, trusted my instincts, and took it to the vet before it became critical. Occasionally, I second-guessed my decisions, particularly when symptoms were subtle. Once, a kitten displayed mild skin irritation that initially seemed insignificant, but my hesitation nearly led to a serious health crisis as it was the start of an infection. That moment taught me that hesitation can sometimes carry consequences, and it deepened my ability to assess risk quickly and act decisively. These observational and critical-thinking skills have translated directly into my professional roles. For instance, during an emergency response situation at work, I noticed subtle signs of distress among colleagues and made adjustments to improve workflow and morale. Those instincts—refined through fostering—helped prevent burnout in a high-stakes situation.

Creativity has always been a core part of my problem-solving process, particularly when guiding people through immersive experiences. One of my most ambitious projects was a zombie-themed murder mystery and escape room I created entirely from scratch. I built the storyline, designed props, made custom videos, and created intricate puzzles, sound effects, and animatronics. Behind the entertainment, there was meticulous critical and creative planning. Every puzzle and prop was designed to narrate a coherent story through visuals, written clues, spoken dialogue, and emotional cues. A key puzzle involved a looping lab scene video identical to the physical setup, except for one critical detail essential to solving the puzzle. The first group missed this completely. Recognizing this oversight required adaptation. I subtly adjusted how I introduced and drew attention to the scene, demonstrating my ability to critically evaluate audience engagement and swiftly implement solutions.

A significant technical challenge arose when one of the miniature zombie animatronics (a converted coded robot) kept malfunctioning during testing. I had to troubleshoot the Linux coding on it to keep it upright and walking where I had programmed it to move to. In doing so, I

strengthened my ability to dissect technical issues and redesign in real time – skills that parallel the kind of flexible thinking needed in planning and operations.

I used flowcharts and drawings throughout the planning phase to ensure that the game's logic was watertight and that all potential player paths were considered. This pre-visualization work helped me avoid logic gaps and supported smoother user experiences. These tools mirrored the kind of structured creative thinking often used in systems design and project planning.

Designing an escape-room-themed wedding required a careful balance between fun puzzle-solving and the flow of a real wedding. My primary challenge was making sure the game elements felt natural and didn't take away from the overall feel of the day. I wanted it ot be both engaging and respectful of the event's tone and rhythm. Knowing each guest personally, I customized puzzles to their personalities and strengths. One puzzle involved decoding the mission briefing woven into the invitation – each detail intentionally planted to lead to the first physical clue. This helped me refine the skill of tailoring experiences based on audience insight, which directly connects to community engagement strategies in planning work.

When I was asked to create a complete job instruction guide for a return-to-work employee that needed light duties, I had less than a day to pull it together, and I still had to stay on top of my regular duties. It was a bit overwhelming at first, but I took a deep breath and broke the job into manageable pieces, and got to work. I started by thinking about what it's like to walk into a role you've never done before, in a department you know nothing about. I asked myself what would be most useful, what would be confusing, and how I could make it all feel less intimidating. I kept the instructions simple, clear, and friendly – adding screenshots, side notes, and breaking everything down step-by-step starting with the "why". I wanted the guide to feel like someone was walking along side him, not just handing over a to-do list. While writing it, I

kept imagining his experience and tried to anticipate where he might get stuck or feel unsure. It was about more than just passing along knowledge. It was about building confidence and helping someone feel supported in an unfamiliar territory. Feedback from the return-to-work employee highlighted how supportive and clear the instructions were, particularly appreciating the effort I put into anticipating his needs. That feedback is a lesson I continue to apply to all forms of documentation, training, and communication.

Taken together, these experiences have shaped the way I approach both creative challenges and complex decision-making. They've taught me to lead with empathy, to anticipate obstacles, and to adapt processes in real time while maintaining structure and intention. I've also learned to embrace the feedback loop – whether it's from people, outcomes, or my own reflections – to sharpen my thinking and improve future outcomes.

Critical and creative thinking has become one of my strongest tools – not just for making things work, but for making things meaningful. It allows me to see connections where others might see chaos, to frame limitations as opportunities, and to move forward with confidence even when there's no clear right answer. I've learned that creativity isn't just about expression – it's a strategy, and when paired with critical reflection, it becomes a powerful force for innovation, growth, and change.

Evidence Supporting Critical and Creative Thinking

6.1 Internal instructions for BC Assessment task

6.2 Escape room wedding photos

6.3 Screenshots of escape room party Facebook event

6.4 Photos of escape room party

Independent Learning and Intellectual Maturity

I've never been the kind of person who waits to be taught. If something needs to be figured out, I find a way to learn it. That instinct for self-directed learning started early and has shaped how I move through the world, both personally and professionally. Over time, I've come to see learning not just as the acquisition of knowledge, but as an evolving process of reflection, trial and error, and applying what works. It's not about ticking off boxes, it's about finding the best way forward and building something meaningful with what you've learned.

By the time I was 13, I was buying, training, and selling horses. One horse in particular, Rocket, came to me aggressive and untouchable. Within two weeks of owning him, he kicked my kneecap out of place. Even so, I went out on crutches every day, refusing to give up. Within a year, he was calm enough for a five-year-old to ride. Training him wasn't pretty – some days I was thrown off twenty times in an hour – but I kept getting back on. That experience taught me about grit, sure, but it also taught me how powerful consistency and trust can be when it comes to learning. I had to observe closely, figure out what triggered his behavior, adjust my approach, and try again. There was no manual—just patience, instinct, and a willingness to learn through the hard parts. I started to understand that failure isn't the opposite of learning – it's part of the process.

Growing up on a working farm added to that. My parents were both working professionals – my dad was a Class 1 Power Engineer and manager, and my mom was a veterinary technician – so I often had responsibilities around the farm when they were at work or tied up with emergencies. There was always something to do, and it didn't come with step-by-step instructions. I learned to round up cattle on horseback because it was faster than chasing them on foot, and faster meant I could get more done before dark. I was driving the farm truck at

13, but my dad made it clear I wasn't allowed to drive until I could rebuild the vehicle. So I did. At the time, I didn't think of it as learning – I just thought it was what needed to be done. But looking back, I see how those expectations taught me to take initiative, to problem-solve in real time, and to take ownership over what I didn't know yet. I had to figure things out independently and be confident in the solutions I came up with, even if they weren't perfect. When my mom, a veterinary technician, was stuck in surgery, I had to take care of the animals and the farm on my own. These weren't just chores – they were early lessons in responsibility, critical thinking, and applying knowledge under pressure.

That same self-reliant mindset shows up in how I learn today. I've completed over 150 courses – mostly self-directed, many of them online. Most were practical, like WHMIS, First Aid, and Safety Training. Others were based on curiosity and interest – like planning, Indigenous awareness, emergency management, and Adobe. These weren't just surface-level checklists. I dove deep, especially when the material tied into areas I was passionate about. One of the most challenging courses I've taken was the Rural Environments course at the University of Alberta, part of their Land Use Planning Certificate. It's designed as a CPL (Continuous Professional Learning) course and is often taken by practicing planners with undergraduate and graduate degrees. It was a stretch, and that's exactly why I took it. The reading, writing, and discussion pushed me to think more critically, to apply abstract theory to real community issues, and to reflect on how knowledge can be transferred from paper into policy. I didn't just complete it – I engaged with it. It changed how I think about planning and made me a more thoughtful contributor in the field.

Beyond formal courses, I've created my own learning environment. I listen to audiobooks and podcasts while I walk, drive, or clean – turning ordinary time into learning opportunities.

These aren't just background noise, they're part of how I stay current and inspired. I'm drawn to anything that helps me understand systems, people, and how things connect. My audiobook library covers a wide range of topics: psychology, planning, urban development, investing, leadership, communication, personal growth, and behavioral sciences. I don't just passively consume these – I pause, take notes, and reflect on how the content relates to things I'm working on. It's become a steady rhythm in my life, and one that keeps me mentally engaged and evolving.

I've noticed that as I've grown, my learning has become more layered. I don't just look at the surface of a problem anymore. I think about the system behind it, the long-term impacts, and how the information fits into broader contexts. That deeper reflection has helped me make better decisions and communicate more clearly with others – because I've already worked through the complexity in my own head first. It's also helped me know when to set boundaries, when to say "I don't know yet," and when to seek out other perspectives before acting. That, to me, is part of intellectual maturity – being confident enough to keep learning, even when it's uncomfortable.

One area I've grown in as an adult is learning to balance my independence with collaboration. I used to take on too much and struggle when others didn't move at the same pace. Working in local government exposed me to different values, communication styles, and cultural perspectives. It challenged me to slow down, listen more, and be open to ways of thinking that weren't my own. That shift taught me that maturity isn't just about being capable, it's about being curious, adaptable, and aware of how we impact others.

Over time, my learning has shifted from just taking in information to being far more intentional. I seek out knowledge that fills gaps or helps me improve areas I know are weaker. I've become more strategic, more reflective, and more confident in my ability to figure things

out without needing a formal structure. I've also learned to recognize when to seek guidance, when to try something hands-on, and when to sit with something longer before taking action. Some of my biggest learning moments haven't come from success, but from the times I had to regroup and try again.

That growth hasn't gone unnoticed. My direct supervisor, Scott Smith, the Director of Development Services and Deputy CAO, is writing a reference letter for me as part of this portfolio. While he doesn't always see everything I do day-to-day, he's seen the outcomes: the way I take initiative, dig into complex material on my own, and apply it in ways that move things forward. His support means a lot, not just because of his role, but because it validates the kind of learning that often happens quietly, on your own time, behind the scenes, when no one's watching.

To me, intellectual maturity means knowing there's always more to learn and choosing to keep learning anyway. It's about showing up, even when it's uncomfortable or uncertain. It's about being open-minded but also discerning. And it's about trusting that the process of learning – especially the kind that doesn't come easy – builds not just skills, but character. Whether I'm rebuilding an engine, navigating zoning bylaws, or absorbing new theories while folding laundry, I'm always learning. That's not just something I do – it's part of who I am.

Evidence Supporting Independent Learning and Intellectual Maturity

7.1 Reference letter from Director of Development Services/Deputy CEO, Scott Smith

7.2 JIBC emergency response course completions and certificates

7.3 List of completed courses **Content warning**

7.4 WHMIS/OHS/First Aid course completions and certificates

Applied Knowledge and Skills

****Content warning**** Sensitive Topics. This competency includes a section in the following page that discusses suicide in the context of my work with the RCMP.

Applied knowledge has never been just a concept for me – it's the way I move through the world. Whether I'm troubleshooting a legal issue or restoring a Jeep from the ground up, I don't stop at understanding something – I put it to work. I take what I learn and apply it in real-world settings where results matter, where people are impacted, and where I often have to think and act quickly under pressure. Across every area of my life, I've built a foundation of learning-by-doing, and I've developed the ability to adapt, improve, and deliver when it counts.

Applied knowledge has been at the center of almost everything I do, whether I'm rebuilding a car, running a business, guiding new staff, or redesigning a city form to make it clearer for the public. I don't just learn things – I apply them, and I constantly look for ways to make what I've learned work better in the real world.

Working in a civilian role with the RCMP, I developed specialized skills in two vastly different but equally demanding areas: firearms verification and critical incident response. As a Firearms Verification Officer, I completed multiple formal courses which included Firearms Identification for Public Agents, Offence Related Property Fundamentals (Levels 1, 2, and 3), and Real-Time Identification – Generic Workflow. But my learning truly solidified through hands-on experience. I regularly had to identify firearms with scratched-off serial numbers, assess modifications for legality, spot safety issues, and use national databases to verify whether seized firearms could be returned. Some firearms were fully automatic or otherwise prohibited, meaning they couldn't go back to the original owners, which was something that understandably upset many people. I was often the one tasked with explaining the situation to firearm owners, walking

them through legal outcomes in a way that was clear, calm, and respectful, even when emotions were high. My role supported both officers and the public, requiring not just technical accuracy, but confidence, patience, and a steady presence.

****Start of Content warning** Sensitive Topics.**

I was also trained in Crisis Intervention and De-escalation, Critical Incident Stress Management, and Critical Incident Peer Counselling – skills I initially used to support staff and officers informally. Over time, that trust in my approach led to me being pulled into more intense and complex situations. I was specifically brought into the Major Crimes unit to help during a particularly brutal homicide investigation—not because it was my job, but because I was already known as the critical incident peer counsellor. My role was for records management, transcription, and to support the investigators themselves, many of whom were struggling emotionally. These were colleagues I had worked alongside, and in that environment, people didn't always feel comfortable asking for help. I quietly made myself available, checking in, listening, and guiding them toward formal supports when needed. One particularly difficult moment involved a responding officer after the spouse of one of our RCMP officers died by suicide. They were close friends, and I was one of the first people she spoke to when she returned to the office. Those conversations were never easy, but I learned how to stay grounded when others could not. I didn't need to fix things. I just needed to be present, steady, and compassionate.

****End of Content warning** Sensitive Topics.**

I've also carried these skills into municipal government, especially when supporting coworkers during difficult customer interactions or policy changes. The calm, clear communication I learned through crisis response has helped me de-escalate tense situations at the front counter, guide residents through confusing processes, and support colleagues privately

when morale dips. The same grounding I relied on in high-pressure environments has proven just as valuable in everyday interactions where empathy and clarity matter most.

What I've really taken away from these roles is that applied knowledge isn't just about knowing what to do on paper. It's about how you show up when things are messy, emotional, or unclear. I've learned how to stay steady when others are overwhelmed, and that skill has become second nature. I carry it with me into every tough situation, whether it's at work, n my community, or just being there for someone when they need it.

Outside of my professional life, I've spent years applying technical knowledge through hands-on projects that pushed me to plan, problem-solve, and follow through with precision. Early on, I used to buy and sell cars from the auction for profit, which meant assessing repair potential, budgeting parts and labour, and understanding resale value. I wasn't just fixing vehicles – I was making calculated decisions about which ones were worth the investment. That evolved into more intensive projects where I've rebuilt entire vehicles from the frame up — doing everything from engine and brake work to rust removal, body repair, and repainting. These projects weren't quick weekend jobs. They required hours of research, planning, and persistence. I used repair manuals, online forums, and trial-and-error learning to figure things out as I went. One Jeep project involved rebuilding the entire brake system, replacing the starter, fuel pump, alternator, side window, complete interior, and finishing it off with a custom camouflage paint job. Every part of it demanded attention to detail and real-time decision-making. If something didn't line up or failed during testing, I had to stop, reassess, and find a new solution. It taught me patience, sequencing, and how to stay calm when plans fall apart. That same mindset has carried over into my home projects. I've taken on creative builds like designing and constructing a hidden door, building an in-floor wine cellar, and planning layout modifications to accommodate an addition on my property. I used software like AutoCAD and SketchUp to plan everything out in advance - measuring spaces, modeling floorplans, and

testing functionality in 3D before I ever lifted a tool. Learning the software on my own took time, but it allowed me to visualize complex designs, catch errors early, and make informed choices about layout and materials. These weren't just aesthetic choices — they required an understanding of structural flow, spatial planning, and how the end user (in this case, me and my family) would interact with the space.

Each project has helped me grow more confident in applied thinking. It's one thing to learn a skill, it's another to use it under real conditions where the consequences of a mistake are immediate and sometimes expensive. These experiences have sharpened how I approach tasks in my professional life too. I now plan out work projects in layers, thinking about dependencies, tolerances, and what success looks like for the people involved. Whether it's a permit package or a city workflow, the thinking I've developed through hands-on projects gives me an edge in problem-solving and execution. I've also learned how to adapt on the fly, because things rarely go exactly to plan. Knowing how to recover, reframe, and move forward without losing momentum is one of the most valuable skills I've developed — and it came from applying knowledge, not just reading about it.

Applied knowledge is more than just a skillset – it's a mindset I've carried across every role, project, and challenge I've taken on. I've learned how to think critically, plan strategically, and stay grounded when things go sideways. From emergency response and firearm verification to floorplan modeling and vehicle restoration, I've taken knowledge off the page and turned it into results. That's what applied learning means to me: not just knowing something, but having the experience and confidence to put it into action when it really matters.

Evidence Supporting Applied Knowledge and Skills

8.1 Photos and descriptions of DIY

8.2 Before and after photo of vehicle restoration work

8.3 Modeling software renderings