

# **Tech Talks**

**March 21, 2024**

Thank you for inviting me to give my testimonial about the relationship between TechKNOWtutors and the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Sector Pensioners Association.

Good morning, everyone. I am delighted to be here, as I am a strong advocate for lifelong learning and for people taking responsibility to avail themselves of opportunities to better their daily living through programs that enhance their capacities, no matter what these might be.

Our journey with TechKNOWtutors began some time ago, when the program was first introduced, but like many others we were slow off the mark and only realized late in the game the benefits that would come from a partnership that would see us working cooperatively to engage older persons in digital technology learning. Back then and not to be daunted, we engaged with the then TKT staff and were able to deliver a few courses to our membership and other older persons. But unfortunately, time ran out for us as we had been late to engage, and time ran out for TKT in that the funding was not sustained.

Fast forward to 2023. As soon as CSCNL and Manny released the first message about the new program, we were on the mark and the relationship has been fantastic ever since. I met early on with Manny and her team, we explored the curriculum, we discussed the learning needs and learning “quirks” of older persons, we talked about strategies to engage with our pool of older persons and how TKT could deliver the training to meet these needs. And, we have not looked back since.

We began a series of in-person and online training sessions before Christmas which

carried on until February. We also developed day long sessions and have delivered four of these so far: in Reidville, Deer Lake, Corner Brook, and Stephenville, with two additional planned for Gander this weekend and next week in Marystown. These have been exceptionally well received and the staff have been phenomenal.

We were delighted with the relaunch of the TKT program. Why, might you say? Well, the answer is simple. Seniors were being left behind in a world that was digitally focused in all daily activities, i.e. grocery shopping, banking, communications, doing your taxes,

renewing your automobile license, your MCP card, getting a moose license, and the list goes on. The one thing we have learned is that seniors WANT TO LEARN, they do not want to be left behind, and they are quite willing to embrace technology. Yes, there are some who will not abandon their fear of technology, but our technological world is here, it is not going back to an earlier time of stamps, post offices, paper documents, and hard cash money, and seniors know that. But what they do need is patience to help them reach a level of comfort to use technology and here is where TKT is the right place to be. Did we have to make modifications along

they way? Absolutely! But these are only minor, if you are flexible in your ability to make these happen. One example we learned very early on was that hybrid trainings do not work for older persons as it is very difficult for a limited staff pool to be hands-on with someone who needs to know how to turn on their device or how to download an app and still pay attention to folks joining online. So, one or the other but not a combined model was an early learning we had.

TKT needs associations to successfully roll out this work as they cannot do it alone. They

need organizations to work with them so they can reach the populations who need and can avail of their services. As an organization, though, you need to be prepared to engage a bit more than just sending out emails, you need to message and re-message, encourage participation in the available trainings, and even follow-up to ensure your folks feel comfortable to participate. The end result, however, is an informed and connected senior who has control of their life, will be motivated to engage digitally, will have trust in the services they receive, and will feel socially connected in many different ways.

Thank you, TKT. We are fully committed to this journey with you and I encourage other associations to take the time to engage your memberships in these learning opportunities. One final word, make sure your locations are friendly, safe, have coffee/tea, are accessible, and bring on the food, they will come! A small investment for a long-term benefit. You can do this!