

THE ROUND TABLE

INSPIRING - INFORMING - CONNECTING

MIND THE GAP

School got you feeling burned out? High school graduation ends 12 long years of education. Think you might need a gap year? If you don't feel ready for college or you're not sure what career you want, then why waste time and money? You can take a gap during or after university too, and it isn't limited to just one year. How do you decide?

'Bridge' might be a better term than 'gap'. A gap should be about taking ownership over this formative time in your life and doing things beyond the classroom that helps you grow and broaden your horizon. What a gap year is NOT, is an excuse to sit back and do nothing.

Raine Goodwin '18, Brynn-Marie Hatt '18, Kayley Dixon '16 and Karleigh Shipley '12 all took a gap right after high school.

Karleigh's lasted 5 years. "I wanted to try a few different jobs to see if they would help me decide my path. My aunt did a nursing degree at age 37 so I knew I didn't need to rush anything. I moved to the city and worked retail jobs, moving into management at two of them. This helped me choose my next step - I'm finishing my business administration diploma this spring and then I'm taking digital marketing in the fall, both at NSCC."

Brynn originally applied to Early Childhood Education at NSCC but was waitlisted. So she decided to take a gap year and soon realized that choice wasn't for her anyway. "I'm working as a housekeeper at Liverpool Best Western. Meanwhile, I realized one of my hobbies is how I want to make my living. In September I'm heading to CBBC Career College for Aesthetics!"

Raine was sure she'd head straight to University and sent in her applications. "Instead, I decided to start my own business 'RaineClouds', making custom cakes. This nurtured my creativity with food. I work both full and part-time jobs and am saving money. Plus I found new hobbies in skateboarding and snowboarding! Next fall, I'm taking Culinary Arts at Holland College!"

Kayley knew she wanted to study Social Anthropology at SMU but felt it essential she take a year off first since she had to move out and wanted to settle into adulthood before starting her degree. "I worked full time at the Dartmouth North community centre and part-time babysitting, saving money as well as networking. My biggest fear was about scholarships due to the misconception that they're only available if you go right out of high school.

Scholarships or student loans were my only option and one of my goals was to be debt free after post secondary. So I made it a priority during my gap to research and apply for as many scholarships as I could. Because I wasn't juggling school deadlines at the same time, I was able to give my applications more time and attention". Her efforts paid off significantly - Kayley was awarded enough to pay all tuition and books for her full 4 years plus living expenses!

Adam MacNeil '16 took his gap after completing a 2 year diploma in Radio Broadcasting at NSCC. "So far my gap has been 8 months and it looks like it's going to go on a little longer. After completing my diploma I wasn't sure where to go from there. I also wanted to save up some money so I can support myself whenever I do decide my next step. I wish I took my gap year right after high school, but I'm also glad to be taking it now. I've been working full time and saving lots."



Brynn



Raine



Adam



Kayley



Karleigh

Everyone said their families and friends were fully supportive of their decision to gap, though Kayley heard plenty of negative warnings about others who never went back. She chose to ignore them. "My parents thought it would be good for me to figure out what I really want in life before making any big commitments like moving away or paying for secondary school," said Raine.

Our Gappers were unanimous as to the biggest challenge. Raine said, "I felt left out and left behind since I was the only one of my friends taking a gap. Everyone else was on a new adventure, in a new place, with new friends and I was just home alone working." For Karleigh, "It was the mental battle. Constantly feeling like I should be doing what everyone else was and feeling like I was falling behind. It took a while to get past that." Adam equates this challenge with growth. "It's been hard trying to entertain myself. All my friends are away at school, scattered across the country and not having them around really sucks. But it's also a great way to discover who I want to be. If you can do that on your own, then there's no obstacle you can't overcome."

Would they do it again? They all say YES. "I'm so relieved to not worry about deadlines and to take a break from all the stresses of education that I've had for so many years. I'm exactly where I need to be right now," says Adam.

According to Raine, "I really benefited with personal growth - improving my self image, my mental health and setting long term goals." Kayley said, "My gap not only gave me the time I needed to apply for scholarships, but I matured a lot and came to understand my wants and needs outside of academics. I felt much better prepared and ready for university." Karleigh admits, "I didn't have a clue what being an adult was like coming out of high school. I think if I just went right into more school I wouldn't have grown up as much as I have. Though I wish I saved more money so I didn't have to rely so much on student loans!" "I know my gap was the right choice because I figured out what I truly wanted to do", says Brynn.

Their last bit of advice? "It can be hard to get past the societal and peer pressure to go to school right away, but it's your life and you get to choose the path that feels right," says Karleigh. Raine wouldn't do anything different - "I've grown so much during this gap, even though I dreaded it at first." Adam agrees - "Gap years can be tough but they're also an opportunity to explore and learn new things about the world, others and yourself. Uncertainty can be scary, but it can also be beautiful!"

All our Gappers had a positive experience - **BUT a gap year is NOT for everyone**. You might find it hard to get back into study mode after a year off. If your gap lacks structure, you may lose your self-discipline and let the year pass without results, which can impact your confidence. You also may not save as much money as you hope, which can add stress.

If you do decide a gap is right for you - take the time to really think about what you want to achieve, set specific goals, plan your finances carefully, and then go execute your plan. Most universities are happy to defer entry and scholarships, but it's important to confirm in advance. Also, if you choose to gap after university but before job searching - then be prepared to sell yourself hard during interviews on how your gap enriched you!

If you did choose to gap but then never quite made it back to your post secondary goals - it's never too late!!!! Post secondary education opens doors. So restart your engine and get back at it!



Join our Wealthy Barber Book Club!

Learn crucial money management skills that can create a strong financial foundation for your future. Borrow 'The Wealthy Barber Returns' from your public library, read it on your own time, and we'll gather monthly via Zoom to discuss a chapter or two at a time. At some sessions we'll invite experts to answer your questions. And Lori will dig out her 15 years of banking experience! If you can't get the book, we will help you. DM Lori to join. All alumni invited!

Catapult's Annual Alumni Conference

In November, the Alumni Committee hosted an evening conference on Zoom, focused on two topics that so many of you keep asking for: money management and networking. Our guest speakers were Jeff Christian (Senior Wealth Advisor with Scotia Wealth) and Tom Brophy (Associate Vice President, Student Affairs and Services at SMU). Jeff focused on becoming financially independent through the responsible use of credit cards, saving, investing, and income tax tips. Tom's focus was on networking for both work and personal gains as well as how to have difficult conversations. Some of their advice is summarized below.

Diesel Pilling '19 said he especially enjoyed the topic of small talk and establishing connections. "Connecting with people is an excellent way to not only expand your peer circles but also a great way to open doors for your future. And it was so good to see everyone again!" Thanks to organizers, **Andrew Foote '19**, **Nova Nguyen '19**, **Paris Greenlaw-Gray '19**, **Shereen Sommerfeld '19** and **Vessa MacNeil '17**. Nova said, "It was such an honour to be on the committee and work behind the scenes this year!"

Tax Tips

Even if you have little or no income, you should still file your tax return because you could get money back (even if you're still in high school)!! If you earned more than \$12,440, you are actually required to file. That includes earned income from a job (your employer will issue you a T4 slip) and any other income (like tips, self employed income and investment income).

The benefits of filing:

- To get a potential refund of any income taxes your employer deducted from your pay slips
- To receive the HST tax credit
- To claim a tuition and textbook tax credit (you should receive a T2202 slip from your college/university. If not needed, the credit can be carried forward to a year that you make more money!)
- To receive the disability tax credit
- To build RRSP and TFSA room (see below)
- To receive the Canada child benefit (CCB)

The deadline for filing is April 30th. It's EASY to do yourself - visit simpletax.ca for free online software. (FYI: a 'tax deduction' reduces your taxable income, a 'tax credit' reduces your taxes payable - so both reduce the taxes you'll pay.)

Investment Tips:

A TFSA (Tax Free Savings Account) can be used to save toward your short, medium, or long term goals. It has a higher rate of interest so you make more money than just leaving it in your bank account. The money you put in is not tax deductible but your TFSA grows tax free. This means any interest, dividends or capital gains it earns are not taxed, even when taken out of the account. You can withdraw from your TFSA at any time. Beware - any over-contributions to your TFSA may result in a penalty!! For 2021 the contribution limit is \$6,000 (watch out as it changes each year!) plus any unused room from previous years. Unused room is noted on the Notice of Assessment you receive after filing your return.

An RRSP (Registered Retirement Savings Plan) is designed to encourage you to save money for retirement. Money contributed is tax deductible and any earnings are not taxed until you withdraw. The contribution limit is 18% of the previous year's earned income plus any unused room from previous years.

To open either a TFSA or an RRSP, visit your bank! (You must be 19 or older.)

What's the best thing to do with excess cash?

- Pay off high-interest debt - especially any credit card debt you inadvertently built!!!! (Credit cards apply exorbitant interest rates of 19% or more!)
- Invest it in a TFSA

For more tips on money questions - check out honestmoney.ca. Listen to local Nova Scotian influencers share their tips on everything from thrifting to decorating on a budget to home buying to getting out of debt. And join our Wealthy Barber Book Club!

The Art of Small Talk

UGH, small talk. To many, it's meaningless, fake, even painful. But small talk is an integral part of relationship-building. It's an opportunity to learn about the person you're talking to and make a new connection. It's also a learned skill and the more you do it, the easier it gets. The pandemic has reduced our face-to-face opportunities to meet others so it is OK to feel uncomfortable or rusty.

Here's "Tom's Tips":

- ✓ Small talk is a critical way of breaking the ice.
- ✓ Life is full of chances to meet people so talking to strangers is an important skill that creates opportunity.
- ✓ It can be a great way to lead into other conversations where you may end up learning more about yourself!
- ✓ Some safe opening small talk questions: What's your name? Where are you from? For us east-coasters, talk about the weather. Even general observations about the pandemic have become common place.
- ✓ Other small talk questions may be related to the situation e.g. if you are a student ... how are your courses going this term? Discussion about course loads and keeping up are usually safe too.
- ✓ A good conversationalist asks more questions than they answer. This gets the other person talking. You also have to share enough about yourself that the other person feels comfortable and safe. But remember - "there's a good reason why we have two ears and one mouth". Listen more than you talk!
- ✓ Interviews are a common example when you have to speak to strangers and the stakes are high. It is good to prepare for these by anticipating their questions. Be ready to ask questions too (including small talk questions which will show that you're comfortable).
- ✓ Everyone has something to learn and something to teach. Small talk that leads to networking is a great way to open exciting new opportunities to learn about others, other perspectives, knowledge, cultural and identity issues, etc.

Be open to the possibilities that come from meeting others. It might just change your whole world!





Congratulations to Karleigh

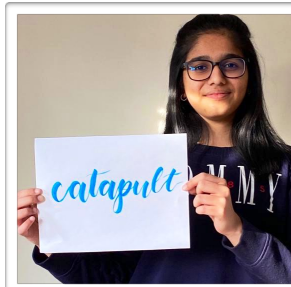
Shipley '12 on being awarded the 2021 **Catapult Alumni Award** - \$1000 raised by Catapulters for Catapulters pursuing their post-secondary dreams, the bursary helped Karleigh with her tuition at NSCC where she is studying Business Administration. She plans to continue studying for a Diploma in Digital Marketing. "For many

years I struggled to figure out what I wanted to pursue in life which is why I didn't start secondary school until the age of 23. My end goal is to be a marketing manager for a non-profit that advocates for domestic violence or people experiencing homelessness. I want to be able to use my education to give back to the community and make a difference in someone's life. Catapult influenced my life tremendously and without it, I wouldn't have the self confidence and courage I have today."

Zach MacMillan '09 is just one of our alumni who initiated this fund. "I want to extend a huge congratulations to Karleigh! I'm thrilled to see the hard work, perseverance, and community contributions of our alumni. Thank you to all who applied - reviewing your submissions was the best part of my xmas holiday!"

Wise Words from Dr Phil:

You know what else is highly contagious ? Kindness. Patience. Love. Enthusiasm. A positive attitude. Be a carrier and spread them around!



Simone Singh '21 received a Catapult **CLIFF Award** to help her get her community project off the ground. Simone took the initiative to apply for some CLIFF "seed money" to help her create a 'Calligraphy Club' at her school. She had already obtained approval from the school and solicited interest in participation. The \$80 grant she received helped purchase needed pens, ink and other supplies. Her idea

is not only to teach other students the art of calligraphy, but to then use their creations for charitable purposes such as making greeting cards for veterans and seniors, or selling items to raise money for Feed NS. What a great idea! Thanks again to **Counselor Kevan Henshaw** who created this fund. (CLIFF stands for 'Catapult Launch it Forward Fund'). Contact Lori if you could use CLIFF funding!

In 2019, **Kayla Bernard '11** developed the 'HeART: Mental Wellness and Art Program' at Heartwood Centre in Halifax. When Covid hit, she recognized the stress and loneliness being experienced by so many youth. So she created "HeART in a Box". Filled with the art mediums and mindfulness resources that were proven most effective, Kayla raised the funds herself to create 40 boxes. She provided them free to youth aged 8-18 via a nomination system. "We ask the youth's age and art interests so we can provide the best experience." The program caught on and so far more than 800 boxes have been sent, with help from donors and grants. The World Scouting Association took notice and awarded Kayla (who is also a volunteer Scout leader) the "Messengers of Peace Heroes Award". She is the first Canadian recipient of this very impressive award!

Congratulations Kayla!



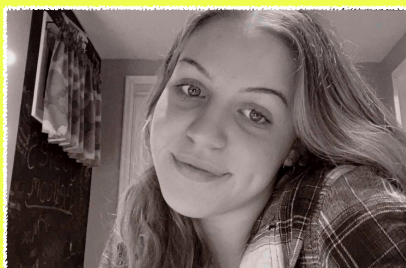
***** SNAPSHOTS *****

ASIAH SPARKS— 2019



School: Prince Andrew High
Cool Fact: I've had locs for 2 years!
Fave Camp Memory: Rock Night diss track. **What inspires me:** My mom, grandmother, and older sister - the strongest and most important women I know. **Future Plans:** Psychiatrist, and learn to replace addictive prescription pills with natural remedies. Also an advocate for systemic barriers re: mental health for black, brown, and working class people.

JOSIE CAMERON- 2020



School: Tatamagouche Regional
Cool Fact: I play on an all-girl's hockey team!
Fave Camp Memory: Sara Westbrook - she made me know I'm allowed to feel my emotions. **What inspires me:** Knowing there are so many possibilities in life to conquer.
Fave quote: The fact that you are trying is proof that you are strong.

PARKER STUCKLESS - 2021



School: West Kings High
Cool fact: I love to play paintball!
Fave Camp Memory: The activities, esp. mouse trap where we had to lead blindfolded people through the traps.
What inspires me: Friends and family who push me to be my best.
Future Plans: Gym teacher.
Fave Quote: "I came, I saw, I conquered." -Julius Caesar



What is Leadership Anyway ???? (by Jane Roy)

Leadership is difficult to define and can look entirely different to different people. Just like your meaning of success can be very different than someone else's. Have you ever tried to articulate what your own meanings are? Personally, I believe leadership is the ability to influence. And influence can come from anyone, in any role. I'm often inspired about leadership when I listen to eulogies of high profile people. In almost every case, it wasn't their career achievements that stood out. It was their character and their life lessons that inspire those they leave behind.

Alexa McDonough recently passed away. She'd been Leader of the NDP for NS, Leader of the NDP for Canada, Member of Parliament, Interim President of MSVU and earned numerous honours including the Order of Canada and 4 honorary degrees. But her two sons chose to focus on what she taught them. Including: How you treat people who can do nothing in return is the ultimate judge of your character. ~ What you do for yourself you take with you. What you do for others, you leave behind. ~ The goal of a debate is not to win but rather an opportunity to listen, learn, and make progress. ~ The boomerang effect is real. What you give you get back. ~ Kindness is the most powerful source of renewable energy. It can be shared, used, and you never have to worry about it running out.

At Donald Sobey's funeral in March 2021, his son Rob said, "the legacy of Dad's accomplishments in the corporate world is firmly superseded by his most important work - helping others. And he never did it for credit. Ever. Don Sobey's truest power was his ability to make people feel welcome, confident, and strong."

You may not know of my old friend Jack Craig. He was a self-made business owner who became very wealthy. His eulogy described him as "status blind - whether you were a doorman, a waiter, or a titan of industry, he treated you with dignity and kindness. We will never know the depth of causes that Jack quietly supported because he never looked for credit- he just did what was right."

I'm not trying to predict what people might say about me when my time comes (which hopefully is not any time soon!). But I sure hope it'll be more about how I treated others than any positions I held or awards I received. And - that Catapult built a legacy of leaders who strive to live their best life every day and pay it forward with kindness. (Yes, that includes YOU!)

www.futureme.org

Write your future self a letter (your goals, resolutions, dreams) and they'll send it back in 1, 3 or 5 years. Surprise yourself, laugh, get re-inspired, have fun.

A LETTER FROM TYLER SWEENEY '10

Dear Catapulters

When we think about Catapult, it's our camp memories that usually first come to mind. To all Catapulters, but especially those who have only experienced online camp, Catapult can be so much more than just camp. It can be as big or as small as we choose it to be. The opportunities to grow and develop don't end with summer, they are accessible all year round. And with our new virtual workshops through the school year, you have the ability to learn new leadership and life skills from wherever you are!

I've been fortunate enough to experience it all. From Camper, to Counselor, to Board Director. Staying involved with Catapult was the best thing I could have done. The skills I learned outside of camp, the career coaching, and the lifelong friendships have only made my life better. To all camp alumni - I can guarantee that staying involved with Catapult will be one of the best decisions you'll ever make! I especially encourage our Classes of '20 and '21 to attend sessions offered through the year and make every effort to attend the Plus conference at Acadia next summer! (Fingers crossed we will finally be back on campus again!!)

~ Tyler

UP coming EVENTS

- FEB 27 - Mission Statements - How to and why!
- MARCH - Catapult Community Days
- APRIL 7 - Catapult Shirt Day
- APRIL 10 - Catapulter Wellness Session

All sessions on Zoom. Watch for details on Instagram or DM Lori to register!

* Need to talk? kidshelpphone.ca

If you like writing or art and would like to see your work published, **Ali Taha '16** has co-created "Archetype: A Literary Journal". Check it out at www.archetypemag.com

Jane & Kayley Dixon '16 at the annual SMU Alumni Awards Ceremony

FEBRUARY is Black history month. Visit these special places to learn more about African Nova Scotian history and their contributions to our society:

- Africville Museum, Halifax (closed due to covid but there's a virtual tour on their website!)
- Black Loyalist Heritage Centre, Shelburne



Shout out to **Breagh MacLeod '19** and **Isaac Ahern '21** who held a toy drive to support Adsum House!

#catapultcommunity
day



if we all do one random act of kindness daily we just might set the world in the right direction
martin kornfeld

THE ROUND TABLE was named with Catapult's medieval theme in mind. King Arthur insisted on having his faithful knights seated at a round table where everyone was treated equally and had an equal voice. Use your voice and send us your submissions for the next newsletter!



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