**Biography Exercise**

My name is Janelle and I happily consider myself a lifelong learner. Enrolling in the Post Graduate Diploma in Digital Design and Development – Web Development Stream, was another chapter in my story of life-long learning. I felt this program was a good step for me because of my self-assumed artistic background and virtually obsolete education in the field of computing. I am a critical thinker who wants to to know why things are done the way they are and I am excited about creating and problem-solving.

At NIC I had ample opportunity to create and solve problems through active learning and projects. In active learning, I had to explore learning material that deepened my understanding of concepts, perhaps more so than if I had been presented with a clearly defined instruction set by a lecturer. Throughout all my courses at NIC I had to work through projects of varying sizes, some with set specifications which the entire class had to replicate, some where we were allowed variations and others where we had a high degree of leeway. This project-based approach provided me with practical experience in delivering projects that closely mirror those in the real world of work. The completion of each project required me to problem-solve and create, as well as refine my web-development skills.

Coming into this program I had completed a few art courses but was not, and still am not, an artist. I also had knowledge in programming and web development, but like anything IT related that is more than a day old, it was was no longer industry relevant. During my two years of study at NIC I have become proficient in several languages, environments and tools. For most projects I have used GitHub for version control and Visual Studio Code as my development environment. For web development I have learnt and have become proficient in HTML and CSS. I have also become competent in JavaScript, SCSS and BootStrap, as well as WordPress. For graphic design, wireframes, mock-ups, publications and other graphic elements I have used and become proficient in Adobe Suite (particularly Illustrator, InDesign and XD) and Canva. I remember my first few HTML/ CSS classes when I could not envision hand-coding an entire, sophisticated looking website. Now, two years later I prefer building from scratch to using a tool like the much-loved WordPress.

My biggest project to date was a design system, Wave DS. Wave was built using HTML, CSS and JavaScript at the half-way point of my program. The design system provided code and examples of components such as forms, navigation and style (typography, color) to be used in the development of digital products for a fictitious business, Caribbean Chef. There were several challenges with code since I had never used some of the components before. To resolve these issues I had to review code examples and try different approaches which in turn eroded time that should have been applied to project documentation. Apart from actually coding the site, I am proud that I wrote the content myself, taking the time to describe each component and its application.

Another project, I completed was the Reduce app design and proposal. For this UX Design project I had to design an app that helped a user manage their carbon-dioxide output. This project reflected a real-world project in the sense that there several flaws were uncovered during usability testing and as such the project went through a few iterations. It really taught me that what seems obvious to a developer or designer is not as obvious to the user.

These two projects are a part of the overall work I have accomplished during my course of study. There were other projects and assignments, some more successful than others. Despite challenges that will arise in any educational journey, at the end of my first year, I was selected for the dean’s honour roll. Apart from grades, I feel a great sense of achievement when my lecturers and peers appreciate and find value my work. Their feedback has helped to build my confidence and recognition my weaker areas.

After two years in a range of courses, I recognize that my strength is in design and research so I hope to work as a graphic designer or UX/ UI designer, perhaps even a UX researcher. As a graphic designer I can easily see myself working for different clients to create digital or print products. As a UX/ UI designer, I think working within a company or agency setting would be beneficial to my professional growth. Either pathway will require continued learning and mentoring and further specialization or formal educational will be dependent on my work experience. Apart from the languages and tools I know, I am a highly-focused and detail-oriented individual with strong communication skills, capable of working well within a team or on my own.

I would like my capstone to showcase my technical skills in HTML/CSS as well as my graphic design and UX/ UI skills. To do this I can build a website or application applying UX design principles I have learnt, incorporating UX tools such as wireframes which I can create with Adobe Suite.

I would also like apply better project managment to the capstone than I have done for previous projects since this has been an area that requires improvement.

My ideas for the Capstone are:

* A portfolio website, displaying projects from the DGL program, and possibly other work I would like to showcase. For these projects I will:
  + Provide an overview of the project
  + List the languages and/ or tools (tool features) used to create them
  + Highlight any important aspects of code or technique
  + Explain the work process, including the use of UX tools such as wireframes and mock-ups
  + Reflect on possible improvements or applications of the project
* A UX design tutorial website, outlining the Design Thinking Process and describing tools and techniques used, I will:
  + Describe the Design Thinking Process overall, as well as each stage
  + Describe tools and techniques used at each stage
  + Provide guidelines for their creation (use of verbs, voice etc)
  + Provide visual examples of each
  + Suggest software or tools for creation

Regardless of the capstone project I choose, I am excited to create something to celebrate the culmination of two years of work.



