

Natasha LeBlanc Counselling – Micro Loan Success

Every single day people are being helped through some of their most difficult, stressful and often scary days at Natasha LeBlanc Counselling. From severe depression to increasing anxiety and even grief, her clients depend on her for access to coping mechanisms and treatment that gives them back some normalcy in challenging times. During COVID-19, many clients are experiencing heightened and often debilitating mental health struggles, but access to care is the first step in the right direction.

It was a loan from Sydney Credit Union, in conjunction with the Cape Breton Partnership, that allowed Natasha to start her own counselling services business in 2020 and today she is providing essential care to those in need.

Natasha, who grew up in Sydney Mines, always knew she wanted to work with people. She explored what ways she could best help others through education and volunteer work. After completing a Bachelor of Social Work at Lakehead University in Ontario in 2011, she worked in Halifax, Nunavut and Cape Breton. Her work took her across the country and she experienced, first-hand, the variety of needs her clients had. She saw that client-care and focused one-on-one supports were needed in order to help instill wellness and foster therapeutic change.

After working with Transition House in Sydney and the Family Service of Eastern Nova Scotia in 2013, Natasha knew she wanted to do more. Her passion for helping was outgrowing the care she was able to provide in her current role. In 2017, she went back to school to complete her Masters of Social Work at Memorial University and focused on providing targeted, quality care.

Knowing that she could best service clients through private practice was the easy decision, starting her own business, with no experiences in entrepreneurship, was the tough part. Natasha first applied for a loan with a financial institute and was finding the process challenging. She found it cumbersome and difficult to navigate with her limited resources. That is when she saw an advertisement on social media for the Sydney Credit Union Micro loan program, administered by the Cape Breton Partnership. That same day, her husband had heard about the exact same program and it seemed like it was meant to be.

After applying for the loan, everything changed. Natasha felt incredibly valued and supported by the Sydney Credit Union team and she started to believe in herself as an entrepreneur. Her future business was becoming a reality. The small \$10,000 loan gave her operating capital to secure office space, furnish it and launch Natasha Leblanc Counselling Services amidst a global pandemic.

“I knew that I could do it, I just needed someone else to be confident in me too,” she says. “Once the loan was secured, I was able to quickly get the service up and running and start helping clients in need.”

Today, Natasha is set up in downtown Sydney and is seeing clients virtually every single day. She has the freedom and flexibility to help clients in the way she knows best and can now do it because she can control how her service works.

“I’m able to see as many clients as when needed, but without undue pressures. I can take my time to offer the services my clients deserve and with no risk of burning out. I can help more people, thanks to this amazing loan.”