

Backgrounder

Below is a special interest story about **Thornton Lourens**, who is being celebrated at Academic Upgrading Recognition Day 2021.

Thornton Lourens

Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) Certificate & Award of Excellence Recipient

Thornton Lourens always wanted to fly. But flight school isn't cheap in his home country of South Africa. So when Thornton's fiancé told him about the Aviation – Flight Management program at Confederation College, he didn't even realize it was possible.

"It was way too expensive in South Africa," Thornton said. "It never would have occurred to me it would be any different here if she hadn't have mentioned it."

There was a problem though. His high school marks from 14 years ago were not high enough to get him into the course. But thanks to Confederation College's Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) program, he was able to upgrade his marks.

What Thornton likes most about receiving the ACE certificate is that now he has options. "It opens up other avenues," he said. "It doesn't mean you have only one door open. You can go on to many fields from there."

As it turns out, that's an important point for Thornton. Although he originally was set on Confederation's Flight Management program, the pandemic has him reconsidering.

He is currently enrolled in the Aviation Technician – Aircraft Maintenance program at the College. Thornton worked as a diesel mechanic in South Africa – he learned to fix cars before he was old enough to drive them. Now he is enjoying taking his skills to the next level, learning how to work on planes and helicopters as well. Depending on the job market, he may work as an Aircraft Maintenance Engineer before he enrolls in flight school.

No matter what he chooses, he'll likely stay in Thunder Bay. Thornton moved to Canada in 2018 to meet his biological mother and had the good fortune to meet his future wife.

Thornton said all his professors were great. His math professor Curtis in particular was a fantastic help.

"Honestly, if it wasn't for him, I wouldn't have gotten the marks I did."