



Premiers honour adult learners

The Premiers of each province and territory have joined together to create the new literacy award. This award is to recognize outstanding achievement and excellence in literacy in each province and territory. The award is called Council of the Federation literacy award because that is the group name the premiers use when they work together to strengthen Canada.

2005 was the first year for the special medallions to be given out but they plan to make it an annual tradition. There were 14 award winners and eleven of them were learners. The winner in Prince Edward Island was a learner named Dianne Smith.

Dianne has been a hard worker all her life but she realized that education would be the key to a better life for herself and her two children. Although she left school in grade nine, Dianne was successful in many different jobs including farming, home care, cleaning and running several of her own businesses. After getting through an illness and surgery she made the decision to return to school.

With help from volunteer tutors, Dianne attended adult education classes and received her GED the day before her 50th birthday. She had to work hard to overcome a variety of learning difficulties. At the same time, she had to hold down a full-time job and care for her family. Dianne never turns away from a challenge. Her ambition and determination

has paid off. She is now the proud owner of a licensed community care facility that bears her name: Smith Lodge.

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Dianne Smith receives the PEI Council of the Federation Award from Premier Pat Binns in September 2005. She says she went back to school because it was time to work smarter not harder.

(cover story article continued)

She has been involved in all aspects of managing this new business from doing the renovations, to catering for large numbers of her clients and running special events for the 15 residents. Smith Lodge has a reputation for quality, thanks to Dianne's hard work and her personal touch.

Dianne continues to seek new learning opportunities and encourages others to improve their literacy skills. In addition to her active role in the community of Charlottetown, Dianne is now the Learner Spokesperson and a Board member with the Movement for Canadian Literacy.

Learning Difficulties?

Have you ever wondered why learning was so hard for you? Perhaps you have a learning disability. A learning disability (LD) is a disorder that affects people's ability to interpret what they see and hear - or to link information from different parts of the brain. Although the person with an LD has average or above-average intelligence, the disability becomes noticeable in academic and social situations. LDs don't need to prevent you from living a productive and happy life. LDs affect approximately 10% of the population (that's 3 million Canadians) so you're not alone!

Awards



MCL salutes all the recipients and nominees for the first annual Council of the Federation Literacy Awards. In 2006 you can nominate yourself or someone you know for the award in your province or territory. Look for the announcement in Spring 2006 or watch the website at: <http://www.councilofthefederation.ca/literacyaward/literacy.htm>

Canada Post has also been honouring literacy teachers, learners and programs for over 10 years. Nominations are usually in the Spring. Stay tuned by visiting: http://www.canadapost.ca/personal/corporate/about/community/literacy/literacy_awards/default-e.asp

Source for LD Support

You can find out about the learning disabilities association nearest to you by checking the national website at

www.ldac-taac.ca

While you are at the LDAC website, be sure to check their latest "readability" features. Their website offers a voice that will read the text out loud. You can also make the words larger or smaller according to what works best. You can even change the colour settings to make it easier!



**On January 23, 2006,
Check out the Learner**

Hats off to Jacques Demers!

In November 2005, former hockey coach and sports expert, Jacques Demers admitted to the public that he could not read and write. After a lifetime of hiding it, he found the courage to speak out about his literacy challenges. In fact, he has written a book of his life story.

Mr. Demers felt ashamed and alone because he did not understand that millions of other Canadian adults also have literacy challenges. Like Mr. Demers, many people just cover it up. He says “for all those years, I always had at the back of my mind that I could be fired, I could be embarrassed, I could be humiliated.”



Serge Savard was a Montreal Canadiens hockey player who worked with Mr. Demers for many years. He said “He fooled everyone. He always had notes with him and he looked like he was writing something.” Even his children did not know until he released the book about the story of his life.

It took courage for Mr. Demers to come forward. We can be grateful because it is also important for the public to learn that all kinds of people have literacy challenges. But they also have many other skills and talents for coping. His

story also points out that many children from abusive homes have a hard time learning.

He says “I’ve been in a prison within myself for all these years. Now I realize that I can help a lot of people open up and not be afraid.”

The French version of Jacques Demers’ story (written by Mario LeClerc) is called “En toutes lettres.” It was released in November 2005 and the English version is coming in Winter 2006. Look for it in a bookstore or library near you.

What do you think?

The voter turnout (the percentage of registered Canadian voters who actually voted) in the 2004 federal election was 60.9%. That means that only 6 out of every 10 people who were allowed to vote, actually cast their ballot! This is the lowest turnout since 1896! Voter turnout has dropped by over 13% since the three elections in the 1980s. What do you think some of the reasons might be?

Do people mis-trust politicians? Are people too busy? Is politics dull and uninteresting? Do people feel powerless? Is it too difficult to decide? Do people have literacy challenges and other barriers that make voting difficult? What do you think?

Discuss this with your friends, family and other adult learners. If you’d like to share your thoughts, we would be happy to publish them in an upcoming issue of *Learners in Action*. Send your ideas to fiona@literacy.ca.



be sure to **VOTE!!**
Voting Guide at www.literacy.ca.

Meet the current Learners Advisory Network



Learners make a big impression on Parliament Hill at Literacy Action Day in October 2005.

The Learners Advisory Network (LAN) is a committee of the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL). The literacy coalition in each province and territory is allowed to select one learner to send to the LAN. At the moment there are 6 learner representatives with 3 others in the process of being selected.

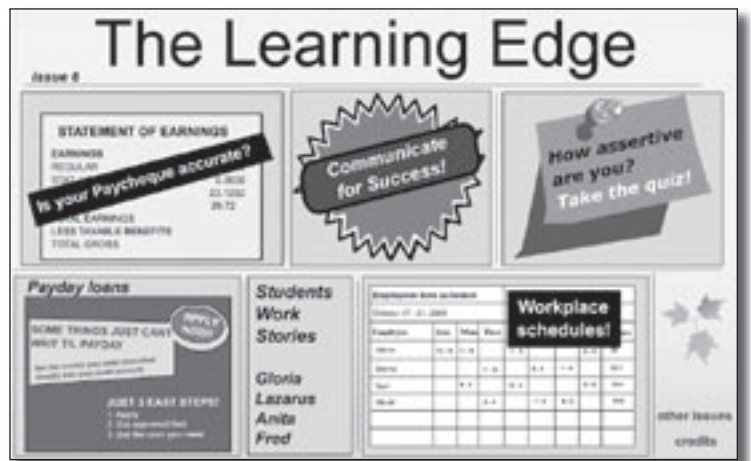
The meetings are held in Ottawa and also by teleconference. The LAN reps are adult learners who want to get active and speak out to politicians and the public about literacy. It is a great opportunity for learners who feel strongly about the need for literacy services.

The LAN tells politicians and the public about the learner's point of view by listening to other learners, and by writing letters and reports. We also meet with politicians, government staff, the media and other organizations who want to know more about literacy problems in Canada.

Recently the LAN published a booklet of their own personal experiences called *Profiles of Literacy and Lifelong Learning*. You can find it at the MCL website at: <http://www.literacy.ca> (under Learners Section)

Learning Edge is no ordinary magazine!

The latest issue of the interactive online learner magazine, *Learning Edge*, focuses on communication skills in the workplace. You'll find articles on effective communication skills, reading workplace schedules, information on building assertiveness skills, including an assertiveness quiz. But this is no ordinary magazine! This magazine lets you listen and read along. You'll see animated action rather than ordinary illustrations and you'll find out instantly if your answers are correct.



This issue also has an article on payday loans and there are four stories from learners about their successes in the workplace. Look for Issue #6 at www.thewclc.ca/edge.

Remember to

VOTE on Jan. 23