



Riding The Wave: How will the federal election affect progress on a pan-Canadian literacy agenda?

IN THE LAST ISSUE (SUMMER 2005) we said it was a “hot time for literacy”. Minister of State Claudette Bradshaw was out consulting the literacy community nation-wide, and a range of national, provincial and local literacy groups were working on advice and action plans to feed into a comprehensive national strategy.

Over the Fall, this work continued at an even more feverish pace. In November, a multi-sectoral advisory committee convened by Minister Bradshaw met and produced *Towards a Fully Literate Canada: Achieving National Goals Through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy*. This report outlines a unified literacy community vision and an urgent call for the federal government to work across departments, across jurisdictions, and with multiple stakeholders to help provide coherence and adequate resources for adult literacy across Canada. The report builds on years of study and consultation inside and beyond the literacy community.

Also over the Fall, other important events were taking place.

- In October, delegates at the 12th annual Literacy Action Day found MPs more receptive and supportive than ever.
- The Canadian results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), released

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Centre *Insert Learners in Action*

in November, indicate that 4 in 10 working-age Canadians rank below the literacy skill level considered necessary for success in our information-based society and economy – a proportion virtually unchanged from a decade ago.

- Also in November, the federal government presented an economic statement and a “Plan for Growth and Prosperity” that promised \$3.5 billion to enhance Canada’s workforce. Increasing access to literacy and essential skills was one of the priorities targeted. (We understand that the bulk of these new investments



**January 23, 2006: a
 date to mark with an X!**

**For voting and election
 information visit:
www.literacy.ca**

will have to be approved by the newly elected Parliament.)

Optimism in the community was at an all-time high until political uncertainty put progress on hold once again. The timing has been unfortunate, as this election, like the one in June 2004, has come just when we hoped consultation might finally translate into government action. At this point it's anybody's guess which party will inherit Canada's literacy challenges and the community's call for action.

Whether we end up with a new government or a new Minister—political transition could make it difficult for us to pick up where we left off in November. We should be reassured by the knowledge that politicians of all political stripes are on the record about the need to create a more literate population (or at the very least a more literate labour pool). However, we can only hope that as they pursue this goal, Canada's leaders recognize the advantage of building on the community expertise and insight already assembled.

Levers outside of the federal political arena should also be an impetus to continued action on literacy. There are many indications that the critical mass of public awareness and concern is growing. For example:

- Provincial and territorial leaders (Premiers, Ministers of Education, and Labour Market Ministers) have identified literacy as a priority and expressed an openness to working intergovernmentally to address the issue. Because jurisdiction has been one of the challenges, this openness is an important prerequisite for a pan-Canadian strategy.
- Literacy was pushed into the headlines when Jacques Demers, a well-known Canadian hockey personality, revealed publicly that he has spent decades hiding the fact that he couldn't read.
- An Ipsos-Reid survey conducted in May 2005 and just released by ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation found that 87% consider adult low literacy "an important social or economic

issue", and close to half (46%) consider it "very important".

All in all, while the election brings some uncertainties, our community can take courage in knowing that we approach the future with a shared "platform" that is stronger than ever before, and that the call for action on literacy cuts across sectoral and political boundaries.

Point of View: Reflecting on how we talk about literacy

Adapted from an article printed in the Moncton Times and Transcript in September 2005 by Tracey Mollins, a literacy practitioner and publisher of the national journal Literacies: Researching practice, practising research.

On International Literacy Day we hear a variety of stories about literacy education and achievement in Canada. We hear about the 42% of Canadians who score so low on the international surveys that they cannot read everyday print materials. We hear from adults who cannot read and the frustrations they experience. And we hear the stories of adults who attend classes, learn to read and feel the changes reading brings to every aspect of their lives.

But what are adult literacy educators talking about on ILD 2005?

Well, of course, we are telling stories such as the ones above. But more and more we are talking about how people who might fall into that 42% use literacy skills and strategies at home, at work and in the community. We are looking at the actual 'literacy practices' of people with lower reading and writing skills. We want to learn how to support these practices instead of prescribing a uniform way that we should all interact with print material. We are thinking about the skills of reading and writing as something separate from all the ways people might be getting meaning from text and using text to communicate. We are considering the different uses of literacy in different contexts and how we use print literacy in conjunction with other media.

These stories represent a shift in the way literacy workers, and workers in fields such as health, labour and community development, are thinking about literacy and literacy education. We no longer talk about deficits and the skills that people lack. We talk about the many different ways people engage with literacy and how these differences are valued within our society.

People practice literacy differently depending on where, when and why they were educated, their own level of confidence in their abilities as readers and learners, and a variety of other factors. Those who learn to read and write in school as children, and continue to use and develop reading and writing skills as adults, tend to view these activities as solitary ones; one person interacting with text by themselves. For people with lower reading and writing skills, interacting with text is often a collaborative activity; a group of people may consult with each other and share skills and knowledge in order to write workplace reports, fill out forms and complete other daily tasks that involve text.

People practice literacy differently in different contexts. Reading and writing take on different meanings depending on whether we are filling out a benefit form, writing a report at work or reading to a child. In each case we need to know, not just how to read and write, but why and what the consequences will be of answering a question this way instead of that way on a form, selecting this fact and leaving out that fact in a report, selecting this book instead of that book to read to a child. In each case, we use our experience and our understanding of social systems to make these choices. People with lower reading and writing skills often have the 'systems knowledge' to make effective choices but may need help with the reading and writing. Conversely, many with higher reading and writing skills find themselves in situations where they lack the systems knowledge to put their excellent reading and writing skills to good use.

Literacy educators across Canada are looking into the question of how to support people

with lower reading and writing skills who face discrimination and barriers at work and in the community. We used to approach this by trying to repair this deficit by encouraging those in that 42% to go to classes and improve their skills. Skills development will always be an important part of literacy work, but now we combine this with asset-building work. We are working with partners in health, labour and community development to understand how we can make print materials more accessible to wider groups of people (e.g., using the principles of clear language and design and context-appropriate ways of communicating), how community organizations and workplaces can become more inclusive (e.g., doing 'literacy audits' and making the necessary changes), and how to ensure that these accessibility measures become universal (e.g., holding workshops and developing tools for workplaces and community organizations).

Literacy educators are seeing that we have a dual role; we are literacy teachers who support skills development for adults who come to classes and we are literacy advocates who support equitable access to information, services and employment for all, regardless of level of reading and writing skill. As literacy advocates, it is our responsibility to support 'good' readers and writers in learning how to communicate clearly and effectively to the largest group possible.

Some asset-building literacy projects can be found here:

- ▶ Weaving Literacy into Family and Community Life (New Brunswick)
www.frp.ca/g_Article.asp?ArticleID=61
- ▶ Connecting Literacy to Community (Alberta) project
www.nald.ca/fulltext/connect/focus/cover.htm and www.nald.ca/fulltext/connect/audits/cover.htm.

IALSS prompts an alternate celebration: learners and practitioners ask their own questions

By Bernadette Walsh, M.Ed., Literacy Practitioner and "We Ask Our Own Questions" organizer, and Sheila Stewart with Festival of Literacies (OISE/UT).

With the release of the International Adult Literacy Skills Survey (IALSS) statistics this spring and fall, the Festival of Literacies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE/UT) wanted to creatively explore some pressing questions about literacy and learning. The Toronto-based group didn't want IALSS to frame our literacy work or our thinking about literacy.



Festival of Literacies
Festival de l'Alpha

On March 1, 2005 adult learners and literacy practitioners gathered at OISE/UT to examine their own questions about adult learning and express their hopes for the future of adult learning in Canada. They used collages to depict what they think and feel about learning. The title of the event was "We Ask Our Own Questions". Themes that emerged were the role of learning in daily life, learning from and valuing nature, being part of a community, and being able to express ourselves through art. Through their art and in the following discussion, participants asked what the numbers would reveal about adult learners, and who counts in the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. Participants also discussed what social values IALSS, or related media coverage, would promote.

On May 11, the day of the international release of the preliminary IALSS findings, literacy learners and workers gathered at St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program to showcase the powerful collages, as well as quilts, paintings and other forms of art that had been made, and to

talk about the survey results. The evening was an opportunity to gather and support each other as a literacy community.

Shawn Johnson, a student from Davenport Perth Neighbourhood Centre, said that "literacy should involve everybody. We should be able to express our backgrounds easier. This means bringing our own traditions to literacy." Shawn showed his collage which includes the words, "A powwow



Collages were an alternative way to talk about recent literacy statistics. For more event photos and information, visit: www.literacyjournal.ca (under Crazy Wisdom - Ontario)

is a place where the young will learn from the elderly and the elderly can become young again for one more dance."

Angela Hamilton of Regent Park said that learning can lead to "freedom" and "better things." The event was emceed by Jerry Lee Miller, himself once a literacy student, now a graphic artist.

Both events showed how adult literacy learners want to improve their lives, not only for employment, but to learn about the world around them, and to participate more fully in society. The visual art 'show' and discussions offered a thought-provoking alternative view of adult literacy from how it is represented in the IALSS.

The Festival of Literacies supports the dialogue between practice, policy, and research. IALSS is an example of a major international research study and it was interesting to hear what learners and practitioners had to say.

To find out more or to consider questions and activities you could use as a prompt for your own discussions, visit www.literaciesOISE.ca.

Surfing Links

National Indigenous Literacy Association now online



The National Indigenous Literacy Association

(NILA) serves as the eyes, ears and voice of Aboriginal literacy in Canada, and reflects the spirit and values of Aboriginal peoples and nations in all of its work. Their new office is located in Winnipeg and their new website can be found at: www.nila.ca.

Discussions worth sharing

The *Literacies* journal continues its online discussions after each issue. Based on the fall 2005 issue on literacy and community, many interesting comments and questions were raised in the November Web Forum. You can still read these worthwhile exchanges in the *Literacies* archives at: <http://www.literacyjournal.ca/forum.html>.

The Literacy Enquirer is a publication for the learning circle of adult literacy workers that meets in Toronto. They discuss how practitioners can have input into policy decisions and how to bring our knowledge to the policy-making process. By taking notes, they thought that they could extend the conversation beyond their group and link with others who might be talking about the same things. Check it out at www.literacyenquirer.ca.

Language and Literacy is an online journal for educators interested in a broad range of literacy issues encompassing research and teaching in multimedia, print and spoken forms. They invite contributions of research articles, position papers, fiction and poetry and reviews concerning literacy issues. Articles in *Language and Literacy* are not published as issues; instead, submissions are accepted and published continuously. Older articles are available in the Archives section. Find out more at: www.langandlit.ualberta.ca.

Skillswise

Skillswise is a British website with great teaching and learning resources to help adults improve their English and maths. This comprehensive site includes games, worksheets, quizzes, workplace key skills, an internet guide for beginners and much more. Both instructors and learners will find this easy-to-use site a valuable online resource. Visit <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise>. Thanks to Christine Pinsent-Johnson of the Ottawa District school board for bringing it to our attention!

Essential skills in the workplace

Building Essential Skills in the Workplace is a book of case studies that highlights best practices in developing Essential Skills in the workplace and provides an overview of the benefits, outcomes and impacts of Essential Skills training. Also included is a 10-step guide to implementing Essential Skills programs in the workplace. This resource was developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada with collaboration from Conference Board of Canada and other partners. It is available for download at: http://srv600.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/esrp/english/general/case_studies_e.shtml. For more information on Essential Skills, visit: http://srv600.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/esrp/english/general/home_e.shtml

Global connections

The International Classroom and School Virtual Visit (ICVV) project, now in its seventh year, links classrooms across the world to enable students to meet each other virtually, share information about their cultures, their classrooms and their communities. Classes of all ages can participate, including English as a Second Language, Adult Basic Education, elementary, secondary and family literacy programs. To sign up, go to: <http://lists.literacytent.org> and click on Public Lists to find ICVV. Follow the directions from there. If you have questions contact: David Rosen at: djrosen@comcast.net or Susan Gaer at: sgaer@yahoo.ca.



Resources



From New Readers Bookstore

The following resources are available from the New Readers Bookstore (NRB) of Laubach Literacy of Canada at tel: 1-877-634-1980 or visit: www.laubach.ca. As you'll see below, the NRB now carries some titles for children to develop interest in reading at an early age. It also has a new selection of volunteer management resources.



Wacky Word Games

This new Canadian resource has word games to challenge children of all ages but will be especially helpful for 8-12 year olds who are learning the basics of the English language with rhymes, riddles and word scrambles. Cost \$5.95.

Start Reading

A series of reading comprehension books (six levels) with grammar points and vocabulary skills. Cost \$8.95 each.



Best of All

This quick reference guide to effective volunteer involvement shares tips and best practices in volunteer coordination with a minimum of words! Cost \$22.95.

Better Safe...

This essential Canadian sourcebook on risk management in volunteer programs will educate your agency about volunteers and liability concerns. Cost \$29.95.



From Grass Roots Press

The following resources are available from Grass Roots Press at tel: 1-888-303-3213 or visit: www.literacyservices.com.

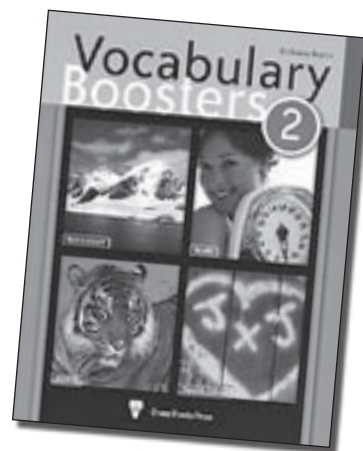
Living with Stress



Living with Stress is the first of four books in the Easy-to-Read Health Series. The first two chapters of this resource provide interactive activities for identifying the stressors in our lives and the ways we respond to stress. The next three chapters deal with strategies for calming our minds, bodies, and breath. The author also discusses how to identify and deal with panic anxiety, burnout, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Parents will appreciate the final chapter, which is "Helping Our Children Deal with Stress." This easy-to-read book contains over 40 illustrations by Val Lawton. The remaining three titles in this series will be published over the course of the next two years. Cost \$19.95.

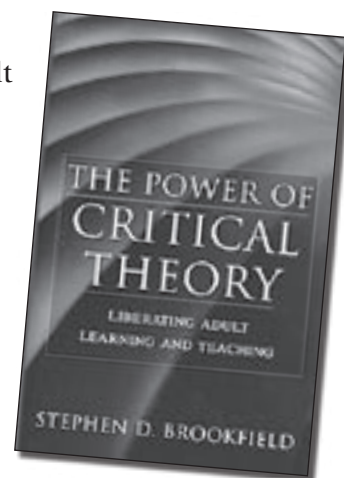
Vocabulary Boosters

These workbooks aim to help adult learners develop their vocabulary through reading passages written at an appropriate level. The workbooks are organized around four themes: health, wildlife, the environment, and popular culture. Each lesson presents a non-fiction passage that relates to one of the four themes and a set of activities. The workbook activities can be completed independently, with a tutor, or with a group. Repetition is essential for vocabulary development; consequently, each lesson presents five activities that focus on the new words. Added features include crossword puzzles, word searches, and a glossary. The answer key is located at the back of each book. Workbook 1 has a Grade 3-4 readability level while Workbook 2 is written at a Grade 5-6 readability level. Cost \$19.95 each.



Critical thinking and theory

Two books by Stephen Brookfield examine how critical thinking is an essential skill for adults in these complex times and how we can guide adult learners to develop their skills. In *The Power of Critical Theory*, he makes a powerful case for how the work of leading critical theorists can help adult educators and learners make sense of pressing modern dilemmas, contradictions, and frustrations. Brookfield explains the key concepts of critical thinking using clear and accessible language. The award-winning *Developing Critical Thinkers*, by the same author is a practical, straightforward guide to help adults explore alternate ways of thinking and acting in four key areas: personal relationships, the workplace, and their responses to the media. Each book costs \$45.95.



Other Resources

Newly launched Alphaplus store



Buying resources from the AlphaPlus Centre just got easier! Visit the newly launched AlphaPlus Store at <http://store.alphaplus.ca/> where you can search and browse through more than 150 titles related to literacy and numeracy including: workforce literacy, family literacy, ESL, learning disabilities, life skills, health, and many other topics.

Getting started with workplace learning



For over ten years, the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators (CAMA) has been a leader in inspiring, encouraging and supporting workplace education programs in the municipal governments. CAMA has built on their initial success with five pilot projects by getting nearly 200 municipalities involved in planning, assessing and/or providing new learning opportunities for municipal employees. Now you can learn from their wealth of experience. The latest issue of the *CAMA Connection* newsletter shares highlights of what it takes to get a workplace learning program started. Steps, case studies and resources are listed in the Winter 2005 issue which you'll find at: www.camacam.ca (click on Programs, then Literacy, then Newsletters) For more information on the CAMA Literacy Project, contact Patricia Nutter at email: pnutter@lincsac.com.

New and Noteworthy

Gifts of words

The ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation is pleased to announce that Starbucks Coffee Canada has signed an agreement to be the sponsor of *Gift of Words*. The program developed and managed by ABC CANADA is a national funding initiative providing resources for public and school libraries and literacy organizations to expand their book collections and launch "reading circles" that encourage students, their teachers and parents to read and learn together.

Starbucks' support enables ABC CANADA to manage the year-round program that entails soliciting applications, collecting and reviewing applications, awarding recipients and reviewing their subsequent reports on funded activities. Each successful applicant for book collections receives \$1500 to spend on book titles, and each recipient of funding to create reading circle programs receives \$2500. Organizations wishing to be considered for funding must apply directly to ABC CANADA by filling out an application form online at: www.abc-canada.org/gow. The deadline for applications is February 1, 2006 and the recipients will be announced on March 15, 2006.

Workplace literacy winners



The Conference Board of Canada

The 2005 winners of The Conference Board of Canada's Awards for Excellence in Workplace Literacy were recognized at the 2005 Workplace Education and Learning Conference on December 1, in Toronto.

The awards, sponsored by the National Literacy Secretariat of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, recognize outstanding programs by employers that improve the literacy skills of their workforce.

This year's winners are:



Stedfast Inc. of Granby, Quebec (small business), in cooperation with the Textiles Human Resources Council, for developing a Skills and Learning Site to support on-the-job training for employees at every level of the organization.



Technocell Canada: located in Drummondville (Quebec), this medium-size business developed a training program for its work force, including an important module for its production employees. In collaboration with the Cégep de Trois-Rivières, the company set up a specialized training program leading to a provincially-recognized certificate in specialty paper products.



Diavik Diamond Mines Inc. of Yellowknife (large business) for its on-site Workplace Learning Centre, which offers a wide range of training to 700 employees, including content tailored to Aboriginal workers.



Honourable mention went to **i3DVR** of Scarborough, Ontario, a manufacturer of digital video recording systems, for its programs to assist immigrants in adjusting to life and work in Canada.

Details regarding these winners and other best practices are available in the 2005 Business and Education IdeaBook available on-line at: <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/education/awards/> or call Linda Scott at The Conference Board of Canada at tel: 1-888-801-8818 (ext. 277.)

Literacy exposed

In our last issue, we featured the unique fundraising calendar from a small library in Westeros Alberta. The 2006 calendar "revealed" a number of men and their love of reading. After seeing the article, the Yamaska Literacy council in Cowansville, Quebec was prompted to tell us about their 2005 calendar which acknowledges the tutors and learners who "take risks" and "bare their souls" for literacy in so many ways. Eleven ladies, one gentleman and a cow posed while numerous community members supported the venture. To find out more about how this Laubach affiliated program tackled their creative fundraising project, contact Yamaska Literacy Council at tel: 450-263-7503 or visit: www.nald.ca/ylc.

Sharing new findings on early language and literacy

After the success of the innovative 2005 Language and Literacy calendar, the Hanen Centre and its partners are pleased to launch the 2006 calendar. The bilingual calendar presents the latest findings on preschool language and literacy development in a practical and colourful format that is easy to use for anyone working with young children. Each month and week features simple tips and techniques for educators, parents and child care workers. To order your copy, contact the Hanen Centre at tel: 416-921-1073 (ext. 232) or visit: www.hanen.org.

In a related project, the Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network and the Canadian Child Care Federation recently announced their plans to develop and distribute language and literacy resource kits. These kits will be sent to 15,000 early learning and child care practitioners by Summer 2007. For more information visit: www.cllrnet.ca or www.cccf-fcsge.ca.

Great contest for Family Literacy Day

One lucky Canadian family could win a visit from beloved Canadian children's author Robert Munsch at their private in-home ABC CANADA Family Literacy Day party on January 23, 2006.

Families just need to write and tell the folks at ABC CANADA what they are planning as a Family Literacy Day celebration. For details on the contest and this year's FLD celebrations, visit: www.abc-canada.org/fld.

Counting everyone in!

It's Census time again! Statistics Canada is asking for our help to spread the word and encourage all Canadians to fill in their



census form online or by mail on Tuesday, May 16, 2006. Statistics Canada offers many communications materials free of charge to assist you in supporting others. Visit: www.census2006.ca.

Correction notice

In our last issue of literacy.ca (#18, summer 2005), we ran an article on an innovative Literacy and Youth Justice project in Calgary (p. 5). In the fourth paragraph, one line indicated that "It is estimated that 80% of inmates have learning disabilities." The authors have requested that we correct this error to say "It is estimated that as many as 75% of inmates have learning disabilities." We agree with them that it is important to share the correct information.



In November 2005, Statistics Canada released the full report of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS). For all the links, visit, www.literacy.ca!

Professional Development

Literacy Basics

Literacy Basics is a free self-directed online training website designed for Ontario literacy practitioners but will be of interest to literacy workers across the country. This innovative training website was researched, written and designed by Community Literacy of Ontario (CLO). Literacy Basics removes many



of the barriers to training faced by literacy practitioners. It reduces travel time, travel costs and scheduling conflicts. It also minimizes the lack of local availability and the lack of time to attend training in more traditional settings. So far, Literacy Basics has the following training modules:

- Initial and ongoing assessment
- Instructional strategies
- Exit and follow-up
- Volunteer management.

Please visit the website at www.nald.ca/literacybasics.

Training tool for learning disabilities screening

A new video from the Learning Disabilities Association of Canada (LDAC) has released a 20-minute training video that includes helpful tips, advice and suggestions on how to prepare for and conduct a successful screening interview to discover if your adult students are at risk for learning disabilities. *Screening for Success: Interview Techniques and Best Practices* complements the best-selling publication *Destination Literacy: Identifying and Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities*. Available in VHS or CD format, in English or French, the video costs \$30.00 or \$45 to buy as a package with the questionnaire. Visit www.ldac-taac.ca or tel: 613-238-5721.

Employability skills guides

Submitted by Lesley Patten, ASPECT, BC



On top of their literacy challenges, most learners face other educational, social and emotional challenges that may prevent them from achieving their goals. In response, BC's Association of Service Providers for Employability and Career Training (**ASPECT**), has developed three innovative curriculum guides:

- Employability Skills
- Work Search Strategies
- Job Well Done

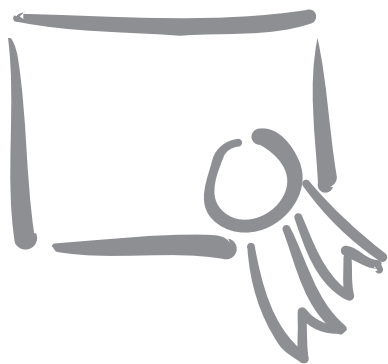
Employability Skills is made up of lesson plans that address personal management skills such as positive attitudes and behaviours, responsibility and adaptability, and teamwork skills. It also addresses anger management and conflict resolution as participants learn how to positively accept and give feedback and criticism. This guide emphasizes the importance of academic skills and encourages the concept of lifelong learning.

Work Search Strategies provides clients with a better understanding of the labour market, prepares them for work search, introduces self-marketing strategies and gives insight into online job search technologies.

Job Well Done offers clients guidelines and reminders for making a great first impression, builds skills to become a valuable employee and helps you progress by taking initiative and enhancing and refining skills. It also offers information on career paths and how and when to leave for new opportunities.

ASPECT is a non-profit association of community-based trainers in BC. Some of their efforts include the development of innovative resources that will strengthen their capacity to provide services to adults who have barriers to employment. Visit **ASPECT** at: www.aspect.bc.ca for more information about the Employability Skills Curriculum and other tools for trainers.

Certificate program for adult literacy educators



Delivered by three colleges in Ontario, the Teacher of Adults: Literacy Educator Certificate Program offers literacy practitioners an exciting

opportunity to gain the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of today's adult literacy learners. A revision of all of the Certificate courses is currently being completed (end of 2005) to reflect the outcomes-based environment of today's literacy programs.

The Certificate Program has six courses and a field placement component. Certificates are awarded once all courses and the placement are successfully completed. Whether you are new to the literacy field or a "seasoned" professional, you will find the courses challenging and stimulating. The program will build both your professional knowledge and your practical skills. The courses are available in a variety of distance education formats making it accessible from anywhere in Canada.

The courses (also called modules) are:

The Adult Literacy Learner
Assessing & Evaluating Literacy Learning
Planning For Literacy Learning
Foundational Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
Applied Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
Professional Issues in Adult Literacy Education
Field Placement

For more information on this program, visit: www.nald.ca/literacyeducator or contact Anne Ramsay at Project READ at: info@projectread.ca.

Skills and learning in the voluntary sector

Imagine what could be accomplished if over 350 leaders from the voluntary sector worked in partnership with allies from the education sector to enhance accessible, relevant education and training opportunities for voluntary sector leaders.

That's just what members of the National Learning Initiative (NLI) imagined back in 2002. They envisioned a new way of fostering dynamic leadership in the voluntary sector to support Canada's vibrant democracy and caring, inclusive communities.

One of the critiques being leveled at the voluntary sector is that it has lost its drive to transform society, and has become just another bureaucracy that perpetuates the status quo. Having a culture of learning, that not only adapts to changes in the external environment, but also generates new thinking that moves the organization and the society within which it functions towards the vision, may be the only way for voluntary sector organizations to survive in these turbulent times.

As a field that focuses on literacy and learning, we should be especially interested in whether our organizations actually support a learning culture. Do our organizations have the capacity to adapt and change? Are our members continually acquiring and sharing new knowledge and skills in pursuit of a common goal? What systemic and organizational barriers need to be challenged to achieve organizational viability? What practices impede our effectiveness?

The 2003 NLI report *Towards a framework of competencies for leadership in the voluntary sector* and other documents describing recent NLI projects and efforts to develop a culture of learning and leadership in the voluntary sector are available at: www.hrcouncil.ca (click on National Learning Initiative). Thought-provoking reading!

Coming Events

January 23, 2006

Canada-wide

Federal Election

Get out and vote! For plain language voter information as well as tips on how to make literacy a priority issue in this election visit: www.literacy.ca

January 27, 2006

Canada-wide

Family Literacy Day

Every year on January 27, families and communities across Canada celebrate this special day at literacy-themed events coordinated by literacy organizations, schools and libraries. For more information, contact the ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation at: <http://www.abc-canada.org/fld/>

May 16, 2006

Canada-wide

Census Day

Every five years, the nation sets aside one day to conduct the census — a count of all people and households in Canada. It gives us the most complete source of information about our country's population so it is important for everyone to be counted. For more information, visit: www.census2006.ca.

June 14, 2006

Ottawa, Ontario

National Summit on Libraries and Literacy

This summit will be a pre-conference event for the 2006 Annual Conference of the Canadian Library Association. For more information, contact Mary Reynolds at mreynolds@alphaplus.ca

June 28-30, 2006

Montreal, Quebec

Summer Institute: Accountability and Public Trust

Restoring the balance: is the cure worse than the disease? This collaborative institute will explore the impacts of and alternatives to recent accountability measures in Adult Literacy and Basic Skills. For information, contact the Centre for Literacy of Quebec at tel: 514-931-8731 (ext. 1415) or www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca.

Movement for Canadian Literacy

180 Metcalfe Street, Suite 300
Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1P5
Phone: 613-563-2464 • Fax: 613-563-2504
E-mail: mcl@literacy.ca

The Movement for Canadian Literacy is a national non-profit organization representing literacy coalitions, organizations and individuals from every province and territory. Our mission is to be a national voice for literacy for every Canadian.

Our member coalitions:

Literacy Alberta
Literacy BC
Newfoundland and Labrador (pending)
Literacy Nova Scotia
Literacy Partners of Manitoba
Literacy Partners of Quebec
New Brunswick Coalition for Literacy
NWT Literacy Council
Nunavut Literacy Council
Ontario Literacy Coalition
PEI Literacy Alliance
Saskatchewan Literacy Network
Yukon Literacy Coalition

The *literacy.ca* newsletter is a vehicle for literacy workers and supporters to share information, ideas, resources and research on emerging literacy issues. We welcome letters to the editor, articles, photos and suggestions for future issues as well as feedback on what you find in these pages. The views expressed in *literacy.ca* are not necessarily those of MCL, its Board of Directors or the editor, but are published to stimulate discussion on a range of adult literacy issues.

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President: Kim Crockatt
(kim@qiniq.com)

Executive Director: Wendy DesBrisay
(wdesbrisay@literacy.ca)

Managing Editor: Fiona Murray
(fiona@literacy.ca)

Design & Layout: The Right Type
(info@righttype.com)

Contributors: Wendy DesBrisay, Tracey Mollins,
Patricia Nutter, Lesley Patten,
Kate Reynolds-Braun, Sheila Stewart,
Bernadette Walsh.

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