

Learners in ACTION

NEWSLETTER

*of the
Movement for
Canadian Literacy's*

**LEARNERS'
ADVISORY
NETWORK**

LEARNERS IN ACTION

February 1998

Movement for Canadian Literacy, 458 MacLaren Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 5K6 • Tel: (613) 563-2464 • Fax: (613) 563-2504

Welcome to the first issue of the **Learners in ACTION** newsletter!

WE have a lot of exciting news to share. But first, let us introduce ourselves.

We're the Learners Advisory Network (or "the Network"). The Network is a project of the Movement for Canadian Literacy's Learners Committee.

ACTION ITEMS IN THIS ISSUE

- ▶ Canadian Public Health Association
- ▶ Audio Banking
- ▶ Food Tips Project
- ▶ Bunk Bed Information Sheet
- ▶ Seniors and Health
- ▶ Breast Cancer Study

The Network is made up of learner representatives from across Canada. We are a national "voice" for learners. Our job is to find out what learners are doing in Canada. We find out about the problems that learners are facing. We want this information so that we can help you.

We also want to know about the good things

learners are doing across Canada. We will share good news with you in our newsletters.

Ministre
of Human Resources
Development

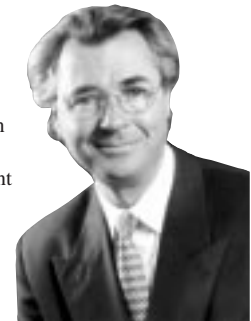


Ministre
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Ottawa, Canada K1A 0G8

MESSAGE TO THE MOVEMENT FOR CANADIAN LITERACY

Involving learners in an organization like the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) is not only important for the organization itself, but for sending a signal to all Canadians about the value that should be placed on learners' experiences and advice.



On behalf of the Government of Canada, I congratulate MCL on the creation of the Learners Advisory Network. Best wishes to all who are involved.

Pierre S. Pettigrew
Minister of Human Resources Development

Canada

Right now the Learners Advisory Network is busy setting up new services. We want to help the Canadian government, businesses and anyone else who needs our help to make their writing easier for all Canadians to understand.

Here's what we do:

...continued on page 3

Our representatives are in touch with learners across the country. We are your friends in Ottawa.

Learners in Action

Our Network has been involved in some very important projects. We've worked on:

- Food Tips sheets
- Bunk Bed sheet
- Seniors and Health
- Audio Banking Project
- Breast Cancer Study

Some of the most important work that the Network does is give advice on how to make information clearer. We also give advice on how to make services like banking easier for all Canadians to use. Here are some examples of the projects we have been working on.

Canadian Public Health Association

We began our work for the Canadian Public Health Association last winter. We met with them twice. We told them about our experiences with the health care system. The Canadian Public Health Association wanted to learn more about literacy and health care issues from adult literacy learners. Our stories and suggestions helped to improve a report that they wrote. The name of their report is *Plain Language and Clear Verbal Communication*.

Audio Banking

In October 1997 the Royal Bank started a new banking machine system for the blind. We were asked to test the system to find out if it made banking easier for learners. We had fun testing it and gave our feedback. We're looking forward to seeing if our suggestions are put into action!



Lynda Magerl



Joy Coldwell

Food Tips Project

We started the Food Tips project during the winter of 1997. The Consumers' Association of Canada wanted to create eight easy-to-read "tip sheets" about nutrition and food shopping.

Last summer we organized the testing of the sheets with literacy students across Canada. We asked the provincial and territorial literacy coalitions to find programs that would like to work with us.

We sent the tip sheet packages to over 90 literacy programs across Canada. Teachers and students worked together to answer questions. The questions helped to make the information in the tip sheets easy to understand.

The results were great! Over 70 programs answered. Over 600 literacy students took part in the project!

Right now a plain language writer is working with the suggestions made by learners. Our client, the Consumers' Association of Canada, is really pleased with our work.

This project benefits everyone. Canadians will get easy-to-understand information on how to eat well. Learners and English as a Second Language programs will use the tip sheets to improve reading skills. We hope you'll enjoy reading the food tip sheets in class!

Bunk Bed Information Sheet

Last fall the Canadian Public Health Association asked for our help with an information sheet on bunk beds.

Five of the Network's members were interviewed to find out what we thought of it. We were asked what we thought of the language, content and design of the information. We gave suggestions on how to make the bunk bed information clearer and more attractive to read.

Now that the sheet on bunk beds has been updated with our suggestions, we will be looking at this information once more. Our client wants to see if we can make it better again before more Canadians get to see it.

Seniors and Health

In January 1998, the Canadian Public Health Association asked us to help them with a seniors and health project. They wanted to hear our stories about our experiences with medical people. Two senior citizens from the Network volunteered to help.

The senior citizen learners were asked

WELCOME... *continued from page 1*

- ▶ We make sure writing is easy to read and understand.
- ▶ We make sure that information is useful and that its message is clear.
- ▶ We give advice on how to reach learners.
- ▶ We do research about literacy. Governments and businesses need to understand what holds learners back from learning. They also need to know

questions about their experiences with the health care system. The learners told them stories about when things didn't work well. For example, the learners told stories about times when they didn't take drugs the right way. The learners also told stories about when information was given in a way that they could not understand. We were told our stories were excellent!

The Canadian Public Health Association hopes that our feedback will help doctors, nurses, and other medical workers. Our stories will help medical people understand why they need to communicate more clearly. That way all Canadians will be better served by health care workers.

Breast Cancer Study

In January 1998, we helped the Canadian Public Health Association with a Breast Cancer study. Six women learners worked on this project. Five of the women were from our Network. The sixth volunteer was from Prince Edward Island. She wanted to help out with the study. We hope that our suggestions will make breast cancer information easier to understand.

about things learning makes possible. We want to break these walls down.

We hope that you will enjoy reading our newsletter and learning more about what the Network can do for (and with!) you.

Sincerely,

*Linda Magerl, Chair
MCL Learners Committee*

If you are interested in working on Network projects, please contact the Movement for Canadian Literacy. Your ideas and input are needed.

Reports from the Regions

We are all involved in literacy programs in our own part of Canada. Here's a look at some of the work that we have been doing.

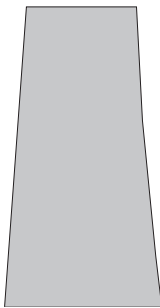
Alberta



Helen Herbert is our learner representative from Alberta. She is helping to organize a student conference at the Learning Centre in Edmonton.

The conference is being coordinated and organized by the students at the Learning Centre. The conference will be a chance for all learners at the Learner Centre to meet and exchange ideas. The conference is planned for April 2, 1998.

Saskatchewan



Lynda Magerl is our learner representative from Saskatchewan. She works with the Saskatchewan Literacy Network. The Saskatchewan Literacy Network is organizing a symposium.

People at the symposium will talk about setting up a learner network in Saskatchewan. For Lynda, a learner network in her province would be a dream come true. Lynda said that it is important to get learners in Saskatchewan organized. Lynda feels that way learners' voices can be better heard. The symposium will take place in June 1998.

Nova Scotia



Edna Kenney, our learner

representative from Nova Scotia, said that everyone out east is very busy right now. She is pleased to tell everyone that the Rotary Club donated money to six different literacy programs in Nova Scotia. Edna was one of the learner representatives who gave the fundraising speech in front of the Rotary Club members. Congratulations Edna!

Edna is a TV star! She is going to be talking about literacy on TV. Catch her in action! The show will be aired on February 10, 1998. It is on Nova Scotia Access Cable (Cable 5). The show is called *Church in Action*.

Edna has also been busy organizing a training session for people who want to tutor for Laubach. The training will take place on the weekend of February 20-21, 1998.

New Brunswick



Dorothy Silver is our learner representative from New Brunswick.

Dorothy is one of the learner representatives who sits on the board of the New Brunswick Committee on Literacy. She is helping the committee organize a conference. At the conference, people will be


working on setting up a provincial learners network. The conference will take place this fall.

Last year Dorothy was part of a three-day "Round Table" discussion on literacy. Literacy organizations from across New Brunswick attended. Out of this came the Minister's Literacy Circle. The Minister's Literacy Circle includes both French and English-speaking learners. The Minister's Literacy Circle has started organizing and working on priorities for learners.

In 1989, Dorothy started a support group called "Second Chance Learners." A couple of weeks ago, she invited a guest speaker from the Consumers' Association of Canada to talk at their meeting. The speaker gave practical advice to the group. He spoke about issues like credit card fraud.

Dorothy is also organizing a *Second Chance Learners* Valentine's event.

Ontario



Dan Haley is our learner representative from Ontario. Right now he is trying to set up a learners support group for people in the Peterborough / Haliburton area.

Unfortunately he is having a lot of trouble organizing the support group.

Dan says that one of the reasons the support group hasn't been successful is because it hasn't received any funding. He said that the group needs money in order to grow.

Dan says that he needs more learners to participate in the support group. He would really like it if the learners in the Peterborough/Haliburton region got involved with the support group. If you think that you would like to talk to him about getting involved he would love to hear from you! His e-mail address is: dhaley@ptbo.igs.net. You are also welcome to contact the staff members at the Movement for Canadian Literacy. Our telephone number is (613) 563-2464. It's great to get involved!

Dan will be speaking at the Annual General Meeting of a literacy organization in Orillia. The meeting is probably going to be on June 1. This date will be confirmed in our next newsletter.

Dan really believes in speaking out. He says that he never misses a chance to talk about literacy. He says that learners need to talk about the problems that they face. We need to voice our concerns because our opinions count!

Dan just returned from a meeting with Correction Services Canada in New Brunswick. He was the only person at the meeting who had connections with literacy groups. Prison chaplains will be getting in touch with Dan when they need advice about literacy and prison inmates.

Yukon

Joy Coldwell is our learner representative from the Yukon. She says that many learners in the Yukon are not able to get the help that they need. This is because there is not

The Network would love to hear from you!

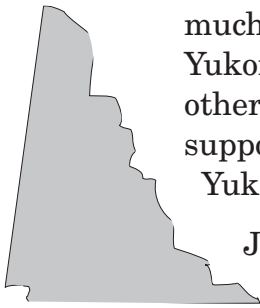
If you have news to share about what's happening in your home town, we'd be happy to spread the word! Please contact the Movement for Canadian Literacy.

We would also be pleased to help you get in touch with any of the Network members.

Just give the Movement for Canadian Literacy a call! Our phone number is

(613) 563-2464

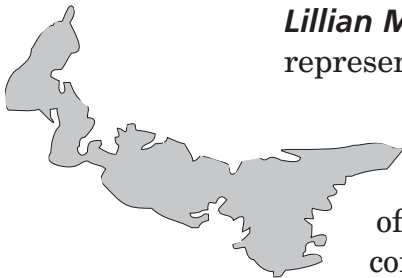




much funding for literacy programs. Yukon Learn, Joy's literacy group, and other literacy programs are not able to support all of the learners in the Yukon.

Joy would like Internet training for the learners at Yukon Learn.

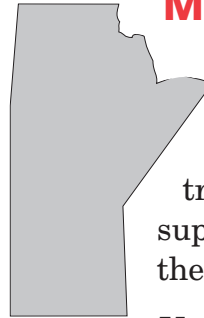
Prince Edward Island



Lillian Mead is our learner representative from Prince Edward Island (PEI). She is very busy in PEI trying to get the PEI Adult Learners Association off the ground. Learners, the community and the PEI provincial government are

supportive of Lillian's work. Good for you Lillian!

Manitoba



Hilma Fiedler is our learner representative from Manitoba. Hilma is trying to organize a learner support group for learners in the Thompson area.

Unfortunately, she is having trouble getting people involved in the group. She says that she would like to get in touch with learners, even if it's just to talk over coffee. Hilma would love to hear from learners in Manitoba.



Here's
Your
Learners
Advisory
Network



Standing: Hilma Fiedler, Dan Haley, Lynda Magerl, Edna Kenney, Dorothy Silver, Nancy Foreman (our CPHA client), Deborah Gordon (our CPHA client), Brenda Lee Giles, Helen Herbert, and Joy Coldwell.
Sitting: (left to right) Pat Hardisty and Lillian Mead.

FEEDBACK

Our readers are important to us! We would really appreciate your feedback on our newsletter.

Do you have a story to tell us? What about some good news? We would love to hear from you!

Would you like to see you own work published? You can write about what

learners are doing in your area. If you have poems or stories send them to us.

This paper is for our readers. Let us know what you want to read about!

We're really looking forward to hearing from you!

We want you to be happy with our newsletter. Please share your ideas with us. You can get in touch with the Movement for Canadian Literacy.

If you have ideas or stories to share, please contact Deborah Chapman or Libby Gray at the Movement for Canadian Literacy. You can call them at (613) 563-2464. You can fax too. Their fax number is: (613) 563-2504. If you would like to write to them, their address is:

**458 MacLaren Street
Second Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1R 5K6**

You can also send them an e-mail.
Their address is: mcl@magi.com

This logo shows that Network standards of clear communication have been met.

OUR NEXT ISSUE...

Stay tuned for our next issue! We are going to be sharing lots of exciting news with you! Here's a quick look at some of the news that will be in the next issue:

- ▶ an update on Literacy Action Day
- ▶ information on learners and computers
- ▶ and more Reports from the Regions



Literacy Action Day 1998

This year, Literacy Action Day is on February 19. We'll tell you all about it in our next Newsletter!

Literacy Action Day is on February 19. Network learners will be very busy that day promoting literacy on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

We have meetings set up with MPs and Senators. We are going to tell the

politicians about the problems adult learners face.

In our next issue, we will have plenty of stories to share with you about Literacy Action Day.

Community Volunteer Income Tax Program

If you need help with your income tax call "Revenue Canada, General Inquiries." It is listed in the blue pages of the telephone book.

Ask them about the **Community Volunteer Income Tax Program**.

The Community Volunteer Income Tax Program would like to help you! For seven years, the program has helped over one million people with their income tax returns. If you need help with your income tax, please let them know.

For more information, please contact the coordinator of your nearest tax office. The coordinator's telephone number can be found by calling "Revenue Canada, General Inquiries." This is listed in the Government of Canada section in the "blue pages" of the telephone book.



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Deborah Chapman - Network Coordinator/Researcher (left) and Libby Gray - Assistant Coordinator

The Learners Advisory Network is proudly sponsored by:

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