



Movement for Canadian Literacy

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January, 1999
Volume 1, No. 2

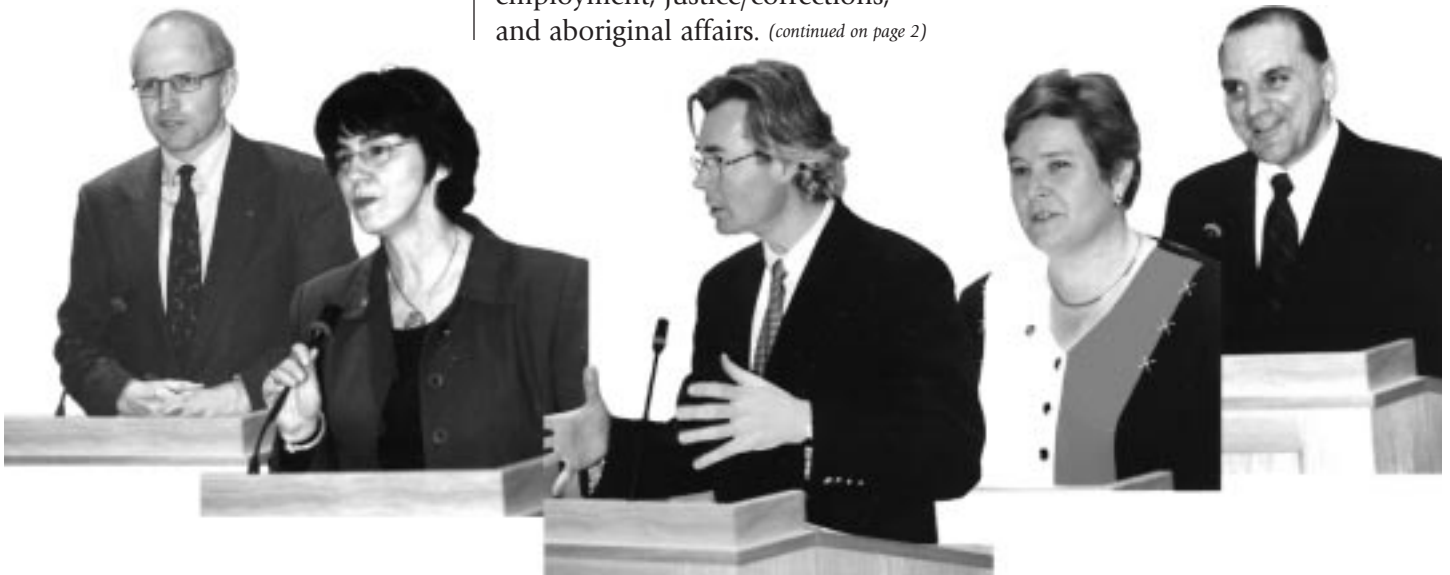
Literacy Action Day (LAD) 99

MEMBERS OF THE LITERACY COMMUNITY are in an excellent position to explain to policy-makers how literacy interacts with health care, poverty, employment, economic development, crime prevention, social justice, education, training, aboriginal rights and other contemporary concerns. Since 1993, MCL has worked with other national literacy groups to organize an annual "Literacy Action Day" to raise support for literacy issues among federal politicians. LAD 99 will take place on Thursday, February 18.

Once again, the other national literacy organizations involved are: ABC CANADA, la Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF), Frontier College, Laubach Literacy of Canada (LLC), and the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD). As in the past, literacy practitioners and adult learners will visit Parliament Hill to discuss literacy problems and solutions with MPs. This year, they will also bring certain key messages to public officials in four areas of federal government activity: health, employment, justice/corrections, and aboriginal affairs. *(continued on page 2)*

What's Inside

- 4** Literacy News
- 5** Learners in Action
- 7** Learner-friendly Websites
- 8** Taking Care of Ourselves
- 11** Literacy and Public Dialogue
continued
- 13** Resources for Literacy work
- 17** Family Literacy Resources
- 19** Training
- 20** Literacy Research
- 23** Organizational Resources
- 24** Calendar



Representatives of the five federal parties speaking at the LAD 98 reception: (left to right) Greg Thompson (Progressive Conservative); Christiane Gagnon, (Bloc Québécois); the Honourable Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Human Resources Development (Liberal Party); Deborah Grey (Reform Party); Peter Mancini (New Democratic Party).

literacy.ca

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literacy.ca is an "information space" for the literacy community in Canada. Its purpose is to pre-digest the vast quantities of literacy information being generated across Canada and internationally.

Literacy workers are busy teaching, keeping their programs afloat and trouble-shooting. They don't have time to wade through long research and project reports, yet they need to keep up-to-date on what is available to them as literacy professionals. *literacy.ca* aims to keep them posted on the most important and useful resources for literacy work.

literacy.ca is more than just this newsletter. Check MCL's website at www.literacy.ca for more information and links.

We welcome your feedback! Please send us your suggestions and submissions for both the newsletter and the website.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada.

ISSN: 1481-3698

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Craig, Wendy and Nayda at launch of *literacy.ca*

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Literacy and Health

- Literacy plays an important role in health. Low literacy has a major negative impact on health, and is interrelated with most other determinants of health.
- Not only do people with low literacy have poorer health, they have trouble getting health information in a form that they can understand. Health information must be presented in plain language.
- Literacy and health goals have a better chance of success when pursued together. Partnerships between the health and adult education fields have great potential to make a difference.



Senator Joyce Fairbairn, one of Canada's most passionate advocates for literacy, at LAD 98 reception.

Literacy and Employment

- People with low literacy skills have a harder time getting and keeping employment. Good literacy skills are essential in today's labour market.
- Good literacy skills are also necessary to access the training that can lead to employment.
- We need a training system that ensures all Canadians can prepare for and get work.
- Unemployed workers with low literacy skills need every opportunity to gain the skills and credentials they need to have a chance at decent jobs.
- Workplace literacy programs benefit both workers and employers.

Literacy and Justice

- In general, offenders have significantly lower literacy skills than the general population. Low literacy can play a role in criminal behaviour, as people with low literacy skills often have fewer opportunities to play positive roles in their communities.

- Accused persons with low literacy skills may not have equal access to justice – from arrest to sentencing, literacy barriers can affect both process and outcome.
- Offenders who improve their literacy skills are less likely to re-offend.
- Investing in literacy, especially for offenders and youth at risk, is an effective crime prevention strategy.
- Literacy organizations have developed effective approaches to help ex-offenders and at-risk youth, and these should be supported.



Lobbyists browse at display table, LAD 98

Aboriginal Literacy

- All of the above factors affect native people and communities to a disproportionate degree. Native people on average have poorer health, higher unemployment, more incarcerations, lower literacy rates, and greater poverty than the general population. Unequal opportunity, discrimination and the past system of residential schools have harmed generations of native people in a variety of ways.
- Native literacy programs are designed to recognise and affirm the cultures and meet the special needs of native learners, families and communities, and should be supported.



Meeting of the Aboriginal Subcommittee of the Learners Advisory Network with the Deputy Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs during LAD 98

A common thread in all these issues is that children from disadvantaged families are at risk for low literacy as well as for poor health,

unemployment, and anti-social behaviour. Literacy programs, in particular family literacy programs, play an important role in preventing and addressing these problems. But literacy programs are only part of the solution. Literacy students have many other fundamental challenges in their lives, such as poverty, discrimination and abuse, which literacy programs have neither the mandate nor the capacity to deal with. Decision-makers must understand that the effects of poverty, abuse and discrimination must be addressed in strategies to get people in a position to be self-supporting and contribute to society.

In preparation for LAD and as part of the literacy.ca project, we have created a "Literacy and ..." section on MCL's website where you will find information about the above issues. If you know of good resources which should be added to these collections, please let us know. You will notice that other collections are planned, so send us your suggestions for those as well.

If you would like to contribute to LAD 99, it would be very useful for MCL to receive any examples you have from your community of how federal programs are working, or not working, from a literacy point of view.

You can contact Craig McNaughton by phone (613-563-2464), fax (613-563-2504) or e-mail (cmcnaughton@literacy.ca) right up to February 17. Don't forget to let your MP know that you would appreciate their taking time to meet with literacy representatives during Literacy Action Day 1999.

Literacy News

MCL members win "Flight for Freedom" awards



Four MCL Board and Learners Network members won 1998 Canada Post "Flight for Freedom" Awards. Shown right to left are Joy Coldwell (Individual Achievement, Yukon) and Liesel Briggs (Yukon Learn for Literacy Leadership), Lynda Magerl (Individual Achievement, Saskatchewan), Linda Mitchell (Literacy B.C. for Literacy Leadership), with MCL President Nayda Veeman, and Learner Spokesperson Dorothy Silver.

News from the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)

NLS Literacy Resource Collection now searchable on-line.

The National Literacy Secretariat's extensive library collection is integrated with the library of Human Resources Development Canada. It can be searched online and items can be borrowed through inter-library loan. PRIMO, the catalogue of the libraries of HRDC and Citizenship and Immigration Canada is on the web at <http://198.102.152.100/>. Once on the site, you'll probably want to "scope in" to the "Literacy and Plain Language" collection.

Bibliography of Workplace Literacy Resources now available

Terri Tomchyshyn at the NLS has compiled a bibliography of Workplace Literacy materials funded by NLS over the years. Other bibliographies of NLS-funded resources, for instance on Family Literacy, are planned. You can contact Terri at Tel: 819-997-7296, E-mail: ttom@istar.ca.

Valuing Literacy in Canada joint research initiative

The NLS and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) will invest \$2.5 million in literacy research over 5 years. For details, see the Research section, page 20.

National Literacy and Health Millennium Conference planned

The Canadian Public Health Association's National Literacy and Health Program has received funding to organize a *National Literacy and Health Millennium Conference* in May 2000. Health professionals; literacy practitioners, advocates, and learners; researchers; and others involved in the literacy and health fields will come together to learn from each other and chart a course for literacy and health in the new millennium. Early in 1999, an electronic conference and e-mail list will be set up to enable participants to connect and share ideas and resources before the conference. For more information, contact CPHA, 400-1565 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1Z 8R1, Tel: 613-725-3769, Fax: 613-725-9826, E-mail: hrc/cds@cpha.ca, Website: www.cpha.ca

Consumers' Association of Canada (CAC) literacy projects

Last year, CAC worked with The Federated Women's Institutes to make FWI members aware of literacy issues in their communities. About 1200 workshops took place in across rural Canada, with a kit of written materials and a video produced by CAC. The video, narrated by Peter Gzowski, introduced two persons with low literacy skills—a woman who learned to read at age 50 (MCL's own Dorothy Silver!) and a young

man who must hire help because he cannot read well enough for certain jobs on his successful dairy farm.

Some of you were involved in testing the plainly written of CAC's "Food Tips." CAC will now work with The Northwest Company to adapt the eight Food Tips for their Northern communities.

For more information about Consumers' Association of Canada's literacy projects and materials, contact CAC, 267 O'Connor Street, Ottawa, ON, K2P 1V3. Tel: 613-238-2533, Fax: 613-563-2254, Website: www.consumer.ca.

Learners in Action

We borrowed this title from MCL's learner newsletter, *Learners in ACTION*, as it seemed to suit the stories below.

Planting Seeds - one learner's journey

Ten years ago, MCL set up a Learners Committee to plan a learners' event for International Literacy Year, 1990. At the first national meeting of learners held in Toronto in March 1989, thirteen literacy learners from across the country worked with the Committee to plan a conference to be held at Candle Lake, Saskatchewan. The conference was organized in the hopes that more learners would become spokespersons for adult literacy, and that more adult literacy organizations would allow learners to really participate. It was set up to encourage learners to support one another and to begin to speak for themselves.

In May of 1990, fifty-eight learners gathered in cabins and around camp-fires at Candle Lake. The group included women and men from all corners of Canada, people whose first languages were Sioux, Inuktitut, Cree, Southern Tutchone, MicMac, Ojibway, Inuit, Punjabi, Kikuyu, Zulu, Kwi Swahili, Russian, Spanish, French and English. Larry Loyie, a longtime MCL member and former board member, was there. For Larry, the conference planted a seed.

Larry's main goal for getting into literacy was to be a writer. At Candle Lake, he made many new friends, including Audrey Fofonoff, who was there as a support person for literacy delegates from Newfoundland.



Larry Loyie and his performers

After 1990, doors opened for Larry's creative work. He wrote two plays, with a third now in progress. He wrote many published articles, and is working on a children's book for Groundwood Books of Toronto. As "Living Transitions", Larry and his partner Constance Brisseden work by invitation in communities across Canada, teaching writing as a tool for honouring the past and healing the present.

Larry's first play, "Ora Pro Nobis (Pray for Us)" has been staged many times and is published

with a companion play, "Strength of Indian Women" by Secwepemc and Ktunaxa writer Vera Manuel in *Two Plays About Residential Schools*. "Ora Pro Nobis" is about the friendship of a group of boys in residential school and how this friendship helps them survive. In "Strength of Indian Women," a group of women reveal the secrets of their residential school experiences with humour and compassion as they prepare for a 13-year-old girl's coming of age feast. The Vancouver Public Library recently hosted a well-attended "Meet the Authors" evening with Larry and Vera.

"Candle Lake opened doors for me as a writer, and provided me with a support group," says Larry. "Over the past two years, we visited Audrey Fofonoff who now teaches at the Stony Point campus of Alberta Vocational College. In May 1998, we spent a week as guest writers in this Cree community. I was born near there so it was a great honour for me. What started as a seed almost a decade ago continues to blossom."

Two Plays About Residential School is available for \$12 per copy plus \$3 for mailing from Living Traditions, 309-319 E. 7th Avenue, Vancouver, British Columbia, V5T 1M9. Tel: 604-876-0880; Fax: 604-876-5105



Second Chance Learners

Dorothy Silver, another learner who has also played a big role at MCL over the years, was at Candle Lake too. In 1989 Dorothy founded Second Chance Learners because she saw a need for learners to get together to support each other. Ten years later, Second Chance Learners is still meeting in Fredericton once a week, and has its own website. You can find more information about Second Chance Learners, and a handbook about how to set up a similar group, on the website at <http://www.nald.ca/scl.htm>.



Dorothy, Larry and another learner at Candle Lake in 1990

Since learning to read at age 50, Dorothy Silver has done many public speaking engagements across the country. She was recently featured in a video about literacy produced by the Consumers Association of Canada for the Women's Institutes. Now Dorothy has been awarded a provincial grant to travel around New Brunswick to recruit other learners for a literacy Speakers Bureau.

You can contact Dorothy and Second Chance Learners at 18 Ross Terrace, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5W5. Tel: 506-472-8506, Fax: 506-459-5198, E-mail: silverd@nbnet.nb.ca.

Manitoba Adult Learner's Circle

Learners from across Manitoba recently elected Abe Friesen as their new representative to the MCL Learners Network. He replaces Hilma Fiedler, whose contribution was much appreciated during her term as the first Manitoba learner rep to MCL. Literacy Partners of Manitoba is working to create a democratically elected provincial Learner's Circle and Speakers Bureau, with support from the National Literacy Secretariat. Abe Friesen can be contacted through Judith Hayes, Provincial Learner Coordinator, Tel: 204-697-3133 or E-mail: mckhay@compuserve.com.

Alberta Students Rock!

For International Literacy Day '98, 13 Alberta literacy programs hosted two events. According to the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy (AAAL) newsletter, "Student involvement in these events was outstanding. The students helped plan the events, made speeches, performed a Reader's Theatre, did interviews with the media, and displayed their writings at the events."

Edna Milligan, a student from Olds' Project Read Soon, said "I learned more in a weekend than in a year of tutoring. We students learned from each other. The speakers got us interested in books, we learned different ways of doing things. ... I am a grandmother, and conferences helped four generations by helping me."

Learner-friendly Websites



Mike Kelly has done a lot of work building bridges between literacy people and technology. He is now developing learning materials for the Internet. Mike agreed to share some learner-friendly websites he has found in his "travels".

- **"Mapblast"** <http://www.mapblast.com>
Type in a street address with the city, province and postal code in the area that says "Canadian" and you will see a map of that area. The balloon on the right will even allow you to zoom in and see a close-up.
- **"How far is it"** <http://www.indo.com/distance/>
This site lets you find out the distance between two cities. For example if you type in Vancouver and Halifax and click a button, it will tell you that the distance between these two cities is 2758 miles (4439 kilometers). I had to type in Vancouver BC and Halifax NS because there are 6 Halifaxes and 2 Vancouvers in North America!
- **Word Search**
<http://www.xs4all.nl/~paridaan/Javalovers/words.htm>
If you like word search puzzles, check out this page. It's like word search puzzles on paper, except that instead of circling the letters, you drag your mouse over them.

- **Coin vocabulary**

<http://www.ampsc.com/~engage/js/CoinVocabPRE.html>
This site tests your knowledge of Canadian coins and helps you with the spelling of each word.

- **Scavenger Hunt**

<http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/th/1/sg-begin.html>
You can learn a lot about the web, learn about doing research, and improve your reading by doing this scavenger hunt.

- **Hot Links to Cool Sites for Adult Learners**

<http://www.nsn.org/wkkhome/adult/ALC5.html>
Check it out!

Mike also shared some advice for web surfing:

- Learning to use the Internet can be frustrating at first, so ask someone more experienced if you need help.
- Instead of just clicking on a link to open it, hold down the mouse button and choose 'New window with this link'. The first site stays open behind the new window. You can open window after window, and when you close them, you'll be back at the first site.
- Don't forget to create 'bookmarks' for your favourite sites.

Taking Care of Ourselves

Breaking the silence in literacy work

The term "breaking the silence" was coined when women first began to share their experiences and discover a social perspective on problems they had thought were personal failures. Women had to confront their own sense of shame as well as the fear of breaking social taboos, in order to begin to identify the issues behind their experiences.

Within the literacy community, some "silences" are beginning to be broken. Here two literacy workers write about the real experiences of literacy learners and workers. Jenny Horsman and Deborah Morgan address in their own ways issues that many of us have felt we had to keep to ourselves: the oppression and pain in the lives of our students, the "costs of bearing witness," and our own limits and needs. Both Jenny and Deborah recognise that women students and teachers have many issues in common, and see value in work that allows them to explore these issues together as women.

Jenny Horsman's research on women and literacy has now spanned several years and engaged many learners, teachers and others across the country. Her forthcoming book is an in depth look at literacy and trauma. The table of contents points to some fascinating directions: "What is 'normal' in a violent society", "Learning in the context of trauma: the challenge of setting goals", "Bringing the whole person to learning in the context of trauma", "Bridging the divide between literacy and therapy", "Examining the costs for literacy workers", "Possibilities for change (for learners, workers, programs)".

Deborah Morgan is Past President of both the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy (AAAL) and Literacy Coordinators of Alberta (LCA). She is the author of *Opening Doors*, which documents the lived experience and celebrates the work of Alberta literacy workers, and *Writing Out Loud*. She lives in Camrose, Alberta with her 2 teenage sons and is currently coordinating the Write to Learn Project. Last November, Deborah's

contribution to the literacy community was recognised through an "Alberta Literacy Award of Merit" at the provincial literacy conference.

As literacy workers, we need to take care of ourselves, so we can be there for learners in a sustainable way. It's time to break the silence about what our work involves, and what we need to be able to keep doing it. In addition to practical tools such as teaching resources and research information, we need to share our hard-won wisdom and strategies for staying healthy and positive in our work. I would like to invite submissions or suggestions, to make this a regular column. —Ed.

The Costs of "Bearing Witness"

by Jenny Horsman

In recent research I looked at the impact of violence on women's literacy learning, in order to develop approaches to help women learn better. My research involved literacy workers, literacy learners, therapists, counsellors and organizational staff from five regions of Canada in focus group sessions, individual interviews and electronic discussions. The research revealed a myriad of ways that experiences of trauma affect learning, and led to many strategies for how literacy programs could address the impact of trauma and support women to learn. Without acknowledgement of the impacts of trauma on learning, learners and workers alike may become frustrated and despairing over the lack of possibilities for real change. In this brief article, rather than introduce the impacts of trauma on learning that I identified, I want to raise questions about the impact on workers when we hear disclosures of abuse.

In my interviews, literacy workers described a range of violence they had seen or heard about in their classrooms, and spoke of their own struggles as they wondered how to respond. These workers experience enormous challenges in their work. They feel contradictory pressures, on one hand to silence talk about the violence they

and their learners experience, on the other to be able to listen to anything learners want to share, provide exhaustive support, AND successfully teach everyone to read in record time. Whether a worker is experienced at setting boundaries or not, there are costs to herself as a consequence of her work in literacy. She may absorb some of the pain in her learners' lives, yet may feel unable to seek support for herself. She may not even be aware of the effect that being with so much pain is having on her. In the face of trauma a literacy worker can easily feel helpless, which may lead to a tendency to "rescue" the survivor. The implication that "no one else could be as good as you"—that encourages literacy workers and therapists to take on more than they should—is a trap for learner and worker alike.

Workers I spoke to said that issues of violence are rarely discussed in their programs or local networks. This silence reinforces a sense that listening and bearing witness are not legitimate work, as well as a feeling that workers have no choice but to listen, and bear it alone. As a result of the research I argue that literacy workers need a variety of places to talk, to develop a recognition of the depth and complexity of these issues. We need access to training that will help us recognize our own limits and explore alternative approaches that support the learner, but do not demand too high a price of the worker. Perhaps we should explore models of "peer support and supervision" used in the therapeutic field and see what they might offer us in literacy work as a way to talk through the issues we experience in our work and gain support for addressing them. We need far greater recognition of the complex work involved in listening and supporting learners around issues of violence. We need to support each other, and to be supported by our programs in developing ways to recognize our own needs and to look after ourselves with care.

"But I'm Not a Therapist": Furthering Discussion about Literacy Work with Survivors of Trauma introduces the research findings in more detail. It is available to download on the Internet at <http://alphaplus.ca> under "resources" or from

CLOW: <http://www.nald.ca/cclow.htm>,
E-mail: cclow@web.net, Tel: (416) 699-1909.

The research was sponsored by The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CLOW) and funded by the National Literacy Secretariat. Many people contributed their wisdom to the process which brought together the ideas and analysis of the research, and I offer them a collective thank-you. I am currently finishing a book which explores the findings in depth. For more information, contact me at jhorsman@idirect.com.

Real Life Literacy

by Deborah Morgan

I dove into my literacy work with the best of intentions. As the first coordinator of a newly funded volunteer tutor literacy program, I put my heart and soul into all aspects of the program—painting the office space I had found, speaking to community groups, interviewing and assessing students, matching tutors with students, setting up a resource library, and writing funding proposals. By the end of the first year, there were 30 students working with 30 trained volunteer tutors. By the end of the third year, I was burned out.

I had established a great-looking program and facility. On paper it sounded wonderful, but I wasn't convinced that the students were improving their literacy skills. What did I really know about teaching reading and writing to adults? My years of teaching evening craft classes to middle-aged women who could afford the courses and the time, didn't prepare me for the degree of difficulty my students faced. It seemed that learning constantly took a back seat to their very real problems of family dynamics, job changes/losses, emotional and physical illness and lack of motivation. I cared deeply about my students, but I felt unable to help them. I felt so inadequate, I felt like a fraud for even trying.

I left the "front lines" to help establish a provincial resource network to support the people working in the field. I could identify with the frustrations and the isolation they felt. Their

stories were so similar to mine. "I feel like all I do is put out fires." "I don't know if I'm making a difference." "I don't know what to do when my student is crying because she got cut off Social Services." "I feel angry when I work so hard to find a tutor for a student and he doesn't bother to show up for the lessons." Many of these workers also experienced varying degrees of burnout.

But over the years I spent helping to develop policy with provincial literacy organizations and government to ensure quality professional development and well deserved recognition for literacy workers, I also heard stories of strength and commit-

ment that were real and commendable. "I love it when I see a student's eyes light up when he writes a sentence with no spelling mistakes." "I took the ESL students and their kids out for their first Halloween and we had a great time together." "It drives me crazy when my student cancels his lessons, but when we do get together, we make a lot of progress." As the field was getting more established, literacy workers were finding that survival meant finding a healthy balance in their lives. They were learning how to take care of themselves, how to set boundaries and how to listen to problems rather than try to solve them.

When I was ready to go back to the classroom five years ago, I was determined not to make the same mistakes I made the first time. I hoped that my expectations were more reasonable and I knew I had a much better sense of myself. Working with students on committees over the years, I had come to understand that students

truly wanted a more active role in their own learning. They didn't want someone deciding what was best for them. This gave me the idea to gather together a group of women on Social Assistance to help me develop a proposal for a literacy/life skills program designed around their specific needs. The women called it the "Chapters Program" because they said they wanted to start a new chapter in their lives. I was the facilitator, but the program belonged to them. And it worked—for them AND for me.

I didn't panic or stress myself out with the Chapters Program. I sat back and took the time to look at the individual needs of each

participant. What were the things that were keeping her from class? What did she need that would make the classroom a more safe and comfortable place for her? What ideas made her laugh, and what thoughts

made her cry? I came to see the women in the program as distinct individuals who also shared many similarities. I learned that they each had their own life story, but they all wanted to move forward in their lives. Together we created a learning environment that was fun and spontaneous and relevant to their everyday lives. And this time I didn't burn out.

Not only did I not burn out, I learned a great deal about myself that has helped me grow and experience life with a greater sense of joy and purpose. The women in Chapters helped me to validate my own story. They didn't expect me to know it all. They shared their courage and strength with me and helped me renew my own love of learning and my own faith in the world



Deborah and three of her students. From left to right, they are: Barb MacTavish, Deborah Morgan, Sharron Szott and Alice Kneeland.

around me. The students learned a lot, too. As they started to believe they could learn and have fun with learning, they began to take control of their lives, making healthy changes that helped them move towards their goals. We all felt more comfortable with the understanding that learning does not happen in isolation of real life.

Today, 13 years after taking my first job as a coordinator of a volunteer tutor program, I am working on an exciting project called The Write to Learn Project, which is designed to study and promote the use and value of writing in literacy programming in Canada. Three of the women from the original Chapters Program have been

receiving training to facilitate writing workshops and speak at Conferences about how literacy (writing especially) has helped to change and improve their lives. Our roles of student and teacher interchange daily, as the students continue to help me understand the importance of viewing ourselves and the people around us as whole people with an array of individual strengths and weaknesses that make us the unique and wonderful people we are. I love the work I'm doing now, and best of all, I don't feel like a fraud anymore.

Deborah Morgan can be reached at 403-672-6289, E-mail: deborah_morgan@aaal.ab.ca.

Literacy and Public Dialogue *continued*

In this issue we continue the theme of public dialogue, although it may be called other names, such as citizen participation or citizen engagement, or....

Journal of Ordinary Thought

This website site reminded me of the work of Deborah Morgan and the "Chapters" women, Larry Loyie, Lee Weinstein, Kate Nonesuch and many others who encourage people to improve their literacy skills by writing about their lives. The Neighborhood Writing Alliance (NWA) holds writing workshops in inner city Chicago, and publishes their writing in the Journal of Ordinary Thought (JOT), which "strives to be a vehicle for reflection, communication, and change". NWA is founded on the propositions that every person is a philosopher, that expressing one's thought fosters creativity and change, and that taking control of life requires people to think about the world and to share their thoughts with others. The goal of both the workshops and the publication is to develop communities of writers who reflect on the experience of ordinary people, and work to improve their personal and collective circumstances. Check it out at <http://www.jot.org/>.

CHP Notes: Sharing our experience in building healthier communities

Janis Wood Catano and the Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic produced an amazing resource kit to help communities, organizations and governments work together to understand and address issues related to child poverty in Atlantic Canada. The kit is written in clear language, and uses song lyrics to set up the discussions and put a human face on the issues (also to help engage people regardless of their education level). Each one of seven issue sheets (Talking about Child Poverty, Child Poverty is Increasing, Single Mother Families, Aboriginal Children, Black and Visible Minority Children, Out-of-the-Mainstream Youth, and What Next?) includes lyrics of a song about the issue with information about how to get the CD, information to provide a factual base for discussion, and several questions for discussion. The sheets are designed to photocopy clearly, and are available for a nominal cost from Community Health Promotion Network Atlantic, P.O. Box 825, Memramcook, NB, E0A 2C0. Tel: 506-758-0987, Fax: 506-758-2002, E-mail: swced@nbnet.nb.ca.

Citizen Participation Initiative

The Citizen Participation Initiative (CPI) of the federal Department of Canadian Heritage worked with ethnocultural and other organizations to develop and test a series of facilitator guides for adult educators to use in workshops with new Canadians. The focus of the guides is to encourage civic participation. Each 3-ring binder includes facilitator tools, participant handouts, references and in some cases audio- or video-tapes. Topics include The Justice System, The Political System, Human Rights, health, Volunteering, Social Welfare, Citizenship Roles and Responsibilities, Natural Heritage, Family Life, Employment, and Living in a multicultural Canada. For more information about the CPI guides, contact Barbara Helm of the Multicultural Program at 819-953-0651.

The Society We Want

Last issue we described a Canada-wide public dialogue process called "The Society We Want", developed by The Canadian Policy Research Network (CPRN). Since the project began a couple of years ago, over 3,000 participants in communities across Canada have gathered to discuss key issues—children, work, health, the role of government, and the social safety net. Background materials on each issue were developed to help in the dialogue.

In the next couple of months, public dialogues will be held on the issue of the health care system. CPRN is looking for organizations willing to facilitate dialogue groups. Clear directions are provided for the facilitator. This time, the resource materials were reviewed by a plain

language consultant and tested with adult high school students. The process may still require some preliminary work to bridge to a typical literacy group, but the effort should pay off.

For more information, contact The Society We Want, Family Network, CPRN Inc., 2 Carlton St., Suite 1009, Toronto, ON, M5B 1J3.
Tel: 416-343-1110, Fax: 416-260-1505.
CPRN website: <http://www.cprn.com>

The Right Question Project

Since 1991, the Right Question Project has been working to share skills for effective participation with people in traditionally disengaged low and moderate income communities. In RQP programs, participants work together to name information they need, formulate questions, reflect on knowledge they have and need to gain, and design advocacy and accountability plans. RQP programs are designed to engage anyone, regardless of their literacy or education level. "This fundamental work is often skipped over in the rush to promote specific agendas or policies. RQP is a resource for people, programs and organizations who are seriously committed to engaging more people in their efforts. RQP strategies have been used to enable parents to support, monitor and advocate for their children's education; families to build skills for partnering with their community health providers; adult educators to share self-advocacy strategies with their low-literacy adult learners; and community organizations to build stronger constituencies and increase community participation." For more information, check out the Right Question Project's website at <http://www.rightquestion.org/index.html>

BIG News

MCL seems to be on a listserv from BIG News – "Brought to you by BIG Online, Canada's most comprehensive, frequently updated internet source of funding information." To take full advantage you have to pay, but even the limited edition gives some useful hints. Check it out:

E-mail: bignews@bigdatabase.com. **Website Address:** www.bigdatabase.com



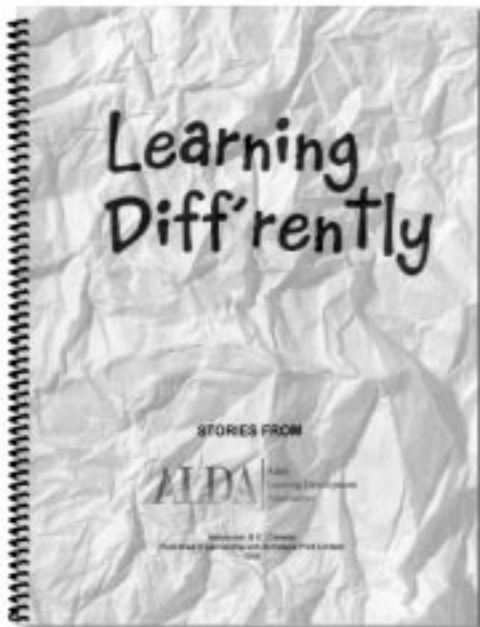
Resources for Literacy Work



Literacy Services of Canada Resource Catalogue

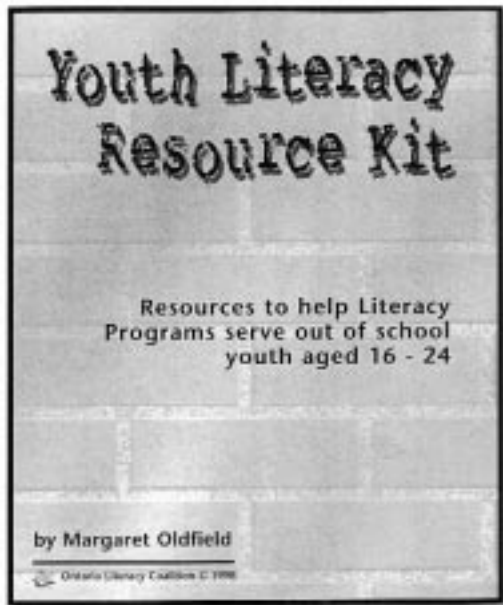
Literacy Services of Canada is among other things ("Research • Development • Distribution"), a clearing house for Canadian literacy resources. This attractive catalogue is illustrated with front covers and sample pages of the resources. To obtain a copy, contact Literacy Services of Canada Ltd., PO Box 52192, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2G5. Tel: 780-413-6491, Fax: 780-413-6582, E-mail: brokop@telusplanet.net. If you have produced a literacy resource that you would like Literacy Services of Canada to consider for distribution, you are invited to send them a preview copy.

Learning Diff'rently: Stories from ALDA - Adult Learning Development Association



ISBN 0-9683995-1-7. "Our not-so-hidden agenda in editing this book has been to demystify "adults with learning disabilities". We want to cut through much of the jargon that is ... used by professionals ... but which is usually badly understood by the rest of us. By allowing people to speak for themselves in this book and by allowing those who care very much for them to tell their stories, we might help others to learn the basic truths that we have learned: that most adults classified as having learning disabilities are just ordinary people like us, and that some have made almost superhuman leaps forward contributing to the betterment of society." The articles are a mix of personal stories from LD people and people who care about them and practical, common-sense articles such as "To Tell or Not to Tell", "Keep the Job", and "Traps for Tutors to Avoid". This book is not written at a basic literacy level, but is an inspiring and informative resource for LD adults who can read pretty well or who have someone to read with or for them. Cost: \$29.95 plus \$6.00 shipping.

ALDA publishes a quarterly newsletter, *ALDA Update*. For more information, contact ALDA, Suite 603-409 Granville Street, Vancouver, BC, V6C 1T2, E-mail: alda@lynx.bc.ca, Website: <http://www.lynx.bc.ca/alda>.

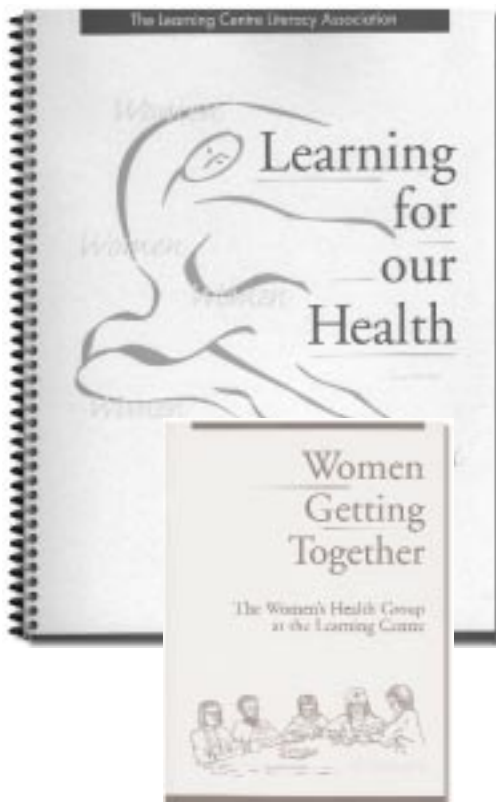


Youth Literacy Resource Kit

This binder prepared by Margaret Oldfield for the Ontario Literacy Coalition contains resources to help literacy programs serve out of school youth, including fact sheets on youth literacy levels and needs, information on best practices for serving youth, a listing of Canadian youth programs, a bibliography of youth literacy resources, and forms to customize for public awareness work. Order from the Ontario Literacy Coalition, 365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1003, Toronto, Ontario, M4W 3L4. Tel: 416-963-5787, Fax: 416-963-8102.

Learning for Our Health: A resource for participatory literacy and health education

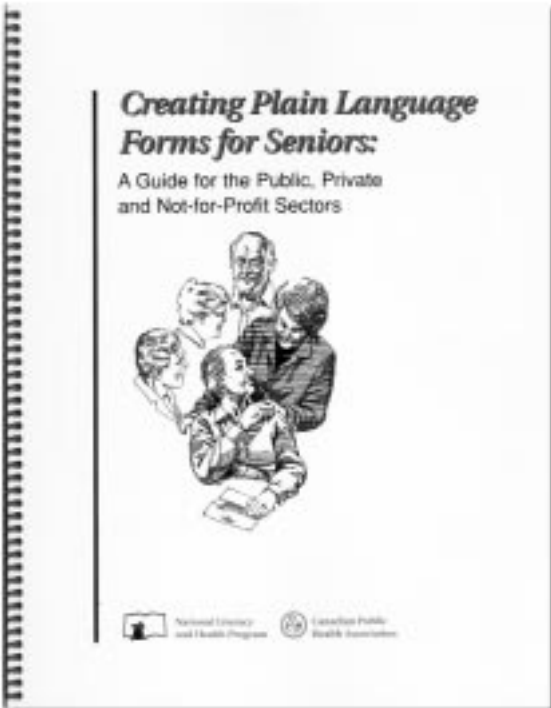
Developed with women in a literacy program, this resource includes outlines for workshops on topics such as stress, saying no, weight, healthy eating, menopause and living with welfare. The resource also includes discussion about literacy and determinants of health, description and reflection about a participatory education model, and suggestions for supporting literacy development in health workshops. A bibliography of easier-to-read health resources is also included. The resource is accompanied by *Women getting together*, a photostory about a women's health group at the Learning Centre. Available for \$15 plus 15% extra for mailing from: The Learning Centre Literacy Association, #200, 10116 - 105 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5K 0K2. Tel: 780-429-0675, Fax: 780-425-2205, E-mail: learningcentre@compusmart.ab.ca



A Resource Book of Health-Related Literacy Materials for Beginning Adult Readers

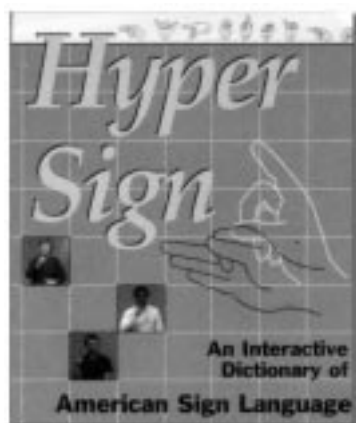
This annotated bibliography lists about 40 resources, grouped by health issue. A description of each resource is provided, along with reading level, ordering information, and a sample page. For more information, contact Yukon Learn, 308 Hanson Street, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 1Y6. Tel: 403-668-6280, Fax: 403-633-4567, E-mail: learn@yukon.net

New Materials from Canadian Public Health Association's National Literacy and Health Program



For more information or to order, contact CPHA, 400-1565 Carling Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1Z 8R1, Tel: 613-725-3769, Fax: 613-725-9826, E-mail: hrc/cds@cpha.ca, Website: www.cpha.ca.

- ***Easy Does It! A Health Communications Training Package***
- ***Working with Low-literacy Seniors: Practical Strategies for Health Providers.*** This guide highlights the special needs of low-literacy seniors within the health system. "The practical strategies offered here are intended to help health providers serve this important group of clients more sensitively and effectively." Appendix 1 has a brief, clear summary of how literacy affects health.
- ***Creating Plain Language Forms for Seniors: A Guide for the Public, Private and Not-for-Profit Sectors.*** CPHA's National Literacy and Health Program worked with the Canadian Bankers Association, the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Great-West Life Assurance Company and Human Resources Development Canada to put selected forms from each organization into plain language. The project also involved 21 seniors in two focus tests. A series of "senior-friendly" forms was developed to serve as a model for plain language forms within each organization. Using concrete examples and drawing on the firsthand experiences of the seniors consulted, this guide explains how to create forms that older adults will find much easier to use.
- ***Directory of plain language health materials.*** The Canadian Public Health Association's National Literacy and Health Program, through its Plain Language Service, is doing readability assessments on North American plain language health materials and entering the results into a computerized database. They expect the directory to be finished by early 1999.



HyperSign

Regent Gendron, Field Consultant for the Deaf community, recommended this resource in the AlphaPlus newsletter *Taking Note*. "It is a CD-ROM designed to teach American Sign Language. It is neat ... It uses video to show many signs. I find this great for the learners. I am keeping my eyes open to look for CD-ROMs that will be useful to Deaf community and I am hoping to purchase more of these."

AlphaPlus is among other things a resource library, with materials for Anglophone, Francophone, Native and Deaf literacy communities. AlphaPlus produces "Quick Lists" (selective annotated bibliographies) on many topics such as ESL materials, Prison literacy, Program evaluation, Native literacy, Deaf literacy, Numeracy, and much more. Ontario residents can borrow materials directly; people from other provinces must use the inter-library loan system. AlphaPlus Centre has new numbers: Tel: 416-975-1351, Fax: 416-975-4608, TTY: 416-975-8839. E-mail: info@alphaplus.ca. To search the AlphaPlus catalogue online, go to www.alphaplus.ca and choose AlphaCat.

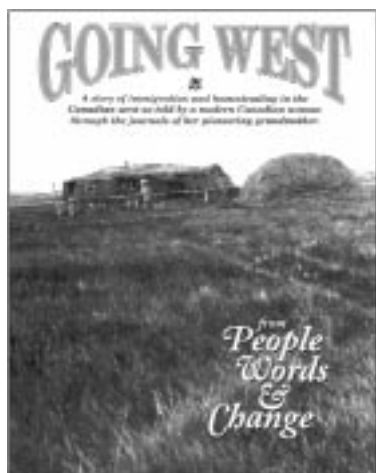


Native Resources

Nancy Cooper, AlphaPlus Field Consultant for the First Nations community, recommended these resources:

- *The Vision Seeker* "documents the story of how the sweat lodge was brought to the Anishinaabe".
- *Flying with the Eagle, Racing the Great Bear* - "This collection of sixteen stories from different Native nations across North America tells of the different ways a boy finds his way to manhood. They are designed not only to help the boy but also to help the man remember the boy within himself, so he can be sympathetic and helpful to the coming generations."

(See AlphaPlus information in the previous entry.)



Going West

A group of volunteers and staff at People, Words & Change in Ottawa created this easy-to-read but "adult enough" Canadian history book. "We wanted to tell the stories of immigrants from a very personal point of view. What was life *really* like in the pioneer west, especially for families? What was it like for native people as the prairies gradually became farmland?" *Going West* has many photographs from the National Archives and the Provincial Archives of Alberta. Available for \$12 plus mailing (\$2.50 for #1, \$1.50 for each extra) from People, Words & Change, 211 Bronson Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1R 6H5, Tel: 613-234-2494, Fax: 613-234-4223.

Each One of Us

A collection of student writing and artwork from the Edmonton John Howard Society's PLUS Literacy Program. Available for \$10 from EJHS Literacy Project, Tel: 403-428-7590, Fax: 403-425-1549.

Reaching the PEAK. A Tutor's Handbook for Using the Community Newspaper

This manual was developed by Malaspina University College in Powell River, BC. Designed to show tutors how to connect with their community by using the local newsletter, it offers a selection of reading, writing and critical thinking strategies and activities. Sample units show the original newspaper article alongside

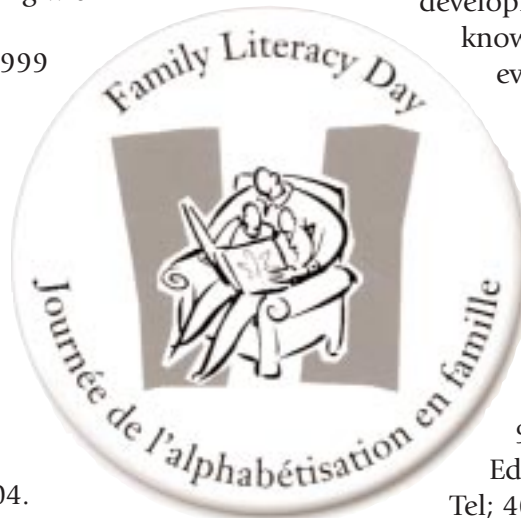
rewritten versions for learners at different reading levels. The PEAK, Powell River's tabloid weekly, was chosen because of its friendliness to low literacy readers, its human interest stories, and its clear language policy. For more information, contact Literacy B.C., 601- 510 West Hastings Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6B 1L8, Tel: 604-684-0624, Fax: 604-684-8520, E-mail: literacy_bc@douglas.bc.ca, Website: www.nald.ca/lbc.htm.

Note — I noticed in the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy (AAAL) newsletter that the Calgary Herald "Vocation for Education" program provides free newspaper subscriptions for schools and organizations to use in learning situations. Do other newspapers do this? Has anyone asked them to? —Ed.

Family Literacy Resources

ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation spearheads Family Literacy Day

ABC CANADA has been working with provincial / territorial literacy partners to have January 27, 1999 declared Family Literacy Day in cities across Canada. Although the day will have passed by the time this goes to print, the materials that have been created (bookmarks, posters, briefing notes) may still be useful. For more information, contact your provincial / territorial literacy coalition or ABC CANADA, 1-800-303-1004. E-mail: abccanada@southam.ca, Website: <http://www//abc-canada.org/>



providing information, expertise, resources, and training. The Centre will raise awareness about family literacy, as well as promote the development of family literacy knowledge through research, evaluation and the dissemination of information. The project's Family Literacy information package is available on Prospects Literacy Association's web page at www.nald.ca/pla.htm. For more information, contact Maureen Sanders, Project Director, 9913 - 108 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5H 1A5. Tel: 403-424-1660, Fax: 403-424-1676, E-mail: cflp@aaal.ab.ca.

Centre for Family Literacy Project

The Alberta Centre for Family Literacy will support local organizations in the development and delivery of programs in their communities by

Family Literacy resources online

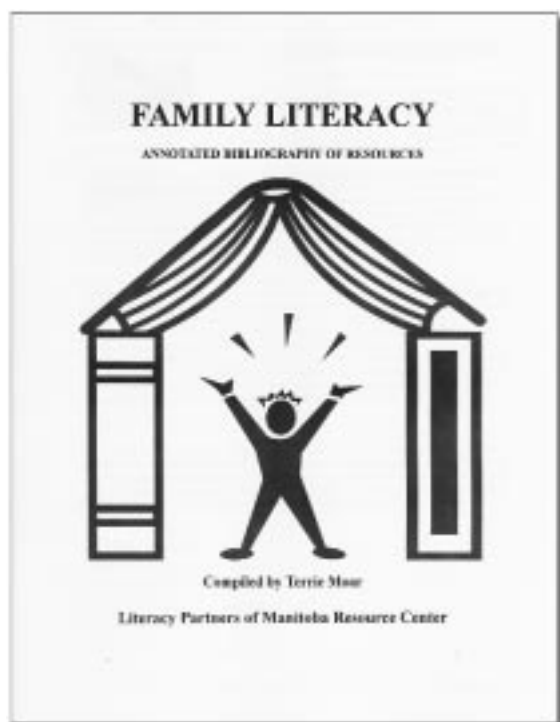
The Family Literacy Canada listserv is a forum for people interested in family literacy. An archive of messages posted since the listserv began last

November is available at <http://www.nald.ca/list-archive/> (select FLC from the list on the left). To join the listserv, send an e-mail message (with no subject and no signature) to list@nald.ca with the following message: join FLC. If you are not sending the message from the e-mail address to which you would like mail to be sent, type your e-mail address after the request: e.g., join FLC your e-mail address. The Centre for Family Literacy Project (above) will provide support for those who need it to subscribe to and use the listserv.

Family Literacy in Canada: Profiles of Effective Practices and Family Connections: 1998 Directory of Family Literacy Projects Across Canada are now available in html and pdf formats on the NALD site <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/recent.htm>. NALD intends to create a database of the directories so that they will be "searchable" from a number of different perspectives, and updated regularly.

Annotated Bibliography of Family Literacy Resources

Terrie Moar, Family Literacy Coordinator for Literacy Partners of Manitoba 1997/98, compiled



this useful bibliography. It has separate sections for Family Literacy Resources, Internet Resources, and Parenting Resources.

Literacy Partners of Manitoba has also developed a very attractive family literacy brochure, which they are willing to share with groups who would like to adapt the template to their own needs. For more information, contact Literacy Partners of Manitoba, 998-167 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 0V3. Tel: 204-947-5757, Fax: 204-956-9315, E-mail: marg.rose@nald.ca

Play and Parenting Connections

This quarterly newsletter from the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs would be a useful resource for family literacy practitioners and programs. Here are some resources from the Summer/Fall 1998 issue:

- *Parents at Play* is a one-page newsletter insert describing benefits of and ways of rediscovering "the magical world of play to which young children hold the key".
- *The First Years Last Forever* is a 12-page booklet for parents and caregivers of babies and toddlers, explaining what they can do to promote young children's healthy development and school readiness. The booklet is available free from the Canadian Institute of Child Health, Tel: 613-224-4144, e-mail: cich@igs.net.
- *Let's Play: A Child's Road to Learning* is a clearly written, illustrated booklet designed to help parents and caregivers learn simple and inexpensive ways to enhance their children's play. It was produced by Parenting for Life, a non-profit public education program to promote positive parenting skills and the well-being of families. PFL recently received an award from CAFRP for outstanding support to children and families (media category). Other PFL publications include *Hands On Dad* and *Yes, You Can!*. These three booklets are available for \$1 each (plus mailing - \$3 for 1-5 copies) from Parenting for Life, c/o Watts AJ Marketing, 115a Chambers Drive, Ajax, ON, L1Z 1E2.

Parenting for Life has a website at www.todayparent.com

- *Preventing Crime by Investing in Families* is a series of publications that look at underlying causes of crime, and suggest ways of meeting the needs of young people at different stages of development: prenatal to age six, age six to twelve, and age twelve to eighteen. They may be ordered from the National Crime Prevention Council, Tel: 613-941-0505, or downloaded from the Council's website at www.crime-prevention.org/ncpc.
- *Case Studies of Canadian Family Resource Programs: Supporting Families, Children and Communities* (CAFRP, 1998) includes detailed case studies of 15 programs that have responded in innovative ways to the child care, employment and family support needs of the families and children they serve. The report also puts the family support movement into historical context and points to potential future collaborations. (In fact, CAFRP, in partnership with MCL, has just received NLS funding to sensitize Family Resource Programs to the literacy aspects of their work and build bridges between their community and ours.)

For more information about Play and Parenting Connections or the Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, contact CAFRP, 101-30

Rosemount Avenue, Ottawa, ON, K1N 1P4.
Tel: 613-728-3307, Fax: 613-729-5421,
website: <http://www.cfc-efc.ca>

West Prince Literacy Homework Clubs

Youth Service Canada (YSC) is a national action program under Human Resources Development Canada that mobilizes community based organizations across Canada to develop community service working opportunities for youth. In this YSC pilot project, seven homework clubs were set up in a region of PEI where literacy rates are lower than the provincial average. 15 youth aged 18-24 were hired as tutors for 32 weeks. They received important work experience and training while providing much needed services to their communities. In the homework clubs, tutor and student met on average for 45 minutes twice a week. Tutors met with school teachers when needed. In several communities, the YSC tutors also helped in elementary schools as classroom assistants. Evaluations done by teachers and students showed that students had made significant personal and academic improvement.

For more information about this pilot project, contact PEI Literacy Alliance, Tel: 902-368-3620, E-mail: peiliteracy.alliance@pei.sympatico.ca. For more information about Youth Service Canada, check the website at <http://youth.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca>

Training



The Training Post

The Training Post website was set up by Laubach Literacy of Ontario to provide training opportunities and resources for volunteer tutors and literacy trainers. Among the services provided are a Trainers Forum (bulletin board), a searchable Skills Bank of Ontario trainers, and pages of information and weblinks for students, tutors and trainers. The tutors homepage offers tutorials for novice and experienced tutors to learn new techniques or reinforce skills. <http://www.trainingpost.org>

Literacy Research

Valuing Literacy in Canada joint research initiative

The NLS and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) have just announced plans to invest \$2.5 million over 5 years in research aimed at providing policy-makers and practitioners with leading-edge knowledge about literacy. SSHRC is Canada's federal funding agency for research and advanced training in the social sciences and humanities, and we all know what NLS is!

The *Valuing Literacy in Canada* initiative will foster collaborative, multidisciplinary, policy-oriented, applied research into the broad range of issues that affect adult learners' ability to participate fully in Canadian society. It will help build on existing research to reflect critically on how literacy is linked to many current policy concerns, including the future of social programs, health care, the administration of justice, the use of new technologies for learning, international competitiveness and participation in the labour force. By contributing to a better understanding of adult literacy issues, ranging from technical learning processes to practical situations in which adults learn, it will enable the development of better policies and programs to address the needs of the various target groups.

Some of the research questions that may be addressed through the initiative include: How does literacy affect social and economic development in Canada? How can we develop literacy-sensitive policy across the range of policy domains, such as health, justice, social welfare, citizenship and training? What constitutes a successful literacy program? How do adults learn to read or write—in formal and informal situations? What happened in the past to inhibit learning and how do we deal with it now? What teaching methods, learning materials, venues and assessment tools are best suited to the adult learner? How does literacy learning affect self-esteem and the participation of an individual at work and in society? What is the relationship of

traditional reading and writing skills to the acquisition of competence in other areas? How do we support literacy development outside of programs or adapt programs so they reflect alternative ways of learning?

Under the initiative, grants will be awarded to researchers from post-secondary institutions, literacy organizations and non-profit groups who can demonstrate that their research will advance knowledge in the areas of adult literacy theory, practice, policy and methodology. To be eligible for grants, proposals must include a partnership between at least one researcher affiliated with a Canadian post-secondary institution and at least one literacy organization and/or literacy practitioner. All research proposals will be subject to expert peer review.

In addition to the research grants, five fellowship supplements of \$5,000 each will be awarded each year to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) postdoctoral and doctoral fellows working in the field of adult literacy.

The deadline for proposals is March 31, 1999. Researchers interested in applying should consult the SSHRC website at: <http://www.sshrc.ca/english/programinfo/grantsguide/html>.

For further information, contact: Margaret Robinson, National Literacy Secretariat, Tel: (819) 953-5677.
NLS website: <http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm>.

(Source: NLS news release, online at <http://www.nald.ca/nls/whatnew/221298.htm>)

At Risk: A Socio-economic Analysis of Health and Literacy among Seniors

This latest monograph in the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) series was written by Paul Roberts and Gail Fawcett of the Centre for International Statistics of the Canadian Council on Social Development (CCSD) in Ottawa. Using Canadian IALS data, the report compares the health-related characteristics of seniors with their

literacy skills and practices. "Given the size of Canada's senior population, the forecast of increased use of medications among senior citizens and the tendency for literacy abilities to be weaker for seniors, there is a pressing need to consider literacy as an important policy issue for health promotion." This is the fifth in a series of monographs using data from IALS. The report is available from Statistics Canada (Catalogue no.89-552-MPE, no. 5). The Monograph and Highlights from the study are available on the NLS website at www.nald.ca/nls/ials/introduc.htm

The National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) publishes IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) Newsletter. For more information about this newsletter, the monographs, or IALS, contact the IALS Team, Tel: 819-953-5280, Fax: 819-953-8076, E-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca

The Western Region Adult Literacy and Distance Education Project: a report on an exploratory, developmental process

The Western Region Adult Literacy and Distance Education Project was funded by the NLS to document interest in, and the current status of, distance delivery of adult literacy for low-level adult learners in the western region of Canada. This report includes a number of useful appendices, including pages of internet links and resources. It was written by Dilys Collier for the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, and can be ordered for \$25 from SLN, #206 – 220 3rd Avenue South, Saskatoon, SK S7K 1M1. Tel: 306-653-7368, Fax: 306-653-1704, E-mail: sklit@sk.sympatica.ca. Portions of this report are on SLN's website at www.nald.ca/sklitnet.htm

Literacy, Welfare and Work

The Literacy, Welfare and Work Research Project is an NLS-funded, 4-year Manitoba study on the relationship between literacy and employment, within the context of welfare reform. The Preliminary Report is available online at <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/title.htm>. The year 2 report will be available soon.

The project researcher has invited literacy workers from other provinces to let her know if this is an issue for them as well. Specifically, she asks:

- Have you noticed any change in the numbers and/or type of students coming to your program?
- What kinds of access issues do your students face?
- Are your students getting jobs on completion of their literacy program? If so, what kind of jobs?
- How have welfare reforms helped / hindered your students?

All replies are completely confidential. If you would like to participate in this survey, contact Janet Smith of Common Ground Consulting by phone/fax: 204-726-8090 or by E-mail: commonground@mb.sympatico.ca.

McMaster study proves offering services to single mothers and children on welfare "pays for itself."

Providing single mothers on social assistance with a complete array of services pays for itself within two years, according to two studies conducted by the System-linked Research Unit on Health and Social Service Utilization at McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences. Headed by Dr. Gina Browne, the unit consists of 16 affiliated agencies and aims to "explore more effective ways of serving people at risk through a unified, intersectoral approach which promotes self-reliance and full integration into society."

The studies "When the Bough Breaks" and "Benefitting all the Beneficiaries", funded by Health Canada and the Hamilton Community Foundation, prove that it actually saves money to "serve people's whole circumstance with proactive, comprehensive health and social services for mothers and quality childcare and recreation for children." The study involved 765 households with 1300 children. Each family was randomly assigned to groups "ranging from those receiving no services to those receiving the full

spectrum of services, including home visits from public health nurses, job retraining and recreation for children."

Among the key findings:

- "25% of families offered the full range of services exit social assistance compared with 10% of those without the services. For every 100 mothers offered comprehensive services, 25 will go off welfare, for a \$500,000 savings within two years in excess of the cost of providing comprehensive services to all 100 mothers."
- "Offering recreational services alone helps psychologically disordered children on welfare maintain their social, physical and academic competence at a level equal to that of a non-disordered child. ... Recreation pays for itself through reduced use of social and health services (such as probation, child psychiatry and other physician specialties, child psychology and social work). Providing recreation alone is also associated with good outcomes for the mother, including fewer nervous system problems, less medication usage, less anxiety, reduced reliance on subsidized child care, less counselling..."
- "More than half of those in the study are functioning well despite their circumstances. ... There are many capable and competent mothers who are poor, but have strength and resiliency."

"One of the children in our study wanted to take ballet lessons more than anything. She ended up dancing on stage as the sugar plum in the Nutcracker ballet. People with talent, given a chance, can realize their dreams", says Dr. Browne. "Investing now saves now and in the future."

For more information, contact Gina Browne, PhD, Reg. N., Director, System-Linked Research Unit, McMaster University Faculty of Health Sciences, 1200 Main Street West, Room 3N46, Hamilton, ON, L8N 3Z5. Tel: 905-525-9140 x22293. E-mail: browneg@fhs.csu.mcmaster.ca

How Does Literacy Affect the Health of Canadians? A Profile Paper

According to this paper written by Burt Perrin for Health Canada, literacy affects health both directly and indirectly. Directly, low literacy may result in incorrect use of medications, failure to comply with medical directions, and inability to understand health and safety instructions when using equipment or chemicals. Indirectly, the relationships between literacy and a range of other factors (for example, poverty, dangerous environments, stress, lifestyle, and health services) have major impacts on health.

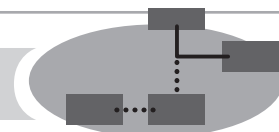
This report makes a number of recommendations, including:

- Increase awareness among health and social services practitioners, the public and "societal opinion leaders".
- Enable children and adults to develop and improve their literacy skills.
- Develop "multi-faceted" partnerships between health and literacy organizations at the local, provincial, national, and governmental levels.
- Use plain language in written health materials, and make health communications available in alternate forms: clear verbal communication, using existing community networks, and through participatory programs that allow people to explore health issues that affect them.
- Explore ways the health care system can help people take more control over their lives and their health.
- Use a "population health" perspective: the changes that would help people with low literacy skills (e.g., using clear verbal communications, plain language in written materials, community development and participatory approaches, and action on structural factors such as poverty) "will benefit everyone, irrespective of literacy levels".

Copies are available from Publications, Health Canada, Ottawa, ON K1A 0K9, Tel: 613-954-5995. The document is also available on Health Canada's website at:

www.hcsc.gc.ca/hppb/healthpromotiondevelopment/pube/literacy-health/literacy.htm

Organizational Resources



Volunteer Management Resources from Community Literacy of Ontario

Community Literacy of Ontario is a provincial literacy network that supports volunteer-based literacy organizations in Ontario. CLO has developed a number of very useful resources and services, including:

- *Volunteer Management Resource Guide*
- *Our Policy Voice*, a newsletter about policy development
- *Guide for the Development of Policies and Procedures in Community Literacy Agencies*
- a volunteer management website for literacy agencies, with hotlinks to other useful sites, at www.nald.ca/volman.htm

The *Guide for the Development of Policies and Procedures in Community Literacy Agencies*, available soon, will contain information on roles and responsibilities, job descriptions, contracts, personnel and financial policies, salaries, and Board recruitment and orientation. Some of these issues are also addressed in the newsletter *Our Policy Voice* and on the website.

In the coming year, CLO will work on providing more in-depth information on issues of special interest to community-based literacy, including volunteer screening processes, safety and security policies, policies on keeping records and statistics, evaluating staff, volunteer and learner performance, referral and access policies, policies for grievances and complaints, insurance and liability policies, and so on. This information will be distributed as a supplement to the Guide.

The Autumn 1998 issue of CLO's regular newsletter, *OURVOICE*, has a short article about the "Millennium Bug", suggesting what your organization can do and giving sources for millennium bug help and support. For example,

- "Have some key people in your organization take clear responsibility for this issue. Conduct

an inventory of your electronic equipment and systems. This could include: computers; fax machines; software (word processing, accounting, database, and other); hardware (printers, modems, scanners, etc.); telephone; electronic mail, etc. ... Determine which of your electronic equipment and systems could be affected. ... Develop a Year 2000 plan. Allocate resources ..."

- "CAN2K is the awareness component of the Year 2000 Initiative launched by Industry Canada and the Canada-Pennsylvania Partnership Council. It has been developed primarily for small businesses, volunteer organizations and local governments in rural communities." For information, visit the CAN2K website at <http://www.can2k.com>.

For more information about Community Literacy of Ontario's projects, contact CLO, 80 Bradford Street, Suite 508, Barrie, ON, L4N 6S7. Tel: 705-733-2312, Fax: 705-733-6197, E-mail: kaattari@bconnex.net.

Meetings in an Electronic Environment Final Report

"The Meetings in an Electronic Environment project investigated the legal implications, cost-effectiveness and practicality of conducting board meetings using the Internet, particularly the AlphaCom system. The intent was to develop and field-test a model while following parliamentary procedure. The Laubach Board held two online meetings using a moderated closed discussion on AlphaCom." Several products came out of the project: a guide to AlphaCom discussions, a handbook for online meetings, two AlphaCom conferences including the Learner's Clubhouse, Internet Survey results, and the final report. For more information, contact Laubach Literacy of Ontario, 591 Lancaster Street West, Unit 4, Kitchener, ON, N2K 1M5. Tel: 519-743-3309, Fax: 519-743-7520, E-mail: llo@golden.net.

Calendar

Third Annual Education/Technology Month @ The Centre for Literacy

February–March 1999, Montreal. Teachers, tutors and the public are invited to preview basic skills software, attend workshops, and participate in public discussions about the impact of learning technologies in our schools and homes.

For more information, contact The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4, Tel: 514-931-8731, x 1415, Fax: 514-931-5181, E-mail: Literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca, Website: <http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm>.

Workplace Learning: Progress through Innovation.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, May 16-18, 1999. The fourth annual Centre on Education and Work conference offers an opportunity to present, learn, and network with more than 1000 employers, unions, educators and government partners from the US, Canada, Mexico, and the UK. Topics: Partnerships and Linkages, Program Design and Evaluation, Resources and Technologies, and Trends Affecting the Workplace and Workers. For more information on the conference, call Susan Schmidt at 608-265-3542 or visit <http://www.cew.wisc.edu/workplace>

Literacy and Technology: Can less be more? The Centre for Literacy's 10th Annual Summer Institute

June 27-30, 1999, Montreal, Quebec. "Adapting to current social and workplace demands... Adapting to the reality of teacher knowledge... Adapting to current funding levels... Can technology help us serve the growing clientele for literacy and adult basic education?" For more information, contact The Centre for Literacy, 3040 Sherbrooke Street West, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1A4, Tel: 514-931-8731, x 1415, Fax: 514-931-5181, E-mail: Literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca, Website: <http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm>.

Feb. 9: "Integrating technology into our curriculum" (public discussion)

Feb. 10: "Poisonous pedagogy" (workshop by Isa Helfield, adult educator and writer)

Feb. 20: "Computer resources within reach" (workshop by Diane McCarger, adult educator and assistant editor of CONNECT")

March 10: "Technology and gender: Is anyone paying attention?" (workshop by Petra Mueller, Concordia University)

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