



Literacy and Citizenship *What's at Stake?*

This is the third in our series on how literacy relates to the primary roles adults play as family members, workers and citizens.

What is the relationship between literacy and citizenship now, at the beginning of the 21st century? How do literacy barriers affect people's ability to exercise their rights and responsibilities in relation to their communities and our country?

A key development in this area (and a very important one for the literacy community) is "citizen engagement", the trend for governments to seek input from citizens in the process of public policy development.

"A variety of forces are pushing governments to find new ways to involve citizens in the making of policy. Forces like the speed and complexity of change and the growing diversity of Canadian society demand up-to-date, accurate input from those affected if policies are to be relevant and effective... The type of involvement follows a continuum from that of communicating a message, to consultations, to true engagement (deliberative, open-ended and transformative)."

Karen Jackson, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) presentation at Ready Set Go conference, Ottawa, January 30 - February 1, 2002

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According to CPRN, the engagement process involves "a working through of issues and values, searching for common ground, mutual listening and public learning". Engagement is significant when there is a genuine role for citizens — especially at the stages of problem definition and direction-setting and if *policy-makers* are ready to invest in listening and learning.

What does citizen engagement mean right now for literacy learners and for those who work with them? ...→



**Movement for
Canadian Literacy**
celebrating

25

years

as a voice for literacy

for all Canadians

1977-2002

First, when governments are engaging consumers and stakeholders on issues that affect them, citizens without good literacy and information-processing skills are increasingly disadvantaged in the process. While we work toward providing literacy learning opportunities for all who need them, we must also encourage — and help — governments to do all they can to ensure that their consultation processes are accessible to all Canadians, including the millions with lower literacy skills.

Secondly, the current consultation on Skills and Learning is of vital importance to literacy learners, educators, managers and theorists. We hope that there will be a meaningful role for us in that process, and that policy-makers will

indeed “listen and learn”. At MCL we plan to participate in the government’s engagement process and to facilitate wider input from the literacy community. Throughout these consultations, we will encourage governments to invest in literacy as a means of strengthening not only our workforce, but also our families and our civic society.

This issue highlights issues, practices and resources for addressing literacy through a focus on civic participation and vice versa. Next issue, we will focus more specifically on ways and means of advancing the literacy cause.

*By Wendy DesBrisay, Executive Director
Movement for Canadian Literacy*

Being a Citizen

How does literacy affect your ability to be a citizen? In these excerpts from MCL’s *Book of Changes*, learners describe how literacy has empowered them to be better citizens.

“*My new confidence, in both reading abilities and speaking abilities, has enabled me to become more active in this community... Everyone has their strengths and weaknesses. My strength is my determination to improve and commitment to helping others.*”

(LD in AB)

“*Literacy is about empowerment, about citizenship, about being fully participatory in society, and about being able to make important decisions every day that affect our lives... There are many others out there who have a lot to give to society, but like I was, they just don’t know it yet.*” (GD in NS)

“*Now my confidence is so great that I can do some community club things... The main thing is that it [literacy] makes me a whole person... It is something that we need to know to survive in the workplace and also in the community.*” (JD in MB)

“*Reading different books fuelled my imagination about far away places and also different cultures and different points of view in life.*” (VJ in AB)

“*I have learned much over the past 15 years but one bitter-sweet lesson is this: people love as we love them, learn what we teach them, and give back to society that which is given to them.*” (ES in BC)



These quotes are from MCL’s *Book of Changes*, a dynamic collection of learner writing on how the ability to read and write has made a difference in their lives. In their own words, learners share their powerful testimonies and wisdom. The original book was brought to Parliament Hill last fall for federal politicians to view on Literacy Action Day (LAD). The *Book of Changes* has now officially been launched on MCL’s website at www.literacy.ca with over 250 stories from across the country. It continues to grow and more learner submissions are always welcomed. An expanded *Book of Changes* will return again to Parliament Hill this October for LAD 2002. For more information contact Arlene MacLowick at MCL (613-563-2464) or email her directly at network@literacy.ca

Citizens as Voters



So how does literacy play a role in the “tasks” associated with citizenship?

One of the first things that comes to mind is elections. We only need to think back to the Florida fiasco in the US federal elections in 2000 to see the importance of literacy. The ballot design in that case required sophisticated decoding skills such that the election results did not actually reflect the voters intentions. Again in recent months the elections in Zimbabwe and Sierra Leone reminded Canadians about how other peoples value democracy and the fragile right to vote.

It is often argued that we take for granted our right to vote since Canada’s voter turnout is so low. In the last federal election only 60% of Canadians cast a ballot. But is it really apathy or are there systemic barriers that prevent people from participating in politics? Many of the social and economic barriers that prevent people from acquiring literacy skills also keep them on the margins of mainstream political systems. Literacy groups have observed that persons with less literacy generally do not vote. The voting process requires some fairly sophisticated literacy skills including registering to vote, understanding rights and the electoral process, deciphering a ballot, understanding all the campaign literature, and feeling confident to make an informed decision.

In the last two federal elections, Elections Canada has worked actively with the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) for assistance in designing election materials in plain language. They also asked for our help in distributing information through literacy networks across the country to reach people that are often ‘missed’ at election time. Elections Canada is increasingly aware and concerned with the needs of less literate Canadians and have produced some marvellous multi-media resources to encourage participation in the democratic process. These include some background information on how Canada is governed as well as election simulation kits. The materials can be readily adapted for different teaching situations and various kinds of elections. To order materials at any time call 1-800-INFO-VOTE (463-6868) or check online at www.elections.ca

How I Feel About Voting: A Student Perspective

At first I didn’t want to vote because I felt none of the candidates were doing anything for me. I got into it when my teacher started showing me in class what it means to vote. She showed us videotapes, she asked us lots of questions about voting and told us what to expect. I learned a lot about voting and about the candidates. Then I was very excited to vote.

I wrote a few letters to the candidates about how I felt about welfare reform and low-income housing. I thought I was wasting my time but I was wrong. A couple of weeks after I sent the letters, I got a letter from the Congressman. I was so excited, I took it everywhere for a few days. I took it to my mom’s house so she and my brothers could read it, then I took it home and made my boyfriend read it over and over to me. This was the first time in my life that I wrote a letter to the House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. I didn’t think they would read my letter, let alone write back. Now I know people read these letters and hear the concerns of the voters because someone read mine and responded to me. I would like to do this again in the near future.



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This morning when I came to school, one of the girls was reading the paper. I asked her, “Who won the election?” I was happy to see that the candidates I voted for won. Now I hope they go through with everything they promised the people who voted for them to the best of their ability.

Excerpted from an article by student, Joanna Morales, reprinted with permission from The Change Agent, Issue #6, February 1998, New England Literacy Resource Centre, www.nelrc.org/changeagent

How do You Teach Citizenship?



Roseanne Benn from the University of Exeter in the UK gives adult educators something to think about in her paper *The Genesis of Active Citizenship in the Learning Society*, published in the English-Welsh Journal entitled "Studies in the Education of Adults" (volume 32, Number 2, October 2000).

This paper builds on definitions of citizenship from the literature and seeks to develop a list of the attributes that promote active citizenship. It then reports on the results of a survey of adult education participants, which aimed to identify where, if anywhere, these abilities had been acquired. The study concludes that the workplace is the main site of learning of citizenship skills with the school setting doing particularly badly. There are messages for adult educators. Citizenship has to be learned like any other skill.

The adult education experience should itself be an experience of participatory democracy.

However, most effective learning will not take place through the formal curriculum but through positive experiences of participation. Participatory democracy is learned through practice and therefore the adult education experience should itself be an experience of participatory democracy. Benn asserts that these skills of citizenship can be learned in any adult classroom. Providers might do well to consider their own list of citizenship skills, perhaps using the ones given in this report as a starting point. The curriculum, pedagogy and approach to the program could then be constructed with the aim of developing these skills.



To learn more about this paper, go to the website of the UK's National Institute for Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) at www.niace.org.uk (look under the "periodicals" section within "publications.")

Building Literacy by Using It

Literacy provides the building blocks for further learning and for community engagement through a number of community writing initiatives across the country. In early April the fourth annual *Grassroots: Community Writing* workshops took place in Montreal presented by the Centre for Literacy of Quebec in collaboration with Blue Metropolis and the Montreal International Literary Festival. The facilitators are usually writers who have written and published in community-based settings, and who have built bridges among verbal, oral and visual literacies. They share their stories, poems, songs and experiences in effecting change in their own milieus.

One of the truly empowering aspects of Montreal's community writing event is the way in which individuals contribute to and benefit from participation. Writing offers everyone voice and expression for their experiences which are often of alienation and marginalization. In this year's lineup, for example, homeless writers told their personal stories and spoke of the magazine they now publish to reach their brothers and sisters on the streets of Toronto. There was also a songwriter-poet who collects alphabet songs and oral stories from rural Newfoundland. A native survivor of residential schooling shared his experiences of how he has written his way out of the despair and now tries to bring other community members with him. An urban group of young men and women who have experienced or used violence shared their poetry and photos which has helped to move them in a new direction.

Creating a safe environment for writing is also the basis of two creative and inspiring manuals by Deborah Morgan. *Writing Out Loud* and *More Writing Out Loud* can be used in both literacy and ESL settings whether in classroom or one-on-one situations. Across Canada, certified "Writing Out Loud" instructors like Linda Dawn Pettigrew in Toronto, offer workshops based on these manuals. Tutor-learner pairs, individuals and literacy instructors are all invited and encouraged to learn about the benefits of freewriting. Linda Dawn says "*Writing Out Loud helps people put their*

voices on paper – learners get over their fears quickly and develop their writing skills meaningfully.”



- For more information on the Montreal event and how community writing can be organized and



sustained in different contexts, contact the Centre for Literacy of Quebec at tel: 514-931-8731 (ext. 1415) or www.nald.ca/litcent.htm

- To order the *Writing Out Loud* Manuals (\$37.95 each), contact Grass Roots Press at 1-888-303-3213 or www.literacyservices.com
- To talk to Linda Dawn Pettigrew about *Writing Out Loud* instruction and certification, or her contributions in the *Writing Out Loud* manuals, contact her at linda.pettigrew3@sympatico.ca
- To learn more about freewriting, order the booklet *Fearless Freewriting* (\$6.00) from The Learning Centre in Edmonton. Contact tel: 780-429-0675, or e-mail: learningcentre@compusmart.ab.ca

Becoming Informed: Why Bother?

After working for eight years as an Adult Basic Education (ABE) teacher at the Community Learning Center in Cambridge, MA, I have finally come to realize that I have no other choice but to become politically involved. My students return to school with high hopes for learning to read and for effectuating positive changes in their own lives. Over the years I've witnessed my students' muddled attempts to negotiate salary increases, decipher the qualifying criteria for various types of social services, and discuss the academic needs of their children with the school systems. I finally had to admit that, unfortunately, learning to read

is not enough, to be truly literate in our society, our students need to know how they can participate in the political process. They need to learn how they can take part in the decisions that have a great effect on their lives. The voices of our student need to be heard when decisions are being made.

Learning to read is not enough, to be truly literate in our society, our students need to know how they can participate in the political process.

At first, political involvement was a responsibility that I took on begrudgingly like trying to eat the right percentages of all the different food groups. As I became more informed, however, and more aware of the discrepancies between democratic ideals and the realities of our political system, I became more genuinely interested. More than anything else, I was incensed by the role money plays in our educational system. Only those who can afford the cost of a quality education, benefit from the opportunities that education affords.

My students have the potential to make invaluable contributions to their communities. They deserve to be given the same chance as the moneyed members of our society to realize their aspirations.

My perception of my own role as a teacher has changed as a result of my own political involvement. In addition to teaching phonics and related reading skills, I now directly teach the skills students need to participate in a democracy such as debating, writing letters to policy makers, and formulating effective questions. I want my students to be as proficient advocating for themselves as they are decoding unfamiliar words. Becoming politically active has made me more determined to help my students recognize their potential to play an active role in shaping a better future for themselves and their communities.

Excerpted from an article by Ashley Hagar. Reprinted with permission from The Change Agent, Issue #6, February 1998, New England Literacy Resource Center, www.nelrc.org/changeagent

Equipping Citizens and Community Members for the Future

All articles on pages 6 and 7 are reprinted with kind permission of the *Change Agent* newspaper, Special Issue on Civic Participation, Issue #6, 1998, New England Literacy Resource Center.



Equipped for the Future (EFF) began in 1993 with a question: "What is it that adults need to know and be able to do in order to be literate, compete in the global economy, and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship?"

In 1995 the American National Institute for Literacy (NIFL) issued a report *Equipped for the Future: A Customer-Driven Vision for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning*. It was based on the writings of 1500 adult learners and summarized the four purposes that bring adults to education programs:

- to gain access to information to orient themselves in the world around them;
- to develop voice and express ideas and opinions with the confidence they will be heard;
- to take action in order to solve problems and make decisions individually with others; and
- to find a bridge to the future so that they can keep up with a changing world.

At that time NIFL also asked for proposals to explore and develop standards that would equip Americans for the future especially for the adult roles of worker, family member and citizen. Equipped For the Future (EFF) has been NIFL's primary project for the last several years, seeking to improve the quality of adult education services. EFF's *Reform Agenda for Adult Literacy and Lifelong Learning* was issued in 1997, outlining standards development and system reform efforts for the literacy field. EFF has now crafted 16 content standards and literacy programs in over 25 states are currently using the EFF framework.

In 1999, EFF presented their Role Maps for citizen, worker and family member. With the permission of New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC) we have reprinted it on the next page.

Ways Into Civic Participation

In the EFF project, teachers used a variety of catalyst or "ways in" activities to get people to starting thinking about civic participation.

Discussion Catalysts

- What does community mean to you?
- What communities are you part of?
- What does it mean to be an active community member? How are you active?
- How do you stay informed about your community?
- What are community issues of concern to you?
- What is a healthy community?
- What is a good citizen?
- What does it mean to "exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship?"

Writing Catalysts

- Tell about your community – its strengths and weaknesses. (When I think about my community, I think... or What I would like to change about my community is...)
- Write about a person you know who made a difference for the benefit of the community.
- Think about a time when you took successful action about a problem.

Reading Catalysts

Some classes started by reading about the activism of people they could relate to and then discussing:

- What was the problem?
- What made people decide to take action?
- How was the problem resolved?
- What factors contributed to the success of the activism?

Have students brainstorm a list of issues. In groups/pairs, choose one issues and discuss these questions: What do we already know about this issue? What do we want to know? How can we find out?

Reprinted with permission from *The Change Agent*, Issue #6, February 1998, New England Literacy Resource Centre, www.nelrc.org/changeagent

CITIZEN ROLE MAP

Effective citizens and community members take informed action to make a positive difference in their lives, communities, and world

Become and Stay Informed

- Identify and monitor problems, community needs, strengths and resources.
- Recognize and understand your human and legal rights and civic responsibilities.
- Figure out how systems (political, economic, and social service) work.
- Find, interpret, and analyze diverse sources of information (including own experience).
- Identify how to have an impact.



Form and Express Opinions and Ideas

- Develop a sense of self that reflects your history, values, beliefs and roles in the larger community.
- Listen to and learn from others' experiences and ideas.
- Communicate so that others understand.
- Reflect on and reevaluate your opinions and ideas.



Equipped for the future

Take Action to Strengthen Communities

- Help self and others.
- Educate self and others.
- Exercise your human and legal rights and civic responsibilities.
- Influence decision makers and hold them accountable.
- Be a leader within your communities.



Working Together

- Get involved in the community and get others involved.
- Respect others and value diversity.
- Define common values and goals and resolve conflict.
- Participate in group processes and decision making.



These materials were developed for the Equipped for the Future Initiative, the National Institute for Literacy's standards-based adult literacy system reform initiative.

Resources on Literacy and Citizenship

Engaging Learners as Citizens



The Change Agent is a biannual, theme-based newspaper that enables adult educators to integrate social justice issues into their curriculum. A 1-year subscription is only \$5 US. Contact NELRC/World Education at tel: 617-482-9485 or online at www.nelrc.org/changeagent

The Change Agent did a special issue on Civic Participation. Although it was originally published in February 1998, this is still a worthwhile read. It includes great examples, case studies, lesson ideas, resources and inspiration. You can view it online at

<http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent> or order back issues directly from the host organization, the New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC). NELRC also maintains a collection of web resources on civic participation and citizenship at www.nelrc.org



The Canadian Policy Resource Networks

The mission of the Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) is to create knowledge and lead public debate on social and economic issues important to the well-being of Canadians. Their goal is to help make Canada a more just, prosperous and caring society.

CPRN is an independent, non-profit organization which acquires its funding from federal and provincial governments, foundations and

corporations. This diversity ensures that no single voice, discipline, sector, culture or jurisdiction dominates the research.

CPRN currently operates three Networks — on Family, Work, and Health, as well as special corporate projects. The Family Network is a leader in discussions on social cohesion, citizenship and diversity in Canadian policy communities. Some of the recent thought-provoking papers on these topics include:

- Challenges to an Inclusive Citizenship
- Mapping the Links: Citizen Involvement in the Policy Process
- Globalization, Social Cohesion and Citizenship

For these documents as well as other materials on citizenship check Canadian Policy Research Networks at www.cprn.org

American Youth Policy Forum

The AYPF is a non-profit, non-partisan professional development organization in Washington DC. Their goal is to enable policymakers and their aides to be more effective in their professional duties and of greater service in the development, enactment and implementation of sound policies affecting the nation's young people. They have produced some excellent resources including *A Guide for the Powerless and Those Who Don't Know Their Own Power: A Primer on the American Political Process* by Dr. Samuel Halperin. Very applicable to the Canadian context and well worth the \$5.00 cost. Contact AYPF at tel: 202-775-9731 or online at www.aypf.org

Inclusion News

Inclusion News is the newsy and user-friendly newspaper published by the Marsha Forest Centre and printed through the *Inclusion Press*. It is a tool for information-sharing and networking and lets readers know what's going on in the international network of people interested in inclusion and diversity in society. Arrangements can be made

for ordering bulk quantities for large and small conferences. There is also a catalogue that lists fabulous resources on inclusion, social change, disabilities and capacity-building. While not directly related to literacy, it provides inspiration for the broader goals of social justice. Contact Canada's Inclusion Press at tel: 416-658-5363 or online at www.inclusion.com

Reflect

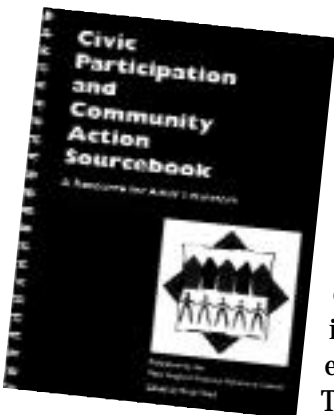
Reflect is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change, used by over 350 diverse organisations in more than 60 countries. It fuses the theories of Paulo Freire with the methodology of participatory rural appraisal. *The Reflect Mother Manual* (which contains a component on strengthening the literate environment) draws on these experiences and contains concrete ideas about how to use Reflect. *Education Action* is a magazine which is published bi-annually. Its primary aim is to enable Reflect practitioners to share their experiences and its articles are written by Reflect practitioners from around the world. Check the website at www.reflect.actionaid.net

From Grass Roots Press



The following materials are available from Grass Roots Press. To order, contact 1-888-303-3213 or www.literacyservices.com

Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook: A resource for adult educators
New England Literacy Resource Center (NELRC)



Are you looking for ways to prepare adults to be more active in their community? This manual will help you integrate civic involvement and community activism into your own adult education curriculum. The manual contains

20 lessons on the following themes: "Finding connections to communities and issues," "Holding decision-makers accountable," "Building community by helping others," "Expressing ourselves and educating others," and "Organizing for change." Each lesson includes a narrative account, followed by activities that develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence one needs to engage in similar kinds of community involvement. Cost: \$20.95.

"This is a major contribution to the field of adult literacy education. Never have so many well-written and practical pieces been assembled in one easy-to-read, thoughtful, and provocative collection."

David Rosen, Director, Adult Literacy Resource Institute, Boston

Educating for a Change

Arnold, Burke, James, Martin & Thomas



Educating for a Change is an essential resource for community and literacy educators who are committed to education for social change. Throughout the book, theory is integrated with practical activities and examples of a transformative approach to social change. The spiral model, which is a cyclical process that begins with sharing the participants' experiences and knowledge, analyzing and building on their experience, and planning for action is described in detail. The spiral model can be applied to group work with adult literacy students. Cost: \$23.95.

Newest issue (#4) of The Learning Edge is now online at www.thewclc.org/edge and still receiving rave reviews!

The Literacy and ESL Connection

Literacy for Canadian Citizenship



New Canadians bring a great potential resource to our country.

In fact, the federal government already acknowledges that immigration currently accounts for more than 70 percent of net growth in the labour force and by 2031 will account for all net population growth in Canada. Many of these people face unfair barriers so that our society never fully benefits from their potential contribution. For immigrants to access to education and occupations, especially in our reading-based information society, there must be language proficiency in one of the official languages.

As Flo Brokop and Pat Campbell discovered during the development of the Canadian Adult Reading Assessment (CARA), the majority of students participating in basic level (non-reader to beginning of Grade two level) literacy programs are those for whom English is a second language. All too often students with an accent are placed into ESL programs which may not be appropriate. If they end up in a literacy program, their lack of first language literacy hampers their progress. Indeed, the issue of where best to serve ESL/literacy learners is politically sensitive in many jurisdictions across Canada.

For most literacy practitioners it is a simple reality that many ESL learners end up in literacy programs without literacy skills in their mother tongue. Their success depends on a literacy worker's ability to adapt teaching strategies. Teachers need to learn about the student's cultural background and values so they can approach language instruction in appropriate ways. For example, descriptive and narrative writing comes easier for students whose language tradition is oral; however comparison and argumentative writing may be extremely difficult and considered rude in cultures which value a harmonious sense of order. Although literacy practitioners may not be ESL specialists they need good resources in their toolkit.

Grass Roots Press carries a number of excellent resources developed by practitioners for ESL students and educators. These include:

- A Day in the Life of the Gonzalez Family
- A Toolbox for ESL Tutors
- The Daily English Series
- Teaching Adults: An ESL Resource Book
- ESL Home Tutor Resource Kit
- Supplemental Training for Practitioners in Literacy Education (STAPLE): two CDs featuring teaching strategies, all of which have an ESL button on the screen to suggest appropriate lesson modifications.
- Connected Speech: An interactive, multimedia, language pronunciation program unlike any other, designed for lower intermediate, upper intermediate, and advanced level ESL students who wish to improve the clarity and accuracy of their spoken communication.

Contact Grass Roots Press at tel: 1-888-303-3213 or www.literacyservices.com

Of course, language proficiency is just one of the barriers that new Canadians must overcome as they approach citizenship. As a society we also have to work to create a culture that truly values inclusion and diversity. The literacy field certainly has a role to play in promoting tolerance for both Canadian-born and foreign-born citizens. We can also push for appropriate services and resources to serve the needs of everyone who needs literacy training regardless of their first language.

Consider Your Volunteer Diversity

Check NALD's website at www.nald.ca for the full-text document called *Stronger Together: Recruiting and Working with Ethnocultural Volunteers* which was prepared by Volunteer Ottawa.

Just the facts!

- One out of every six Canadian residents was born outside the country. (Immigration Totals, Speech by Hon. Elinor Caplan, 2000 available at www.cic.gc.ca)
- Canada accepts more immigrants and refugees in proportion to its population, than any other country in the world. (same source as above)
- In 2001, Canada accepted 250,386 immigrants and refugees.
- About 61 percent are economic immigrants who are often skilled or they bring businesses.
- 54 percent of all the immigrants and refugees came from the following ten countries (in order): China, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Korea, United States, Iran, Romania, Sri Lanka, and Great Britain.

These and other statistics can be found on the Citizenship and Immigration Canada website at www.cic.gc.ca

First Language Literacy Supports Second Language Development

Being literate in a first language helps you to learn a second language. In the report called *The Importance of First Language Literacy in the Acquisition of a Second Language*, Dorothy Bogdan asserts this position based on a teaching strategy developed by the Canadian Multilingual Literacy Centre (CMLC), in Toronto. The CMLC provides first language literacy and ESL literacy instruction for adult with limited literacy skills in their first language. After 12 years of providing these programs, the CMLC can confirm that the acquisition of first language literacy enables learners to acquire English more quickly. In their

curriculum learners become literate in their own language by bridging from that language to English and thus learning both at the same time. Order the report (\$18.00) from University of Toronto Press at 1-800-565-9523.

Citizenship Week

In 2000 Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) launched Canada's Citizenship Week during the third week of October. To celebrate they produced *Belonging: An Activity Guide*, aimed primarily at teachers and community leaders who work with young people. This guide and its brilliant bright posters were so well received that they created *The Voices of Our People* in 2001. Both activity guides celebrate Canadian diversity in a very inclusive way. There are dozens of activities for group and individual use. They take a cross-curricular, multi-grade approach that makes these guides interesting and adaptable for adult literacy and ESL classes. At CIC's website you'll find many publications and initiatives. You'll even discover information on hosting a citizenship ceremony as well as kits to organize a Reaffirmation Ceremony for Canadians wishing to express their commitment to Canada. To view the guides and these other wonderful materials, go to www.cic.gc.ca

Some Resources to Support ESL/Literacy Work

Canadian Ethnocultural Council

a non-profit, non-partisan coalition of national ethnocultural umbrella organizations which, in turn, represent a cross-section of ethnocultural groups across Canada. Promotes diversity and anti-racism and also election information. 176 Gloucester St. Tel: 230-3867, website: <http://www.ethnocultural.ca>

Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB)

Exists to develop, promote and conduct research in support of the Canadian Language Benchmarks, and to encourage the alignment of curriculum and program structure with the Canadian Language Benchmarks. Recently produced *ESL for Literacy Learners* (2000) Tel: 613-230-7729 or www.language.ca

Citizenship and Immigration Canada www.cic.gc.ca

ESL Resources in Canada www.eslincanada.com

Settlement.org

is an informative website with information and resources for immigrant newcomers to Ontario at www.settlement.org

Teachers of English as a Second Language
TESL Canada is a national organization dedicated to advancing communication and coordinating awareness of issues for those concerned with English as a second language and English skills development. The organization promotes advocacy for ESL learners, unifies teachers and learners by providing a forum and network capabilities, supports the sharing of knowledge and experiences across Canada, and represents diverse needs and interests in TESL nationally and internationally. Find out more about standards, training, the TESL Canada journal, teacher tricks and links to many Canadian organizations including the TESL organization in each province at www.tesl.ca

Nonprofit Sector Resources/Issues

Let Charities Speak!

The Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society (IMPACS), in association with the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, recently released *Let Charities Speak*, the much-anticipated report on the national dialogue among charities and not-for-profits that took place in the fall of 2001.



The national dialogue was the second step in a campaign to focus public discussion on the right of Canadian charities to participate in public policy debate or to advocate for changes to legislation, regulations or government policy. The first step was the publication and broad dissemination of an accessible overview of the law entitled *The Law of Advocacy by Charitable Organizations: The Case for Change*.

Under the current law, based on English laws written in 1601, participation by charities in public policy discussions or advocacy campaigns may be deemed “political” by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), which forbids charities from using any more than 10% of their resources annually for “political activity,” which is how they categorize advocacy.

This limit on charities has been recognized as a serious impediment to modern Canadian democracy, as it limits the voices of charities and the people they serve, very often the most vulnerable members of society. It has also been criticized for lacking a valid and principled justification. Finally, from an administrative perspective, this restriction is widely condemned because it is fraught with imprecision and subjectivity.

The national dialogue on the law of advocacy by charities revealed a deeply felt desire for change among voluntary sector organizations. There is very strong agreement across the country that the current restriction on advocacy by charities is out

of place in a modern society. It is an impediment to democracy where informed and unfettered debate is essential. The national dialogue also revealed strong support for high standards of disclosure, transparency, and accountability to ensure virtuous practices by charities.

To read or download the report, *Let Charities Speak*, and its conclusions, visit the IMPACS website at www.impacs.org

VSI draft codes now available for feedback

After an Accord was signed between the voluntary sector and the Government of Canada on December 5, 2001, the Joint Accord Table of the Voluntary Sector Initiative (VSI) formed three working groups to help develop plans and products to implement that Accord. As a result, two draft codes of good practice, one on funding and the other on policy development, were created as guides to interactions in these areas between government departments and voluntary sector organizations. These draft codes are now available online and will be finalized by early July. To view the codes and provide feedback, visit: www.vsi-isbc.ca/eng/draft_codes.cfm

One Step Closer to a New Corporations Act for the Nonprofit sector

For years the public has raised concerns that the Canada Corporations Act was outdated and no longer met the requirements of today's federally incorporated nonprofits. In response, the government held a series of roundtable discussions in 2000 and recently published a report, *The Draft Framework for a New Not-for-Profit Corporations Act*. The suggested reforms of the act were guided by four principles. The Act should:

- be flexible and permissive;
- encourage transparency and accountability;
- promote efficiency; and finally
- be fair.



Industry Canada has been seeking public input on these proposed reforms at a series of nation-wide public consultations in May and June. To view the draft framework and discussions visit: www.strategis.ic.gc.ca/SSG/cl00150e.html

The Public's View: We Trust Them, But We Want to Know More

According to the Canadian Centre for Philanthropy (CCP) Canadians in general have a high level of trust in the country's charities and other voluntary organizations. But as Dr. Michael Hall, the CCP's Vice-President for Research says "Canadians think charities are important and they enjoy a high level of trust, but they want to see limits on their expenses, more information on what they're doing, mandatory exposition of their costs, and greater monitoring of their activities, not necessarily by government."

The Centre's telephone survey of about 3,800 Canadians yielded encouraging responses on charities:

- they are increasingly important to national life;
- they understand the needs of society better than government does;
- they do a better job of meeting those needs than government;
- they make good use of the donations they receive;
- they should not offer services which would substitute for those already offered by government;
- the people who work for charitable organizations are highly trusted, exceeded only by nurses and medical workers.

Access this report as well as other great voluntary sector information by logging on to www.kneadmarketing.com. Register for the free e-bulletin service while you visit their website.

7% of all Canadians do 73% of the volunteer work in this country. And older Canadians are putting in most of the volunteer hours.

Source: *Volunteer Canada*

Literacy Action

On the National Front



In February 2002, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) released *Knowledge Matters*, a discussion paper for a national dialogue on priorities, goals and

outcomes for the Skills and Learning Agenda, part of the government's wider *Innovation Agenda*. In spite of several references to the importance of literacy, MCL and its partners were disappointed to conclude that *Knowledge Matters* does not succeed in making literacy a priority, advancing literacy policy, or paving the way towards a pan-Canadian literacy agenda.

The time has come for the literacy community to work together to fill this gap. MCL has offered to take the lead in developing a vision and policy agenda for literacy in Canada that will:

- complement the federal policy and consultative process related to the Innovation Agenda
- articulate our common vision for literacy and learning in a modern Canada
- identify priority literacy issues and steps to addressing these
- list best practices related to these priority areas
- make specific recommendations for action by various levels of government and the community

The six national literacy organizations have written jointly to HRDC Minister Jane Stewart, outlining our concerns about *Knowledge Matters* and indicating our desire to constructively assist the government in developing a national skills and learning strategy that includes adult literacy. We are happy to report that Minister Stewart has responded with an offer to meet and discuss the issues.

We'll base our draft agenda and our discussions with policy makers on priority themes identified by the literacy community in recent years. For example, the June 2001 literacy roundtable identified the following priorities:

1. Funding (adequate, stable, including infrastructure)
2. Literacy as community development
3. Multi-stakeholder process (to design a strategy)
4. Overcoming learners barriers to participation
5. Family literacy
6. Basing literacy and learning in culture
7. Developing a learning society
8. Building capacity (of the literacy delivery system)
9. Public awareness
10. Technology.

For each of these issues, we will be looking at the challenges, what needs to be done, and by whom (federal government, provincial/territorial government, literacy organizations, business, and other players). We welcome your input now or later in the summer, when we will have a draft document and a discussion guide ready to facilitate the response. Check www.literacy.ca

Canada's 6 National Literacy Organizations are:

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- ABC CANADA
 - Fédération Canadienne pour l'Alphabétisation des Francophones (FCAF)
 - Frontier College
 - Laubach Literacy Canada
 - Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL)
 - National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)

Check out NALD's latest issue of *Network News* which is still published online at www.nald.ca

News Updates

International Adult Learners Week



International Adult Learners' Week (ALW) was conceived at UNESCO's Fifth International Conference on Adult Education in Hamburg in 1997. It was first celebrated in 2000 and

is currently celebrated in over

40 countries, with more countries in the process of joining the movement. Around the world, ALW promotional campaigns and media events are aimed at celebrating learning in all its forms, at all levels of society and throughout life.

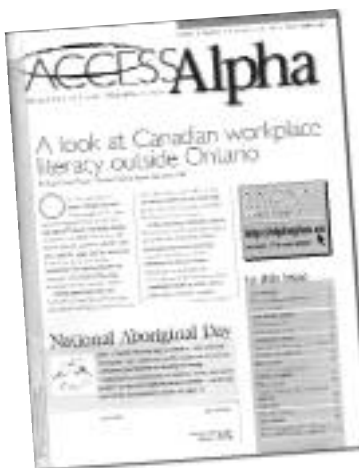
The Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC), has announced its formal support of International Adult Learners' Week in Canada, to be launched around International Literacy Day in September 2002.

This could be a useful opportunity for the literacy community, for a number of reasons:

- The support of the Ministers of Education will be crucial to any progress on a pan-Canadian literacy agenda. This event gives coalitions an opportunity to forge stronger relations with their Education Ministers and to promote literacy as the cornerstone of lifelong learning.
- The Ministers will be looking for help and ideas, and the literacy community has expertise after years of organising International Literacy Day events in September.
- It is an excellent opportunity to highlight literacy learners' achievements and the returns on literacy investments.
- To the extent that other organizations are drawn in, it could result in important new alliances for lifelong learning at local, provincial and national levels.
- For groups that already plan International Literacy Day activities, these can be coordinated with the larger theme. For those who do not have plans, UNESCO materials will include a range of ideas and tools.

MCL will serve as a clearing house for Adult Learners Week ideas and information. Arlene MacLowick will be coordinating this and will be glad to hear from you at network@literacy.ca

Worth Checking Out



The recent issue of *Access Alpha* newsletter from the AlphaPlus Centre in Ontario contains a number of articles on the theme of workplace literacy. This newsletter is available online at www.alphaplus.ca. Just click on the Spring/Summer 2002 issue under newsletters. The

cover article by Brigid Hayes of the National Literacy Secretariat provides a good overview of literacy across Canada. There are also reviews of a number of new resources available through the AlphaPlus Centre's library services as well as online through www.alphaplus.ca

HRDC funds the Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy

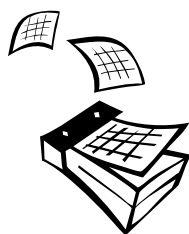
HRDC has announced funding of \$40,000 through the National Literacy Secretariat, to create the Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy. ABC CANADA will be responsible for establishing a steering committee that will oversee the establishment of the legal framework to start the Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy. For further information call Paul Rollin at HRDC at 819-994-5559.

Correction

In the last issue of *literacy.ca* an email address for one of Saskatchewan's workforce literacy contacts was incorrect. On page 12, Ron Torgerson, with the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour was listed as sfl.west@sk.sympatico.ca but should be corrected to say westprogram@gosympatico.ca

Upcoming Events

September 8, 2002
International Literacy Day



September 8 – 14, 2002
International Adult Learners' Week

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO is currently preparing a "kit" to help organizations plan celebrations for this week. It will be distributed to literacy programs in early August through MCL and the provincial/territorial literacy coalitions. Find out about the national launch and local events by checking on www.literacy.ca or <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/publications/alguide.shtml>

September 20 – 29, 2002
Plain Language Conference
 Toronto, Ontario

The Plain Language Association International is planning for their fall conference. For more information on this event on plain language, check www.plainlanguage.gov

October 24, 2002
Literacy Action Day
 Ottawa, Ontario

Contact MCL for details at 613-563-2464 or go to www.literacy.ca

literacy.ca

Movement for Canadian Literacy

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The Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) 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.

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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www.literacy.ca

Please visit the Movement for Canadian Literacy on the World Wide Web.