

# Literacy on the Move



March 2006

## Partnerships in the Voluntary Sector

### POLITICS AND POLICY

*By Askin Taner, OLC Public Policy Analyst*

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER, the OLC explores partnerships. We start by providing some background on partnerships in the voluntary sector in general, and discuss the context in which 'partnerships' has become a buzzword.

Today, 'partnership' is used to characterize a wide variety of arrangements between and amongst organisations. At one end of the spectrum are relationships which are based on narrowly defined, immediate interests of the parties involved. At the other, 'partnership' is used to describe arrangements where shared visions, objectives and budgets bring about outcomes that none of the parties could have achieved alone.<sup>1</sup> This type of partnership is usually based on both immediate and long term, broadly defined interests. Wherever they lie on this spectrum, partnerships are seen as a universal remedy for the voluntary sector in delivering better value to society.

It is now widely agreed by those in the field of adult literacy that partnerships hold a potential for progress in the field, and literacy organisations have been engaging in an ever-increasing number and type of partnerships. While our understanding of why precisely partnerships are necessary, and what exact benefits they are

likely to bring is still evolving, reports from the field provide growing evidence that literacy organisations are getting better at partnering.

In the last two decades, partnerships mushroomed in almost every corner of the globe, and across very diverse fields in the voluntary sector. By the end of the 1990s, the demand for partnerships had increased so sharply that there was now money to be made in non-profit partnership brokering by private businesses. Prestigious universities took notice and started offering postgraduate programs in domestic and international partnering.

The idea that partnerships hold the key to societal well-being has become a rather influential one. Many large private Canadian corporations have bought into the idea by proudly going into partnerships with voluntary organisations focused on social service delivery. While advocates of socially responsible corporations view this shift to 'change from within' as highly beneficial to society, for critics these partnerships represent little more than a new form of dependency on the part of the voluntary sector.

The voluntary sector has skillfully survived the funding setbacks of the 1980s and 1990s, and it has emerged as a significant player in civil society and social service delivery in the

new millennium. Not surprisingly, it has also successfully adjusted to the trend of partnerships by adopting a 'practical' outlook vis-à-vis sponsors, supporters, donors, suppliers, clients, customers, and even deserving causes.

From a public policy perspective, the momentum toward partnerships can be seen as an emerging policy approach toward capacity-building for social service delivery. Today governments across the western world actively promote a concept of partnership as a new, efficient and low-cost mode of capacity-building. This holds true for the field of adult literacy and basic skills training across Canada.

Canadian governments are strongly encouraging partnerships in service delivery, program and professional development, and research in the field. In particular, there is evidence that the momentum for building partnerships between private businesses and literacy organisations in the program design and delivery of workplace literacy training is becoming stronger.<sup>2</sup>

Partnerships within the voluntary sector are also in a different place today than they were a decade ago. In the 1990s, when funders started requiring partnerships of their grantees, many voluntary organisations were thrown into a reactive mode, and ended up in partnerships motivated by a desire to meet funding criteria or share the burden of risk.<sup>3</sup>

More recently, voluntary organisations have had to become more reflective and strategic in their partnership building efforts, as demanded by funders: the emerging funding framework for the sector is characterized by an increasing emphasis on partnerships in requests for proposals and choices of funding mechanisms.<sup>4</sup>

While most voluntary organisations are indeed very positive about the potential for partnerships, many are worried about this recent trend of funders to impose partnerships on the sector. The full range of implications of this emerging trend is still unclear, including the implications for the literacy field.

Recent decades have brought with them significant change in the voluntary sector. Today, the sector has an expanded mandate to lead effective social change. The trend toward partnerships, with its political and policy implications for society becomes particularly significant and needs to be carefully analyzed in light of that expanded mandate.

Voluntary organisations, including those in the field of adult literacy, are accountable to society, as well as to their partners. While making the most of partnerships in their quest for delivering quality services, the voluntary sector needs to strike the right balance between their accountability toward partners and funders on the one hand, and their accountability toward society on the other.

### References

1. Ben Tuxworth and Florian Sommer, "Fair Exchange? Measuring the impact of not-for-profit partnerships" *Forum for the Future* June 2003.
2. For more on partnerships in the field of workplace literacy, see: "Workplace/Workforce Literacy: Building Linkages for Action" Symposium Report, The Ontario Literacy Coalition, Toronto, Ontario. May 31, 2005; Alison Campbell: "Strength from Within: Overcoming the Barriers to Workplace Literacy Development" The Conference Board of Canada, 2003; Alison Campbell: "Creating a Sustainable Workplace Literacy Program" The Conference Board of Canada, 2005.
3. *Building Sustainable Non-Profits: The Waterloo Region Experience*. Centre for Research and Education in Human Services, 2004.
4. Katherine J. Scott. "Funding matters: the impact of Canada's new funding regime on nonprofit and voluntary organisations," 2003. <http://www.ccsd.ca/pubs/2003/fm/>



## Nominations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Frances Lever Memorial Award

Do you know a person who should be recognized for their dedication to and involvement in literacy? The OLC is now accepting nominations for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Frances Lever Memorial Award. Please see the nomination form enclosed with this newsletter for more information about the award and about Frances Lever.

**Deadline for Nominations: April 21, 2006**

# Building Communities of Practice

By Lesley Brown, Director, Program Development

**T**HE CONCEPT OF A **COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE** refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations<sup>1</sup>. It is from this concept that many of the Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) projects have been built this year.

## Workplace/Workforce

In the *Strategic Partnerships for Action* project we are building partnerships between training, education and literacy groups, and labour and employment and business groups in a united approach to presenting options for workplace basic education. Key stakeholders from each of these sectors met last year at the OLC Workforce/Workplace Symposium. This year, to support the continuation of the delegates' work, the OLC will be holding five forums across the province to extend the discussion, and identify the issues and models most appropriate to our diverse regions. We will continue to build community partners, identify key issues, develop action plans and explore workplace/workforce basic education models that fit in with the realities of Ontario.

## Literacy and Basic Skills

The Literacy and Basic Skills field remains an essential community of practice devoted to supporting the learning needs of adult literacy learners in Ontario. The OLC has been funded to plan for a *20th Anniversary Conference* in 2007. The conference will allow the literacy community to share knowledge, celebrate successes and continue to learn from each other. We already have a conference planner and an advisory committee that has representatives from all sectors. We will soon be asking for your ideas in creating a successful event.

## Family Literacy

The family literacy community of practice is supported through the work of the *Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO)*, a provincial working group of the OLC. This year we will be hosting five regional forums across the province to bring together key stakeholders interested in developing sustained family literacy programming. The forums will share best practices, identify issues, respond to research and begin the process of building a community of practice to raise the profile of family literacy in Ontario.

## First Language and English as a Second Language Literacy

Through the First Language/ESL Literacy in Ontario project, OLC has the opportunity to develop a new community of practice by bringing partners together from the immigrant settlement and English as a Second Language communities to explore the relationship of literacy for second language learners — those who are not literate in their mother tongue and now need to learn English. This will broaden our understanding of literacy and allow us to more fully explore literacy issues through the spectrum of literacy, learning and language.

Our communities of practice include all OLC members and advisers who support our work. We thank you; it is only with your guidance and commitment that are we able to do the work that we do.

For more information on these projects or the OLC, visit the OLC website at [www.on.literacy.ca](http://www.on.literacy.ca) and the AFLO website at [www.aflo.on.literacy.ca](http://www.aflo.on.literacy.ca) or contact Lesley Brown at 416-963-5787, ext. 27 or by email at [lesley@on.literacy.ca](mailto:lesley@on.literacy.ca)

## References

1. Wikipedia – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communities\\_of\\_Action](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communities_of_Action)

# Identifying and Building Potential Partners in Family Literacy

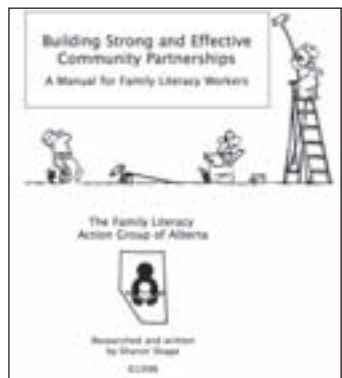
By Ellen Long, Groundswell Publishing

WE HEAR A LOT ABOUT PARTNERSHIPS in the family literacy field. On the one hand, funding has become increasingly tied to having significant partnerships with other agencies. On the other hand, partnerships have their own appeal because we know instinctively that combining resources and areas of expertise results in more integrated, holistic programming possibilities.

In theory, partnerships have the potential to improve delivery through donations, sponsorships, coordination and collaboration. Partnerships between family literacy groups and other agencies can help facilitate co-referrals, increase space and administrative support, incorporate family literacy principles into other programs and create greater awareness. In practice, however, partnerships take time, and time is at a premium in the family literacy field.

While family literacy workers know the value of community partnerships, time limitations often make it difficult to research potential partners and to investigate methods and strategies for building effective partnerships. According to a recent province-wide family literacy survey (in press), commissioned by the OLC and overseen by the Action for Family Literacy Ontario, a working group of the OLC, most family literacy groups in Ontario have partnerships with at least one other organisation. Still, Ontario practitioners identify a need for a comprehensive list of potential partners and strategies for pursuing them.

Fortunately, the Family Literacy Action Group of Alberta (FLAG) published a top-rate and still-current document, called *Building Strong and Effective Community*



*Partnerships: A Manual for Family Literacy Workers*. In addition to an extensive list of potential family literacy partners, this manual provides step-by-step instructions and a set of well-crafted worksheets on how to approach potential partners and how to build, maintain and evaluate partnerships. Researched and written by Sharon Skage in 1996, the full text of this document is available on NALD at [www.nald.ca/clr/partner/cover.htm](http://www.nald.ca/clr/partner/cover.htm)

FLAG suggests that the first step in thinking about partnerships is to develop clarity on the following questions:

- ▶ What do you hope to gain by forming partnerships with other agencies that you cannot accomplish or provide internally?
- ▶ Do you hope to gain financial or in-kind support? If so, what would that support consist of?
- ▶ Do you hope to access expertise in other disciplines? If so, what kinds of expertise are you looking for?
- ▶ Do you want to receive or make referrals to or from other agencies?
- ▶ Do you or your agency have expertise that others could benefit from? If so, what is it?
- ▶ What other reasons do you have for seeking partners?
- ▶ What value would be added to the proposed project by involving partners?
- ▶ What benefits or value you could offer to other agencies?

Being clear about these questions will help practitioners develop focused goals and use their limited time as strategically as possible. The FLAG manual is full of other helpful strategies for effective partnership development. Whether your organisation already has established partnerships or is just venturing into this terrain, the FLAG manual is a must-read.

# Partnerships – Preparing Learners for the Real World

By Pat Whyte, DoorWays Coordinator, The Centre for Skills Development & Training

**W**HAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU COMBINE learners, a literacy agency and a community partner? From our experience, you get a win-win-win situation.

Perhaps you have joined a literacy program with the hope that this decision will help you get a better job. Literacy programs today are well prepared to help you with that goal. At your agency, your practitioner can help you develop many skills called Essential Skills. These skills include document use (reading documents used in your job), communication skills, thinking skills, problem-solving skills, math, computer skills, teamwork skills and document use.

Once you and your practitioner have decided what kind of job you want, you can work on assignments that are job-related. You and your practitioner can even link up with a community employer to help you develop a workable action plan. This is where the power of partnerships will really benefit you.

At our agency, we help learners move into pre-apprenticeship programs such as Electrician, Machining, and Construction. As a coordinator, I have partnered with the trades instructors and industry partners (e.g., construction companies) to find out what kinds of specific skills they will need for their job. For example, we have learned from the construction employers that they want to hire people who have good communication, math and problem solving skills.

When our construction students come to class, we work on fractions and measuring skills, so the learners will be prepared to cut

materials quickly and accurately. We also provide demonstrations on filling out inventories and cutting sheets for wood projects. The students love to work on assignments that are related to their employment goals.

One of our construction students was terrified of math, but after she came to our agency, she developed confidence in math and went on to be hired by a very good construction agency. As an extra benefit, she now helps her children with their math homework.

Partnering has been a real benefit for our learners, staff and community partners. I would be interested in hearing if anyone else has developed similar partnerships. Please contact me at [pat.whyte@thecentre.on.ca](mailto:pat.whyte@thecentre.on.ca)

You can learn more about our centre and our programs. Look on our website at [www.thecentre.on.ca](http://www.thecentre.on.ca)



Electrical, machining and construction students doing work-related assignments in the LBS class at DoorWays

# Law and Learning—A Unique Partnership

By Gay Douglas Broerse and Judy Calvin, Literacy Link Niagara; and Robert B. Reid, Lancaster, Brooks & Welch

**A**N INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP in the Niagara Region is combining the powerful personal stories of adult learners with the talents of the community's leading law firm.

The *Learner Advocate Program* is a partnership of prestigious law firm Lancaster, Brooks & Welch and Literacy Link Niagara, the regional literacy network. The program will pair a team of literacy learners and the firm's lawyers to create a dynamic speakers' group.

Lancaster, Brooks & Welch has made a generous donation toward the program and has committed their lawyers' support to presenting with learners, promoting the program in the community and opening doors to government, the business community and service clubs.

Presentations will be developed on five critical issues linked to literacy—health, employment, family, justice, and legal rights.

The joint presentations take a real team approach. A lawyer from the firm will first cover the "big picture" of literacy—what the research has to say about its impacts on health, employment, the local economy. Then the lawyer will introduce the learner, the "real" expert on the subject. The learner will then tell his or her personal story about struggles with low literacy or how the decision to pursue upgrading affected this aspect of his or her life.

"We were thrilled last summer when the call came in from Lancaster Brooks & Welch,"

said Literacy Link's Executive Director, Gay Douglas Broerse. "The firm had made a strategic decision that literacy was a community issue that reflected both their values and the work they do as lawyers in interpreting law. They also recognized that many of their clients struggle with literacy issues."

The lawyers at Lancaster, Brooks & Welch are equally excited about the possibilities. "We work with words every day, in the office and in court," said LB&W partner Robert Reid, "So we know how critical it is in today's world to communicate clearly and understand what is said and written. The *Learner Advocate Program* will be a great way to raise the profile of this important issue."

Recruitment is currently underway for students enrolled in literacy programs in the Niagara Region. A learner group facilitator has been hired to coordinate learner recruitment, coaching and scheduling of speaking engagements.

"We see great opportunities for learners to meet new people and develop new skills and confidence while telling their personal stories," said Learner Group Facilitator, Judy Calvin.

We hope that this unique partnership will serve as an inspiration and model for other communities.

For more information call Gay Douglas Broerse at Literacy Link Niagara, 905-937-8887.



The Learner Advocate Program was announced at the Literacy Link Niagara AGM in August 2005. **From left to right**, Harry Thorsteinson (Lancaster Brooks & Welch), Gay Douglas Broerse and Dorothy Franklin (Literacy Link Niagara) and Rob Welch (Lancaster Brooks & Welch).

## Learners' Corner

By Denis Lemieux

I can think of many partnerships that would help a person like me. It would be good if literacy programs and local employers could create partnerships that would let people get some job experience. People with literacy challenges may not know where to go or where to find out what is available for them in their community. Even people who have had jobs may not know what is out there if they cannot read and write well.

It can be a self-esteem issue too. If you have never worked, or not worked for a while, you lose confidence. A literacy program that is partnered with an employers group could help people make the next move when they are ready for it.

There are several ways that this partnership could work. Literacy programs could support workplace placement, job mentoring or job shadowing. Employers could support on-the-job training through co-op programs or practicums. Even volunteer jobs help people to connect between what they are expected to learn and how they use that skill on the job.

Unions need to be part of this partnership, too. It is not enough to just help injured workers to get a pension. Help them find something else to do. Unions could refer injured or laid-off workers to literacy programs if they need it. If the workers are people like me, they want to work or to get the background that will help us work again.

### Kim Strickland Memorial Learner Leader Sponsorship Program



Do you know an adult learner who has shown leadership in the literacy community? Would they be interested in attending OLC Annual General Meetings (AGM) this June to see about getting involved at the provincial level?

- Find out more about the Program
- Find out how to apply

Go to <http://www.on.literacy.ca/learner/alno.htm#how>

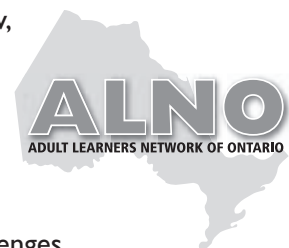
Or contact the OLC Learner Coordinator, Patricia Brady at

Phone: 416-963-5787, extension 22  
or email [patricia@on.literacy.ca](mailto:patricia@on.literacy.ca)

**Deadline for applications is April 21, 2006**

### Positions available on the Adult Learners Network of Ontario (ALNO)

Are you, or do you know, anyone who would like to become part of ALNO?



ALNO advises the OLC on what it is like to live with literacy challenges.

Find out:

- more about ALNO
- how to apply for ALNO
- what areas need new people

Go to <http://www.on.literacy.ca/learner/alno.htm#how>

Or contact the OLC Learner Coordinator, Patricia Brady at: 416 963-5787, extension 22  
or email [patricia@on.literacy.ca](mailto:patricia@on.literacy.ca)

**Deadline for applications is April 21, 2006**

# AlphaPlus' Community Literacy Collection Program

Promoting Community Development through Literacy/Library Partnerships

By Mary Reynolds, CLC Program Coordinator,  
Centre AlphaPlus Centre

IS THERE A PUBLIC LIBRARY IN YOUR COMMUNITY? Do your learners visit and use their library, or do they find it too intimidating?

AlphaPlus' Community Literacy Collection Program (CLC) promotes community

development and literacy awareness by facilitating collaborative partnerships between Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) agencies in the Anglophone, Francophone and Native literacy streams and their local public library.



As a CLC Partner, you and your public library sponsor a Community Literacy Collection of up to 200 adult and family literacy resources from AlphaPlus. Housed at, and managed by the library, the CLC is accessible not only to your learners, their instructors and tutors, but also to members of the community at large. The CLC stays in your community for up to two years, and can be refreshed with new materials. AlphaPlus customizes each CLC to meet the literacy needs that you and your library partner identify.

As a CLC partner, your role is threefold:

- ▶ to actively promote the Collection in your community
- ▶ to work collaboratively with your library to introduce your learners to the library and its collections
- ▶ to provide AlphaPlus with an evaluation of the impact of the CLC in the community

AlphaPlus supports your joint promotion of the CLC by providing a promotional kit that includes posters, flyers, a press release and a backgrounder report.

Since the CLC Program's inception in the fall of 2003, a total of 34 LBS agencies from the community-based, school board and college sectors, and 2 regional literacy networks have partnered with 22 public libraries across Ontario

“The literacy program is the place you go to learn to read. The perception is that you have to already know how to read to go to the library. Pathways were developed between literacy and the library. It takes a long time to develop new habits.”

—Library Partner

to sponsor an AlphaPlus Community Literacy Collection. Response to the Program has been overwhelmingly positive. In the spring of 2005, Sue Folinsbee of Tri-En Communications conducted an independent evaluation of the CLC Program. The goal of the evaluation was to determine the most effective ways to integrate the CLC Program into AlphaPlus' library services. Past, present and future CLC partners, regional and provincial literacy and library representatives, and AlphaPlus staff participated.

The evaluation determined that the CLC Program was highly successful and was having a very positive impact in participating communities.



If your agency is interested in becoming a CLC Program partner, please contact Mary Reynolds, CLC Program Coordinator, at AlphaPlus ([mreynolds@alphaplus.ca](mailto:mreynolds@alphaplus.ca)).

# New Resources

By Maria Moriarty, Centre AlphaPlus Centre  
1-800-728-1120 — [www.alphaplus.ca](http://www.alphaplus.ca)

The following materials may be borrowed or purchased through AlphaPlus.

## The Partnership Handbook

The Partnership Handbook was developed by the Labour Market Learning and Development Unit at Human Resources Development Canada to help people learn more about what community-based partnerships are and to offer suggestions about how to be effective in them.

Section One of the Handbook defines what a partnership is and what it is not. Section Two identifies the conditions that support partnerships and provides examples of assessment tools. Section Three outlines the partnership process and how to apply it. Section Four explores the knowledge, attitudes and skills required to undertake a partnership. Section Five examines common issues and concerns as well as providing some possible solutions. Section Six describes the characteristics of a variety of partnership approaches.

This invaluable resource provides tools and tips including “Lessons from Experience” and “Points to Ponder” to encourage thoughtful planning for potential partners and to assist partners to move forward together. A Facilitator’s Guide containing a series of exercises and role plays is also available. The guide can be used to facilitate discussion between potential partners and for existing partnerships, to review the partnership and to plan for the future.

Download The Partnership Handbook at: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/epb/sid/cia/partnership/handbook.shtml&hs=lxt>



## Youth and literacy partnership models

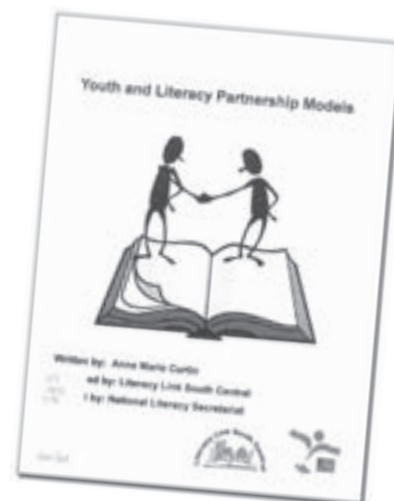
London, Ont.: Literacy Link South Central, [2002].

**Borrow from AlphaPlus. Call no. 371.2913 C79**

This report, based on work by Literacy Link South Central to investigate and form partnerships with youth service providers in their region. It is a timely and useful guide to the pitfalls and possibilities for partnership formation between literacy programs and other community agencies. The report describes the process undertaken by Literacy Link South Central to review existing partnerships between literacy agencies and youth service providers across Canada, and to work toward the development of viable partnerships with agencies serving youth in the local region.

The review underlined the need to develop a greater awareness and understanding of literacy issues within community agencies serving youth and of the availability of literacy programming for youth.

This report is a straightforward account of the project and provides helpful discussion and practical advice, in the form of helpful hints, about formal and informal partnership models. The report will be very useful tool for agencies contemplating partnership as they work to establish good working relationships with other agencies and to build awareness of literacy issues and the availability of literacy programming.



### Family service organisations: examining their stake in literacy

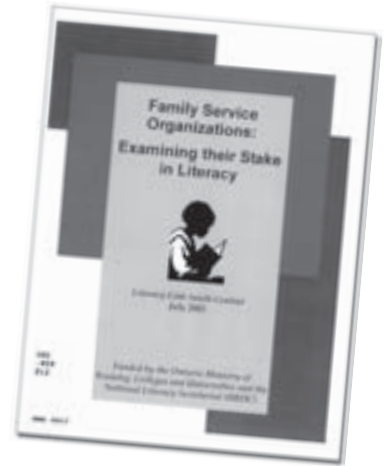
London, Ont.: Literacy Link South Central, 2003.

**Borrow from AlphaPlus. Call no. 362.829 F12**

Literacy Link South Central undertook this project based on the fact that although there are many individuals in the region who could benefit from literacy upgrading, many may not seek out literacy programs. They may, instead, look for help from other family service organisations, such as employment centres, multi-service centres, neighbourhood resource centres, and legal advocacy centres.

This innovative project set out to look at the level of awareness of the impact of low literacy on clients using these family service organisations, what “stake” such organisations have in literacy, and how these organisations can work effectively with literacy networks to make services more accessible for clients with low literacy and to refer clients to literacy services.

The result is a thought-provoking examination of how connections between literacy service providers and family service organisations need to be fostered and strengthened in order to better serve clients. The report provides a constructive discussion of how literacy networks and agencies can work with and better understand the structures and priorities of family service organisations in order to build awareness of literacy and literacy issues. Such an increased understanding will contribute to the creation of a literacy-sensitive environment that will make it easier for clients to access literacy programming and will support the development of strategic relationships between literacy networks and family service organisations, that will lead to successful partnerships in the interests of better serving clients with literacy needs.



### Building community capacity: focus on adult literacy: handbook

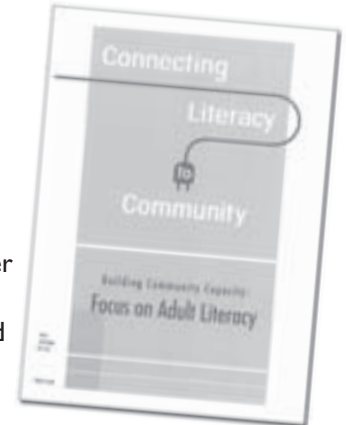
Calgary, Alta.: Bow Valley College, c2003.

**Borrow from AlphaPlus. Call no. 374.01209 G133**

This handbook was developed as a resource for people and organisation who are interested in using community capacity building methods to build or enhance a community response to adult literacy needs. Developed for use by literacy service providers as well as for social workers, nurses, librarians, community agency coordinators and managers, the handbook can be used to help build partnerships with organisations to facilitate the reduction of the number of barriers to literacy in community agencies; to build awareness of literacy issues that may impede or compromise service provision, as well as to raise general awareness of literacy and literacy issues and the existence of literacy programs and services in the community.

The handbook is organised into three parts. Part one describes the Connecting Literacy to Community project (CLC). Part two offers tools and strategies to advance adult literacy among community services. Part three describes the research that was included in the CLC project.

Available at NALD: <http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/connect/focus/cover.htm>



### Spring 2006—AlphaPlus’ free on-line workshops

The annotations above are just one of the things that the intrepid Information Resources team does at AlphaPlus. Since late February they’ve been part of a team offering on-line workshops to help you develop a great resource collection, learn how to use Centra for meetings and other events, explore research, and think about how to integrate technology into your literacy programming. There are still lots of workshops that you can register for. Check out the News and Events listings on the front page of the AlphaPlus Web site for more information and the workshop schedule [alphaplus.ca]. If you’d like to receive complete information about the workshops that are remaining in the series, or you’d like to find out about past workshops, send a message to Trudy Kennell at [tkennell@alphaplus.ca](mailto:tkennell@alphaplus.ca). She will send the information to you and put you on the mailing list for future updates.

# FESTIVAL NEWS

Do you want time to reflect on and improve your literacy work?

*By Sheila Stewart, Coordinator, Festival of Literacies*

**M**ANY OF YOU HAVE HEARD ABOUT the literacy research workshops the Festival of Literacies piloted in Guelph, North Bay, Ottawa, and Toronto this past year. In total, they were attended by more than fifty practitioners. Throughout 2006, we will deliver workshops in various parts of Ontario and online using Centra. This year we have a particular interest in working with networks, programs, and communities, in planning the workshops to create sessions that can be applied to your unique needs.

Learning about research requires a variety of approaches to meet the needs of different communities, programs, and individuals. We have workshops for practitioners who are interested in small action research projects focusing on improving their programs or who are interested in learning more about research and reflective practice in general. We can also offer workshops for organisations interested in engaging in major research projects.

A member of our advisory committee said to us, "Do you have to call it research?" So much of what we do in literacy already involves on-the-ground research—observing, asking questions, discovering learners' needs, finding out what other practitioners do, learning about our communities' resources, problem-solving. But many practitioners don't feel they need to call it research. And don't literacy practitioners have enough to do already working with learners, tutors, committee and board members, their communities, and funders?

In fact, even beginning to learn about research can help to break down some of the isolation and burnout common in our field. Practitioner research helps literacy programs, practitioners, and ultimately learners. Research helps us claim the reflection time we need to get better at the work we do and to talk more widely about our practice with other practitioners. Research gives our knowledge greater legitimacy as well as a wider scope and impact.



By working closely with partners, we want to create workshops that are appropriate to specific communities, needs, and interests. We would like to involve local practitioners in co-facilitation and evaluation. In the spring of 2005, the Festival worked closely with the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition (ONLC) to prepare a workshop for their conference in North Bay. Katrina Grieve worked with Christianna Jones, a practitioner in Wikwemikong and chair of the ONLC, to develop a workshop appropriate for the practitioners who would attend. This partnering and co-facilitation resulted in a stronger, more relevant workshop. We welcome your input in workshop planning for your group.

Workshops vary from introductory, for example on reading research and reflecting on practice, to more advanced, such as how to deliver research findings so that they make an impact on the field. These workshops will provide a breath of fresh air to help us renew our energy, gain new perspectives, and think and feel differently about our work.

We sent out information on the workshops and a request for input in late February. For more information, discussion, or to request an information package, contact Guy Ewing, [guye@ca.inter.net](mailto:guye@ca.inter.net) or Joy Lehmann, [jlehmann@idirect.ca](mailto:jlehmann@idirect.ca).

The Festival of Literacies ([www.literaciesoise.ca](http://www.literaciesoise.ca)) is located at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.

# Message from the President and Chair

By Sara Gill, OLC Board of Directors

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS WOULD LIKE TO THANK all those members that participated in last year’s moral ownership consultation at the Annual General Meeting. The input we received around the Ends statements was very valuable. In general, we were very pleased with the feedback that our members agree that our Ends are appropriate and that the organisation is working toward them in very positive ways.

During the consultation, we asked groups to look at different sections of the Ends policy. We asked for comments on their appropriateness as well as suggestions on to how to do our work better. In reviewing the Ends policy we used the members’ comments as a reference when making revisions.

In the future we plan to continue to connect with, and get feedback from, our moral ownership through the Annual General Meeting, as well as our e-bulletins, newsletters, surveys and other communications.

The Board of Directors and staff are committed to working towards the Ends outlined below.

## The OLC Ends Policy:

**The Ontario Literacy Coalition (OLC) exists so that all people in Ontario who have literacy challenges can participate fully in society.**

### Interpretations:

#### “Literacy”

- ▶ enables people to gain the skills they need to achieve their personal and societal goals
- ▶ makes it possible for people from all backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities to live with dignity in their communities
- ▶ helps to reduce the barriers to meaningful participation in society.

“Participate fully in society” means that people with literacy challenges are able to:

- ▶ live full lives—at home, at work and in their communities
- ▶ have access to high quality supports and opportunities
- ▶ contribute to the community.

### Second Level Ends Policies:

The OLC will bring about results in the following areas:

1. Deliverers of literacy programs and services (programs, networks and practitioners and volunteers in the literacy field) can:
  - ▶ do their work better and deliver quality services so that learners are able to get maximum benefits from literacy programming

- ▶ have a voice with government
- ▶ be aware of research, best practices, current trends and issues and government initiatives
- ▶ have a forum for sharing and gathering information
- ▶ have an opportunity to participate in professional development initiatives.

#### 2. The general public will:

- ▶ be aware of and understand literacy issues
- ▶ be sensitive and respond positively to people with literacy challenges
- ▶ accommodate people with literacy challenges

#### 3. Government and other decision-makers will:

- ▶ be aware of and understand literacy issues and other issues impacting the literacy field
- ▶ be aware of the availability of current services and understand the need for additional services
- ▶ have information to take action
- ▶ be accountable.

#### 4. People who have literacy challenges, whether they are enrolled in a literacy program or not:

- ▶ are aware of literacy programs
- ▶ are encouraged to attend a literacy program
- ▶ have access to programs that are holistic, build self-esteem and meet their needs at home, at work and in their communities
- ▶ can find and use the information and services they need.

# OLC News

By Anette Chawla, Executive Director, and Lesley Brown, Director, Program Development

## OLC and the Advisory Roundtable meets with Minister Bentley

On January 19, 2006, we were fortunate that the Honourable Chris Bentley, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), came to meet with the Advisory Roundtable (ART) and OLC staff. The Minister opened the one hour meeting by saying that the government and he are committed to people in Ontario achieving their greatest potential. Literacy is the foundation for further learning and for skills development. In this context, the number of people who are not proficient in literacy is especially disturbing. It poses an enormous challenge to our province and represents a huge loss in many ways, not least economically.



Mr. Bentley chats with the OLC Advisory Roundtable members. **From left to right:** Heather Cousins, Colleen D'Sousa and Wendy Tanner.

### Government initiatives to date include:

- ▶ The No Wrong Door and One Stop Training and Employment System
- ▶ A Labour Market Development Agreement and a Labour Market Partnership Agreement negotiated with the federal government
- ▶ An Adult Education Policy Unit was created in response to Kathleen Wynne's *Ontario Learns* report
- ▶ A commitment for the two ministries, Education and TCU, to work together more closely

- ▶ Learning to 18
- ▶ New investments in the school system and in post-secondary education
- ▶ Best Start childcare and healthy early development initiative.

### The OLC and ART raised these issues with the Minister:

- ▶ The need for a robust adult literacy delivery system (Literacy and Basic Skills and Ontario Basic Skills) with increased funding and a streamlining of the obligations being placed on literacy organisations
- ▶ The need for the focus of adult literacy programs to be broader than only preparation for the workforce
- ▶ The need to better respond to the diversity of participant needs in Ontario's literacy programs including newcomers to Canada, youth, and people with developmental disabilities, to name a few
- ▶ The need for the government to expand the notion of literacy initiatives to include other ways for those with literacy challenges to access information and services and to take literacy into account when developing new policies.

Mr. Bentley emphasized several times that he is looking to the OLC and its members for advice on how to address the literacy gap and how to move forward. Since accountability is always needed and there will be some form of outcome measures, he invited us to look at these issues as well. The Minister said that this is a great opportunity for something to happen. We need to think big and our expertise is required!

The OLC plans on taking the Minister up on his invitation.

## Literacy Action Day, October 27, 2005

On Literacy Action Day literacy advocates from across the country descend on Parliament Hill

in Ottawa to make the case for the federal policy makers to take action on literacy—2005 was no exception. This year, Team Ontario was made up of:

- ▶ Shirley Annable, representative of the Adult Learners Network of Ontario (ALNO) and a board member of both OLC and MCL
- ▶ Annemarie Wesolowski, Vice-President of the OLC and Executive Director Literacy Northwest
- ▶ Anette Chawla, OLC Executive Director.

Our goals were to inform our hosts about literacy, to stress the importance of supporting a 10-year pan-Canadian literacy strategy, and to make the case for continued support of the National Literacy Secretariat.

Our first visit was with **Judi Longfield**, a liberal back-bencher from Ajax. Judi is a strong supporter of literacy. She struck us as a person who really “gets it”. We also met with **David Christopherson**, the NDP critic for Labour, Steel Policy, and Cities and Infrastructure. David is dedicated to literacy in Hamilton and has a strong sense of what the issues are at the national level. During the day, we also had the pleasure of meeting with senior political advisors to **Ministers Joe Fontana** and **Ken Dryden**. In all cases, we had excellent discussions and debate. At the end of the day, we left feeling we had made our case well and that we had done our piece to make literacy stronger.



Judi Longfield, Liberal MP from Ajax, meets with Anette Chawla, Shirley Annable and Annemarie Wesolowski.

At lunch, **Lieutenant-Governor Bartleman** and **Jack Layton**, Leader of the NDP, spoke to a full luncheon crowd. We were so pleased that Jack publicly acknowledged the contributions of Anette and Shirley. We met Jack in 2004!

Thank you to the **Movement for Canadian Literacy** for arranging this event and making LAD 2005 a success. We will be back next year!

### More OLC activities

- ▶ Had two-day Board of Directors meetings in October 2005 and in February 2006
- ▶ Hosted two-day meeting of ALNO (Adult Learners Network of Ontario) in February 2006
- ▶ Held two-day Advisory Roundtable (ART) meeting in January 2006. Emailed out summary of June 2005 meeting
- ▶ Received approval of three MTCU/NLS grants in November 2005
- ▶ Sent out 10 e-bulletins to OLC members.

#### *Family Literacy*

- ▶ Action for Family Literacy Ontario (AFLO) had one face-to-face meeting in February 2006 and has had 4 teleconference meetings since October 2005.
- ▶ Launched a position paper, *Family Literacy in Ontario—Putting it on the MAP!*, on Family Literacy Day—January 27, 2006. This paper outlines our position for moving family literacy forward in Ontario. Visit [www.aflo.on.literacy.ca](http://www.aflo.on.literacy.ca) to learn more about this important work.
- ▶ Participated on an advisory committee with the Centre for Family Literacy in Alberta.
- ▶ Attended Next Steps meeting: Discussing the Future of Foundational Training in Canada with the Centre for Family Literacy in Alberta, in October 2005.
- ▶ Coordinated and distributed Family Literacy Day material from ABC CANADA.
- ▶ AFLO and OLC presented at the manager’s meeting session of the CESBA conference and staffed a booth at this same event in December 2005.

#### *Provincial work*

- ▶ OLC and ALNO representative met with Omar Khan, Special Advisory to Mr. Bentley in January 2005

- ▶ Hosted the MTCU/OLC Liaison meeting in November 2005. Sent field briefing by email to OLC members in February 2006
- ▶ Wrote a further submission to MTCU's One Stop Training and Employment System team in November 2005
- ▶ Wrote and distributed *What's New at Queen's Park*, summarizing the Throne Speech and the two new Labour Market Agreements in January 2006.

#### National work

- ▶ OLC and ALNO representatives attended Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) meetings in October 2005 and in February and March 2006. Met with Board of Directors, colleagues from other provincial and territorial coalitions, and LAN (Learner Advisory Network)
- ▶ Participated in Literacy Action Day (LAD) in October 2005. Met with aides to Ministers Dryden and Fontana and with MPs Judi Longfield (Lib) and David Christopherson (NDP)
- ▶ Attended Ottawa Literacy and Essential Skills roundtable held by the Honorable Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of State (Human Resources Development), in October 2005
- ▶ In November 2005, in partnership with MCL, analyzed the release of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) and provided material to OLC members.
- ▶ Had an opinion piece published in The Toronto Star in November 2005, dealing with the IALSS
- ▶ MCL:
  - co-chaired an advisory committee to The Honourable Mme. Bradshaw and produced a report outlining recommendations for a literacy strategy for Canada
  - produced an election kit with both learning materials and ideas for how to get involved, January 2006.

#### Outreach

- ▶ Presented a workshop on self-direction and self-awareness to the practitioners from St. Louis Adult Learning Centre, Waterloo Catholic District School Board, November 2005

- ▶ Attended Local Service Planning (LSP) meeting in Guelph in December 2005.

#### Resources

- ▶ Will soon be publishing a new resource – *Family Literacy in Ontario: A Guide to Best Practices*. We hope to have it available by March
- ▶ Published and distributed *Making It Work!* A set of five Workforce bulletins for practitioners and learners in Literacy and Basic Skills programs.
- ▶ Distributed postcards and posters from the *Taking a Step* social marketing campaign
- ▶ *Workplace/Workforce Literacy: Building Linkages for Action Symposium Report* from the May 2005 Symposium is now available on the OLC website.

#### OLC Team

- ▶ Susanne Smith joined the OLC as Bookkeeper/ Office Manager in November 2005. We wish Neressa Topping all the best in her new job.
- ▶ Gabriela Tavaru started as Project Coordinator on contract in January 2006.
- ▶ Askin Tanner joined the OLC as Policy Analyst on contract in November 2005.



**The OLC staff:** **Front**, left to right: Susanne Smith, Anette Chawla, Askin Taner. **Back**, left to right: Urszula Mazur, Patricia Brady, Lesley Brown, Gabriela Tavaru, Anne Sealey.

# OLC Board Nominations

The OLC is now accepting nominations for the Board of Directors.

For more information, see the enclosed nomination form.

**Deadline for nominations: April 21, 2006.**

Go to the OLC website at [on.literacy.ca](http://on.literacy.ca) for more information.



## Literacy on the Move

Literacy on the Move is published two times a year by the Ontario Literacy Coalition



### OLC STAFF

Executive Director  
*Anette Chawla*

Director, Program Development  
*Lesley Brown*

Learner Coordinator  
*Patricia Brady*

Bookkeeper/Office Manager  
*Susanne Smith*

Administrative Coordinator  
*Urszula Mazur*

Public Policy Analyst  
*Askin Taner*

Program Coordinator  
*Gabriela Tavaru*

Administrative Assistant  
*Anne Sealey*



### NEWSLETTER

Newsletter Coordinator  
*Patricia Brady*

Copy Editor  
*Daniel Shapiro*

Layout  
*The Right Type*



**To submit material to Literacy on the Move, contact:**

**Literacy on the Move**  
Ontario Literacy Coalition  
65 Wellesley Street East, Suite 503  
Toronto, ON M4Y 1G7  
E-mail: [olc@on.literacy.ca](mailto:olc@on.literacy.ca)  
Website: [www.on.literacy.ca](http://www.on.literacy.ca)  
Tel: 416-963-5787  
Fax: 416-963-8102

The articles in **Literacy on the Move** do not necessarily reflect the view of the Ontario Literacy Coalition but are published to share experience and stimulate interest in, and discussion on, adult basic literacy and numeracy issues.

The OLC gratefully acknowledges funding support from the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Social Development Canada, the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the Trillium Foundation.

### Update Your Database Please!



OLC has moved. Please update your database so that we won't miss any of your important communications!  
See masthead for our new contact information.

### Newsletter Distribution Change

The OLC newsletter, *Literacy on the Move*, will now be distributed two times a year. This change has been made so that the OLC can find the time to send out updates and breaking news through our new e-bulletins. These two communications contain different kinds of information and both of them have received positive responses from the field. The OLC looks forward to continuing to connect with our moral ownership through both of these publications.



### Find out about the OLC Employee Benefits Program

There is an Employee Benefits Program designed specifically for Ontario Literacy Coalition member agencies. Customized choices are available to you at an affordable price. Enrolling is easy! For more information contact the OLC's insurance broker, Owen & Associates, at 416-252-6116.



### MEMBERSHIP REMINDER

**Membership Renewal:** It is not too late to renew your OLC membership. Don't lose your access to OLC publications, events and other benefits. Send in your form today!

The form is available on the OLC website at:  
<http://www.on.literacy.ca/member.htm>

