

In this issue

We have an exciting announcement, the first of many to come in the New Year! Our articles feature new and exciting developments, updates and exciting new resources. We know that you will find information to pique your interest and ignite your passion.

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Chris Harwood and Patricia Ashie show the importance of learner involvement, a special member of the Committee of Adult Literacy Learners (CALL) is recognized and you can find out the latest information from the Financial Literacy Task Force. Not to mention some excellent literacy resources for practitioners and learners and some helpful HR materials for boards and executive directors.

Introducing CLLN!

We have a new name! MCL is now called the **Canadian Literacy and Learning Network** (CLLN). During the last year, the Board of Directors for Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) undertook a review of the organization. Using feedback from key stakeholders and from a broader environmental scan, the board developed a new mission statement, focus and structure. Part of the change included a decision to re-name and re-brand the organization to reflect a new vision and mandate.

As a network we are enthusiastic about fulfilling our new mission of sharing knowledge, engaging partners and stakeholders, building awareness and advancing literacy and learning across Canada.

CLLN's board of directors is made up of four representative from CLLN's Provincial and Territorial Coalitions Committee, two representatives from CLLN's Committee of Adult Literacy Learners and four members-at-large. Board members hold a three year term. CLLN's first board includes: Patricia Ashie, Wendy Bulloch, Kim Crockatt (Vice-Chair), Ningwakwe George (Treasurer), Janet Lane (Chair), Fiona Murray (Secretary), Ellen Szita, and Carolyn Vaughan. Two vacancies will be filled at a later date.

Supporting Learner Leadership

What does it take?



Chris Harwood is the Canadian Adult Literacy and Learners Network (CLLN) coordinator for the Committee of Adult Literacy Learners (CALL). Chris has extensive knowledge as an adult literacy consultant. Her experience includes teaching adult literacy learners; developing curriculum; creating tutor training resources, promoting and using clear language and design; coordinating, developing and delivering training to managers of volunteer resources; project research and writing resources; writing and delivering training sessions and workshops, provincially and internationally.

In October, Chris presented a workshop on learner leadership at the Ontario Literacy Coalition Conference, *Spotlight on Learning*, to over fifty participants, including CALL members Patricia Ashie and Marie David. Patricia talked about the skills she gained as a learner-leader when she created a *Socks for the Homeless* campaign at St. Lawrence College.

Participants saw how a **Learner Involvement Strategy** can support Learner Leadership. Most of the participants are educators in adult literacy or administrators in Literacy and Basic Skills programs. The *Learner Involvement Strategy* is important for organizations that provide literacy programs and upgrading or who work extensively with learners. A learner involvement strategy can help guide organizations to challenge the status quo and become more inclusive of learners as stakeholders. We learned that the government in England requires further-education colleges and work-based training providers to develop their own learner involvement strategies. The government believes that successful learner involvement plays a key role in improving quality and in 2006, created a National Learner Panel to provide it with direct access to learners from a wide range of backgrounds to ensure that the voice of the learner influences national policy.

Participants in the workshop examined key questions relating to a learner involvement strategy, but first—during small group discussions—they identified what they were already doing to involve learners.

A learner involvement strategy benefits learners and organizations by providing a framework—supported by policies and procedures—to enable, equip and motivate learners to voice their views. Improvements are made based on learner-feedback, leading to better programs and services. A learner involvement strategy allows learners to develop essential skills as they take on leadership roles and become actively involved in providing feedback. An active and participatory learner involvement strategy demonstrates an embedded culture of learner involvement.

Organizations must work with learners at all stages, involving them from the beginning. There are many ways to develop leadership skills in learners. Learners can be:

- Learner-Ambassadors and Mentors to new learners
- Volunteers for fundraising projects
- Active in literacy events, such as Adult Learners Week, learner conferences and celebrations of learners' achievements.

Chris's workshop closed with participants asking CLLN to support the advancement of learner involvement by providing:

- guidelines
- draft policies and procedures
- outlines
- training modules – skills for learners/skills for staff
- scenarios

The work plan that CALL is proposing for the next year would support learner involvement. For additional information on a Learner Involvement Strategy please contact Chris Harwood at chris@literacy.ca

Involving Learners

By Patricia Ashie



Patricia Ashie is Vice-Chair of the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network's Committee of Adult Literacy Learners, and sits on the Board of CLLN. Patricia is also a member of the Toronto Adult Student Association. She is part of the international movement advancing education, human rights and fundamental freedoms with the Global Learners Network and the International Council of Adult Education Academy of Lifelong Learning Advocacy.

The values and goals of the individual are strongly influenced by personal circumstances and I do not believe we can truly deal with literacy until we overcome barriers to involving learners.

Adult learners are an under-utilized asset in the promotion of adult learning and literacy. Often the perspective of adult learners is not sought. We are spoken for, thought for and done for. Our participation is limited to storytelling and mere presence.

Positioning of birth and circumstance has nothing to do with individual aptitude, but it can prevent self-sufficiency. How can a child who is consumed by overwhelming challenges in the home understand that education is the means of escape?

Education was never a priority in my life. I was the abused child of an abused mother with mental illness and a father who dealt with the trauma by withdrawing. I was separated from my family while in foster care. I believe this emotional drama was the primary reason for the lack of awareness of my challenges in school.

I left home when I was fifteen and went to work in a hospital kitchen. At seventeen I married and had my first child. I had no vision or desire to change my life. All I ever wanted was a home and family.

Parental responsibilities and a failed marriage made me recognize my problems: a grade nine education, learning challenges and the fear of revealing my weaknesses when applying for a job. How was I going to support my children?

On mother's allowance, embarrassed, and getting nowhere, I bit the bullet and decided to go back to school. A counsellor at St Lawrence College told me to upgrade my math skills. I looked through the text book and remember very clearly: panic!

That same counsellor told me I shouldn't waste my time with school as I could make plenty of money as a cocktail waitress. He even gave me his friend's business card. Again, panic! I knew this job would not be good for me or my children. Fear of the unknown meant I ran back to the comfort of the familiar. I didn't take the math course or a job as a cocktail waitress!

A few years later I married my best friend and became a farmer. Making ends meet was a struggle, but I was able to stay at home with my children and I was reasonably content.

What was never part of my vision was the value of **me**. My ability to create a successful business was not recognized. I felt submissive to the wishes of others. It wasn't until I finally enrolled in a college preparatory program to upgrade my skills that I discovered my potential and the value of me. Literacy upgrading allowed me to discover who I am and recognize my potential. Adult learners are often not included in the design of our own futures. I believe adult learners will only be recognized and valued when organizations have learner involvement strategies.

Literacy and education is not a consumer product or a social program. It is a human right.

Catching Confidence

Jan Eldred is the Associate Director, International, for England's National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (NIACE). Jan wrote a report called *Catching Confidence*, which was presented at the *Summer Institute at the Centre for Literacy* in 2010. The report speaks to the importance of capturing progress and achievement in the things learners want to learn. Teachers and learners reported that the outcomes which mattered were about "having a go" at reading or writing; feeling better about tackling a difficulty

they had been unable to face in the past; applying something learned in a new or different context or being more assertive in speaking up in personal, familial or employment settings. Such discussion and experience led many practitioners to conclude that the Skills for Life strategy resulted in "...counting the things which we can count rather than the things which really count."

Jan's work on perceptions of success in teaching and learning adult literacy reported that both learners and teachers believed gains in confidence were the most significant indicators of success. A finding of interest was that changes in confidence is not necessarily linked to increases in competence. Indeed, some learners revealed, that while they had been attending a literacy class for some time, they had not achieved some of the skills and knowledge (which the national standards and core curricula indicated they might have). These learners, however, thought they were succeeding as they could indicate changes in their lives and in their attitudes to literacy learning.

These changes are not captured through the normal process of assessment; however, they are important to the learners. For this reason, a small study was undertaken by NIACE to understand more about the nature of confidence, its significance in the learning situation and how those learning gains could be captured. One of the tools to come out of the research is the *Catching Confidence Pack*.



This pack builds on the initial research and experience of tutors using the *Catching Confidence* tool in different learning environments. It contains a summary of research findings as well as advice and guidance on how to capture changes in learners' confidence levels.

The Catching Confidence tool or format is a grid (or a mind-map), which uses the literacy and language levels appropriate to the particular groups of learners. It can be adapted to reflect a specific learning context, such as catering, horticulture or literacy or in-work programs, by changing the statements used to highlight specific activities associated with the learning. Symbols are adopted which relate to different levels of confidence and which are placed on the format. These can be stickers, cards, hand-drawings or computer-generated shapes.

You can download a copy of Jan's report from the 2010 Summer Institute at: www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca/inst/sli2010/Papers/Catching_Confidence_discussion_paper.pdf

You can download the Catching Confidence Pack at: <http://archive.niace.org.uk/Research/BasicSkills/Projects/Catching-confidence.htm>

CALL Member Recognized

Danny Haines is a learner from Edmonton, and serves as a member of the Canadian Literacy and Learners Network's Committee of Adult Literacy Learners. Danny was recently nominated as an extraordinary Canadian volunteer in CBC's *Champions of Change* nationwide search for Canada's best volunteers. On Monday, November 15, he was interviewed by Edmonton AM radio host, Ron Wilson. You can listen to the story by clicking on the link on our "What's New" column at www.literacy.ca. Way to go, Danny!

Governance

Standards for the Voluntary Sector

The growth and development of board leadership is key to running an effective and efficient non-profit organization. Effective governance throughout the sector also requires a standardized approach to understanding, planning and evaluation.

Imagine Canada (<http://www.imaginecanada.ca/>) recently launched *A Proposal to Implement Voluntary Standards of Excellence in Canada's Voluntary Sector*. The Standards Initiative is currently being led by a Steering Committee made up of Founding Members. Their role will be to shape the development of the Standards Program and to shepherd it to a formal launch at a Forum in early 2011.

Goals:

- Foster public trust; promote confidence in the sector and protect both its credibility and the public interest.
- Be accountable to the public, acting as a check and balance to ensure good practice.
- Provide educational tools and capacity-building initiatives to the sector.
- Continually evolve and enhance the standards and accreditation processes for the benefit of Canada's voluntary sector.

Looking forward:

Over the next few years, a number of factors will help to shape and guide the Voluntary Standards Initiative: the establishment of minimum standard levels to take into account different sized organizations, capacity building initiatives and toolkits, balancing high ethical objectives with implementation realities, and the need to create value while managing costs.

Canadian standards will help volunteer leaders develop a better grasp of what legitimate board work is all about. Ultimately, standards of governance excellence will increase the level of engagement for all those positively impacted by charitable activity.

Ethical Code Program

The **Ethical Code Program** is a tool created by Imagine Canada, and is designed to help you meet donor expectations and to distinguish you from others in the field. Charities that join the Ethical Code Program have the right to use the Ethical Code Trustmark, which signals to donors that they comply with the Code's fundraising and financial accountability standards. Participation in this voluntary program is open to all registered Canadian charities. For more information on the program and its Trustmark go to <http://www.imaginecanada.ca/ethicalcode>

Task Force on Financial Literacy

This spring, the Finance Minister's Task Force on Financial Literacy held a series of public consultations across the country. It heard from 175 individuals and organizations, including CLLN. The Task Force posted *What We Heard*, in September 2010. It is a summary of the presentations, submissions and comments submitted to the task force.

Participants urged the task force to think about financial literacy, not only in terms of how to budget, save, invest or borrow, but also in terms of knowledge, skills and confidence with regard to the impact of taxation, the availability of social programs, the intricacies of government retirement and income support programs, savings, investments and insurance products.

Presenters—including CLLN— argued that it is important that problems with general literacy and numeracy be addressed before, or concurrently with, financial literacy.

The Task Force on Financial Literacy is scheduled to submit its final report to the Finance Minister this month. To receive a copy of the final report, sign up at: <http://www.financialliteracyincanada.com/eng/newsletter/subscribe.php>.

Good to Know

Resources, Reports and Articles from Around the Globe

Good Reads get adult learners hooked on books

ABC Life Literacy Canada, in partnership with Grass Roots Press and with support from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, recently launched the first six (of 12) titles in the innovative Good Reads series of Canadian-authored books for adult literacy learners.



Good Reads is a series of fiction and non-fiction titles by bestselling Canadian authors, written expressly for adult literacy learners. The authors of the first six books are Gail

Anderson-Dargatz, Deborah Ellis, Maureen Jennings, Rabindranath Maharaj, Louise Penny and Gail Vaz-Oxlade. The short books (about 100 pages) use simple vocabulary and sentence structure. The authors' skill at writing compelling plots and believable characters hooks readers into the stories.

The book covers are eye-catching. The books are easy to read, with generous fonts, space between each line and wide margins. The other Good Reads titles that are available are promoted on the back pages, and a short biography of the author is found on the last page.

Literacy organizations, libraries, and educational institutions can order Good Reads from Grass Roots Press. The series has been very well received in the adult literacy community, as it addresses the acute shortage of pleasure-reading books for adult literacy learners. Good Reads books are written for reading levels between Grade 3 to Grade 6, depending on the title.

Comprehensive reading guides for each title are available as free downloads from the Grass Roots Press website. The guides include discussion questions and exercises for classroom and individual reading. Posters and bookmarks are available free through the Good Reads website at: www.GoodReadsBooks.com.

The Teaching Toolbox

The Teaching Toolbox at <http://www.ns.literacy.ca/video.htm> is a useful video series that was created during the development of the Nova Scotia Literacy Practitioner Training and Certification Program. It contains practical teaching techniques for use in a classroom or tutoring session. Each video in this series highlights or demonstrates a teaching technique.

Make it Count, Parents and Instructors Guides to Youth Money Management

These are excellent resources for instructors, parents and children. They are bright, attractive and clearly laid out. They contain a wealth of activities that are useful and fun to do. There are activities on everything from financing, shopping and leisure, to setting goals, budgeting and getting your first cell phone. They help youth plan for recreational spending and giving back to the community. Young people will learn how to be safe online and how to save money. Youth are encouraged to plan for all spending and saving, establishing a process that will be useful throughout their lives. Every home should have a copy to use with their children.

You can get the online version at: <http://www2.makeitcountonline.ca/csa/> You can also order your own hard copies at no cost.

OLES Tools and Resources

The Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES) is focused on improving the literacy and essential skills of adult Canadians. It provides expertise, funding for innovative and dynamic projects and a wide range of learning tools and other resources. You can download the tools from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/oles/tools.shtml> or you can obtain OLES Tools on a DVD (WP-122-08-09) by sending an email with the publication number to: publications@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca.

The HR Council for the Non-Profit Sector

The HR Council takes action on non-profit labour-force issues, by building awareness and bringing together people, information and ideas. The comprehensive resource centre, at <http://hrcouncil.ca/resource-centre/home.cfm> contains many useful resources and tools, including a toolkit and a diagnostic check-up for non-profits and webinars, designed to help managers, employees and board members better understand, address and manage issues.

Capacity Plus

Organizational capacity is a key part of the work that literacy agencies do to improve performance. Although this resource is written for literacy organizations in Ontario and has Ontario examples, it has useful information for community agencies across Canada.



The guide, called *Capacity Plus, Organizational Capacity Resource Guide for Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies*, was published in August 2010. It is clearly written and can be used when reviewing existing practices in an organization and when considering strengths and weaknesses. It is a useful document for both staff and board members and covers a wide range of topics, including Financial Management, Human Resources Management, Risk Management and Customer Service Management. Each key topic has web links to additional information. This resource is available online at http://www.nald.ca/clo/resource/capacity_plus_book_02.pdf

The Road to Retention, Public Policy Forum

This document details the results of six in-person, cross-country workshops held in 2009, which brought together approximately 300 young Canadians and select employers. Together they explored and generated practical ideas on curbing outmigration, enhancing intergenerational dialogue and transforming organizations into 'choice' employers.



Employee retention is an organizational and public policy priority. To meet it, employers must make changes. At the same time, young people must

understand workplace expectations and adjust to the values and ethics of their employer. Meaningful cross-generational interaction needs to improve.

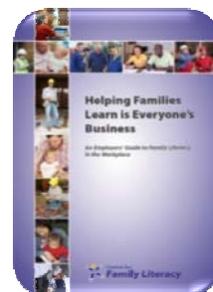
The workshops resulted in ten recommendations. To learn more go to:
<http://www.ppforum.ca/publications/road-retention>

Helping Families Learn is Everyone's Business, Centre for Family Literacy (Alberta) http://www.famlit.ca/resources/Employers_Guide-Quick_June25.pdf

The package includes two guides that are the result of a two-year research project funded by OLES, which examined the feasibility of offering family literacy programs in the workplace.

An Employers' Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace has useful facts and figures to encourage employers to offer family literacy programs. It also identifies the benefits to employers and employees.

A Practitioner's Guide to Family Literacy in the Workplace describes a process to help literacy organizations and businesses partner to introduce, adapt and deliver existing family-based programs in the workplace.



In the works

Information about work in progress



National Association of Friendship Centres Literacy Project

The NAFC is a national Aboriginal organization representing the concerns of 118 Aboriginal service delivery, cultural and community-development organizations across Canada. Friendship Centres deliver a wide spectrum of programs and services to Aboriginal people living in towns and cities across the country, providing and promoting human resource development through these services to a diverse and growing urban Aboriginal community.

In 2006, the NAFC published an exploratory paper and held a national gathering focused on family literacy in Aboriginal Friendship Centre communities. In 2007, it commissioned eight regional reports on Family Literacy in Friendship Centres and published a national strategy for Aboriginal literacy in Canada.

In 2009 the NAFC developed a proposal for submission to Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) that resulted in the NAFC Literacy Project, which got underway in early 2010.

The objectives of the NAFC Literacy Project are to develop:

- a culturally appropriate NAFC literacy assessment tool
- a community-based curriculum for application by local Friendship Centres and
- a ‘Train the Trainer’ strategy and manuals for local Friendship Centre use.

The developed NAFC literacy program will be piloted in selected Friendship Centres, and then modified as needed and disseminated amongst the Friendship Centre Movement in both official languages.

The project is guided by a Steering Committee comprised of representatives of the NAFC’s Provincial/Territorial Associations, as well as external literacy experts and members of the Canadian Literacy and Learning Network and other organizations. The NAFC has hired a contractor—with extensive experience in curriculum development and previous experience of literacy work for the NAFC—to complete the activities in this project.

The Steering Committee is guiding the development of the project and its specific components, such as the assessment tool and curriculum. When the assessment tool and larger curriculum are finalized, the material will be piloted in selected local Friendship Centres (in early 2011). The ‘Train the Trainer’ manuals will be developed in 2011 with full project program piloting taking place later in the year.

For more information, please contact Musqwaunquot Rice, Literacy Program Officer, at 877-563-4844, ext. 332. Lindsay Kennedy, CLLN Senior Manager is a member of the project’s steering committee.

Do you have a project in the works? If you want to share information about interesting resources, new research or the work you are doing, contact Lindsay Kennedy at lindsay@literacy.ca for inclusion in the next edition of our newsletter. **The deadline for submissions for the next issue of literacy.ca EXPRESS is March 30th, 2011.**

Upskilling

Events, Conferences and Workshops from across the Continent

Summer Institute 2011: The Centre of Literacy of Quebec’s 2011 Summer Institute will take place at Dawson College in Montreal on June 27-29, 2011. Mark your calendars.

The focus will be on workplace literacy and essential skills. Visit

<http://www.centreforliteracy.qc.ca> for details.

Your Opinion Matters

Check out the CLLN website (www.literacy.ca) on a regular basis and participate in our online polls. If you have suggestions for a poll email Lindsay Kennedy at lindsay@literacy.ca.

Membership

If you aren't already a member, or haven't renewed your membership, please click on www.literacy.ca/?q=membership to go to the membership form on the CLLN website. We have two types of membership available – general and organizational. If you have any questions about becoming a member, or renewing your membership, please call the office at 613-563-2464 or email us at clln@literacy.ca.

In the Future



What's **your** hot button topic? In a future issue of literacy.ca *EXPRESS* we will be looking at some of the key topics being discussed in the field, including professionalism, the challenges of workplace delivery and creating awareness. We'd like to hear from you. Contact Lindsay at lindsay@literacy.ca.

Also, if you have suggestions for topics and articles, websites or conferences or if you are working on a project and you'd like to share information about your project let Lindsay know.



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