

Live & Learn

Fall 2005

The Newsletter of the PEI Literacy Alliance

Proud Winner



Dianne C. Smith is PEI's first recipient of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award. Dianne is joined by her parents and two sons George and Robbie. The Literacy Alliance is pleased that Dianne has agreed to work on our governing board for the 2005-2007 term. See page 5.

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Live & Learn

The Newsletter of the PEI Literacy Alliance

Live & Learn is published four times a year by the PEI Literacy Alliance.

Edited and designed by Catherine O'Bryan and Norman Finlayson.

We would like to hear from you if you have:

- learners' stories
- creative writing by learners
- articles or news about teaching adults
- upcoming events
- new resources for adult education

Please send your material to:

Live & Learn
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PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy.*

Message from the Chair



These have been busy and productive times for us. Our AGM was very successful with a big turnout as we celebrated individual accomplishments in literacy.

We are excited to be included in the announcement by the Charlottetown Rotary of the creation of the **Rotary Literacy Foundation**. We will be represented on the Board of the Trustees and will help set priorities for the use of any funds generated.

Events like these give us a chance to celebrate and recognize the achievements of people who are trying to improve their literacy and make a better life for themselves. Our hats go off to Barbara Macnutt from the Provincial Literacy Initiatives Secretariat for promoting the idea of a Literacy Foundation for PEI and lobbying Rotary to take the lead.

The Premier spoke at the Rotary luncheon when the Literacy Foundation was announced. He gave an important address and I was proud to hear him speaking passionately about the need to improve the "culture for literacy" on PEI. He also pledged his government's support for all our efforts in improving literacy for Islanders. He saluted the work of Rotary in creating the Literacy Foundation. He reiterated his commitment to hold a Premier's Summit on Literacy in the near future. Great job Mr. Binns.

Achieving full literacy for all Islanders will not be gained solely by the efforts of a few champions. It will take the efforts of each and every one of us to create a stronger culture for literacy throughout our Island home to ensure our future economic and social survival.

Remember, if you are going to do something for literacy, today is the best day to start.

- Ray Doiron

News from the Movement for Canadian Literacy

In July, Minister of State, Claudette Bradshaw went on the road to see how literacy plays out on the front lines. She spent the summer gathering information and perspectives to help build the comprehensive literacy strategy named in the federal budget of February 2005.

In addition to her cross-Canada tour, she has asked the seven national literacy organizations to provide a literacy community blueprint for action. She wants to know “What’s it going to take?” In response, the Movement for Canadian Literacy and the other national organizations are developing a “results-based action plan.”

It will be based on MCL’s National Literacy Action Agenda developed with and endorsed by the community over the past couple of years. You’ll find this 2002 document online at: www.literacy.ca/govrel/agenda.htm.

The plan is to move MCL’s earlier Literacy Action Agenda from vision to concrete steps. The new Action Plan was presented to the Minister in late September, and will be widely available after that. We hope it will be useful not only to government but to everyone involved in literacy.



NALD Update

Do you want to keep informed about literacy resources and information?

A new service developed by The National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) has made it easier. You are invited to subscribe to NALD’s free service of weekly updates.

Subscribers will be notified about new resources added to NALD’s:

- *Full Text Documents*
- *Literacy Collections*
- new websites of literacy and literacy-related organizations
- learners’ stories in *Story of the Week*
- *Headline News* items
- national and provincial/territorial literacy newsletters.

These updates make it easier to stay informed about changes and additions to the NALD website. You can sign up for the free weekly update at www.nald.ca/update/.

The seven national literacy organizations who worked on the Action Plan are:

Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL)

La Fédération canadienne pour l’alphabétisation en français (FCAF)

National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA)

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)

ABC CANADA Foundation

Frontier College

Laubach Literacy of Canada

Awards and Presentations



Barbara Macnutt, director of the Literacy Initiatives Secretariat, presents Ian Carr with the Workplace Learning Award for excellence in teaching.

Ms. Macnutt also presented the prize for the highest PEI GED score for 2004 to Ernest J. Costain. Ms. Macnutt announced that the Atomic Energy of Canada bursary was awarded to Colin Farrell.

Canada Post Literacy Awards were presented to two winners:

Individual Achievement – English - Clarence Blanchard of Bloomfield

Individual Achievement – French - Margaret Arsenault of Wellington



Eric Donovan , president of the Learning Disabilities Association of PEI presents Ray Doiron, chair of the Alliance, with an engraved gavel. It was to recognize the contributions of the Alliance to the LDAPEI.



The PEI Literacy Alliance welcomes new board members Eric Donovan and Dianne Smith. We also thank out-going board members, Nora Young, Joyce McCardle and Joanne McCabe. Returning board members are Ray Doiron, Chair, Donna Langille, Treasurer, Angela Larter, Vice-chair, Audrey Penner, Carrie St. Jean and Karen Chandler.

Council of the Federation Literacy Award

Premier Pat Binns joined premiers across Canada in Banff, Alberta on August 11 to announce the names of the first recipients of a new national award recognizing outstanding achievements in literacy. The Council of the Federation Literacy Award was created to recognize individuals and organizations involved in literacy across the country.

“I am pleased to announce that Dianne Smith is the recipient of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Prince Edward Island,” Premier Binns stated. Ms. Smith, a business woman and resident of Charlottetown, was named the first Island person to be honoured with the award. Premier Binns said, “I am very impressed with the accomplishments of our award recipient. Dianne was nominated and selected from among the many Islanders who have taken steps to improve their literacy skills. She is an excellent role model and example of a person who sees education and learning as essential to herself personally and to the province generally.”

Dianne C. Smith is an adult learner who has made outstanding progress in her own learning and has inspired other adults to do the same. After leaving school in grade nine, Dianne’s work experience included home care, farming, cleaning, and a variety of entrepreneurial endeavours run solely by ambition and desire. At the age of 49, as a single mother, Dianne realized education would be the key to a better life for herself and her children. With help from volunteer tutors and by attending adult education classes, Dianne received her GED certificate the day before her 50th birthday. Dianne has worked hard to overcome a variety of learning difficulties while holding down a full-time job and caring for her family. Dianne now owns her own licensed community care facility, Smith Lodge, and encourages others to improve their literacy skills. Dianne continues to seek new learning opportunities and encourages others to improve their literacy skills.

Premier Binns views the Council of Federation Literacy Award as a significant award recognizing the importance high-level literacy skills play in the life of a province. “Literacy is the foundation upon which all learning is built,” he stated. “Lifelong learning is essential for families, provinces and countries to be secure for the future. Adult Islanders who make the decision to return to learning are role models for their children, their friends and their employers. By their example, they show everyone that learning and education are to be highly valued,” said Premier Binns.

The award presentation was held at the Charlottetown Rotary Club meeting on September 26th.



Adult Literacy and Lifestyle Changes

“Being illiterate is like waiting for the bus, whereas being literacy is being able to drive.”

– adult literacy student

Do adults who have enrolled in literacy programs perceive significant lifestyle changes when or if their literacy skills improve? In order to answer this question, Iain Edmonds interviewed six adult literacy students: three lived in Prince Edward Island and three lived in England. The sample of six included three males and three females. The interviews revealed several themes among the participants.

The Decision to Enroll

Quite often, the six participants relied on familiar routines because of their low-literacy skills. For instance, one participant always shopped at the same store, because the layout was familiar. The participants feared that changes in their routine would expose their literacy challenges. Eventually, all the participants experienced a catalyst that led to their decision to enroll in a literacy program. This catalyst varied from the loss of a reading mentor to financial difficulties to wanting to be able to read to their children.

Before and After

The six participants discussed how literacy offered the possibility of escape from a life of drudgery, stress, and secrecy. The participants spoke of the inadequacy they felt, particularly the shame they felt by not being able to support themselves. They were critical

of themselves and attributed the reason for low-literacy skills to their own lack of ability. They laid no blame on external factors such as school or family for their difficulties.

Edmonds was disturbed by a pattern that surfaced in the stories they told. He discovered that the participants did not think about “how their shame had been socially constructed and how their inability to learn had also been systematically enabled by inadequate learning models or methods.” As they become more literate, the findings indicated that their confidence, self-esteem improved and this sense of shame and failure was lessened.

Implication

As educators, we need to facilitate discussions with students so that they can see themselves differently. The shame and stigma that the individual feels in isolation is removed by the social awareness that comes from talking with others. Rather than blaming themselves for their low-literacy abilities, they need to see themselves as part of a larger social issue or picture.

Edmonds, I. (2003). *Adult literacy and lifestyle changes: Understanding the special awareness, needs and stories of six adults who are literacy challenged*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Learner's Page

Learners' Stories Wanted

The *Book of Changes* is a collection of stories by learners from across the country. The Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) started it 3 years ago as a way of showing government decision-makers how important literacy programs are in the lives of real people across Canada.

MCL received dozens of submissions. Some were long, some were short but all of them were special, unique and heartfelt. The one common message was that learning literacy skills changes lives in many different ways.

Since 2003, the *Book of Changes* has traveled to Parliament Hill and other important meetings. Some of the messages have been included at conferences and in reports.

The stories are posted online at: <http://www.literacy.ca/lan/bookchng/cover.htm>. This fall, MCL needs your help to build the

collection again. **MCL wants to expand the *Book of Changes*.** Many decision-makers have said how powerful it is to find out about the experiences of adults with low literacy. Learners are encouraged when they read the stories and realize that they are not alone.

Please tell us how literacy has made a difference in your life!

MCL will print your story if you give us your permission to publish it. Everyone who sends something will receive a certificate. MCL will also enter your name in a draw for prizes.

Please email: fiona@literacy.ca or go online to: www.literacy.ca/lan/lan.htm (click on Learners Section) or mail your story to MCL, Suite 300 - 180 Metcalfe Street, Ottawa, ON, K2P 1P5

This article was excerpted from the Learners Section of literacy.ca, a publication of the Movement for Canadian Literacy.

Adult Bursaries Available

Five \$500 bursaries will be available this fall to adults who are enrolled in an adult education program that does not exceed high school graduation. Laubach Literacy students are also eligible to apply.

For information and an application form call Catherine or Norm at 368-3620.

Deadline for applications is October 31, 2005.

Bouquets and Announcements

Kids Count Family Literacy Breakfast

Saturday, October 29, 7:30 - 10:30

Location: Montague Regional High School Cafeteria

Special Guest: Chef at Large Michael Smith who will present tips for kids healthy eating.

Proceeds to: Eastern School District Literacy Projects & District Breakfast Programs.

Contact: Kids Count at 368-5182 or jkrankin@edu.pe.ca

Family Story Nights

Tignish Elementary

6:30 - 7:30 pm, October 18

Parkside Elementary

6:30 - 7:30 pm, October 28

St. Jeans Elementary

6:30 - 7:30 pm, November 2

Fortune Consolidated

7:00 - 8:00 pm, November 17

For information call the school or Lori at 368-6498.

Things you can do:

These ideas are all about engaging yourself in the many literacy-related activities offered in our communities.

- Pass the word about the adult literacy programs offered at Holland College
- Volunteer for Project L.O.V.E. and help children with their reading
- Pick up some library books for someone who can't get to the library themselves
- Take a technology course or visit your local CAP sites
- Start a book club with your friends
- Tell your colleagues about a good book you just read

Functional Context Education: Making Learning Relevant in the 21st Century

Tom Sticht is recognized internationally for his work on the education and training of under-educated youth and adults.

Who: Tom Sticht

What: Workshop

Where: Richmond Room, Charlottetown Hotel on Kent Street

When: 9:00 - 4:00 pm Wednesday November 16th, 2005

Cost: \$20.00

To register: Call the PEI Literacy Alliance at 368-3620 or 1-866-827-3620 (toll-free)

Registration deadline: November 10, 2005

New Literacy Foundation

On September 26 Premier Pat Binns took part in the announcement Rotary's new PEI Literacy Foundation. The premier commended Charlottetown Rotary Club members for their leadership and commitment to improving literacy in the province.

He also stated that he will work with the PEI Literacy Alliance to host a Premier's Literacy Summit and to provide leadership to a provincial literacy strategy.

The PEI Literacy Alliance presented a donation of \$10,000 we raised at the PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy while Premier Binns presented a donation of \$25,000 to the Rotary Club to boost the new literacy foundation.