

# Live & Learn

Spring/Summer 2005

The Newsletter of the PEI Literacy Alliance

## Outstanding Volunteers



Georgia MacKenzie



John Yeo



Geraldine MacDougall

At the 2005 AGM for Project L.O.V.E. in June Education Minister Dover presented plaques to three 10-year volunteers. John Yeo volunteers at Montague Consolidated School, Georgia MacKenzie at Vernon River Consolidated School and Geraldine MacDougall at Vernon River Consolidated School.

Other 10-year volunteers who were unable to attend include Helen Rose, Eastern Kings Consolidated; Peggy MacRae, Belfast Consolidated; Beth Clements, Southern Kings Consolidated and Betty Shaw, Parkside Elementary.

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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:

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[www.pei.literacy.ca](http://www.pei.literacy.ca)



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by funding from the  
PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy.*

## Message from the Chair



Greetings to everyone from the PEI Literacy Alliance Board! Whether you are just back from the strawberry patch, ball game, golf course, or your

local beach, it means we have shifted into a whole new frame of mind for these wonderful summer months.

Some people may think summer is the time when school is out, adult literacy programs are closed, and no one is really thinking about literacy. Not so. While programs may be over for the summer, the whole Island is alive with many social and cultural activities that are really literacy events for all of us to enjoy. Be sure to attend a local festival, take in some of our wonderful summer theatre productions, visit local galleries and museums and take your children, grandchildren and visiting relatives along with you. These are not literacy events in terms of traditional reading and writing, but they are part of our visual and oral traditions and they form the foundation of print literacy. They add quality to our lives as much as reading a book would do. Of course, don't forget to read a few good books as well.

See you in the fall for our Annual General Meeting, International Literacy Day and many other PEI Literacy Alliance events.

- Ray Doiron

## Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey

### Overview

A study by Statistics Canada released on May 11, 2005, shows that millions of Canadians do not have the literacy skills they need keep pace with the escalating demands of our society and economy. This loss affects the social and economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and our country.

The Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey sheds light on our literacy challenges and also connects those challenges to some of Canada's most pressing social and economic issues. The link is made clear in this conclusion: "... *investments in foundation skills would lead to improved levels of health, increased productivity, reduced social costs and higher growth*".

### Key Findings

- Too many Canadians (four in ten) do not have the literacy skills they need to meet the ever-increasing demands of modern life, where skills are the key to success in our knowledge-based economy and society.
- We have seen some important improvements in the number of Canadians with the most serious literacy challenges. However, overall there has not been a great deal of progress in dealing with our literacy challenges since a similar study reported 10 years ago.
- In the international ranking, Canada ranks 4<sup>th</sup> of the 6 countries compared in this study: behind Norway, Switzerland, and Bermuda but ahead of the USA, Italy and the Mexican state of Nuevo Leon. Norway performed the best.
- Mean proficiency scores in Canada have dropped since 1994. Not only do too many people struggle with literacy challenges, but on average Canadians are not doing as well on literacy tests as they were ten years ago.
- Currently, the people who need training most are the least likely to be able to access adult education and training programs. Governments and business tend to support skill upgrading for people with the highest skills and do less for people with the lowest skill level.
- Literacy scores for youth in Canada (16-25) are lower on average than they were ten years ago. Moreover the decline is mainly among youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. There is a strong connection between the education-levels of parents and the literacy skills of their children.
- Canada's literacy challenges are undermining our economic potential<sup>2</sup>. Literacy is strongly connected to Canada's productivity and position in the global economy as it becomes increasingly clear that skills drive economic growth.
- Literacy is also connected to some of the key social challenges of our time –

unemployment, poverty, health, integration of newcomers, child well being, and more. For example, Literacy is strongly associated with health outcomes and well-being.

- Labour markets no longer replenish themselves sufficiently through young people coming out of school. We need to help less-skilled adults acquire the skills they need to participate fully in our economy and our society.
- Literacy skills decline with age, and erode if not used regularly.
- Canadians with literacy barriers tend to be stuck in low-paid, low-skilled jobs that offer little chance of advancement or of improving their skills. There is also a strong correlation between literacy barriers and probability of employment.
- Most immigrants to Canada (regardless of their skill level) are disadvantaged in terms of employment, even compared to low skilled native-born adults.
- The relationship between formal schooling and literacy skills is complex. Even a high school education is no guarantee that a person has the literacy skills they need to succeed.
- ALLS confirms the existence of a digital divide: about 20% of Canadians do not have access to home computers. Those without computer access tend to have lower literacy levels than the rest of the population. Computer proficiency is very tied to earnings.

### **What's Next?**

In the Fall and Winter of 2005, the next phase of data will be released. This will include a much anticipated national snapshot that will dig deeper into the Canadian statistics, and also provincial/territorial releases that will provide regional analyses. Due to some Canadian particularities related to the term "life skills", Stats Canada has renamed these upcoming releases the IALSS (International Adult Literacy Skills Survey).

These surveys (ALL and IALSS) have enormous potential to educate and influence public policies around literacy in Canada. As a national literacy organization with the structure and mandate to represent the English literacy community across Canada, Movement for Canadian Literacy will work with the community to develop a thoughtful response and to identify opportunities to apply lessons learned in the hope of creating a more literate Canada.

<sup>1</sup> The federal government invests close to \$15 billion annually in post secondary education and only around \$50 million annually for adult basic education. This does not include what provinces and territories spend.)

<sup>2</sup> Average skill levels drive economic growth (in this ALLS confirms recent Stats Canada studies that show a 1% increase in average literacy rates would lead to a 1.5% permanent increase in GDP, the equivalent of \$18 billion a year!)

# Golf Tournament for Literacy



## 2005 PGI: Another Great Success

Thanks to all our golfer and volunteer literacy supporters, we raised over \$32,000 this year for literacy making this our best tournament yet!



Michael  
Pendergast

**Mike McCarville** led his team of Gary Moore, Alan Pickard and Bob McGee to yet another victory – their sixth PGI win. The PGI attracted 132 golfers to Andersons Creek – a wonderful new golf course in Stanley Bridge.

A special thanks goes out to the **Atlantic Lottery Corporation**. They sponsored the after-golf meal at New Glasgow Lobster Suppers.



Nils Ling

**Michael Pendergast** – “The Music Man” is becoming one of our fixtures. He entertained the crowd before the meal. UPEI’s **Kevin Lewis** was a first-class Master of Ceremonies. Comedian and storyteller **Nils Ling** was our featured entertainer. The PEI business community showed their generosity by donating lots of golf prizes and silent auction items. The prize for the “Most Honest” team went to the foursome from Wendy’s.

Each year an adult learner who excelled in his or her program wins the Cooperator’s Learner Achievement Award. This year’s winner was **Charlene Clow**. Charlene was not able to attend, so Shaun MacPhee of the Co-operators presented the award to Charlene’s instructor.



Kevin Lewis

**Wendell MacDonald**, who has entered our PGI faithfully for many years was honoured with the Gzowski Award, for the golfer who most embodies the spirit of the day.

This year’s Poet Laureate was **Frank Ledwell**, who is also PEI’s Poet Laureate. Franks’ wonderful poem started with a humorous commentary on the golf, and ended with a moving tribute to Peter Gzowski.



Frank Ledwell

The tournament wouldn’t happen without our many volunteers, especially the hard working planning committee: Jack Desroches, Bernard Gillis, Joanne Ings, Bruce Stewart, Lori St.Onge, and John Young. Thanks again!

## **PEI Task Force on Student Achievement**

*The following is an excerpt from the Alliance presentation to the task force titled "Towards the Literacy Achievement of all Islanders".*

### **School Culture**

Your definition of school culture left out the role of the community in creating the school culture. While you mention parent and volunteer involvement, the school could play a larger role in the community and the community could play a larger role in the school life.

Literacy is not limited to school – it rests within the whole community. Thinking literacy rests solely in the school creates a problem because parents start to think that it is the responsibility of the school to develop their children's literacy, when it is really a shared responsibility among the home, the school and the community. We have an adage that it takes a village to raise a child – we feel it takes a village to raise a reader.

*Perhaps with this type of thinking, we would move towards a literacy and learning society, a learning province, where everyone sees learning and literacy as part of the wider culture not just school culture.*

### **Parental Involvement**

Parental Involvement is certainly a major thread running through your Discussion Paper. We would like to return to our original point to leave you with some important consideration about parental involvement.

First of all, the Task Force calls for more parental involvement but remember there are close to 50% of parents with some literacy difficulties themselves. This is not limiting them just in the reading process (although some parts of your discussion paper have a readability level that requires 14 - 15 years of education to be able to understand it). That's one major type of barrier. The documents, the tools, the websites that we create thinking that we are helping people are really alienating them, cutting them off from meaningful involvement.

Secondly, literacy difficulties don't just limit what you can read. People feel afraid, intimidated and excluded when they go to the school to lobby for their child, to question a teacher, or to seek service for themselves or their children etc.

*We need to recognize these are not excuses these people are making – these are real barriers to meaningful parental involvement. Schools need to do more; they need to create genuine ways to involve all parents; and they need to help parents stay involved and learn how to play a role in student achievement.*

*Student achievement will only improve when we have Literacy for All and Learning for Life.*

## Learner's Story

*Charlene Mary Clow is the 2005 winner of the Cooperator's Learner Achievement Award presented at the PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy. The following is the essay she submitted with her application form.*

At the age of thirty-eight I decided to return to school. I left school at an early age and then got married, had four children and before I knew it twenty years had passed by.

I have had numerous jobs in the area of janitorial work. I am now a substitute custodian with the Western School Board but in order to apply for a full-time position I need my GED.

When I decided to go back to school to get my Grade 12 I was so scared and nervous. I thought I was so stupid because I could not read or do math very well. On the first day of school I

had to take a deep breath and say to myself that I can do it. I am so glad that there is Adult Education for people like me.

When I get my Grade 12 I will be so proud of myself. So will my family and my boys and my husband will be proud too. I have been in school for several months and now I have done the pre-test for the GED. Next year I will be coming back to get my GED.

Thank you again for having a program like this.

*Charlene plans to return to school in the fall to complete her GED and we wish her luck with her educational and career plans.*

### 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.

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 29/05  
7:30 - 10:30am

Location - Montague Regional High  
School Cafeteria

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

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

For more information contact:  
Kids Count in September  
at  
368-5182  
or  
[jkrankin@edu.pe.ca](mailto:jkrankin@edu.pe.ca)

### INVITATION

We invite you to attend the annual  
general meeting for the **PEI Literacy  
Alliance** on Thursday, September 8 at  
the Charlottetown Hotel.

The business meeting begins at 6:00 pm  
followed by a guest speaker. Nora  
McCarthy will speak about the **Summer  
Tutoring Program for Kids**.

At 7:30 **Canada Post** will present their  
annual **Literacy Awards**. There is a  
reception following the awards  
presentation.

## Write to Read Contest

Calling all kids in Grade 4 and Grade 5!

Have you ever wanted to be a published  
author? Do you love to tell stories to  
your friends? Do you have some amazing  
stories in your family that you'd like to  
share with other kids?

We want to hear from you!

Find out more at [www.worldlit.ca](http://www.worldlit.ca)

## Call for Manuscripts: Assessment Practices in Adult Basic Education

Grass Roots Press will accept  
proposals on one of the following  
topics:

- diagnostic assessment
- competency-based assessment
- performance assessment
- standardized assessment
- national systems, standards,  
accountability frameworks and  
assessment tools
- assessment for who and for  
what?
- assessment: a balancing act

Submit a one-page description of the  
chapter you are proposing to write.  
Also include a 50-word biographical  
statement. Please include your  
contact information including phone  
number and e-mail address.

Submissions can be sent by mail or e-  
mail to:

Pat Campbell, editor  
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