



Our Voice

Boards! Boards! Boards!

Community Literacy of Ontario

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Joanne Kaattari and Lee Torvi recently presented a training workshop on board roles and responsibilities to the CLO board of directors. Joanne has delivered this workshop many times to a variety of non profit organizations, but since this workshop was being held after a full-day board meeting about revising CLO's policies and bylaws, Lee and Joanne wanted to add a little humour. Board roles and humour? Yes, it can be done!

Lee served as the television host for the "talk show" *Philanthropy Today*. She quizzed Joanne with a variety of questions sent in by the "studio audience". Questions included such gems as:

"I am on the board of a small organization where everyone pitches in to get the work done. Recently, our new Executive Director has been causing a few problems. I often help out in the office. It is a good arrangement because if the E.D. is busy, as a board member I can make decisions that our secretary would normally need to ask the E.D. about. This new E.D. doesn't seem to appreciate my help. Joanne, what do you think is wrong with her?"

This workshop covered the following topics:

- Boards – why do they matter?
- Overview of the voluntary sector
- The three fundamental duties of board members
- The Panel on Governance and Accountability in Canada's Voluntary Sector
- The eight key areas of board responsibility:

1. Mission and Strategic Planning
2. Communication and Public Relations
3. Board and Organizational Structures
4. The Board's Understanding of its Role
5. Financial Responsibility
6. Oversight of Human Resources
7. Assessment and Evaluation
8. Planning for Board Succession

CLO was delighted to have Patti Redmond, the Director of the Workplace Preparation Branch at the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities address our membership at our Annual General Meeting.

CLO board members enjoyed this fun and informative training workshop. Now we at CLO are just waiting with suspense for Lee's future career as a talk show host!

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So what do they do? CLO board activities:

In the past year, the CLO board of directors has been extremely active. Some activities they have undertaken include:



- Revising CLO's bylaws
- Revising CLO's financial and personnel policies
- Participating in board orientation and training
- Participating in numerous board, committee and reference group meetings
- Developing a "board profile" of the skills and knowledge required to sit on the CLO board
- Reviewing, approving and monitoring CLO's business plan
- Overseeing current projects and planning for future ones
- Reviewing and approving CLO's practitioner training strategy and the provincial standards for training staff and tutors in our sector

In May 2002, the CLO board and staff participated in a strategic planning retreat at the *Centre for Executive Decision Making* at Queen's University in Kingston. At this retreat, the board reviewed CLO's mission statement, developed draft values and guiding principles, and conducted an environmental scan of the threats and opportunities facing CLO. The board also planned for future projects and identified the following initiatives for CLO to undertake:

- Develop a *Trails to Literacy for Workforce* funding proposal based upon the highly successful Trails to Literacy project.
- Conduct an internal audit of CLO's bylaws, policies and procedures.
- Conduct a survey of the community-based sector to give a detailed and current picture of the field. This survey will be funded through CLO's existing funding and will begin in January 2003. It will cover such areas as program size, type of programming (one-to-one, small group, family literacy, etc.) and a variety of human resource issues.
- Hold a 10-year anniversary conference in 2004 to celebrate CLO's founding in 1994.
- Research alternate sources of funding for CLO to supplement our current core funding.
- Consider re-running CLO's highly successful online workshops.
- Try to find a well-known "champion" to promote community-based literacy in Ontario.

FACTS ABOUT THE CLO BOARD!

1. Directors joined the CLO board for a wide variety of reasons, including: to support an effective network for community literacy agencies; to learn about provincial literacy issues; to learn about being on an exemplary board; to help strengthen literacy agencies so they can better serve learners; to be part of a great organization; to grow personally; to bring a student perspective to the board; to do meaningful work, to acquire better board skills; and to support a professional and dynamic organization.

2. Our directors have diverse interests including: gardening, sailing, crosswords, music, curling, dogs, crafts, soccer, playing the drums in a band, cooking, rug hooking, walking and, of course, reading!

Community Literacy of Ontario is governed by a 12-member board of directors. We want to thank our past board members for their dedication and strong support and extend a warm welcome to our new board. Effective October 23, 2002, CLO's board members are:

CENTRAL ONTARIO:

- Dan McGibbon, Barrie
- Joan Robinson (Toronto Public Library)
- Brendan Tarry (YMCA Career Development and Learning Centre, Burlington)

EASTERN ONTARIO:

- Jan Goatcher, CLO Co-Chair (John Howard Society, Ottawa)
- Laurie DesLauriers (Community Literacy Centre, Napanee)

NORTHERN ONTARIO:

- Betty Ffrench (Program Read, Sault Ste. Marie)
- Penny Smith-Jensen (Dryden Literacy Association)
- Denise Tremblay (Iroquois Falls Adult Learning Centre)

SOUTHWESTERN ONTARIO:

- Val Sadler, CLO Co-Chair (Hamilton and District Literacy Council)
- Margaret Maynard, CLO Treasurer (Literacy Council of Niagara West)

MEMBER-AT-LARGE:

- Lee Torvi (Renfrew County Community Upgrading Program)
- Joyce Bigelow, CLO Secretary (North Frontenac Literacy Program)

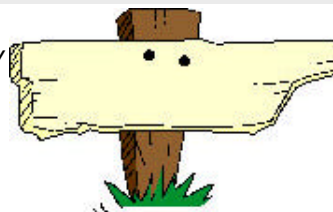


MORE CLO BOARD FACTS...

3. 11 of CLO's 12 board members are affiliated with a literacy agency. One director, who is finishing an existing term of office, is no longer involved with an agency. However, he provides a valuable learner perspective.
4. The agencies of our board members are located in every region of Ontario. 5 directors come from urban communities, 5 from rural and 1 from a mixed urban/rural community.
5. Board members also come from agencies that offer a wide variety of programming to learners. The agencies of all 11 directors offer 1-1 programming; 10 offer small group; 4 offer family literacy; 3 offer workforce; and 1 offers youth literacy programming.
6. CLO directors come from agencies that serve a total of 1,294 learners.
7. In total, our directors support 464 volunteers in their programs!
8. The agencies of 6 directors are affiliated with Laubach Literacy Ontario.
9. The agencies of 5 directors operate as part of a multi-service agency or library.
10. In total, our directors have been involved for 121 years in literacy!
11. CLO directors have served on a total of 70 boards!

Trails to Literacy

By Joyce Bigelow (Executive Director of the North Frontenac Literacy Program and a CLO board member)



In 2000 – 2001, through National Literacy Secretariat funding, North Frontenac Literacy piloted a new approach to Literacy and Basic Skills training called “*Trails to Literacy*”. Due to its success, Trails was expanded to seven pilot sites with MTCU and NLS funding: Blind River, Napanee, Parry Sound, Perth, Picton, Renfrew and Sharbot Lake.

The purpose of *Trails to Literacy* is to combine a literacy marketing strategy together with participatory, hands-on, outcome-based learning by:

- **Creating closer links between literacy upgrading and the community.** *Trails* highlights the need to involve learners with the people, businesses or organizations in the community.
- **Marketing the idea of literacy and basic skills to the general public.** *Trails* promotes literacy skills as a necessary element of employment and independence and also develops a positive, relevant image for LBS and its participants.
- **Delivering learning relevant to the community and the workplace.** *Trails* provides a context, through real-life activities, where understanding and meaning are given to the learning process.
- **Putting control into the hands of the participants.** *Trails* draws participants into the learning process, develops their self-management skills and their ability to acquire knowledge. (participatory / collaborative learning theories).
- **Providing opportunities for learners to attain skills for better employment.** *Trails* gives participants new work skills, self-confidence and community connections.

Trails is a **client/community driven** program. It partners community interest groups, volunteers and staff with learners who do activities based upon individual interests and goals. Activities include: administrative, environmental awareness, public relations, fundraising, historical studies, carpentry, computers, etc. **Participants** involved in the planning, research, writing, and production gain new literacy and basic skills. Perhaps even more significantly, they develop self-confidence and enthusiasm for learning. In our pilot project, this contributed to a 43% employment rate at exit.

Trails to Literacy is **transferable** almost anywhere. It is a pathway to skills attainment which markets literacy while still allowing practitioners to do what we do best – facilitate learning.

A trail can be: a multi-cultural study; a historic walk; a waterfront beautification project; a path of native healing; community gardens; ecological rehabilitation; a path of sound, touch and scent for the blind; or a clothing depot. The possibilities are endless!

Why not join us? Please visit our web at:

www.trailstoliteracy.com.

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