

Our Voice

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Literacy and Mental Health Workshops

In the fall of 2005 the Ottawa Community Coalition for Literacy (OCCL) partnered with the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) to develop and deliver training for literacy practitioners on mental illness. This innovative partnership was made possible due to a small grant from the Ottawa Citizen Literacy Foundation.

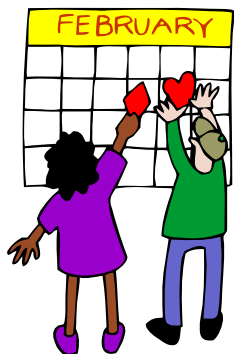
This training was delivered because many literacy agencies in the Ottawa region have learners in their programs who have mental illnesses. Another goal was to increase communication between literacy agencies and mental health agencies. The CMHA adapted their regular introductory workshop called "Myths and Realities of Mental Illness" specifically for the literacy field. The CMHA offered a reduced rate to deliver the training. This event was extremely successful with 25 participants attending. The training covered the following topics:

- ⇒ The Major Mental Illnesses
- ⇒ Pre-planning with Learners and their Support Workers
- ⇒ Setting Limits and Boundaries
- ⇒ Community Resources
- ⇒ Taking Care of Ourselves

OCCL is planning a half-day follow-up session to allow participants to discuss how they have applied their new knowledge, work on case scenarios and learn more about community resources. In the fall of 2006 OCCL plans to partner with the CMHA again to deliver training on non-violent crisis intervention.

Mary Wiggin, the Executive Director of the OCCL, recommends that literacy organizations who may be interested in pursuing similar training contact their closest Canadian Mental Health Association to explore possibilities.

(Source: Ottawa Community Coalition for Literacy)



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Labour Market Development Agreement

On November 23, 2005, the governments of Canada and Ontario signed two important agreements for the future of training in this province: the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the Labour Market Partnership Agreement (LMPA). Ontario is the last province to sign such agreements. Essentially, these agreements transfer the design and delivery of federal labour force programming for EI eligible clients over to Ontario effective January 1, 2007.



The Honourable Chris Bentley, Minister, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities notes in his letter of November 25, 2005: "Through the LMPA, the federal government is increasing its investment in Ontario by \$314 million in agreed priority areas. Half of this new money will be spent by Ontario and half by the federal government. The agreed labour market priorities are apprenticeship, labour market integration of new immigrants, literacy and essential skills, workplace skills development, and programs for Aboriginal people and others facing labour market barriers such as older workers and persons with disabilities".

MTCU also circulated "Questions and Answers" about the LMDA and LMPA. Two questions were specific to literacy and are summarized below.

⇒ *Question 7:* What does this mean for the reform in Literacy and Basic Skills currently underway such as the networking review?

Answer: The goals and objectives of the current reforms are consistent with both One-Stop and the agreements with the federal government, so work will continue.

⇒ *Question 8:* The latest results from IALSS shows that Ontario rates of literacy are not improving. What will the investment be in literacy services?

Answer: The LMPA identifies literacy and essential skills as key priorities for Canada and Ontario. Canada has agreed to increase investment in literacy and essential skills in Ontario and some of that investment will flow to the province over the term of the LMPA. The total investment may support such things as developing new tools to address adult literacy and essential skills, developing innovative ways to expand academic upgrading and trade-specific literacy and numeracy and facilitating partnerships between governments, local businesses, unions, community organizations and other stakeholders to address the needs of adult learners with low literacy and essential skills. Stakeholders will be kept informed as plans evolve.

For more information on these agreements, please visit: www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/training/labourmarket.html. You can access Minister Bentley's letter and the "Questions and Answers" on AlphaCom's "Info-LBS".

My Crystal Ball

By Joyce Bigelow, Executive Director, Northern Connections Adult Learning Centres and Co-Chair, Community Literacy of Ontario

My crystal ball is out for polishing so I can't *predict* the future, but I do *think* that new Labour Market Agreements will be good for the future of literacy in Ontario.

Our agency does LBS programming for MTCU, but we are also funded by Human Resources Skills Development Canada (Service Canada) to provide *Employment Assistance Services* to our community. As of January 2007, we will see a changeover to funding by MTCU for *both* services. Employment Assistance Services (EAS) provides job search help and counseling to unemployed individuals. Counselors refer clients on to other services and training as part of the clients' Return to Work Action Plans.

Now, I do not see all LBS programs in the province taking on EAS, as there are already many excellent EAS providers, as well as Job Connect sites throughout the province. However, I do see closer links developing between the EAS counselors and the LBS programs as the "One Stop" and "No Wrong Door" programs roll out. MTCU already sees the value of Literacy and Basic Skills programs in getting people the skills they need to work and function in our society. They are well aware of the IALSS results. In the past our EAS counselors have sometimes had trouble "selling" the value of LBS training to Service Canada staff, who currently have the final say in Skills Development approvals for those on Employment Insurance. How much easier it will be to make this "sale" to someone employed in our own Ministry! But, we can't be lax either. Now is the time to start making the connections with these EAS workers and with Job Connect, too.

One way we are trying to do this in our county is to all start talking the same language: essential skills. HRSDC's essential skills (http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/hrp/essential_skills/essential_skills_index.shtml) are written in a language that employers and employment people can value. They can be easily matched to our LBS Outcomes, especially with all the new essential skills projects funded over the past several years, like Literacy Link Eastern Ontario's *Essential Skills Occupational Curricula*. Using these curricula and other workforce tools we have improved our own knowledge of essential skills.

Through funding from Frontenac Community Futures Development and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund, our literacy agency contracted Karen McGregor to create *Essential Skills Inventory* (ESI) surveys for employers and clients/learners, and develop an ESI workshop on their use. This funding has also made it possible for us to host a service providers meeting in rural Frontenac County, inviting employment service providers and educators to join us in planning a strategy to "market" essential skills. Finally, we are gathering marketing materials from the field to help determine what works and what does not work.

Why don't you join us in this essential skills vision and see what is in your future?



NLS Round Table on Literacy and the Essential Skills

By Linda Conley, CLO Board Member and Executive Director, Prince Edward Learning Centre

Minister of State, the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw invited a representative of Community Literacy of Ontario to participate in a roundtable discussion on literacy and essential skills in Ottawa on October 25, 2005. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to represent CLO at that meeting. In Budget 2005, the government committed to working with stakeholders on the development of a comprehensive pan-Canadian strategy on literacy and essential skills. As an initial step, the Government of Canada announced an additional \$30 million to enhance the National Literacy Secretariat's (NLS) capacity to further develop partnerships with provinces, territories, and other stakeholders to foster awareness of and involvement in literacy issues and to promote learning in the workplace.

In order to advance the development of a comprehensive pan-Canadian literacy and essential skills strategy, the government wanted to engage with their partners to identify areas of common purpose. The round table discussion I attended was one of a series that Minister of State Bradshaw held in an effort to hear the views of their partners. The objectives of each discussion included:



- ⇒ Sharing information and building a common knowledge base on literacy and other essential skills
- ⇒ Opening a discussion on a potential vision and key directions of a comprehensive literacy and essential skills strategy
- ⇒ Hearing views on priorities for the renewed Adult Learning, Literacy Essential Skills program, including priorities for the additional \$30 million referenced in the 2005 budget

Minister of State Bradshaw opened the meeting by stating that this was an important meeting for her because of the weight she attaches to the views of groups working in the community. Minister of State Bradshaw asked people to speak frankly about what they see as the future of literacy in Canada. Some of the other points she made were:

- ⇒ She noted the importance of specifying measurable results
- ⇒ She expressed the critical need to solve the issue of core funding because literacy groups need proper equipment, appropriate teaching conditions, and adequate resources for learners
- ⇒ She talked about the need to ensure that literacy practitioners are paid a fair wage
- ⇒ She dispelled rumours about the demise of NLS, saying that the organization was secure
- ⇒ She discussed the importance of building bridges between what is being done on workplace essential skills with what needs to be done for literacy

The next speaker was Donna Kirby, the Director of the NLS. She explored the links between literacy and essential skills to social and economic outcomes such as enhanced health, greater labour market participation, increased social inclusion, higher productivity and competitiveness, increased social capital and lifelong learning. Among other things, Donna Kirby stressed that there was a growing consensus in Canada about the importance of literacy and essential skills. She said that the Government of Canada intended to go beyond increased financial support by developing a comprehensive strategy to increase the literacy and essential skills of Canadians.



Ontario Public Service Spirit Campaign

The Spirit Campaign is an annual province-wide campaign that encourages Ontario Public Service (OPS) employees to participate in volunteer activities. The OPS has selected literacy as its cause for 2006. CLO is delighted to have been asked to help share information about Spirit with the literacy field.

We see this as a wonderful opportunity for agencies to recruit highly skilled volunteers from a new area. As well, the Spirit campaign gives the Ontario literacy field the unparalleled opportunity to promote the cause of literacy throughout the various ministries of the Ontario government. This is a chance to increase awareness about literacy, the needs of learners, plain language issues and other issues dear to our hearts.

The Spirit Campaign runs all year. This means that you can submit applications for volunteers at any time during 2006. To request an application form, please contact CLO or contact Stan Squires, Ministry of Culture at the following email: Stan.Squires@mcl.gov.on.ca.

OPS volunteers are potentially interested in all kinds of positions. This highly-accomplished group of people has diverse skills sets and interests. Now is your chance to be creative and sell them on what you have to offer. Here are some ideas to start you off: tutoring, editing or desktop publishing newsletters, designing a new brochure and updating or creating websites.

Volunteers could potentially be available wherever government offices exist and in nearby communities. Also, your volunteer opportunity may be a virtual one that can be done via email or the Internet. You aren't necessarily limited by geography. All you can do is be creative and ask!

On January 26, 2006, CLO attended the official launch of the Spirit Campaign. The guest speaker at this important event was the Honourable James Bartleman, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. He held the audience spell-bound as he spoke of his *Literacy Camps* initiative for Ontario's north. To read more about this innovative program, please visit: www.nald.ca/PROVINCE/ONT/wnont/2005/pages.htm.

Literacy Volunteers: Value Added



In September 2004, Community Literacy of Ontario received funding from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the National Literacy Secretariat to research the economic and social value of literacy volunteers.

CLO's conducted broad external research and also received a tremendous response to our surveys from Ontario's community literacy agencies and their volunteers. We have produced a ground-breaking research report that not only identifies the economic and social value of literacy volunteers, but also the roles and characteristics of volunteers; key issues for agencies and volunteers related to volunteerism in the 21st century; motivational factors; needs of literacy volunteers; and issues related to the management and support of volunteers.

CLO has also developed a comprehensive toolkit with practical and valuable resources based on the volunteer management needs identified by literacy practitioners during the research phase of the project. The kit also includes a CD-ROM with blank versions of all the tools and resources to allow practitioners the opportunity to adapt and use tools for their individual agencies. The research report and kit were circulated to all CLO members in December 2005. These resources are also available for purchase or may be downloaded free of charge from CLO's website at: www.nald.ca/volman.htm.



CLO's Annual General Meeting

CLO's Annual General Meeting was held on October 20, 2005 at Toronto's Primrose Hotel. The day began with informal networking that allowed our 45 participants to visit displays from CLO, AlphaPlus, Laubach Literacy Ontario, Festival of Literacies and the Golden Oaks Adult Book Club.

The Annual General Meeting was held after lunch and CLO members elected their Board of Directors for 2005/2006. We are pleased to welcome two new directors to our board: Johanna White (Red Lake) and Lindsay Kennedy (Wellington County). CLO members also bid a fond farewell to CLO's two retiring board members: Jan Goatcher (Ottawa) and Penny Smith-Jensen (Dryden).

Garfield Gini-Newman, a Senior Consultant with the Critical Thinking Consortium and an instructor with OISE/University of Toronto, delivered a lively and thought-provoking workshop that established the link between brain research and critical thinking to help promote literacy. This workshop received rave reviews and ended the day with practitioners feeling inspired and invigorated. CLO received many requests to invite Garfield back next year. So for those of you who missed this wonderful workshop, you may get a second chance next year!

Literacy Basics Plus

Community Literacy of Ontario is delighted to announce that it has received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat for an exciting project called Literacy Basics Plus. Literacy Basics Plus will provide “just in time” training for LBS practitioners. This project will provide both real-time, online training on Centra and web-based, self-directed training modules. Our project will run from December 2005 until November 2006.

As part of this project CLO will research and write the curriculum for four web-based, online, self-directed training modules. These four modules will be added to the four existing modules on CLO’s fabulous new self-directed online training website called “Literacy Basics” (www.nald.ca/literacybasics).

The four web-based modules will be:

- ⇒ Learner recruitment
- ⇒ Learner retention
- ⇒ Outcomes-based program evaluation
- ⇒ Self-management and self-direction

CLO will also research, develop and deliver four online workshops on Centra. Each of these workshops will be delivered twice to 15 literacy practitioners per session for a total of 60 training seats.

Outcomes-Based Program Evaluation:

- ⇒ Thursday, February 23, 2006 (9:30 a.m. to noon EST)
- ⇒ Tuesday, March 7, 2006 (1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. EST)

Learner Recruitment:

- ⇒ Tuesday, May 16, 2006 (10:00 a.m. to noon EST)
- ⇒ Thursday, May 25, 2006 (1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. EST)





OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Caryne Arnold (Kingston)
- Chris Benninger (Chatham)
- Joyce Bigelow (Sharbot Lake)
- Linda Conley (Picton)
- Heather Hufton (Peel)
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- Joan Beaudry (Administrative Assistant)
- Jette Cosburn (Co-Executive Director)
- Joanne Kaattari (Co-Executive Director)
- Vicki Trottier (Project Staff)

OUR CORE FUNDER

CLO gratefully acknowledges its funder: the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

OURVOICE NEWSLETTER

OURVOICE is published two times per year by Community Literacy of Ontario

Research, editing and desktop publishing by Joanne Kaattari

On the Home Front... CLO News!

Our capacity:

We have been very busy lately at CLO. This is especially true given our limited staff capacity. Like the literacy agencies we serve, CLO's core operating budget has not increased over the past years. Similar to our members, this has meant reducing costs wherever we can and stretching every dollar as far as it can go. This year it has meant that all three of CLO's core staff work only part-time.

Some of CLO's current activities include:

- ⇒ We participated the MTCU's consultation on One-Stop in September 2005
- ⇒ CLO attended the keynote address by Kathleen Wynne on the Adult Education Review in September 2005
- ⇒ We launched our wonderful self-directed training website called "**LITERACY BASICS**" (www.nald.ca/literacybasics) in September 2005
- ⇒ CLO wrote a letter to the Honourable Claudette Bradshaw (Minister of State) in October 2006 re: CLO's input into a pan-Canadian literacy strategy
- ⇒ CLO attended the *Ontario Children and Youth Summit* in October 2005.
- ⇒ CLO wrote a family literacy bulletin in October 2005
- ⇒ We held our Annual General Meeting in October 2005
- ⇒ CLO attended the National Literacy Secretariat's *Round Table on Literacy and the Essential Skills* in October 2005
- ⇒ CLO contributed to OLC's second letter to MTCU giving input into One Stop in November 2005
- ⇒ We submitted a funding request to the Trillium Foundation called "*Building Capacity and Strategic Planning*" in November 2005
- ⇒ CLO attended the provincial conference of Literacy Alberta in November 2005
- ⇒ We conducted our "members survey" in December 2005 (results will appear in the next newsletter!)
- ⇒ CLO circulated its research report and kit on "*Volunteers Value Added*" in December 2005
- ⇒ We attended the launch of the Ontario Public Service Spirit Campaign for literacy in January 2006
- ⇒ We attended the *Advisory Round Table* meeting of the Ontario Literacy Coalition in January 2006
- ⇒ CLO attended the pre-budget consultation with the Ministry of Finance and prepared a written submission to the Minister in January 2006