Big Plans for Literacy Nova Scotia

Literacy Nova Scotia has four main goals in its three-year Action Plan. We look forward to working with the literacy community to accomplish more than ever in the coming years!

Goal #1: To support and strengthen the development of organizations and people involved with adult literacy. This involves professionalization of the field of adult literacy, providing training opportunities for the development of family literacy programming, research, and the development of LNS as a strong voice for literacy.

Goal #2: To provide a forum for provincial and regional organizations and individuals to work together to ensure that every Nova Scotian has equal access to quality literacy education. This involves an examination of the technology and training needs of literacy organizations, improving communications with and among community-based literacy programs, and promoting the integration of literacy into other fields.

Goal #3: To make the federal and provincial governments and the general public more aware of the issues connected with adult literacy in Nova Scotia. We will inform policy-makers about literacy issues from the perspective of provincial programs, encourage governments to view all programs and initiatives through a literacy lens, promote literacy awareness to the general public, and advise the provincial departments involved in the implementation of Skills Nova Scotia Framework and 2002-03 Action Plan.

Goal #4: To strengthen the adult student/learner voice in Nova Scotia. This includes maintaining the Learn Line, a toll free information line for adult learners, providing networking opportunities for adult literacy learners, making literacy education opportunities more accessible to adults, strengthening our message by strengthening the learner’s voice, and celebrating and supporting all learning.

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Message from the Chair

Fall is a busy time in literacy. There is International Literacy Day on September 8th, International Adult Learners Week, and the start of many programs. Our theme for this issue is “Celebrating and valuing what has been achieved in adult literacy.” We have so much to celebrate!

Literacy Nova Scotia awarded three bursaries and two scholarships to adult learners. Twenty literacy organizations received PGI grants to support learners. The PGI Grants are made possible by a yearly donation to the PGI Golf Tournaments by the Nova Scotia Department of Education. The scholarships and bursaries are funded by the annual tournament.

Literacy is highly valued in Nova Scotia. We see it in the work done by community-based groups, the community college and school boards. It has been nearly ten years since the late Premier John Savage announced $1.6 million for community-based literacy. Groups in every region of the province have met the challenge in creative and determined ways. National literacy organizations led by the Movement for Canadian Literacy called on the federal government to develop a national strategy for literacy. It seems the call was heard: A standing committee report to Minister Jane Stewart of HRDC calls on the federal and provincial governments to develop a pan-Canadian response to raise adult literacy skills. Now is the time to help turn those recommendations into reality. Please participate in Literacy Action Week (LAW), from November 3rd to 8th, 2003. Check out the Literacy Action Week insert in this issue of the Literacy Nova Scotia News!

Thanks to all who support and value literacy. I wish you every success!

Eileen MacNeil
Chair, Literacy Nova Scotia

International Adult Literacy Day

On September 8th, Nova Scotians who have made a significant contribution to literacy and learning were honoured at the 13th annual IALD celebrations in Dartmouth.

“These award winners are all demonstrating the ideals of Skills Nova Scotia, our provincial skills agenda,” said Education Minister Jamie Muir. “Reading and writing skills enrich our personal lives and contribute to a stronger economy and society.”

Michael Stephen, an adult learner with the Bedford Sackville Literacy Network, began the event with an inspirational account of his experiences. “So many opportunities to learn have come my way, and every aspect of my life has changed.”

The following awards were presented:

Canada Post Literacy Awards
Individual Literacy Achievement Award, English - Pamela Ring, Digby; Community Leadership Award - Cape Breton Literacy Network, Sydney; Educator Awards - Richard Goldbloom, Halifax and Gil Dares, Yarmouth

Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning Community Literacy Volunteer Awards
Shirley McNamara, Richmond County Literacy Network; Mary Thompson, Yarmouth County Learning Network; Heather Croke, Dartmouth Literacy Network; Jane MacDonald, Cape Breton Literacy Network

Workplace Ambassador Awards
Luca Idzanovic, Prince George Hotel, Halifax Regional Municipality; Ronnie Jacquard, Western Regional Health Centre, Yarmouth; Jolynn Muise, Alex MacDonald Award, Yarmouth Regional Hospital, Southwest District Health Authority; Mel Lively, Elmsdale Lumber, Elmsdale

GED National Award for Outstanding Achievement
David Beaton, Dartmouth

Atomic Energy of Canada Limited GED Scholarship Award
James Annis, Annapolis County

Literacy Nova Scotia celebrates everyone who works to make life long learning a reality!
2003-04 LNS Scholarship & Bursary Recipients: Celebrating Success!

Literacy Nova Scotia congratulates the following winners of the 2003-2004 scholarships and bursaries.

Kathy Rector - $1,500 Scholarship Recipient
Kathy left high school in 1986. The pressures of being a wife and mother at a young age, school and a full-time job were too much to handle. In 1997, her husband became disabled and unable to work so she returned to school, completing Levels 3 and 4 at NSCC Truro in June 2003. Kathy is now enrolled in the two-year Human Services Program. Her goal is to finish the program, focusing on children and youth, and get a job in her field. Kathy’s instructor wrote, “With all this schoolwork to do, Kathy still finds time to act as a peer tutor to her classmates. Kathy’s positive attitude towards learning is contagious... She is a kind, caring individual and a natural leader who is actively involved in school activities. This year, Kathy organized a used clothing bank at the Truro campus.”

Elizabeth (Beth) Samson - $1,500 Scholarship Recipient
Beth decided to return to school after 19 years. She enrolled in the Adult Learning Program in September 2002 at NSCC Kingstec. Beth’s instructor says, “As a mature student with a young family and all the associated issues, Beth persevered through the challenges, determined to acquire her Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma and go on to post-secondary study. In December, she had surgery, but returned directly after Christmas and dove into the work at hand.” Beth is now enrolled in the Office Information Technology program at NSCC Kingstec and is working towards a new career.

Marcia Stevens – $500 Bursary Recipient
Marcia is enrolled in the adult upgrading program at the Colchester Adult Learning Association. She knew she needed more education to get a job, so she returned to school in 2002 after leaving over 27 years ago with a grade 8 education. Marcia sees this educational opportunity as a stepping stone to a better life and plans to achieve her goal of completing grade 12. Marcia’s instructor says, “Marcia has proven herself to be a very eager and determined student, despite having to overcome obstacles over the past two years. She is also a very creative and beautiful writer; she has even had her writing published.”

Deborah Smith - $500 Bursary Recipient
Deborah decided she needed to return to school so she could compete in today’s job market. She left school in 1976 at the age of 15, with a grade 9 education. In 2002, Deborah enrolled in the adult learning program at NSCC Shelburne but was unable to complete her studies due to problems with her health and home life. In spite of this, Deborah has returned to the program to earn her grade 12 diploma. She plans to further her studies in the Library Information and Technology program via virtual campus.

Georgina (Jeannie) Gratto - $500 Bursary Recipient
Jeannie returned to school at the Pictou County Continuous Learning Association in 2002 with a grade 7 education. She returned to the classroom for many reasons: a need to learn, wanting to be a good role model, and financial independence. A former instructor wrote, “Jeannie is a wonderful, dedicated and hardworking person. She has worked very hard to improve her academic skills in the past two years.” Jeannie is now enrolled in ALP Level 3 & 4 at NSCC Pictou.

Learner’s Voice
Watch this space for learners’ stories, tips and resources in upcoming issues. If you have something you would like to contribute to Learner’s Voice, check the back page for details.
In our last issue, we wrote about the changes to the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and how those changes were resulting in funding delays and difficulties for literacy organizations. Letters were then exchanged between Howard Green, Director General for the Nova Scotia Region for Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Ann Marie Downie, Executive Director of LNS. We publish these excerpts to keep you updated on some of the funding issues literacy networks in Nova Scotia are facing and what is being done about them.

Continued on the next page...
July 9, 2003

Howard Green, Director General
Nova Scotia Region, HRDC

Dear Howard:

Thank you for telling me about the error in the LNS Newsletter...

As you know, the reason we approached your office was in an effort to provide relevant information to literacy organizations about how literacy will be funded in the next few years... The uncertainty has been problematic for literacy organizations in the province.

There has been a tremendous growth in the delivery of literacy/essential skills in the past decade... At no time in recent history has so much been demanded of the voluntary sector. Organizations have developed strategies to meet the responsibilities they have taken on. Of course, their response has created a dependency on both levels of government... When there is no clear information about what the future funding framework will be, anxiety about the future of the programs becomes the focus of every organization...

The Canada – Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework is not a new LMDA. Does that mean that the usual three years of funding allowed under the present version of the LMDA will be a factor when literacy organizations come to you for funding under the new Framework? Many literacy organizations will not be able to meet their responsibilities if they cannot apply for continued funding... The hardships that a change in funding options will cause are significant. A positive answer to this pressing question would help alleviate the anxieties of the literacy organizations in the province that are caught in the funding bind.

...I am optimistic that there will soon be a new agreement between the provincial and federal governments that will expand the support given to adults requiring literacy/essential skills learning opportunities...

Very good wishes in the success of your negotiations.

Sincerely,
Ann Marie Downie

July 28, 2003

Ann Marie Downie
Executive Director, Literacy Nova Scotia

Dear Ann Marie:

Thank you for your letter of July 9... I am pleased to advise that the fact that a group has been able to access funding from HRDC in the past is not a disqualifying factor for them in working with this department in the future.

At the same time, I must note that HRDC does not operate in a static environment that allows us to make long term commitments to organizations beyond the project funding periods of specific projects...

...I understand that literacy organizations are concerned about ongoing funding, and that there are challenges to finding ways to support them in carrying out some of the work they have done in the past.

I have asked my staff across Nova Scotia to work proactively on these issues with our literacy partners, and I understand that we are actively seeking proactive approaches... These approaches however also require cooperation from the literacy organizations to work with governments to look for solutions that fit within our existing programs, and I hope that you will be able to encourage your colleagues to do so...

Yours sincerely,
Howard Green
We know that literacy has a positive impact on many aspects of our lives, but is it good for our health as well? Most research strongly suggests that it is. In Atlantic Canada, where the percentage of adults with limited literacy skills is higher than the national average, rates of chronic disease are also higher.

The Antigonish Town and County Community Health Board’s concerns about this issue resulted in the Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia Research Project (funded by SSHRC-National Literacy Secretariat Valuing Literacy in Canada Strategic Research Program). The advisory panel, made up of local health and literacy organizations, works with a research team from St. Francis Xavier University with expertise in nutrition, adult literacy education and nursing. The purpose of the project is to:

♦ learn how adults with limited literacy find and use health information, services and supports
♦ identify what can be done to make it easier for people with limited literacy to have better health
♦ increase awareness of health literacy as an important public issue
♦ provide a basis to improve policies and programs that enhance the health of adults with limited literacy skills living in rural northeastern Nova Scotia.

The research data comes from the experiences of the project participants, who generously shared their stories and reflections on literacy and health issues. In-depth interviews were held with 25 adults enrolled in adult learning programs and 20 adults with limited literacy not enrolled in adult learning programs. Health and literacy practitioners shared their insights through seven focus groups, and 20 community leaders were interviewed.

Preliminary results of the project will be shared through a plain language report and at a Roundtable on Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia. The Roundtable, bringing together adults limited in literacy, health and literacy practitioners, and decision-makers, will be held November 21, 2003 at the Millennium Centre at St. Francis Xavier University. Space is limited. If you would like to attend, please contact Janet Shively at jshively@stfx.ca.

Visit the Health Literacy in Rural Nova Scotia Research Project web site at www.nald.ca/healthliteracystfx.ca. You can also read the article Beyond Words: The health-literacy connection, prepared by principal investigator Doris Gillis, on the Canadian Health Network site at www.canadian-health-network.

PGI Literacy Grants & Learner Awards

Each year, Literacy Nova Scotia supports community-based literacy programs by distributing funds provided by the Department of Education to the annual Peter Gzowski Invitational Golf Tournament. Each year for the past several years, we have been able to distribute $40,000. Organizations use these grants for a variety of things including salaries, resources, transportation, child care, program delivery, computer hardware and software, office supplies, printing, advertising, and volunteer support. This year, PGI grants were distributed to twenty different organizations. Watch for next year’s PGI applications in the spring of 2004.

Congratulations to Harold Wilson, left, Dartmouth Literacy Network, winner of the Co-operators Learner Achievement Award and to Patricia Burke, NSCC Strait Area Campus Adult Learning Program, winner of the Nova Learning Incorporated Learner Award. She is pictured below left with Sherry Fitch, poet laureate of this year’s PGI Golf Tournament.
We are pleased to include here excerpts from the speech Jane MacDonald made at the International Literacy Day event sponsored by the Department of Education. Jane received the 2003 Community-Based Literacy Award and she spoke on behalf of all the volunteer recipients. Jane has a passion for literacy for all. She worked for many years until her recent retirement as the Co-ordinator of the Multimedia Education Centre at UCCB. Her work for literacy began as an outreach component of that position and continues today as she volunteers as a member of the Cape Breton Literacy Network. Jane was one of the founding members of the Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Coalition, now Literacy Nova Scotia, and served as the regional representative for Cape Breton for several years. From 1997 to 1999, Jane chaired the Coalition Board.

“On behalf of myself and the other three recipients, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Department of Education for this award. To be honored in such a manner is quite wonderful... As a child I was fortunate to be what we now call a reader, a natural reader. Many of my peers were not and so the doors of education were not as open to them as they were to myself. As a teacher, I again witnessed many children struggling with the printed word and so they were at a distinct disadvantage throughout their schooling years. As adults, the problems continue and are further compounded today by the complexities of the technological world in which we live. They find themselves stranded as witnesses only in the democratic society in which they live, unable to reach their full potential as human beings; because as we all know an inability to read is not a sign of lesser intelligence but is purely a difficulty in understanding the strategies that unlock the world of words...

As adult educators we are able to help students come to understand how to be strategic readers. They, many for the first time, taste the fruits of success and we all here know what this is like, how it can change a person. Successful people are different. They walk taller. Their voices are heard. They do not sit as witnesses to life but are full participants to their own and the history of the world around them... Through my participation both with Literacy Nova Scotia... and the Cape Breton Literacy Network, I have been able to watch this transformation as it occurs in our learners and as they say, “It is brilliant, absolutely brilliant.”

Our learners are then able to embrace the challenges that life has to offer and forge ahead with new resolve. It is my pleasure to be a part of their success and so it is to all of these people that I say thank you for allowing me to be a part of your successful journey.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity as an adult educator, to say that without proper funding to assist adult learners in this province the job would not be done. Volunteers are a piece of the puzzle but only a piece. All levels of government must continue to fund our community upgrading programs so that many more adults can taste the fruits of success. They deserve no less.

Thank you.”
Literacy Nova Scotia News

Literacy Nova Scotia (LNS) supports the literacy community in Nova Scotia. Our mission is to make sure every Nova Scotian has equal access to quality literacy education.

The Literacy Nova Scotia News is published three times a year by LNS.

The advisory committee is: Nina Barnaby, Digby Area Learning Network; Joanne Binns, Cape Breton Literacy Network; and Jayne Hunter, LNS.

Designed and edited by Erin Casey.

We would like to hear from you if you have:
• stories, news or ideas for articles
• letters
• announcements
• new resources for adult learning
• something for Learners’ Voice
• anything else others involved in literacy would be interested in!

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Upcoming events & important dates

Oct. 1 to 31 - Library Card Month
Cape Breton Regional Library invites residents of Victoria County and CBRM to sign up for free library cards at any of our branches or online at www.cbrl.ca. The library supports lifelong learning and literacy. Check us out!

Nov. 3 to 7 - Literacy Action Week
Contact LNS at 1-800-255-5203 or email literacyns@nscc.ca. Check out the insert in this issue!

Nov. 6 - Network Chairs & Coordinators’ Symposium
9:30am to 3:30pm, Colchester Hall Room, Howard Johnson Hotel, Truro. Taking place during Literacy Action Week, we want this to be the first in a series of meetings and events that will help literacy organizations inform governments about the issues. These meetings will include the development of strategies for speaking out about literacy. We hope you will leave with a clear communication plan, time lines for achieving your goals and shared ideas. Travel to this event will be subsidized by Literacy Nova Scotia. Contact LNS at 1-800-255-5203 or email literacyns@nscc.ca.

Nov. 13 - Word for Word
7:30 to 10:00pm, Alderney Landing Theatre. Dartmouth Literacy Network’s annual entertainment event showcases talent brought together to celebrate the written word and the importance of the ability to read. Performers and authors donate their time to an exciting evening packed with song, comedy and words. Call DLN at 464-3444 for tickets. Watch dartmouthliteracy.net/ for details.

News for instructors & tutors

Watch this space for more information about upcoming professional development opportunities from LNS!

Resource bulletin board

The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy announces the Knowledge Development Centre! Funded by the Government of Canada through the Canada Volunteerism Initiative (CVI), the Centre will provide grants to nonprofit and voluntary organizations and post-secondary institutions to conduct research on volunteering and volunteerism. Visit www.kdc-cdc.ca for information.

ABC CANADA is creating awareness tools to help literacy groups celebrate Family Literacy Day (FLD) in 2004. LNS will receive posters, bookmarks, tipsheets, stickers, event guides, note pads, pencils, temporary tattoos, certificates, postcards and T-shirts in early December for distribution in Nova Scotia. If you would like materials for your literacy group, please contact LNS by November 27, 2003.