



Canada's Premiers Announce 2016 Literacy Award Recipients

September 8, 2016 – Canada's Premiers today announced the recipients of the 12th annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award in honour of International Literacy Day. The award is presented to recipients from all 13 provinces and territories to celebrate outstanding achievement, innovative practice, and excellence in literacy.

The recipients of the 2016 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

Blue Quills Literacy Centre – Alberta
Burnaby School District LINC Program – British Columbia
Margaret Banasiak – Manitoba
Evelyn Lewis – Newfoundland and Labrador
Peter Bowmaster – New Brunswick
Jean-Charles Richard – New Brunswick
Archie Laroque – Northwest Territories
Michael Hajnal – Nova Scotia
Saa Pitsiulak – Nunavut
Kenamatewin Native Learning Centre – Ontario
Jean Ellsworth – Prince Edward Island
Carolane Flamand – Québec
Saskatchewan Literacy Network – Saskatchewan
Audrey Loughheed – Yukon

“On behalf of all Premiers, I extend my congratulations to the recipients of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award,” said Darrell Pasloski, Premier of Yukon and Chair of the Council of the Federation. “This year’s recipients represent an enduring commitment to literacy of which all Canadians should be proud. I am honoured to recognize their accomplishments.”

Created by Premiers in 2004, the Award recognizes the important role that literacy plays in facilitating Canadians’ participation as full and active citizens in all areas of society. The Award celebrates adult learners who undertake literacy training and the valuable contributions made by Canadians in the field of literacy, including family, Aboriginal, health, workplace, and community literacy. The Award is presented to learners, educators, volunteers, community organizations (including non-governmental organizations), and businesses in each province and territory.

Each Award recipient receives a certificate, signed by the Premier of their province or territory, as well as a Council of the Federation Literacy Award medallion.

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The Council of the Federation comprises all 13 provincial and territorial Premiers. It enables Premiers to work collaboratively, form closer ties, foster constructive relationships among governments, and show leadership on important issues that matter to Canadians.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

2016 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients

Blue Quills Literacy Centre – Alberta

The Blue Quills Literacy Centre, housed at the University nuhelot'jne thaiyots'j nistameyimâkanak Blue Quills on the Blue Quills First Nations Reserve in Northeastern Alberta, provides unique programs and services that are embedded in the traditional worldviews of the seven nations governing Blue Quills. The Blue Quills team works to increase literacy and essential skills in response to community needs. Whether it is travelling to deliver literacy and foundational learning off campus, offering tutorial and academic support, providing essential skills workshops and summer literacy camps, or partnering with community or other First Nations colleges, Blue Quills Literacy Centre continues to demonstrate outstanding achievement, innovation, and excellence in literacy and essential skills provision. In addition, the Centre contributes a local voice to national initiatives such as the National Aboriginal Literacy Strategy.

Burnaby School District LINC Program – British Columbia

The Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) teachers have been providing services in the Burnaby School District since 1992. Many students come to the LINC program unable to read or write in any language. The LINC program offers basic literacy and advanced skills in reading, writing, speaking and listening and ties their competencies and outcomes to the Canadian Language Benchmarks. LINC incorporates inter-cultural/cross-cultural literacy, financial literacy, social/emotional literacy, health literacy and digital literacy to their programs. The teachers support students in achieving their goals through active partnerships with community groups, innovative practices in their programs, referrals to local support services, ongoing professional development, and by taking a learner-centred approach in their classrooms. The LINC teachers are making a difference in the lives of their students and students' families by instilling self-confidence and empowerment through learning.

Margaret Banasiak – Manitoba

Margaret Banasiak is a teacher and coordinator of several adult literacy programs in low-income areas of Winnipeg. She was instrumental in the development and delivery of the Open Doors program in 1990 and the Luxton School program in 2002. Banasiak contributed her expertise to establish the Lord Selkirk Park Adult Learning Program, which was instrumental in revitalising a housing development complex. After 26 years, Banasiak's passion for literacy is evident in her willingness to mentor other teachers, and by the genuine respect and appreciation she receives from learners and colleagues. Banasiak has co-authored several resources, presented at conferences and made invaluable contributions to committees, including the Winnipeg Foundation's Literacy for Life Grants Committee. Banasiak's work has had life-changing impacts for vulnerable individuals within a supportive community context.

Peter Bowmaster – New Brunswick

Whether it is walking a substantial distance to pursue his learning or being involved in a community group, Peter Bowmaster demonstrates his true commitment and dedication to himself and his community through his actions. Learning is important to Bowmaster and, despite a recently diagnosed learning disability and several family emergencies, he continues to follow his goals of improving his literacy skills. This education will allow

Bowmaster to acquire a GED, take a post-secondary training course and get a job. Bowmaster continues to fight to achieve the skills that will allow him to participate fully in his community. As a once “underpaid” and “bullied” employee, Peter hopes to get a meaningful job so he can purchase a home, something about which he has always dreamed.

Jean-Charles Richard – New Brunswick

Jean-Charles Richard left school in 1999 after completing Grade 9. He tried twice, unsuccessfully, to go back to school. For a number of years, he dreamt of a fulfilling job, better salary, and better quality of life. In 2015, 16 years after his first attempt, Richard entered an adult education class in Edmundston. Motivated and encouraged by his teacher who believed in him, he completed Level 2 and his GED preparation in one year. In February 2016, he passed his GED on the first attempt. Since then Richard has completed two math courses, and he began network and computer security training at the CCNB in Edmundston in September 2016, which is a dream come true for him.

Evelyn Lewis – Newfoundland and Labrador

Originally from Nain, Labrador, Evelyn Lewis left school in Grade 10 without her high school diploma. Thirty-eight years later she enrolled in the provincial Adult Basic Education (ABE) program in St. John’s. Lewis has completed ABE Level III and is considering post-secondary education in the near future. Her experience in an ABE program has helped her overcome many obstacles including social anxiety and the bullying she experienced while growing up. This has translated into increased self-confidence, academic success, and willingness to help others. She is considered a role model by many of her peers.

Archie Laroque – Northwest Territories

Archie Laroque is a Dene man residing in the community of Fort Smith, in the Northwest Territories. Having left school at a young age, Laroque faced many hardships due to his lack of education. After more than thirty years away it was a challenge for him to return to school to become an adult learner, as a mature man with a family. Laroque’s persistence, desire to achieve mastery in all subjects and dedication to his studies have all contributed to an impressive improvement in his literacy skills and his academic success. He is a role model for his fellow students who regularly seek him out for help with their learning.

Michael Hajnal – Nova Scotia

Michael Hajnal’s life has been anything but easy, experiencing both addiction and mental health issues, but over 30 years out of school did not deter him from getting a high school diploma. His courage to confront issues has helped him share those experiences with others. He exhibits compassion for his peers and actively listens, leading to a healthier lifestyle. Hajnal has grown intellectually and academically and he is described by his instructors as hardworking, thoughtful, committed, and kind with a value for education. Volunteer work and self-confidence have helped Hajnal develop what he describes as a buffet mentality – choosing ideals that fit within his current ideology, yet allowing him to change with the times. Hajnal graduated in June 2016 earning the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults with a view to study at the Electrical Construction Program at NSCC’s Waterfront Campus.

Saa Pitsiulak – Nunavut

Saa Pitsiulak is an Inuktitut language program officer with the Nunavut Department of Culture and Heritage. Pitsiulak has been an educator in Nunavut for over 30 years. She has taught hundreds of children in Inuktitut, as well as instructed adult Inuktitut literacy in community learning centres in Kimmirut and Iqaluit. Pitsiulak has gone above and beyond her day job, and has been active in creating children's Inuktitut guided reading resources, used in all Nunavut schools. She does this on her own time, and has quietly worked for many years to create teaching materials and resources, and to give Inuktitut lessons. Pitsiulak exemplifies leadership within her community, and empowers learners to invest in their own learning.

Kenamatewin Native Learning Centre – Ontario

Katherine Shine, Executive Director of the Kenamatewin Native Learning Centre (KNLC) and her dedicated and committed staff, have demonstrated that their organization is very deserving of this award as a result of innovation, inclusion and collaboration for the multi-barriered learners in Northern Ontario. Multiple stakeholders and community partners develop a network of support for learners to reach their full potential and goal path achievements. On-site TV Ontario GED tests occur at least three times per year for 16 learners, and employed learners are teacher-supported in evening classes to achieve their GED Grade 12 certificates. As a demonstration of KNLC's success in assisting learners, 59 certificates adorn the walls of Kenamatewin, and individuals are supported in their transition long after the one-year follow-up requirement.

Jean Ellsworth – Prince Edward Island

Jean Ellsworth struggled with reading, writing and math at school. Jobs she found paid only minimum wage and she needed and wanted a better job. She also knew she first needed to earn her high school certificate. Once Ellsworth determined this, she pursued her Grade 12 certificate through the GED Program. Preparing for the tests was complicated by Ellsworth's major back surgery and a long recuperation period, but she emerged more determined than ever to complete Grade 12. With a great tutor, Ellsworth earned her Grade 12 certificate in 2015 and was accepted into the RCW Program at Holland College, from which she graduated in June 2016. Ellsworth has become a strident spokesperson encouraging adults without Grade 12 to follow in her footsteps with her message, "If I can, you can."

Carolane Flamand – Québec

Since Carolane Flamand returned to school, both her parents and the staff at the Samares school board's *Pavillon l'Envol de Manawan* have seen the dedication that has characterized Flamand's pursuit of completing her training program. From the Atikamekw Nation, and at the age of 27, Flamand decided to resume her studies so she could become a nurse. She has turned her energy toward breaking down barriers and following the necessary steps that will lead her toward her professional goal. In explaining why she chose this field she said, "... I love people and I want to help." In addition to developing strong learning strategies, Flamand has blossomed personally. Her commitment and determination have also had a positive influence on the youth in her community.

Saskatchewan Literacy Network – Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Literacy Network (SLN) is one of the longest thriving provincial literacy coalitions in Canada. Since 1989, SLN has introduced numerous initiatives that have contributed to the advancement of literacy specific training, resource development and distribution, special events and project initiation in adult, family, community and workplace literacy. Ever adaptable to change, SLN attributes its continued success to its resilient leadership and the partnerships it has cultivated with government ministries, community organizations, academic institutions, First Nations and Métis organizations, businesses, practitioners and learners. Recognizing the importance of skills development, SLN has advocated for a broader vision of literacy that encompasses social justice, human rights and expression of freedom. Moving these concepts into mainstream is a passion that continues to propel the organization forward.

Audrey Lougheed – Yukon

Audrey Lougheed has devoted a lifetime to supporting adult literacy. In 1983, she became a founding member of the Yukon Literacy Council, which is now the Yukon Learn Society. For over 12 years, she also held various positions on the board of directors. “We have come a long way from where we wanted to be 20 years ago. We are much more professional. It is shown with government, which is financing us to develop the northern workforce,” Lougheed said. Over the past 33 years Lougheed has also provided one-on-one tutoring services in adult literacy and for English Second-Language learners. “I believe everyone has a right to literacy-reading, writing, numeracy, essential skills, or developing their life and work skills. I am honoured to have taken part in this work.”

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