



Council of the Federation Literacy Award Winners Announced

BANFF, August 11, 2005 – Canada’s thirteen Premiers today announced the recipients of the first annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award. This award recognizes outstanding achievement and excellence in literacy, and is presented in each province and territory in Canada.

Premiers agreed to create this Award in 2004 in recognition of the importance of literacy as an essential building block to a vibrant society and economy.

The recipients of the 2005 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

Ontario – Rita Buffalo

Quebec – Nicole Roy

Nova Scotia – Crystal Simmons

New Brunswick – Beverly Arbeau, Yvonne Léger

Manitoba – Faye Belhumeur

British Columbia – Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy

Prince Edward Island – Dianne C. Smith

Saskatchewan – Lynda Richards

Alberta – Leonard Duby

Newfoundland and Labrador – Jamie Garland

Yukon – George Green

Northwest Territories – Nora Wedzin-Quitte

Nunavut – Kim Crockatt

“On behalf of all Premiers, I congratulate these recipients of the first annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award,” said Ralph Klein, Alberta Premier and Chair of the Council of the Federation. “Their tireless efforts and outstanding contributions to their communities are to be commended.”

The Award recognizes the valuable contributions made in the field of literacy, including family, Aboriginal, health, workplace and community literacy. It is presented to educators, volunteers, learners, and community organizations (including non-governmental organizations) and businesses in each province and territory.

Each recipient will receive 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 is comprised of all thirteen provincial and territorial Premiers. It enables Premiers to work collaboratively to strengthen the Canadian federation by fostering a constructive relationship among the provinces and territories, and with the federal government.

To learn more, visit www.councilofthefederation.ca.

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For more information:

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Biographical and Background Information

2005 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients

Ontario – Rita Buffalo

Rita Buffalo of Thunder Bay, Ontario, is a devoted advocate for the cause of literacy and Aboriginal literacy in her community. After overcoming a difficult childhood, little formal education and an addiction problem, she joined a literacy and basic skills class at the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre to develop her skills. After graduating with honours from Confederation College in 2002, Rita is now the Literacy Coordinator for the Anishnawbe Skills Development Program at the Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre. She is also a long-serving member of the National Indigenous Literacy Association, a participant in literacy events and a public speaker and champion for the cause of literacy.

Québec – Nicole Roy

Nicole Roy is an Abitibi-area resident who is married and has four children, one of whom is mentally handicapped. Her family responsibilities and lack of access to education prevented her from returning to school for a number of years. In 2004, Ms. Roy had the opportunity to enroll in a training program. Her desire to encourage her daughter in her educational development led Ms. Roy to register at the *Centre de Croissance d'Abitibi-Ouest*. The training centre opened the door to lifelong learning for Ms. Roy and enabled her to contribute to a soon-to-be-published compendium of texts, titled *Mon pays, d'hier à aujourd'hui*. As she approaches her 50th birthday, she intends to complete her high-school studies with a view to contributing further efforts to the training centre. Her goal is to enable other people to fulfill their dreams and gain confidence in their plans. To quote Ms. Roy, her training experience gave her “the feeling of taking control of her life.”

Nova Scotia – Crystal Simmons

Crystal Simmons is a single mother of two who left school in grade 9, and has gone on to become a successful adult learner and literacy advocate. Enrolling at the Elmsdale Adult High School in 2002, Crystal graduated with her high school diploma with honours in 2004. She was the recipient of the Staff Award and was Valedictorian of her class. Crystal went on to graduate from the Nova Scotia Community College Medical Office Assistant Program in June 2005, and is now employed, while holding several positions on boards of community literacy organizations such as the Hants Learning Network Association and East Hants Adult Learning Association.

New Brunswick – Beverly Arbeau

Beverly Arbeau, a resident of Burt's Corner, New Brunswick, overcame challenges to improve his literacy skills. Despite the heavy toll his work and family obligations were taking on his health, Bev was determined to invest the time and effort necessary to improve his skills with the help of a Laubach tutor. After two years of hard work, Bev gained confidence in reading and was able to attend job interviews, write tests, and obtain a job with better hours, closer to his home. Most importantly, he was able to use his new skills to help his youngest son, Jason, with some difficulties when he started school – the accomplishment of which Bev is most proud.

New Brunswick – Yvonne Léger

Yvonne Léger of Notre-Dame, New Brunswick, has led a successful life as an entrepreneur and member of her community despite having to leave school very young due to the economic circumstances of the time. Yvonne no longer relies on others due to her lack of literacy skills. On her own initiative, she has become a successful adult literacy learner by enrolling in a literacy class in her village. In the last seven years, she has discovered her full potential. To date, she has won eight prizes for her written work, one of which was in June 2005, *le Prix de la francophonie en alphabétisation de l'Association canadienne d'éducation de langue française (ACELF) de la Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF)*.

Manitoba – Faye Belhumeur

Faye Belhumeur, a resident of Swan River, Manitoba, is an accomplished literacy learner despite her difficult life situation and tragic circumstances. Despite having doubts about her ability to learn, Faye enrolled at the Swan River Adult Education Centre in 2003. Since then she has upgraded her basic literacy skills, completed the Literacy Stage Certificate, the GED, and the Mature Student High School Diploma. Faye now uses her passion for literacy as a volunteer assisting new immigrants, tutoring learners and their children in her home. She is currently working as a part-time education assistant while continuing her studies.

British Columbia – Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy

The Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy was formed in 1999 and became a registered charitable society in August 2001. The purpose of the Alliance is to promote literacy and lifelong learning through the Columbia Basin by educating the public about the importance of literacy and by supporting local community actions related to literacy. This organization has held successful conferences, worked in partnership with local colleges and literacy groups, and covered literacy programs spanning the whole spectrum from preschool programs to workplace literacy. Community Literacy Advisory Committees have been formed or are currently forming in each of 17 major communities in the Columbia Basin to plan for, initiate, and support family literacy programs.

Prince Edward Island – Dianne C. Smith

Dianne C. Smith is an adult learner who has made outstanding progress in her own learning and has inspired other adults to do the same. After leaving school in grade nine, Dianne's work experience included home care, farming, cleaning, and a variety of entrepreneurial endeavors run solely by ambition and desire. At the age of 49, as a single mother, Dianne realized education would be the key to a better life for herself and her two children. With help from volunteer tutors and by attending adult education classes, Dianne received her GED certificate the day before her 50th birthday. Dianne has worked hard to overcome a variety of learning difficulties while holding down a full-time job and caring for her family. Dianne now owns her own licensed community care facility, Smith Lodge, and encourages others to improve their literacy skills.

Saskatchewan – Lynda Richards

Lynda Richards, a businesswoman and accomplished adult learner from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, is an active individual in the field of literacy in both her province and her country. As President of the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, Lynda has taken a leadership role in the literacy movement, and through her membership on several provincial committees, has contributed to development of literacy policy and programs in Saskatchewan. She is a founding member of the Saskatchewan Adult Literacy Learners' Focus Group, and through the Saskatchewan Literacy Network Learners' Speakers Bureau, is an engaging public speaker who continues to be a strong advocate for learners. Lynda is also Saskatchewan's representative on the Movement for Canadian Literacy, proof of her devotion to the cause of literacy in all communities.

Alberta – Leonard Duby

Leonard Duby of Calgary, Alberta, is recognized as a hard-working advocate and volunteer in the field of literacy. Twelve years after working with a tutor to develop his own reading skills from a grade 1-2 level, Leonard has devoted himself to helping fellow adult learners as a volunteer with the Alberta Association of Adult Literacy, the Movement for Canadian Literacy, and as a speaker on the importance of adult literacy and learning. In 1999 Leonard was elected to the Board of Directors of the Alberta Association of Adult Literacy (now known as Literacy Alberta), and was recognized in 1999 when he was awarded the Canada Post Literacy Award.

Newfoundland and Labrador – Jamie Garland

Jamie Garland of St. George's, Newfoundland and Labrador, is an accomplished literacy learner in spite of numerous life challenges. A few years after leaving high school before completion due to low literacy skills and numerous learning disabilities, Jamie became driven to improve her literacy skills. While single-parenthood presented Jamie with a new challenge, it also provided her with the motivation to enroll in ABE Level I classes at the Bay St. George Learning Centre in Stephenville. Since September 2004, her literacy skills have increased several grade levels. During the summer months Jamie secures employment so that she can return to the Learning Centre to continue her studies.

Yukon – George Green

George Green has demonstrated a lasting commitment to literacy in the Yukon. As a determined advocate for the cause of literacy, George has devoted many years to the Learning Disabilities Association (LDAY). His LDAY work has involved building effective partnerships in sponsoring, hosting and conducting many workshops and conferences on literacy, as well as the introduction of the Wilson Language Program to Yukon schools. He has also acted as Chairperson of the Yukon Literacy Action Committee and participated in the 2001 Yukon Literacy Strategy. Mr. Green has been involved in numerous volunteer organizations as a Founding Director of United Way Yukon and an advocate for health and social development.

Northwest Territories – Nora Wedzin-Quitte

Nora Wedzin-Quitte of the Northwest Territories has accomplished much in the field of literacy despite having to leave school at a young age. As an adult, she returned to school to improve her grade 3 level of literacy. Through twenty years of determination and hard work, Nora has continued to improve her personal literacy level. Nora's personal achievements have motivated her to give back to the community as an advocate for education and literacy. In her workplace, she counsels young people to return to school, and she has established a day care centre in the local high school so young mothers can return to school. She continues to be an active participant in her community, and has been instrumental in establishing Aboriginal Healing and Wellness programs in the Tlicho communities.

Nunavut – Kim Crockatt

Kim Crockatt of Cambridge Bay, Nunavut is an active member of her community with a passion for Inuit history and literacy education. Kim has extensive experience in management and administration of non-profit organizations. As a volunteer, Kim provides voluntary administrative and project related support. Kim currently works as the full-time Executive Director of the Nunavut Literacy Council and serves as Vice-President of the Movement for Canadian Literacy.

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