



## **Canada's Premiers Announce 2015 Literacy Award Recipients**

**September 8, 2015** – Today, in honour of International Literacy Day, Canada's Premiers announced the recipients of the 11th annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award. The award is presented each year to educators, volunteers, learners, community organizations, non-governmental organizations and businesses in each province and territory to celebrate outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

The recipients of the 2015 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association - Alberta  
Helen Domshy - British Columbia  
Pauline Petti - Manitoba  
Russell Simms - Newfoundland and Labrador  
Mélanie Massé - New Brunswick  
Christa Piercey - New Brunswick  
Carol Elanik - Northwest Territories  
Andy Ewing - Nova Scotia  
Elijah Tigullaraq - Nunavut  
Brenda Krys - Ontario  
Wilfred Augustine - Prince Edward Island  
Hélène Simard - Québec  
READ Saskatoon Inc. - Saskatchewan  
Margaret Workman – Yukon

“On behalf of my fellow Premiers, I offer congratulations to the recipients of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award,” said Paul Davis, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and Chair of the Council of the Federation. “This year’s recipients have worked hard and shown an exceptional commitment to literacy. I am pleased to honour their accomplishments.”

Premiers recognize that literacy is an important part of every Canadian’s ability to participate as a full and active citizen in all areas of society. Established in 2004, the Council of the Federation Literacy Award recognizes the successes of adults that have undertaken literacy training, and celebrates the valuable contributions made by Canadians across the field of literacy, including family, Aboriginal, health, workplace and community literacy.

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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.

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

### 2015 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients

#### **Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association - Alberta**

The Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association (TDCALA) has been providing innovative programs in literacy and essential skills training for 43 years. In the last 15 years, Alberta's population has changed and so has TDCALA's programming. Working collaboratively, the Association has made a positive impact on the community through its family and adult literacy programs and work foundations. In addition, they also provide English-as-a-Second Language (ESL) training, including an ESL drop-in centre, one-on-one tutoring and the *Families Learning Together* program. TDCALA demonstrates outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy by providing seamless pathways to learning.

#### **Helen Domschy - British Columbia**

As a lifelong learner, Helen Domschy has worn many hats. She has had a lengthy and successful career as a medical imagist with specific interest in women's health, pursued further education in gender studies, and has been a vital part of Prince George as the community's literacy outreach coordinator. Since 2008, Domschy has worked tirelessly to develop and nurture community connections between learners, services, and agencies. She has built community capacity by offering plain and clear language workshops, coordinating training for dozens of volunteer tutors and creating locally relevant programs and materials for learners. Domschy has been successful in promoting a broad and intersectional definition of literacy that empowers people in all aspects of their lives.

#### **Pauline Petti - Manitoba**

Pauline Petti has participated in the adult literacy program at LiteracyWORKS Inc. since October 2012. Petti worked for 30 years in the health care field and, after retiring, she began the program at Stage 1 with a basic understanding of reading and writing. With perseverance and hard work she progressed to Stage 2. Despite health issues she remained motivated and continued to attend classes. Petti has made significant progress in her writing and is now comfortable reading a variety of texts. With increased confidence, and a goal of achieving her grade 12 diploma, she has mentored younger Aboriginal students and has become a volunteer in the community at church services and pow wows. Petti is an inspiration and a role model to other students.

#### **Mélanie Massé - New Brunswick**

As the mother of three young children, Mélanie Massé found the courage and determination to go back to school and earn her General Educational Development (GED) diploma. Despite a few bumps along the road, she found ways to overcome obstacles in order to fulfill her dream of being accepted into the *Intervention Techniques for Offenders* program. Using her life experience, Massé wants to help young people get back on the right track and realize their dreams. Making her dream a reality, she started college in the fall of 2015. Massé is a real source of inspiration for others, showing that with motivation and perseverance, anything is possible.

### **Christa Piercey - New Brunswick**

Christa Piercey is a remarkable example of courage and resilience as she has overcome both physical and learning challenges. As a young cancer survivor with a diagnosis of autism, she has been able to make steady and constant gains in her life. Piercey is in the process of completing the GED preparation program and certification and would like to continue on to post-secondary education. To quote her mother, “she wants to go to college to get business administration [skills] and open a café where every person will feel included and accommodated.” Although Piercey may have lacked confidence in her abilities when she began her journey, she has shown commitment to her goals and has been a positive influence to anyone with whom she has come in contact.

### **Russell Simms - Newfoundland and Labrador**

Russell Simms left school at sixteen years old without a high school diploma and had always regretted his decision. In 2013, a little over thirty years later, he decided to try again and entered the provincial Adult Basic Education (ABE) program at Keyin College. The college’s principal notes that he quickly became a role model in his class. Simms has since completed ABE, as well as a carpentry course, and is now employed in his new profession. Simms says that the ABE program has improved his literacy skills and opened so many doors for him that he would recommend it to anyone who wants a second chance in life.

### **Carol Elanik - Northwest Territories**

Carol Elanik is a 38-year-old Inuvialuit woman from Aklavik who self-identifies as living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Elanik’s optimism and perseverance have helped her to progress to a level of functional literacy that has allowed her to live on her own and made her a role model to others. Elanik sets her own literacy goals and challenges herself to move beyond expectations. She regularly attends literacy, numeracy and computer classes at her local college and actively supports others to continue their education. She has a Facebook page that she uses to keep others up-to-date on community events and she is an enthusiastic volunteer at youth nights and camps, where she organizes literacy activities. She is also a cultural ambassador to newcomers to the community.

### **Andy Ewing - Nova Scotia**

Andy Ewing left the public school system for a variety of health issues in 2008, but was eventually referred to the Dartmouth Learning Network where the next phase of his educational journey began. An important first step in this journey was being matched with a dedicated tutor who helped him gain the confidence he needed to succeed. Each milestone he achieved helped him to move beyond his comfort zone and take on new challenges. Ewing has learned the importance of volunteering and he continues to help others, paying forward the help he received throughout his journey. He successfully completed the *Adult Learning Program* at both the Dartmouth Learning Network and the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). Ewing graduated in June 2015, receiving the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults, and he will attend the *Continuing Care Assistant Program* at NSCC in the fall.

### **Elijah Tigullaraq - Nunavut**

Elijah Tigullaraq is a visionary leader and educator with more than 35 years of experience as a problem-solver, curriculum leader, school administrator and strategic planner for school improvement, both at the school and district levels. He has extensive experience in professional development and in the supervision of diverse learning groups. Tigullaraq is a dedicated individual who has not only inspired numerous students, but also his co-workers. For teaching purposes, his inspirations came from Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ). For Tigullaraq, Inuit societal values are also useful in helping others understand the logistics of being an Inuk. He furthered his education through teacher's college and since then has worked in the field of education. He is currently a bilingual language consultant with the Nunavut Department of Education and continues to inspire and pursue IQ.

### **Brenda Kryz - Ontario**

Brenda Kryz has been a dedicated volunteer adult literacy instructor with the Waterloo District School Board's *Essential Skills Upgrading Program* since 2008. Since then, she has worked as a small group instructor, one-to-one tutor and on outreach activities. Kryz extends her dedication to removing barriers toward learning. She has worked tirelessly to find suitable employment opportunities for literacy learners and she is a role model for lifelong learning. When she began to volunteer, Kryz decided to complete her *Teacher of Adults: Literacy Educator* certificate to be more effective as an instructor. She then pursued a Bachelor's degree in adult education. Kryz is greatly respected by adult learners because of her commitment and passion for adult literacy and because she is a learner herself.

### **Wilfred Augustine - Prince Edward Island**

When he moved to PEI with his family in 2007, Wilfred Augustine never thought that he would one day complete grade 12 and be accepted into the *Correctional Officer Program* at Holland College. Despite having dropped out of school, Augustine was always gainfully employed in New Brunswick as a paramedic on his reserve, but in PEI his employment was limited to seasonal jobs. In 2014, determined to find better employment, he found the courage to go to the upgrading program offered by Holland College on the Scotchfort Reserve. His excellent attendance and determination to succeed resulted in achieving the grade 12 diploma that eluded him for so many years. Augustine is now looking forward to a positive future for himself and his family.

### **Hélène Simard - Québec**

Throughout her life, Hélène Simard has faced challenges and has managed to overcome many obstacles. A sense of commitment, perseverance, dynamism and generosity are just some of the qualities that she has cultivated and reinforced by returning to her education. The organization La Clé, Centre de lecture et d'écriture d'Alma (*The Key, Alma Reading and Writing Centre*) benefits greatly by her involvement, particularly as a participants' representative on their Board of Directors. Building on her local experience, she has also represented her peers on the committee for Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation du Québec (*Coalition of Literacy Groups in Québec*). As her family's breadwinner, Simard's approach to literacy allows her to support her son in his education and guide him toward success. Simard's journey is an outstanding example of the changes and benefits that greater literacy can provide.

### **READ Saskatoon Inc. - Saskatchewan**

READ Saskatoon Inc. is a provincially and nationally recognized community-based organization that has been offering free literacy programs and services to thousands of adults and families in Saskatoon and the surrounding area for over 35 years. Through visionary leadership and community partnerships, READ Saskatoon has become a strong engine for community building and change. First established in 1979 as a volunteer agency, the organization has expanded its programming to include adult, family and financial literacy programs that have demonstrated strong outcomes for learners and gained continued commitment from hundreds of volunteers. READ Saskatoon reaches people of all ages and, true to their mission statement and proactive spirit, their work is helping to build engaged, employable and resilient lifelong learners and citizens.

### **Margaret Workman - Yukon**

Margaret Workman's traditional name is Äyedindaya. She grew up speaking Southern Tutchone and living a traditional lifestyle. At the age of seven, Workman was taken from her family and placed in the Baptist Mission School where she was not allowed to speak her native tongue. She later entered the *Native Language Instructors Program* where she attained her diploma and an Associate of Applied Science Degree. Workman was responsible for developing the first Athapaskan 11 and 12 language program at F.H. Collins Secondary School. Twice she received the *Innovations in Teaching Award* from the Yukon Department of Education. Workman has extensive elementary, secondary and college level teaching experience. After decades of making vital contributions to Native language literacy, especially Southern Tutchone, she continues her commitment even in retirement.

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