



## **Council of the Federation Announces Literacy Award Winners for 2006**

**ST. JOHN'S, July 28, 2006** –Canada's Premiers today announced the recipients of the second annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award. This award is presented in each province and territory, and recognizes outstanding achievement and excellence in literacy.

The recipients of the 2006 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

**Leslie Ion** – Ontario  
**Céline Gaudreault** – Québec  
**Jason Dykens** – Nova Scotia  
**Nicolas Chabotte, Jennifer Hallihan** – New Brunswick  
**Daphne Joyce Prince** – Manitoba  
**Linda Mitchell** – British Columbia  
**Anne Morrison** – Prince Edward Island  
**Carey Rigby-Wilcox** – Saskatchewan  
**Betty Martin** – Alberta  
**Evelyn Keener** – Newfoundland and Labrador  
**Cindy Voudrach** – Northwest Territories  
**Rock Brisson** – Yukon  
**Winnie Owingayak** – Nunavut

“It is a great privilege for me to congratulate the recipients of the second annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award,” said Danny Williams, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and Chair of the Council of the Federation. “On behalf of all Premiers, I applaud the exceptional efforts and outstanding contributions of these individuals to their communities.”

The award recognizes the valuable contributions made by Canadians in the field of literacy, including family, Aboriginal, health, workplace and community literacy. It is presented to educators, volunteers, learners, community organizations, 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.

Premiers created this award in 2004 in recognition of the importance of literacy as an essential building block to a vibrant society and economy. Premiers noted the critical link of literacy to skills training and post-secondary education, key priorities for all Canadians.

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The Council of the Federation is comprised of all thirteen provincial and territorial Premiers. The Council 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](http://www.councilofthefederation.ca).

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**Biographical Information**  
**2006 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients**

**Leslie Ion – Ontario**

Leslie Ion of Brantford, Ontario has been advancing literacy through volunteer activities for more than ten years. Ms. Ion's volunteer involvement has covered a broad range of activities including learners, fundraising, community outreach, and serving on the Board of Directors for the Literacy Council of Brantford and District, where she reached a milestone of 1000 volunteer hours in 2004. A true promoter of literacy, her dedication to and passion for literacy are exceptional. She is well informed about literacy issues, and goes out of her way to share this knowledge with her community. A quote from Ms. Ion's nominators says it all, "That day, ten years ago, when Leslie Ion walked into our office to enquire about becoming a tutor, is a day for which the Literacy Council of Brantford thanks its lucky stars."

**Céline Gaudreault – Québec**

Céline Gaudreault of Gatineau, Québec, embarked on her quest for literacy in 2004 by registering, at the prompting of her parents, with "Le vent dans les lettres," an independent community action organization dedicated to literacy. Previously isolated and dependent on her family, Ms. Gaudreault is now autonomous in her everyday life. In fact, from the beginning, her dream was to become independent and help others. "I am proud of having become a self-reliant and confident citizen!" is how she puts it. In addition to being comfortable with the written word, Céline is now actively involved with her community and the organization that helped her. Céline Gaudreault will be presented with the COF Literacy Award as a tribute to her determination, perseverance and success.

**Jason Dykens – Nova Scotia**

Jason Dykens of Nova Scotia was diagnosed with ADHD and left school after eleventh grade. In May 2003, Flowercart, an agency that facilitates training and employment opportunities for people who are considered to have a learning or cognitive disability, hired Jason and he began working at Michelin. Realizing that he required his GED in order to obtain a higher paying job to support his family, Mr. Dykens enrolled at the Kings County Learning Association (KCLA) with a view to improving his literacy and numeracy skills. As a result of his work commitments, he was required to meet with his tutor or attend classes after work in the evenings and on weekends. Mr. Dykens wrote and passed his GED in May 2006. In addition to working and studying full-time, he volunteered to help repair a local church and plans to volunteer with the VON. Mr. Dykens hopes to give back to his community the same support that he received from the KCLA.

### **Nicholas Chabotte – New Brunswick**

Nicholas Chabotte of Campbellton, New Brunswick quit school in eighth grade to enter the labour force. A decade later, Mr. Chabotte enrolled in a literacy program, but ultimately chose work over school once again. Dissatisfied with working in various low-income jobs that took him away from his family for long periods of time, he finally settled on construction work, which he loved. With the aim of improving his skills in the construction field, Mr. Chabotte decided to return to school, take the GED preparatory course, write his exams, and apply to college. Today, he has discovered a love of reading, and has forged friendships with classmates who appreciate his energy and good humour. Mr. Chabotte will begin the carpentry program at the New Brunswick Community College in Campbellton in September 2006.

### **Jennifer Hallihan – New Brunswick**

Jennifer Hallihan of Saint John, New Brunswick dropped out of school with plans to get a job and work her way to the top, but the birth of her son led her to change her plans. With a view to educating her son, Ms. Hallihan knew she needed to complete her own education. While living at First Steps, a home for pregnant and parenting young women, she began working with a tutor to improve her literacy skills. Despite the challenges of dyslexia, single parenthood, finding full-time child care, and the long commute to Basic Education Skills Training classes at the Saint John Learning Centre, Ms. Hallihan has never fallen behind in her studies. Always one of the first to volunteer to help others and to participate in fundraising activities, she has also taken part in workshops in order to help others to improve their parenting skills. This dedicated mother's long-term goal is to own a daycare – one that is open twenty-four hours, seven days a week.

### **Daphne Joyce Prince – Manitoba**

Daphne Joyce Prince of Winnipeg, Manitoba is a single mother of four children who is determined to create a better life for herself and her family. In October 2004 Daphne enrolled in the literacy and upgrading programs at the Aboriginal Learning and Literacy Centre. She continued on to the Academic Grade 12 Diploma program and received her high school diploma in June 2006. Her determination and commitment to her education goals were evident on a daily basis, and she provided leadership in program activities. Daphne is a member of the Literacy Partners of Manitoba Learners Speaker Bureau where she assists other learners and promotes the importance of literacy to volunteers, government and business leaders. To quote Ms. Prince: "I would like to work toward helping women and children, and my community. I hope that one day I will be known for a good purpose."

### **Linda Mitchell – British Columbia**

Linda Mitchell, a resident of British Columbia, is one of the literacy movement's most passionate and articulate spokespersons. Since the 1980's she has been a leader at local, provincial and national levels. As a volunteer in the emerging adult literacy movement of the 1980's, Ms. Mitchell became Executive Director of Victoria READ Society. She was instrumental in the creation of Project Literacy Victoria and is founder of The Learners' Network, one of BC's first adult literacy volunteer tutor programs. In 1990, Linda carried forward a dream held by many – the formation of a provincial literacy organization to champion adult and family literacy in BC. She is the Chair of the Premier's Advisory Panel on Literacy, which this spring submitted its Final Report which assesses the nature and scope of literacy challenges and issues in BC. Linda has also contributed countless volunteer hours to literacy and community organizations, which includes her role as Chair of the PGI National Committee from 1998-2005. Ms. Mitchell, with her leadership, wisdom and tenacity, has been instrumental in building the BC literacy movement.

### **Anne Morrison – Prince Edward Island**

Anne Morrison, a resident of Prince Edward Island, is a long time school teacher and adult educator who exemplifies a commitment to all her students. She has been instrumental in ensuring her students achieve levels of literacy that enhance their quality of life. Her students express not only gratitude, but also a deep seated respect for Ms. Morrison. Her approach to teaching and learning has always included working with learners to help identify the steps required to achieve their goals; recognizing the special and specific needs of every student. She dedicates her teaching to connecting everyday efforts to long-term goals and highlights daily achievements. This constant encouragement for students gives valuable support which translates into student success. Ms. Morrison is an excellent example of how an adult educator can have a positive and long lasting influence in the lives of a great number of people. Her skill as a teacher, her passion for learning, her commitment to her learners and her obvious optimism ensure her learners have hope for the future.

### **Saskatchewan – Carey Rigby-Wilcox**

Carey Rigby-Wilcox of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, is a literacy learner, activist and volunteer who is deeply committed to promoting and advancing literacy at the community, provincial and national levels. Her exposure to community literacy work was through READ Saskatoon where she first became involved as a learner in 1993. Since then, Ms. Rigby-Wilcox has taken on many other activities, including literacy tutor training, and she says, "Literacy is my life!" She is currently Vice-President of READ Saskatoon's Board of Directors. As a literacy advocate representing learners, Ms. Rigby-Wilcox is also a board member of the Saskatchewan Literacy Network and the Movement for Canadian Literacy Board of Directors. Carey has devoted many hours to developing the Saskatchewan's Learners' Speakers Bureau and has assisted with organizing Learners' Conferences and facilitating workshops. Her recent assistance promoting a book drive for her MP in Saskatoon resulted in the collection of over 10,000 books. Ms. Rigby-Wilcox is the recipient of the Saskatchewan Literacy Award of Merit (1999) and the Canada Post Award for Achievement in Learning (2001).

### **Betty Martin – Alberta**

Betty Martin, a resident of Alberta, is an outstanding volunteer who has helped adults to improve their literacy skills. For the past five years, she has volunteered with Project Adult Literacy Society (PALS) in Edmonton. Over the past year, Ms. Martin has logged nearly one thousand volunteer hours, working regularly to help numerous students. She spends two hours with each student for a total of eight hours a week, well above the two hours per week commitment that PALS asks of its volunteers. Betty's enthusiasm, constant good cheer, wonderful sense of humour and competence as a tutor enable all of her students to make progress and brighten the atmosphere of the PALS office. One of Ms. Martin's students reports: "My life is now my own with the help of Betty. I can read labels when I shop. I can read my mail. I've become outspoken not shy, and secure instead of insecure."

### **Evelyn Keener – Newfoundland and Labrador**

Evelyn Keener, who resides in Labrador, accepted various teaching positions in Labrador until her retirement in 1999 as a Special Education teacher in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. After retiring, she continued to work with children with special needs and those who were having difficulty in school. In 2002, she began tutoring adults who were interested in attending the Adult Basic Education Level II program at the local college, but who did not meet the entrance requirements. She has been a tutor for learners at various local community organizations and receives referrals from a number of agencies and friends. The amount of time she dedicates to tutoring adults is dictated by the level of commitment of the adults themselves but rarely drops below 25 to 30 hours a month. Ms. Keener says she will always love teaching and finds it a very satisfying and meaningful way to contribute to the community and to learners in particular.

### **Cindy Voudrach – Northwest Territories**

Cindy Voudrach, a resident of the Northwest Territories, is a single mother of three children who enrolled two years ago in an Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE) program at Aurora College in Inuvik. In that short time, she has progressed from the ALBE 120 level (Grades 4 to 6) to the ALBE 150/160 level (Grade 12). She has written Grade 12 departmental exams in English, Math, Social Studies and Physics, and she is now ready for postsecondary studies. Cindy has also grown personally as a result of her studies. When she began her studies, she was shy and unsure of herself. Today, she has the confidence to be the Master of Ceremonies at the Inuvik ALBE completion ceremony. A champion of adult education, her commitment and outstanding dedication to learning has had a strong influence on her family; her niece has returned to school as a result of her encouragement. Ms. Voudrach has also given back by volunteering at a range of community events. Cindy's instructors describe her as "a leader of today and one to watch in the future."

### **Rock Brisson – Yukon**

Rock Brisson, a resident of the Yukon, had a difficult early life in foster homes and orphanages. Despite only functioning at a third-grade level at the age of 13, he was placed in high school classes. He left when alcohol and illegal activities clashed with school, not to return for three decades. Mr. Brisson married and had a family, and became a successful businessman and the owner of Northern Lights Painting and Renovation; all without the ability to read or write. While seeking help for one of his children, Mr. Brisson, wanting to be a role model, asked for help for himself. He is now learning to read in both French and English and to use assistive technology. Mr. Brisson works with tutors through Yukon Learn, Association Franco-Yukonnaise, Yukon Council on Disability and in an Essential Skills program at Yukon College. He is now able to write letters of support for educational programs, write poetry, work on an autobiography and is Yukon's "learner representative" at Ottawa meetings for French learners. At 49, Mr. Brisson says: "It's never too late to learn. There are so many different opportunities to express yourself through reading and writing."

### **Winnie Owingayak -- Nunavut**

Winnie Owingayak, is an elder and resident of Baker Lake, Nunavut. Over the years, Ms. Owingayak has been heard on the local radio speaking Inuktitut and encouraging elders to share their knowledge by having them phone in and tell their stories. She has encouraged Inuit to collect Inuktitut words, explain the meanings of songs and legends, and record interviews. In her community of Baker Lake, Ms. Owingayak has energetically organized dances and Inuit cultural games, held discussions with high school and elementary school children and passed on the rich Inuit culture. She was instrumental in the development of Tuhaalruuqtut Ancestral Sounds, a Baker Lake Inuit Heritage Centre exhibit containing Inuit songs, legends and photographs that can be found on the Virtual Museum of Canada, Community Memories website. As an inspiration to young, old, and everyone in-between, Ms. Owingayak has played a key role in preserving the Inuktitut language and the culture of Nunavummiut.

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