



Council of the Federation Announces Literacy Award Winners for 2009

REGINA, August 5, 2009 – Canada’s Premiers today announced the recipients of the fifth annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award. Presented in each province and territory, the award celebrates outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

The recipients of the 2009 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

Ken Steele – Alberta
Laurie Gould – British Columbia
Donald Richard – Manitoba
Karon Campbell Connors – New Brunswick
Claudia Dubé – New Brunswick
Marc Glassman – Newfoundland and Labrador
Annie Whane – Northwest Territories
Blaise Sullivan – Nova Scotia
Quluq Catherine Pilakapsi – Nunavut
Jean Doull – Ontario
Workplace Learning PEI Inc. – Prince Edward Island
Francine Guindon – Québec
Margaret Lipp – Saskatchewan
Emma Sam – Yukon

“On behalf of all Premiers, I congratulate these recipients of the fifth annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award,” said Brad Wall, Premier of Saskatchewan and incoming Chair of the Council of the Federation. “Through their tireless efforts and devotion to literacy, these individuals and organizations play an important role in improving the lives of people in their communities and throughout the country.”

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 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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Premiers created this award in 2004 to recognize the importance of literacy as an essential building block for a vibrant society and economy.

The Council of the Federation comprises all 13 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.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

2009 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients

Ken Steele – Alberta

Mr. Steele left school in grade six and returned to learning in his retirement. In 2005, at the age of 74, he began attending classes at The Learning Centre Literacy Association in Edmonton. He is now a writer of short stories and poetry. As an ambassador for The Learning Centre, he shares his literacy journey with others. He was involved with the Northeast Edmonton Literacy Network, a group of agencies working to create more literacy friendly environments in the community. Mr. Steele's positive attitude, success, openness and humility have increased understanding of the struggles of adults with low literacy. His active encouragement of literacy learners has inspired many.

Laurie Gould – British Columbia

For almost 35 years, Laurie Gould has demonstrated her commitment to literacy work. Soon after joining the Basic Education Department of Vancouver Community College in 1974, Laurie became instrumental in the early design and implementation of adult literacy programming. Since that time, she has served on numerous provincial and pan-Canadian committees related to literacy; designed innovative curriculum and assessment resources; created original reading materials for the adult literacy learner; edited health and government information for plain language; worked directly with scores of adult learners in the classroom and in assessments; and generously shared her vast expertise with colleagues throughout BC and Canada. In her 35th year working in the field, Laurie continues to serve the literacy community with a strong sense of commitment to both literacy learners and practitioners.

Donald Richard – Manitoba

Donald Richard is an adult learner and an inmate at the Winnipeg Remand Centre. Mr. Richard dropped out of school at the age of 15 and although he attempted to return to school several times, events in his life interfered and he stopped attending. He felt that he had missed his opportunity. In July 2008 he joined the John Howard Society Literacy Program that helps inmates in the Remand Centre improve their literacy skills and upgrade their education. He has moved from basic literacy to planning the steps to finish grade 12. Mr. Richard is known as the 'go-to-guy' on his unit for anything related to literacy. In addition to helping other inmates with their homework, he helps the teacher with marking. He is trusted and respected in the institution. Mr. Richard is now using his skills in a project to make the program more accessible to those inmates with especially low literacy skills by rewriting sections of the reading materials and contributing artwork. He is also writing and illustrating an interactive children's book that incorporates camping and counting. To quote Mr. Richard "I have rediscovered a love for reading. I'm learning new ways to describe things and as a result I'm learning new ways to appreciate things."

Karon Campbell Connors – New Brunswick

Since 2005, Karon Campbell Connors has been an adult literacy teacher at Moncton Headstart's community-based adult literacy program where most learners are single parents working toward General Educational Development (GED) Certificates. Karon's gift of building relationships has made her a magnet for learners wanting to increase their academic credentials. She says that the greatest difference she can make for learners is to instill in them a belief in their own success. She leads a learner-centred program, and assists learners in accessing the social services they need in order to be successful learners. This past year, Karon has been part of a provincial academic curriculum committee set up to standardize program intake and exit assessment tools, curricula and resources. She has also served as a mentor to a new adult literacy teacher. Karon finds the work she does to help others a source of great satisfaction.

Claudia Dubé – New Brunswick

Claudia Dubé deserves our gratitude for her commitment and her exceptional dedication to the cause of adult literacy. She started as a remedial instructor for the Community College Network and then became involved in literacy. For several years, she pursued her training while still working. In 1999, she obtained her certificate in Adult Literacy and in 2008, qualified for teaching Essential Skills for the Labour Market. In 2006 she received an Award for Excellence from Bernard Lord, then Premier of New Brunswick, for her exceptional commitment. Beyond these honours, Claudia Dubé is only interested in seeing her learners succeed.

Marc Glassman – Newfoundland and Labrador

For the past 32 years, Dr. Marc Glassman's knowledge, passion and commitment to the literacy movement in Newfoundland and Labrador has been far-reaching and significant. Dr. Glassman is a member of the Faculty of Education at Memorial University and instructs in the area of literacy education. He has undertaken a number of special initiatives in the community that have helped a diverse group of children, parents, and low-literacy adults overcome the barriers to language and literacy development. He has inspired and challenged his undergraduate and graduate students, and he has provided professional support to teachers in the K-12 classroom and to instructors and volunteers in adult literacy programs throughout the province. He has been a pioneer in the area of applying technology to the development of literacy in Newfoundland and Labrador and continues to be innovative and creative in advocating for literacy.

Annie Whane – Northwest Territories

Annie Whane displays a high degree of integrity, creativity and ambition as a student with the Literacy Outreach Centre in Yellowknife. Annie has taken on the role of an aspiring author by regularly writing poems, short stories and song lyrics. Annie takes inspiration from her own life as a young adult and shares her journey in humorous and touching ways with her peers. She is cheerful, friendly, vibrant and helpful towards her classmates, enhancing the milieu of the classroom. Annie is involved with community support agencies where she assists others in the community who are experiencing similar hurdles. She never fails to offer encouragement and support to those around her both in the classroom and in the community.

Blaise Sullivan – Nova Scotia

Blaise Sullivan is a successful business man who preferred to keep his struggles with literacy secret. In January 2006 when he walked through the doors of his local community literacy organization, Antigonish County Adult Learning Association (ACALA), he asked that his attendance be kept confidential. Mr. Sullivan always struggled at school. Years later he learned he had dyslexia. After leaving school at the age of 15 to work, he was often under qualified for jobs: "There were many jobs I would have liked to apply for but for the fear I would have to read something...It made me feel stupid and embarrassed." The past coordinator for ACALA remembers Blaise starting out with sessions once a week, but then coming three times a week, his one-on-one sessions becoming adult learning group programs, and privacy turning into Blaise championing the literacy cause through public presentations. He is also working diligently towards completing his GED.

Quluq Catherine Pilakapsi – Nunavut

Quluq is a respected Elder and educator. Her creative approaches to literacy and language development are recognized across Nunavut. She has created numerous resources that are imaginative and fun for children and adults. The Storysacks program, for example, combines doll-making with storytelling as a means to share literacy. Quluq has inspired people to create their own Storysacks, supporting their efforts to encourage Inuit language and literacy development. Quluq took the lead conducting community-based research to gain a better understanding of the links between language acquisition and literacy skill development. She incorporated this research into workshops. As one participant said, "... Quluq being there means a lot to me. I can speak to her in Inuktitut. She advises me and I can call her up."

Jean Doull – Ontario

Ms. Doull has been an active and dedicated member of the literacy and adult learning community in the Sarnia Lambton area for more than 25 years. Most recently, Ms. Doull retired from the post of Executive Director of Organization for Literacy, after having contributed close to 20 years to the organization, with half that time spent at the helm. Ms. Doull began her career at the grassroots level, when programming for adults did not exist in Sarnia Lambton. She spent countless hours drafting proposals and battled fiercely to bring funding and awareness to marginalized and isolated people in need of language and basic skills training. She paved the way for improved access and visibility for clients in the penal system and those living in remote communities, and to this day, has never relented in making contributions toward achieving literacy goals.

Workplace Learning PEI Inc – Prince Edward Island

Workplace Learning PEI Inc. (WLPEI Inc.) is a not for profit partnership of business, labour, government and community that ensures learning opportunities for the workforce and workplace. Changes in the workplace affect the way work is done and the skills required to do that work. To meet those demands employers and employees need opportunities to learn. Founded in 1997 as Workplace Education PEI and incorporated in 2007 as Workplace Learning PEI Inc., hundreds of employed Islanders have enjoyed great success in learning programs facilitated by the dedicated staff of WLPEI Inc., who are experts in the field of literacy and essential skills. Numerous Island businesses that have received assistance from WLPEI Inc. have been recognized over the years by the Conference Board of Canada for excellence in workplace education programs.

Francine Guindon – Québec

Francine Guindon was born into a family of 16 children in Hull, Québec. Having had three children at the age of 19, she dropped out of school and was forced to work unstable jobs. As her children started going to school, she found it more and more difficult to help them with their school work. As she says: “they tried to pass their knowledge on to me. It was the world upside down!” At the age of 36, she enrolled in Ottawa’s Basic Education Centre and learned again to read and write while regaining her self-confidence. Today, she is a member of the Board of Directors at the Centre where she represents the adult learners. “I try and motivate them and invite them to share their worries, their needs and their dreams.”

Margaret Lipp – Saskatchewan

Dr. Margaret Lipp is an accomplished Saskatchewan educator, administrator and literacy advocate, whose career in education and literacy has spanned nearly four decades. Acknowledged for her visionary leadership in curriculum innovation, Dr. Lipp has made a positive and enduring contribution to the advancement of school based literacy education in Saskatchewan. In 2005, Dr. Lipp was appointed Literacy Commissioner, and under her leadership, new initiatives to expand family, workplace and community literacy initiatives were introduced. Dr. Lipp has served on provincial and national organizations and contributed as a presenter and participant at provincial, national and international education conferences and Pan-Canadian literacy meetings and forums. Currently retired, Dr. Lipp maintains her involvement in literacy through her continuing role as a board member of the National Adult Literacy Database.

Emma Sam – Yukon

Emma Sam was born to David and Rosie Johnston of the Teslin Tlingit First Nation and is of the Ishkhitaan clan whose crest is the Frog. Her Tlingit name is Wakhsâni. Emma’s first language is Tlingit. “I was born with it,” she says. When she went away to school in Carcross, she made a promise to herself that she would not forget her own language as she learned to speak, read and write in English. Over the years, Emma has taken on the role of mentor to many students. One of her current students recently completed a master’s degree in education and Emma is proud to have assisted her with her thesis. As a grandmother, Emma continues to practise her cultural traditions and pass them on to her children and grandchildren. “I have fun teaching the language,” says Emma, adding that she continues today to “think in Tlingit”.