

This Week in Literacy

October 3rd, 2008

The NWT Literacy Council is a non-profit, non-government agency dedicated to supporting the development of literacy in all official languages of the NWT.

In this E-News

- [Community Events and Information](#)
- [In the News](#)
- [Resources and Websites](#)

Literacy Dates

National Family Literacy Day	January 27, 2009
Aboriginal Languages Month	March 2009
International Children's Book Day	April 2, 2009
World Book Day	April 23, 2009

Community Events and Information

NWT Literacy Week

We hope that everyone had a great NWT Literacy Week! Please send us photos and information about how you celebrated NWT Literacy Week in your community. We will report on NWT Literacy Week activities in our next newsletter.

Ministerial Literacy Awards

Minister Jackson Lafferty presented the Ministerial Literacy Awards to an outstanding educator and literacy organization this week. The Council of Federation Literacy Award was supposed to be presented at the same ceremony, but the winner Mardy Voudrach from Tuktoyaktuk was unable to attend due to the weather conditions in her community. We would like to congratulate the recipients of these awards.

- **Literacy Organization: Hay River Literacy Society**

The Hay River Literacy Society is an organization that supports literacy in the town of Hay River. It is run entirely by volunteers. The society has been running for three years now. The society is dedicated to developing innovative programs that meet the needs of people in the community of Hay River. The NWT Literacy Council would like to congratulate the Hay River Literacy Society for their strong leadership role in promoting literacy in their community.

- **Educator: Hilary Gemmell – Fort Smith**

Hilary is a long time teacher and northerner. She has worked very hard for adult literacy in the NWT, and even in retirement continues to volunteer, teaching learners with disabilities. The NWT Literacy Council congratulates Hilary for being a strong voice for adult literacy.

- **NWT Council of Federation Literacy Award – Mardy Voudrach**

As an infant Mardy was stricken with meningitis. The disease impeded Mardy's ability to learn. Despite her tragic start in life, Mardy has demonstrated an exemplary level of courage and determination in advancing her literacy skills. Prior to enrolling in a one-on-one tutoring program in Tuktoyaktuk, she could not read or write, and spoke very little. In the past year, she has worked very hard on her literacy studies. Mardy can now speak clearly, do basic math, read and write texts, use a computer, and operate a digital camera. Since improving her literacy skills, Mardy has started her first job. Her employer describes her as a "great asset to our workplace," and says she has a very positive work ethic. The NWT Literacy Council congratulates Mardy Voudrach for her determination and dedication to learning.

2008 Fall Practitioner Training Conference

The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition is hosting a [training conference](#) November 20 – 23, 2008. This year's training sessions, running in three concurrent streams, offer a wide and diverse variety of topics. Read the attached document for more information on this conference.

In the News

Not black and white

Donna Nebenzahl, Special to The Gazette, Montreal Gazette, Published: Tuesday, September 23

The word literacy carries a lot of baggage, says the head of the Centre for Literacy of Quebec, because in the popular mind it's about being illiterate, that is, unable to read.

That's not what literacy means in the research world, says Linda Shohet, who has headed the centre at its Dawson College location since it was started in 1989. An English teacher until recently, she launched the centre as an offshoot of a Dawson project called Literacy Across the Curriculum. "What we actually have," she says, "are large numbers of people with low levels of literacy." This shows up in a number of ways, Shohet says. The literacy gap becomes evident in areas like technology, when jobs are redefined and workers lack the skills to understand new technologies. It shows up among the elderly, who have trouble deciphering information, and among those with learning difficulties. It shows up among the immigrant or refugee population who didn't have educational opportunities to begin with, and among hospital patients unable to decipher medical information. To read more go to <http://www.canada.com/montrealgazette/Story.html?id=9c0b21d6-ffc9-4102-83d2-258bd467c3fc&k=17148>.

Some key benefits of investing in adult literacy from NALD

At work:

- Greater employment opportunities – Literacy and numeracy skills improve the chances of individuals finding work and attaining promotions on the job.
- Increased workplace safety – Understanding safety regulations and procedures leads to fewer injuries. This, in turn, leads to reduced insurance costs and employee downtime.
- Enhanced workplace efficiencies – Greater understanding of job demands and procedures aids communication and enhances workplace efficiencies.
- Increased competitiveness – Enhanced literacy skills prepare employees for managerial and technological changes in the workplace, and position the company for greater competitiveness.
- More vibrant and engaged workforce – When literacy skills are increased, employees are better suited to meet the demands of their job, assume greater responsibilities, and seek promotion. An organization active in offering education and employment opportunities is more likely to retain its employees.
- Bolstered Canadian economy – A more literate workforce boosts productivity. The C.D. Howe Institute reports that a 1 per cent rise in a country's literacy level, relative to the international average, is associated with an eventual 2.5 per cent rise in labour productivity and a 1.5 per cent rise in the per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) [Public Investment in Skills: Are Canadian Governments Doing Enough?, Serge Coulombe and Jean-François Tremblay, C.D. Howe Institute, 2005]

At home:

- Better-prepared youth for work and life – Increased literacy levels among parents mean more reading and literacy-building activities in the home, preparing their children for success in school and encouraging a lifelong love of reading and learning.
- Enhanced family environment – Establishing a culture of learning encourages an exchange of ideas, enriches family relationships, and bolsters confidence and independent thinking.
- Improved health – Increased literacy provides the ability to access, understand, and act on health information.

In the community:

- Improved healthcare system – An understanding of medical dosages means fewer mistakes and interventions. Greater individual autonomy, including among seniors, means less reliance on health-givers. As fewer resources are needed, the cost of the healthcare system is likely to decline.
- Reduction of poverty – Literacy proficiency improves chances of employment, builds self-confidence and enables discussions and actions that affect the welfare of individuals and their community.
- Increased democratic participation – Greater understanding of social and political issues means a more informed opinion at the ballot box, better understanding of issues, and greater confidence in discussing them. This, in turn, encourages leadership and engagement in public debate. [www.abc-canada.org/en/adult_literacy/myths]

Resources and Websites

Learning Literacy in Canada: Evidence from the International Survey of Reading Skills

S. Grenier, S. Jones, J. Strucker, T.S. Murray, G. Gervais and S. Brink, January 2008

The evidence presented in this initial report from the International Survey of Reading Skills, a study designed jointly with institutions in the United States, fills several gaps in what is known about the learning needs of Canadians with low literacy skills — a basis for judging whether, where and how much public investment is warranted, and for educators to develop more effective remedial programs. To download this document go to <http://www.nald.ca/library/research/stats/llc/cover.htm>.

Welcome to the Frontier College New Readers Bookstore!

The Frontier College New Readers Bookstore has a wide variety of resources for tutors, trainers, teachers and learners. Their booklist contains titles of interest to low literacy readers, titles that support students' writing skills, dictionaries and reference books for students, Clear and Plain Language Writing tools, resources for volunteer tutors and literacy instructors, and volunteer management resources. Their goal is to be responsive to the needs expressed by literacy practitioners in a wide variety of literacy programs so they welcome your feedback on materials you would like to see or suggestions you may have. All of the profit generated by the **Frontier College New Readers Bookstore** will be reinvested in their literacy programs across the country. For inquiries, please call 1-800-555-6523, ext. 305 or email us at <mailto:mnewreaders@frontiercollege.ca>.

Inuit Myths <http://www.inuitmyths.com>

Storytelling traditions around the world are passed from generation to generation, linking people to their cultures and ancestors. Traditional stories are an important aspect of Inuit culture. Currently in the Arctic, however, many of these stories are not being passed on and are at risk of being lost. The Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA) works hard to promote and protect Inuit culture. QIA has developed Inuitmyths.com, to provide a resource for Nunavummiut and people from around the world who want to learn more about the Inuit storytelling tradition. Inuitmyths.com is QIA's ongoing initiative to collect traditional stories and make them available to the public. If you have stories you would like to share or if you know someone who does, please contact them at <mailto:minfo@inuitmyths.com>.

The Northern Edge Online Newspaper – Issue #6

The NWT Literacy Council has just launched the new *Northern Edge – Issue #6*. You can view this online newspaper at <http://www.nwt.literacy.ca/resources/northernedge/edge.htm> . This edition has:

- Northern Biographies
- Climate Change
- Family Literacy
- Finding Work
- Learner Stories

We have also developed a study guide to go with this issue. You can download a copy from our website at www.nwt.literacy.ca or call or email us for a hard copy.

Learning Edge Online Newspaper – Issue #10, Workplace Apprenticeship

The Learning Edge is an online newspaper developed by Alpha Plus. They have just launched their latest issue called Workplace Apprenticeship. It includes:

- An introduction to apprenticeship
- Hear from several apprentices about their experiences
- Interview with Dean of the School of Transportation and Building Trades, Algonquin College
- First 5 steps to apprenticeship
- Key questions to ask when starting an apprenticeship

The following link will take you directly to issue 10: <http://www.thewclc.ca/edge/issue10/index.html>.

The following link will show all the issues of the Learning Edge: <http://www.thewclc.ca/edge>.