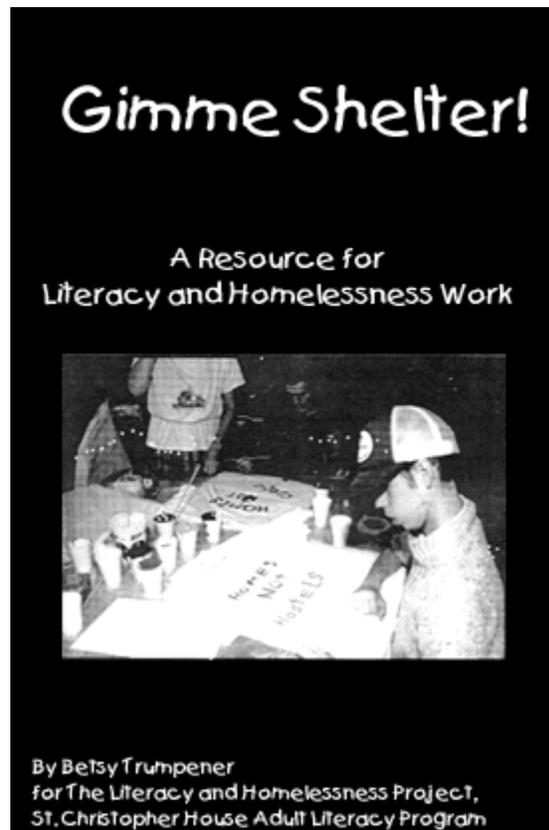


Gimme Shelter!

A Resource for Literacy and Homelessness Work



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Gimme Shelter! A Resource for Literacy and Homelessness Work by Betsy Trumpener for The Literacy and Homelessness Project St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 248 Ossington Avenue Toronto, Ontario Canada M6J 3A2 (416) 539-9000

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Layout and Design: Janine Luce, Nine Designs

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I hope that *Gimme Shelter!* will be both a useful resource and a starting point for critical discussion about literacy and homelessness. This book is a first step. I wish to thank everyone I learned from, and those who took this first step with me:

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Who is this book for?

This book is for you if you are interested in literacy or in the issues of homelessness and poverty.

This book was written mostly for people who do, or would like to do, literacy and community development work with people who are transient or homeless. This includes staff, volunteers, and participants in:

- drop-ins, shelters, and emergency hostels
- community literacy programs
- community health centers
- anti-poverty initiatives.

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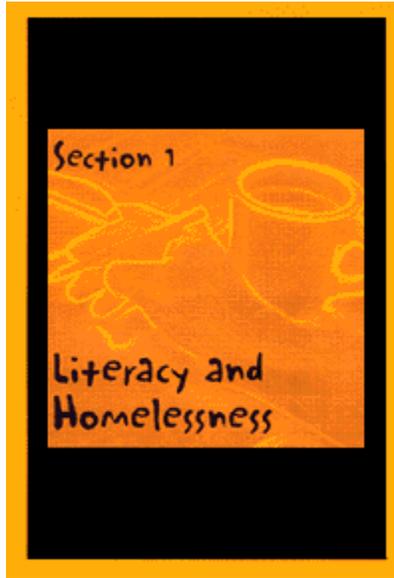
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Section 1

Literacy and Homelessness



The Literacy and Homelessness Project

The Literacy and Homelessness Project has worked since 1994 to make literacy accessible and relevant to people who are transient, socially isolated, homeless, and underhoused in Toronto. ¹

In developing literacy and homelessness practice in Toronto, the Project was able to draw on the experiences of innovative programs like Beat the Street, Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center (PARC), Street Haven Literacy, the First Nations Adult Education Project, Graffiti Jeunesse, and the Meeting Place's Black Homeless Initiatives Project. Staff from these programs formed the Project's advisory group and provided training and expertise.

The Project's work has included:

- Facilitating literacy in a drop-in for homeless adults through development of a learning environment provision of tutoring, a writing group, and newsletter production; and training of drop-in staff.
- Training drop-in, shelter, and community agency staff through literacy workshops and mentoring.
- Developing a network and forums in which literacy and drop-in/shelter workers exchanged expertise, information, and support.
- Researching and documenting different ways of doing literacy work with people who are homeless
- Producing and distributing a clear language map of drop-in learning locations in Toronto
- Working to improve access to community literacy programs for homeless adults

What is Literacy?

Critical Literacy

"Literacy from a critical perspective means that programs assist learners to:

- improve their basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy, communication, life skills, abstract thinking and general knowledge
- increase their critical abilities;
- build self confidence;
- increase their understanding of self;
- participate more fully in society;
- create language and culture;
- enhance the quality of their own lives; and
- work towards empowerment and social change."²

What is literacy work with people who are homeless?

- Teaching a shelter resident to read housing ads or the shelter's rules.
- Writing a letter to a welfare worker as it's dictated to you by a client.
- Working with a group of homeless men fighting a proposed vagrancy law.
- Showing a drop-in member how to use the computer so that he can write a resume.
- Posting newspaper articles about changes to welfare rates or housing policy.
- Suggesting places that a street poet might send her work for publication.
- Rewriting an information sheet about emergency shelters to make it easier to read.
- Assisting a woman who is transient to sign up for a high school correspondence course.
- Encouraging members of a community kitchen group to write out recipes for each other.
- Calling a meeting to paint placards for a homeless deaths' memorial.

Although there are hundreds of different ways of approaching and defining literacy, the most effective ways respect the adult learners' life experience and abilities. Adults are usually able to decide for themselves how and what they will learn, and this is no less true for adults living on the street. Literacy initiatives that help people to meet their needs and achieve their goals are likely to be relevant and effective.

Your program's approach to literacy will probably evolve based both on the needs of the people you work with and the staff's political beliefs about education and society. In a 1996 training workshop about literacy and homelessness, staff from drop-ins, shelters, community health centers, and social agencies in Toronto considered their beliefs about literacy:

What is literacy?

- Literacy is what society defines as literacy.
- It's being able to understand what you have read - comprehension.
- The ability to understand your own context.
- There are lots of different literacies - for example, we can't understand legal jargon.
- There is a higher standard of literacy now, due to the economy. Instead of just grade 8, you now need grade 12 to get work, and computers are now part of the standard of literacy
- People who aren't literate can't make sense of their own reality. (Some people disagreed)
- There may be different standards/expectations of literacy within one's own culture, community, or even for different genders.
- Everyone needs basic skills so that they don't get stiffed and they can get a job.
- What we teach in literacy depends on the needs of the individual. It must be relevant and usable.
- Literacy should also be the skills to act on and shape society and culture, not just conforming to the new era. Literacy has its roots in social change.
- Literacy should not just be about survival skills.

Renaming Literacy

In Canada, adults who admit they have literacy problems still risk being labelled "slow" or "stupid". This may be especially true on the street. Staff at many Toronto emergency shelters and rooming houses agreed that even hearing the word "literacy" can turn away potential learners. A worker at Seaton House, Metro Toronto's largest men's hostel, explained that "for men who have a long history of institutionalization or incarceration, image is extremely important, and illiteracy is still highly stigmatized." Research on literacy and homelessness in the United States confirms this, noting that potential learners feared ridicule and embarrassment, and stressed the need for privacy³, especially in residential institutions like hostels. Indeed, many drop-ins and shelters have abandoned the literacy label and renamed learning opportunities as adult education courses, computer classes, writing groups, and learning circles. There are, however, examples of successful groups in drop-ins that bluntly state their literacy orientation⁴

The realities of life on the street and the challenge of working on a stigmatized issue can encourage us to think about learning and literacy work in new ways. In challenging more traditional ways of teaching literacy, our work can become an "incubator for fresh ideas about literacy education."⁵ One "fresh idea" is to integrate reading and writing into activities, programs, and projects that are already established in a drop-in or shelter. Section III provides models and examples of this integrated approach.

Defining Literacy at The Meeting Place Drop-In

The Meeting Place Drop-In is a daytime drop-in centre for homeless and socially isolated adults in southwest Toronto, operated by St. Christopher House using a community development model.⁶ Literacy work in the Drop-In began when St. Christopher House's Adult Literacy Program (SCHALP) acknowledged that it wasn't able to meet the learning needs of drop-in members, or match literacy tutors with people who were transient. By placing a literacy worker in the Drop-In, they sought to develop new and responsive models of literacy work.

Particular beliefs about literacy have guided the development of literacy work at the Meeting Place. These beliefs are influenced by adult education theory, the traditions of community based literacy and anti-poverty work, and progressive health promotion strategies. These beliefs have influenced the Literacy and Homelessness Project's work and the development of this resource book.

Literacy work supports a learning environment in drop-ins or shelters.

It seeks to integrate literacy work into ongoing program activities and to support a learning environment in the place as a whole. Learning takes place in different ways through different groups and activities. Through information displays, books, games, activities, posters, and the set up of physical space, learning is celebrated and valued as a valid program activity.

Literacy work is inclusive and participatory.

Learning groups are multi-level. They include all interested participants, both the educated and those with low literacy skills, native English speakers and people who speak English as a Second Language. People are encouraged to participate in whatever way they are able.

Literacy work values and builds on participants' knowledge, experience, and voice.

Participants' experience of homelessness and poverty is validated in the learning process. Participants are encouraged to write about, define, and analyze their reality through activities like the writing group and newsletter production.

Literacy work is critical and empowering.

Group work encourages identification, analysis, and action on common problems, including homelessness. It does not blame individuals for homelessness or illiteracy.

Literacy work is relevant

"The nature of members' lives is such that many devote considerable time and energy to simply meeting their basic survival needs. They are consequently unmotivated to participate in programs which appear to have few, if any, immediate and tangible benefits."⁷

Literacy work is flexible.

It can respond to people's immediate needs and facilitate meaningful short-term participation by individuals. It takes place at times and in places that are comfortable and familiar.

Literacy work is equitable and accessible.

It seeks to make literacy and learning opportunities available to all. It works to address barriers to learning, which include sexism and racism in the program.

What is Homelessness?

This Project defines homelessness broadly to reflect the reality of urban homelessness in Canada. It includes people who are homeless, transient, staying in emergency shelters, or underhoused in substandard apartments and rooming houses. People who are homeless also tend to be living in extreme poverty and excluded from opportunities for employment, education, recreation, and social contact.

Homelessness in Toronto

Over the last two years, homelessness has increased dramatically in Toronto. This is most apparent in the winter months. According to The Toronto Star, 4,400 people stayed in Metro Toronto's emergency shelters each night of December, 1995. This figure does not include those who stayed in church-sponsored basement shelters, those who slept outside, or those who stayed with friends. In 1995, the Yonge Street Mission's executive director stated that there were up to 10,000 street youth in Metro. In the last three years, there has been a 53% increase in the number of families seeking emergency shelter, and a marked increase in the number of children, two parent families, and single women who were homeless. More people were staying in the hostel system longer. ⁸On any given day in 1996, 1 200 Toronto children were housed in temporary quarters, including a family shelter/motel strip in Scarborough. ⁹

The human cost is staggering, and so are the financial costs of emergency, band-aid responses. Hostel accommodations in Toronto averaged a cost of \$1 200 a month per person ¹⁰, almost double the cost of a one bedroom apartment.

Homelessness is created and supported by the recession, the absence of affordable housing, insufficient supportive housing, high unemployment, and cuts to welfare rates. While addictions and mental health issues affect many people living on the street, it is important to look first at the structural causes of homelessness. In order to work effectively with people who are homeless, it is important to be aware of and work to change the root causes of homelessness. Effective literacy and homelessness work is integrated into the struggle to end homelessness and poverty.

Literacy and Homelessness: What's the Connection?

What does it mean to do literacy work with homeless adults? What does it say about the nature and causes of homelessness? Does our work imply that literacy will empower people to transcend homelessness? "Two critical assumptions (of this work) were that homeless adults needed such training and that adult educators would know how to provide it..."¹¹ An American Government report about Adult Education for the Homeless programs was entitled "Learning to Hope." Are literacy facilitators in drop-ins and shelters expected to be magicians of hope?

Illiteracy and Poverty

There are documented links between poverty and illiteracy¹³, with research indicating both that "circumstances that created people's poverty were much the same as those preventing them from acquiring an education" and that "enrolling in literacy programs did not mean an end to poverty."¹⁴ While acknowledging that literacy cannot create jobs, research has shown that "literacy is a cause and consequence of employment success, and can make an individual more employable when there are jobs."¹⁵

Illiteracy and Homelessness

There is less decisive research linking illiteracy and homelessness. Anecdotal evidence from one Canadian study included reports from literacy workers that "many learners are periodically homeless or live in transient shelters. In Vancouver, many (learners) live in cheap downtown hotels... While most poor people have problems with housing, the undereducated are particularly vulnerable because of all the complex information tenants must decipher."¹⁶ One American educator estimated that "60% of the homeless lack the basic skills necessary to become self-sufficient or benefit from job training."¹⁷

Most American research, however, contradicts these claims. In the United States, "educators had assumed that homeless adults would be eager to participate in classes and would have time to accomplish educational objectives. The realities were different. Many of the homeless adults were high school graduates, and in some cases, college graduates."¹⁸ Indeed, "very little of the sociological and psychological literature about homeless adults refers to illiteracy as a significant variable in the understanding of homelessness."¹⁹ According to one American study, 20% of all homeless adults have more than 13 years of education.²⁰

Interestingly enough, in the American experience, it was primarily homeless adults with some high school education who took advantage of further learning opportunities. Three quarters of homeless adults who chose to participate in the U.S.'s Adult Education for the Homeless classes already had nine to twelve years of schooling, and a further 8% had more than thirteen years of education! Less than one fifth of the participants had only eight years of schooling or less²¹.

In my work in a Toronto drop-in, the homeless adults who participated in the Literacy and Homelessness Project activities tended to have higher levels of education and better literacy skills than their counterparts in community literacy programs. In a Project survey, drop-in members were asked to report their educational level. Responses ranged from grade three to college completion, with an average of grade 9. It must be remembered that the stigma of illiteracy may have discouraged some basic level members from participating in the Literacy Project or disclosing their true educational level in the survey.

Homelessness and Poverty

Understanding the primacy of poverty in the lives of the people who are homeless is key to offering literacy opportunities that are relevant. One American study indicated that "when given a chance to describe their own needs, people are more likely to stress first their economic problems"²² rather than education. A needs assessment of one group of homeless women indicated that finding a home was their first priority, and that gaining literacy skills was not even mentioned.²³

Our own experience also suggests the inadequacy of an approach that focuses on education as the single solution to economic problems. Most literacy programs are well aware of their learners' struggles to find and keep housing and jobs. Many learners are hungry when they come to literacy programs, affecting their ability to learn. Still, as literacy programs struggle to survive in an atmosphere of cutbacks, they often have to justify their existence by stressing outcomes and speaking in the language of the marketplace. One of the few analytical Canadian articles about literacy and homelessness notes the irony of the coexistence of literacy for empowerment and literacy for global competitiveness within the same literacy program. The article lauds Frontier College, which works to provide accessible learning opportunities "whenever and wherever people congregate." Yet it points out that Beat the Street, - a pioneering literacy program for marginalized street youth - and The Workplace Literacy program, which promotes itself on the grounds of maintaining economic competitiveness, coexist within Frontier College. The article identifies this dichotomy as "clear pointer to current trends in literacy work in industrialized countries."²⁴

Some theorists go so far as to argue that "rather than enfranchising people... (literacy) is ulterior and uniquely devoted to Western economic ends... (it) uses literacy and literacy standards to maintain privilege and parcel disadvantage."²⁵

Whether we believe these findings or take them with a grain of salt, they do challenge us to consider why and how we want to do literacy work with people who are homeless. What are their needs and desires? How does improving their literacy skills relate to their needs and desires?

Literacy skills in themselves will not necessarily end poverty or ensure that people are housed. Literacy is, however, a tool that people can choose to use for personal and social empowerment.

A Brief History of Literacy and Homelessness Work

In Toronto

In 1995, there were at least ten drop-ins, shelters, literacy programs, and institutions in Toronto doing some form of literacy and homelessness work. Although some programs informally shared advice and support, it is fair to say that most of them developed independently and in isolation from each other. The immediate demands of working in a drop-in or shelter, insufficient funding, and a focus on work with a particular group or neighborhood all worked to perpetuate this isolation. As a result, homeless learners had a low profile in the literacy community, and a wealth of experience was left untapped.

In 1995, St. Christopher House's Literacy and Homelessness Project received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat to build a network of literacy and homelessness providers in Toronto. Six experienced providers formed the Project's advisory committee and acted as a work group.²⁶ At the end of 1996, members of the Project's advisory committee formed the Toronto Street Education Coalition. They plan to share information, improve their practice, and advocate for educational access for people who are homeless.

A brief description of Toronto's main literacy and homelessness programs follows. For Program flyers and contact information please refer to the Resources and Materials Section

Beat the Street, a Frontier College literacy program, was started in 1985 by two men who were Frontier College learners. Their mandate, unique at the time, was to reach out to street youth in downtown Toronto and provide opportunities for literacy learning right on the street. Since then, Beat the Street has grown and changed. Beat the Street's traditional means of outreach was the street walk, but connections with other downtown youth agencies now make outreach easier. Beat the Street provides on-site tutoring using both peer and community volunteers; small group learning including a writing group, an art group, weekly rap session, Women's Group, and Men's group; and a state of the art computer lab. They also provide outreach tutoring at detention centres, group homes, and at a drop-in for youth who work the street. The program's philosophy is that everyone can learn. Increasingly, Beat the Street faces the challenge of integrating youth and adults who are homeless into the same literacy program.

Beat the Street staff have also trained volunteers for literacy and homelessness initiatives elsewhere in Canada, and assisted in the development of other street youth literacy programs.

Although largely funded by government, Beat the Street has also attracted a large corporate donor. The donor developed their computer lab and now supports other literacy programming.

Street Haven at the Crossroads is a 24-hour, emergency, short-term shelter and drop-in centre for women in downtown Toronto. The Haven provides shelter, food, clothing, counselling, programs and activities. The literacy program at Street Haven started in the late 1980's. When new residents were admitted to the Haven, they had to read and sign an HIV/AIDS disclaimer. Some of the women were unable to read the disclaimer.

So Street Haven submitted a proposal to the provincial Ministry of Education and Training to start an on-site literacy program. They were refused! The Haven launched a pilot project anyway using their own funds. The program ran two days a week. There was a great response from the women in the house. The next year, Street Haven again applied for funding and this time was successful. The program has expanded over the years with help from small Ministry funding increases, private donations of money and materials, and especially through the work of volunteers. The program keeps growing despite the threat of cuts from the provincial government. The program offers two writing circles, a computer class, a math class, and individual tutoring. The Street Haven Literacy Program began as, and continues to be, a place for women to learn on their terms, when they are ready.

The Adult Basic Education Unit (ABEU) of the Toronto Board of Education has been a pioneer in establishing literacy classes out in the community. The ABEU funds literacy classes in places like The Good Shepherd Refuge, an emergency shelter, Queen Street Mental Health Centre, and the First Nations Adult Education Project (FNAEP), which began as a pilot project and became established in 1995. The First Nations Project trains Native literacy instructors and offers literacy in a safe, supportive, and culturally appropriate environment. The Project provides assessment, tutoring, small group learning, and culturally-based learning circles in places like Anduhyan, a shelter for Native women, Native Women's Resource Centre, and Sistering, a women's drop-in. The Project's goal is to develop culturally appropriate models that work for Native learners.

Parkdale Activity and Recreation Centre (PARC) is a day program that provides community support for psychiatric consumer-survivors, many of whom are homeless. Located in west Toronto, PARC operates in a non-clinical way, with members taking part in running the Centre. PARC provides support, laundry, a coffee shop, and many small group activities. One activity is the long standing writing group. PARC's literacy group is a more recent initiative, begun when it was evident that more basic level members could not function in the writing group. The literacy group is facilitated by a drop-in worker, who has training as a volunteer literacy tutor. In the past, staff from the local community literacy program provided support to the group facilitator. At first, the literacy group was held during drop-in hours, but there were too many interruptions, too much noise, and no privacy. Now the literacy group meets after the drop-in hours, with food and cigarettes provided. PARC receives no special funding for the group.

Graffiti - Jeunesse, a Popular Literacy program for Francophone street youth, was launched in 1991. Beat the Street had approached the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) for money to start a literacy program for Francophone youth.

NLS agreed that there was a need, but wanted to establish a separate, Francophone-run program. Originally, Graffiti's office was located atop Beat the Street's office on Shuter Street, and run by one staff person. According to one source, there was initial resistance to the program both from some sectors of the Francophone community, who did not wish to recognize illiteracy, and from some street agency staff, who held anti-French sentiments.

Graffiti serves diverse set of youth, including Franco-Ontarians, Acadians, and refugees from Francophone Africa. They provide small group literacy and numeracy, and literacy work linked with sewing, employment skills, and computers. One of Graffiti's projects is drop-out prevention programs in Francophone high schools. They also do outreach to Francophones in prisons and half-way houses.

In the United States

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, passed in 1987, was the first American federal legislation to acknowledge that homelessness had become more than a housing problem. The McKinney Act provided federal funding to state initiatives to address long term issues related to homelessness, including adult education. Prior to McKinney, only one American state funded education for the homeless.

The Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) program was funded between 1987 and 1995. In the first year, 550 million was divided among all 50 states to fund education for adults who were homeless. Almost 18,000 people participated in AEH in the first year. Funding for programs was later restricted based on "success" and other evaluative criteria. Still, over the eight year period, more than 150,000 adults participated.

"The majority of initial efforts were carried out within Adult Basic Education programs that had already been prodding literacy education to adults. The steps were (already) in place to carry traditional literacy programs into homeless shelters, soup kitchens, and other homeless-oriented environments."²⁷

From funding reports and official project descriptions, the models of delivery and methodologies appear traditional. Many programs framed their efforts in the patronizing terms of helping people "meet their adult responsibilities" and "making them less likely to become dependent on others".²⁸

A 1990 American National Conference on Adult Education for the Homeless was held in conjunction with the "Life Management Conference." The conference proceedings noted that "in the context of growing homelessness in the US, an estimated 60% of the homeless lack the basic skills necessary to become self-sufficient or benefit from job training." ²⁹

Indeed, the Mayor of New York recently proposed to deny shelter to homeless families who refused to participate in treatment and training programs, citing the "responsibility of the homeless to help themselves."³⁰

This conservative agenda was evident in the official evaluation of the AEH program. While evaluation outcomes did include "achievement of personal goals" and "registering to vote", most stressed traditional goals, such as an increase in grade level, attaining GED or high school, improving in life skill areas, and getting off welfare. Despite the funder's strong focus on standardized and measurable outcomes, local providers insisted that in their experience, "achievement of personal goals and social/psychological gains" were among the leading indicators of success.³¹

Despite the apparent limitations of the AEH program, the provision of substantial funding for adult education for poverty stricken Americans can be seen as a profoundly progressive act. Indeed, this funding became a site of struggle in the 1995 American budget debate, when the Republican-dominated House proposed the complete elimination of funding for AEH. Current McKinney Act funding - and American literacy and homelessness work - is now focussed primarily on the education of homeless children.³²

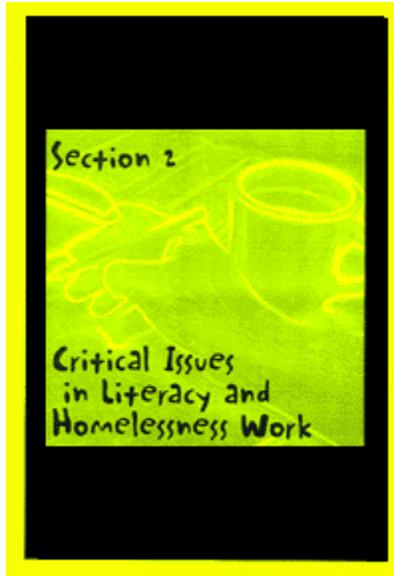
Endnotes: Literacy and Homelessness Work

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21. *Learning to Hope*, 1995.
22. Hunter and Harman (1979) quoted in *Developing Literacy for Homeless Adults*, p. 17.
23. Russell (1988) quoted in *Developing Literacy for Homeless Adults*, p. 17
24. "From the Campsite to the Street" by Jean-Pierre Velis in *Alpha 90. Current Research in Literacy.* Jean-Paul Hauteceur, ed. Quebec: Ministere de l'education du Quebec, and UNESCO Institute for Education, 1990. P. 15 - 29.
25. *The Violence of literacy.* by Elspeth Stuckey. Porstmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook Publishers, 1991.
26. See page 3 for information about the Project's work.
27. *Developing Literacy for Homeless Adults*, p. 16.
28. Ibid. p. 16.
29. *The Challenge in Education: Meeting the Needs of the Homeless Adult Learner and the New York State Life Management Conference. Conference Proceedings.* Albany: SUNY, 1990.
30. The New York Times Index
31. *Learning to Hope: A Study of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program.* Washington, D.C.: Department of Education, 1995. Eric Document 381615.
32. See, for example, *Broken Lives: Denial of Education to Homeless Children.* National Coalition for the Homeless. 1987.

Section 2

Critical Issues in Literacy and Homelessness Work



Critical Issues: Outreach and Access

One of the reasons for doing specific literacy and homelessness work is the difficulty that people who are homeless have in accessing adult education in traditional settings.

While adults living in extreme poverty may be unable or uninterested in committing to a regular class, they may still have literacy needs. One Canadian educator suggested that "field workers frequent soup kitchens to talk to clients and help them with specific short-term literacy tasks, or a walk-in center providing scribe services".¹ This kind of innovative outreach work - and many of the models for doing literacy and homelessness work - challenge traditional ideas about literacy delivery and adult learning. It is important to rethink these traditional models and work to improve access, rather than expecting people who are homeless to "fit in". It's also important to address barriers to access, rather than blaming individuals. As one report noted: "Many of the homeless students involved with the (American) Adult Education for the Homeless programs are seen as beyond the help of traditional educational systems because of their transient living situations, chemical dependency issues and low sense of self worth."²

Debate continues over whether people need to have stable housing before literacy learning can become meaningful, or whether learning can provide the support and tools to establish stability. Janine Luce, the coordinator of Street Haven Literacy, notes that the path to secure housing is usually not line.

With high rents and low vacancy rates, people often move between shelters and the street, from rooming houses to apartments, and back to shelters. Waiting until they are housed could mean waiting years. At Beat the Street, co-coordinator , Violetta Ilkiw reports that once people are securely housed, they are better able to learn and to set goals. I would argue that everyone has the right to learn. Learning opportunities in drop-ins and shelters and comfortable street locations may provide an important starting point. An important recommendation that came from the recent community inquiry into homelessness and street deaths in Toronto was that day shelters and hostels "should receive adequate funding ...to provide for social, recreational, and intellectual stimulation."³

People who have experienced homelessness and agencies working with people who are homeless also have a responsibility to teach adult educators about the learning needs of homeless adults.

An access checklist and discussion tool for community literacy programs that want to work with homeless adults

Y ____ N ____

Our literacy program is aware of programs and services for people who are homeless or marginally housed in our neighborhood, our catchment area, and in our city.

Y ____ N ____

We make personal visits, phone calls, or send our program flyer to agencies that serve people who are homeless in our catchment area, such as shelters, adult drop-ins, Community Occupational Therapists, soup kitchens, Out of the Cold programs, and food banks.

Y ____ N ____

If current learners lose their housing, we would be able to connect or refer them to agencies and workers who could assist them.

Y ____ N ____

We are able to provide bus tickets, snacks, or meals for learners.

Y ____ N ____

Our program has reviewed our rules and unwritten expectations to ensure that we don't exclude certain kinds of learners or potential learners. For example, these practices may be barriers to participation for people who are transient:

the requirement that learners "live" or work in our catchment area or that learners who move should move on to another literacy program

the requirement that learners phone to cancel tutoring sessions

the expectation that learners should commit to regular tutoring for two hours a week

the belief that learners who attend sporadically are "unmotivated", "uncommitted," and "unreliable"

the belief that scarce literacy resources should be devoted to programming for learners who are "motivated" and "committed"

Y ____ N ____

Our program has developed ways to address the barriers mentioned above. If learners are required to phone to cancel sessions, we have a system for relaying messages for learners without a phone. We give out quarters for phone calls, or phone cards so that learners can call in. We help learners to hook up with cheap or free community voice mail services. We accept collect local calls from phone booths.

Y ____ N ____

We don't believe that learners who attend sporadically are unmotivated, and this belief is conveyed through tutor training and learner/tutor support. We believe that learners' schedules and lives are as important as those of volunteer tutors. We ensure that staff are available to tutor learners whose lives are unpredictable or cannot be reliably matched with a volunteer

Y ____ N ____

People from the community can drop in without an appointment to get literacy help

Y ____ N ____

Learners can attend a drop-in group without making a regular commitment

Y ____ N ____

Our program has the ability to meet immediate functional literacy needs on an as-needed, drop-in basis. For example, we could help someone complete a resume or fax their welfare worker.

Y ____ N ____

Our staff, tutors, and learners are welcoming to ALL people from the community. We talk about and try to change our unspoken rules and attitudes about acceptable dress, learning styles, levels of participation, language, and behaviour, which would make some people feel unwelcome in our program.

Y ____ N ____

We have and enforce an anti-discrimination policy.

Y ____ N ____

If our program has rules about language or behaviour, these rules are clearly explained to all program participants. Staff are comfortable in confronting or "calling" people on inappropriate behaviour.

Critical Issues: Power

Poverty and homelessness are isolating, alienating, and disempowering. Drop-ins and shelters can work to empower their residents and clients or they can reinforce powerlessness and dependence. Literacy work, too, can be used to empower people or to encourage passivity.

Empowering literacy work supports homeless adults in determining for themselves how and what they want to learn. It encourages them to continue to think critically and to participate in creating change, both in their lives and in society.

Critical issues: Racism

Many adults with low literacy skills experienced racism in school. Some were sent to Residential Schools, where their language and culture were destroyed. Others were streamed into special education or vocational classes because of the colour of their skin. Still others were ridiculed by teachers and students because of their form of speech or where they came from. Black people, First Nations' people and People of Colour who are homeless also experience racism on the street and when they try to access services.⁴

In order to create accessible spaces where people feel safe enough to learn, it's vital that agencies adopt strong anti-racism policies. These policies should ensure that agencies develop a diverse staff, culturally appropriate programming, and anti-discrimination rules for the drop-in or shelter floor. Learning environments should include reading materials, flyers, and posters that reflect the experiences and abilities of Black people, First Nations' people, and People of Colour.

Critical Issues: Gender

Do women who are homeless have the same access to literacy and learning opportunities as men in similar situations? The experience of Toronto literacy and drop-in/shelter workers suggests that they do not. Violence against women, a common cause of homelessness, often intensifies on the street.⁵ And unfortunately, drop-ins and shelters don't always provide a safe haven for women.

Beat the Street, a pioneering street literacy program, had the courage to confront this issue head on. The program was " started by two men who were from the streets. The idea was to have a literacy program for street people and have it run in a way that was comfortable to street people. For men and particularly white men, this principle worked well. Women on the street are abused and exploited in more sexual and violent ways ... These attitudes towards women were accepted at Beat the Street because some male staff felt that it was just the way men are and that there was no need to interfere. The fear that women lived with on the street made them afraid to report incidents of abuse and harassment that happened in the centre."⁶

This experience is not unique to Beat the Street. Staff from many programs report that women who do use gender integrated services experience harassment and sexual overtures from male clients. Women's ability to utilize these services is already often restricted by their responsibilities for child care, and by the control of their male partners.

Some women who are illiterate experienced childhood abuse and incest, experiences which made it difficult for them to learn as children and which continue to affect them as adults.⁷ Many homeless women also experienced childhood violence. The importance of creating safe spaces for women before learning can begin is obvious. Before women can access services and feel comfortable enough to risk learning, a safe and anti-sexist atmosphere has to be in place.

Homeless-serving agencies have responded in different ways to this challenge. A handful of excellent feminist services provide women-only drop-ins, shelters, and literacy programming.⁸ Some integrated programs have launched women's groups, or a women-only time in the program. Others have initiated men's groups, in which homeless men are encouraged to learn about and address sexism. Still other programs consider anti-sexist work on the floor addressing and stopping sexist comments and behaviour - as vital to improving services for women. These efforts are still in their infancy.

Women who are homeless face unique challenges in accessing learning opportunities, but female staff in predominantly male drop-ins and shelters also experience sexual harassment. Literacy workers, who are usually female and eager to break down the power dynamics between tutor and learners, may be particularly vulnerable. Outreach literacy workers who come into drop-ins and shelters need to be clear about their own boundaries and assertive in "confronting" men on inappropriate behaviour and remarks. Even with agency support, confronting sexism is not easy. It often leads to conflict and can be exhausting. It can be difficult to separate the feelings of powerlessness that result from being harassed from the knowledge of your actual power as an agency worker. While sexist men can make you feel bad, ultimately you have the power to deny them services. It is important to consider approaches to confronting sexism that make dialogue and change possible.

Critical Issues: Personal Experience

"The surest indication of experience in community is the explicit common knowledge of tragedy, death and suffering..."⁹

Literacy and the process of adult learning draw on and value the learner's personal experience. In the context of homelessness, this will inevitably touch on tragedy. There are deaths: freezing deaths, murders, suicides, overdoses, deaths to AIDS and TB and pneumonia. There are losses: of control, of trust, of friends, of security, of children to the Children's Aid Society. There is sleep deprivation and stress and insecurity and cynicism. There is denial and survival.

These are all issues which will enter - and affect - the learning process. Literacy facilitators need to be aware and be prepared. As homeless adults are encouraged to discuss and to write about their experiences, painful experiences and powerful emotions may be unleashed.

Many people, both homeless and housed, are uncomfortable or unwilling to talk about their lives. Others are eager to talk, and feel better knowing that they share problems with others.

For some people, group discussion and collective action can be a powerful forum for healing and creating change. For example, some members of the Meeting Place Drop-in decided to take political action in response to several deaths in their community. Several became active in an advocacy group, the Toronto Coalition against Homelessness. One woman spearheaded a campaign for a permanent memorial for homeless people who have died on the streets. Others sat in on an inquest into the homeless deaths and participated in demonstrations.

Although many drop-in members remain skeptical of the possibility of political change, others feel empowered by collective action.

Critical Issues: stress

Stress can interfere with the learning process. "One outcome of a prolonged stress reaction is reduced competence in communicating"¹⁰ and in information processing. Although a certain level of stimulation is good for learning, adults can't learn when they're experiencing extreme stress or anxiety. Sleep deprivation, lack of privacy or personal space, and over-stimulation - common conditions in drop-ins and shelters make learning difficult.

An atmosphere that is calm, respectful, and works to build trust between people will nurture learning.

Critical Issues: First Nations Model

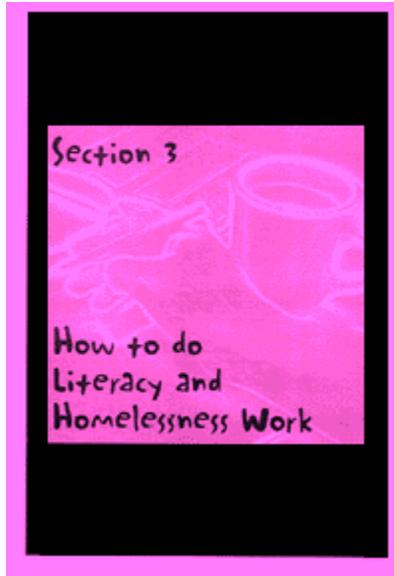
The First Nations Adult Education Project, working together with Michael Thrasher, a First Nations educator, elder, and addictions worker has developed a balanced model of literacy¹¹. The model is applicable to people from all cultures and to both teachers and students. The model is symbolized by a feather. It emphasizes a balance between thinking and feeling. When these are not in balance, there are attitude problems. There so needs to be a balance between meeting material needs, such as food, shelter, and clothing, and developing spirituality, values, and moral beliefs. When there has been childhood trauma, the development of spirituality, values, and moral beliefs may have been damaged. This will impact on someone's ability to learn or to teach. We often need to begin with problem solving skills and communication skills, not reading and writing. There are many issues in people's lives that literacy skills in themselves will not address.

Endnotes: Critical Issues in Literacy and Homelessness Work

1. *Encouraging Adults to Acquire Literacy Skills*. By Audrey M. Thomas. Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat, 1990.
2. *Adults in Transition. A Report of the Fourth Year of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program*. Washington, DC: Division of Adult Education and Literacy, 1993. ERIC Document 359399.
3. *One is Too Many. Consolidated Recommendations: Inquiry into homelessness and street deaths in Toronto*. Toronto Coalition against Homelessness. Toronto, May 25, 1996. Recommendation #14, p. 2.
4. The Meeting Place Drop-In's Black Homeless Initiatives Project has conducted Toronto-wide participatory research addressing these issues. A report will be issued in 1997. For more information, contact Libby Zeleke, B-HIP Coordinator, The Meeting Place Drop-In, 588 Queen Street West, Toronto, Canada.
5. *The Street Health Report*. By Elleen Ambrosio and others. Toronto: Street Health, 1992
6. "Why a Women's Committee " in *Recipes for Political Action*. by Robin Silverman, Beat the Street Women's Committee. Beat the Street: Toronto, 1993. p. 14.
7. Dr. Jenny Horsman, a Toronto literacy worker and researcher, is currently conducting national research in this area. See also " Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives" by Jenny Horsman, in *Making Connections. Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective*. Toronto: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996. p. 15.
8. In Toronto, these include Sistering, Street Haven at the Crossroads, the 416 Drop-In, Native Women's Resource Center, Anduhyaun Residence, and Stop 86.
9. "Regenerating Community" in *From Consumer to Citizen*. by John McKnight. Canadian Mental Health Association, 1986. p. 21.
10. *Adult Learning Principles and their Application to Program Planning*. by Donald Brundage and Dorothy MacKeracher. Toronto: Ministry of Education, 1980, p. 28.
11. For further information, contact Nancy Cooper or Robert Beaton, First Nations Adult Education Project, Adult Basic Education Unit, Toronto Board of Education. Telephone: (416) 393-1995.

Section 3

How To Do Literacy and Homelessness Work



Creating a Learning Environment

A learning environment respects, values, and nurtures learning throughout the drop-in, shelter, or program. This is reflected in the skills and attitudes of staff and volunteers, in program planning and in the physical set-up of space. These are some of the elements of a learning environment:

Staff and Volunteers ...

- understand literacy issues and second language issues
- are trained in Clear Language and Design (CLAD)
- write signs, letters, flyers, and posters using Clear Language and Design
- maintain up to date and readable bulletin boards
- explain and enforce anti-discrimination policies so that the space is safe
- explain and enforce anti-discrimination policies so that barriers to learning, such as sexism and racism, are addressed
- refer interested participants to education and training and to outside literacy groups
- believe that everyone can learn
- believe that everyone can participate in learning opportunities
- believe that everyone has something that they can teach

Program Planning

- The program values learning that happens in different ways and in different kinds of groups, including First Nations' language classes, cooking groups, photography club, life skills, political action, informal Scrabble games, etc.
- The program and its groups are accessible to people with low literacy skills or English as a Second Language.
- The program does special outreach to ensure participation by individuals from equity and under-represented groups.
- Program participation and participant expression are encouraged through members' or residents' meetings, a supply of art supplies, paper and pens, a "graffiti" whiteboard, a participant newsletter, a suggestion box, etc.

Space and Set-Up

- There is some quiet space, with good lighting, comfortable chairs, and a table or desk
- There are relevant and interesting books, magazines, and newspapers

The Toronto Public Library arranges deposit collections in community locations. They also make donations of discarded books. For more information, contact the Library Literacy Facilitators at 393-7606.

- There are board games, such as Scrabble, maps, an atlas, and dictionaries
- Posters, decor, and books reflect the diversity of participants and their experiences, making the program inclusive of women, psychiatric survivors, First Nations' people, Black people and People of Colour
- There are computers and basic computer training. Written information, including program forms, signs, and rules, are presented clearly and simply, using principles of Clear Language and Design.

Clear Language and Design

Clear Language and Design (called CLAD) is a set of simple ideas that makes information easy to read for as many people as possible.

- Use a title or headings for text.
- Put the most important information first.
- Explain what you want to say clearly and logically.
- Don't use big words.
- If you want people to do something or take action, put what people need to do first.
- Use pictures that help people to understand the text.
- Use language that is familiar to people.
- Use active language that shows who is responsible or taking action.
- Sentence order is subject-verb-object
- Explain acronyms: Personal Needs Allowance (PNA)
- Use at least 14 point or even larger print.
- Use Times Roman or Palatino font, if possible. Or print neatly.
- Use both upper and lower case letters. All capital letters are harder to read.
- Use short lines, ten to twelve words per line.

On the next page you will find an example of CLAD.

An Example of Clear Language and Design

Which one of these is easier to understand? Why?

BEFORE

OUT OF THE COLD - WINTER PROGRAM 1995/1996		
MONDAY	LUNCH	WYCHWOOD OPEN DOOR 10:00 am to 3:00pm 729 St. Clair Ave. West at Rushton
	OVERNIGHT	ST. ANDREW'S/HOLY BLOSSOM 6:00PM TO 8:00AM KING ST WEST AT SIMCOE
	OVERNIGHT	ST BRIGID'S 5:00PM TO 7:30AM 57 GLEBMOUNT AT WOLVERLEIGH. 2 blocks North Woodbine at Danforth, 2 blocks West on Wolverleigh.
	OVERNIGHT	GERRARD STREET 70 EAST 4:00PM TO 8:00AM

AFTER

<u>Do you need a warm place to sleep tonight?</u>	
Are you on the street? Out of the Cold can help you. It is free and friendly	
<hr/>	
<u>Monday Nights</u>	
	Downtown. King West & University Opens at 6 PM 75 Simcoe. St. Andrew's Church.
	Downtown. Parliament and Dundas East Opens at 9 PM East 252 Parliament St. Council Fire
	East End. Danforth & Woodbine Opens at 5 PM 300 Wolverleigh. Walk 2 blocks west of Danforth. Walk 2 blocks north of Wolverleigh. St. Bridgids Church.

Referrals to Programs in the Community

Staff can refer clients to outside agencies where they can be matched with a literacy tutor, attend an upgrading class, or take a correspondence course. Most programs are free.

In Metro Toronto, you can use the Literacy Access Network Hotline 961-5557 to make referrals. Anyone can call. They provide excellent, up-to-date referrals for literacy, upgrading, English as a Second Language, and basic computer training.

Elsewhere in Canada, look under LEARN in the yellow pages for contacts.

Support and Networking

It's very important to support adults going to outside programs. Support could include transit tickets, listening, encouragement, arranging homework help or computer access, or accompanying someone to the program.

Look for a list of Toronto programs who work with transient learners in the Resources Section.

Many community programs and schools (most!) are not set up for learners who are transient. These programs may expect regular attendance, calls of cancellation, or residence in their catchment area. Some programs have waiting lists. These are all barriers to learning for adults who are homeless. That's why it's important for drop-ins and shelters to connect with community literacy programs in their area. Ask them for literacy and clear language support in your work, and educate them about the needs of the adults you work with who want to learn!

Models for doing Literacy and Homelessness Work

"In challenging normal models and methodologies of literacy work, literacy and homelessness work is an "incubator for fresh ideas about literacy education. "

This section will outline several models for doing literacy work with homeless people and offer some practical examples. These models can be changed, built on, or rejected based on your experiences, programs, and the needs of people that you work with.

Getting Started

Start with the immediate needs of the individuals that you're working with. People don't often directly ask for help with "literacy". Instead, they may ask for help in completing a task. Do they want help with a resume or filling out a form? Do they want to start a cooking group in the drop-in? Listen to and respond to their individual needs. Each individual is best able to determine what they want to learn and how they want to learn it.

Using Community Resources

Remember, there is literacy help available in the community.

- If you need training or support around meeting people's literacy needs, talk to your local literacy program. You may also want to educate your literacy program around the needs of learners who are transient and homeless.
- Your local library may lend adult literacy materials. As well, they may be able to arrange donations of books or a deposit collection of library books.
- If you need information about literacy resources in Metro Toronto, call the Literacy Access Network at (416) 961-5557. Elsewhere, look under LEARN in the yellow pages. Also check the resources section at the back of this book.

Model 1: On Site One-on-One Tutoring

This can be a nonthreatening way of introducing people to literacy in a familiar place. In this model, a tutor works with people at scheduled times or whenever they need help, right in the shelter or drop-in. The tutor can help with writing resumes, filling out forms, reading letters, getting on the computer, or whatever else people need. (See page 36 for information about these "Literacy Moments".) The tutor can also refer people to other education and training programs. The tutor may be a trained volunteer, a drop-in or shelter worker, or an outreach tutor from a literacy program. Drop-in member and shelter residents may also volunteer to provide peer tutoring.

It's important for people to see that the tutor is around and available, but ideally, tutoring should take place in a quiet space that has some privacy. Tutoring times can be posted on a clear language poster and announced in residents' or members' meetings. If possible, the drop-in or shelter should provide paper, pens, pencils, books, dictionaries, word games like Scrabble, simple forms for creating resumes, a computer, a whiteboard, and a small library of low-vocabulary, high-interest books, in the tutoring space.

There are many benefits to this model:

- it brings literacy to where people are
- it is flexible and informal
- it helps people to meet their immediate, individual literacy needs
- through personal contact with a tutor, people who are transient gain an access point for literacy
- having a positive learning relationship with a tutor may encourage people to return to learning when their lives are more stable.

There are also challenges inherent in this model:

X It may take time for people to trust the tutor, or approach them for help. People may be more likely to seek help from a staff person that they already know. If not, there may be a long start up period in which there seems to be no interest. During this time, the tutor may become frustrated or anxious. Spreading the word about the tutor's availability and flexibility should be extensive and ongoing. People should understand that the tutor is available to work with them on whatever they choose.

X The stigma of illiteracy is still strong. People may not be unwilling to discuss their literacy problems. They may not want others to know that they're getting tutoring. Privacy may become an issue, particularly if using peer tutors.

X Literacy tutors need both training and ongoing support. Drop-in or shelter workers and clients can ask their local literacy program to provide tutor training, and then use their skills on-site. Volunteers or literacy workers from an outside agency will need orientation to your program, assistance in getting to know potential learners, and regular support from staff.

X Beware of the possibility of learners becoming dependent on or expecting tutors to do things for them. Tutors should teach people skills and provide support, while always encouraging independence.

Model 1: On Site One-on-One Tutoring

Example: Literacy moments

"Literacy Moments" ² is a term that captures the pace and spontaneity of doing literacy work in a drop-in or shelter. As you read this, hundreds of social workers, drop-in, and shelter workers and peers are having literacy moments without even knowing it, as they are asked to assist with literacy tasks that are very specific and need to be completed immediately:

- Read a letter.
- Find a number in the phone book.
- Help me find where to go.
- I need a resume for tomorrow.
- Show me how to use the photocopier.
- I need to send a fax.
- I want to respond to this Hostel Incident Report.

When the task is done, the "learner" may leave to attend to other survival tasks, and be unable or uninterested in sitting down for an hour of related tutoring. Quick and specific as they are, these "moments" of literacy work can still be positive learning experiences for people, and a basis for their return to learning and adult education when their lives are more stable. During literacy moments, we need to be conscious of our practice in order to support the learners' independence and build on their current skills.

- What skills does this person need to complete this task on their own?
- Which of these skills does this person already have?
- How can I assist this person to complete the task without doing it for them?
- What strategies can I model to increase this person's independence in doing this task next time?

Literacy Moments - Some Background

Literacy Moments have yet to be accepted in most mainstream literacy programs, where learners are expected to commit to regular, weekly tutoring and are considered "unmotivated" if they cannot. I was gratified, then to see references to these short bursts of literacy in descriptions of the American Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) projects. A workshop at the first conference on literacy & homelessness, held in New York in 1990, was entitled, "What can we teach in 60 seconds?"³ In fact, 40% of all the students served by AEH projects received 10 hours or less of instructions. Other reports spoke of "recommendations to develop lessons for students who attend only a few hours or a few sessions and "mastery of instruction in small, self-contained units."⁸

In this, homeless adults showed similarity with other adult learners.

"People tend to want specific strategies to deal with specific problems, not generalized assistance in learning to encode and decode written language."⁷

"Many homeless persons look at the goal of continuing their education as a long-term prospect for the future. Although they do recognize the extra hours in the shelter are well-spent working toward that goal, others stay focused on their immediate needs revolving around jobs and places to live... (By helping out with forms and documents,) teachers may have contact with learners that (otherwise) they never would have had."⁸

Literacy moments help adults to complete vital paper work and tasks necessary for survival. They also make literacy accessible to adults who are intimidated by the long term commitment to learning required for joining a literacy program.

Example: Write your own Resume Form

This easy-to-read form can be adapted to help people write their own resume or work with a tutor to write their resume.

Please ask _____ if you need any help.

RESUME

Personal Information

Your Name: _____

Where you live: _____

If you don't have an address, use the drop-in / shelter address.

Your phone number: _____

If you don't have a phone, write a number where messages can be left or the drop-in phone number: _____

Work Experience

Write down your volunteer work AND paid work.

1. What is the last job that you worked at?

What was your job called?

For example, labourer, receptionist, cook.

The name of the company you worked for: _____

Month and year you started work there _____

Month and year you finished work there _____

Explain what you did in your job:

For example, - cooked lunch for 20 people daily

II. Before that, what job did you do?

What was your job called?

For example: labourer, receptionist, cook .

The name of the company you worked for:

Month and year you started work there

Month and year you finished work there

Explain what you did in your job:

For example, - cooked lunch for 20 people daily

Education and Training

What's the name of the school you last went to?

What city and province did you go to school?

What year did you finish or stop school?

What is the highest grade or level you did?

Did you win any awards, certificates, or diplomas?

Did you ever get training for a certain job, including on the job training?
Write this down.

Do you know how to use a computer?

If you do, what kind of programs?

This is one way of writing up a resume. If you need help, talk to

Resume

Your Name
Your Address

Toronto, Ontario, Postal Code

Telephone: (XXX) - XXX - XXXX

WORK EXPERIENCE

Kind of Work you Did - Most Recent Job First Name of Company, City Province

- Dates you Worked There
- Your Duties
- Your Duties

Construction and Demolition Worker
Big Rock Wall Come Down Demolition and Construction.
Toronto, Ontario.
May to October, 1996

- Basic home renovations and demolition work
- Dry walling and painting

Cook's Assistant (Volunteer)
The Corner Drop-In, Toronto, Ontario
January, 1996 - present

- Assist in food preparation for 100 people daily
- Supervise volunteers in clean up

Receptionist (Volunteer)
The Meeting Place Drop-In, Toronto, Ontario
September, 1996 - present

- Answer telephones in busy environment
- Respond to information requests

Machine Operator
Tools and Gadgets, Sudbury, Ontario
January, 1987 - December, 1992

EDUCATION

George Brown College, Toronto, Ontario. O.B.S., 1995.
Northern High. Sudbury, Ontario. 1982.

Job Related Training and Skills

Bartending Course, Georgian College
St. John's Ambulance First Aid
Red Cross CPR
Basic computer skills: Windows and Word Perfect
Stain Glass Production Workshop
English and French

References are available on request.

Model II: On Site Small Group Work

Working in a group has many advantages:

- social contact
- people find that they share common problems
- works against isolation
- fun
- creates energy and peer support
- literacy can tie in to existing groups in a drop-in or shelter
- chance for different kinds of communication - discussion, reading, art, film

There are also many challenges to working in a group, especially in a drop-in or shelter:

- group may be multi-level in terms of needs and skills: hard to meet individuals' needs
- group members may have different levels of skills in terms of participating, listening, and speaking in a group, and dealing with conflict
- some people will not participate in a group, or will need lots of support and encouragement to participate
- members may defer to the facilitator or staff as the "expert" or "referee"
- one or two members may try to dominate or direct the group
- group membership may be transient and may change every meeting. It can be hard to build consistency or group norms. This is hard because it takes time to build trust in a group, and for people to feel comfortable speaking or participating.
- it can be very hard to get a new group going in a drop-in or shelter.
- The group may get cancelled early on because no one shows up.

The suggestions for group work in this section assume group formation has occurred. But it's important to recognize that this in itself can be a long term process.

New groups have a better chance of success in a drop-in/shelter if:

- members/residents/clients participate in deciding what the group should do
- members/residents/clients and staff are committed to the group and do regular outreach
- the group has a clear purpose and regular time and place to meet

- the group's work is focused on a short-term project that has meaning and that people can participate in, whatever their skill level
- the group is flexible enough to respond to the more immediate needs of its members

II. A. Literacy Groups

- The group may be named as a literacy group (PARC), an adult basic education class (Toronto Board of Education classes at Fred Victor, Good Shepherd Refuge), or adult education (First Nations Adult Education Project)
- These groups allow community and friendship to develop and decrease social isolation through learning
- These groups de-stigmatize literacy, as participants realize they are not alone
- These groups allow students to teach and learn from one another
- Some people won't have anything to do with a group named "literacy" due to stigma/shame

II. B. Integrated Groups

Reading, writing, and critical discussion may be one aspect of groups that meet for other purposes: Writing Group, Life Skills Group, newsletter or radio show group, Community Economic Development, computer club, cooking group, camera club, political action/advocacy, participatory research, Members' or Residents' Meetings, Women's Group, Men's Group, newsletter, Native Learning Circle, or storytelling/oral history group.

- These groups may meet regularly or on an ad hoc basis
- These groups may attract more people than a literacy group
- These groups don't always reach or interest adults with basic literacy skills. If they do come, they may feel intimidated by those with higher level literacy skills who complete literacy tasks with ease.
- Group membership may constantly change, or there may be a regular core group.
- Through this work, you can use literacy in ways that are creative, fun, empowering and non-stigmatizing.
- Through group work, people can build friendships, community, learn new skills, and decrease their isolation.

- Group facilitators must be sensitive to literacy issues and to doing things in clear language.
- Group facilitators must be very creative to include literacy skill development alongside other group work.

Example: Writing Group

Even with the demands of survival, many people living on the streets have huge amounts of creativity. Literacy work is not just about survival writing, but also personal expression, using writing for empowerment, and maintaining literacy skills. Writing groups tend to appeal to people with higher level literacy skills. Many programs in Toronto offer writing groups, including Street Haven, PARC, Beat the Street, and the Yonge Street Mission. Most writing groups work like this:

- people decide together on a topic and discuss it
- they write individually on the topic for a set amount of time
- they are invited to share their writing with the group

Writing Group: Some Ideas to get Started

Homeless Issues.

Bring in enlargements of current newspaper articles about homelessness (the HEAT response, Street Patrol, the Out In the Cold Program, or housing issues.) Group members can choose and read one of the articles out loud, then discuss and write about it. Or the group can dictate a joint response that is written up on flip chart.

Hats

Each group member writes a topic or theme on a piece of paper and puts it into a hat. Each person then draws a topic to write about.

Scruples

Each member picks a card from the board game *Scruples*. Each card describes a situation that poses a moral dilemma. Members have to write a response. Members can trade their card for another one, or write about more than one dilemma. They can also write their own moral dilemma cards.

Rules

Members write a good - or funny -set of rules for their drop-in or shelter.

Creative Writing Group Work by Robin Dynes is an excellent resource book.

Example: Participatory Research

*The Black Homeless Initiatives Project (B-HIP), The Meeting Place.*⁹ Several members of the Meeting Place Drop-in helped to develop and carry out a research project. They researched the needs of Black people in Toronto who are homeless or underhoused. They hoped to find ways that drop-ins and shelters could better serve Black people who were homeless. This was the first time these issues had been researched in Canada.

Six drop-in members met in a group every week with Libby Zeleke, a drop-in worker and the B-HIP coordinator. The member/researchers were paid an honorarium. They talked, wrote about, and analysed their experiences of homelessness and racism. They also learned about group process, systemic racism, and qualitative research. Every second week, they met with advisors from community agencies. The member/ researchers helped to identify key issues, draft a research survey, and carry out research interviews. By the end of the project, they had interviewed more than two hundred and fifty people in drop-ins, shelters, and on the street, spoken with agency staff, and held focus groups.

Member/researchers came to the group with different levels of education and different kinds of life experience. All of these had to be juggled in the group process. The research process took over a year, and during this time, some researchers dropped out, or left for periods of time. Nonetheless, BHIP participants did feel pride and ownership in this important work.

Example: Newsletter

Many drop-ins, literacy programs, and shelters produce newsletters. In some places, members or clients write, edit, illustrate, produce, and distribute the newsletter. They work together to learn *some publications produced by the Literacy and new skills* and produce a *Homelessness Project* collective product. It can be empowering for people who are homeless to have a public way to write about their lives, instead of always being written about by others. Newsletters can be produced easily and cheaply, yet they travel far, and their message can be spread widely.

Those who have difficulty writing can be interviewed or have their stories written down by others in the group. It's very powerful for them to see their words in print. People with low literacy skills can also help out with illustrations, layout, printing, and distributing. They can learn to use the computer to type out their story. See Resources Section for an example of a Meeting Place newsletter.

Newsletters: Some Ideas For Getting Started

Outreach	Talk to people & show them newsletters that other programs have done. Explain that anyone can help out, whatever their skills.	
Editorial	Get everyone to sit down together and brainstorm about what should be in the newsletter. What should go on the cover?	
Delegating	Decide together who will write	type
	draw or take photos	proofread
	tape interviews or stories of people who don't want to write	do layout
		photocopy and collate
		distribute

Set a date for when things should be done.

Meet regularly to help each other get tasks done and share some food.

Have a central envelop where people can leave submissions.

Be sure to credit everyone who helped.

Find a process that is fun, inclusive, and works for the people involved.

Readability: Do you want your newsletter to be easy to read? The type the articles in Times Roman or Palatino, 14-16 font size, with 10-12 words per line. Type straight across the page, not in columns. (See the Clear Language and Design section on page 30 for more information.)

Resources: Information about the national association of North American Street Newspapers, on-line directory of street newspapers, technical assistance for launching street newspapers, links with homeless papers from Europe, Quebec, and the US, and the Homeless News Service. The National Coalition for the Homeless - Street Newspaper Project, contact Michael Stoops, 1612 K Street, Nw, Suite #1004, Washington DC 20006. Fax: 202 -775-1316, email:nch@ari.net, telephone: 202-775-1322.

Example: Cooking Group

Many drop-ins have a cooking group or a community kitchen. There are many ways to integrate literacy and numeracy into such a group. Bring a flipchart stand into the kitchen, or mount a whiteboard or blackboard on the kitchen wall. Group members or the facilitator can write out recipes in large print on the board, and read out instructions line by line. The group may also want to compile their own recipe book.

The group can practice or learn simple math skills by making a double or triple batch of a recipe, or doing price comparisons of recipe ingredients using supermarket flyers, or comparing the cost of preparing their dish to the price of a comparable fast food meal.

II C. Work Shops & Special Events

Special events with a literacy focus or component

Examples:

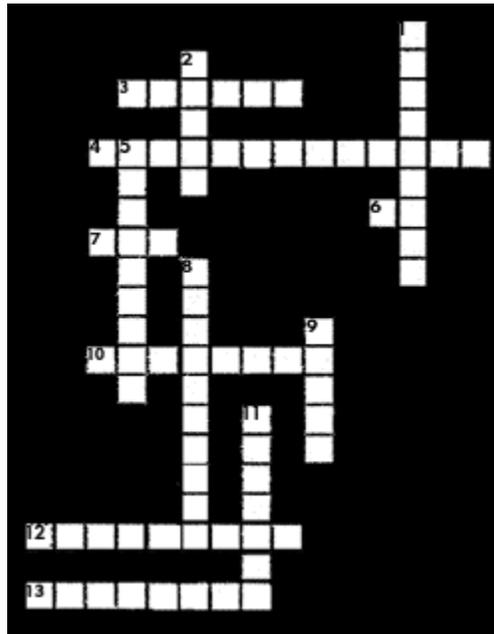
- A Guest speaker - poet, singer, storyteller
- One time writing event - create a Book in a Night project
- Advocacy: letter writing campaign, writing slogans for placards
- Film night with discussion
- Field trips to museum, art gallery, musical, plays
- Education fair: invite speakers from colleges, high schools, training programs, and community job counselors
- Written quiz or quiz show with prizes. You can use information about the drop-in/shelter program, city news, health issues, etc.
- Scrabble tournament
- Designing and producing a quilt, mural, or banner

Meeting Place Quiz #2

Give your answers to Betsy or Brian.

Prizes will be given at the next Member's Meeting.

Name: _____



Across Clues

3. Where does Meeting Place get most of its money? Ministry of _____
4. Who is the head of St. Christopher House?
6. What political party is in power now in Ontario? (Short form)
7. Who would you talk to if you want to join the Camera Club at Meeting Place?
10. What is the name of the plan to force street people off the street in winter?
12. What day does the camera club meet at the Meeting Place?
13. What program is the Harris government starting for people on GWA?

Down Clues

1. What is the last name of the Social Services Minister?
2. What is the first name of Michele's supervisor?
5. What street is Meals on Wheels on? Argyll, Ossington, or Liberty?
8. What is the name of Leslie's group that meets on Thursdays?
9. Who should you talk to if you want help with writing or math?
11. What is the name of the Project that Jimmie works on?

Model II C: Example - Written Quiz

Model III: Culturally Specific Literacy Example: First Nations Adult Education Project

FIRST NATIONS ADULT EDUCATION PROJECT

"Native literacy is a tool which empowers the spirit of Native people. Native literacy services recognize and affirm the unique cultures of Native peoples and the interconnectedness of all aspects of creation. As part of a life-long path of learning, Native literacy contributes to the development of self-knowledge and critical thinking. It is a continuum of skills that encompasses reading, writing, numeracy, speaking, good study habits, and communicating in other forms of language as needed. Based on the experience, abilities and goals of learners, Native literacy fosters and promotes achievement and a sense of purpose, which are both central to self-determination."

-this definition of Native literacy was developed by the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition in consultation with Native literacy programs in Ontario.

In May of 1993 the Native Men's Residence hosted a one day conference on Native Adult Education in Toronto, focussing on literacy and upgrading. From this community meeting the First Nations Adult Education Project was developed with support from community agencies and the Adult Basic Education Unit of the Toronto Board of Education.

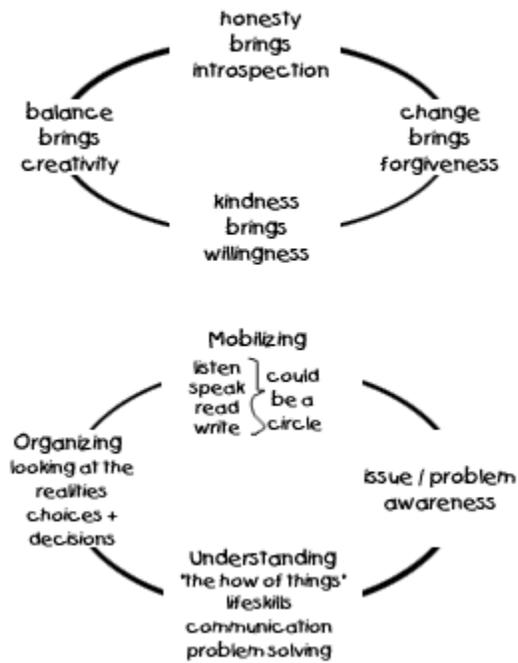
The vision of the FNAEP is to develop, deliver and evaluate Native adult basic education classes in an urban setting. Emphasis is placed on developing culturally based, learn-centred learning and training models for both instructors and students. These models are to be holistic in nature, attempting to find a balance between the four directions: spiritual, emotional, physical and mental. The FNAEP recognizes the importance of seeking direction and training from Elders, traditional teachers, Native trainers and educators. The FNAEP strives to include and encourage the participation of various Native service agencies and supportive non-Native agencies in Toronto.

Cooperative agencies include the Native Canadian Centre, Council Fire Native Cultural Centre, the Native Women's Resource Centre, Spirit of the People, Sistering Drop-in for Women, St. Chistopher House -The Meeting Place, Anduhyuan, Alpha Ontario, as well as the Canada Employment Centre.

An information Sheet on the First Nations Adult Education Project of the Toronto Board of Education, Adult Basic Education Unit.

The Literacy Wheel showing a holistic First Nations theory of adult education.

The Literacy Wheel



Successful Programs in Literacy and Homelessness

Some elements of successful programs: ¹⁰

- use a variety of approaches, including small group instruction, computer assisted instruction, tutorial/individual instruction, drop-in sessions, student-developed publications, on-site lending libraries
- choice of attending in-shelter instruction or literacy group in community location
- group support and counseling
- an emphasis on social and emotional needs as well as academic skills, including life skills, stress management, and building self esteem
- instruction based on practical tasks and everyday needs which assist the learner in applying basic literacy skills in dealing with situations of homelessness
- individual educational plans developed
- curriculum relevant and responsive to people's actual needs
- learners have a stable living environment for at least 45 days
- staff and volunteers were well trained and supported
- staff had experience of homelessness, or were politically and socially active in homeless communities
- networking takes place between agencies and with homeless coalitions

Some Barriers to success:¹¹

- Shelter staff and administration were unsupportive, uncooperative, or apathetic
- lack of space for class
- irrelevant curriculum, academic approach to assessment or instruction
- high staff turnover and volunteer frustration
- lack of community linkages and referrals
- tutors don't understand that they are teaching people under stress
- learners' substance abuse, along with shortage of drug treatment programs
- high turn over in the shelter
- learners' basic needs remained unmet
- stress of street life on learners
- learners' need to look for work, attend appointments, deal with family problems
- learners' fear of failure and of school
- lack of support services, including child care and transportation

Evaluating your work in Literacy and Homelessness

Example: Participatory evaluation of the Literacy and Homelessness Project at the Meeting Place Drop-in

Introduction

The Literacy Project at the Meeting Place Drop-In was evaluated to see if members' literacy needs were being met and if new programs or models should be used. Twenty members of the drop-in were asked to participate in the evaluation. Drop-in staff asked the questions orally and wrote down the responses.

Learning Project Evaluation for Members

Oral Introduction: We want to ask you some questions to learn more about the project that Betsy has been working on. Betsy and the Drop-In want to find out how it has been going, and if you are learning what you want to learn.

1. Have you talked or worked with Karen (last year) or Betsy at The Meeting Place? Are you still working together?

IF NO - go to question #8. IF YES, continue ...

2. If you worked together, what did you do?

(Prompts: Writing Group, Newsletter, newsletter group, tutoring help with a letter, help with a resume, played scrabble, field trips, participated in quiz, facilitating members' meeting, etc)

3. Are you still involved in these things?

4. If you didn't get involved, is there a particular reason why you didn't?

5. Should we keep having a writing group? Why or why not?

6. Should we keep having a newsletter? Why or why not?

7. What other kinds of things could a literacy project in the drop-in provide for you or other members

(Prompts: computer group, cooking group, high school upgrading, job search help, reading room, job training information)

8. Is it a good idea to have these activities go on right here in the drop-in? Why or why not? Where else would you be willing to go to do them?

9. Have you taken any training or been in school recently?

10. How far did you go in school?

11. Are you interested in training or going back to school?

12. What have you thought about having a literacy worker at Meeting Place?

13. Do you think literacy is an issue for a lot of people who are homeless? (Ask for specifics about what things people might find hard to do.)

Literacy and Homelessness: Your Action Plan

You've had a chance to consider some of the models for doing literacy and homelessness work. What will your program's approach be?

Here are some things to consider

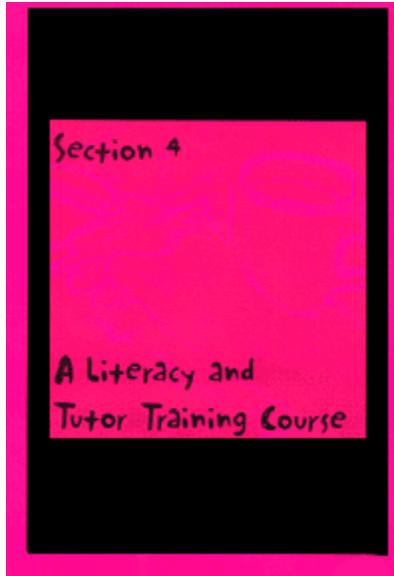
- Why do you want to do literacy work with homeless people?
- How do you define literacy?
- What are the literacy needs of your clients? How will you find out?
- What programming and activities are already popular in your program?
- Which literacy models might work in your program?
- How would you change or invent models to meet the particular needs of people in your program?
- Who might facilitate literacy work in your program?
- Who might support literacy work in your program?

Endnotes: How to do Literacy and Homelessness Work

1. *Developing Literacy Programs for Homeless Adults*. by Joye A. Norris and Paddy Kennington. Professional Practices in Adult Education and Human Resource Development. Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1992. p. ix.
2. "Literacy Moments" is a term that I adapted from Rick Eagan's concept of "Income Moments" in community economic development.
3. *The Challenge in Education: Meeting the Needs of the Homeless Adult Learner and the New York State Life Management Conference. Conference Proceedings*. Albany: SUNY, 1990.
4. *Learning to Hope: A Study of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program*. Washington DC: Department of Education, 1995. ERIC Document 381615.
5. *Arkansas Adult Education for the Homeless Project. An Evaluation*. Arkansas: State University, 1991.
6. *Adult Education for the Homeless: 1989 Report, 1990 Report. San Diego: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System, 1990 and Adult Education for the Homeless. Report. San Diego: Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment, 1992.*
7. Fox (1986) quoted in *Developing Literacy Programs for Homeless Adults* by Joye Norris and Paddy Kennington. Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1992. p. 1.
8. Ibid., p. 23.
9. A final report will be released in 1997. For more information, contact Libby Zeleke, B-HIP Coordinator, The Meeting Place Drop-In, 588 Queen Street West, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 504-4275
10. These criteria are based on evaluations of American Adult Education for the Homeless programs. They will not apply to all situations. For information about the A.EH evaluations, please see the resources listed at the end of this resource book.
11. These criteria are based on evaluations of the American Adult Education for the Homeless programs.

Section 4

A Literacy and Tutor Training Course



The Literacy and Homelessness Project's Literacy Training Course for Shelter and Drop-in Workers

This section provides a training course curriculum from a literacy tutor training course designed especially for shelter, drop-in, and community workers.

Training Course Overview

What do a drop-in for women, Seaton House men's hostel, and an Etobicoke youth shelter all have in common? A keen interest in literacy! Staff and volunteers from these - and twelve other - agencies were active participants in the Literacy Training for Shelter, Drop-In, and Community Workers. Over a three week period in March, 1996, they came together at St. Christopher House in Toronto to learn about literacy issues, tutoring, and community resources. They also explored different ways of doing literacy work with transient people. Some of the participants hope to do literacy work with their clients. Others will look to existing community literacy programs for support. The goal of the training, coordinated by the Literacy and Homelessness Project, was to increase knowledge of literacy issues and community resources among programs that work with homeless people.

The training was jointly facilitated by literacy workers from many different programs, including Street Haven, East End Literacy, Beat the Street, The First Nations Adult Education Project, St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, and the Toronto Board of Education. We think that this was the first co-operative literacy training ever held in Toronto! This approach promoted personal contact between many different shelter and literacy workers. It also brought a diversity of approaches and a wealth of energy to the training.

The training curriculum was loosely based on a standard community literacy tutor training, but several themes were expanded or added. For example, participants looked at how they would adapt the language experience approach to the needs of residents in a men's hostel. They learned about the effects of medication and drugs on learning. And they attempted to CLAD a schedule of information about church basements offering overnight shelter. As one participant stated, "It's important to get materials for street adults, not suburban adults." Participants completed the training by developing action plans.

Training Goals

- To support you to find ways of meeting the literacy needs of people you work with.
- To use your knowledge and experience of homelessness issues to think about literacy in new ways.
- To help you develop basic skills in tutoring, assessment, and clear language.
- To introduce you to people who can provide ongoing support and ideas.
- These include each other, literacy workers, and community resources.
- To model, through the training, adult education principles, and different ways of learning.

Literacy and Homelessness Project
St. Christopher House Literacy Program / The Meeting Place Drop-In
248 Ossington Avenue, Toronto

Literacy Training for Drop-in, Shelter, and Community Workers

Training Outline*

Week 1. Thursday, March 7, 1996. 3 - 5:30 PM

- What is literacy? What is literacy in the context of homelessness?
- Critically rethinking literacy
- Learning Styles & Adult Learning
- Models of literacy work in drop-ins and shelters

Week 2. Thursday, March 14, 1996. 3 - 5:30 PM

- Models of drop-in literacy (Part II)
- Report back: a) Drop-in and Community Workers b) Shelter Workers
- Reading and Reading Theory
- The Language Experience Approach
- The Language Experience Approach in Shelters and Drop-ins
- Supporting student writing
- Transactional literacy: filling out forms, reading maps and schedules

Week 3. Thursday, March 21, 1996. 3 - 5:30 PM

- Learning and medication
- Clear Language and Design - making signs and flyers easier to read
- Numeracy
- Community resources for Literacy and ESL
- Action Plan
- Wrap-up and evaluation

Follow up session - next month

- Topic to be determined by group

* Please note that there may be changes in topics or scheduling

Training facilitators will include:

Betsy Trumpener (Literacy & Homelessness Project Worker, St. Chris Literacy / The Meeting Place) Nancy Cooper (First Nations Adult Basic Education Project), Robert Beaton (Toronto Board of Education) Michelle Kuhlmann (East End Literacy), Janine Luce (Street Haven Literacy) Violetta Ilkiw and Shawn Conway, (Beat the Street), Nancy Friday-Cockburn (St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program).

The Literacy and Homelessness Project
St. Christopher House

Literacy Training for Drop-In, Shelter, and Community Workers

Week I - Summary Notes

March 7, 1996

What is literacy? What is literacy in the context of homelessness?

Facilitator: Michele Kuhlmann, East End Literacy

Small group questions

- How do you decide when someone is literate?
- Is literacy the same for everyone?
- What can't you do when you are not literate?
- What can you do when you are literate?
- How would you define literacy?
- Are some kinds of knowledge more important than others? To whom?
- Why? What are some of the ways that people learn things?

Participant/Group responses

- When you see someone writing, you make an assumption What society defines as literate
- Understanding what you have read - comprehension
- Ability to understand your own context
- Who decides?
- Lots of literacies - for example, we can't understand legal jargon
- There is a higher standard of literacy now due to the economy.
- Instead of grade 8, you need grade 12, and computers are now part of the standard of literacy
- There is a pressure to have it all together before you start a job they won't train you on the job
- Some people go through the mainstream school system without developing solid skills
- Limited literacy limits mobility and choice of opportunity, employment, lifestyle
- Is literacy the same for everyone?-No.
- People who aren't literate can't make sense of their own reality. (Some people disagreed with this statement.)
- There may be different standards/expectations of literacy within one's own culture, community, or even for different genders
- People with low literacy skills are vulnerable to being ripped off, by contracts, payments, legalities. Having low numeracy skills limits your opportunities.
- Everyone needs basic skills so that they don't get stiffed and they can get a job.
- Barriers to developing literacy skills
- Forms are intimidating
- Systems are intimidating
- Health problems

- Disability
- Resources - teachers, tutors, programs, support is needed
- Money, housing, transportation, child care
- Shame and stigma of illiteracy. People are embarrassed to show their lack of skills
- Low self-esteem
- Problems in the school system.
- **What we teach in literacy depends on the needs of the individual. It must be relevant and usable.** It must include computers
- How we learn: visual, sounds, memory, doing it (experience), folklore, speech, storytelling, traditions, physical - hands on, reading and writing, listening, imitation, rote, fun activities and play, interaction with others, writing, role modelling, kinaesthetic, listening. **Visual and reading and writing are the most accepted forms of learning in society.**
- With everything moving to hi-tech and computers, will we lose the need/desire to go to school and to learn our culture through community interaction.
- This question about knowledge is based on classism and culture.
- Knowledge depends on what you are doing. Formal education vs practical experience.
- Literacy should also be skills to act on and shape society and culture, not just conforming to the new era
- We shouldn't forget that literacy's roots are in social change
- Literacy should not just be about survival skills

Critically Rethinking Literacy

Facilitators: Nancy Cooper and Robert Beaton. First Nations' Adult Basic Education Project.
Phone: 393-1995

Nancy and Robert dialogued about a balanced model for literacy that came out of their work with Michael Thrasher, a First Nations educator, elder, and addictions worker from Alberta. The model is applicable to people from all cultures, and to both teachers and students. The model is symbolized by a feather. It emphasizes a balance between thinking and feeling. When these are not in balance, there are attitude problems. There also needs to be a balance between meeting material needs (money, food, shelter, clothing), and developing spirituality, values, and moral beliefs. When there has been childhood trauma, the development of spirituality, values, and moral beliefs may have been damaged. This will impact on someone's ability to learn or to teach. We often need to begin with problem solving skills and communication skills, not reading and writing. There are many issues in peoples lives that literacy skills in themselves will not address. For more information, contact Nancy and Robert.

Learning Styles

Facilitator: Betsy Trumpener, Literacy & Homelessness Project, St. Chris

Different ways of learning were discussed. A handout covered this material in more depth. As teachers/tutors, we need to be aware of how we learn and whether this becomes our preferred style of teaching. We can help the people we work with to determine their preferred learning style(s) and tutor in ways that build on these strengths. We can also help people to develop other approaches to learning. Activities or teaching that cover a range of approaches to learning will be the most successful. This is especially important in groups.

Adult Learning

- respects and values the adults life experiences and skills
- the learner (adult student) decides how and what they want to learn. This process may need to be negotiated and encouraged.
- the learner sets their own goals and helps to evaluate progress
- learning is relevant, related to learners' needs and interest
- acknowledges issues in learner's life which may support or hinder learning process, such as housing, hunger, need for child care, TTC, etc.
- encourages learners to support and learn from each other and address common concerns through group work

Models of Literacy Work in Drop-Ins and Shelters

Facilitator: Betsy Trumpener

These outlines of models were developed based on work by Betsy and Karen Farmer at the Meeting Place Drop-In, from information from other programs in Toronto, and from researching American programs. They are general ideas, which we can flesh out, build on, or modify based on our experiences, programs, and the needs of people we work with.

I. On Site One-on-One Tutoring

- Tutor/teacher is available at scheduled times or drop-in basis
- Tutor may be volunteer, drop-in/shelter staff, peer, staff from outside agency such as community literacy program
- Can meet immediate, individual literacy needs of individuals (i.e. - fill out this form. We call these "Literacy moments".)
- Nonthreatening way of introducing people to literacy in a familiar, comfortable environment

- Provides people with an access point for literacy, education or training referral through one person
- Positive learning relationship may provide basis for returning to formal education when less transient

Issues:

- Outreach/spreading the word about the tutor's availability must be extensive, exhaustive, ongoing
- It may take time for people to trust or approach the tutor for help. There may be a long start up period in which there is no interest and tutor becomes frustrated
- Volunteer or staff from an outside agency will need orientation to your program and regular support
- Peer or internal staff tutors may need literacy training and ongoing support around literacy tutoring
- Tutoring should ideally take place in a private, quiet space that is also accessible. Need to strike a balance around privacy and people being able to see that the tutor is around.
- Stigma of illiteracy is still strong - people may not want to have others know that they're getting help or reveal their literacy problems. This may be an issue particularly if using peer tutors.
- Possibility of dependency on tutor to do things for learner. Some programs may actually encourage dependency. Need to be aware of process of helping people but teaching them to do it for themselves.

On Site Small Group Work

Literacy Groups

- Group may be named as a literacy group (PARC) or adult basic education class (Toronto Board of Education classes at Fred Victor, Good Shepard Refuge, First Nations' Project)
- These groups allow community building, friendship building, and decrease social isolation
- Destigmatize literacy, as people realize they are not alone
- Allow students to teach and learn from one another
- Some people won't have anything to do with something named as "literacy" due to stigma/shame

Integrated Approach

- Literacy may be one aspect of groups that meet for other purposes: Writing Group, Life Skills Group, Radio Drop-In, Community Economic Development, computer club, cooking group, camera club, political action/advocacy, Members or Residents' Meetings, Women's Group, Men's Group, newsletter, Native Learning Circle, storytelling/oral history group, Member-driven research.
- These groups may meet regularly or on an ad hoc basis
- These groups may attract more people than a literacy group
- These groups don't always reach or interest adults with basic literacy skills. If they do come, they may feel pushed out by those with higher level literacy skills, who can complete literacy tasks easier and faster
- Group membership may constantly change, or there may be a regular core group.
- Through this work, you can use literacy in ways that are creative, fun, empowering, non-stigmatizing
- Through group work, people can build friendships, community, learn new skills, and decrease isolation
- Group facilitators must be sensitive to literacy issues and doing things in clear language
- Group facilitators must be very creative to include literacy skill development alongside other group work

On-Site Resource Center

- Library
- Computer Lab
- People may require staff support to use these resources, especially a computer lab
- The Toronto Public Library arranges deposit collections in community locations. They also donate books they are discarding. For more information, contact the Library Literacy Facilitators at 393-7606.
- In building a library, think about who will use it and what their literacy levels are.
- May need to do outreach to publicize that this is available

Workshops/Special Events

- Special events with a literacy focus or component
- Guest speaker - poet, singer, storyteller
- One time writing event - i.e. Book in a Night project
- Letter writing campaign
- Film night with discussion
- Field trips to museum, etc. etc.
- Education fair - invite speakers from colleges, high schools, training programs, community job counsellors

Community Referrals

- Staff refer to outside agencies (Beat the Street, East End Literacy, George Brown College, Independent Learning Center, Community training programs) where people can be matched with a tutor or attend a class
- You can use the Literacy Access Network hotline 961-5557 to make good referrals. Anyone can call.
- Very important to provide support for adults going to these programs. (TTC, listening, encouragement, arranging homework help, computer access, etc.)
- Many community programs (most!) are not set up for learners who are transient - barriers may really discourage learners. Programs may expect regular attendance, calls of cancellation, residence in catchment area, etc.
- Important for drop-ins/shelters to connect with community literacy programs ask them for literacy and clear language support in your work and educate them about the needs of transient adults who want to learn

Participants Comments

- Role plays work well in life skills and developing communication skills. Particularly for youth, peer feedback is very important.
- People need access to supplies like pens, writing paper, computers
- Activities, games, fun things
- Food is a motivator for group participation - also hard to learn when you are hungry
- People depend on you - providing some structure and consistency for learning is important
- Encourage people to assist each other with literacy
- Important to encourage independence, not dependency, in learning situations

Homework:

For next week, think about these models. Talk to staff or other volunteers in your program. Think about:

- What are the literacy needs of members/clients/residents/peers?
- What programming and activities are popular in your program?
- Which literacy models might work in your program?
- How would you change/modify/invent models to meet the particular needs of people in your program?
- Who might facilitate literacy work in your program?
- Who might support literacy work in your program?

The Literacy and Homelessness Project
St. Christopher House

Literacy Training for Drop-In, Shelter, and Community Workers

Week II - Summary Notes

March 14, 1995

Models of Drop-In Literacy (Part II)

Facilitator: Betsy Trumpener, St. Chris/The Meeting Place

As Week I homework, participants were asked to think about the models of literacy that were presented, to talk about them with their co-workers, and to consider the following questions:

Think about your program/agency:

1. What are the members'/residents/clients needs? What are their literacy needs?
2. What programming and activities are popular?
3. Which literacy models might work?
4. Who might do literacy work or facilitate it?
5. Who could support this work?
6. How could you change/modify/invent models to meet the particular needs in your agency?

This week, participants met in two groups to share their thoughts.

Shelter/Overnight Workers

- One-on-one
- Mutual respect
- Empowering people to take responsibility
- Building trust, offering consistency

- Masking the group's name i.e. calling literacy "Communication" For men who have long history of institutionalization/incarceration, image is extremely important, and literacy is still highly stigmatized
- Hook into things people already do - i.e. discussion or writing groups about films, TV, current events
- Role modelling/role plays
- Normalizing learning : destigmatize literacy and literacy problems
- Finding outside resources
- Important to get reading materials for street adults, not suburban adults
- Kinesthetic/experiential/hands-on activities
- Facilitator can share their difficulties with learning and ask for help
- Live and learn - hands on

Community & Drop-In Workers

- Models that have worked at Sistering are creative things, writing group or photography
- Applying or tying literacy work into life skills training. Very important to connect with issues related to & important to peoples' lives
- Workshop model works well
- Reality is that resources and support are very limited; its hard to balance everyone's needs in a multilevel group, for example, CED
- take current issues in people's lives and incorporate literacy in that for example, responding to PNA cuts

The facilitator acknowledged that these are only initial discussions. Participants were encouraged to continue these discussions with each other and with the people they work with.

In addition, all of this training's facilitators are available to talk or meet with participants' and their programs to assist them in thinking about how to meet people's literacy needs.

Reading and Reading Theory

Facilitators: Shawn Conway and Violetta Ilkiu, Beat the Street, 979-3361

Large Group Discussion:

When the people you work with tell you that they can't read something, what do they say?

- "I don't understand the words."
- "I don't remember what I read."
- "I understand some things but not everything."
- "I don't know how to pronounce (sound out) the words." "Those words are too big, complicated, etc."
- "I don't understand this English / this kind of language"

Participants were asked to read a short text called "Maintaining a Consistent Light Source". The text was about electricity and had lots of technical vocabulary. Most participants found it frustrating to read this, because they didn't know the vocabulary, couldn't remember what they were reading, were intimidated by the technical jargon, and had no experience/background knowledge about electronics.

Large group discussion:

What strategies did you use to read this text?

- Skip the whole damn thing
- Skim to get the gist of it
- Relied on previous life experience and reading experience
- I tried to visualize what they were talking about
- Substitute words to understand the whole meaning
- Read ahead and then reread it
- Read ahead for the gist of it and then went back to read it slowly

Sean pointed out that although participants are fluent, experienced readers, we used some of the same language that beginning readers' use in describing their reading difficulties. The difference is that we have strategies to overcome problems with vocabulary, comprehension, etc.

We concluded that:

- **We read for overall meaning, not details**
- **We select and use different reading strategies to make meaning**
- **We make predictions and then read to confirm our predictions**
- **As experienced readers, we have more experience with and confidence in our reading strategies. We need to support beginning readers to develop and trust their reading strategies.**

Violetta explained two approaches to developing reading skills.

Bottom - Up.

Many of us learned to read this way as kids.

First we learned the alphabet, or single words using pictures.

We developed sequential skills starting with decoding or sounding out letters and single words.

At some point, our ability to decode words was greater than our ability to understand what we read, and a plateau of non-comprehension was reached.

Top-Down

This is the approach used most often in adult literacy.

We start by reading for meaning, reading relevant materials that are necessary for survival.

People are engaged and motivated by trying to read relevant, meaningful things. Through this process of reading meaningful things, relying on their knowledge of the spoken English language, and their life experience, they can also learn about the "building blocks" - the letter/sound correspondence (which is called phonics), the letters of the alphabet, predicting or guessing information and words from the context, getting meaning from the context. They use their knowledge of the oral English language to make sense of sentence structure. (You don't need to have a formal knowledge of grammar to know what parts of speech are or how they work.)

Comprehension (understanding what is read) and decoding (sounding out the words on the page) develop together.

There is no magic to learning to read. People need practice, support and encouragement to try different strategies. It is very important that reading material is relevant and meaningful to adults on the street.

The Language Experience Approach

Facilitator: Betsy Trumpener

This is a tool you can use right away to help someone learning to read or write. In Week 1, we talked about how learning should be relevant and useful, and build on people's experience and current skills. This week, we've learned more about the importance of meaning and relevance in helping people to learn to read and write. The Language Experience Approach is a way of teaching adult literacy that brings all these things together. It validates people's own language and experience. It's also a way to create instant, meaningful reading materials if you don't have any books around in the shelter or drop-in.

Language Experience Approach

- respects and values people's experience and language
- is meaningful
- easy way to create instant reading material
- you act as a scribe to write down the person's story or words exactly as they speak them
- what you have written down becomes the reading text, and a basis to do further work on spelling, sight words, editing, copying, etc.
- People find it easier to decode and to comprehend material that is personal, meaningful, and uses their own way of speaking and vocabulary.

LEA in drop-ins and shelters

A handout was distributed giving more information about the LEA and how it is used to do literacy work in a tutoring relationship. However, the way that the LEA is used in most literacy programs may not be practical or appropriate given the immediate, hurry-up demands of survival literacy. **Think about how you would use or adapt the LEA. Think of the times and the reasons that people ask you to write things for them. In what situations would the LEA approach be useful or usable?** For example: helping someone to write a covering letter, making a complaint in the hostel, writing an article for the newsletter about residents' response to PNA cuts or Code Blue

The LEA was modeled for the group, as writing up a complaint from a shelter resident. Participants then practiced telling and scribing the LEA in pairs.

The group was asked to consider:

- Did you feel more comfortable telling your story or writing? Why?
- Did your "tutor" edit your words or change what you said? What things? Why?

Supporting Writing

Facilitator: Janine Luce, Street Haven Literacy, Phone: 967-6060

Janine described different approaches to facilitating writing. Even with the demands of survival, people have huge amounts of creativity. Literacy & homelessness is not just about survival writing, but also personal expression and using writing for empowerment.

Writing Groups

- support self reflective writing
- people write on a topic and then share their writing with the group
- this tends to appeal to higher level people, Helps to maintain literacy skills.
- Creative Writing in Group Work by Robin Dynes is an excellent book with lots of ideas. Its available at the Alpha Ontario Library. 397-5900. 21 Park Road, near Yonge and Bloor.

Newsletters

Janine showed newsletters from the Meeting Place, Fred Victor, and other programs. These newsletters can be put together very simply. In some places, members/residents/clients write as well as edit and produce the newsletter. This teaches new skills and gives them control over the final product. People who can't write can get other people to write down their words. It's very powerful for them to see their words in print. Newsletters travel all over the city with people. Its empowering for people to be able to write about themselves and describe their reality, instead of always being written about by others.

Other

- Janine and Sean modelled writing an ongoing dialogue.
- Some programs encourage "graffiti" writing by putting up flip chart paper or whiteboards on the wall. People can express themselves or carry on written conversations, debates & dialogues
- Advocacy: writing letters of complaint, signs for demonstration, letter to the editor, etc.

Transactional Literacy (Functional Literacy)

Facilitator: Betsy Trumpener

Groups were given a particular literacy task to complete.
They were asked to consider these questions:

1. What literacy skills does someone need to complete this task?
2. What other skills does someone need to complete this task?
3. If you were helping someone with this task, what strategies would you use to help them build their skills and independence, rather than just doing it for them?

Group 1 Task

**A client asks you for the phone number of the welfare office on Dovercourt.
You hand them the phone book and tell them to look it up.**

Skills needed:

Recognize letters
Spell (welfare office, Dovercourt)
Know the alphabet
Know the numbers
Be able to write down or memorize a phone number
Understand how the blue, white, and yellow pages work
Be able to follow instructions
Know alphabetical order for initial and subsequent letters
Know about order and sequence
Be able to pick the right number from a list of numbers

Strategies:

- Get them to call 411 from a pay phone and get the number
- Explain how the phone book works (you need time to do this, and a phone book)

Group 2 Task

A 37 year old man wants to get from Seaton House to the Meeting Place. He has a TTC map.

Skills needed:

Understand the concept of a map (scale, representation, spatial concepts)
Know directions (east, west, north, south)
Read street and streetcar numbers
Read street names

Strategies:

Highlight the route on the map
Give them the number of the streetcar to take
Use their resources - ask the streetcar driver to tell you the right stop
Describe landmarks that show they are on the right route (Eaton Center) or have gone too far (Trinity Bellwoods Park)
Give them simple directions
Get them to draw their own map of the route

Group 3 Task

A teenager from Manitoba, living on the street in Toronto, wants to get a job at MacDonaldis and to apply for OHIP.

Skills needed for Form Filling:

High level of reading comprehension
Be able to write neatly and in print
Understand form jargon and vocabulary

Be able to follow directions and written instructions
Understand form conventions - which parts to fill out, space conventions of writing in boxes and writing on the line
Numeracy and sequencing skills for writing dates
Understand employment law and illegal questions
Understanding barriers - how to fill out if you don't have a phone or address, or a solid work history

Strategies:

Give them blank forms to practice on or copy information onto.
Write out the meaning of form vocabulary for them to keep

Numeracy Section was deferred to Week 3.

Homework:

Bring a flyer or brochure or form from your program/agency for next week to put into clear language.

The Literacy and Homelessness Project
Training for Drop-In, Shelter, and Community Workers

Week III

March 21, 1996

Learning and Medication

Facilitator: Nancy Friday-Cockburn, St. Christopher House Literacy Program

Nancy gave a brief overview of the effects of medication, alcohol, and inhalants on the ability to learn. She suggested strategies for working with someone whose ability to learn is affected in this way. Nancy distributed a handout, "Literacy and Medication"

Literacy and Medication

by Nancy Friday-Cockburn, St. Christopher House Literacy Program

Medication has side effects that impact on a person's learning to read and write. Other side effects affect how people appear, behave and fit in with others. These effects can impact on a person's self esteem which impacts on their learning process.

Concentration

Concentration may be difficult for people who are either sped up or slowed down by medication. Peoples abilities may change from day to day or they may follow a pattern. Sometimes peoples concentration is worse at certain times of the day or week depending on when they take their medication. Know your learning partner. Talk about this if the person is comfortable doing so. Choose a time together that is good to meet. Work with the strengths of your learning partner.

Memory

Medication can affect memory, both short and long term. Figure out what kinds of memory skills are the strongest for your learning partner. Information about learning styles will be helpful here. Build on the strengths. Recognize the impact of the medication for what it is, don't try to work against it.

Shaking

Shaking can be a side effect of medication. Shaking can affect writing. With some medications the fine muscles in the hands are affected. Writing large on flip chart paper can be easier when this occurs. Guided writing (your hand over the learners) can also be helpful. Discuss what the learner is comfortable with. Maybe not writing at all is most comfortable if the shaking is erratic.

Other movements

Other movements, such as rocking, repetitive motions of parts of the body, having a shuffling walk or stiff joints can be direct effects of medications. If the behaviour doesn't interfere with literacy learning and if your learning partner doesn't worry about it, then neither should you

Vision

With medication, some people have temporary problems with their eyes, some have permanent effects and may get glasses. Blurred vision is a very common side effect of medications. Partners have to discuss this and figure out ways to make seeing the letters easier. Some ideas are to:

- change the lighting, if possible
- use a different colour and/or size of pen
- enlarge the text
- take frequent breaks to allow the persons eyes to rest

Unusual or Emotional Behaviour

Be flexible about what to expect . from a person on any given day. People's well-being fluctuates and can affect their ability to cope with daily activities. including their literacy learning. Much of the time, people know how much they can handle and how to take care of themselves. Learn to work at your learner's pace. For some of us that alone can be a huge challenge in tutoring.

In his book *Just Ask!* Howard Davidson addresses various problems that can arise when tutoring a person who is on medication for mental illness and proposes strategies to cope with these in a literacy learning context (p.95-137). The issues he addresses are:

- attendance
- attention
- blurred and double vision
- changing courses
- comprehension
- delusions
- drowsiness and fatigue
- hallucinations
- hygiene
- mental regression
- problem solving and organization
- realistic goals
- responsiveness
- stigma and stereotyping
- tardive dyskinesia
- tremors

Substance Abuse

Alcohol and inhalant abuse both adversely affect short term and long term memory. Brain dysfunction disorders are related to both inhalant abuse and alcohol abuse. That means that the brain's capacity to store information is damaged. The impact this has on learning is significant.

Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol is a depressant and therefore affects a person's ability to concentrate. The person becomes easily fatigued and distracted which affects memory processing. With alcohol abuse there is a tendency to deny that a problem exists. This is not helpful in a learning situation. It helps to be straightforward with the person. " It appears to me that you have been drinking. Your

behaviour is making it very difficult for me to be helpful. Are you receiving any help for this problem?" If the person says no or denies it, you must be firm about what you are prepared to do. Some people will adapt their tutoring to this situation, some will not continue the session. Some will not continue the tutoring unless the problem is being treated.

Inhalants

Inhalants are chemicals which produce fumes. By breathing in these fumes the individual experiences a 'high' or 'rush'. Common inhalants are solvents, gasoline, glue, cleaning fluid, hair spray and cookware coating. Long term abuse of inhalants causes physical damage, including damage to the central nervous system. A common effect is brain damage leading to dementia. Dementia involves the loss of intellectual abilities, including problems with memory, judgement, speech and decision-making. The impact on the person's ability to learn is significant. Because of the affect inhalants have on memory processing, tutoring a person high on inhalants will not be effective.

Again it is important to be firm about what you are prepared to do.

In the book *Am I Welcome Here?* Julia Rogers has a section called "Suggestions and Recommendations for Literacy Workers" and another called "Suggestions and Recommendations for Literacy Tutors". These will both be helpful to anyone tutoring people who experience side effects of medications.

Culture

One participant pointed out that our cultural background also affects our learning. We all have culturally based learning styles which are embedded in our culture.

People's learning difficulties should not be automatically associated with alcohol or drugs - it may be that they see the world and approach problems from a framework that is different than the dominant, "white" framework. These different approaches to learning should be valued. At the same time, people need to develop "mainstream strategies", a process of learning to use the "white way" framework. People need to learn different patterns, ways of making connections, recognize, and logical thinking in order to adapt to mainstream society and education.

CLAD

Facilitator: Betsy Trumpener

Participants looked at a flyer advertising a tenants' meeting.

What makes it hard to read?

- letters are slanting
- distracting, too busy
- words get cut off
- assumes knowledge of vocabulary - what does "Tenant Selection" mean?
- font/print sizes are all different
- weird letters going in all different directions
- uses all capital letters

Participants then looked at a clear language flyer advertising the same meeting.
What makes it easy to read?

- picture shows what it is about
- easy to look at
- information is clearly explained
- clear, concise to read
- inclusive
- uses bold font to highlight important info
- uses upper and lower case letters

Betsy explained that material in clear language makes information accessible to as many people as possible. Clear language information should provide an overlap between what the reader wants to know and what the writer wants to say. These are some key things to remember in writing things clearly: Know what you want to say and who the information is for

- Determine what information is most important
- Put important information first
- If you are asking people to do something or take action, put what people need to do first
- Use a title or headings
- Put it in a logical order
- Use pictures that help people understand the text
- Use language that is familiar to people
- Use active language that shows who is responsible for what is happening: ("The government is cutting PNA" is clearer than "PNA is being cut.")
- Sentence order of Subject -verb - object explain acronyms: Personal Needs Allowance (PNA)
- print size - 14 point or 12 point
- style - Times Roman or Palatino
- use upper and lower case letters. ALL CAPITALS ARE HARD TO READ, BECAUSE THEY HAVE FEWER DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS.
- use short lines (12 - 14 words per line)
- we can all learn to make things easy to read - it takes practice

Participants broke into pairs and small groups to try to CLAD material from their programs and agencies. Betsy, Nancy, and Janine provided assistance. Materials included the Out of the Cold schedule, a brochure on TB and HIV, and the Sistering brochure.

If you don't know who the material is for, try to make it as readable as possible. (We all benefit from clarity!) If there is lots of information, perhaps write the first paragraph of front panel clearly, so that people who only get that far can read it.

Numeracy

Facilitator: Janine Luce, Street Haven Literacy

Janine discussed a handout on numeracy. Numeracy work, like the language experience story, can easily draw on people's life experience and actual tasks that they need to do. Some examples from the handout were:

- Budgets - use flyers, which have big pictures and big numbers
- Cooking/recipes - can use to look at imperial and metric systems
- Banking: Bank machine vocabulary is not in clear language

In addition, Janine and the participants suggested:

- Learning to read and spell written numbers
- Flashcards (some people don't like them. You can buy or make your own.)
- Use money or fake money
- Learning to use a calculator, especially if they have memory problems
- Strategies for counting using fingers
- Building models for learning measurement, geometry
- Some people love math drills from math workbooks
- We can develop street-related word problems, for example the social service cuts to determine percentage and do money math
- Get people to gather and calculate statistics about drop-in or shelter usage

Community Resources

Facilitator: Janine Luce, Street Haven Literacy

Janine provided written information and flyers about the Literacy Access Network (referrals to ESL, Upgrading, literacy, etc.) Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy, & Alpha Ontario. The Project's flyer on literacy programs/classes for transient people was distributed.

Janine also presented information about the Independent Learning Center (ILC correspondence courses), Ontario Basic Skills at George Brown College (non-credit upgrading for college entrance, free for UI and SARS, must write a two hour entrance test and be above grade 7 level.), Toronto Board of Education Literacy & ESL classes.

Action Plan

Facilitator: Betsy

Participants were asked to develop a written action plan on what they what literacy work they would like to do in their programs after the training. After working on these individually or in program groups, participants reported back to the group about their plans.

Niagara Community Health Center - Maryanne

- she will present information about the literacy training at their staff meeting, especially the CLAD info
- her placement at Niagara is finished in two weeks, but she will let people know that Betsy is at Meeting Place

Community Economic Development/Special Projects, St. Christopher House - Rick

- aware that CED project loses participants due to literacy issues
- would like to develop clear language materials for CED around business
- SHOP housing - aware that information about lease and landlord/tenant rights needs to be clearer, use less jargon
- would like to make information about political/economic literacy more accessible - will pursue this through the Metro Network

Maxwell Meghan Center (Salvation Army) - Kathleen

- attended training as fact finding
- have to report and share information with their ED and management board
- at beginning of process: needs are not yet known
- so, needs assessment may be first step
- may not be able to offer low-level training, possibly higher level
- need to look at money, staff, space, equipment needed
- have both transient and long term residents
- interested in computer training but PLATO system very expensive
- excited to see hostel resident teaching another man math

Youth Without Shelter, Etobicoke - Michelle

- Michelle has been providing support to youth doing ILC courses
- now, they are funded for 1 day/week for 9 weeks to do literacy and whole range with youth, at their own pace. Work with 10 youth.
- 3 out of 28 residents are more basic, but its hard to reach them.
- \$ came from United Way, to keep kids out of trouble and off the streets
- they are getting computers & other resources.
- would like to CLAD their information

Sistering - Daniela

- will take this to Board, staff, and volunteers (program-wide discussion)
- do a needs assessment
- want to put forward a proposal and develop a process
- will draw on St. Chris for support in this
- group from training will meet in April
- interested in CED

First Nations Adult Education Project - Sally

- would like to connect with what Sistering is doing
- would like to work on a more holistic model, together with First Nations' staff
- would like to work on continuity
 - maybe weekly learning circles for discussion at Sistering
 - work with learners on plans
- would like to draw on volunteers both at Sistering and at Native Women's Resource Center, to emphasize that learning doesn't stop when I'm not there
- would like to be part of Sistering discussions
- Project groups at Native Women's and at Sistering do not mix; uncomfortable on each others' turf
- no computers at Sistering
- need to develop a framework for doing literacy, maybe incorporate CED

Out of the Cold

- St. Michael's Hospital Volunteer Services has offered space, volunteer tutors (retired teachers), and computers to support literacy work at Out of the Cold
- many Out of the Cold volunteers are very interested

Wrap-Up

- Participants were invited to attend a Reunion/Check-In/Trouble Shooting session on Thursday, May 9 from 3 to 5:30 to talk about how their action plans are going and to get support.
- A phone list of participants and facilitators was distributed.

Suggested Training and Discussion Topics for Literacy & Homelessness Facilitators

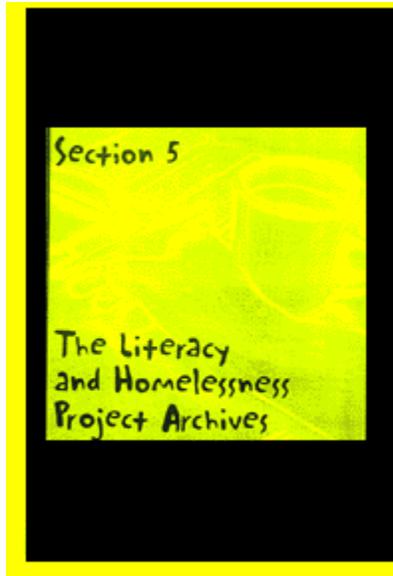
- Adult Education Principles
- Literacy Tutoring
- Popular Education
- Anti-Discrimination and Cultural Sensitivity training
- Stress management and working with adults under stress
- Nonviolent conflict resolution / Crisis Management
- Addictions and harm reduction strategies
- Group building techniques
- Community resources and referrals
- Mental health issues. Learning and medications.
- Health and homelessness

Ongoing training and support for literacy facilitators is invaluable.

It is also important to support networking between facilitators, so that they can share information and experiences and dispel feelings of isolation.

Section 5

The Literacy and Homelessness Project Archive



The Literacy and Homelessness Project Archives

In this section, you'll find articles and flyers about The Literacy and Homelessness Project in Toronto.

St. Christopher House's Literacy and Homelessness Project

By Karen Farmer

As literacy workers understand, adult learners face great challenges. However, for adults experiencing homelessness, social isolation and the challenges of extreme poverty, or for those coping with addictions, literacy studies are often unimaginable.

In St. Christopher House's catchment area of south west Toronto, the "traditional" model of weekly scheduled tutoring is difficult for many learners to meet. To address this and meet the unique learning needs of this population, St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program and St. Christopher House's The Meeting Place drop-in have launched a pilot literacy project for people marginally housed or living on the streets. The Literacy and Homelessness Initiative is funded by the National Literacy Secretariat and is the first of its kind in Canada.

As researcher/literacy facilitator I was hired to develop and explore various models of delivering literacy, taking into consideration drop-in centre learners' need for flexibility. Literacy projects have taken many forms including: a weekly writing group; a bimonthly newsletter; one-on-one tutoring; training of members to become tutors; a monthly radio show and the addition of a literacy focus in daily drop-in activities. Many members (as regular visitors to the drop-in are termed) have become excited by writing, learning and having an outlet for their tremendous creative talents. Having a variety of programs which respond to the transient nature of life on the streets has made the program effective.

A forum presentation of this project's findings will be taking place February 8, 1995 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Meeting Place drop-in (see box). Literacy and drop-in workers will have the opportunity to share information about delivering literacy to socially isolated adults. Many experts, in the field will be present, and they will be displaying information about funding, publishing learners' writings and unique programs. All MTML members are warmly welcome to attend. We hope to see you there

Karen Farmer is the researcher/literacy facilitator at St. Christopher House's The Meeting Place.

You are invited to The Meeting Place Literacy and Homelessness Forum.

When: February 8, 1995 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Where: The Meeting Place, 761 Queen Street W.

There will be speakers from literacy programs, funding agencies, and community organizations there to share their expertise about literacy and homelessness.

Please call Karen Farmer at (416) 366-3571 if you would like to attend.

MTML Update, Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy Newsletter, #31, P. 9
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You are invited to **The Meeting Place Literacy and Homelessness Forum** on *Feb. 8th, 1995* from *10:00am* to *12:00pm* at 761 Queen St. W., Toronto.

We'll be presenting the findings of our research project which explores several models of delivering literacy in a drop-in centre. This forum will offer an excellent information sharing opportunity!

At the forum you'll get a chance to:

- view materials produced by learners at the Meeting Place drop-in and meet the authors.
- hear about the process of establishing new programs at a drop-in centre by researcher/literacy facilitator Karen Farmer.
- talk with experienced people in the Literacy and Homelessness field.
- connect with literacy and drop-in workers in your area.

The following will share their expertise:

- **Bill Worrell** of Beat the Street will discuss tutor training.
- **Louis Dionne** of Parkdale Activity Recreation Centre (P.A.R.C.) will offer information about the P.A.R.C. writing group.
- **Harold Alden** of the Ontario Training Adjustment Board, will talk about funding to Toronto literacy programs.
- **Marcela Fresolone** from Parkdale Project Read will display published learners' writings.
- **Sarah Clenyg-Jones** + editorial collective from Fred Victor Mission will answer questions about producing a drop-in centre newsletter.
- **Nancy Cooper** from the Native Womens' Resource Centre will outline how their centre meets the literacy needs of the Native womens' community.

Please call Karen Farmer at 366-3571 to R.S.V.P. Thank you.

The Meeting Place Finds its Own Way to Literacy

By Janine Luce

On February 8, 1995, The Meeting Place hosted a forum about literacy and homelessness at their location on Queen Street West. The forum was well attended by people in literacy, Meeting Place members, and people interested in the area of literacy and homelessness.

The forum was a chance for The Meeting Place to tell people about their Literacy and Homelessness Project. The project focused on finding ways to deliver literacy services to the clients at The Meeting Place.

The panelists told people about the different ways The Meeting Place brought literacy to its members. Over the past year, three peer tutors were trained at The Meeting Place. They are all now doing regular tutoring with their fellow members.

Many of the regular activities at The Meeting Place now have a literacy component. The weekly members meetings provide a chance for members to work on writing an agenda and minutes. There is also a writing group which gets together every week to discuss issues and write about them. The writing from this group is often published in the recently-revived newsletter. Literacy has also been introduced in The Meeting Place's advocacy work. Members wrote and presented questions at a mayoral debate during the last municipal election. They also prepared deputations and wrote appeal letters.

It was very exciting to see the innovation used in the project to find ways of including literacy in The Meeting Place. I was thrilled to hear members read their writing. Terry Remple, one of the panelists, talked about the writing group. He told everyone that there are people who are at different literacy levels and that everyone has a different reason to come.

News Flash!

St. Christopher House Adult Literacy and The Meeting Place are beginning to develop a Toronto network for drop-ins and literacy programs who serve or are interested in serving people who are experiencing homelessness. For more information contact Karen Farmer at (416) 504-7571

Ontario Literacy Coalition adopts "New Directions"

The Ontario Literacy Coalition had its Annual Conference and General Meeting from April 20-22, 1995, in Sudbury, Ontario. At this meeting the membership voted to adopt the new constitution outlined by the New Directions Committee. This new constitution supports the development of five councils: sectoral; regional; special interests, needs and equity; learners; and community partners. The two major objectives of the OLC - advocacy and field development - will be directed by the work of these councils.

MTML Update, Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy Newsletter #32. Spring, 1995. P. 7.
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ST. CHRISTOPHER HOUSE ADULT LITERACY PROGRAM'S LITERACY AND HOMELESSNESS PROJECT

would like to invite you to our first networking meeting on **Friday July 14th** to discuss ways of delivering literacy to a transient population.

We hope to discuss:

- how do we (as overworked) drop-in, shelter and literacy, workers want to network with each other in order to better deliver literacy to the populations we serve.
- what training do you as staff need or desire to better deliver literacy?
- SCHALP latest funding proposal to network with Metro Toronto programs which deliver literacy to a homeless population.
- the literacy models developed at the St. Christopher House Meeting Place drop-in. Copies of the Literacy and Homelessness Final Report will be available.

Let's talk about what you need and how we can help each other.

Location: The Meeting Place drop-in, 761 Queen St. West (1.5 blocks west of Bathurst St.)

Time: 9:30 -11:30 a.m.

Please R.S.V.P. Tel: 504-7571 or 539-9000

Literacy in the Drop-in

The Literacy and Homelessness initiative, a new approach

by Karen Farmer and Fernando Marshall

For people interested in improving their literacy skills, the ability to make and keep appointments is a prerequisite. This may not seem like much to ask, but consider how difficult this can be if you do not have a phone or even a place to live. This is the situation faced by many members of the St. Christopher House Meeting Place Adult Drop-in.

"Over the years the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program has attempted to meet the needs of Meeting Place Members," says Nancy Friday-Cockburn, a program worker with the Adult Literacy Program. "Tutor and learner partnerships work independently and contact each other when cancelling and rescheduling. When one partner does not have an address or telephone, it's more likely these partnerships will break down. For people at the drop-in homelessness, addiction and isolation are real barriers to learning."

In the spring of 1994, the Adult Literacy Program teamed up with staff at the Meeting Place to address the literacy needs of the members in the drop-in setting.

"Writing at the Meeting Place has been a good experience. If people write, they get to express themselves differently," says Antonio, a member of the drop-in. "I used to come here have coffee and play pool. Now I am planning for the future to be a good writer."

To make the program accessible to all the members and to reduce the stigma some members feel about working on their literacy skills, the Meeting Place has adapted existing programs and activities to incorporate a literacy component.

Minutes taken at weekly meetings are now written in clear language in a log so that members of all literacy levels can find out what is happening at the drop-in. The group also participated in the camera club's calendar project. Learners and tutors wrote small captions to fit each photo in the calendar. Members not only got to see their words in print, but also benefited from a portion of sales from each calendar.

The writing group encourages people, regardless of their level of literacy, to express themselves creatively. "It was only after joining the writing group that I was able to complete anything that I tried to write," said Terry Remple, a member at the drop-in. "Before that I thought that what I had to say was not important, or had been said already. The writing group gave me the support I needed to express myself." Three members have been trained as literacy tutors to work one-to-one with other members who request more support in improving their literacy skills.

Perhaps the most significant benefit of having literacy programming in the drop-in is that members have been able to draw on the confidence which comes from improving their reading and writing skills, and become active in the larger political process. Members have given deputations at City Hall and prepared questions for candidates during the last Municipal elections. The Literacy and Homelessness initiative at The Meeting Place has made literacy training accessible to people who have the desire to learn, but few opportunities.

Karen Farmer is a literacy program worker and Fernando Marshall is a drop-in worker.

House to House. Volume 4, Number 1. Spring, 1995. P. 3.

**The Real Word on the Street:
Literacy and Homelessness in Toronto
By Betsy Trumpener**

Toronto is a harsh place this winter. Welfare cheques have been cut, rent controls will soon be history, and more than 4,500 people sleep in emergency shelters every night. Thousands of people continue to live in housing that is substandard or unsafe. Hundreds more live on the street. How does our literacy work respond to these realities?

A few programs have been working for years to respond to the literacy needs of homeless people. Others have started to look at these issues more recently. What is the role of literacy tutoring to people whose lives are shaped by the immediate need to survive? Are literacy programs accessible to people who don't have a phone or an address in a catchment area? How is literacy work done in drop-ins or shelters? How can literacy and drop-in workers share their knowledge and experiences with each other?

St. Christopher House launched the Literacy and Homelessness Project more than a year ago to seek answers to these questions. Karen Farmer, the first Literacy and Homelessness Project Worker, initiated and facilitated literacy work at The Meeting Place drop-in. In addition, she did outreach and organized forums where literacy and drop-in workers could begin to learn from and support each other. Her work is summarized in a newly-released report, *Literacy and Homelessness: Delivering Literacy in an Adult Drop-In*. The report describes needs, barriers, models, and recommendations for doing literacy work with homeless and socially isolated adults.

This year, the Literacy and Homelessness Project is staffed by me, Betsy Trumpener. I am doing literacy work at The Meeting Place. I'm also working with a core group of frontline workers to plan and facilitate workshops for the literacy and drop-in communities. I'm available to act as a resource/mentor to programs or drop-ins wanting to do literacy with homeless people. In addition, I'll be facilitating an ALPHACOM conference and ongoing networking meetings.

**Literacy and Homelessness
Network Gathering**
Brown Bag Breakfast Discussion:

***Access to Literacy for Basic Level Learners
who are Homeless, Underhoused, or Socially
Isolated.***

When: Thursday, February 29, 1996 9:30
AM - 11:30 AM

Where: MTML Board Room, 365 Bloor St.
East, Suite #1003

To RSVP or for more information, call:

Betsy Trumpener
St. Christopher House
(416) 539-9000
(Mondays and Fridays)

To order copies of the report, find out more about the Project, or talk about your work in this area, please call Betsy Trumpener at 539-9000 on Mondays or Fridays.

Betsy is the Literacy and Homelessness project worker at St. Chris. Prior to this she worked at the Toronto Training Centre and at Parkdale Project Read.

MTML Update. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy Newsletter. #35, Winter, 1996.
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The Literacy and Homelessness Project
invites you to talk about

**Access to Literacy for Basic Level Learners who are
Homeless, Underhoused, or Socially Isolated.**

Thursday, February 29, 1996

9:30 - 11:30 AM

Board Room, Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy

365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1003, Toronto

(Just west of the Sherbourne Subway)

A discussion for:

Literacy Workers Drop-In Workers Shelter Workers

Anyone who is interested in developing literacy for homeless people

Please join us!

RSVP to Betsy Trumpener, Project Worker, at 539-9000 by Feb. 23.

Please bring a stack of your program's flyer or newsletter to share with others

The St. Christopher House Literacy and Homelessness Project. 248 Ossington Ave., Toronto.

This networking meeting is made possible by support from OTAB (Literacy Branch), The National Literacy Secretariat, and the City of Toronto Healthy City Office. The Literacy & Homelessness Project also benefits from the input of an Advisory Group composed of: St. Christopher House Literacy Program, St. Christopher House The Meeting Place Drop-In, First Nations' Adult Basic Education Project, Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center, Beat the Street, the Toronto Board of Education, and OTAB, Literacy Branch. "Drop in to read and write" image by Karen Farmer.

Sharing Ideas:

Discussion for Workers in Drop-ins and Shelters

By Bert Providence

On February 29, 1996, 25 representatives from 14 agencies and programs attended the Literacy and Homelessness Network Gathering in the boardroom. We discussed access to literacy for basic level learners who are homeless, underhoused or socially isolated. The meeting was facilitated by Betsy Trumpener, Project Worker.

This meeting provided an opportunity for workers in drop-ins and shelters to discuss ways in which literacy in these contexts differ from mainstream literacy. It was also an opportunity for staff from services for the homeless to get information about existing literacy services and programs.

We were asked to consider the barriers to doing literacy work in our respective organizations, and the barriers homeless people face in trying to access these programs and services. Some of the common difficulties identified were: lack of comfortable, private space; the effect of other issues in homeless people's lives; lack of resources to do outreach; and an environment or system that doesn't support learning for people outside the mainstream.

We then looked at ways we could remove these barriers and improve access. There was a wide range of suggestions and ideas put forward, and it was helpful to hear what other groups were doing so we could consider if we could apply some of these ideas in our own programs. One of the more important outcomes of this part of the discussion was the recognition of the need to work together. There was a common resolve to share ideas and resources and to help raise awareness of this issue. This was thought to be particularly appropriate now that more and more people are being thrown into this situation of homelessness.

Although not many literacy programs were represented here, it was encouraging to see so many other agencies represented. Participants had different levels of involvement in and knowledge of literacy, so at times the discussion was about literacy in general rather than on the stated topic. However, this level of participation confirms that this issue is a real one for many organizations and that there is a need for more literacy services to serve socialism isolated and homeless adults.

A series of workshops on Literacy and Homelessness were held in March as a follow-up to this discussion (page 12). Anyone interested in finding out more about this discussion, or about literacy and homelessness in general, should contact Betsy Trumpener at St. Christopher House, 539-9000.

Bert works with the Toronto Public Libraries

MTML Update. Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy Newsletter. #36. Spring, 1996. P. 16.
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The Literacy and Homelessness Project

How to do Literacy Work in Drop-Ins, Shelters, and Supportive Housing

A Training Workshop

For workers and experienced volunteers working in drop-ins, shelters, and rooming houses.
March 7, 14, and 21. From 3 - 5:30 PM.

These free workshops will give you some skills and new ideas for meeting the literacy needs of people who are homeless, socially isolated, or underhoused. After completing the training, you will be able to assess literacy needs, tutor people with literacy problems, and write flyers and signs that are easier to read.

Learn about:

- Literacy tutoring in the drop-in/shelter environment
- Literacy group work and peer tutoring
- Clear language and design
- Community resources for literacy and ESL

When:

- Three Thursday afternoons: March 7, 14, and 21, 1996.
3 PM to 5:30 PM.
One follow-up session will be scheduled for April.

Where:

St. Christopher Main House, 248 Ossington Avenue, Toronto.
At the northwest corner of Dundas Street West and Ossington.

For more information:

- Call Betsy Trumpener, Literacy & Homelessness Project Worker
at 539 - 9000 on Mondays or Fridays.

This training workshop is offered by St. Christopher House' Literacy and Homelessness Project. Assistance in workshop development was provided by staff from East End Literacy, Streethaven Literacy, and Seaton House day program. The Literacy and Homelessness Project benefits from the input of advisors from St. Chris Literacy, The Meeting Place Drop-In, First Nation's Adult Basic Education Project, PARC, Beat the Street, and the Toronto Board of Education. The workshop is made possible by financial support from OTAB (Literacy Branch), The National Literacy Secretariat, and City of Toronto Healthy City Office.

The Literacy and Homelessness Project presents

Learning on the Street

Participatory workshops about learning & teaching in drop-ins, shelters, and street literacy programs.

Thursday, June 6, 1996

3 PM - 6:30 PM

10 Trinity Square. Upstairs Chapel, Church of the Holy Trinity. Behind the Eatons' Centre.

Reading and Rap Sessions

Violetta Ilkiu and Shawn Conway
Beat the Street Literacy Program

Life Skills in Literacy

Nancy Cooper
First Nations' Adult Education Project

Writing from the Street: Making Newsletters

Betsy Trumpener, Literacy & Homelessness
Project
The Meeting Place Drop-In

Participatory Research

Libby Zeleke, Black Homeless Initiatives
Project
The Meeting Place Drop-In

Facilitating a Multi-Level Literacy Group

Kathy Ferreira
Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center

\$5 Registration Fee or Pay What You Can

For more info, please call Betsy, Literacy & Homelessness Project Worker, at 539-9000, Mondays or Fridays.

1:15pm - 3:15pm

SESSION 2

Literacy and Homelessness

Betsy Trumpener (St. Christopher House), Nancy Cooper (First Nations Adult Education Project) & Violetta Ilkiw. This workshop will engage participants in a critical discussion of key issues surrounding literacy and homelessness including access, poverty, survival needs, creativity and maintaining literacy skills, political action, stigma, and "literacy moments". We will explore some practical approaches to doing literacy with homeless people in drop-ins and shelters. You will be able to leave this workshop with an action plan to bring back your own community. (Record Room B)

Drop by the
Literacy and Homelessness Booth
at Word on the Street

Sunday, September 29. 11 AM to 6 PM. Booth 142, near Queen and Spadina

- CED products from The Hive, Stain Glass, and Tare Shop for sale
- Literary readings by Meeting Place members
- Photo display by the Meeting Place Camera Club
- Ali's Art sale
- Meeting Place newsletters, by donation
- Find out more about the literacy & homelessness project

To find out more or to help out, please talk to Betsy or Brian at the Meeting Place.

Literacy & Homelessness Project 142

More than 4,500 people slept in emergency shelters in Toronto last winter and hundreds more on the street. What does literacy mean to people fighting to survive? Find out about the literacy and homelessness project. Buy candles, bowls, glass and Indian crafts made at Meeting Place Drop-In.

Laubach Literacy 144b

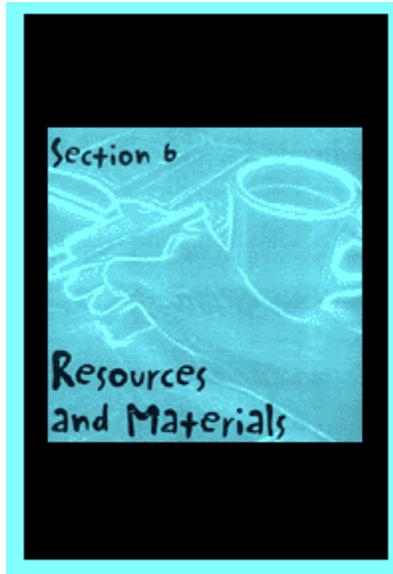
Native Women's Resource Centre 151

The Toronto Star, Saturday, September 28, 1996.

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Section 6

Resources and Materials



Resources and Materials

Materials

In Ontario, many of these books and resources can be borrowed through Alpha Ontario, a non-profit resource center for literacy and English as a Second Language materials. 21 Park Road, Toronto Ontario M4W 2N1. Telephone: (416) 397-5900, 1-800-363-0007 (toll free).

www.mtrt.toronto.on.ca/centres/alpha/.

E-mail: alphaont@gwmail.mtrt.toronto.on.ca. Your local literacy program or drop-in may also have some of these books.

ERIC Documents

There are currently about 26 ERIC documents which relate to Literacy and Homelessness. Some of these are listed in this bibliography. These documents are primarily project descriptions and evaluations from the American Adult Education for the Homeless program. Summary descriptions are housed at the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in the resource library. Summary descriptions can also be searched at the OISE library of the University of Toronto, where the complete ERIC documents are on microfiche. For more information, contact ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education. 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210 - 1090, U.S.A. Fax: 614-2921260. Home Page: <http://coe.ohio-state.edu/cete/ericacve/>.

Street Literacy and Literacy & Homelessness Projects

Dorey, Gloria. "Report on Ten-Week Program Based at the Elgin Street Mission, (Sudbury)" Unpublished report. Contact: D. Vanderle, New Leaf Literacy, 124 Cedar St., Third Floor, Sudbury, Ontario, Canada P3E 4M9.

Drury, Darrel and Koloski, Judy. *Learning to Hope: A Study of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program*. Washington D.C.: Department of Education, 1995. ERIC Document 381615.

Karen and the St. Christopher House Literacy Program Staff. *Literacy and Homelessness: Delivering Literacy in an Adult Drop-In*. Toronto: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1995. Order from: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 248 Ossington Avenue, Toronto, Canada. M6J 3A2. \$12.00 per copy plus 15% handling. Ordering information available on St. Christopher House's homepage: <http://www.torque.net/~schalp/homepage.htm>

Heath, Kathleen Butler. *Qualitative Perspectives on Educating the Homeless: A Case Study of Adult Education through Wayne Community College at the Homeless Shelters of Goldsboro, North Carolina (Stewart B. McKinney Act)*. Ed. D. Dissertation, North Carolina State University, 1994.

Lampropoulus. *Beat the Street: Literacy for Street People*. Unpublished University of Toronto Masters' Thesis. 1990. Available in the OISE Library, University of Toronto.

Love, Myron. "Storefront school draws street kids back to education" in *Education Manitoba*. Vol. 20, Number 3. January/February, 1993. Page 30 - 31.

Norris, Joye A. and Paddy Kennington. *Developing Literacy Programs for Homeless Adults*. Professional Practices in Adult Education and Human Resource Development. Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1992. Available in the Alpha Ontario and OISE libraries. Order from Krieger: 1-407-724-9542

James, Simon and others. *Meeting Half Way. Some Approaches to Educational Work with Single Homeless People by the Basic Education Development Scheme*. London, England, 1987. Project Description. ERIC Document 290907.

The Challenge in Education: Meeting the Needs of the Homeless Adult Learner and the New York State Life Management Conference. (Conference Proceedings.) Albany: SUNY, 1990. ERIC document 335558

The Meeting Place. *A Framework for Health Promotion with Homeless and Socially Isolated Adults*. September, 1992. Grade #89-7.

Velis, Jean - Pierre. "From the Campsite to the Street" in *Alpha :90. Current Research in Literacy*. Jean-Paul Hautecoeur, ed., Quebec: Ministere de l'education du Quebec, and UNESCO Institute for Education. 1990.

Internet Resources on Street Literacy..

<http://novel.nifl.gov/forums.htm> - National Institute for Literacy (U.S.) information on subscribing to the Literacy and Homelessness listserv, which is like a free conference and bulletin board.

<http://www.torque.net/~schalp/homepage.htm> - St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in Toronto.

Writing by People who are Homeless and Popular Media

Beat the Street students. *Heart Beats. Writings by the people of Beat the Street*. Toronto: Frontier College Press. February, 1994. Beat the Street has many other publications. To order, contact Beat the Street, 290 Jarvis Street, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 979 - 3361.

Beat the Street Women's Committee. *Recipes for Political Action*. Toronto: Beat the Street, 1993. This book includes stories by homeless women and youth, articles on the formation of a women's committee and a Clear Language sexual harrassment policy.

Coare, Pam and Loma Jones. " Inside-Outside. A Homeless People's Writing Project" in *Adults Learning*. January, 1996. P. 105 - 106.

Eighner, Lars. *Travels with Lizbeth: Three Years on the Road and On the Streets*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994.

Manno, Michael and Olivia Chow, eds. *Street Writings: Poetry and Prose by Street Youth*. Toronto: Olivia Chow, 1992. Available at the Alpha Ontario Library.

Micari, Susan. *The Theater Workshop Project: Experiences in Enhancing the Literacy of Homeless People*. 1992. ERIC Document 362581.

Writers from PARC, *Kiss Me You Mad Fool*. Toronto: Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center, 1991. ISBN 0-9694886-0-2. To order, contact: PARC, 1499B Queen Street West, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 537-2593.

PARC, *Foolproof*. The Weekly Newsletter of the PARC community. Toronto. Contact: PARC, 1499B Queen Street West, Toronto. Telephone: (416) 537-2593.

Scheffer, Ludo. "SHELCOM: Going High Tech with the Homeless." in *National Center on Adult Literacy (NCAL) Connections*. February, 1995. Philadelphia. P. 4 - 6.

Street Haven at the Crossroads. *The Blue Door Sun*. A newsletter produced by the literacy program in women's drop-in/shelter. To order, contact: Literacy Coordinator, Street Haven, 87 Pembroke Street, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 967-6060

I Want to Learn All the Dances. Stories from the Women of Street Haven. Toronto: A Blue Door Sun Publication, 1996. To order, contact: Literacy Coordinator, Street Haven, 87 Pembroke Street, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 967-6060

Susko, Michael, Ed. *Cry of the Invisible - Writings from the Homeless and Survivors of Psychiatric Hospitals*. Baltimore: Conservatory Press, 1991.

Swithinbank, Tessa. "World Exclusive" (Homelessness Street Papers) in *New Internationalist*, February, 1996. P. 28 - 30. This article includes information about the International Network of Street Papers.

The Meeting Place Newsletter. Published every 1-2 months by members of the Meeting Place Drop-in. Contact: Newsletter, The Meeting Place, 588 Queen Street West, Toronto, Canada M6J 1E3. E-mail: btrump@ican.net

Vanderstaay, Steven. *Street Lives: An Oral History of Homeless Americans*. Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1992.

Walters, Michael, et al eds., *Songs of the Streets. Poetry from Edmonton's Inner City*. Edmonton: Our Voice Newspaper, 1996. Contact: Our Voice Newspaper, 10527 - 96th Street, Edmonton, Alberta.

Ward, Jim. *Organizing the Homeless*. Ottawa/Montreal: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1989. This book includes information on organizing homeless-driven newspapers, radio shows, and participatory research.

Internet Resources:

<http://www.speakeasy.org/realchange/> - a monthly review of the best of *Real Change*, Seattle's Homeless newspaper. 2129 2nd Ave., Seattle Washington 98121. (206) 441-3247.

<http://www.teleport.com/~bcad/> - The Burnside Cadillac, Portland, Oregon's street newspaper published by the Bridge School literacy program

<http://nch.ari.net/stnews.html> - National Coalition for the Homeless (U.S.) information on the Street Newspaper Project, Homeless News Service, and on-line directory of Street newspapers

 <http://csf.colorado.edu/11/psn/home/> - Homeless News Service

Homelessness

Ambrosio, Elleen, Dilin Baker, Cathy Crowe, Kathy Hardill. *The Street Health Report. A study of the health status and barriers to health care of homeless women and men in the City of Toronto*. Toronto: Street Health, May, 1992.

Homeless, not Helpless. Report of the Homeless Persons Outreach Project. Toronto: Healthy City Office, 1991.

Literacy and Poverty: A View from the Inside. Research Report. Ottawa: National Anti-Poverty Organization (NAPO) / National Literacy Secretariat., 1992.

Ministry of the Advising Committee on the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. *More Than Just a Roof - Action to End Homelessness in Ontario*. Canada: Ontario Ministry of Housing, 1987.

Office of the Solicitor General & Office of the Chief Coroner. *Verdict of Coroner's Jury. Inquest into the Deaths of Upper et al*. Toronto: July 30, 1996.

One is too Many: Consolidated Recommendations: Inquiry into homelessness and street deaths in Toronto. Toronto Coalition against Homelessness. Toronto: May 25, 1996.

Russell, Betty. *Silent Sisters - A Study of Homeless Women*. New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, 1991.

Valpy, Michael. "One is too many" in *The Globe and Mail*. Toronto: June 1, 1996, p. D 1.

Wagner, David. *Checkerboard Square - Culture and Resistance in a Homeless Community*. Colorado: Westview Press, 1993.

Ward, Jim. *Organizing the Homeless*. Ottawa/Montreal: Canadian Council on Social Development, 1989.

Although dated, this book is an excellent orientation to the history of community development and organizing work with the homeless in Toronto, including comparisons and case studies of Australia. It includes a critical analysis of the role of the professional in this process, and the inherent conservatism of homelessness. Case studies of organizing strategies include newspapers, homeless-driven media, homeless-driven research, popular education, and leadership development.

Woolcott, Lynne. *Homelessness and Social Change: a case study in Community Development*. Unpublished research paper presented to Wilfred

Laurier University in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Social Work. April, 1994.

Internet Resources

<http://nch.ari.net/database.html> - National Coalition for the Homeless' Online Library

Literacy

Brundage, Donald H. And Dorothy MacKeracher. *Adult Learning Principles and their Application to Program Planning*. Toronto: Ministry of Education, 1980.

Calamai, Peter. *Broken Words. Why five million Canadians are illiterate. A Special Southam Survey*. Toronto: Southam, 1987.

Gaber-Katz, Elaine and Gladys M. Watson. *The Land that we Dream Of...A Participatory Study of Community-Based Literacy*. Toronto: OISE Press, 1991.

McKnight, John. "Regenerating Community" in *From Consumer to Citizen*. Canadian Mental Health Association. 1986.

First Nations' Literacy

First Nations Adult Education Project Team. *First Nations Adult Education Project. Final Report*. Unpublished report. Toronto: June 27, 1994. Contact: Nancy Cooper or Robert Beaton, Adult Basic Education Unit, Toronto Board of Education, Greenwood Centre, 24 Mountjoy Avenue, Room 232, Toronto, Canada M4J 1J6. Telephone: (416) 393-1995.

Internet Resources:

<http://www.nald.ca> - National Adult Literacy Database (Canada)

www.frabco.ca/alpha/index.htm - Federation canadienne pour l'alphabetisation en francais

<http://www.nald.ca/mcl/mcl.htm> - Movement for Canadian Literacy

<http://novel.nifi.gov/forums.html> - National Institute for Literacy (U.S.) information on subscribing to the Literacy and Homelessness listserv, which is like a free conference and bulletin board.

<http://www.torque.net/~schalp/homepage.html> - St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program in Toronto.

Consumer/Survivor Issues

Beaton, Robert. *Report on Literacy at Queen Street Mental Health Center* Unpublished report. July, 1995. Contact: Robert Beaton, Adult Basic Education Unit, Toronto Board of Education, Greenwood Centre, 24 Mountjoy Avenue, Room 232, Toronto, Canada M4J 1J6. Telephone: (416) 393-1995.

Centre for Independent Living in Toronto. *The Literacy Book - Options for Teaching Literacy to People with Disabilities*. Toronto: CIL, 1991. ISBN 1 - 895676-05-3.

The Canadian Mental Health Association. Metro Toronto Branch: 970 Lawrence Avenue West, Suite 205, Toronto, Ontario M6A 3B6. Telephone: 416 - 789 - 7957. Fax: 416 - 789-9079. E-mail: cmhator@io.org. CMHA Home Page: <http://www.io.org/cmhator/>

Davidson, Howard. *A Handbook for Instructors of Students being Treated for Mental Disorders*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1993. This book includes excellent information on learning and medications. It is currently out of print, but available through libraries, including Alpha Ontario.

Writers from PARC, *Kiss Me You Mad Fool*. Toronto: Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center, 1991. ISBN 0-9694886-0-2. To order, contact: PARC, 1499B Queen Street West, Toronto, Canada. Telephone:(416) 537-2593.

PARC, *Foolproof*. The Weekly Newsletter of the PARC community. Toronto. Contact: PARC, 1499B Queen Street West, Toronto. Telephone: (416) 537-2593.

Rogers, Julia. *Am I Welcome Here? A book about literacy and psychiatric experiences*. Toronto: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, 1991.

Access and Outreach in Education

Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies. *Report on the Literacy Needs of Women in Conflict with the Law*. Ottawa: 1989.

Fitzgerald, G.G. "Can the Hard-to-Reach Adults Become Literate?" in *Lifelong Learning*, February, 1984, Volume 7.

Thomas, Audrey M. *Encouraging Adults to Acquire Literacy Skills*. Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat. 1990.

Thomas, Audrey M. *The Reluctant Learner A Research Report on Nonparticipation and Dropouts in Literacy Programs in B. C.* Ottawa: National Literacy Secretariat: 1990.

Wimer, Maija. *Teaching the Hard to Reach: Working with Releasees and Probationers. A Handbook for Adult Educators*. Huntsville, Texas: Education Service Center.

Substance Abuse and Learning

Davidson, Howard. *A Handbook for Instructors of Students being Treated for Mental Disorders*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1993. Good information about the effects of drugs and medications on learning.

Fox, C. Lynn and Shirley E. Forbing. "Overlapping Symptoms of Substance Abuse and Learning Handicaps: Implications for Educators" in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. Vol. 24 (1); January, 1991. R 24-39. In Toronto, this book is available at the Addiction Research Foundation library.

Women's Issues

Ambrosio, Eileen, Dilin Baker, Cathy Crowe, Kathy Hardill. *The Street Health Report. A study of the health status and barriers to health care of homeless women and men in the City of Toronto*. Toronto: Street Health, May, 1992.

Beat the Street Women's Committee. *Recipes for Political Action*. Toronto: Beat the Street, 1993. Includes stories by homeless women and youth, articles on the formation of a women's committee and a CLAD sexual harassment policy.

Goodwill Industries of Pittsburgh, PA. *Family Literacy for Parents in Bridge Housing*. Project Description. 1993. ERIC Document 368877.

Horsman, Jenny. "Responding to Disclosures of Abuse in Women's Lives" in *Making Connections. Literacy and EAL Curriculum from a Feminist Perspective*. Toronto: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1996. p. 15.

Lloyd, Betty-Ann with Frances Ennis and Tannis Atkinson, eds. "Women's Committee, Beat the Street, Toronto, Ontario" in *The Power of Woman-Positive Literacy Work. Program Based Action Research*. Halifax: Femwood Publishing, 1994. Toronto: CLOW, 1994. p. 179 - 185.

Micari, Susan. *The Theater Workshop Project: Experiences in Enhancing the Literacy of Homeless People*. Project Description. ERIC document 362581. February, 1994.

Rockhill, Kathleen. "Literacy as Threat/Desire: Longing to be SOMEBODY" in *Women and Education: Canadian Perspectives*. J. Gaskell and A. McLaren (eds.) Calgary: Setselig, 1986. p. 315 - 331.

Street Haven at the Crossroads. *The Blue Door Sun*. A newsletter produced by the literacy program in women's drop-in/shelter. To order, contact: Literacy Coordinator, Street Haven, 87 Pembroke Street, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 967-6060.

I Want to Learn All the Dances. Stories from the Women of Street Haven. Toronto: A Blue Door Sun Publication, 1996. To order, contact: Literacy Coordinator, Street Haven, 87 Pembroke Street, Toronto, Canada. Telephone: (416) 967-6060.

Programs in Toronto

Literacy and Homelessness Project

248 Ossington Ave., Toronto, M6J 3A2

Telephone: 539 - 9000. Fax: 532-8739. Betsy Trumpener, Project Worker. St. Christopher House

E-Mail: btrump@ican.net

Information on developing literacy activities for people who are homeless in Toronto and Canada. Support for drop-in and literacy workers through the Toronto Street Education Coalition (TSEC), which meets every two months. Research report on Literacy and Homelessness and Resource Kit for literacy facilitators available for a small fee. Small resource library on literacy and homelessness.

Literacy Access Network

961-5557 from 9 AM - 5 PM.

A free hotline. Anyone can call. Up to date information and referral to literacy classes, upgrading, basic computer training, English as a Second Language classes, etc. in Metro Toronto.

Beat the Street

290 Jarvis Street, Toronto.

Phone: 979-3361. Contact: Violetta Ilkiw or Patricia MacNeil Works primarily with street youth, age 19 to 29, and homeless and marginally housed adults. One on one tutoring, state of the art computer lab, writing group, tutor training, women's group, men's group, small group work.

First Nations Adult Education Project

Adult Basic Education Unit, Toronto Board of Education Greenwood Center, 24 Mountjoy Avenue, Room 232, Toronto. M4J 1J6 Telephone: 393 - 1995 Contact: Nancy Cooper or Robert Beaton Provides culturally appropriate adult basic education through small groups and one on one tutoring for First Nations adults. Programs are offered at off-site locations such as Native Women's Resource Center, and Anduhyan Shelter. Call for intake and referral information.

The Meeting Place Drop-in, St Christopher House

588 Queen Street West, Toronto. (Enter off Bathurst) Telephone: 504 - 4275. Contact: Betsy Trumpener, Denyse Stewart, or drop-in staff. Newsletter writing and production, literacy assistance and resume help on a drop-in basis, computer access, referral to upgrading through St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program and George Brown College.

Native Women's ReSource Center

191 Gerrard Street East, Toronto M5A 2E5

Telephone: 963-9963. Contact: Jody MacDonald One on one literacy tutoring and computerized upgrading to the grade 12 level.

Parkdale Activity and Recreation Center

1499B Queen Street West, Toronto

Telephone: 537-2593. Contact: Kathy Ferreira

Literacy group (by referral only) and writing group. PARC is a drop-in center primarily for psychiatric consumer/survivors.

Street Haven Learning Resources Program

87 Pembroke Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 2N9

Telephone: 967-6060. Contact: Janine Luce

For women only. One on one tutoring, computer classes, writing group, math/numeracy group.

Toronto Board of Education

Adult Basic Education Unit,

Intake: Greenwood Center, 24 Mountjoy Avenue, Room 232, Toronto.

M4J 1J6 Telephone: 393-1994. Contact: Donald Qi, intake facilitator provides small group literacy classes in locations across the city. Classes at places like the Good Shepherd Refuge, Harbourlight (Central), Fred Victor Center, and Queen Street Mental Health Center (internal referrals only), may be particularly accessible for homeless adults.

Graffiti Jeunesse

920 Yonge Street, Suite 805, Toronto.

Telephone: 960-8332. Contact: Renaud Saint-Cyr

Small group Francophone literacy & computers for Francophone street youth to age 29. Referral to Francophone literacy for adults.

Council Fire Native Cultural Center - Literacy Program

252 Parliament Street, Lower Level, Toronto M5A 3A4

Telephone: 360-4350. Contact: Trish Roman

Daytime drop-in, overnight shelter, and literacy tutoring.