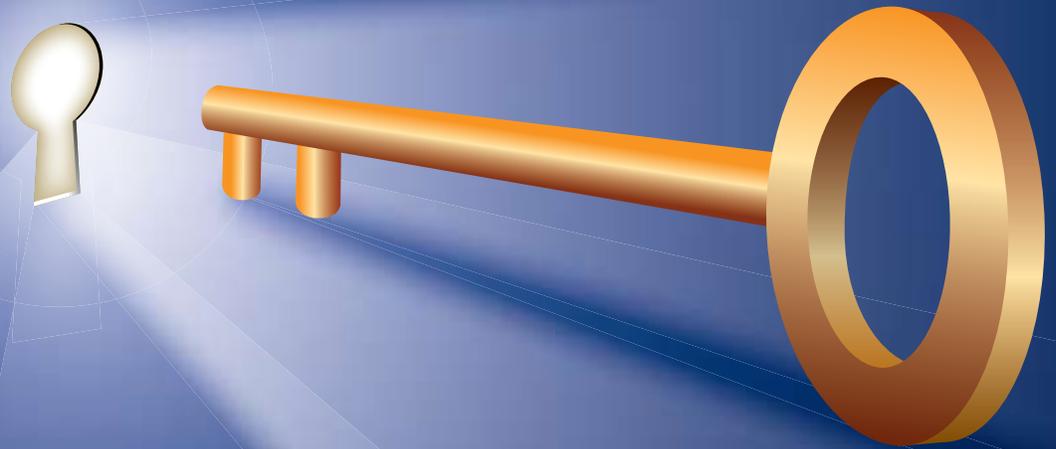


CELEBRATING  
ADULT  
LEARNERS

# POWER OF LEARNING

INTERNATIONAL  
ADULT LEARNERS'  
WEEK 2009



A WORLD OF  
POSSIBILITIES THROUGH  
LEARNING

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# ON YOUR CALENDAR



## DAYS

International Mother Language Day **February 21**

International Women's Day **March 8**

World Information Society Day **May 17**

World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development **May 21**

International Day of Older Persons **October 1**

World Teachers' Day **October 5**

United Nations Day **October 24**

Human Rights Day **December 10**

## DECADES

International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World 2001–2010

United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLD) 2003–2012

United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005–2014

## INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

UNESCO World Conference on Education for Sustainable Development – Moving into the Second Half of the UN Decade  
March 31–April 2, 2009,  
Bonn, Germany

*Living and Learning for a Viable Future: the Power of Adult Learning*, Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI) May 19–22, 2009,  
Belém, Brazil

*The New Dynamics of Higher Education*, The World Conference on Higher Education  
July 6–8, 2009, UNESCO, Paris

## KNOWLEDGE IS **POWER**

**E**very experience is a learning experience—in the classroom, in the community, at work, at play—it all counts.

Learning opportunities abound across all levels of society—and when the desire is there, you can accomplish anything. Accomplishment builds confidence, and

confidence leads to self-empowerment and success. Here are models for success—stories of how adult learners in Canada created a better life for themselves and their families through learning.

In Canada, International Adult Learners' Week 2009 will be celebrated March 2–8. Since 2000, this celebration has recognized adult learners in more than 40 countries around the world who have embraced learning.

# LEARNING: THE KEY TO INFINITE POSSIBILITIES



Never underestimate the power of learning. It opens doors to infinite possibilities for individuals and for societies. Learning is the key to personal fulfilment and empowerment, and the foundation on which sustainable, just and peaceful communities are built.

During International Adult Learners' Week (IALW), we celebrate adult learners and the power that their accomplishments give to us all. With each learning opportunity that they embrace, adult learners not only strengthen themselves, but also expand the knowledge, expertise and potential prosperity of their communities. The goal of IALW is to promote the value of lifelong learning, help build supportive networks for our adult learners and encourage their ongoing input and participation.

The Canadian Commission for UNESCO works with its partners to promote festivals, literacy days and other learning activities across the country. Our partners include community groups, non-governmental organizations, learning institutions, foundations, unions, governments at all levels and international organizations. Together, we reach out to all segments of the population—students, workers, seniors, Aboriginal people, immigrants, the unemployed, the under-employed and people with disabilities.

Since the launch of Adult Learners' Week in Canada in 2002, the generous support of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada has helped to make the celebration

of the Week possible. On behalf of the Commission and our partners, I would like to thank them for their ongoing commitment to adult learning.

The Sixth International Conference on Adult Learning (CONFITEA VI) will take place later this year in Belém, Brazil, May 19–22. Organized by UNESCO, this global conference, with the theme "Living and Learning for a Viable Future—The Power of Adult Learning," will focus on the contributions of adult learning to sustainable development. The conference will explore policies, structures and financing that promote lifelong and non-formal learning. It will also work to develop standards for measuring progress in lifelong learning and to advocate for adult learning in all its forms.

This magazine showcases 10 adult learners from across Canada, and you can find more stories on the Commission's web site ([www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/AdultLearners.aspx](http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/AdultLearners.aspx)). I would like to thank the adult learners who generously shared their experiences with us. Their inspiring stories, showing the challenges to be overcome and the pride of achievement, are a testament to the power—and infinite possibilities—that lifelong learning brings.

David A. Walden  
Secretary-General  
Canadian Commission for UNESCO

## LARRY LOYIE

# NEVER GIVE UP YOUR GOALS

**F**irst Nations writer Larry Loyie (Cree name: Oskiniko/ Young Man) was 55 years old when he went to Vancouver's Carnegie Learning Centre to fulfill his dream of becoming a writer. He is now the award-winning author of four children's books, with two more in the works. This is his story:

I clearly remember my first day at the Carnegie Learning Centre in Vancouver. It was early spring of 1988. I was uncertain, nervous and scared, having committed myself to upgrading my literacy skills. I knew there was no turning back.

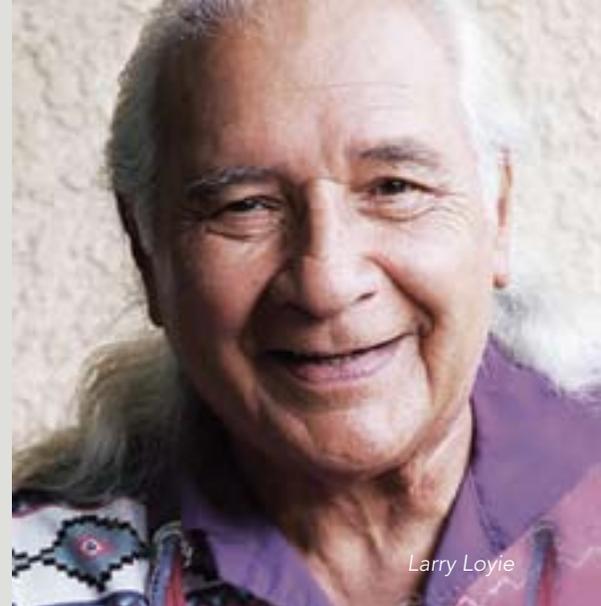
Since I was 12 years old, my dream was to be a writer. I was one of many First Nations children who went to residential school. The level of learning was very low. Working later in life as a labourer to support my family, I didn't know the skills needed to be a writer. In my mid-50s, I found myself disabled. I thought, "This is my chance." All my efforts went into learning English and grammar. I taught myself to type and upgraded my reading, math, science and health skills. The free writing classes at Carnegie made it possible to replace the drudgery of daily life with the excitement of change and personal growth.

At Carnegie, I could trust and be comfortable with the instructors. They were encouraging and honest. I was treated as an equal. They erased the fear and shame of me being an older person going back to school. Without realizing it, I learned leadership skills, to be more assertive and speak up at meetings. I went from being invisible to being very visible.

In 1994, I wrote a play, *Ora Pro Nobis, Pray for Us*, about my residential school years. To complete one scene, where the nun berates us and belittles our families, I went to a medicine wheel to find the strength to write the ugly things she said. I cried many times but I got it down. With my partner, Constance Brissenden, as director, the play was staged in three provinces.

In 2001, I received the Canada Post [Community] Literacy Award for Individual Achievement (B.C.). My first children's book, *As Long as the Rivers Flow*, an award-winner, is about the traditional life I loved before residential school. Two more books about my childhood followed: *When the Spirits Dance* (set during the Second World War) and *Good-bye Buffalo Bay*, about my last year in residential school and moving on as a child worker. I also wrote *The Gathering Tree*, a children's book that introduces HIV awareness and prevention.

My goal is to continue building on the knowledge of traditional First Nations lifestyle through my writing and to encourage pride in our cultures. To other learners, I say: "Never give up your goals. They are attainable."



Larry Loyie

Larry Loyie and  
Constance Brissenden

You can find out more about Larry Loyie and his writing at [www.firstnationswriter.com](http://www.firstnationswriter.com)

Larry Loyie served on the committee that established the National Indigenous Literacy Association (NILA). NILA works to increase awareness about Aboriginal literacy issues in Canada and the benefits to learners, the community and the economy of increased literacy levels. For more information, go to [www.nila.ca](http://www.nila.ca)

The Carnegie Learning Centre is located in the Carnegie Community Centre in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Learning programs are provided in cooperation with Capilano University, and tutoring services are also provided by volunteers. The centre is funded by the City of Vancouver. For more information, go to <http://vancouver.ca/commsvc/carnegiecentre/>

For more information about Capilano University, go to [www.capilanou.ca/home.html](http://www.capilanou.ca/home.html)

# LITERACY + LEARNING

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Literacy is the foundation for basic and lifelong learning—a key condition of sustainable development—and it is connected to the achievement of other societal challenges such as gender equality and poverty reduction. But halfway through the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003–2012), one in five adults—approximately 774 million men and women worldwide—lack necessary literacy skills, according to *The Global Literacy Challenge*, a 2008 UNESCO mid-decade report.

The first half of the Literacy Decade saw some progress: literacy was given a higher profile among member nations, which helped to create a more positive policy environment. And in the last 20 years, some measurable progress was made in increasing the global literacy rate for adults aged 15 and older—from 76% to 83.6%. In fact, considerable progress was made in the Arab States and in South and West Asia, where literacy rates rose 13.8% and 16.1%, respectively. However, many of the gains were offset by population increases, leaving the absolute numbers of illiterate adults virtually unchanged. Overall, three-quarters of the 127 countries for which projections were calculated will miss the Education for All target of halving adult illiteracy rates by 2015.

In some areas of the literacy challenge virtually no progress has been made. For example, in the period 1985–1994, women made up around 63% of the illiterate population compared with 64% in 2000–2006, indicating a considerable and continuing gender gap. As well, equitable opportunities to become literate are still lacking for particular groups: indigenous populations, nomadic communities, marginalized young people, the rural population, prisoners, migrants and people with disabilities.

The mid-decade report notes that UNESCO's Literacy Initiative for Empowerment (LIFE) has been an effective catalyst in planning and developing capacity, building partnerships and mobilizing new funds for literacy. Launched in 1985, LIFE focuses on 35 countries that are home to 85% of the world's illiterate population. Each of these countries has a literacy rate of less than 50%—or at least 10 million illiterate adults. The goal of LIFE is to stimulate action, encourage greater cooperation and mobilize additional support for literacy in these 35 countries.

The report says that for the remainder of the Literacy Decade, more action is required at the global level in three key areas: a greater commitment toward literacy; improved literacy programming and capacity development; and additional funding for literacy.



Jean Johnson (left) and Isabella Dryden are the volunteer instructors of the computer course for older newcomers enrolled in the English as an Additional Language (EAL) program.

**STAYING  
ENGAGED**

# CREATIVE RETIREMENT MANITOBA

Isabella Dryden (standing on left) in the computer class with older newcomers who are taking English as an Additional Language (EAL). Helen Bowen (also standing) helps out when Jean Johnson goes away in the winter.

**The motto on the web site of Creative Retirement Manitoba (CRM) explains its purpose in a nutshell: “Learning is to the brain what exercise is to the heart.”**

CRM’s Executive Director, Marjorie Wood, points out, “At the heart of our philosophy, education isn’t just about getting a job. It is as critical to our well-being as adequate health care and housing. Learning is about keeping people stimulated and engaged. And that’s very important for retirees.”

The Winnipeg-based CRM had its beginnings in the 1970s when seniors attending a conference at the University of Manitoba identified the need for continuing education resources for seniors. Today, CRM is the only independent education centre for seniors in Manitoba, with more than 1,700 students—mostly retirees from the Winnipeg area. It offers more than 100 courses in each of three terms (fall, winter and spring), ranging from computers and herb gardening to language classes, creative writing and reflexology.

The two volunteer instructors, Jean Johnson, 88, and Isabella Dryden, 90, tailored the computer classes to people who have language barriers. Isabella, a teacher for many years and a curriculum consultant for the Manitoba Department of Education before she retired, developed and customized the course curriculum.

“These women truly are remarkable,” Marjorie says of Jean and Isabella. “The students have had a whole new world open up for them, using the computer and the Internet. It’s amazing to watch. They are so animated and appreciative. Learning English is one thing, but getting on a computer to expand their learning is so much more.”

Other programs offered at CRM involve intergenerational awareness. “We have a program in which seniors go into the schools to talk about history, to do storytelling, art and dancing,” explains Marjorie. And a program called Story Sacks involves CRM members who create “story sacks” containing books and tools for reading and numeracy that are given to elementary-school children to take home to their families.

## **“LEARNING IS TO THE BRAIN WHAT EXERCISE IS TO THE HEART.”**

Although many of the CRM students already have secondary or post-secondary education and are lifelong learners, CRM offers literacy programs—including a unique computer literacy program for immigrant seniors. This project is the only one in Manitoba offered exclusively to older newcomers to Canada who are enrolled in English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs.

By the end of their eight-week training, the students have learned basic computer skills such as typing, using the Internet and emailing. The computer classes also enhance the students’ English skills by having them speak and listen in class. More than 60 immigrant seniors have participated since the classes began.

Marjorie says an earlier pilot project that was developed when “a senior from Afghanistan asked us if we could provide a computer course for other Afghani seniors” opened the door for this project.

By offering seniors innovative ways to enjoy lifelong learning and share their skills and talents with younger generations, CRM is an active contributor to the well-being of all members of the community and society.

*Creative Retirement Manitoba contributes to the well-being of older persons and their communities by developing and offering innovative and interactive learning opportunities. For more information, go to [www.crm.mb.ca/index.html](http://www.crm.mb.ca/index.html)*

*CRM is a member of the Canadian Network for Third Age Learning, known as CATALIST, a bilingual, Canadian network of older-adult learning organizations. It fosters and promotes third-age learning through shared knowledge, expertise, research and resources. Find out more about CATALIST at <http://dev.www.uregina.ca/catalist/>*

*Marjorie Wood was interviewed by Cecelia McGuire (Prosebusters), who wrote this story.*

Flags hanging in the production area at Edmonton headquarters represent the diverse backgrounds of the employees of All Weather Windows.

# DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

## ALL WEATHER WINDOWS

**T**he 55 flags that hang in the production area at the Edmonton headquarters of All Weather Windows represent the national origins of the company's multicultural workforce.

Since 1978, All Weather Windows has grown from a small window manufacturer in Edmonton to a national enterprise with 13 sales and service branches across Canada, and a second plant in Mississauga, Ontario. It now has roughly 1,000 workers across the country.

"There is a huge amount of linguistic and cultural diversity among employees," says Jason Fleming, a corporate trainer in the company's training and development department in Edmonton. "There are over 40 different languages represented on the plant floor. As well, there is a wide diversity of training and expertise necessary within the plant."

**"ALLOWING PEOPLE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP LANGUAGE AND LITERACY SKILLS IS VITAL TO HAVING COMMITTED EMPLOYEES WHO WILL BE ABLE TO LEAD ALL WEATHER WINDOWS IN THE FUTURE."**

"This company values a diverse and involved team and strives to build trusting relationships based on a foundation of fairness, integrity and understanding," Jason adds. "Providing language and literacy training is one aspect that demonstrates this value put into action."

In 1999, the company added English as a Second Language (ESL) to its regular technical training program.

It brought in trainers from Edmonton's NorQuest College and the Mennonite Centre for Newcomers to give courses.

According to Jason, employee safety has been one of the driving forces behind the classes. "The ability to read signage, follow instructions and communicate about potential hazards is critical to a safe workplace and serves as core content for most language training initiatives."

In 2006, the company began hiring full-time trainers with ESL background, and offers a wide range of courses, from team building and supervisory skills to plain English courses in providing customer service.

Jason explains: "We have courses in basic communications, pronunciation and clear speaking practices. We also have 'train the trainer' programs that teach how to deliver programs and how to teach skills on the plant floor.

"People with excellent technical skills and/or leadership potential may find their literacy skills or language ability a barrier to advancement. Allowing people the opportunity to develop language and literacy skills is vital to having committed employees who will be able to lead All Weather Windows in the future."

Jason says that developing language and literacy programs is one piece in the puzzle toward developing a culture of communication and innovation necessary for "lean manufacturing."

"It is also a key to fostering a workplace culture that values and respects the diversity of all of its members."

*All Weather Windows recently worked with the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES) to develop its Safety Talk Supports project, which included both plain language and highly visual materials, as well as a training program for people delivering Safety Talks. AWES is a non-profit organization that helps industries with need assessments, best practices, referrals, publications and other materials on essential skills training. For more information, go to [www.nald.ca/awes/start.htm](http://www.nald.ca/awes/start.htm)*

*The Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers is a community agency that assists immigrants and refugees to settle in the Edmonton area through a variety of programs, including English as a Second Language and other courses. For more information, go to [www.emcn.ab.ca/](http://www.emcn.ab.ca/)*

*NorQuest College, based in Edmonton, offers a variety of credit courses and training, including adult education and distance learning programs. Go to [www.norquest.ab.ca/](http://www.norquest.ab.ca/) for more information.*

**I've always appreciated Apryl for the kind and appreciative person she is. But it wasn't until I sat down to interview her that I saw some of the superwoman behind the smile. Apryl is an Early Childhood Development student at the Mayo campus of Yukon College, and is the supervisor of the local day-care. She is married to Eddy Olsen and they live in a beautiful spot, high up on a bluff above Stewart Crossing. Stewart is 50 kilometres from Mayo and about 40 people live there.**

"Why do you take training?" I asked Apryl.

"It furthers my education," she says, "and helps me provide better for my family. I'm a foster parent and it helps me understand the kids more. I'm better able to handle situations. When I started, I didn't even know what programming meant. Now when I work with the Child Development Centre, I have a lot of the responsibility for developing the individual program plans for the kids."

Apryl gets up at 5:00 a.m. with her husband for coffee. They fill the wood stove and haul their water. They choose to have no electricity and use propane for their lights, fridge and stove. She leaves her home at 6:50 a.m. This morning she drove the 50-plus kilometres to work in -35 C temperatures. Two days a week she works all day and then stays for training at the Mayo campus. On Thursday nights she gets home after 10:30 p.m. It's amazing that she does all this, but she declares it's her education that gives her confidence.

"It changes your personality," she says. "It makes you more open. The more you participate and hear what they talk about, the more you find you have something to say, and the more you find that people want to listen to you."

"Now" she says, "give me a question and I'll talk to you forever." People can be intimidated by education, but Apryl says, "You have to go for it. It helped me on the job front, it helped me with professionals, and it helped me adjust to parenting with my son Nathan."

**"GIVE ME A QUESTION AND I'LL TALK TO YOU FOREVER."**

Apryl's participation is only part of this story of distance learning. Besides the 50-plus kilometres she drives to the Mayo campus, we still have to patch her into the instructor who works in Whitehorse. Without the video conference unit and high-speed Internet from Yukon College in Whitehorse there would be no access to this education. Without the courses, Apryl would not be

certified to manage the licensed day-care. Without the day-care, families and single mothers would not be able to take training or find work. Without the training and work they would be in a cycle of instability so common in northern communities.

Our communities are built upon individuals like Apryl, and their achievements and work. If through adult learning we can create those achievements, then we also create stronger communities.

*John Reid is the instructor/coordinator for the Mayo Community Campus of Yukon College.*

*Yukon College is a comprehensive community college, based in Whitehorse. It has 11 community campuses. The college takes pride in its ability to deliver programming to small rural populations. For more information, go to [www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/index.php](http://www.yukoncollege.yk.ca/index.php)*



*Apryl Olsen with her son, Nathan, outside the Mayo campus building.*

# A APRYL OLSEN SUPERWOMAN BUILDS CONFIDENCE

*AN INTERVIEW WITH APRYL OLSEN,  
BY JOHN REID*

PHOTO BY JOHN REID

## FRANCES, BETTY + AZURA THREE GENERATIONS LEARNING TOGETHER

**F**or more than 20 years, Frances Bates has been at the front of the class as a teacher of English as a Second Language. Employed by the Toronto District School Board, she is currently teaching at the Bickford Centre in downtown Toronto. Throughout her teaching career, her commitment to her students and her community has provided inspiration to many new Canadians.

Frances inspires others partly because she is always ready and eager to take on something new. When she and her mother attended an amateur theatre production put on by Toronto's *First Time Productions* in which two of her mother's friends were acting, Frances thought that it looked like fun. She was so impressed by the professionalism, excitement and exuberance of the performers, she decided to audition for the company's next show, the musical *Hello Dolly*. To her delight, she was chosen—and before long, she had inspired her mother, Betty Savich, and her daughter, Azura, to join the theatrical extravaganza. A desire for new learning adventures surely runs in the family!

At the end of a long and often gruelling schedule of rehearsals, coupled with late nights committed to practising the lines, the show went on. *Hello Dolly* was staged and opened to the public for four great performances last October. After the final standing ovation, Frances, Azura and Betty were singled out for their family effort and commended for bringing three generations of amateur actors together in a "First Timers" production for the first time.

According to Azura, "This experience allowed me to explore the world of theatrical art with the two people I admire and love beyond words: my mother and grandmother." For Betty, the learning experience was fun, exciting and joyful—and for Frances,



Azura Bates, Betty Savich  
and Frances Bates  
Photographer Sue Wemyss

the opportunity was unforgettable. "I would never, ever guess that I would see the day when I would be together with my daughter and mother on stage. What a great opportunity for the bonding of three generations."

As for her students, Frances' learning adventure provided yet another energizing source of inspiration.

*The Toronto Adult Student Association is a non-profit, membership-based organization that advocates for, and provides support to adults who have returned to school to learn literacy and basic skills (LBS) and English as a Second Language (ESL), and to take courses for high-school credit to attain their educational goals. For more information, go to [www.tasa2000.com](http://www.tasa2000.com)*

## EDUCATION MINISTERS ANNOUNCE **BOLD**

**A** bold new vision for learning in Canada was released in April 2008 by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), to address the education needs and aspirations of Canadians. *Learn Canada 2020* is a framework document that the provincial and territorial ministers of education will use to enhance Canada's education systems, learning opportunities and education outcomes. The theme of the new approach is *Quality Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All Canadians*.

*Learn Canada 2020* recognizes the direct relationship between a well-educated population and a vibrant knowledge-based economy, a socially progressive, sustainable society, and enhanced personal growth opportunities for all Canadians.

In keeping with its theme, the new framework identifies four pillars of lifelong learning: early childhood learning and development, elementary and secondary schooling, post-secondary education, and adult learning and skills development. The ministers have set a goal for each pillar.

# RECOGNIZING OTHER LEARNING

**I**n lifelong learning, all learning—formal, non-formal and informal—has value regardless of how it was attained:

- *Formal* learning is gained through an education system and leads to certification.
- *Non-formal* learning may be gained through organized programs but does not lead to certification.
- *Informal*—or experiential—learning is acquired through daily activities relating to work, family, community, culture and leisure, and is usually not intentional learning.

The recognition, validation and accreditation (RVA) of non-formal and informal learning is a key initiative of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning (UIL) and is among the issues to be addressed at the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI).

The larger issue of recognizing learning other than formal learning has implications for many situations: when entering or continuing formal education or training programs; when seeking occupational or professional certification; when moving to a different industry, province or country; and when evaluating candidates for employment. In the European Union, Germany and several other countries use a lifelong learning passport, known as the EUROPASS, to document various kinds of learners'

competencies. The passport helps communication between education systems, employees and employers in the European community.

## PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR)

The recognition of other learning is important in Canada, where it is called prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). Two key advocate organizations for PLAR are the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) and the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB).

In Canada, PLAR is critically important both to employers and to large numbers of immigrant workers. Many Canadian employers face severe shortages of skilled workers but are unsure about the value and relevance of immigrants' experience and work histories. On the other side of the issue, immigrants face major challenges receiving recognition for formal credentials and informal learning acquired abroad. Many are unable to find employment in their field because there is no system in place to evaluate their credentials.

Through PLAR, people of all backgrounds can receive recognition and credentials for their prior learning and skills, thus enabling them to become valued members of Canada's workforce.

## VISION FOR LEARNING IN CANADA

For adult learning the goal is that "Canada must develop an accessible, diversified and integrated system of adult learning and skills development that delivers training when Canadians need it."

The framework also sets out eight key activity areas:

- literacy
- Aboriginal education
- post-secondary capacity
- education for sustainable development

- international and national representation
- official languages
- learning assessment programs and performance indicators
- strategies for education data and research

The ministers recognize the importance of education for economic development, and have pledged to work with key partners and stakeholders to meet the stated goals.

# STONE HILL

## A WIN-WIN VENTURE

**A** workplace learning project at Stone Hill group home in Liverpool, Nova Scotia, has allowed the 15-member staff the opportunity of advancing their training and gaining college credits while continuing to work in the home. Tracy Oickle, supervisor of the home for people with mental and physical challenges, says the program has cemented a solid team spirit among employees while expanding their workplace expertise and knowledge.

The Queens Association for Supported Living has established workplace learning programs at its five facilities in Queens County, including Stone Hill. The programs help employees upgrade their credentials while on the job using prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR).

Tracy and other staff at Stone Hill came from different backgrounds, with various levels of formal academic achievement and ranges of informal learning and skills. The project's first step was to assess the prior learning of each employee who signed up for the program. This involved a rigorous evaluation of each worker's skills and

experience. Evaluators from Nova Scotia Community College's Burrige campus in Yarmouth interviewed and assessed each candidate against the requirements of the college's two-year diploma program in Human Services – Residential & Vocational Services. Employees missing any of the competencies would take the appropriate courses to "fill the gap."

"It was a win-win undertaking," says Tracy. "The staff benefited from the PLAR experience because they didn't have to take unnecessary courses required for the diploma. We could also receive credit for the work we do each day by demonstrating our knowledge and practices. The association benefited because employees are working toward a credential that is respected within the community services network."

The Stone Hill employees worked on their diploma credits in team projects that made use of workplace situations, Tracy says.

"We were all learning at the same time," she says. "We worked together on workplace projects and were able to discuss important workplace issues. It encouraged a lot of team building and problem solving. It made us a closer team that shares a similar background of knowledge."

Tracy, who has graduated with her diploma along with two other Stone Hill staff members, says that the group learning process has strengthened a lifelong learning culture in the workplace. Even though employees had a different starting point because of the range of learning achievements—both formal and informal—the group learning project became a shared goal. It raised awareness about the value of continuous learning and raised the bar in terms of professional practice.

*This story was provided by the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA). CAPLA has been operating since 1994 and is Canada's only national PLAR membership organization dedicated to the assessment and recognition of prior learning. More information on CAPLA can be found at [www.capla.ca](http://www.capla.ca) and [www.recognitionforlearning.ca](http://www.recognitionforlearning.ca)*

*(Left to right) Janette Tielsch, Debbie Boudreau and Tracy Oickle, participants in the workplace learning project, on the job at Stone Hill group home.*

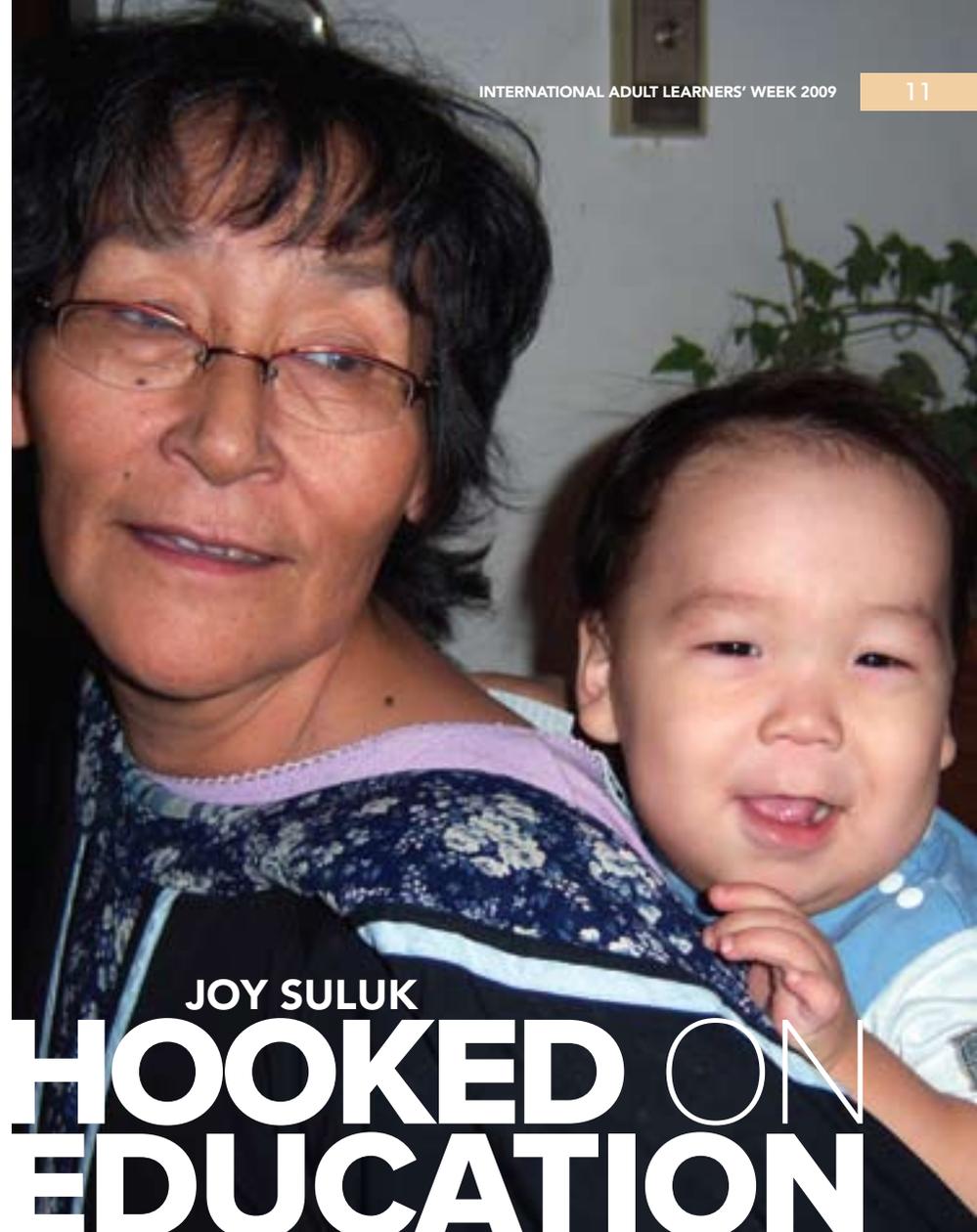
**H**aving being born during the tail end of the Inuit nomadic way of life, I did not start school until I was about eight or nine years of age. In the early 1960s, the Canadian federal government built a day school in Arviat (formerly known as Eskimo Point), and that was when we were introduced to education outside the home.

On the first day of school, I did not speak or understand any English and spoke only in Inuktitut. Right from the beginning, we were allowed to speak only English and got punished for speaking our language. Because I was already fluent in my mother tongue, it was easier for me to pick up another language.

As I progressed from Grade 1 to 6, I stayed in my community. When I was ready for Grade 7, my grandparents were asked to send me to Churchill, Manitoba, 200 miles south of our community, to finish my education. My grandparents did not want me to go away and I dropped out of school at Grade 6. At the age of 16, I joined the workforce and became a teacher's assistant and that was when I got hooked on education.

Over the next 22 years, I took every course and program offered at the adult education centre and learned to teach Inuktitut as a second language to people who wanted to learn how to speak it. During that time, I and three other people started to take correspondence courses through distance education from Ontario. I don't recall completing the program but it continued for two or three years.

In the early 1990s I challenged the General Education Development test and got my Grade 12 equivalency



## JOY SULUK HOOKED ON EDUCATION

*Joy Suluk with her grandson, Kyle Qiqut.*

certificate. With that piece of paper, I was able to get a job as an adult educator trainee and enrol in the trainer of adults [program at] Algonquin College in Ottawa through distance education. After finishing the program I became the adult educator in my community and delivered courses and programs that had helped me get ahead in life.

After 30-plus years in education, I am still plugging away as the literacy coordinator for our territory—and still loving what I do. More importantly, I am still learning, will continue to learn

and pass on what life has taught me to my children, grandchildren and the youth in Nunavut. I truly believe in purposeful, holistic lifelong learning that nurtures the physical, spiritual, intellectual and emotional dimensions of the human race.

*Joy Suluk is the literacy coordinator of Adult Learning and Post-Secondary Services for the Government of Nunavut Department of Education. She is based in Arviat, on the west coast of Hudson Bay. For more information, go to [www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/](http://www.gov.nu.ca/education/eng/)*

# CONFINTEA VI: RENEWING INTERNATIONAL MOMENTUM

**T**he Sixth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA VI), scheduled to take place May 19–22, 2009, in Belém, Brazil, will provide an important global platform for policy dialogue and advocacy on adult learning and non-formal education.

CONFINTEA VI will bring together UNESCO member states, United Nations agencies, multi- and bi-lateral cooperation agencies, private and public sector organizations and learners from all over the world.

The conference's title, *Living and Learning for a Viable Future—The Power of Adult Learning*, reflects its overall objective: to draw attention to how adult learning and education contribute to sustainable development, which has social, economic, ecological and cultural dimensions.

## GOALS AND THEMES

CONFINTEA VI aims to build on the holistic understanding of adult learning and non-formal education (which was the centrepiece of the Hamburg Declaration adopted at the 1997 CONFINTEA V) within the perspective of life-wide and lifelong learning.

A key goal of CONFINTEA VI is to clarify the role of adult learning and non-formal education in meeting international education and development agendas, including Education for All, the Literacy Initiative for Empowerment, the Millennium Development Goals, the UN Literacy Decade and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. At the national level, the conference will work toward integrating adult learning and non-formal education within sector-wide strategies.

To address the discrepancy between rhetoric and action, CONFINTEA VI also intends to develop internationally applicable benchmarks to measure progress and ensure that commitments on adult learning and non-formal education are implemented.

Several themes will be explored, including policies, structures and financing for adult learning and education; inclusion and participation; the quality of adult learning

and education; literacy and other fundamental key competencies; poverty eradication; and critical citizenship.

## PREPARING FOR CONFINTEA VI

The lengthy process of preparing for CONFINTEA VI began with the drafting of national reports on the state of adult learning and education in UNESCO member states. The national reports were synthesized into regional reports and became the focus of discussions at five regional conferences held between September 2008 and January 2009. Each preliminary conference identified key issues in its region and developed recommendations for the global conference. A preparatory conference was also held among 54 *Organisation internationale de la francophonie* (OIF) countries in February 2009, and recommendations were prepared for CONFINTEA VI.

The preparatory conferences comprised:

- Latin America and the Caribbean: *From Literacy to Lifelong Learning: Towards the Challenges of the 21st Century*. Mexico City, Mexico, September 10–13, 2008.
- Asia and the Pacific: *Building Equitable and Sustainable Societies in Asia and the Pacific: The Challenge of Adult Learning*. Seoul, Korea, October 6–8, 2008.
- Africa: *The Power of Youth and Adult Learning for Africa's Development*. Nairobi, Kenya, November 5–7, 2008.
- Europe, North America and Israel: *Adult Learning for Equity and Inclusion in a Context of Mobility and Competition*. Budapest, Hungary, December 3–5, 2008.
- Arab States: *Investing in Adult Learning: Building Knowledge and Learning Societies in the Arab Region*. Tunis, Tunisia, January 5–7, 2009.



- Francophonie countries: *Enabling Sustainable Literacy: Preventing and Fighting Illiteracy*. Lyon, France, February 11–13, 2009.

A *Global Report on Adult Learning and Education* (GRALE) is being prepared by the UNESCO Institute on Lifelong Learning and will substantially contribute to the final CONFINTEA VI working document. GRALE will serve as a reference document, an accountability report and an advocacy paper that unites trends and key issues in adult education and learning.

The various reports, along with the recommendations from the preparatory conferences, will form the basis of the CONFINTEA VI discussions. Conferees will develop and adopt a “framework for action,” which will include key strategies, recommendations and benchmarks for renewing policy and action and for monitoring adult learning and education around the world.

## CANADA ATTENDS BUDAPEST REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Canadian representatives were among the more than 200 participants at the Budapest conference for the Pan-European region, which includes North America and Israel. An outcome of the Budapest conference was a concise set of 10 regional policy proposals, recommendations and benchmarks for renewed policies and initiatives on adult learning and education—all of which will contribute toward the global document to be adopted at CONFINTEA VI.

The Budapest recommendations attempt to address the needs of the Pan-European region. Despite its rich diversity, many countries in the region face continuing literacy challenges and high levels of immigration; most have responded to those challenges primarily by offering vocational education and training. The recommendations,

however, urge a more integrated approach that addresses economic development, social cohesion, equity and diversity, democratic citizenship, sustainable development and community and personal development.

The recommendations stress the fundamental importance of inclusive education in achieving human, social and economic development, as well as accessibility—a point reinforced by recommendations that countries promote access to adult learning and education. Also emphasized is extending the governance of adult learning and education to partnerships to include local, regional and national organizations; public authorities; civil society; and learning organizations.

Reflecting the holistic approach to adult learning—a key theme for the CONFINTEA VI conference—the Budapest policy document recommends that policy frameworks cover formal, non-formal and informal types of adult learning, and that all forms of learning outcomes should be recognized and validated, regardless of how, when and where they are achieved.

Noting that effective investments in adult learning could curb the higher social costs of unemployment or marginalization, the Budapest document recommends that adult learning be funded by all levels of government, the private sector and individuals, and that new financing mechanisms be adopted that would stimulate investment by enterprises.

*The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education (ALE): Report for Canada*, October 2008, was prepared by the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO. The report is available in English at [www.unesco.org/uil/en/UILPDF/unesco/confinteacanada.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/UILPDF/unesco/confinteacanada.pdf)

# BRIEF HISTORY OF CONFINTEA

**C**ONFINTEA VI continues a series of global UNESCO meetings on adult education and learning that have been held every 12 or 13 years since 1949:

- 1949** International Conference on Adult Education, Elsinore, Denmark
- 1960** World Conference on Adult Education, Montreal, Quebec
- 1972** Third International Conference on Adult Education, Tokyo, Japan
- 1985** Fourth International Conference on Adult Education, Paris, France
- 1997** Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, Hamburg, Germany
- 2009** Sixth International Conference on Adult Education, Belém, Brazil

## THE HAMBURG DECLARATION

**T**he *Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning*, adopted by the 1997 Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) in Hamburg, Germany, transformed traditional thinking about adult education and learning.

The Hamburg Declaration marked a turning point in that it redefined adult education in much broader terms as all adult learning, including learning outside the formal education system. According to the Declaration, adult education is “the entire body of ongoing learning processes, formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.”

Another of the Declaration’s groundbreaking assertions was that adult education is multi-sectoral and integral to the attainment of development goals: “The informed and effective participation of men and women in every sphere of life is needed if humanity is to survive and to

meet the challenges of the future. Adult education thus becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice.”

CONFINTEA V was held in July 1997 following several major United Nations conferences on key development issues, including education for all, the environment, social development, women, human rights and food. All of these conferences proposed courses of action that required adults to acquire new knowledge and skills, thus highlighting the importance of adult learning.

Despite the lofty language of the Hamburg Declaration, however, the global consensus is that the rhetoric has not translated into opportunities for adult women and men to pursue their right to learn. Although there is a greater awareness of the importance of providing schooling for the young, the vocational training needs of adults have not been sufficiently addressed.

One of the objectives of CONFINTEA VI, being held in Belém, Brazil, in May 2009, is to take steps that will finally turn this rhetoric into action.



Emita working in the Newcomer Literacy Initiative classroom.



Emita and her classmates in the Newcomer Literacy Initiative.

# EMITA MAHAMAT HER OWN TOUGHEST CRITIC

By Dorota Blumczynska

**U**ntil six months ago, Emita Mahamat had never set foot in a classroom. She was born into a poor family in Lagos, Nigeria, where her parents struggled to feed their nine children. They could afford to send only their three sons to school.

"I have been home all my life. I got married when I was 16 and had my first baby at 17," Emita says. "In my house in Nigeria I had a store where I sold drinks and bricks of ice, and in [my] spare time I braided hair to get money to send my children to school. I never wanted them to end up like me."

At 25 and with four children, Emita is changing her life. In the basement of a Winnipeg inner-city school, she is doing what she had thought was impossible. "Now I know how to write my first name, my last name, my children's names."

All her life Emita has faced great challenges, yet her tears are of resilience and she comes alive explaining all that she can do. "If someone asks me, 'What is your birth date?' I can even remember that. I am so proud of myself."

Despite her perseverance, Emita struggles to read. "When my son brings home a paper, he says 'Why didn't you fill out the form for me to take to school?' I tell him I didn't go to school so I have to find someone to fill it out for him and read it to me. I feel embarrassed."

Emita is grateful for the help she receives from volunteers and her teacher. "[They] ask me to make the sound of the letters so I can read to my children." She is her toughest critic—too humble to say that she can read many short sentences and accurately provide personal information about herself and her family.

"If I didn't come to Canada, I would never have learned all these things. I look at everything I have learned in six months and if I live here for three or four years, I will learn a lot. If I could go to school for a long time, I will also be a teacher and help many people."

But it is the things we take for granted that Emita dreams of in a distant future. "Maybe I can even read a book to myself."

*Dorota Blumczynska is Program Coordinator and one of the English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers to adults in the Newcomer Literacy Initiative (NLI), a program of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba (IRCOM). Established in 2007, the NLI provides community-based adult EAL literacy classes to immigrants and refugees in Winnipeg five days per week, and serves more than 40 low-literacy learners and their children. NLI partners with IRCOM, Victoria Albert Elementary School, Hugh John Macdonald Junior High School and the Community Education Development Association (C.E.D.A.). It is funded by Manitoba Labour and Immigration's ALT (Adult Language Training) Branch. For more information, go to [www.ircom.ca](http://www.ircom.ca)*

**"I STRUGGLE TO LEARN ENGLISH AND READ SO I CAN HELP [MY CHILDREN] WITH THEIR HOMEWORK. THAT'S WHY I COME TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY."**



Valérie Lafrance with her husband and two children.

**VALÉRIE LAFRANCE**

# A LONG-TERM INVESTMENT

**M**y name is Valérie Lafrance. I am 28 and I have two children. I live in Maria in the Gaspé region, and I am back in the classroom.

A year ago, a few months before my daughter was born, I had an idea. Why not go back to school?

I had a full-time job but I didn't see any opportunity for advancement. I had done some post-secondary studies but had no diploma. And without a diploma, it's tough to get a job that pays above minimum wage. A person's salary is an important consideration, especially when you have two children at home. So why not?

During my second pregnancy, I had to be reassigned at work. I work full-time in the meat department at the local IGA, but after my 20th week of pregnancy, I couldn't stand on my feet all day during a 40-hour week. So I worked part-time in the meat department and the rest of the time

I helped in the store's accounting department. After a few weeks, we got talking about how much I liked the accounting work. It was suggested that if I took a course, I could continue to help out in that department and one day take over the accounting work. Then I had to ask myself, "Would I be able to do that?"

During my maternity leave, I kept thinking about this crazy idea of returning to school with two infants at home. In February, I got up my courage and enrolled at the Centre d'études collégiales Baie-des-Chaleurs in the business and accounting program. I then had to figure out how to handle the workload of a two-year program, plus look after my children and work at the grocery store. I finally went to

the employment centre in Avignon and found out that I could get financial assistance while going to school, which would help with travel costs, tuition, day-care and school-books. That would mean that I didn't have to work at the store while I was going to school.

Now I have finished my first session of school and I don't regret my choice. It's not easy every day, but I am considering the long-term investment.

It's been almost 10 years since I set foot inside a school, and the first weeks were difficult. Teaching methods have changed. Computers are indispensable now, so much so that I finally bought a laptop to make my life easier. I also had to relearn how to do schoolwork and how to study. Not easy after 10 years. Mixing in with the younger students was tough at the beginning. I had to get used to them and to remember what I was like when I first went to CEGEP! There was also so much organizing to do at home—the meals, the day-care, the housecleaning, the laundry, making time for schoolwork and studying, as well as time for me and my husband, and just for myself.

**"IT'S NOT EASY. BUT IT'S WORTH IT BECAUSE EDUCATION IS MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT IN OUR SOCIETY."**

*The Centre d'études collégiales Baie-des-Chaleurs is a provincially funded college in the Gaspé region of Quebec. It provides six programs to its 250 students. There are three technical programs and three pre-university programs. In the business administration program, about 30% of the students are adult learners. For more information, go to [www.cgaspesie.qc.ca/carleton/index.php](http://www.cgaspesie.qc.ca/carleton/index.php)*

*(Valérie's story has been translated from French, and condensed.)*

**B**raving rain, thunderstorms and biting flies, seven members of the Acadia Lifelong Learning Centre in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, provided enthusiastic support on a scientific expedition into Cape Breton's Northern Highlands in July 2008.

The K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre at Acadia University and the Acadia Lifelong Learning (ALL) Centre joined forces on a four-day expedition to look for rare species of plants—some of which cannot be found elsewhere in eastern North America. The expedition succeeded in documenting several rare and endangered species of flowering plants and lichens.

The expedition to the Lockhart Brook area aimed to examine the status of rare plants that had been studied by former Acadia professor E.C. Smith and his students in the 1950s. The 2008 scientific team wanted to see what effects climate change and other human activities might have had in the intervening decades.

Jan Baldwin, another ALL member, said, "It was a great learning experience as well as a wonderful way to see such a spectacular area of our province."

The scientific importance of the trip was also considerable. According to Ruth Newell, a scientist with the Irving Centre, "A great deal remains to be discovered in the Cape Breton highlands with respect to its biodiversity. It is important to document as much as possible as soon as possible before climate change, biological processes such as increased grazing from growing moose populations, and various human activities have a significant impact on the environment. Working with the Acadia Lifelong Learning group was an absolute pleasure. Their endless enthusiasm and able assistance in the field made the expedition a successful as well as a truly memorable venture."

"Projects like this take the ALL vision to another level," said Carol Embree. "It is learning and growing, with nature as the classroom."

# ACADIA LIFELONG LEARNING CENTRE

## OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE

*By Rachel Cooper, Peter Eaton, Debbie Kiely, Ruth Newell and Peter Romkey*

The seven volunteers from the ALL Centre helped four scientists—variously affiliated with the K.C. Irving Environmental Science Centre, Nova Scotia Environment and the Nova Scotia Museum—to catalogue and preserve collected specimens.

Carol Embree, one of the volunteers, says that although she and other ALL members didn't have scientific expertise, "I think we brought an excitement over every new discovery. We brought keenness, energy, and a desire to learn."

"I saw this as a good opportunity to go beyond my comfort zone of the familiar and routine," Carol added. "It met many of my interests and goals: exploring, hiking, keeping fit, experiencing our local Nova Scotia natural beauty, and becoming more knowledgeable regarding our flora and fauna. I took away from this experience a much higher appreciation for our wild plant life."



*Volunteers from the Acadia Lifelong Learning Centre joined a team of scientists on an expedition to the Northern Highlands of Cape Breton. Photo Credit Carol Embree*

*This story has been adapted from an article that appeared in the Fall 2008 Acadia Bulletin and the December 2008 issue of the ALL Centre newsletter.*

*The Acadia Lifelong Learning Centre was created in 2000 as a way of sharing intellectual resources of Acadia University with the growing population of senior adults. The ALL Centre, under the umbrella of Open Acadia, provides courses, seminars and outings for adults 50 years of age and older. ALL works to develop relationships with all aspects of the university and community to provide the best learning experiences for its members as well as to contribute to Acadia and the community. The Cape Breton Botanical Expedition arose out of one such relationship. For more information on ALL, see <http://all.acadiau.ca>*

# ONLINE

**F**or more success stories, and information on adult learning in Canada, visit the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's

Education page at [www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/adultlearners.aspx](http://www.unesco.ca/en/activity/education/adultlearners.aspx)

More information about IALW around the world can be found on the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning web site at [www.unesco.org/uil](http://www.unesco.org/uil)

IALW and Literacy Day events in Canada are listed on the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) web site at [www.nald.ca](http://www.nald.ca)

You can also submit your own adult learning or literacy event to NALD.

You can find out more about the themes covered in this magazine by checking out the following web sites:

**CONFINTEA VI, the Sixth International Conference on Adult Education** (to be held in Belém, Brazil, May 19–22, 2009.

[www.unesco.org/uil/en/focus/confintea.htm](http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/focus/confintea.htm)

**National Report from Canada for CONFINTEA VI**

[www.unesco.org/uil/en/UILPDF/nesico/confintea/Canada.pdf](http://www.unesco.org/uil/en/UILPDF/nesico/confintea/Canada.pdf)

**Education for All by 2015: UNESCO's top priority**

[www.unesco.org/education](http://www.unesco.org/education)

**Millennium Development Goals**

[www.un.org/millenniumgoals](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals)

**OECD Education at a Glance 2008– Canada Report**

[www.cmec.ca/publications/EAG2008.en.pdf](http://www.cmec.ca/publications/EAG2008.en.pdf)

**Learn Canada 2020**

[www.cmec.ca/2008declaration.en.stm](http://www.cmec.ca/2008declaration.en.stm)

**The Pan-Canadian Education Indicators Program (2007)**

[www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-582-x/81-582-x2007001-eng.htm](http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-582-x/81-582-x2007001-eng.htm)

# CREDITS

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