

2007

# RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR ADULT LITERACY

S U B M I S S I O N S

Sponsored by a partnership of Quebec adult literacy and adult education organizations, in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO



The Centre  
for Literacy  
of Quebec



Quebec Association  
for Adult Learning  
L'Association québécoise  
pour l'éducation des adultes



QLWG



Quebec Literacy Working Group



CANADIAN COMMISSION FOR UNESCO  
COMMISSION CANADIENNE POUR L'UNESCO  
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# RECOGNITION AWARDS FOR ADULT LITERACY

This recognition award was established in 2006 by four Quebec adult education and literacy organizations in collaboration with the Canadian Commission for UNESCO to recognize Quebec adult literacy students for their courage and dedication to knowing it's never too late to learn to read and write, or improve reading and writing.

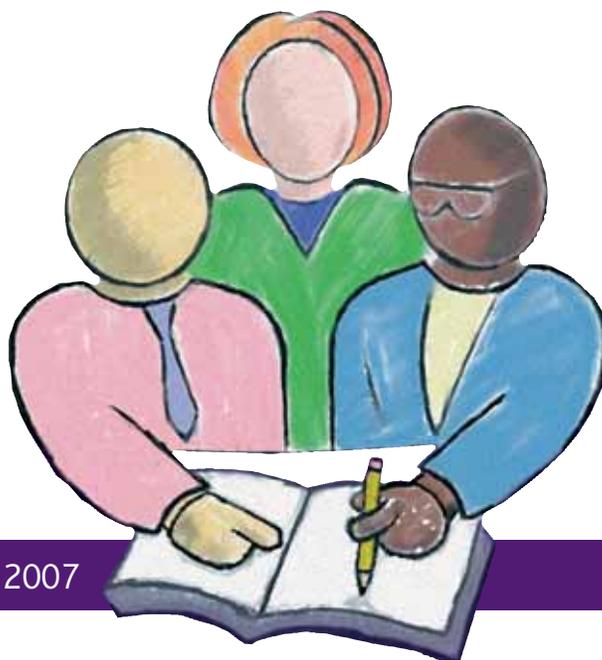
The teacher/tutor award acknowledges dedicated teachers in a field that often takes dedication for granted. We would like to thank our teacher/tutor winner, Sylvia Flowers, for generously sharing some of her teaching methods.

On April 23, 2007, student and tutor adult literacy awards were presented at the annual Poetry Challenge event that was held at Dawson College in Montreal.

Learners and students were asked to describe how learning to read and write or improving reading and writing has changed their life, and what they can now do that they could not do before. Entries were accepted in any form of communication that involved some writing (e.g.: essay/poem/comic strip). If a learner/student was unable to write the entry alone, a teacher or tutor was permitted to act as a scribe.

Two awards were offered in the community sector (for a learner and a tutor) and two in the school board sector (for a student and a teacher). Only one award was given this year in the school board sector.

*This booklet is a compilation of the winners and all the submissions received from the learners and students. Because learners are at various stages in their learning development, we've left the structure of the submissions exactly as we received them.*





The Centre for Literacy of Quebec is a resource library, professional development and research centre that supports best practices and informed policy development in literacy, by creating bridges between research, policy and practice.



Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL) was established in 1981 to provide leadership in matters pertaining

to lifelong learning and to create a collective voice to promote educational opportunities for adults who pursue learning projects primarily in the English language.



Laubach Literacy Canada-Quebec/Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LLC-Q/LVQ) is a provincial not-for-profit coalition which is dedicated to and supports volunteer literacy groups through professional development, networking, communication and advocacy for English literacy.



Quebec Literacy Working Group (QLWG) is a provincial committee of school board representatives, committed to the promotion, advancement and

support of adult, youth and family literacy within the English sector.



Canadian Commission for UNESCO

operates under the aegis of the

Canada Council for the Arts. Its role is to act as a forum for governments and civil society, and to mobilize the participation of Canadian organizations and committed individuals in UNESCO's mandated areas: education, natural and social sciences, culture and communication and information.

#### The organizers would like to thank:



The Québec Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (MELS), Service aux Anglophones

**The Gazette**

*The Gazette* for providing book prizes



Via Rail for generously supplying tickets for out-of-town learners



Edible Arrangements for contributing refreshments



Dawson College for providing the venue

Second Cup, Alexis Nihon Plaza for contributing a gift basket

# Winners of the 2007 Recognition Awards for Adult Literacy:

## COMMUNITY SECTOR

### LEARNER AWARD:

**Bruce Walsh**

Western Quebec Literacy Council  
Page 6

### TEACHER/TUTOR AWARD:

**Sylvia Flowers**

Literacy Unlimited  
Page 7

## SCHOOL BOARD SECTOR

### STUDENT AWARD:

**Lory-Anne Campeau**

Hull Adult Education Centre  
Page 5

## Lory-Anne Campeau – Hull Adult Education Centre

### How Coming Back to School Improved My Life!!!

My life has been a struggle. Previously I couldn't spell words properly. It was also difficult for me to write good English essays. All this at a point affected my self-esteem and my life.

It has not been easy for me because my pregnancy was not expected. At nineteen years old, I was a young mother who was on her own without any support or father figure for my daughter. I felt the need to go back to school, not only for myself but to be a good role model for my daughter. Concerning my education well, I dropped out when I was in grade 8. I decided to come back now because I didn't want the minimal education in life.

Prior to coming back to school, I wasn't able to spell properly. I usually misspelled words. I would spell one word in place of another. Without realizing it, I would use unnecessary letters in words like "whent" for "went", "whas" for "was", "whant" for "want", "whit" for "with" and "he his" for "he is". Today I would say that my writing has improved. I don't use unnecessary letters anymore. I pronounce the words that I'm not sure how they are written, and it helps me to write them well.

With that little problem, I couldn't write essays. They kind of scared me a little bit. But with a bit of practice and hard work, I can say now that I've made improvements in essay writing.



*Lory-Anne Campeau  
Linda Shohet, Executive Director,  
The Centre for Literacy of Quebec*

When I started school, I was at the bottom of the ladder. I told myself "Oh Lord, this is going to be hard". As I attended the classes I saw that it wasn't so hard after all. If I just put a little bit of motivation into my work, I will achieve my goal in life. My goal in life is to be a paramedic. I want to make a difference in the world.

Before coming back to school my self esteem was low. Being a young mother of a two year old girl, I lost all hope. My focus is on my daughter. When I look at her every day I find the strength to come back to school and reach my goal. For me to be able to get her a good living environment is very important. As she grows up I want to be able to be a good role model. I want her to know that no matter what happens in life it shouldn't hold you back from achieving your dreams. As human beings, we are all in charge of our lives and we are the only ones capable of changing our lives for the better.

Until this day I hold my head up high. I'm glad I came back to school. With my improvements in spelling and essay writing, I hope to move forward to achieve my goal. I set it up high but now I know I can get anything I want. It's just a matter of time.



*Lory-Anne Campeau*



## Bruce Walsh – Western Quebec Literacy Council

### Entry for the Recognition Award for Adult Literacy

I was born in Sudbury, Ontario. I grew up on our family farm which was in a small community just outside Sudbury. The farm was beside a lake. I would go fishing there sometimes with my brother and sister. I liked going to school and went as far as grade six. I did not go back to school after grade six. I stayed at home and worked on the farm. Nothing changed until we moved to my grandparents' farm in Shawville, Quebec. I worked on the farm and I managed to receive my driver's license. I still work and live there with my dad.

A few years ago I received a phone call from the Western Quebec Literacy Council. They wanted to know if I would like to learn to read and write. I accepted and this is how I got started. Since then I have been going for lessons with my tutor once a week. I read lesson books, short stories and try to read the newspaper.

I have written a few short stories about my life experiences: "A Day in the Sugar Bush" – how my dad and I make maple syrup on our farm; "My Visit to the Wild Wild West" – the trip I made with my brother Les, and Darlene from Shawville to Calgary and then back to home through the United States; "My Cruise to Alaska" – a flight to Vancouver and a six day cruise to Alaska with my dad, Phil and Joan.



*Bruce Walsh and Linda Shoheit*

Since I learned to read and write I can read the signs in grocery stores and street signs. I am able to read menus in restaurants and itineraries on my trips. I can read labels on packages and fill out forms.

I have many new friends who I met by going to the literacy council. We have our own curling team, "The Happy Rockers". We meet every Thursday evening to curl. I play the position of "Skip". Thanks to learning to add, subtract and multiply, I can keep track of the score board and watch how well our team is doing with points.

I am also a member of a group formed by the literacy council called T.R.E.E. (Teamwork to Raise Education and Equality.) It is for the students. I help to chair the meetings and to organize activities with the group. We have gone on day tips to museums, a trip to Montreal, held craft days and bowling days.

Because of learning to read and write, it has made me more active and involved. I look forward to curling each week and I enjoy doing activities with the T.R.E.E. group.

## Sylvia Flowers - Literacy Unlimited

Tutors put into practice the methods that work best for their students. I can only share my experience and provide an overview of the time my student and I spent together. It is a continuous journey.

When I was asked to share some of my ideas and lesson planning, I think back to how it all began. With a desire to help adults read and write, I met with Sue Bramfitt-Reid, Program Director at Literacy Unlimited. Events unfolded quite rapidly. Within weeks of completing my Tutor training I was matched with a student and we began our lessons.

I felt quite nervous about the whole process of being a tutor, but what I discovered opened my mind and my heart. I developed a strong passion which has driven me to do what it takes to help someone improve their reading and writing skills. I am delighted for my student, Francis, who won a "Proud to Learn" Award. His keen motivation and avid interest were an inspiration. I also extend my heartfelt gratitude to Sue, whose astute insight, encouragement and continued support assisted me greatly.



*Sylvia Flowers*

### THE BASICS:

The main objective is to help a student improve his reading and writing. However, I also had to be sensitive to this person who has taken a courageous step to improve their life, face and overcome challenges. There are several elements I found critical to help an Adult Literacy learner.

- Establish a foundation of mutual trust and respect
- Focus the lessons on their interests and goals
- Select subject matter that is relevant, practical and enjoyable
- Be empathetic and patient with your student

### LESSON PLANNING:

**Lessons:** Weekly lessons were held for about two hours consisting of four to six activities, including student's choice. Activities were built on previous lessons. Oral conversational skills were integrated into lessons.

**Flexibility:** I learned to be flexible and revise lesson plans as needed, modifying activities based on the student's progress or an activity initiated by student (bringing a newspaper or magazine article that he wanted to read).

**Student's Work:** Student kept a record of his work in a binder. My student was quite amazed when I reviewed a year's work with him. This gave him a sense of accomplishment. Homework was assigned requiring 10-15 minutes.

**Give your student space:** While we usually worked side by side, I assigned activities leaving the student to work independently (I left the study room for 10 minutes) followed by review.

**Build Confidence:** It was important to build confidence and praise progress so student gets feedback and sense of achievement.



**MATERIALS:**

Examples of the materials used in the lessons.

- Calendar – teach numbers, days of the week, months of the year
- Newspaper articles – current events, spelling bee competition
- Literacy newsletters
- Consumer Electronics Magazine
- The Bible and related spiritual books (student's favourite reading material)
- Geography – Use Atlas to identify and compare features of countries and continents
- Music – Student brings in favourite CDs, read cover/back, lyrics
- Short autobiographies on student's favourite actors
- Brochures from work place
- Reading and Phonic workbooks
- Christmas cards

**ACTIVITIES:** Examples of the activities used in the lessons.

**Reading/Comprehension:** Select material at appropriate level - usually a passage of 2-3 paragraphs. Assist student with pronunciation, develop fluent reading skills. Read over the passage – repeat exercise in subsequent lesson. Assess comprehension by asking student to explain the reading passage in his own words. Encourage student to bring in material even if at higher level. Tutor to be selective in the complex material and develop activities balancing attainable goals and challenges for the student.

**Vocabulary/Word Building:** Words are taken from the reading activities. Work on pronunciation, spelling and definition of word. Use new words in sentences or describe a situation. Play "Wonder Word" games. Homonym exercises. Place words in alphabetical order. Phonics, vowel/consonant blend exercises.

**Writing:** Encourage oral conversation to get the creative juices flowing and provide a basis for writing ideas. Use visualization and brainstorming techniques to create a story of interest to the student. Two examples that required several lessons, 1) based on an actual event: taking the children out on Halloween and 2) based on a desired goal: being a photographer.

**Numeracy:** Writing cheques. Arithmetic and basic concepts (adding exercises, word problems, symbols of greater, less than).

There are so many possibilities, materials and activities that can be used to make the learning process stimulating, creative and enjoyable. It is up to each of us to use the methods that work best for our students.



*Sylvia Flowers receives her award*

## SUBMISSIONS

(IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER)

### James Forde – Literacy Unlimited

#### My Struggle

I had a hard time all of my life. It was difficult to cope. I suffered in my mind and my heart. I had to play the game. It was all a big lie. How did I cope? I got sick. It put me in a bad place. I got into a lot of trouble because I couldn't read or write.

I battled to get free from the blank words that I had in my head. I stared at the paper and cried. There are far too many people who feel these things. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired.

Going back to school later in life can be done. You will smile when you can read and write. Those close to you will feel better knowing that you are free and can finally open some doors.

For years I had always wanted to go back to school. I was just too messed up to follow through with anything. My life was in shambles. I was the black sheep of the family. My family and friends shut me out of their lives. I found myself surrounded by some dangerous people. It was a wild ride! I am lucky that I am still here.

I finally broke free from this lifestyle. There was no choice. One of my first goals was to learn to read and write. I was lucky to find support in my community. Some volunteers from Literacy Unlimited were distributing material at the Pointe Claire Shopping Center. I still have one of their pens which I keep close to my heart. I wrestled with making the first phone call because I was scared. Looking back, I am grateful that I made the call.

For the past year and a half, I have been tutored once a week. It has been a thrilling experience. Learning to read and write has enriched my life. I have much more confidence. My daughter has also benefited. It is so cool to be able to read to her every night.

I now have a good relationship with my family and friends who are all very supportive. My future looks a whole lot brighter now.



## Trelton T. James - Literacy Unlimited

### L.U. Helps to Achieve Goals

Back in Trinidad I did not remember much about school but I remember getting whipped. It also happened to me in St. Vincent. I hoped that it would be better in Canada, which it was, but damage was already done. I was attending school to be with friends but my mind was not in class. I was in and out of school so I missed a lot of stimulation and education.

I know I had a problem in reading and writing so I was looking for help. One day driving to work I heard on the radio about LU so I took down the number and I told my family about it. I called and came in for an interview. It took two tries to get a tutor. After I got my tutor everything went well. After three months I started feeling very comfortable in the work I was putting in with my tutor. That boosted my self-esteem to do other things, like reading to my daughter, buying a house, being more comfortable at work, reading bills, following instructions.

Something that I would never do is to pick up a book to read. Now I have that confidence to read a novel of one hundred and ten pages. Before I hardly knew my numbers, months, and days and now it flows perfectly. I feel comfortable writing cheques even with big numbers. I never liked writing before; that was my weak point but with my tutors help by pushing me I wrote an essay. This is just the start!

It has encouraged me to move on in life. I'm on that second level meaning less shy, and being more involved with people. My tutor is very flexible with our schedule. So to end this story off on a good note I will be with my tutor as long as it takes to improve myself.

## Habib Louafi – James Lyng Adult Education Centre

### How Learning English Has Changed My Life!

We cannot get into any civilization nor get in touch with that civilization's people without mastering their language. In my opinion, language represents the ultimate key to taking advantage of all the good values accumulated over years.

At first glance, you might think that mastering English can be done easily without hard work. Some people would be wrong. Take it from me: Learning a new language is a real challenge that demands a lot of energy and continual hard work. I remember those days when I was watching TV or listening to the radio and enjoying English music without understanding the meaning of the songs. I felt lost and uncomfortable; how can I have fun with music and not understand the words?

One day, I decided to organize my time and cope with my daily activities to learn English. First of all, I tracked down the addresses of local colleges and universities to find out about their programs. There were many good programs to choose from. Given my financial situation, I chose a college program which was given free. I was sure that learning English at the college would not be sufficient, so I decided to change my habits. From that time, I began listening and watching only English programs. Besides that, I had started using English in my life that is, going grocery shopping, with my friends at the college and outside. It was a great experience for me.

Day after day, I began to feel more and more confident and comfortable. Right now, I can't say that I can watch a TV program and understand it entirely, but noticeable progress is being realized. I can read, write and understand people around me. I'm not afraid of taking an English book and reading it and consequently enjoying it. A new horizon has opened to me. Today, I'm another person, confident and ready to take advantage of the English culture. Who knows? Maybe, one day, I'll hand that culture down to other people.

## Jean-Guy Racine – Hull Adult Education Centre

### My coming back to school.

My coming back to school was a great thought. I had gone to a Modeling school and to a Hair Dressing school. I had graduated from both of them. I have always had problems with my writing and spelling, that is why I decided to go back to school. Presently, I'm at the Hull Adult Education Centre in Gatineau.

As a graduate from these professional Academic schools, I always had my equivalence. Though I graduated from these professional schools, I still don't know how to write and read properly. I decided to go back to school. My inability to write, read and spell properly has been going on since I was young. I had a lot of problems with letter writing or even trying to write little notes, I have always had spelling mistakes.

But now that I have enrolled my self in school I know that I'm learning to spell, write and read. Writing this essay is one of the greatest advantages that I'm getting. There has been an improvement since my enrollment at this adult school.

Going back to school boosted my self-esteem, and it made me happier. The joy that I have now gives me courage despite the mental sickness I have. It really proves to me that I'm getting to be like all the others. It's the greatest thing that has happened to me. One of them is really to get my writing and reading done properly. I no longer use my sickness as an excuse.

But I will depend on my teacher to help me make it through. I want to eventually go back to work in order to live a fulfilling adult life.

Now I do really believe in my self. I also want to succeed as a good student. I will graduate, get my diploma with all of my faith, strength, courage and all of my patience. Making this decision has made me a winner. Being a winner means that I will be out of the Welfare system and the Regie des Rente. I hope this little story about why I came back to school will influence the person who has been struggling in his or her life.



## Julie Sicard – Western Quebec Literacy Council

### Literacy Essay

I became a literacy student in 1994. I went to the Western Quebec Literacy Council's AGM in 1994 with my sister Jennifer. I became a board member and then the first Student Representative in 1995. I was the Student Representative for five years. I went to the Western Quebec Literacy Council (WQLC) to improve my writing skills.

I also wanted to become a writer. I think that my writing skills and how I write have improved greatly. I find that my writing is more legible now than it was when I first joined the WQLC. I also have made many new friends.

I have lived on my own since December 1991. I lived in Shawville since September 1992 and I moved back to Calumet Island in April 2000. I moved back to Shawville in March 2005 and then I moved again in August 2006. On October 5, 2006 I moved to a supervised apartment. I live by myself and I like living by myself.

Since I have joined the literacy council I have written a short story. I have improved my story structure and writing. I can write an essay now and I have written articles. I have been to several AGM's in Montreal. I have gone to museums, the Imax and many other places that I would have never gone too without the literacy council. Being with a group makes me feel more confident.

I can write letters, go to literacy conferences in Montreal. My math has improved but I wish my memory would improve!

I have more confidence in my writing and spelling.

I would like to take a correspondence course and will be taking English and History. I would like to go to college and to become a historian and maybe a history teacher.

Being a part of the literacy council and studying makes me feel great, it is a fun place to be and a great motivator to reach my dreams and goals.

## Liviu Socolovici – James Lyng Adult Education Centre

### How Learning English Has Changed My Life

Language is like air; life wouldn't be possible without it. Even small creatures like bees or ants have a language. When people have to change their country, they usually have to change their language. A new country means a new language. Language is the keeper of the history and the traditions of one nation, the expression of its identity. If you want to become part of a new nation, you first have to acquire its language.

I've been in Canada for three and a half years, but I've been studying English for only few months. I don't live in an anglophone area and I don't have any anglophone friends to meet with, except for one. However English has changed my life. The first thing that is different since I started the English classes is the field of my main occupation: now I do English grammar exercises, I read in English, I watch T.V. in English and some nights I dream in English.

I have a new country, so I have a new language. Actually, I have two new languages; but, as I find it difficult to live in two different cultures at the same time, I made a choice. Everyone will agree that it is useful and interesting to know as many languages as possible; but you can only live in one in the privacy of your home. If you try to catch two rabbits at the same time, you'll finish by catching none of them.

The first step of the integration in a new culture is the ability to speak its language. How would it feel not to be able to explain to the storekeeper what you want to buy, or to explain to the superintendent what is wrong in your apartment without annoying him, or to give your opinion on some subjects that you're interested in? Or when you like someone, not to be able to get in touch with him or her? It would be a nightmare: you want to move or to scream, but you can't. Understanding and speaking English can change this nightmare into a pretty dream.

Living without working is unbearable; working is about communication and communication needs a language. So, to find a job and keep it, you first need a language that you have mastered. Everyone knows that English is a very helpful language in finding a job – let's say a good job – not only in Canada, but almost everywhere in the world. Besides, the manner of working has changed in the last few years. Communication becomes more and more important in any field of human activity. So, as a worker, you not only need to be a speaker, but a good one. I started to work pretty soon after my arrival in Canada. In the beginning I wasn't able to speak to my workmates, so they became polite and distant. I was sinking in solitude: I was eating alone, I had no one to exchange a word with and I felt miserable. Now, things are different: not only have I stopped spending my breaks alone, but I also give my opinion on various subjects like politics, daily life and our boss. I usually don't treat the last subject too gently, but, unexpectedly, my workmates always agree with me.

English is a first international language. Being able to communicate with the people in a foreign country could easily enhance your experience there. So, you can travel everywhere in the world without headaches when you speak English. Even in small towns you'll find someone to speak this language with. I was once on a trip in Bulgaria during the high-school. After we crossed the



Danube in a ferry, a group of Bulgarians joined us. In the coach, a Bulgarian girl approached me and asked me in English if I was enjoying the trip. She seemed to be gentle and kind. I understood the question, but I didn't answer; I thought that my poor English would make her laugh. I quickly got away from her, but soon after I felt miserable: I thought she might be a special person. Unfortunately, it was too late. But a few weeks ago, I went to a down-town pub. At a table there were few German marines. Being curious about Germany, I spoke with one of them. He said interesting things about his country and that he liked Montreal, although he had been spending only eight hours here. We had a beer and spent an agreeable half hour together.

The Internet is an ocean of information that is largely in English. If you want to keep yourself up to date or if you are interested in science or art, sooner or later you'll need to read a book or an article in English. The contribution of this language to the global culture is too big to be ignored. For example, almost all computer stuff demands English knowledge. This is some kind of tradition and I think that all the people find it more natural to talk about computers in English, or, at least, using English words, like Internet, computer, CD-ROM etc. Of course, if you are an expert in computers, you certainly know English.

Two years ago, I became aware of what Internet was for the first time thanks to a ... computer quest game named Gothic 1. In this non-violent game, you are a prisoner in a small world surrounded by a magical barrier summoned by a huge monster – The Sleeper – that was hidden in a temple under the ground. You have to kill that monster and free the people. The game is tricky and if you're not a maniac, you certainly need help. But getting help wasn't too easy: I needed to know exactly what I wanted and how to express it. For the first time, I seriously considered studying English systematically.

In Canada, the English teaching methods are quite different from those that I am used to. The idea behind them is that English is not an esoteric science, but something that everyone can learn. Examples and exercises are inspired directly from real, daily life, so that learning grammar and discovering the new reality come together. Besides, classes are usually funny, except when there is some test. My teacher is always patient, gentle and funny. She loves her work and she does it very well. She's capable of treating every student according to his level. No doubt that she's a master in this language and in working with people. If you meet her, you'll never forget her.

However, no matter how good the teacher and his methods are the effort that I make is the most important factor in learning English. Making a systematic effort needs patience, a lot of patience. In Chinese the word Kung-Fu means achievement through great effort. There is a Kung-Fu for the Martial Arts, violin, chemistry, dancing, cooking for everything someone might want to master. So, there is one for English too. Among the things that I do to learn English is writing the new words in a notebook then reviewing them as often as possible. I even memorize whole grammatically correct sentences in English in order to get used to the English clause structure. I also do grammar exercises. The simple exercises are helpful in creating linguistic automatisms (for example, the short answers: I do, you have, he won't etc). The more difficult ones improve my grammar knowledge (for example, the right employment of tenses). To make a long story short, I treat English like a long exercise of patience.

The English language is not only useful for people who are immigrating to Canada or other anglophone countries, but for every man or woman in the world who lives in the present and tries to find the meaning of his life or to improve it.



The Centre for  
Literacy of Quebec



Laubach Literacy Canada-  
Quebec/Literacy Volunteers of  
Quebec (LLC-Q/LVQ)



Quebec Association for Adult  
Learning (QAAL)



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WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO:

EDUCATION,  
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The Gazette



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