

AdLKC 2009 Symposium: Linking Communities / Overcoming Barriers

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ADULT LEARNING

Knowledge Centre

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Welcome and Opening Keynote Address

WELCOME

Dr. Kathleen Flanagan
Coordinator
Adult Learning Knowledge Centre
Fredericton, New Brunswick

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Dr. Paul Cappon
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)
Ottawa, Ontario

Dr. Kathleen Flanagan welcomed everyone to the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's (AdLKC's) fourth annual symposium.

She explained that the program includes 20 presentations offered in five concurrent sessions. The presentations were selected from 77 submissions; the presentations are diverse, wide-ranging, and informative, representing the practice of adult learning from across this large and varied country.

In addition, the program includes three plenary sessions. The first one deals with the issue of equity and learning. The second plenary session is titled Learning Strategies for a Troubled Economy. The third session is a discussion about the future of adult learning in Canada, what can be done to ensure that Canada has the adult learning systems to help us thrive as individuals, as communities, and as a nation, in this knowledge-based economy and society of the 21st century.

The theme of this year's symposium speaks to concepts that are central to the work of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre. "Linking communities" ("*relier les collectivités*") speaks to the role of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre in fostering knowledge exchange across differences, across boundaries. Canada is an exceptionally large and diverse country, and adult learning is an exceptionally large and diverse domain. There are differences in language, in geography, in sensibility, in culture, in imperatives. There is much that we can learn from each other in order to overcome the barriers.

Dr. Flanagan introduced Dr. Paul Cappon, noting that Dr. Cappon has the rare distinction of holding both a medical degree and a doctoral degree in sociology. This double accomplishment speaks volumes to the range of intellectual prowess that he brings, as well as the diversity of his

interests. But more than this, it speaks to his capacity to engage fully and deeply with key issues, not on a one-dimensional level, not on a surface level, but a level that is aware of complexity and intricacy.

Dr. Cappon has had a remarkable public service career. Prior to CCL's inception in 2004, he held the post of director general of the Council on Ministers of Education in Canada. CMEC is the mechanism through which ministers of education across Canada meet and discuss matters of mutual interest. In addition to Dr. Cappon's leadership roles with CCL and with CMEC, he has served with a variety of national and international initiatives related to policy action. His achievements are impressive, to say the least.

Dr. Flanagan added a personal note to her introduction of Dr. Cappon, by stating, "I first became aware of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre in August 2005, when it was established following a series of development meetings that took place in Atlantic Canada in the spring and summer of 2005. I remember a tremendous sense of excitement and optimism. For the first time in a very long time, there was a vision around lifelong learning. And that vision recognized and validated the idea that adult learning constitutes a distinctive domain with links to social justice and community. And that lifelong learning was perceived to have nation-building implications. This vision – developed and implemented by Dr. Paul Cappon throughout the work of the Canadian Council on Learning – has sustained the work of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre for the last four years. And it will continue to nurture the field in the years ahead."

Dr. Paul Cappon said that he has watched an empowered, vibrant community of adult learning take root with the work of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.

"There are lots of success stories," he said. Dr. Cappon thanked those involved in the AdLKC, as well as the participants, adding that it was a great pleasure to be in Montreal and Quebec—a "beacon in continuing education."

In November 2008, Dr. Cappon published a commentary on the role of the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) in Canada's period of economic challenge. With so much transition in the world, the CCL is well positioned to provide evidence-based knowledge to learners, educators, and employers, thereby helping to create sustainable development in Canada.

Dr. Cappon compared the process of learning about learning to the early days of medicine. "There were few resources to learn how disease spread and combat disease," he said. Now, medicine understands more and is more effective at preventing and curing illness. "Evidence is the key to understanding," he said. Canada's investment "in human capital will distinguish [it] from its competitors." Human infrastructure will help Canada respond to the immediate economic crisis and ensure future growth.

The mandates of the CCL are research and mobilization of resources. "It asks what strategies work and why," through a combined approach of monitoring and research. Through national programs in learning, the Canadian community can agree on national benchmarks and set analysis, he said, noting that most other countries already have this system in place.

Dr. Cappon said the challenge is to connect policy concerns and people's daily lives. He said the main difficulty has been meeting the needs and expectations of adult learners across Canada. Unlike other countries, Canada has many gaps in learning information.

To help bridge these gaps, and to help policy makers have access to the information they need to make decisions, the CCL has developed some tools and resources. For example, in 2006 the CCL introduced the Composite Learning Index (CLI) to measure lifelong learning by linking learning conditions with successful outcomes.

This year, the CCL launched an online literacy assessment tool, the first of its kind in the world. It also has an online tool to track adult learning, an adult literacy market segmentation study, and a series of short articles called *Lessons in Learning* that provide educators with information about what works in education. "These are the ways we try to link policy and everyday concerns," said Dr. Cappon.

"How do we know that we're making progress?" asked Dr. Cappon. The European Union (EU) has 16 indicators of education and training that they report publically, including targets such as number of graduates. Not all goals are achieved, said Dr. Cappon, "however, it is the very process of establishing targets and reporting transparently on them that will drive learning and development forward." Canada has yet to establish clear targets.

Dr. Cappon said Canada must assert that learning is beneficial to society so it can invest in tools to assist Canadians reach their learning needs. Canada must encourage partnerships with industry and public reporting. It must commit to common information systems of post-secondary colleges and skills, as well as common goals and targets. "Let's set goals and assess them," said Dr. Cappon. He also advocated for national accreditation standards across professions and skilled work.

Dr. Cappon reiterated that "knowing how to learn is a quintessential skill," and that the CCL's goal is to assist in creating optimal learning conditions. "The voice of CCL nationally is only a modest constituent part of what we hope will be a growing part of moving up the Canadian learning curve," he said.

Discussion

Following his address, Dr. Cappon answered participant questions.

The first related to the closing of the AdLKC. "How can we overcome this obstacle?" asked the participant. Dr. Cappon said financial relationships are always delicate, but discussions are

under way and he expects a decision about CCL's funding soon. "I hope whatever the outcome is, that the reasons that we came into being will last," he said.

CCL is a non-profit group that relies on government funding. "We work a lot with partners in Europe and are known by UNESCO and others," he said. "I hope that our international reputation will be heard in Ottawa."

Another participant asked how Canada could implement a better national system of indicators. Dr. Cappon said Canada must set national standards first and then collect information the same way across the country. This is currently not the case. He suggested convening a pan-Canadian forum with all stakeholders to determine those standards.

"Setting objectives is a tremendously influential act because it drives you towards success and gives accountability," he said. "It's very difficult to move ahead if you're vague."

A participant asked about awareness of the CCL among educators in general. Dr. Cappon said for an organization that is less than five years old and that was built from a concept, "we haven't done too badly." Awareness builds over time.

There were several questions submitted in writing concerning the closing of knowledge centres.

Dr. Cappon said there is a role for knowledge centres as capacity builders. "This is hugely different than a report that sits on the shelf, even if people are aware of the report or information," said Dr. Cappon, adding that most Canadians do not understand education so there is less political mobilization around it.

Dr. Flanagan thanked Dr. Cappon for his informative, engaging, and forthright talk. She said she was extremely proud of the organization and its work.

Concurrent Session 1

Non-Formal Adult Learner Programming at Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions

PRESENTER

Dr. Dale Kirby
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Education, Memorial University
St. John's, Newfoundland

"Lifelong learning is important to a person's economic success and competitiveness, especially in tough economic times," said **Dr. Dale Kirby**. Adult learning programs help develop labour market skills particular to current workplace needs. They also help to foster a culture of learning in society.

Dr. Kirby said he believes Canada needs a more integrated approach to adult learning. The current system tends to be fragmented with many levels of government splitting responsibility for it. He also said there has been a shift from a community-oriented service model to an entrepreneurial one that focuses on accreditation and revenue generation.

While participation rates and general access to adult education programs have both increased since 2003, Dr. Kirby said, "those who have the most to gain from adult education are the least likely to gain access to it." People who are not in the labour force are less likely to have access to many of these programs.

Dr. Kirby's research has focused on non-formal adult education programs, which he defined as learning that takes place in structured programs offered without formal credit, such as courses, seminars, and certification workshops. Continuing education, non-credit courses, and distance learning fall under this category. Specific examples include second language, literacy, business, and software training.

Dr. Kirby surveyed 198 post-secondary institutions across Canada. He said that over the last decade, universities have doubled their financial investment in adult education, while the investment from colleges has increased fourfold. One-third of the colleges he surveyed reported that more than 40% of their students enrol in non-formal programs. The rates tend to be much lower at universities.

Non-formal programs are successful when organizations develop them to meet the practical needs of a specified audience. Community, collaborative, and flexible models work well for adult learners.

Time and money can be major barriers for adult learners. Adult learners with lower levels of education tend to have less money to pay for programs, since they generally have lower levels of income.

Dr. Kirby said another barrier for many adult learners is travel distance, especially for students living outside major urban areas where most universities are located. Since colleges tend to be more widely dispersed across regions, they have become primary centres for adult education and learning. Colleges are also investing more in non-formal programs.

Participants discussed partnerships between educational institutions and community-based organizations and the impact these collaborations could have for adult learners in remote or rural areas. Dr. Kirby said such partnerships could prove to be beneficial. "Often institutions don't have enough space and community organizations have space and are closer to the learner."

Niagara Employment Resources Network: A Collaborative Model

PRESENTERS

Margaret Maynard
Executive Director
Niagara West Employment & Learning Resource Centres
Beamsville, Ontario

Normand Savoie
Director
L'ABC Communautaire
Welland, Ontario

Margaret Maynard said Ontario's Niagara region has been hit hard by the economic downturn. The poor economy has provided a unifying cause, pulling together groups from the 12 different municipalities of this diverse region.

Normand Savoie noted the importance of collaboration between groups that have often worked in silos—employment and education—to help the unemployed search for work. The different agencies, specializing in upgrading, basic skill training, and employment counselling, work with the same clients, many of whom have not completed Grade 12.

Niagara College, Port Cares, Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, Niagara Employment Help Centre, Niagara Immigrant Employment Council, the Business Education Council of Niagara, Niagara West Employment & Learning Resource Centres, and *L'ABC Communautaire* (a francophone service group) followed a collaborative model to serve clients locally. Maynard said many of the groups in the partnership had already worked together, thus there was a sense of a shared philosophy and trust.

“Many of our clients are out-of-work auto workers over 40,” said Maynard. They face the work and interview process with trepidation — “they are devastated.” The aim of the collaborative effort was to provide these and other unemployed people with the expertise to chart their path back to employment.

The groups came together about a year ago in a more formalized relationship to produce needed resource materials. Since there were no additional funds for such a project, all partners agreed to share the cost to prepare a guide for use with or without practitioners.

The guidebook details seven case studies describing paths to employment for laid-off, underqualified, dissatisfied, overqualified, and Aboriginal workers as well as for those new to Canada and those returning to work after a considerable absence. The case study approach allows participants to recognize similarities between people in the case studies and themselves. The guidebook also contains sections on transferable and essential skills, job seekers’ pathways, and future employment trends in the region.

Maynard outlined the process of preparing the guidebook noting important issues such as readability for various literacy levels and emphasizing positives and transferrable skills. After just releasing the guidebook in print, the partnership now plans to produce e-training modules based on the guidebook. While the group wants to translate the guidebook into other languages, there are no funds to do so. Maynard also noted capacity issues in delivering programs with so many unemployed in the region.

Health, Illiteracy, and Rural Environment: Understanding the Connection for a Better Intervention *(This session was offered in French.)*

PRESENTER

Dr. Nathalie Boivin
Université de Moncton
Moncton, New Brunswick

Dr. Nathalie Boivin presented the findings of her recent exploratory research from the largely francophone northeastern region of New Brunswick. She examined how literacy levels of the respondents had an impact on their health according to the respondent’s point of view along with the impacts of living in a rural region. One of the goals of this research was to find out what would facilitate this population to be more active in their own health care.

Dr. Boivin said 66% of people in the region live in rural areas. According to a recent study, 68% of New Brunswick’s francophone population over 16 has a literacy level considered insufficient to function in society. There are four levels of literacy; this 68% of the New Brunswick

francophone population is at Level 1 and 2. She described people at this level as having limited writing skills and great difficulty reading.

The minimum requirement for an individual to function in society is Level 3. Dr. Boivin posed the question, "If they are unable to read and comprehend the pamphlets and information provided to them, how can they actively look after their health needs?"

Dr. Boivin conducted her research using semi-structured interviews with opened-ended questions such as "What does health mean to you?" For sampling purposes, she chose people who were francophone with little or no literacy, who were over 18, and had lived in New Brunswick for at least one year. It was easier to find participants in the rural areas than in the urban areas where many participants did not want to be identified.

The respondents' definitions of health varied. For some people, health meant living longer. Some saw health as a resource that provides them with personal freedom. When asked if they considered themselves to be in good health, the majority described themselves as being in average health.

Dr. Boivin asked the respondents if they understood when their doctors spoke to them. Many said they did not and said they felt doctors did not spend enough time explaining information to them. They also said they felt doctors did not consider it a priority for their patients to truly understand their medical conditions.

One of the respondents told Dr. Boivin how learning to read improved his quality of life because he can now read and administer his prescriptions, something he previously had to rely on his wife to do. Dr. Boivin cited this as an example of how vulnerable and dependent an individual can be if he or she is unable to read. Some of the indirect impacts of illiteracy are social isolation and low self-esteem.

Regarding the issue of rural versus urban living, one respondent told Dr. Boivin that life in the country was simpler and less stressful than life in the city. There was a feeling that living in a small city was easier because the respondents know more people and can ask for help.

Dr. Boivin asked what the respondents thought would help people learn to read and write. They said that an individual who cannot read should not be afraid to ask for help. They also wanted financial aid from government. These individuals need support from family, friends, community, and decision-makers to help them take control of their lives and improve their literacy levels.

Reflecting Multiple Realities on the Silver Screen: Community-based Film Festivals, Citizenship Education, and Community-building across Differences

PRESENTER

Dr. Carole Roy
Assistant Professor
St. Francis Xavier University
Antigonish, Nova Scotia

Dr. Carole Roy has coordinated seven documentary film festivals, first in Peterborough, Ontario and now in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. "I see documentary film festivals as a way of community-building and citizenship education," she said. Film festivals are not like watching documentaries at home: "Watching is not engaging; and watching in isolation can be disempowering," said Dr. Roy. Distribution is in fewer hands and fewer voices are heard, despite many specialty channels.

Dr. Roy said documentary film festivals are about inclusion. The Peterborough festival incorporates a broad range of issues and integrates local productions. "People get excited about people in their communities making films and sharing their stories," she said. For sponsors, film festivals are an opportunity for networking and community development. Involvement may also extend to include art exhibits and other media. The Peterborough festival has a bazaar or marketplace where people can gather and discuss the films. It has information tables and sells food and crafts.

For people wanting to try their own festival, Dr. Roy recommended using multiple venues during the day but only venues with film and local performers in the evening. Workshops can be organized with filmmakers and groups related to the films' topics. A school program with age-appropriate films has been very successful in Peterborough. "It is now such a big program that some organizers only work on that," said Dr. Roy.

Dr. Roy described the participant experience as empowering. "People report changing their views after seeing films," she said. Documentaries also motivate people to be participants in the changes they want rather than observers. They also engage strangers in conversation after viewing films. "When we stand at the door at the end of a screening we see a lot of energy coming out," she said.

In the discussion that followed, participants asked how to find films and how many to screen. Dr. Roy said she looks at other, larger film festivals as well as specific distributors. She also recommended watching films before listing them. The number of films will vary with each festival. Peterborough shows about 70, but Antigonish only shows 30. "Each community has to adapt to their own reality," said Dr. Roy.

One participant asked about educational materials. Dr. Roy said some films come with them, and if not, there may be people in the community with knowledge who can facilitate discussion. "People want to talk about it so it happens easily," she said. Another participant asked Dr. Roy how to promote festivals. Dr. Roy said sponsors publicize the festival to their members and that word of mouth is important. Community radio, newspapers, and the Internet are also crucial.

Concurrent Session 2

Brokering Learning Communities: The Challenges of Adult Learning in Criminal Justice Settings

PRESENTER

Jean Flynn
Part-time Faculty Member
Lifelong Learning Program, Mount Saint Vincent University
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Jean Flynn's doctoral research examines the role that prison-based educators play within the criminal justice system. She has a background as a program facilitator in prisons and has interviewed administrators and educators from correctional facilities across Canada. Her study examines how and why educators function as they do, reflecting their experiences and challenges.

Time and money are two constraints that adversely affect the work of educators. They spend much of their time working on funding applications and trying to get policies implemented. Educators emphasized the importance of community placements for their students, but found it was often difficult to arrange for these placements due to limited time and resources. Flynn described the educators with whom she spoke as passionate and committed. They believe their work improves safety in the larger community.

"I had not expected health to be such an important issue to the learning of the incarcerated," said Flynn. She said substance abuse, mental health issues, and diabetes emerged as some of the health factors that affect learning. Many prisoners come from the margins of society—the challenges they face are not really about how to reintegrate into society, as they were never integrated originally.

She found that correctional services are not often very effective in helping offenders make the transition to living in communities outside of prison. While inmates have access to valuable resources and services within the correctional services system, these resources are far more difficult to access once they are no longer incarcerated. Community organizations try to fill this gap, but they often have limited funds and spend much of their time fundraising.

Flynn said she believes more research must be done into the role that advocacy can play in improving the educational opportunities for adult learners who are incarcerated. Correctional institutions and community-based organizations need to link better.

One participant asked how the length of an offender's sentence affects access to learning opportunities. Flynn said the system places Canadian inmates serving less than two years in

provincial facilities and these prisoners have often completed their sentences before their names appear on waiting lists for educational programs.

Another participant said her organization works with offenders who have disabilities. She finds that most of these people have not taken part in prison learning programs because of their disabilities. Flynn said if learners have problems keeping up in class because of a disability, they might not join the class. This situation serves as an informal screening process that prevents some potential students from participating.

A New Paradigm in Learners' Demand (*This session was offered in French.*)

PRESENTER

Suzanne Benoit
Executive Director
Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes
Ottawa, Ontario

Suzanne Benoit asked participants what would motivate them to enrol in an adult training course. Many of the reasons the participants provided were the same as those from the coalition's study. Reasons for not taking courses include:

- Dispositional—lack of self-esteem or not relevant
- Situational—lack of time or money and other constraints
- Informational—lack of information or poorly-conveyed messages

In contrast, people register for a course because it fills a need or can improve their skills, for personal satisfaction, or simply because they heard it was good. These results are not new; however, the finding that Ontario francophones take much of their training in English, is. Benoit attributes this finding to easier access to English courses and more ready acceptance of francophones by English groups.

Benoit said her organization has looked for ways to awaken the need in adults for training, particularly basic skills education and French education in a minority environment. This is difficult since people with more education are already taking more courses while those with less education often do not have the confidence and the idea that they could benefit from courses.

One example that has seen success however is the “one-stop” approach to adult education in Ontario. Such a central place can appropriately direct individuals or agencies by evaluating their capacities and providing a menu of training and education options. For francophones who want to be educated in English, the one-stop shop can help predict in which language they are more likely to succeed.

The Quebec activity *La Fierté d'apprendre* presented an opportunity to distribute widely an informational kit on adult education. The kit, developed by different Quebec agencies, has resulted in an increase in program registration—in part due to demand from agencies rather than individuals directly.

Individuals have to identify with the promotional messages, which have to be about success—“If the guy down the street is capable, then I am too.” Organizations should not use the term “illiteracy” as no one wants to go to a program for “losers,” said Benoit. Training centres must create opportunities for people to come for other reasons. Once there, they meet others like themselves who are succeeding.

Benoit described a virtual, 12–15 week training tool available in many Ontario training centres that recreates the activities and responsibilities necessary in a variety of businesses. Family literacy offers another way to attract adults to centres.

“They will come for their kids, but not for themselves,” said Benoit. Once there, they discover the possibilities for themselves.

Hook, Line, and Sinker: A Northern Manitoba Strategy of Learner Attraction and Retention

PRESENTERS

Leslie Tucker
Coordinator
Steps to Success Program, YWCA Thompson
Thompson, Manitoba

Catherine Cogle
Program Instructor
YWCA Thompson
Thompson, Manitoba

Leslie Tucker said the city of Thompson has a population of 14,500, and the region served by the community’s YWCA has over 65,000 people. Thompson has the highest percentage of Aboriginal people in one municipality in Canada.

Tucker described Thompson as a highly stratified and diverse socio-economic community, with both a large number of high-income residents as well as many with lower incomes.

During the 1970s and ‘80s in Thompson, many workers obtained high-paying jobs with relatively low skills, education, and literacy. This situation has been changing since the ‘90s with the introduction of computers and other technologies.

Tucker said there was a lack of basic skills within the community, including computer and business communication skills. Both high-income and low-income workers lacked basic computer skills. Low-income workers suffer from barriers to advancement such as the impact of the residential schools system. There is a high rate of homelessness in the community.

Tucker said they needed to develop a program to appeal to a wide variety of learners: "How do you market to, and attract, such a diverse population?" She quoted a survey showing 97% of people in the community had never heard of their office. She decided that her role was to focus on marketing and increasing visibility of their program.

"I had to become a salesperson," she said. Tucker said she knew she had to create "stickiness" in order to make the programs work. She had to become a "connector."

Using a multi-level marketing approach, she sought out potential cohorts of learners in a variety of places. She fostered relationships at the provincial agency level, the community school, local churches, and many other organizations. She also approached high-level industry contacts in the private sector. As a result, the program name "Steps to Success" became "sticky" and the learner base increased by 133%.

Catherine Cogle said when they offered the basic computer program, they were amazed at how many people expressed interest. "The people ranged from age 18 to 80. It attracted people with low levels of literacy and people in high positions in the community," she said.

Cogle said the computer class became their "hook" because people are not afraid to say they cannot operate a computer, whereas they are reluctant to admit to low literacy or numeracy skills. When a student registered for the computer course, that person soon freely expressed interest in other courses such as math and reading.

"Once I have that student, I ask myself, 'How can I make them feel comfortable and respected?'" Cogle described her teaching approach as one that uses a lot of humour, flexibility, and creativity.

Cogle described different methods for keeping students interested. For example, she may write something in Cree on the board, or help new Canadians find information about their home country on the Internet.

Cogle stressed the importance of communication with students to find out what other courses they may need. Describing Tucker as a "fisherman," Cogle said, "I take the fish that Leslie has caught and support it, take it somewhere else, maybe a bigger body of water like the sea of learning." Cogle noted, "The idea that 'computers don't bite.' is our hook. What is yours?"

A Micro-business Development Group Program for Economically Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs

PRESENTER

Kenneth Kavanagh
Community Centre Alliance
St. John's, Newfoundland

In his introduction, **Kenneth Kavanagh** said micro-lending gives people a hand-up, not a handout. It provides money and other kinds of support to individuals who would normally not have access to such resources. Started in 1976 by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh, micro-lending gives loans based on character, not collateral. Worldwide, loans exceed \$7.5 billion, and default rates are less than 2%—extremely low compared to traditional loan models.

Micro-lending began in Newfoundland in 1997; however, HRSDC cut funding in 2003. Between 1997 and 2003, the program administered 333 loans totalling nearly \$500,000. Kavanagh said the current initiative is a partnership between four groups: the Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives (NLFC), the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Innovation, Trade and Rural Development (INTRD), Metro Business Opportunities (MBO), and the Community Centre Alliance. An area committee with background in business development provides accountability and transparency to the program, and mentors those entering it.

Kavanagh said the program has already overcome several key obstacles. The province will not apply a claw-back policy to participants on income support. They are also adjusting their restrictions on business activities by clients in housing units. "This is a major victory," said Kavanagh because these are typically the two major barriers facing those on income support when they start their own business.

The program provides business counselling, networking, skills development, and access to four successive micro-loans between \$2,500 and \$10,000. A lending group forms once six to eight people express an interest. The group self-selects its peers and meets monthly to refine their ideas. Six modules guide them through business planning, applying for a loan, and repaying it. Peers in their micro-lending group approve the loan, but MBO pays it out through the bank's standard process. Kavanagh said people learn about financial lending this way.

To apply for the loan, applicants make a formal presentation to their peer group who then decide to approve the project or make suggestions for change. If someone defaults on the loan, the group stagnates and cannot approve any others until the debt is repaid. Kavanagh said most people stay in the program for two to four years.

Considerable discussion followed the presentation; most of it centered on group dynamics. "People are judge and beneficiary of the system—usually we try to avoid this. It's puzzling," said a participant. Kavanagh agreed, but added the model is proven and works in other places.

Several participants noted the similarities between this program and historical credit union lending, or lending within some cultural communities. One participant asked about the age of current participants. Kavanagh said people in the current group are between 25 and 50 years old. Another participant asked about success stories. Kavanagh said they do not have any from the current program yet because it is too new, but they do from the earlier initiative.

Plenary Session 1: Equitable Access to Learning

MODERATOR

Dr. André P. Grace
McCalla Professor and Director
Institute for Sexual Minority Studies and Services, University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta

PANELISTS

Sandra Germain
Coordinator
Mi'kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Program
Joint Program of Dalhousie and St. Thomas universities

Dominique Ollivier
Executive Director
L'Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)
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Executive Director
Council on African Canadian Education
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Dr. Shahrzad Mojab
Professor
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario

Sandra Germain discussed access to equitable learning for Aboriginal people. She said African-Americans face many challenges in the educational system that are similar to those faced by Aboriginal people. When President Obama worked as a community worker at inner city schools, he wondered why African-American students were dropping out. A school counsellor told him the public school system is not about empowering African-American children. The counsellor said the inner city schools are about social control.

Germain said, “For the Black child as well as the First Nations child, from day one, everything is turned upside down. They are learning about someone else’s history and someone else’s culture—not only that, it is the same culture which has systematically rejected them and denied their humanity.”

Germain said the situation is worse for boys because they have fewer role models and many do not have relationships with their fathers. Girls usually have the advantage of having their mothers as role models. Unless the students are rooted in their own traditions, they will not appreciate what other cultures can offer.

Germain said First Nations people must acknowledge that these education systems are not going to change. First Nations people must form partnerships with universities to advise them on how they learn and ask mainstream institutions to accommodate their learning needs.

Germain discussed the Mi’kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Program, launched in September 2005 with 29 students, as a three-year part-time program. The students came together at one location for one week per month. This type of scheduling accommodated students with full-time jobs. The program produced graduates who are returning to their communities to work, creating a strong network of students who can become recruiters and leaders.

Dominique Ollivier said the level of adult participation in continuing education is dependent on several factors including age, gender, level of education, and employment situation. Men, the employed, and learners with higher incomes were among the groups more likely to access continuing education.

Ollivier stressed the importance of looking at obstacles that create inequalities. In 2006, a campaign funded by the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) called *Accès-formation* was launched, which brought together over 300 education and training stakeholders from government, community groups, and other institutions to discuss obstacles to learning.

Ollivier said there are four basic groups of obstacles to adult education: dispositional, situational, institutional, and informational. The ICÉA approached individuals from five regions of Quebec and asked to what extent these barriers applied to the realities in their region, and if they had discovered ways to overcome these barriers. By undertaking the study on a regional basis, they found certain obstacles were more common in some regions than others. Ollivier discussed the importance of communicating with members of the population to determine their support needs.

Mary Ferguson’s presentation focused on attracting and retaining women in trades, technology, and science occupations. She has developed tools for employers to use to attract and retain female employees.

Ferguson has been working on a project that is a joint venture between the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters (CME). Her firm examined policy practices for women in trades, technologies, and science. The CLC represents thousands of workers and the CME represents thousands of manufacturers. Both of these organizations are in a position to influence conversations about encouraging women to participate in non-traditional occupations.

Ferguson said they found that although women could obtain training in these occupations, actual participation was limited. The project decided to examine employers, educators, and individuals participating in trades and technology occupations to locate key people for the research using an online survey. They identified 60 people as suitable respondents.

Ferguson said they concluded the best way to transmit the research findings was by producing a website. They developed the website as three layers with an introduction on the top layer. Icons and further details were on the second layer, with papers and reference materials on the bottom layer.

There are three information categories. The first discusses why organizations should hire women and outlines mechanisms to help understand what women want and how to recruit them. The second section discusses preparing for organizational change. If a workplace previously had less than 30% women, it will likely require changes. The third section offers strategies to assist, prepare, and recruit women to work.

Delvina Bernard presented a historical approach to equitable learning in the context of African Nova Scotians. She focused on four main themes: challenges, access to learning, impact of inequity, and innovative/inclusive strategies. Bernard said when looking at educational challenges faced by African Nova Scotians, they examined arrival and early settlement patterns. Three major groups came to Nova Scotia: Black Loyalists, Jamaican Maroons, and Black refugees during the War of 1812. There were three distinct classes of African Nova Scotians: free Blacks, enslaved Blacks, and Black indentured labourers.

“Many of the educational challenges which exist today are a legacy of slavery and racism in Nova Scotia,” Bernard said. Black Nova Scotians were given the least desirable tracts of land, sealing their fate into a particular social, political, and economic backdrop. Bernard characterized the history of Black Nova Scotians as being one of exclusion and neglect.

Bernard said the Nova Scotia government established free and compulsory primary education in 1865; however, at the same time they passed a law to segregate schools. This situation continued throughout the 1950s and '60s until the landmark U.S. case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which led to the desegregation of schools in the U.S. and Canada.

Bernard said while schools integrated, attitudes did not. She provided a list of the impacts of this unequal system such as differential treatment, stereotyping, labelling, alienation, insensitivity, lowered expectations, curriculum deficiencies, dropouts, and discipline issues.

These conditions persisted for 20 years until some high school students began to resist their oppression. Bernard said the Black community used these events as an opportunity to call for an inquiry into the historic and current issues of racism in education. This led to the establishment of the Black Learners Advisory Committee (BLAC) in 1989. The task force made 46 recommendations aimed at establishing a comprehensive infrastructure to combat systemic discrimination in education.

Bernard listed some of the remediation strategies such as the BLAC Report on Education, the Black Educators Association, and the Council on African Canadian Education (CACE). There is now a designated seat on the Nova Scotia School Board for a Black elected representative and a race relations officer who reports to the superintendent.

Bernard said they have been successful in establishing many initiatives; unfortunately, most of them are for redress. She would like to see a time when they will be working towards educational excellence.

Dr. Shahrzad Mojab discussed a model she developed for teaching English to immigrant and refugee women. She has examined the education and employment obstacles faced by immigrant women. "First we deskill them, then we reskill them, and then consider them perpetual lifelong trainees," Dr. Mojab said.

Dr. Mojab explained "closure, opening, closure syndrome." This refers to immigrant or refugee women who are at first closed to the educators because they fear them. They then open up, but because the educators cannot address their experiences, their visions, and their survival, they close up again.

Dr. Mojab discussed the process she developed for teaching English as a second language. It consists of a series of workshops called "Words, Movements, and Colours." "Words" enable the participants to write about their memories of incarceration and violence. "Movements" help the women express their experiences through theatrical performance. "Colours" encourages the women to paint and draw the images of their experiences.

Part of her method includes asking these women to recount their stories with as few words in English as possible. During this process, she tapes the women's voices. She uses the tape to create a grammar and vocabulary sheet for them. The learner receives a copy of the tape to use for practice. Dr. Mojab said their repertoire of words expands tremendously in only a few months. Although the model is costly, it works well because the content is relevant to the participants. They have committed to the story of their life and are testifying to what has happened to them.

Concurrent Session 3

A New Approach to Adult Learning Services *(This session was offered in French.)*

PRESENTER

Ginette Poirier

Centre de formation des adultes de la Commission scolaire des Îles de la Madeleine

The fishery is the major industry on the Magdalen Islands, but it is an industry in crisis, said **Ginette Poirier**. At 15%, the unemployment rate is much higher on the Magdalen Islands than in the rest of Quebec, and the annual income is much lower.

Poirier said 39% of the adult population does not have a secondary school diploma, a figure that is higher than anywhere in Quebec. Most of those adults work in the fisheries industry, which has not required a secondary level education; however, the professionalization of the industry is changing this situation.

Poirier described the goals of Quebec's program, *Services d'accueil, de référence, de conseil et d'accompagnement* (SARCA). These goals include increasing the level of adult education and contributing to the roots of learning. She said her centre has adapted SARCA to fit the reality of the Magdalen Islands with the goal to serve adults better.

In terms of initial client reception, the centre had to address the reticence of adults to return to school. The environment has to favour the needs of adult learners.

Older people are often reluctant to go back to school, and they are not comfortable seeking information in a school setting. Therefore, the centre set up two training centres at both extremities of the islands. Each week, SARCA comes there. People feel less inhibited. The objective is to increase access to SARCA and more broadly, to increase access to adult training.

Poirier said they attend major events with information and a banner that shows locals fishing and in school. "We want to change the perception of adult education and training." She said it has taken a long time to undo the years of negative connotations associated with adult basic education.

SARCA also offers client support by asking about a client's needs and life experience during the first visit. Based on this information, SARCA provides material about courses and schools.

The centre collaborates closely with local organizations because they work with the same people that the centre is trying to reach. As well, the centre "is everywhere—in shopping

centres and bingo halls." This strategy has yielded good results. Personalized letters encouraging adults to finish secondary school have also seen a good response.

Making it personal, decentralizing, and working on the perception of adult education are critical components to the centre's success and have enabled clients to realize their dreams. The viewing of the DVD *Petites histoires de grandes réussites, Témoignages d'adultes qui ont cru en leur rêve* ended the presentation on a very positive note.

Ethical Issues in Conducting Practitioner and Community-based Research

PRESENTERS

Dr. Judith Holton
Assistant Professor
Commerce Department, Mount Allison University
Sackville, New Brunswick

Dr. Thomas Mengel
Associate Professor
Renaissance College, University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Dr. Judith Holton discussed the challenges and ethical issues facing practitioners who work in community-based research. Dr. Holton said practitioner research rests in a different paradigm compared to traditional scientific method research. She described it as a humanist paradigm. The issues that affect this type of research are complex and have deep roots.

Dr. Holton said practitioner research is situated, qualitative, interpretivist, and socially constructed. In contrast, research funding is based on evidence-based facts. Practitioner research is less about testing and more about discovering what is happening. She characterized the traditional positivist paradigm and the humanist paradigm as "two solitudes."

With regard to the Tri-Council Policy, Dr. Holton said their goal is to protect the public from poor and unscrupulous research practices. She said the bio-medical model contains far more opportunities to do harm than the social science model and said it was highly impractical to try to develop a code in such a diverse field as adult education.

Dr. Holton said the requirement for a consent form is one of the key problems of the Tri-Council Policy. She feels the forms create mistrust and she questions their effectiveness because even if people sign them, it is unlikely that they fully understand them.

One of the problems with the Research Ethics Board (REB) is they want project proposals to be fully defined, Dr. Holton said. In many cases, this is not possible. She said a major challenge sometimes arises during the research that changes its focus.

Dr. Holton said the policy needs a balance between flexibility and sound judgement and the REB concerns of managing risk and assuring the well-being of the individuals involved in the research.

Dr. Thomas Mengel said he had experienced some of the same challenges faced by Dr. Holton. He said the new Tri-Council Policy has three major principles: concern for welfare, respect for autonomy, and respect for equal moral status of all humans.

Dr. Mengel said an important change in the new document is the shift in culture. He said the document's language is more inclusive and is no longer focused on traditional paradigms of research. There are new chapters on qualitative research, and Aboriginal people and community engagement.

Dr. Mengel said, "Throughout the whole document you will find more awareness about the need to balance the needs of the community with the needs of society as whole."

At various points, the new Tri-Council Policy addresses the uncertainty in some research projects and the need to keep things open before the research agreement is formalized. The proposed policy changes encourage researchers to perform as much preliminary investigation as possible with the objective of producing a more clearly defined proposal.

Dr. Mengel said the proposed changes address some of the issues around signing consent forms. The policy provides more flexibility and allows participation in the research project itself to be interpreted as consent.

Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education Curriculum and Aboriginal Learners

PRESENTER

Lisa Wilson
Program Director
Gabriel Dumont Institute
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Lisa Wilson said the Gabriel Dumont Institute began about 30 years ago with a mandate to promote Métis culture. It currently provides a range of services including degrees and certificate programs. Her research focuses on the Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education (ABE) curriculum and how it constructs identity around Aboriginal people and learners. Wilson said she is Métis, and is very interested in social justice issues.

The *Saskatchewan Labour Market Trends Report* (2000) describes an aging general population but notes the Aboriginal population is young, booming, and underrepresented in the labour force. It suggests this young population could replace aging workers.

The report says Canada's Aboriginal population is growing, with high unemployment and low education levels. Wilson said the report presents a "regime of representation" that constructs Aboriginal identity in particular ways and oversimplifies the connection between education and employment, "as if participation is a choice Aboriginal people are making or not making."

The report's perspective makes the barriers to Aboriginal participation in education and employment invisible and defines the symptoms as the problem. It appears to blame Aboriginal people for problems caused by educational systems and workplaces that have not been receptive to them.

The report was the background against which the government created the new Saskatchewan ABE curriculum. The curriculum's text constructs an identity of Aboriginal people and learners as deficient and needing help. Wilson said this perspective creates an accepted "common sense" understanding about Aboriginal people.

One section of the curriculum describes a young Aboriginal woman with two children, who is on welfare and has never completed high school. Wilson used this as an example of some images of Aboriginal people that come to be widely accepted as truth. She said nobody questions this description because it supports widely held views of Aboriginal learners. It places the blame for inequality on Aboriginal people, while ignoring social and economic inequality or systemic discrimination.

"Words in curricula are powerful and shape the way instructors see their students and interact with them," said Wilson.

She said it is unfair to place the responsibility exclusively on instructors to deconstruct the curriculum that is supposed to guide them. "Instructors are supposed to challenge their own ideology and assumptions but neither the dominant ideology nor the new curriculum supports it." Wilson said it is up to instructors to practice education for social justice each time they step into the classroom. The role of the curriculum is to foster and support anti-oppressive education.

Wilson said these two problematic sections of the Saskatchewan ABE curriculum are being re-evaluated. This attempt by Saskatchewan to develop an anti-racist, anti-oppressive curriculum is a hopeful sign. "The desire for social justice is genuine."

CATALIST: Linking Older Adult Learners across Canada

PRESENTERS

Carolynn Rafman
Program Coordinator
McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement (MILR)
Montreal, Quebec

Kerrie Strathy
Division Head
University of Regina Seniors Education Centre (SEC)
Regina, Saskatchewan

Kerrie Strathy gave a brief history of the Canadian Network for Third Age Learning (CATALIST), which links similar institutions across Canada. She said CATALIST was born from a 1997 University of Regina conference on older adult learning attended by schools, non-profits, and institutions from all provinces and territories. "Within CATALIST we are all very different models," she said. "Each organization is its own entity."

"Retirement has changed," Strathy said. At the University of Regina Seniors Education Centre (SEC), learners in their 80s teach computer skills and others do fieldwork in botany. The centre offers over 180 programs ranging from knowledge-based classes like science and history, to physical activity programs and studio art classes. Off-site outreach programs include an intercultural network uniting First Nations, Métis, and older women, as well as a seniors' English as a second language (ESL) literacy program.

Carolynn Rafman introduced the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement (MILR), a peer learning program that aims "to engage the minds, elevate the spirits, and foster the well-being of its members." The institute has over 800 members, 70 moderators and 40 administrative volunteers and offers over 200 peer-led study groups and lectures. Volunteers design and run the programs.

The MILR has recently introduced outreach programs in seniors' residences and Anglophone groups outside of Montreal. The major challenges are funding and working within a university environment. "When we look for money and funding, we really have to stress that intellectual and social activity . . . improves physical and mental health," she said.

Participants asked the presenters if they had seen an increase in learners seeking work-related skills due to economic realities. Strathy said yes, they are currently looking at partnerships with continuing education and other programs to accommodate this. They are also seeing an increase in older adults needing financial assistance for the course fees. A participant asked if SEC pays their moderators. Strathy said SEC pays moderators \$25 to \$45 per hour for classroom time only.

Another participant asked how SEC and the MILR established their endowment funds. Rafman said the MILR's fund came from membership fee surpluses. Strathy said the SEC endowment was given as a donation that was then matched by a centre for literacy. "We live on income earned from that interest," she said.

Another participant asked the presenters to comment on surveys where seniors say they prefer multigenerational learning opportunities. Strathy said the preference is individual. Rafman said because the MILR classes are in a university, the MILR has a multigenerational flavour even if the classes themselves do not.

Concurrent Session 4

Connecting the Dots between Accountability and Adult Learning

PRESENTERS

Linda Shohet
Executive Director
The Centre for Literacy of Quebec
Montreal, Quebec

David Hurley
Project Manager
Connecting the Dots
Montreal, Quebec

David Hurley and **Linda Shohet** defined accountability as "a relationship based on the obligation to demonstrate and take responsibility for performance in light of agreed expectations." (Office of the Auditor General of Canada and Treasury Board, 1998) Hurley said this definition acknowledges an aspect of mutuality in accountability.

People working in education need to become policy literate in order to understand "how policy is driving what you do in the field," said Shohet. Instructors familiar with how policy influences their work are better able to promote literacy and advocate on behalf of adult learners.

Researchers spoke with 106 adult literacy educators and 30 funders across Canada about accountability practices. They found accountability varied considerably across regions and levels of government. Funders were aware and troubled that the policies they implemented were often at odds with best practice. A field review report is now available online.

In 2008, a pan-Canadian symposium, "Moving the Conversation Forward: Adult Literacy and Accountability," fostered discussion between literacy practitioners and provincial and federal funders. One educator said it was the first time he had sat down with a funder and not had to negotiate for money. Funders admitted they often feel caught between the needs on the ground and the system within which they must work.

Shohet said, "When organizations don't have good governance in place, accountability is hard to come by." She said Connecting the Dots is funding an action research project that is developing a Horizontal Governance Brief that may be a useful model.

Five organizations were funded to do action research related to improving accountability in literacy work. These groups include Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, Storytellers' Foundation, and Bow Valley College. The Peterborough Native Learning Centre is researching tools to identify success factors of Aboriginal schools and literary programs to be applied

elsewhere. The Quinte Adult Day School team is studying measurement tools in literacy that provincial funders could eventually use.

Many provinces want employability as the measure for success. A participant said that older adult learners need literacy skills, but not necessarily for employment.

"In terms of accountability, if you don't pay your staff as skilled labour, you can't expect skilled labour results," said one participant whose comment was met with applause.

Hurley said one hopeful sign is that in Saskatchewan adult learning programs with a good financial record can get funding from three to five years so they are able to break away from a state of ongoing fundraising.

Accessibility Audit

PRESENTERS

Lois Miller
Independent Living Nova Scotia
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Isabelle Ducharme
Metropolitan Montreal Active Living
Montreal, Quebec

Penny Parkes
Metropolitan Montreal Active Living
Montreal, Quebec

Lois Miller opened the session by handing out the audit and explaining that her original co-presenter, Stephanie Peach, was unable to attend. She introduced her new co-presenters, **Isabelle Ducharme** and **Penny Parkes**, from the Metropolitan Montreal Active Living Program, both of whom are learners with disabilities.

In 2008, the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) asked Independent Living Nova Scotia to look at barriers and challenges faced by adult learners with disabilities in Atlantic Canada. The study identified five key areas, including sustainable funding for learning programs. "Learners want to know that a program is going to be there next year," Miller said. Other key areas were accessible transportation and facilities; alternative formats for learning and testing materials; peer support networks; and disability awareness for adult educators.

Miller reviewed several specific challenges from study participants. These included inaccessible classrooms, inadequate residence accommodations, and safety hazards. During a bomb scare, "I was carried by four of my buddies down over four flights of stairs, and me in a 300-pound chair," said one respondent.

The study identified attitudinal barriers, including lack of patience by peers, patronizing attitudes, and a sense of a different set of expectations from educators. "I was denied the opportunity to even fail," one respondent wrote. Miller said learners with disabilities have added stress because they are constantly having to educate people about their disability. Teachers may not even be aware they have a student with a disability until he or she shows up.

Ducharme said most schools and teachers are quite open. "Sometimes difficulties come from within," she said. Parkes agreed. "We have to deal with those ourselves. We have to learn to be comfortable being visible and self-conscious," she said.

Time management can be challenging. "I need to be quite organized and plan ahead," said Parkes. This may involve planning transport, finding resources, and arranging for note-takers or helpers. Ducharme added that it is important for schools and programs to publicize available resources for learners with disabilities. Add a statement on the website, suggested Parkes. "It makes you feel more accessible."

A participant asked how learners with disabilities find out about resources. Ducharme said she gets information from organizations that support learners with disabilities. Participants asked Ducharme and Parkes to talk more about "being visible." Ducharme said, "In a wheelchair, I have to sit at the front of the class. Everyone knows who I am." Parkes said people with disabilities "stand out"—a challenge of self-acceptance and self-esteem.

Several participants asked how to use the audit. Miller said it is essentially a checklist. She suggested reviewing it with colleagues to determine deficiencies, then picking a few short-term issues to work on. "Some may be really simple things that will not cost a lot of money," she said. Ducharme said the audit helps organizations know what resources are available so they can quickly answer questions from potential students.

Integration of an Interactive Learning Model by Health Care Professionals in Francophone Minority Settings *(This session was presented in French.)*

PRESENTER

Christiane Fontaine
Executive Director

Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario (Rifssso)
Toronto, Ontario

Christiane Fontaine said *Regroupement des intervenants francophones en santé et en services sociaux de l'Ontario* (Rifssso) is a growing network of stakeholders in health and social services that aims to develop and support professional leadership in its members. Its ultimate goal is to improve access to French-language health and social services in Ontario. As an umbrella organization,

Rifssso's network comprises dietitians, educators, nurses, dental hygienists and other professional members.

Fontaine described the distribution of francophones in Ontario with 25.6% and 25.2% in the central and northwest part of the province, respectively. Literacy level varies across the province with 60% to 80% of Sudbury francophones operating at a Level 2 or under while those in urban centres such as Toronto and Ottawa have achieved Level 3 literacy or higher. About 60% of Ontario francophones have not reached Level 3 literacy.

The availability of continuing education in French is a challenge with the geographic distribution of francophones, considering the time and cost associated with travel. While English courses are full, a course registration of 15 to 20 is considered a success for course offered in French. The measure of success is more qualitative than quantitative.

Fontaine said her clientele still prefers face-to-face interaction but are becoming increasingly comfortable with electronic communication. She said very little data exists on the level of proficiency among francophones and there are few links between organizations and academia. One of Rifssso's projects is to popularize scientific information and statistics related to health and social services.

Specific project goals include the development of a network of knowledge exchange and of partnerships between researchers and professionals. Rifssso has created a number of tools such as face-to-face workshops and a blog. The blog facilitates continuous learning and the sharing of practical resources. Rifssso is developing a toolkit of resources and on-line workshops.

A Rifssso workshop held in Sudbury, Toronto, and Ottawa, was an opportunity to share data on health and social services literacy with stakeholders in a regional and interactive way. Participants could evaluate their level of knowledge and their literacy needs to more effectively serve their clients. Rifssso will likely repeat these workshops in other locations. As stakeholders adapt to electronic forms of communication, Rifssso will use teleconferences, fireside chats, and possibly a virtual training centre to achieve its goals.

Fontaine said Rifssso's goal is not adult education per se, but rather enabling its members to communicate effectively in their profession.

Work Environment Training: Increasing the Organization's Action Capacity (*This session was presented in French.*)

PRESENTER

Daniel Baril
Project Manager
Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)
Montreal, Quebec

Daniel Baril said he would divide the session into three parts: steps required to integrate training into the workplace; obstacles to workplace training; and how to become a business that incorporates continued learning.

Baril said the information he is presenting is based on numerous research studies on the obstacles to training. This information can be found in an ICÉA document called *La formation en milieu de travail pour accroître la capacité d'action de votre organisation*.

Baril described two levels of success that characterize a successful workplace training program: macro level and micro level. He described macro level as forces at work in the universe of skills development. The micro level refers to how the training program itself is organized.

Baril referred to a diagram in the document entitled "The Universe of Skills Development." The diagram shows how different parties interact to integrate training into a workplace. Baril said an interaction must take place between upper management, employees, unions, and the educators to produce a successful training program.

Baril discussed the forces that influence successful workplace training such as strategic orientation, beliefs, training practices, legislation, technologies, and available resources.

He said the training process could be divided into three parts: before, during, and after. Before any training takes place, there must be an exchange of views and a precise evaluation of needs in a supportive atmosphere. During the training process, the organization must continue to support the learner. Baril said providing a day off for training is an example of support. After the training, there should be an evaluation to assess whether the training has had an impact on the workplace.

Baril asked participants, "Regarding the organizations that you are involved with, do they measure whether or not training programs have really worked in an appropriate manner?" Using cards to indicate their response, the majority of participants responded "no" to this question.

Baril briefly outlined four main categories of obstacles to participation in workplace training: dispositional, situational, institutional, and informational. The most common obstacles cited by

potential learners were situational, with 73% of respondents reporting they do not have enough time to participate in training.

Baril provided an outline of how to become an organization that favours learning. He said this kind of organization practices five essential activities: resolution of problems in groups; learning by experimentation; learning from failures as well as successes; learning with others such as clients, partners and suppliers; and transfer of knowledge.

Baril emphasized the importance of removing barriers to learning to provide access that is more equitable because education is a basic right.

Plenary Session 2: Learning Strategies for a Troubled Economy

MODERATOR

Derwyn Sangster
Business Liaison
Work and Learning Knowledge Centre, Canadian Council on Learning
Ottawa, Ontario

PANELISTS

Mary Morrissey
Executive Director
Prior Learning Assessment Centre
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Guy Fortier
Director
Compétences Montréal
Montreal, Quebec

Karen Myers
Senior Research Associate
Social Research and Demonstration Corporation
Toronto, Ontario

Steve Jordan
Chair and Associate Professor
Department of Integrated Studies in Education, McGill University
Montreal, Quebec

Derwyn Sangster said “we do live in troubled times, with current unemployment at 8.4% and a net loss of 360,000 jobs. We haven’t seen the likes of this in a long time.” The question is how to deal with this economic downturn in an innovative way with limited resources. There must be an increase in learning, particularly informal learning, for the unemployed and those entering the job market for the first time. These people need as many strategies as possible.

Mary Morrissey described the difficult economic situation as a short-term recession co-existing with a long-term labour market shortage. Post-recession, many will not return to the same job or even the same sector or location. This means massive transitions for individuals and their families.

Even in a time of layoffs and job losses, some sectors are still unable to fill positions. This suggests the demand for skilled professions remains high and that those who are out of work do not have the skills organizations are looking for.

“What is missing is the recognition that adults already possess considerable knowledge and skills,” said Morrissey. The solution requires a reorientation from the deficit approach to an asset-based one.

Learning recognition strategies build confidence and motivation, and bridge actual knowledge and skills with educational and labour market requirements. Such a strategy “is a first order solution to the labour market crisis,” as it can mobilize and motivate the reserve labour force, which includes Aboriginal people and immigrants.

Learning recognition strategies require a paradigm shift in human resources policy. While these strategies have started in Canada, the programs favour a bottom-up approach. Morrissey said the policy frameworks to support learning recognition strategies are most developed in Manitoba and Quebec although Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia are moving forward.

She related a promising example of a strategy adopted by Portugal that combines workplace learning with learning recognition. “It is top-down and bottom-up,” said Morrissey; the goal is to qualify one million active workers by 2010.

Guy Fortier said *Compétences Montréal* defines learning recognition as a process that can allow an individual to receive official recognition by identifying and validating acquired knowledge and skills. *Compétences Montréal* looks at competencies in the workplace as determined by official programs established by the provincial government in conjunction with sectoral committees. At the basic skills level, the organization recognizes other elements that influence a person’s development.

Fortier described a Quebec government policy that supports the recognition of prior learning and skills. The government followed the 2002 policy with an action plan that invested in a system to develop qualified individuals for the workplace using an integrated approach. One of the principles behind this policy is that individuals should not have to relearn what they already know.

Compétences Montréal’s clientele includes people without diplomas, people educated elsewhere, and the unemployed. The organization’s mission is to awaken the demand for continuing education and to increase the availability of courses on the Island of Montreal.

Compétences Montréal’s main project is its work with colleges to offer a diversity of courses, with the recent addition of philosophy in French and English as well as physical education. A variety of collaborating organizations, such as Emploi-Québec and school boards, help in the identification of skills and refer clients. Fortier is now looking to the private sector for new partnerships.

Project results include 600 validation interviews and 300 requests for information in the first year alone. New projects include specific programs for immigrants in telecommunication and bureaucracy using an adapted approach.

Karen Myers said it is commonplace to assert that school no longer prepares people for jobs with decent wages and that many adults still do not possess the foundational skills to succeed in the new economy. "Skills are just one piece of the puzzle," said Myers, adding that helping working-age adults gain key skills is more important than ever.

Reports show relatively few adults participate in literacy and occupational upgrading programs, although this may not reflect the reality in Ontario where demand has increased. "What has not changed is that few persist long enough to the point of economic gain," said Myers. The process is too long for many people, given family constraints and other personal responsibilities.

Myers said the U.S.-based Work Advancement and Support Center Demonstration has coaches who provide support and services to individuals. When the centre provides workers with counselling, many individuals choose some kind of training. "The results are promising."

The Career Pathways program, also from the United States, responds to the issue of persistence in training. In this model, colleges, adult educators, employers, unions, and others work together to identify in-demand jobs. They map an individual's potential career pathway, and design an integrated educational program that enables the worker to advance.

The program has modular curricula with multiple entry and exit points, and offers literacy training in the context of occupational training. Preliminary results from Washington State show Career Pathways students are 15 times more likely to complete educational programs and have earned five times more college credits.

A Canadian example is the workplace skills program developed at Douglas College in Victoria, which assists unemployed individuals re-entering the labour market. It has a flexible three-phase approach that includes skills assessment and exploration. "The gains that learners, particularly Aboriginal people, have made in less than 11 weeks are striking," said Myers.

These examples demonstrate that formal training is a necessary step to moving ahead. Foundational skills training is often necessary to benefit from occupational training. "The bottom line is that the integration of adult learning with career development requires an in-depth understanding of the labour market and knowledge of training programs that can help workers advance," said Myers.

Steve Jordan said 66% of Canada's population growth comes from net migration. While about 18% of this population is twice as likely to have an undergraduate degree and four times more likely to have a graduate degree than the non-immigrant population, they suffer lower

employment rates, earn less, and more live in poverty. “That trend is getting worse and is accentuated in this recession,” said Jordan.

To respond to the issues, immigrant worker centres are emerging across North America. They are primarily community-based service delivery organizations. The centres focus on direct action and lobbying, where learning arises at the intersection of labour and community organizing—“it is a new kind of social movement,” said Jordan.

The McGill University Immigrant Worker Centre was established in 2000 by a Filipino-Canadian union and former union organizers. The Centre engages in various activities including skills training and labour education regarding rights at work. “In this sense the centre is a social change organization that aims to better conditions for immigrant workers,” said Jordan.

For a recent study, the centre interviewed immigrant factory, service, domestic and agricultural workers about their informal learning experiences. “We asked them why they left, and about their settling and work stories,” said Jordan. The Centre found different social and working conditions had an impact on immigrants’ learning experiences, particularly language learning.

Learning strategies adopted by immigrants fell into the informal type of learning including political, collective learning and learning to reshape the self. Jordan described it as “learning in reverse, unlearning, and relearning whereby they learned to adapt to their conditions.” The interviews raise questions about unlearning/learning in troubled times, what learning is for, and whose needs are met.

Concurrent Session 5

Creation of a pan-Canadian Community for Research in French Literacy (This session was presented in French.)

PRESENTER

Sharon Hackett
Coordinator

Communauté pour la recherche en alphabétisme et littératie en français (CORAL)

Sharon Hackett described *Communauté pour la recherche en alphabétisme et littératie en français* (CORAL) as a community of people interested in French-language literacy research. The community is diverse with individuals from academia, government, community, and various sectors. The need for such a community arose from the recognition of the profound lack of research on French-language literacy. The research that did exist was not visible enough.

CORAL began from a partnership between the *Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français* and the *Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine*. The preliminary stages of the community were exploratory with a pan-Canadian committee looking at successful research models from around the world.

The first colloquium hosted by the partnership, held in Montreal in April 2008, touched on many topics including the integration of participatory research, research culture, and funding. On the second day, participants focused on the concept of a pan-Canadian network, and possible mission, values, and structure.

Hackett said that while this meeting was the beginning of a community, "it was not quite ready." As a result, the group launched an online consultation from June to September 2008. The resulting input was brought to the committee for their consideration and reaction. An initial research model was constructed and brought for discussion in November 2008, resulting in the launch of CORAL. During the November session, participants refined the community's mission, vision, and values and developed an action plan.

Members chose a community practice model since individuals should be motivated by their own interest rather than the organization for which they work. Hackett outlined CORAL's mission, values, and structure, noting that it is a work in progress. In terms of structure, CORAL minimized membership fees to make membership accessible.

CORAL's action plan rests on the involvement of the network members, who identify what research is required to help the community at large. Hackett said CORAL will anchor the action plan in local/regional round tables, debates, and meetings to promote local and regional ownership.

CORAL intends to mobilize research, promote research results, collate research projects, and provide a place for networking. The first steps towards the network's goals are to establish an operations committee and a strategic committee and raise awareness of the network. Subsequent steps include conducting a membership campaign, establishing an inventory of past and existing research, and investigating funding sources.

Hackett asked participants to consider their potential involvement in a community for the development, transfer, popularization, and implementation of francophone literacy research in Canada.

Old Massett Economic Development Building Project

PRESENTER

Sarah Loewen
Former Director of Education
Northwest Community College (NWCC)
Haida Gwaii, British Columbia

Sarah Loewen said that the high school she attended in the island community of Haida Gwaii has been rated by the Fraser Institute as one of the worst schools in British Columbia. She characterized her experience as an indicator of some of the barriers to education that exist in rural areas. At the time when she attended high school, no post-secondary education was available on the island.

Northwest Community College (NWCC) operates four centres on six campuses. Aboriginal students make up 44% of the college population – the highest percentage of Aboriginal students of any post-secondary institution in Canada. NWCC strives to serve a wide range of learners in the region. The college curriculum focuses on trade training and offers the only culinary arts program with an indigenous focus. Students from this culinary program travel abroad for competitions. The culinary program not only reflects the region, but is also becoming renowned on a world level.

NWCC is very remote and it can take up to 24 hours in bad weather to reach Haida Gwaii. The region is home to 5,000 people located on approximately 150 islands. Loewen said the high costs of reaching the mainland make it almost impossible for a low-income child to leave the region. She said the decline of the logging and fishing industries has caused the region to suffer economically. The Old Massett Economic Development building project was created to address an unemployment rate of 64% on the Old Massett reserve.

Loewen said providing an educational program to such a small population meant that it had to be firmly grounded in the community. The creation of a carpentry program addressed a strong

need for locally trained carpenters. Previously, the reserve contracted out local construction work outside of the community, creating an economic loss to the reserve. Loewen said there were many upcoming projects such as housing repairs and the construction of community facilities.

Old Massett Economic Development, Old Massett Education Department, Skeena Native Development Society, Old Massett Social Development, and Gwaii Trust were all partners on the project.

The program guided 16 students through carpentry courses. The structure of the program addressed several issues that had created barriers for students. Because the students had lower entrance literacy and math levels that would normally prevent them from qualifying for other programs, the Old Massett program integrated these required courses instead of making students complete the upgrade courses in advance.

The program grouped students into teams that spent three days doing team-building activities. These teams served as support groups for students to assist each other in completing the program. Loewen also provided assistance filling out applications. The project hired a local instructor from Gabriola Island who could also serve as a mentor.

The first project assigned to the students was to renovate a house on the reserve where the program could take place. Loewen said it was crucial to offer the program within walking distance for all of the students.

When the project was completed, the program invited community members to see the building. As some of the students had had previous encounters with the law, Loewen invited the local judge and some law enforcement officers to show them these individuals were now working towards something positive.

Loewen said the program was very successful, with 12 out of 16 students graduating with a Level 1 carpentry certificate. "Although it is only Level 1, it still greatly increases their employment possibilities," she said. The Old Massett Construction Company employed nine out of the 12 students, one student went to Australia, and another went to work on the Olympic Village.

From the Margins: Promising Practices for Health and Learning

PRESENTERS

Sue Folinsbee
President, Tri En Communications
Coordinator and researcher
Adult Working Group, Health and Learning Knowledge Centre

Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier
Researcher
Adult Working Group, Health and Learning Knowledge Centre

Baijayanta Mukhopadhyay
Adult Working Group, Health and Learning Knowledge Centre
Medical student, McGill University

Community members and service providers across Canada say improving health care is more complicated than simply making more information available. The Adult Working Group of the Health and Learning Knowledge Centre examined barriers to health by consulting people who are often marginalized. The priority groups were adults with literacy issues, immigrants, refugees, adults affected by HIV/AIDS, and those living in remote or rural areas.

Interviews showed that social determinants have important effects on health. For example, some people knew what healthy foods they should eat, but they did not have the money to shop for them. They were also more likely to live in housing with improper winter heating and suffer from health problems as a result. Some people did not have money to pay for medication or to see the dentist. **Sue Folinsbee** said literacy affects health too. Sometimes a person is unable to read medical instructions on the prescription, for example.

A significant barrier to health was stigma and discrimination in racialized communities, as well as discrimination based on sexual orientation, clothing/dress, area of residence, and drug use. Discrimination affected all aspects of life, beyond health and health services, to areas such as access to good housing and jobs.

Service providers "have a distinct lack of respect for us as human beings," one community member told researchers at an HIV/AIDS consultation. The need to be treated as human was a recurring theme as people described health care experiences in an impersonal system. One person was the last to be called in a hospital emergency waiting room; another was not called at all, for example.

Baijayanta Mukhopadhyay said service providers must handle time pressures better and must not use time as an excuse to avoid listening to their patients' needs. Conversely, community members must learn to insist that service providers make time for them. "A lot of people go into

service because they are good with people; however, the way our system is set up blocks that." Providers need to create strategies to combat the depersonalizing effects of working within a bureaucracy.

Early childhood professionals, health care providers, people working with literacy, and those working with HIV and AIDS organizations attended a forum on health and learning in March. They recommended creating a health and learning network so they could continue to share information and exchange promising practices across sectors.

Participants discussed cultural expectations around health. **Wendy Kraglund-Gauthier** said that an immigrant woman who is not used to having to see a male doctor might have to find a way to navigate around that as she seeks health care. Mukhopadhyay added that in some cultures men might not seek help because of cultural views of masculinity.

Community Partners build Connections between Employers and Individuals

PRESENTERS

Christina Fowler
Executive Director
Saint John Learning Exchange
Saint John, New Brunswick

Cathy Wright
Social Planner
Vibrant Communities Saint John
Saint John, New Brunswick

The TIES 2 Work program in Saint John, New Brunswick is a combined initiative of Vibrant Communities Saint John and the Saint John Learning Exchange. **Christina Fowler** and **Cathy Wright** said the initiative provides essential skills training tailored to an employer's specific needs.

Key principles of the program include multi-sectoral partnerships and a living wage for employees. It offers fast-track training with nine weeks in the classroom followed by three weeks in a job placement. "People wanted to get to work and not be in the class for a year," Fowler said. The program builds on individual strengths and skills rather than formal education.

Employers who participate in the program undergo a skills identification and matching process. "Employers have recruiting needs and skills shortages that aren't being met," said Fowler. The process helps them find the match. "The goal was to get employers interested, committed, and

involved. We look at positions they have available and what materials they want. That becomes part of the essential skills training," she said. At the end of the process, they have an appropriately trained and pre-screened candidate.

One of the key challenges has been shifting the focus of employers away from the General Education Certificate (GED)—the New Brunswick high school certificate—and into essential skills, said Wright. This has been especially difficult with government employers like hospitals. Fowler added some participants go on to complete their GEDs once they are back in the work force.

"Success is based on partnerships," said Wright. TIES 2 Work operates with a leadership team of business, community, and government organizations; a front line team of caseworkers and coordinators; and an evaluation committee with representatives from government and post-secondary institutions. "The partnerships build ownership and commitment," she said, adding that they also reduced obstacles to funding.

TIES 2 Work tracks its performance through an ongoing dialogue with partners, employers, and workers, said Fowler. It has a formal evaluation system process of interviews, focus groups, and other tracking tools. The program has achieved much, including having deductions from income assistance waived while participants are in the program.

Participants asked the presenters how learners entered the program and how they were assessed. Fowler said most come through anti-poverty strategies and community outreach. Assessment for soft essential skills like literacy and teamwork are done in a group; employment-specific assessments are individualized.

Participants asked the presenters what obstacles the program had encountered in recruiting employers. Fowler said the main one has been recognition of skills versus GED, especially with union or government employers. Another obstacle has been the living-wage requirement. "We are looking for good employers who believe in continuous learning and have benefits," said Fowler.

Plenary Session 3: The Future of Adult Learning in Canada

MODERATOR

Dominique Ollivier
Executive Director
L'Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)
Montreal, Quebec

SPEAKERS

Léa Cousineau
President
L'Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)
Montreal, Quebec

Dr. Teresa MacNeil
Moving Forward Committee
Nova Scotia

Dominique Ollivier welcomed participants to the third plenary session and introduced **Léa Cousineau** and **Dr. Teresa MacNeil**.

Cousineau described her participation, through the *L'Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)*, in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adult learning symposia.

The UNESCO conferences demonstrate that when people share knowledge about learning, they can accomplish great things. Cousineau spoke briefly on how the closing of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) and the current economic crisis will affect adult learning opportunities in Canada. "The decisions we take today will impact our futures," she said.

The needs and realities of adults in education are diverse, yet there is an opportunity to respond to those needs collectively. Canadian provinces have never had a unified vision of education, even though "those on the ground" see a need for it. Cousineau said now is the time to unite nationally so Canadian voices can participate more fully in international forums. There are currently no pan-Canadian organizations representing Canadian adult education at international conferences, she said.

Cousineau said raising awareness for the place of adult education in Canadian society and putting it back into the "heart of social agendas" is a challenge. Continuing education not only contributes to the individual well-being of those who engage in it, but also contributes to the economic prospects of a civil society.

To engage government, organizations must preserve existing ties with government and create new ones; exert influence over social policy involving adult learning; and ensure Canada has a place internationally.

Dr. MacNeil thanked Cousineau for setting the stage so well for her presentation, which is “a proposal to ensure the continued development of adult learning in Canada.” The proposal is the result of an ad-hoc committee of 11 members formed in April 2009 in reaction to the cut of the Canadian Council on Learning funding to the AdLKC. “This plenary is for decision-making,” she said, adding the proposal suggests an initiative for going forward.

Dr. MacNeil said the purpose of the new initiative is “to develop a national, bilingual forum for adult learning stakeholders to foster knowledge exchange and to build networks.” Stakeholders would include a wide range of adult learning groups and individuals, including those involved in literacy, seniors’ learning, and civic engagement.

Several key features define the initiative. Foremost, it will be pan-Canadian, bilingual, and collaborative. It will be community-based, inclusive, foster partnerships and networks, and link learning with equity. Finally, it will share promising practices and policies.

An advisory board would oversee the work to be undertaken by a secretariat, which would organize an annual forum, produce proceedings, raise funds, and maintain a website.

Participating organizations and individuals would share costs. By sharing facilities and events with other groups, the organization would keep costs low. Ideally, the group will be a non-profit, charitable organization.

Dr. MacNeil said a steering committee needs to be formed as quickly as possible, and a primary host identified who can take on the project initially. Interested individuals must also identify satellite contributors and funding sources. “We need to develop funding proposals, organize structure, and locate start-up funds,” she said. “We need to know today if you support this initiative and if you would like to be involved,” she said.

Discussion

Eighteen individuals from the audience, representing adult learning organizations across Canada spoke at the symposium microphones, to publicly express their support for the initiative and to offer either resources or advice. Representatives from the Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL), Canadian Network for Innovation in Education (CNIE-RCIÉ), Canadian Commission for UNESCO, PLA Centre, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), Work and Learning Knowledge Centre (WLKC), and Quebec Association for Adult Learning were among those who expressed interest. The speakers represented organizations from across Canada.

One participant said that maintaining a collective organization was important for government recognition of adult learning. Large annual meetings show cohesion and increase the visibility of organizations to funders. Another participant said, "I don't want to lose the momentum we've gathered and we need to find a way to continue it."

Participants raised the issue of organizational structure early in the discussion. One participant said several structures exist that could fit the initiative, such as a charitable organization; an umbrella organization that focuses on networking, conferences, and advocacy; or a social enterprise. Another participant suggested a cooperative model and noted a recent funding announcement for new co-ops. Another participant suggested working with the Council of Ministers of Education of Canada (CMEC), which is currently focusing on adult learning. One participant suggested a business-led model.

Several participants expressed gratitude for the effort to hold bilingual conferences, and expressed a desire for this tradition to continue. "We have appreciated finding a forum where anglophones and francophones could exchange both practice and research in our own languages," said one participant. Another said, "The relationship with Quebec is an innovation that we haven't seen with other organizations in the country. It has been well done."

Participants commented on the importance of combining knowledge and practice. "This is an occasion for reflecting critically on practice, not just a place for talking," one said.

Many participants indicated support for some sort of umbrella organization. "We need to preserve the vast network of expertise," said a participant. One participant suggested using new technology to maintain community dialogue between annual forums. "Geography is the greatest challenge in a pan-Canadian organization, and technology can help with that," said another.

Several participants commented on the importance of the AdLKC. "There are genuine roots here on the practice of adult education," said one participant, adding "human resource strategies come out of adult learning strategies." Another participant said learning goes "well beyond basic literacy and has great benefit to those in later stages of life." One participant said she would like to see work around the UNESCO International Adult Learners' Week continue.

Several participants commented on the connection between adult learning and workplace learning. Participants encouraged a continued partnership with the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre, which has also lost their funding relationship with CCL.

Ollivier thanked participants for their input and asked Dr. MacNeil for closing remarks.

"I think there is no question that the answer is 'Go!'" said Dr. MacNeil. "But it is going to be a challenge." She read a list of organizations that have contacted her with letters of support, and thanked everyone for their participation. Participants were invited to indicate their support for the initiative on a sign-up sheet located at the registration table.

Closing Keynote Address: The Uneven Emergence of Adult Learning and Training

INTRODUCTION

Danielle Charron
Assistant Coordinator
Adult Learning Knowledge Centre
Fredericton, New Brunswick

Danielle Charron introduced Dr. Paul Bélanger.

“It is my pleasure to introduce Paul Bélanger to you this morning. When the symposium planning committee was thinking about keynote speakers, the first name that came to mind was Paul Bélanger's. Mr. Bélanger is a national and international role model in the field of adult education and training, and lifelong education. Allow me to introduce him.

Mr. Bélanger is a professor at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) Faculty of Education Sciences. He is the director of the Center for Interdisciplinary Research and Development and Advanced Studies on Lifelong Learning (CIRDEP) for that university. He is also the chair of the International Council for Adult Education, and was the director of the UNESCO Institute for Education from 1989 to 1999. He has been at the centre of activities such as CONFINTEA V and helped plan the International Adult Learners' Week. He holds a doctorate from the Sorbonne University in Paris, and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Surrey. He is the author and co-author of numerous publications. His areas of specialization include:

- Work and education
- Lifelong education
- Transnational policy analysis
- Adult education and training
- Sociology of education
- Literacy education
- Popular education

Several colleagues have told me that Paul is everywhere. His is a **man of action** who is very much in demand because of his great ability to rally people around major adult education issues. I was told that he deals with several matters at the same time and that he manages very

efficiently in his own way.

In an article that appeared last month in the newspaper *La Presse*, Mr. Bélanger stated that he was very disappointed with the closure of the CCL Knowledge Centres. He has been participating in the symposium since yesterday and wants to build momentum around a pan-Canadian adult education group. The name Paul Bélanger is widely known in Quebec and Francophone Canada; the time has now come to introduce him to Anglophone Canada.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre is pleased to give the floor to a champion of lifelong learning, Mr. Paul Bélanger.”

SPEAKER

Dr. Paul Bélanger
Director, Centre for Interdisciplinary Research and Development on Lifelong Learning (CIRDEP)
Professor, *Université du Québec à Montréal*
Montreal, Quebec

Adult education is a worldwide imperative that is evident in Canada every day on university and college campuses, said **Dr. Paul Bélanger**. Big business is investing in employee skill development. In fact, the number of adults taking part in structured learning exceeds the number of young people in elementary and high schools. Nevertheless, said Dr. Bélanger, there is an inequality in this trend in terms of lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep learning.

Lifelong learning

Dr. Bélanger said the dominant vision of lifelong learning has atrophied. Adult learning is characterized by being lifelong, life-wide, and life-deep. The dominant vision of lifelong learning, however, is limited by its failure to recognize the multi-dimensionality of education.

Currently, lifelong learning is restricted to two life phases. The first begins when children arrive at school at age six and the second is during an individual’s professional life. Then, suddenly, the vision for lifelong learning stops, even though life does not start in school or stop after professional life.

The biography of the individual has been neglected, said Dr. Bélanger. Inequality can leave its mark early in children’s lives. In the presence of caring adults, children between birth and age six can receive stimuli that allow them to develop a sense of self. In Quebec, the inequality manifests itself in the link between socioeconomic status and the ability to access daycare.

Dr. Bélanger described a silence in the dominant vision for senior citizens and the elderly. The policies for these groups are too often limited. While other infrastructure exists for this population, society forgets their learning life. Ironically, these individuals have much time, but they experience limited freedom to continue learning. The social aspect of life for the elderly is considered irrelevant, and this omission denies the living source of society's collective memory.

Most educational activities are limited to the workplace, said Dr. Bélanger, and retirees can only continue learning if they can afford it or are already well-educated. The situation is similar for women, where income determines true lifelong learning.

Life-wide learning

The dominant vision of life-wide learning is also unidimensional, even though the recognition of life-wide learning in itself represents a major breakthrough. This breakthrough has not developed past a simple recognition however.

Governments should continue to invest in life-wide learning and expand learning in the workplace. In general, adults will not continue to learn beyond the needs of their career and so the learning becomes unidimensional. However, adult learning and skills beyond the workplace have significant implications.

In the area of health, for example, popular education could make a tremendous difference not only for individual empowerment, but also for cost control in an over-burdened health care system. Places in Northern Europe provide state support for adult education in the health care sector to enhance individuals' abilities to take ownership of their bodies.

Reasonable accommodation is not possible without the opportunity for everyone to discuss with each other. The multicultural context is not a conflict but a contribution. Canada needs an active civil society with participation from groups such as community organizers, feminists, union activists, and educators.

Life-deep learning

There can be no lifelong or life-wide learning if learning is not an internal activity of the self, said Dr. Bélanger. Life-deep learning is rooted in everyone; thus, it is sustainable and empowering. Personal empowerment means that individuals gain awareness, master skills, are capable of sharing, and have the autonomy to observe, criticize and to take action.

The intimacy of learning is a social issue, its expression emancipating. From this perspective, people will not take part in learning unless it has meaning. This implies that workers must have a mechanism to express their demands and needs.

Dr. Bélanger said that for all three dimensions of learning, the dominant vision is limited and it overlooks people's biographies. That vision silences activities, and forgets the life of an evolving

subject. In this light, adult learning is only meaningful if it is a tool for action. Prior Learning Assessments—the recognition of some stored knowledge and an opportunity for an individual to have their experience assessed—are also limited in the current vision.

The uneven emergence of adult learning in action: Policies and practice

The participation of adults in education is deeply unequal, said Dr. Bélanger. Only a few countries have implemented outreach programs that have made a difference. Socio-economic status is a major factor in this inequality leading to an uneven evolution of the educational biographies of adults. The development of competencies, however, is a major breakthrough in this area. While this is moving ahead in Canada, there is slow progress and limited assessments of prior skills in small- and medium-sized businesses, in less qualified occupations, for elderly employees and for some groups of women.

Dr. Bélanger suggested three elements that could address the existing inequality. First, active policies to elicit the needs for education from seniors need to be enacted. In the current market philosophy, such policies do not exist. The need for education for children and employees is clear, but for senior and elderly citizens, the requirements are different. They are trapped in their living conditions and it is often not obvious for them to leave traditional ways for educational goals.

Policy-makers say they do not hear a demand for basic skill education from this population. No demand means no budget; it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, said Dr. Bélanger. It is easy to say there is no demand when adults cannot express themselves or overcome their fear; it is also much easier for governments to maintain the status quo. Progressive policy can address this situation.

Second, individuals' financial obstacles to education must be addressed. Efficient financial mechanisms could include paid educational leaves or loans to part-time students. There is probably not one unique solution and Dr. Bélanger suggested developing pilot projects based on the experience of other countries. "Why wait to be unemployed to get training? Why does income dictate the opportunities for seniors to develop themselves and to contribute to society?" The initiation of the elderly to new technologies is most widespread in the Netherlands and in Belgium where it is the hottest trend.

Third, the educational environment needs updating. Dr. Bélanger said adult learning is not possible without the Internet, because it deepens structured learning. The Internet can feed curiosity, the engine that drives lifelong learning.

However, only half of Canadian households are connected to the internet. Specifically, only 27% of lower-income households are connected, compared to 82% for their wealthier counterparts. If three out of four households cannot access the universal source of knowledge, it means the de facto privatization of the electronic highway.

Education rests on the right to learn, but currently it rests on household income. "How can we talk about cultural democracy in a place where women on a \$13,000 annual income cannot afford Internet, cable TV or private newspapers?"

While an educational society is emerging for adults, the vision and action surrounding it still result in inequality. Dr. Bélanger described the new scenario as full of holes and silences that forget the individual's experience. Removing financial obstacles could address the unequal access to educational resources and the suppression of the expression of educational needs in some populations.

The right to learn throughout life: A societal issue

The right to learn is a global issue, which cannot wait another 30 years. "We have to act now with this generation of adults," said Dr. Bélanger. Adults in this country need:

- Enhanced possibilities for action
- New competencies in a changing economy
- New competencies to meet environmental challenges
- New skills and knowledge to democratize the ailing economy
- Popular democracy to redefine the dominant structures

Dr. Bélanger also discussed the rights of immigrants to improve their lives and that of their children, and the rights of senior and elderly citizens to continue to learn. The dominant discourse on adult learning does not recognize that the capacity to learn does not disappear with age.

Economic crises do not have borders; therefore, a free and plural debate is needed about the role of adult learning. This will be a topic of discussion at the International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTÉA) in Brazil (recently postponed from its initial date of May 2009), which will have strong civil society representation from Canada.

The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) denies adult literacy in developing countries, said Dr. Bélanger. Vigilance over the right to learn is needed. The announcement that both Statistics Canada and UNESCO are cutting their budgets for monitoring adult learning is cause for concern, as it has a direct impact on the availability of statistics needed to advocate for adult learning policies.

Dr. Bélanger expressed a need for a space and a sustainable structure at the national level for open dialogue and debate over general adult learning and learning at the workplace.

Closing the five Knowledge Centres is a step backward that makes the creation of a forum all the more critical. The forum would allow stakeholders to discuss issues freely. A crisis in democracy parallels the current economic crisis. The Canadian and international organizations

on adult learning must communicate to debate and address the current narrow vision of lifelong learning.

Discussion

After Dr. Bélanger's presentation, one participant related developments in neuroscience and the possibility of pinpointing and influencing the area of the brain responsible for adult learning. He said lifelong learning has to become a priority supported by policy: "the federal government must take ownership of lifelong learning." Dr. Bélanger agreed and said, "We need to increase the capacity for action and community in all sectors."

In terms of findings in the field of neuroscience and stimulating the brain, Dr. Bélanger said the best way to stimulate the brain is to live in a stimulating environment. Therefore, Canada's educational policies cannot put aside policies that provide stimulating environments.

Another participant raised the issue of jurisdiction in lifelong learning, particularly for francophones living outside Quebec. Dr. Bélanger said a broad vision of adult education is necessary and such a vision implies all three levels of jurisdiction—municipal, provincial, and federal.

Dr. Bélanger wants to increase the capacity of the adult imagination and that goal involves all three levels in an integrated way. He referred to the concept of learning cities or regions where stakeholders that normally do not work together are brought together to explore the learning dimension.

Dr. Bélanger noted the importance of horizontal sharing of innovation. Communication between the international adult education forum and the emerging forum on adult education will be important. Emerging knowledge from the former can serve to energize the Canadian Council on Learning.

Participants at AdLKC's 2009 Symposium

<i>Surname</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Province</i>
Allen	Deanna	Laubach Literacy New Brunswick	Moncton	NB
Ambrosi	Sophie	Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDÉACF)	Montréal	QC
Andrew	Sheila	St. Thomas University	Fredericton	NB
Andrew	Tim	Third Age Centre	Fredericton	NB
Arsenault	Colette	Collège Acadie Î.-P.-É.	Wellington	PE
AuCoin	Réné	Université Sainte-Anne	St-Joseph-du- Moine	NS
Audet	Mona	Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF)	Saint-Boniface	MB
Baril	Daniel	Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)	Montréal	QC
Baron	Maureen	Canadian Network for Innovation in Education	Ottawa	ON
Barot	Elisabeth	Commission canadienne pour l'UNESCO	Ottawa	ON
Barrett	Debra	Street Haven Learning Centre	Toronto	ON
Battaglia	Noreen	Lake City Employment Services Association	Dartmouth	NS
Battista	Tania	English Montreal School Board	Montreal	QC
Beigleman	Michael		Montréal	QC
Bélanger	Paul	Université du Québec à Montréal	Montréal	QC
Belhadj	Tami	Lester B. Pearson School Board	Lachine	QC
Benjamin	Malka	Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL)	Montréal	QC
Benoit	Suzanne	Coalition ontarienne de formation des adultes	Ottawa	ON
Bernard	Delvina	Council on African Canadian Education (CACE)	Halifax	NS
Bernard	Maria	Groupe de travail Liens communautaires Centre du savoir sur l'apprentissage chez les adultes	Summerside	PE
Biss	John	Canadian Council on Learning	Ottawa	ON
Bissley	Marc	Camosun College	Victoria	BC
Blaquière	Claude	Collège Acadie Î.-P.-É.	Wellington	PE

<i>Surname</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Province</i>
Boivin	Nathalie	Université de Moncton, Campus de Shippagan, site Bathurst	Bathurst	NB
Boldon	Colleen	Dept. of Business	Fredericton	NB
Boskey	Sam	Quebec Ministry of Education (MELS)	Montréal	QC
Boyle	Linda	New Brunswick Community College Saint John Campus	Saint John	NB
Brandenburg	Armance	Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes (ICÉA)	Montréal	QC
Bull	Arthur	Saltwater Network	Digby	NS
Burnaby	Barbara	Coalition on Richer Diversity	St. John's	NL
Burns	Deborah	NB Association of Career Colleges	Fredericton	NB
Burt	Diane	New Brunswick Community College Saint John Campus	Saint John	NB
Bussiere	Patrick	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	Gatineau	QC
Caldwell	Brenda	Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario	Ottawa	ON
Campanella	Marisa	MELS-DEAAC	Montréal	QC
Cappon	Paul	Canadian Council on Learning	Ottawa	ON
Carusetta	Ellen	University of New Brunswick	Fredericton	NB
Carvalho	Anabelle	Université Laval	Montréal	QC
Castonguay	Chantal	Centre Daniel-Johnson	Montréal	QC
Charron	Danielle	Centre du savoir Apprentissage chez les adultes	Fredericton	NB
Cissé	Amadou	Centre d'apprentissage pour adultes francophones	Winnipeg	MB
Clarke	Mia		Lively	ON
Cogle	Catherine	Steps to Success at the YWCA	Thompson	MB
Côté	Élisabeth	Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDÉACF)	Montréal	QC
Cousineau	Léa	Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes	Montréal	QC
Coutant	Isabelle	Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDÉACF)	Montréal	QC
Crépeau	Louise	Formation de base pour le développement de la main-d'oeuvre (FBDM)	Montréal	QC

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Cyr	Pierre-Luc	Service d'orientation et de formation des adultes Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY)	Whitehorse	YT
d'Entremont	Katherine	National Adult Literacy Database (NALD)	Fredericton	NB
Dawe	Tom	Teachers on Wheels	St. John's	NL
De Cicco	Maria	CCA and Centre Paul-Gratton	Montréal	QC
Dignard	Hervé	Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes	Montréal	QC
Dionne	Geneviève	Université Laval	Montréal	QC
Doiron	Roger	Fédération d'alphabétisation du N.-B.	Richibouctou	NB
Downie	Ann Marie	Literacy Nova Scotia	Sydney	NS
Dugas	Danielle	Thomas More Institute	Montréal	QC
Eran-Tasker	Safak	Lester B. Pearson School Board	LaSalle (Montréal)	QC
Farrell	Cyril	College of the North Atlantic	Grand Falls- Windsor Campus	NL
Favreau-Tan	Beng	Literacy Haida Gwaii	Queen Charlotte	BC
Ferguson	Karen	Hants Learning Network Association	Windsor	NS
Ferguson	Mary	Eko Nomos	Kimberley	ON
Flanagan	Kathleen	Adult Learning Knowledge Centre	Fredericton	NB
Flynn	Jean	Mount Saint Vincent University	Windsor	NS
Folinsbee	Sue	Adult Working Group Health and Learning Knowledge Centre	Toronto	ON
Fontaine	Christiane	Rifssso	Toronto	ON
Fortier	Guy	Compétences Montréal	Montréal	QC
Fournier	Hélène	National Research Council	Moncton	NB
Fowler	Christina	Saint John Learning Exchange	Saint John	NB
Francke	Jeanne	RGPAQ	Montréal	QC
Gagnon	Marjorie	Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation	Montréal	QC
Gatien	Karen	NS Department of Labour and Workforce Development	Halifax	NS
Germain	Sandra	Mi'kmaq/Maliseet BSW Programme	Fredericton	NB
Gillis	Peter	Valley Community Learning Association	Kentville	NS

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Gobby	David	Concordia University	Montréal	QC
Gosse	Gail	College of the North Atlantic	St. John's	NL
Gouthro	Patricia	Mount Saint Vincent University	Halifax	NS
Grace	André P.	University of Alberta	Edmonton	AB
Guay	Michèle	FAFO	Ottawa	ON
Haché	Linda	Fédération d'alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick	Bathurst	NB
Hackett	Sharon	Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDÉACF)	Montréal	QC
Hamalian	Arpi	Concordia University and CAROLD Institute	Montréal	QC
Harvey	Diane	Centre d'études collégiales en Charlevoix et Commission scolaire de Charlevoix	Baie-Saint-Paul	QC
Hayes	Brigid	Brigid Hayes Consulting	Ottawa	ON
Healey	Elaine	Memorial University Lifelong Learning	St. John's	NL
Heft Hecht	Riva	Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL)	Montréal	QC
Helfield	Isa	English Montreal School Board	Montreal	QC
Henderson	Lloyd	UNB College of Extended Learning	Fredericton	NB
Herbert	Mary Ellen		Ottawa	ON
Hicks	Joan	Metro Council on Continuing Education	Halifax	NS
Hodgkinson	Douglas	Canadian Council on Learning	Victoria	BC
Holton	Judith	Mount Allison University	Sackville	NB
Hunter	Jayne	Literacy Nova Scotia	Truro	NS
Hurley	David	Connecting the Dots	Montréal	QC
Hutchins	Richard	NALD	Fredericton	NB
Ireland	Martha	Gateway for International Professionals, The Chang School	Toronto	ON
Jones	Connie	Saskatchewan Literacy Network	Saskatoon	SK
Jordan	Steven	McGill University	Montréal	QC
Kavanagh	Kenneth	Community Centre Alliance	Bell Island	NL
Kehler	Maureen	Fraser Cascade Literacy Task Initiative	Hope	BC

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Kennedy	Bonnie	CAPLA	Ottawa	ON
Kennedy	Karen	Memorial University of Newfoundland	St. John's	NL
Kennedy	Lindsay	Movement for Canadian Literacy	Ottawa	ON
Kilgallen	Celina	YWCA Montréal	Montréal	QC
Kirby	Dale	Memorial University of Newfoundland	St. John's	NL
Kraglund-Gauthier	Wendy	Adult Working Group Health and Learning Knowledge Centre	Antigonish	NS
Lampron	Jean-Paul	Collège de Rosemont	Montréal	QC
Lamy	Normand	CSPI-Centre le FAR	Montréal	QC
Larose	Danielle	Alpha Huronie	Penetanguishene	ON
Lehmann	Joy		Toronto	ON
Levesque	Danny	Collège communautaire du Nouveau-Brunswick	Grand-Sault	NB
Lévesque	Normand	Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF)	Ottawa	ON
Loewen	Sarah	Vancouver Island University	Duncan	BC
Loiseau	Fulvie	CIERC	Pierrefonds	QC
Lundrigan	Jody	Ontario Literacy Coalition	Toronto	ON
MacDonald	Betty	Saint Mary's University	Halifax	NS
MacDonald	Linda	Saint Mary's University	Halifax	NS
MacNeil	Teresa		St. Peter's	NS
Marchand	Louise	Université de Montréal	Verdun	QC
Martin	D'Arcy	Centre for the Study of Education and Work	Toronto	ON
May	Julie	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	Gatineau	QC
Maynard	Margaret	Niagara West Employment & Learning Resource Centres	Beamsville	ON
McGuire	Teresa		St-Lambert	QC
McIntosh	Marnie	Ontario Native Literacy Coalition	Owen Sound	ON
McLean	Donna	Halifax Immigrant Learning Centre	Halifax	NS
McLeod	Darren	Adult Learning Knowledge Centre, Canadian Council on Learning	Fredericton	NB
Melanson	Lorette	Base de données en alphabétisation des adultes (BDAA)	Fredericton	NB

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Mengel	Thomas	University of New Brunswick	Fredericton	NB
Meunier	Caroline	Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation du Québec (RGPAQ)	Montréal	QC
Miller	Candace	Fanshawe College	London	ON
Miller	Lois	Independent Living Nova Scotia	Halifax	NS
Miller	Sunday	GODSun	Halifax	NS
Mojab	Shahrzad	OISE/UT	Toronto	ON
Morrissey	Mary	PLA Centre	Halifax	NS
Mukhopadhyay	Baijayanta (Baj)		Montreal	QC
Mutabazi	Simon	Department of Natural Resources	Halifax	NS
Myers	Karen	Social Research and Demonstration Corporation	Toronto	ON
Ndejuru	Rosalie	Centre de documentation sur l'éducation des adultes et la condition féminine (CDÉACF)	Montréal	QC
O'Reilly	Declan		Saskatoon	SK
O'Rourke	Seaneen	Yellowhead Tribal College	Edmonton	AB
Ollivier	Dominique	Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes	Montréal	QC
Ostiguy	Louise	Centre Antoine-de-St-Exupéry - CSPI	Saint-Léonard	QC
Pacey	Penelope	Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick Ltd.	Fredericton	NB
Paquette	Danielle	Télé-université (UQAM)	Montréal	QC
Paquin	Maryse	Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	Trois-Rivières	QC
Pasteris	Mario	Quebec Association for Adult Learning (QAAL)	Montréal	QC
Patoine	Tony	Service francsaskois de formation aux adultes	Yorkton	SK
Patterson	Heather	Mount Allison University	Sackville	NB
Pelletier	Christian	Regroupement des groupes populaires en alphabétisation Québec (RGPAQ)	Montréal	QC
Pepin	Sheryl	Adult Learning Knowledge Centre	Fredericton	NB
Poirier	Ginette	Centre de formation des adultes, Commission scolaire des Îles	L'Étang-du-Nord	QC
Postras-Collins	Tracey	Yellowhead Tribal College	Edmonton	AB

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Potter	Judith	McGill University	Montréal	QC
Proulx	Christine	Free Rein Associates	Hope	BC
Rafman	Carolynn	McGill Centre for Continuing Education	Montréal	QC
Rantucci	Clara	English Montreal School Board	Montréal	QC
Richard	Ginette	RGPAQ	Montréal	QC
Roback	David	IWK Health Centre	Halifax	NS
Roback	Halley	Mount Allison University	Halifax	NS
Roy	Carole	St. Francis Xavier University	Antigonish	NS
Saadane	Saadia	Pluri-elles (Manitoba) inc.	Winnipeg	MB
Sangster	Derwyn	Work and Learning Knowledge Centre	Ottawa	ON
Santilli	Diego	HRSDC	Gatineau	QC
Sauvé	Louise	Télé-université / SAVIE	Québec	QC
Savoie	Normand	ABC Communautaire	Welland	ON
Savoie	Rodrigue	NRC	Moncton	NB
Séguin	Marie-Claude	TÉLUQ, université à distance de l'UQAM	Montréal	QC
Sharpe	Jim	Mount Saint Vincent University	Halifax	NS
Shohet	Linda	The Centre for Literacy of Quebec	Montréal	QC
Solar	Claudie	Université de Montréal	Montréal	QC
Sookermany	Nadine	Parkdale Project Read George Brown College	Toronto	ON
Stairs	Gary	Red Hot Learning	Fredericton	NB
Steele	Dawn	Université de Moncton	Moncton	NB
Stephens	Alex	Work and Learning Knowledge Centre	Ottawa	ON
Stephens	Heather	Thomas More Institute	Montréal	QC
Stoyanoff	Louis	Street Haven Learning Centre	Toronto	ON
Strathy	Kerrie	Seniors Education Centre	Regina	SK
Talbot	Geneviève	Compétences Montréal	Montréal	QC
Therrien	Micheline	Centre FGA Anjou	Montréal	QC
Tremblay	Suzanne	Sultrem Gestion Conseil	L'Assomption	QC

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Trépanier	Claude	IDEES inc.	Longueuil	QC
Tucker	Leslie	Steps to Success at the YWCA	Thompson	MB
Valcin	Mélanie	Collège Frontière	Montréal	QC
Valk	Nadine	Canadian Council on Learning	Ottawa	ON
Van Kleef	Joy	Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning	Toronto	ON
Vega Baron McTavish	Ana Maria	Learning Branch, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada	Gatineau	QC
Vesac	Jean-Ambroise	L'ABC des Hauts-Plateaux	L'Islet-sur-mer	QC
Wilson	Lisa	Gabriel Dumont Institute	Saskatoon	SK
Wojda	Gwen	Lakehead University	Thunder Bay	ON
Wright	Cathy	Vibrant Communities Saint John	Hampton	NB
Zwolak-Ross	Pat	Red River College	Winnipeg	MB