# Report on the 2007 National Symposium

Halifax, Nova Scotia
June 10 – 12, 2007

## ADULT LEARNING
Knowledge Centre

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CANADIAN COUNCIL ON **LEARNING**   CONSEIL CANADIEN SUR **L'APPRENTISSAGE**

The Right to Learn

Report of the
Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's
2007 National Symposium

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# Executive Summary

On June 10-12, 2007, the Canadian Council on Learning's Adult Learning Knowledge Centre held its second annual national symposium at the Lord Nelson Hotel in Halifax. Over two hundred people from diverse community-based groups, non-profit organizations, post-secondary institutes, government, and private sector groups across Canada, participated in a rich dialogue on the symposium's theme, *The Right to Learn.*



The symposium program overtly demonstrated the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's commitment to the right to learn, by hosting an event that offered (with no registration fee) ample time for discussion, flexible access to translation services, and diverse presentations offered by researchers, administrators, and community-based practitioners.

There was an impressive array of speakers who provided national and international perspectives on Canadians' capacity to exercise the right to learn. Abrar Hasan from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development opened the conference. His keynote address identified policy challenges related to participation rates and equitable distribution of adult learning opportunities. Dr. Hasan concluded that "lifelong learning is clearly not a reality for *all* adults" and recommended increased and targeted investments, as well as improvements to the structure, quality and relevance of programs. His full speech is included in this report of the proceedings.

The two-day symposium showcased research projects funded by the Canadian Council on Learning, as well as knowledge exchange projects funded by the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre. The 32 presentations included a broad range of research findings and knowledge exchange activities, related to diverse issues such as the knowledge of Aboriginal seniors, theatre and art as adult learning tools, quality assurance in prior learning assessment (PLAR), accessibility to French-language learning in rural areas, online adult training, and literacy in the workplace.

Participants also heard plenary presentations on a conceptual framework on adult learning designed to aid data collection on formal and informal adult learning, and the impact of literacy challenges on Canada's social capital and economic productivity. The highlight of the symposium was a dynamic panel discussion on the right to learn with Paul Bélanger, Daniel Baril, and Ray Ivany, moderated by Aldéa Landry.

The symposium aptly demonstrated the diversity and impact of adult learning.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's Third national symposium will take place in St. John's, Newfoundland June 23-25, 2008.

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## Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's
## 2007 National Symposium: The Right to Learn

### 1. Introduction

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre (AdLKC) is an initiative of the Canadian Council on Learning, which is a national independent, not-for-profit organization funded through an agreement with Human Resources and Social Development Canada. AdLKC was launched in September of 2005 and is based at the College of Extended Learning, University of New Brunswick.

The mission of the AdLKC is to foster a rich, informed, and coordinated culture of adult learning responsive to the needs and interests of all Canadians. Its focus is on promoting adult learning inside and outside of the classroom, so that all adults are able to participate fully in today's knowledge-based society and economy throughout their lives.

*The Right to Learn* was the theme of AdLKC's second national symposium, held in June of 2007 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The symposium provided an opportunity for dialogue about the rights and responsibilities related to adult and lifelong learning for all Canadians.

The symposium drew over 200 individuals from across Canada to contribute to this discussion, sharing their perspectives from a diverse range of settings – universities, community colleges, the three levels of government, non-profit and community based organizations and private sector organizations.

The program was dynamic and diverse with a combination of plenary and individual sessions and ample opportunity for discussion. It was carefully designed to be an inclusive event with simultaneous translation provided at all plenary sessions and an interpreter assigned to each session to assist with French-to-English and English-to-French communication.

Two keynote speakers, two plenary sessions and 32 presentations featuring cutting-edge researchers and front-line practitioners, reflected AdLKC's commitment to providing knowledge exchange using a broad, inclusive and pan-Canadian approach. The program ensured there was information about community-based knowledge exchange projects funded by AdLKC, applied research projects funded by the Canadian Council on Learning, and other major initiatives related to adult learning.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre owes thanks to many people. The 2007 symposium committee included Judith Potter, Kathleen Flanagan, Ellen Carusetta, Joan Hicks, Judith Holton, and Gerona McGrath. We are deeply grateful to the many presenters and participants, who provided the energy and dynamism of the symposium and whose names are listed in the appendix. The report was written by Cathy Wright with the assistance of a team of volunteer note-takers: Élise Arsenault, Léonie Bouvier, Ellen Carusetta, Danielle Charron, Lorette Chiasson, Ann Marie Downie, Hélène Fournier, Joan Hicks, Brenda King, Gerona McGrath, Judith Potter, Nadine Sookermany, Nadine Valk, and Rick Williams.

*Kathleen Flanagan*

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## 2. Keynote Address by Dr. Abrar Hasan

*Dr. Abrar Hasan has served as the Head of Education and Training Policy Division, of the Education Directorate of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since 1994. Based in Paris, OECD's role is to work with its 30-member countries as well as other global partners in developing a better world economy. Dialogue, consensus, and policy development are at the very heart of OECD. A Canadian, Dr. Hasan has been with OECD since 1983. As an economist, his career has been dedicated to education, labour market, human capital, work organization, and economic development, providing strategic advice to senior government officials, non-governmental organizations, employer and union representatives, and stakeholders in education. The work undertaken by OECD in the area of adult learning provided an impetus for the creation of the Canadian Council on Learning in 2004. Just a few weeks before AdLKC's symposium, Dr. Hasan moved from OECD to UNESCO. Dr. Hasan delivered the following paper at the 2007 symposium of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

## Adult Learning: Patterns of Participation and Policy Developments

### I  Introduction

It is a great honour for me to be invited by the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre to give the keynote speech for its 2007 symposium. I have been asked to bring you the international perspective on the state of adult learning in OECD countries. I will begin by considering the rationale for adult learning and how it is linked to the concept of lifelong learning. I will then outline some of the key features of adult learning provision with the aim of raising two major policy challenges that emerge from the observed patterns: the adequacy of participation rates in adult learning and the equity of distribution of adult learning opportunities. I will be alluding, as well; to the policy directions OECD countries are following in addressing these two challenges. The concluding part of my remarks will attempt to draw some implications of these two challenges for the right to learn theme of the Symposium.

### II  The Rationale for Adult Learning
#### Adult learning and the concept of lifelong learning

Interest in adult learning has risen sharply over the last three decades. The notion of "recurrent education" or "second chance education" gained considerable attention in the early 1970s, spurred in part by the need for a more skilled labour force. The term lifelong education emerged and was adopted by several international organizations working on education policy (OECD 1973). Gradually it evolved into a lifelong learning concept, which signals, in essence, a longer term process of evolution in modern societies from the industrial to the post-industrial society. The driving forces of economic growth, IT, demographic change and globalization have given new impetus to the need for continuing learning in the emerging knowledge economy.

The idea "lifelong learning for all" was adopted formally by the OECD Education Ministers in 1996 as the guiding strategy for education policy as countries move into the early 21st century (OECD

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1996). The OECD Labour Ministers as well as Social Affairs Ministers echoed support. The concept was also adopted, in the same year, by UNESCO and the European Commission.

**Key features of lifelong learning:** Three key features of the modern incarnation of the concept are worth noting.  First, it is truly lifelong in its scope, that is, it covers learning from cradle to grave. Adult or recurrent education is one component of this lifelong learning view. The life-cycle view is a recognition that the capacity to learn and "learning to learn" can be shaped in early years well before formal schooling begins. Second, by emphasizing the centrality of the learner the concept signals a key shift to the demand side of the learning experience from the traditional emphasis on supply of provision and formal structures that support it. This was signaled by replacing lifelong *education* with the term lifelong *learning*, which was meant to recognize the learner as an active agent in the process of learning.  Third, the concept emphasizes that learning does not only take place in the formal but also in the non-formal and informal settings, and that learning in all these settings can potentially contribute to the stock of human capital.



**Adult learning and lifelong learning:** The driving forces for *adult* learning parallel those for *lifelong* learning. Under the impetus of more rapid technological change and innovation, there is a continuing need for new skills. Higher level skills are more in demand: employment growth is being driven by white-collar, high skilled jobs in almost all OECD countries.  The shelf life of skills is shorter. Workers must gain new and refresh their skills. Long-term job attachments are fewer, requiring workers to move across firms, industries and occupations. Employment/population ratios have risen along a trend implying the need for skill acquisition so they participate in the labour force.

In consequence, there is a range of economic motivations for participation in adult learning. But there is also the social motivation, which comes from the need to function effectively in an increasingly technologically sophisticated society. For example, the Lisbon Summit defined basic skills for functioning in the knowledge society as: *"Among the basic skills now frequently included in curricula are oral and written communication, literacy, numeracy, teamwork, ICT, problem-solving and foreign language teaching"* (European Commission, 2003, National Actions to Implement Lifelong Learning in Europe, Eurydice,  Survey 3).

Adult learning undertaken for economic motivation can bring a range of benefits to the learner, employers and the economy. For example, at the individual level, the private rates of return to higher education continue to be well in excess of the rates of return to secondary education, despite the massive expansion of tertiary education (OECD 2006; *Education at a Glance, 2006,* Table A9.1a, data for 2004). Employment rates, likewise, are higher for tertiary graduates than for secondary graduates, whose employment rates in turn are higher than for those with only primary or lower secondary education (OECD 2006, *Education at a Glance 2006,* Table A8.1a, data for

2004). In contrast, unemployment rates are, correspondingly, lower for tertiary graduates compared with people with secondary or lower secondary level attainments (OECD 2006; *Education at a Glance, 2006,* Table A8.2a, data for 2004). For the employers, there are gains in productivity.

The large returns to higher education imply that labour productivity is positively related to the years of schooling. For the labour market, adult education and training can contribute to improved labour market matching and mobility, thus improving productivity and reducing unemployment rates. Labour force participation rates also rise with the level of educational attainment and skill levels (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005), which can also compensate for the lower inflow of youth in the labour market that would happen in countries with the demographic decline. Adult learning can increase contribution of adults to the labour market over a longer time-span as population ages.

For the economy as a whole, there is considerable evidence that every additional year of educational attainment contributes positively to GDP growth. On the social plane, adult learning can contribute positively to social cohesion by helping to bridge social divides. Adults with higher levels of skills are shown to be healthier than the less skilled (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005, Chapter 11). Adult learning can therefore cut down costs of health and safety programs. Higher levels of skills are also associated with higher participation rates in civil society and the exercise of citizenship responsibilities (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2000).

### III Is the Volume of Adult Learning Adequate?
This section examines available data on patterns of participation in adult learning activities with the objective of raising two questions: is the volume of adult learning activities adequate; and, are learning opportunities distributed equitably among the adult population?

### Volume of adult learning
**Wide variation across countries:** Participation rates in adult learning can be measured in different ways, differentiated for example by the type of programs and the time period over which the learning episodes are undertaken. A highly diverse picture emerges across the 21 countries for which comparable data could be gathered (OECD 2006, Education at a Glance 2006, Table A8.2a, data for 2004). Measured over a 12-month period, the participation rate of adults aged 25-64 years ranged from 4% in Greece to 46% in Denmark. The rate is more than 40% of the labour force in five of the countries and less than 10 in another five. Canada, with 29 % (2002 data) appears around the middle of the ranking. The participation rates are different when measured by different surveys (EULFS, Eurobarometer, CVTS, IALS and national surveys) and over different time reference periods (4 weeks or a year). However, the high degree of variability across countries is confirmed by all (OECD 2005, Table 1.1).

**Diversity in duration of training:** A cardinal feature of adult learning is its enormous range of types and purposes. The duration of training is one indicator of this diversity, a feature that is sometimes used as an indicator of the quality of training. Measured over a 12-month period, the mean number of hours spent in learning per participant varies from 100 hours or more in Hungary, Greece and Canada to the lows of between 30 to 40 hours in the UK US, Slovak Republic, Sweden,

Poland, and Finland (OECD 2003a, data for 2002). In general, there is a tendency, across countries, for higher participation rates to be counterbalanced (though only partially) by low duration per participant.

### Alternative approaches to assessing adequacy of volume of adult learning

The question of adequacy of the volume of adult learning can only be discussed in the context of some notions of a "desirable" or "optimum" level of participation. But the concept of an optimum volume of adult learning or an optimum rate of participation in adult learning has not received much analytical attention. It would be very difficult to arrive at a concept that could command wide acceptance. This is partly because of the large number of factors that might be used to determine the demand for adult learning opportunities and partly because of the different perspectives from which the optimum might be perceived. The "optimum" rate would depend on a variety of factors: the level of skill attainment of the population, the rate of change of skills demanded in the economy, the state of social demand for adult learning, and so on. Similarly, what may be judged to be the optimum participation rate on the basis of economic factors may not be the relevant optimum from the social perspective.

The data on the participation rates described above suggest that adult learning is not a reality "for all" in any country, not even in the best performing country Denmark. However, as the level attained in practice, the best performance level can be used as one benchmark that other countries may strive to achieve. Another benchmark, or target, may be the skill levels signaled by upper secondary level of education that may be considered the minimum level that all adults ought to reach. The implication of this benchmark can be assessed with the help of the educational attainment data for the adult population aged 25 - 64 (OECD 2006, *Education at a Glance 2006,* Table A1.1a). Even in the best performing of the 30 OECD countries, some 11 to 17% of the adult population would need to be upgraded to reach this level. For the majority of the countries, the proportion needing upgrading exceeds 30 per cent of the adult population.

Another benchmark may be set in terms of specific skill levels deemed necessary to function in modern societies. The information from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS, 1994-98), which measured literacy proficiency in different dimensions, can be used for this purpose. IALS measured adult literacy skills – prose, document, and quantitative – on a scale from Level 1 to Level 5, indicating increasing levels of difficulty. A panel of experts reviewed the skills scale and came to the conclusion that Level 3 is a suitable minimum for coping with the demands of everyday life and work in a complex knowledge society. If this standard is used, some 25 to 40% of the adult population fails to reach this level (Figure 2.2, Statistics Canada and OECD, 2000, p. 17) even in the five top performing countries (Sweden, Norway, Finland, the Netherlands, and Canada). In eleven of the 22 surveyed countries, the proportion failing to reach Level 3 is more the 55%.

Yet another target can be read into the Lisbon Summit declaration: *"Among the basic skills now frequently included in curricula are oral and written communication, literacy, numeracy, teamwork, ICT, problem-solving and foreign language teaching"* (European Commission, 2003, *National Actions to Implement Lifelong learning in Europe,* Eurydice, Survey No. 3). If the target measure is

broadened to include problem solving skills, some two-thirds of the adult population in the seven countries surveyed by ALLS fails to meet Level 3 on this skill measure (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005, Table 2.3). Some one-third of the adults do not reach the less stringent standard of Level 2. Even in the best performing country, Norway, some 23% of adults aged 16 to 65 did not reach Level 2.

The conclusion is hard to avoid that large adult skill deficits exist in all countries, even in the best performing OECD country, no matter which measure is considered among a range of benchmark indicators. The volume of adult training opportunities that is needed to meet these deficits is large and would require high levels of investments.

### Finding resources for increased investment in adult learning

Who should bear the responsibility for finding resources for such investment, and in what proportion?  Since the benefits of adult learning accrue to the individual learner, the employer as well to the economy and the society at large, a purely economic approach would suggest that each should share in financing adult learning.

**Market failures and the role of government:** The case for large public responsibility for investment is clear for those types of adult learning that have social benefits. For example, adult learning of the foundation skills type, which is regarded as essential for an individual to function as an effective citizen in the modern knowledge society, may not have marketability and no immediate demand by the employers. They may have social benefits of the type mentioned above. They are important not only for an individual's effective functioning in the society but also as a threshold for the adult learner to prepare for further learning with future market demand.

But there is also a case for public investment where training market does exist. The benefits of this type of adult learning may not all be garnered by the individual learner. There are benefits to the economy and the society. In the economists' jargon, there are "externalities" to investment in adult learning that are not captured by the individual learner or the employer. As a consequence, learners and employers underinvest and spend less than the rate of return would warrant. Because of market failures there is case of public investment in the types of adult learning that have a market but for which markets do not function properly.

**The need for co-financing arrangements:** The discussion over the last decade has achieved a consensus that co-financing arrangements are needed for this latter type of training. The term co-financing means that such types of adult learning should be financed through combined contributions from employers, learners and the government. The public sector contribution is to make up for market failure, while the employers and the learners each should contribute because they capture a share of benefits from investing.

A large number of experimental co-financing programs have been tried in a number of countries in recent years. They aim to strengthen incentives for individuals, particularly for those individuals for whom training costs have been a barrier for engaging in learning activities. The initiatives can be

grouped into three general categories: (i) those that aim to reduce the direct cost of learning for the individual, (ii) those that cover foregone earnings through learning accounts or time accounts; and (iii) those that aim to share the risks attached to investment in learning (OECD 2003b).

Reducing the direct cost of investment to the individual can take the form of leveraging the resources that individuals put into learning (cash or time) accounts with a matching contribution and/or eligibility for reduced fees. The English Individual Learning Accounts Programme, the Dutch Ministry of Education pilots carried out in 2001, the learning Account Programme of Basque Country (Spain), and the Flanders (Belgium) individual learning accounts and development accounts introduced in 2003, are examples of the first approach. This approach can also take the form of interest rate subsidies and the use of tax policy to reduce the cost of capital for investment. Among the second category are examples of time accounts which are part of many collective agreements in Germany and the financial accounts of the Swedish company Skandia. The Australian higher education contribution scheme (HECS) is an example of the third category.



These and other examples of co-financing experiments have achieved some successes and have also identified factors that need to be taken into account in designing successful schemes. While the experiments undertaken so far have achieved some successes, a systemic approach requires going beyond the incremental changes implemented so far (OECD 2003b). The schemes need to be based on more solid information on  the returns to adult learning; they need to be supported by creating appropriate financial institutions that can underwrite arrangements for the sharing of the financial burden among partners; the tax policy instruments need to be brought into the design considerations; a number of supporting structures dealing with such services as account management systems for administering payments, maintaining records, ensuring financial probity, quality assurance and monitoring systems need to be put in place. It is necessary to take into account the breadth of public policies involved and the different levels of government. For example, the tax and fiscal policies of government are implicated in addition to the direct funding and subsidies for adult learning. Similarly, the breadth of interests and institutions outside the government must be considered, for example the financial institutions. A wide range of new financial instruments are needed, which will need to be tailored to the specific needs of different groups of adult learners and regions.

### IV  Adult Learning Opportunities: Inequities in Access and Participation
The data sources used above, and others that are noted below, shed some light on other aspects of participation and access patterns by various characteristics of learners and their socio-economic affiliations. There is considerable evidence that adult learning opportunities go disproportionately more to the already well endowed. Individuals with higher qualifications, in more prestigious occupations, in better paying business sectors, in supervisory and skill-intensive jobs, and in larger

firms participate in adult learning relatively more than their less fortunate peers. Immigrant, linguistic minorities and first nation groups have proportionately lower access to adult learning opportunities. More specifically, these data support the conclusion that participation rate is, generally:

- Higher for people with higher levels of educational attainment (OECD, 2006, Chart C6.2a); the participation rate in informal learning is also positively associated with the level of education (Statistics Canada and OECD 2005, Figure 4.7);
- Higher for the employed than the unemployed (OECD 2006, Chart C6.5), and lowest for the inactive population (OECD 2005, Figure 1.1). The rates of labour force inactivity is significantly high for the low-skill compared with the high-skill categories (Statistics Canada and OECD 2005, Figure 5.3);
- Higher in large rather than small firms (OECD 2005, Figure 1.2);
- Among industrial sectors, higher in upper-tier services and lowest in the resources sector (OECD 2006, Chart C6.3, p.316);
- Higher for management and senior positions than for unskilled occupations (OECD 2003a, Figure 3.9) ;
- Higher for young and middle-aged workers than for older workers (OECD 2005, Figure 1.1); and
- Similar between men and women except for UK, Switzerland, Finland, US, Sweden and Denmark, where women have higher rates (OECD 2006, Chart C6.2c).

These data confirm that there are marked inequities in the way learning opportunities are distributed among the adult population. In the preceding section, the case was made for raising the investment level in adult learning. The inequitable distribution of learning opportunities suggests that the policy challenge is not only of finding resources for a larger volume of investment. Policy-makers need to address, as well, the inequities in the distribution of learning opportunities. For this, it is important to understand the reasons of weaker participation by some groups of adults.

**Why adults most in need are not reached?** Data on reasons for non-participation provide some clues for responding to this question. Data from the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) show that lack of time is the main reason why adults did not participate in learning activities even when they wished to (Statistics Canada and OECD 2005). This finding is supported by information from CEDEFOP and other sources on the obstacles adults encounter in participation (OECD 2005, Figure 1.5 and Table 1.2). The large majority of adults responded that lack of time was the main obstacle they faced. The CEDEFOP survey also enquired about what would facilitate participation. The most common responses were the possibility of flexible hours (21%), the existence of individualized programs of study (20%) and personal choices of methods of study (20%). Access to good information and advice also figured in the responses (14%).

**Obstacles to access:** In most cases, the time constraint mentioned by many adults can be interpreted as another expression of the resource constraint. Studies show that a large part of the cost of undertaking training is often the "opportunity cost" or the earnings forgone during the period of training, which is evident for the employed participants. Even in the case of the

unemployed and the inactive, there may be some opportunity cost where participants have to take time out from other responsibilities. For example, parents with young children may have to engage caregivers for the time they engage in training activities.

The data point to other obstacles, as well. There is some evidence that lack of suitable training opportunities is also a cause of non-participation as available opportunities do not map well with the needs of adults. In other situations, suitable training courses may be available but their scheduling may be inappropriate in terms of the time availability patterns of the adults. Inappropriate pedagogy is frequently mentioned as a factor in non-participation: many adults do not like the institutionalized (school-like) instruction and respond negatively to such learning settings. Poor motivation may also come from the lack of relevance of the available learning opportunities to the needs of the adults. This can take many forms. Available training opportunities may not offer links to clear pathways leading to further learning or employment opportunities. A clear linkage between the training and how it is assessed, certified, and recognized, both as part of the national qualifications system and in the labour market, are important elements in motivating adults to participate. Career guidance services available to adults are generally weak and not tailored to the particular circumstances of the adults (OECD 2004). Many adults do not participate simply because they lack information on what training is available. Finally, data show that some adults are unaware of their deficiencies in functional literacy (OECD 2005).

These obstacles and evidence of lack of motivation suggest that improving participation in adult learning requires qualitative changes in provision, in addition to providing more resources for such learning opportunities.

### V  Concluding Remarks

The lifelong learning agenda reflects the demands of a post-industrial democratic society. Adult learning is an important component of the lifelong learning strategy. A cardinal feature of adult learning is its diversity of needs and forms of provision. The arguments for increased participation in adult learning reflect this diversity and are based on the economic, social, cultural benefits, including in the form of participation in civil and democratic rights.

A comparative review reveals considerable variation in access and quality of provision across countries.  Measured in terms of adults who participate, there are shortfalls in even the lead countries. Lifelong learning is clearly not a reality for all adults. This is a far cry form the strong position advocated by the European Commission: *"In order to gain and renew the skills needed for participation in the knowledge society, everyone should be guaranteed permanent access to learning"* (European Commission 2003).

Given the great diversity of adult learning needs and the economic and social context of different countries, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to identify what might be regarded as optimum levels of adult learning participation rates. Any target that a country chooses will be based on a combination of a number of social and economic considerations. On a more pragmatic plane, I have noted several criteria that could be used to set up benchmarks or targets for countries to aim for.

The inescapable conclusion is that no matter which of these alternative targets is chosen, large additional investment would be required to meet any of them. To make adult learning universally available would be even more demanding in terms of the additional investment required.

But additional resources are not the only requirement for improving participation in, and access to, adult learning. Qualitative changes in the nature of the offerings are also required. Efforts are needed to improve the structure of program, quality and relevance of provision, motivation to participate, and the flexibility of schedules. There is more urgent need to provide targeted access for those groups who appear more in need but fail to participate.

Some of these additional investment requirements can only come from the public sector, because they are not sustainable on the basis of private benefits that accrue to individuals and employers from such investment. At the same time, some investment is economically viable for the individual and merits private contribution. Taking these factors into account, there is a consensus that some forms of co-financing arrangements are needed that would combine contributions from the government, the business sector and the individual learner. While a number of experiments embodying co-financing arrangements are underway in several countries, the appropriate design and the sharing of costs remain hotly debated issues.

**Policies do matter:** What is encouraging is that the policies pursued by various countries over the last decade have produced positive results. A review of comparative international data shows gains in participation rates in all countries for which comparable data are available over the last decade. All countries covered by IALS and ALLS experienced increases in participation rates over the 1994-2003 period over which these two surveys were carried out (Statistics Canada and OECD 2005, Chapter 4). The increases were between 10 to 15 percentage points. That policy approaches are having some impact is also visible in the changed patterns of participation. Government financial support has made a noticeable difference in raising participation rates among the disadvantaged groups (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005, Chapter 4). The dispersion in participation rates among skill groups has also narrowed in all countries.

**What are the implications for the right to learn?** It is evident from the available data that lifelong is not a reality for all adults. Making it a reality for all would require a large amount of resources but additional resources are not the only requirements. Also required are steps to address a number of non-pecuniary obstacles to participation, particularly for the disadvantaged group. To be meaningful, making adult learning a right for all must be accompanied by a specification of the amount and type of learning and whether resources are forthcoming to provide those opportunities.

Given the enormous differences in country histories and context, adult learning programs need to take individual country context into account: there is no unique set of best practice that can be transplanted across nations without tailoring them to the national/local context. What is evident, as well, is the need for strong political commitment and assumption of leadership at high levels. There is no natural jurisdiction to champion the cause of adult learning. The broader area of lifelong

learning comprises a range of ministry jurisdictions, which is an obstacle to developing coordinated and coherent set of adult learning policies.

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## Discussion following Abrar Hasan's Presentation

During the discussion that followed the presentation, the conversation turned to best practices that could lead to more equitable approaches. There was interest in identifying examples of a "whole of government approach" which requires different ministries operating with high levels of coordination and policies. In some European countries such as Denmark, government and co-financing models of investment exist, but the strategy separates the right to paid educational leave with affordability and so it is targeted to those who could not afford to pay. In Norway, 60% of financing comes from employers and 10% to 15% from the public sector. One participant commented that in Canada less than 10% comes from the private sector.

In comparing the IALS and IALSS results over the ten year period, there is a 10-15% increase in participation rates in adult learning, so policy approaches do matter and have implications for the right to learn. However, the policy challenges are daunting which emphasizes the requirement for political commitment and responsibility for strategic directions.

Models suggest that greater participation of government is essential for ensuring equality of opportunities. A vision (which includes social and economic goals) of learning opportunities for everyone is required, although not everyone may be interested. While it may not be realistic and financially feasible to provide lifelong learning across the whole population, targeted investments are acceptable when it is directed to the disadvantaged.

## 3. Panel Discussion on the Right to Learn

*The panelists discussed the complex practical realities associated with the Right to Learn, from perspectives informed by experiences internationally and within Québec.*

*Presenters:*       Paul Bélanger, Université du Québec à Montréal
                    Daniel Baril, Institut de coopération pour l'éducation des adultes
                    Ray Ivany, NS Workers Compensation Board
*Moderator:*        Aldéa Landry, President, Landal & Associates

### Dr. Paul Bélanger

Dr. Bélanger emphasized that the right to learn has become a very important issue in the movement of adult education.  On an international level, questions are raised as to whether it should be viewed as similar to the right to healthcare.  Is it not essential to take care of our minds and our bodies?  The right to learn provides a tool that is essential to economic development. Without it, access to learning opportunities is a privilege.

United Nations proclaimed the *Right to Learn* through Article 26, in which all citizens of the world have the right to education.  However, while clearly proclaimed, it is not a legal right. Canada recently agreed on the right to education and training for workers in every country; the Right to Literacy has been proclaimed and the Right to Intellectual Life also exists.

Dr. Bélanger asked the panel and the audience to consider what this means for the provinces.  The Quebec government states that every citizen has the right to education, despite age, but the reality is different, simply illustrated by the contrast of no free books for adult learners only for children.

There are four essential components to this discussion:
1. The right to basic training for children be extended to adults, i.e. GED education etc. Age can't be a discriminating factor.  If you didn't get your education in the early years, what are your options now?
2. Federal and provincial correctional systems should have the right to basic education equivalent to mandatory education;
3. Right for adults with disabilities; and
4. Right of immigrants to learn one of Canada's official languages.

In closing, Dr. Bélanger recommended that CCL undertake an analysis of the right to learn in each province and territory in Canada.

### M. Daniel Baril

Daniel Baril's argument, as outlined in his written text, covers both the legal and moral aspects of the right to learn, particularly as it pertains to Quebec. He agrees with Paul Bélanger's position concerning the inequities associated with Quebec's commitment to the right to learn. Despite broad

acceptance on the international level of the scope of the right to education, Quebec limits this right to a strict minimum. The restriction results in inequities in adult education and training. The prime focus on employability creates an unfavourable context for recognizing the diversity and the richness of adult learning.

M. Baril provided an overview of the legal basis of adults' right to education in Quebec, and what his organization considers are violations of that right. There are a number of relevant acts in existence, including the *Education Act* (reinforced by Quebec's Charter of Rights and Freedoms) which entitles adults to training services leading to a high school diploma. It is encouraging to note that a newly revamped *Act to promote workforce skills development and recognition* will include ministerial recognition of prior learning. The leverage provided by this law is a new obligation for businesses with a payroll of $1 million or more to spend 1% on staff training.

Specific policies are in existence such as the policy on museums or on reading and books, or the information highway, that strengthen the legal bases of the right to education by adding public obligations for adult education and training.

M. Baril's presentation described how, despite these legal and policy bases, the reality tells a "different story" with significant numbers lacking a high school diploma and whose reading skills are too limited for them to take full advantage of the knowledge society. He referenced a recent report that showed decreasing employment opportunities for workers without a high school diploma and increasing employment among those with a university education[1]. Enforcing the right to a basic education is not just an essential economic factor but more and more a prerequisite to enforcing the right to work.

In his opinion, the moral dimension of the right to education resembles a deep aspiration for the development of everyone's potential and the existence of educational inequities constitutes a violation of the moral right to education. A narrow approach as illustrated by the emphasis on basic training and manpower training implies that the Quebec government would have no role, for example, in post-secondary education for adults, general or scientific culture, popular education, or education related to the environment, healthcare or citizenship, or intercultural or anti-discriminatory education.

M. Baril emphasized that adults' right to education in Quebec faces crucial educational challenges and renewed energies are required to protect what has been achieved, to broaden the legal scope of this right and, at the very least, to enforce its moral value.

M. Baril encouraged CCL and AdLKC and its annual symposia to consider their role in Canada's preparations for the UNESCO's 6th International Conference on Adult Education, CONFINTEA 6, scheduled for 2009. Canadian governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the field of adult education and training will be required to share their assessment of how we are doing and to bring common concerns to the international stage.

[1] Data from Statistics Canada and the Institut de la statistique du Québec quoted in Québec's Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport. L'éducation: avenir du Québec, report on access to education, Québec, 2005, p. 76.

## Ray Ivany

Ray Ivany agreed with the previous speakers about the inequities that exist with access to learning. He advised that a new approach is needed, to ensure that post-secondary education is not available only to the rich. Mr. Ivany emphasized that the democratization of access has made education a catalyst for many to move up the income scale. He likened his own situation to getting on an escalator that carried him up, pointing out that this has dramatically changed his life and his income, a situation similar to many in this room. But for others, access to learning is a long way off. Mr. Ivany suggested the image of a burning moat that surrounds the escalator - there is no easy way to get on the escalator.

While acknowledging that the notion of knowledge has broadened, Mr. Ivany advised that another lens is needed to understand learning. There is so much learning that we don't recognize or celebrate. Broadening our definition of learning and what counts will influence our understanding of the right to learn. The rigidities of formal institutions prevent a recognition of other forms of learning, such as non-formal and informal. The growing impetus of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is helping.

Mr. Ivany illustrated his point by describing a recent situation where individuals were being displaced from fisheries industry. A narrow approach suggested that these individuals had skills limited to the fisheries. A broader approach was taken by staff at the Nova Scotia Community College who asked the individuals *"what do you know how to do"*. Portfolios were developed and marketed to a company in Nova Scotia which was having trouble finding workers in vessels for offshore work. In a few months, seventeen people made the transition to this company. It was not formal and not institutional but crucial pieces of learning that the individuals possessed.

## Discussion

Aldéa Landry opened the discussion by suggesting that there are two different views concerning the right to learn. One view sees it as an actionable right which is enforceable and the other view is to question how we measure learning and how it is recognized. Mme Landry emphasized that the legal right to learn is a reality for very few, and that the right to PLAR should be a fundamental right. She also challenged participants to consider whether the right to education is similar to the right to health and how far do we need to go before civil organizations can sue government?

A lively dialogue followed between panelists and participants.

One area of discussion concerned the impact of the increasing numbers of private schools for children (in Montreal 30% of all children attend private schools). The risk is the creation of an elite system that begins even earlier if the young children are attending private schools. It reinforces that adequate budgets must be in place to finance public schools, especially in poorer neighbourhoods.

Another area was in relation to equating the *Right to Health Care* with the *Right to Learning*. It is not considered someone's fault if they get sick but there is a blaming attitude in society towards

> "We keep doing the same things but expect different results".
> Ray Ivany

individuals that lack basic education. The culture of learning is not a reality. Mechanisms need to celebrate the assets of people and acknowledge that they are learning; which is similar to CCL's mission of fostering a learning culture that is beyond formal learning. A broad public campaign would champion the right to education and ensure that the "lack of knowledge" is viewed as an absence of knowledge not of intellect.

The impact of the changing demographics on the labour force may provide a window of opportunity to address the current inequities.

Another significant concern is the emphasis placed on employability without providing people the access to becoming employable. Individuals are expected to already have the basic education and literacy skills needed for employment. Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of knowledge to assist individuals with low literacy skills in moving further ahead.

In Quebec, employability is dominant in discussion between government and employers. However, supporting learners has to be the centre point, making room for them to be full participants in this debate. This would include breaking the "ghetto of silence", having people talk about why they don't have an education. It would also involve providing people with an opportunity to succeed, such as training programs that link to employment.

## 4. Mapping the Field: A Framework for Monitoring and Reporting in Adult Learning
Presenter: Rick Williams, Praxis Research, Halifax, NS

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's Monitoring and Reporting Working Group has undertaken to develop a conceptual framework to support future development of indicators, benchmarks, measurement tools and tracking processes. It is a starting point which will evolve and change over time. Linking with the other four knowledge centres will promote common conceptual tools and measurement standards across learning sectors.

The *Mapping the Field*[2] report proposes a framework to support the development of strategies and tools to measure, monitor and report on adult learning in Canada. It makes sense to use it to define the universe of learners and of learning activities as broadly as possible. The potential outcomes include:
- Providing indicators and data sources and other supports for research on adult learning;
- Establishing benchmarks for tracking changes in numbers and types of learning activities and participation rates;
- Leading to the development of regional and international comparative research;
- Providing evidence to support policy advocacy.

One of the first steps was to define the field, work through the different definitions of adult learner, adult learning, formal and informal learning and others. The paper, *Mapping the Field,* proposes

a strategic and constructive approach to data gathering – one that builds on the recent research across the various fields of adult learning and acknowledges the constraints and challenges inherent in this type of inquiry.

The report provides a chart outlining the two spheres of adult learning, seven fields of adult learning activity (with criteria to help define which field) and examples of specific programs or learning activities.  The two spheres of learning are:
- Structured Educational, Organized Programs which include formal (for academic credit), non-formal (organized but no credit) and formal workplace training;
- Informal learning in everyday life activity/experience that includes informal work-related learning (usually employer or union provided), self-directed learning projects (individuals and small groups), community/social learning and incidental/tacit learning.

For each activity or program, the conceptual framework suggests the collation of two key kinds of information.  One describes learner populations – what do we know about the learners for each activity or program such as their gender, age, stage in life, whether they are a member of a visible minority group, what kind of student such as full-time, "second chance", or an apprentice, etc.  The second is related to learning modalities – the tools and methods of delivery such as use of PLAR, self-directed learning approaches or involving internet-based distance education; and delivery in formal classroom settings or workplace settings, or use of small group, supported learning approaches.

### Response from Kjell Rubenson, University of British Columbia

Kjell Rubenson raised a number of issues related to accessibility and to the kind of data that is required.  One of the issues in mapping adult learning activities is varying levels of willingness of people to participate in education and training opportunities. Duration is also an issue. How do they hear about learning opportunities? How do people finance their learning; for example, changes in employment insurance have reduced participation in adult learning.  To what extent is one form of learning substituted for another and how does one address "life as curricula"?

The conceptual framework for mapping adult learning activities is complex.  Does it need to be so precise?  What kind of data is easily available?  There is no distinction between courses and programs. In Europe, the national framework takes all the information and decides itself whether it is formal or informal.

### Discussion

A number of concerns were raised by participants. There was a caution in considering such a framework.  Would the emphasis be on boxing everything in, squeezing it into a framework?  For example, how would learning in Northern Canada be reflected?  Will people want to use the framework?  How does the framework help us keep track of the needs?  On the other hand, participants appreciated the courage to develop and present a framework for consideration.  It certainly provided a common language for talking across groups.

For example, the implications of 9 million Canadians between the ages of 16 to 65 reported to have literacy skills below the level deemed necessary to live and work in today's society, yet the participation rate of those seeking upgrading is as low as 5-10%.
Mapping the Field: Conceptual Framework of Adult Learning in Canada

*Adult learning is intentional and/or incidental learning experienced by adults either alone or in groups, resulting in distinct and measurable advances in their knowledge, skills and attitudes.*
Adult Learning Knowledge Centre

## 5. Concurrent Sessions

The symposium offered 32 presentations. Summaries of each presentation are provided in the order in which they appeared in the program. The brief descriptions are intended to provide a snapshot of each session; more information can be obtained by contacting the presenters.

**Concurrent Session 1.1**
**Presentation 1:** *Street Life's Creative Turn*
Presenter: Corrina Craig, Our Place Society, Victoria, BC
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

Through a creative and visual presentation, Corrina Craig described the experiences of this year-long community action research project, a social justice model working with members of the street community. The research team heard from many women living on the street, whose lives have been affected by violence. The women wanted to share their stories.

When asked *'what do you want for programs'*, the women choose art as the medium to share their stories with the community. With the help of artists, art projects were developed alongside "kitchen table" chats which enabled women to build a network of support and trust and learn from each other.

Two art shows have taken place, "Busted But Not Broken" with the theme of violence in 2006 and "Phoenix Rising in 2007" with the theme of thriving not just surviving.

**Presentation 2:** *Providing Access to Transformational Learning for Non-traditional Adult Learners*
Presenter: Janet Groen, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning*

Janet Groen began the presentation with a short history of a unique initiative, the *Clemente Program for the Humanities,* which began in New York and focuses on philosophy, culture, and politics, rather than skills training. It reaches out to learners who are surrounded by poverty and many other internal and external barriers. The program covers transportation and childcare costs to facilitate access to courses for non-traditional learners.

Conducting case studies on three different iterations of the Clemente program through the Universities of Calgary, Ottawa and British Columbia, this project examines their values, contexts, clients, program delivery, credit or non-credit, course design and partners. An interactive website facilitates dialogue among the programs.

Some learners who are involved in the Clemente program are going on to post-secondary education but the transition is difficult and ideas for continuing support are explored once participants 'get hooked' on learning. When the research project is completed, it will contribute to promising practices for teaching and learning for non-traditional learners.

"For Tom, his dreams changed. He has an identity again. He is a student and that's really important".
Janet Groen, Presenter

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**Concurrent Session 1.2**
**Presentation 1: *The NALD Portal and Adult Literacy Services in Canada***
Presenter: Lorette Chiasson, La Base de données en alphabétisation des adultes

Loretta Chiasson provided an overview of the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) website (www.nald.ca).  The site offers a library, links to resources, contact information, NALD-generated tools, plus other resources.   It is bilingual and provides updates on resources in French (limited resources are available) and literacy contacts in francophone communities in Canada.  In the fall NALD will launch "NALD at work", providing connections to employers.

One suggestion from the discussion that followed the presentation was whether a research project could examine ways to connect the NALD site and essential skills for use in GED testing.

**Presentation 2: *Internet and virtual museums of Canada***
Presenter: Maryse Paquin, Université d'Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning*

The purpose of the research project was to increase knowledge and understanding of the issues involved in integrating online resources into the classroom.  Viewing an internet site made publicly available by the Canadian Heritage Information Network through its portal, the Virtual Museum of Canada (accessed at www.virtualmuseum.ca), Maryse Paquin illustrated how online resources can provide for rich cultural and historical learning.

Teachers who were more familiar with technology were more inclined to use online resources. Principals can be very instrumental by ensuring that time is allocated for continuing professional development to understand the online resources and that appropriate technology is available. When teaching, teachers do not have time to work out any technical problems.

**Concurrent Session 1.3**
**Presentation 1: *Learning in the Municipal Workplace***
Presenters: Patricia Nutter, Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators, Ottawa, Ontario, and Kathy Brown, Halifax Regional Municipality, Halifax, NS

Patricia Nutter provided an overview of literacy and learning programs in municipal workplaces, reflecting the work of the Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators which undertook its first literacy and learning project in 1994. Rather than use the term "literacy", workplace education or learning tend to be used. The CAMA website has a "Clarity Kit" which offers an approach to clear language which is useful in the workplace and in communicating with the broader community. Workplace programs tend to be broad in scope, focused on essential skills and personal interest courses, all of which help to entrench a workplace philosophy for "continuous or lifelong learning".

Kathy Brown described the efforts of the Halifax Regional Municipality which provides a continuum

of learning to over 5000 part-time and full-time employees.  The continuum includes leadership development, tuition support, and workplace education programs.  Approximately 300 individuals have participated in the workplace education programs – the purpose being to improve job related reading, writing and communication skills. The program curriculum is based on an assessment of employees' skills and new technological and educational requirements.  The commitment and support of management, union, project team, instructors and employees is integral to the success of this initiative.  In particular the union/management joint committee helps to overcome fears that employees may have. Evaluation results show improvement in skills, confidence and educational advancement.

### Presentation 2: *Identifying Adult Educator Competencies*
Presenter: Kareen McCaughan, Brock University, St. Catharine's, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning*

In reviewing their adult education curriculum, Kareen McCaughan described how Brock University wanted to explore the core competencies required by adult educators and how best to prepare students for this role.  The project interviewed graduate students working in the field and instructors from Brock University, University of New Brunswick and University College of Cape Breton.  An extensive literature review assisted in identifying the competencies of an adult educator which laid the basis for a quantitative (survey) and qualitative (follow-up interviews) approach to validating an adult educator competency inventory tool (AECI).

There are six competency categories: facilitation, instructional design, communication, professionalism and professional behaviour, information technologies, and management.  The AECI tool will be helpful to program development in both formal and information adult education programs and to better understanding the necessity of representing learner needs in program development.

### Concurrent Session 2.1
### Presentation 1: *Best Practice Models for Literacy Interventions in GED Adult Education Classrooms*
Presenter: Audrey Penner, Holland College, Charlottetown, PEI
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

To set the context, Audrey Penner first provided a brief educational snapshot of Prince Edward Island where the overall percentages for level 1 and 2 proficiency are essentially the same as the national statistics, however, 46% of youth between the ages of 16 and 25 have literacy functioning below level 3, which is the highest percentage in Atlantic Canada. The project began by researching and collecting data on literacy interventions designed to improve GED achievement.  Using a pre-test/post-test design, two literacy interventions – Literacy Links, a classroom based instruction of groups of six or less for approximately 60 hours and Reading Horizons, a computer-based intervention and self-directed, for approximately 30 hours – were measured against a control group of GED students.

The results were shared with classroom instructors to identify a best practice model that would improve GED delivery.  This model provides for GED pre-assessment targets to identify when a literacy intervention is appropriate, leading to greater program efficiency.  It also promotes an integrated delivery where students with low literacy levels would be enrolled in GED and literacy interventions offered in shorter time frames.  This will assist with the challenge of recruiting participants with lower literacy levels, helping them make the link between basic literacy and GED attainment.



### Presentation 2: *Mature Students in the Persistence Puzzle*
Presenter: Lynne MacFadgen, Malaspina University-College, Nanaimo, BC
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

A growing proportion of university and college students are aged 25 years and older. With this comes a resounding organizational theme, that: *"student retention is key, and is everyone's responsibility"*. Lynne MacFadgen explained that it is not so clear how to improve student retention rates which is why the research project focused on gaining knowledge about mature students' involvement in a university or college environment.

There were a number of similarities between what younger and mature students see as important, particularly in structural issues such as financial pressures, and course scheduling, but mature students seem more determined, confident and satisfied with faculty relationships and teaching methods.  However, younger students seek external opportunities for socialization, while older students want this integrated into the classroom.

This knowledge will assist in developing student retention policies and practices that are based on adult learners' unique challenges, needs and goals.

### Concurrent Session 2.2
### Presentation 1:  *A Meeting of Minds: Strategy Development on PLAR for Adults at Canada's Universities*
Presenter: Joy Van Kleef, Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning, Toronto, Ontario
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

Joy Van Kleef reported on a meeting in January, 2007 which brought together representatives from 10 universities across Canada. Its purpose was to share PLAR materials and discuss issues and strategies to move PLAR forward.  The meeting was sponsored by AdLKC and co-hosted by the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning and the Council of Ontario Universities.   The premise

"Younger students seek external opportunities for socialization, while older students want this integrated into the classroom".

Lynne MacFadgen, Presenter

of PLAR is that prior "experiential" learning can be equivalent to academic learning; it also supports lifelong learning.

A number of countries have legislation that supports PLAR in higher education institutions, many of which have national principles and guidelines. In Canada, there are no principles, guidelines or legislation; PLAR is viewed as a challenge difficult to fit into regular activities.  There is tension as some universities will not recognize PLAR credits from other universities.  The European Union is developing tools for Transfer of Credit which may be helpful in Canada.  Some of the strategies from the January meeting included professional development for faculty in assessment and PLAR, that research be disseminated on this topic and to continue to exchange information and best practices across universities.

### Presentation 2: *PLAR in the Aboriginal Community*
Presenter: Marnie McIntosh, Ontario Native Literacy Coalition, Owen Sound, Ontario
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

The Ontario Native Literacy Coalition runs 26 programs throughout the province, either on reserves operated by band councils or off-reserve operated by the Indian Friendship Centres.

Marnie McIntosh described the findings of this research project which focused on PLAR and older Aboriginal adults who were functioning below the ILS level 3.  Because of the strong native oral tradition and also the discomfort with surveys, it was more appropriate to turn the survey into guided conversations.  It was found that PLAR was used to acknowledge learned skills in native knowledge, affirming the unique culture of Native peoples and the interconnectedness of all aspects of creation.  The practitioners found that teaching essential skills can now be integrated into programs, and can include PLAR, but there needs to be materials suitable for lower level learners.

The presenters also described how collage – putting images together, particularly associated with native culture – was another option for learner self-evaluation and self-reflection.  It is also used as a Prior Learning Assessment tool.

### Concurrent Session 2.3
### Presentation 1: *Literacy in Francophone Canada, Results of the International Study on Adult Literacy, the FCAF Takes Action*
Presenter: Gaétan Cousineau, Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français (FCAF), Ottawa

Gaétan Cousineau provided a summary and commentary on the main results of the *Enquête concernant le niveau d'alphabétisme des francophones au Canada* (Survey into the status of literacy among francophones in Canada).  In December 2006, the International Literacy and Life Skills Survey was released, showing that in 10 years there was little improvement overall, except in the number of individuals who have moved from level 1 to level 2.  The potential number of

Francophone learners for levels 1 and 2 is 58,200. Over the last 15 years, the FCAF and its members have reached about 20,000 learners. They reach about 5,000 persons each year. However a great deal of work remains.  It is also important to note that literacy levels in the francophone communities fall below levels in Anglophone communities.

The FCAF recognizes that there is a need to change the culture in the area of reading and writing and encourage more people to read and write more. The work already started on family literacy will contribute to this.

Solutions will involve all sectors of society.  Literacy activities have improved chances of success if they are part of an overall plan to support the vitality of minority official language communities. Funding remains a significant challenge which makes it harder to maintain continuity in the field. He suggested that a $450 million investment from government could yield a $650 million  return - in savings, contribution from the workforce, health costs etc.

Participants were encouraged to read the article, *Droit à l'éducation des adultes,* prepared by the FCAF in the magazine, *à lire,* Number 13, 2006-2007.

### Presentation 2: *Lifelong Learning in French in Nova Scotia*
Presenters: Marie-France Prayal, Université Sainte-Anne, Pointe-de-l'Église, NS and Lianne Comeau, Équipe d'alphabétisation N.-É., Tusket, NS

Marie-France Prayal and Lianne Comeau provided a brief history of literacy in Nova Scotia and the mission, goals, organization, funding and services of the *Équipe d'Alphabétisation Nouvelle-Écosse* (Nova Scotia Literacy Team) and the *Formation générale des adultes* program at the Université Sainte-Anne.  Various family literacy programs are offered such as "J'apprends en famille" as well as tools and kits such as "Prêt à conter" (samples of these tools were available).

An advertising campaign is organized each year.  Last year, it primarily targeted the preschool level and currently they are working with a firm of consultants to pursue the next advertising campaign. Only 47% of those who have a right to enroll in French schools are actually enrolled in them.

The *Développement promotionnel de l'éducation acadienne et francophone en Nouvelle-Écosse* project has reached various partners in the field of education.

### Concurrent Session 3.1
### Presentation 1: *Visual Media as a Tool for Community Development*
Presenter: Arthur Bull, Marine Resource Centre, Digby, NS
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

Arthur Bull presented the findings from three workshops on using visual media as a tool for community development offered by the Bay of Fundy Marine Resource Centre. The knowledge

exchange that resulted from these workshops was both interdisciplinary (community development, filmmaking, photography), and cross-cultural (Mi'kmaq, Acadian and other non-native). The workshops have helped to build an ongoing learning circle on community-based media.

A number of learnings were identified through the discussion.  More local collaboration with the cultural sector, particularly with local artists would be helpful.  The changes in the technological world means that amateur groups can achieve much better production values and it is important to take advantage of this, do more training and involve the local experts as collaborators.  It also provides an opportunity for involving youth as they have the skills and comfort level with technology.

When diverse groups come together in a community development process they sometimes need assistance in accepting each other's differences, particularly if they are in conflict on other issues. Strong leadership is required to implement "mediative communications" or active mediation as a tool to foster dialogue.

After the Marshall decision (the Supreme Court decision guaranteeing Aboriginal access to commercial fisheries) there was a lot of conflict in fishing communities. Arthur described the process that brought together Native and non-Native communities

**Presentation 2: *Adult Learning in Aboriginal Community-Based Inner-City Organizations***
Presenter: Jason Brown, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

The Andrews Street Family Centre is located in a predominately aboriginal neighbourhood in downtown Winnipeg and provides employment experience, personal and social supports, and opportunities for links to formal education programs.  The Centre recognizes the gap between adult education and people's lives and for this reason partners with the university to teach courses in the community.  The Centre hires volunteers and paid staff (as a stepping stone to further employment) extensively from the local community.  This is based on the belief that people are best served by others from the same background; this enabled the Centre to work with the community on issues of concern.

Jason Brown presented a research initiative that explored the nature and experience of informal adult learning within community-based inner-city human service organizations (the Andrews Street Family Centre) who hire from within the community.  The average age of participants was 43 and many started out as volunteers or casual employees before moving into full time, and later senior positions.  A number of common themes were identified including commitment, ways of working with staff and both the benefits and challenges of hiring from the community. The initiative emphasized the value to the organization, individual and community in hiring from the community and the impact of the supportive learning that took place.

The discussion that followed revealed ways to reach out and educate the larger community.   The

"Out is In" project in Edmonton is an arts informed informal community learning program where kids were taught to use cameras and produce images of their community. This resulted in a public arts exhibition in which the kids were there and members of the general community and the arts community were invited.

The session concluded with a recommendation to support connections across the country among neighbourhood-based projects whether working with aboriginal communities, literacy groups, or low-income communities through arts based projects or other kinds of focuses.

## Concurrent Session 3.2
### Presentation 1: *A Repository of Competences: The use of ICT for collaborative work*
Presenter: Claire IsaBelle, Université d'Ottawa, Ottawa, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

Claire IsaBelle introduced her presentation by explaining that 5% of the population of Ontario or 600,000 are Francophones. Many adult Canadian Francophones in minority milieus take distance and on-line training (DOLT) which requires joint learning activities supported by information and communication technologies (ICT). Little research has been done on the resources, knowledge and skills that adults need to progress in this type of collaborative work when taking a DOLT program. The research project, a case study of distance training for teachers and administrators of Francophone schools, provides a first referential framework on the individual skills of learners and the organizational capacities required in collaboration supported by ICT.

Results from the first phase recognized the importance of technological, operating and relational skills which resulted in four guides being written on:
1) Building a team – getting basic information on members including their individual realities;
2) Operation of an effective team – strategies and suggestions for team projects;
3) First team meeting – first steps in meeting with a proposed operating mode; and
4) Establishing a team work plan – helping to identify tasks and distribute within the team.

These four guides were provided to a second group and received very positive feedback. Next steps include improving the guides, writing other reference guides and continuing to experiment and evaluate. One end result will be a list of communication and work tools for students.

## Concurrent Session 3.2
### Presentation 2: *Study of the Conditions of Knowledge and Learning Transfers in Families with a Child Living with a Disability*
Presenter: Sylvie Houde, Université de Sherbrooke, Québec
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

Sylvie Houde first provided definitions of what is meant by physical, intellectual, sensory and

> "…really believe in hiring from the community… know that it is messy, complicated, all tangled up, but it's the most powerful way for the individuals and for the community…"
> Interviewee from the research project

psychological handicaps, numbers of children affected, and some of the harsh realities facing families. The research project examined the conditions for transferring knowledge and learnings in families having a child living with a handicap and in a context of collaboration between families. This is an area that is poorly documented.

The project was an exploratory study; its theoretical framework based on three angles of approach: pedagogical and adult education; clinical and sociological; and organizational. The research methodology focused on the following questions: *How do families learn from each other in the context of their process of adaptation to the person's handicaps? What strategies do they favour for an efficient exchange of knowledge? What specific elements and factors give meetings between families the character of a true learning organization?*

Thirty-six parents or caregivers of a child with a handicap participated in the project. Through a focus group of eight parents, a number of encouraging results were gathered from the research project. The learnings and sharing of knowledge seem to occur basically in two sub-systems: in the relationship between parent/caregiver and child including the motivation in looking for more information and openness to outside resources; and in the relationship with interveners, especially with other parents (mutual teaching) to share and objectify experiences and knowledge, and create a feeling of belonging. While certain exchanges among parents are informal, most exchanges take place in structured contexts such as through associations, organized groups etc.

In the second year of this project, two new rehabilitation centres will use the lessons learned to better orient the new programs and focus groups will be conducted before and after as part of the evaluation. Overall, the research has shown benefits for the children, parents and professionals.



**Concurrent Session 3.3**
**Presentation 1:** *Profile of Seniors Learning in Public Housing*
Presenter: Leah Pomerantz, Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society, Vancouver, BC
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

Leah Pomerantz explained that the purpose of this knowledge exchange project was to start a dialogue to educate community organizations about the learning needs of seniors and to increase awareness about learning opportunities by seniors. Little Mountain Neighbourhood House Society conducted interviews with seniors in their low-income housing development in which 13% of all residents are seniors. Door to door interviews took place with a small sample of seniors. Part way through the research it was announced that the housing development would be redeveloped (completion date by 2011) which meant that residents needed to move by early fall of 2007.

Although seniors are learning in their everyday life, sometimes they don't identify that they are. The seniors expressed a desire for programs in their own neighbourhood which are inexpensive, accessible both in terms of time of the day and location. The community centre which is located on site was recommended as an ideal meeting place. Some formal educational opportunities were suggested, but most seniors were interested in informal learning opportunities; one-time speakers were not popular.

A number of recommendations were developed for community organizations to better meet the needs of seniors. They include involving seniors in developing any followup actions, increasing awareness of seniors' issues, connecting with intergenerational groups and encouraging other stakeholders such as local businesses to become involved.

**Presentation 2: *As Seen Through Their Eyes: The Learning Needs of Ontario Elders***
Presenter: Pat Spadafora, Sheridan College, Oakville, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

Pat Spadafora described the progress of a research initiative to identify the learning needs, interests and learning styles of Ontario adults, aged 65 plus. The initiative also hopes to prepare an inventory of a representative sample of informal and formal learning opportunities. Different research methodologies are being used to collect information – mail out questionnaire, focus groups, key stakeholder interviews, telephone interviews and case studies. The study is examining formal (colleges, third age programs) and informal (libraries and walking programs) programs. The final purpose is to develop provincial recommendations to respond to the learning needs of older adults with suggestions for further research on a national scale.

Preliminary results show that the most popular interests of "informal" learners are in the areas of health/medical, hobbies, and finance. "Formal" learners are also interested in the areas of health/medical, spirituality and finance. The most likely methods of learning new information are through finding someone with similar interest, library and discussion group. Barriers to new learning include transportation, accessibility of buildings, lack of finances and taking care of family member. Interesting to note that the mean age of the respondents was 77 years, 55% own a computer and 9% were enrolled in formal learning.

**Concurrent Session 4.1**
**Presentation 1: *Quality Assurance in PLAR***
Presenter: Joy Van Kleef, Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning, Toronto, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

Joy Van Kleef reported on the work of a partnership between the Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning, Ryerson University, Saskatchewan Institute for Applied Science and Technology and the University of New Brunswick to conduct an in-depth examination of the issue of quality assurance in PLAR. The methodology included an extensive literature review and interviews with institutions and experts.

PLAR is the knowledge and skills acquired through life experiences.  Its premises are:
- Prior "experiential" learning can be equivalent to academic learning;
- Prior learning can be assessed with quality and credibility; and
- Prior learning should be recognized where it is relevant.

Quality assurance (QA) is the establishment of and adherence to policies, processes, and assessment practices which ensure that the knowledge and skills of individual learners are recognized so that they can engage in the subjects and levels of learning that most appropriately contribute to their educational and employment goals. Quality assurance will improve assessment methods, tools and results.  It will also improve institutional performance and promote transparency. Canada does have quality assurance but it is often hidden, embedded in policies, practices and procedures at different institutions.

The project's conclusions to date indicate that QA must be explicitly integrated into PLAR.  In addition, QA needs to address methods and tools used in PLAR.  New methods of assessment will require news ways of determining quality and the quality of assessors will be a critical element.

### Presentation 2: *Active Citizenship for Women in Nova Scotia*
Presenters: Patricia Gouthro, Laurie Allain, Wendy Terris Klaus, and Tara Ward, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

The team of presenters introduced a year long study which conducted life history interviews with eight women from different academic and economic backgrounds who are "active citizens" in Nova Scotia, and four "key informants" who are in decision-making roles in government and administration with an interest in policy and services that affect women.  The interviews investigated the barriers and support that impact women's ability to participate as active citizens.

The women described their key supports as childcare, transportation, family, friends, community and funding.  They felt that often childcare and domestic labour left little time for activism, transportation is an issue in rural areas, and confidence and self-esteem, particularly for public speaking are also issues to overcome.   The women experience discrimination, lack role models and informal mentoring, and often feel less politically "literate" than men in knowing how to access funds, or to be appointed to boards.  Certainly the legislature with its hours and often combative method of operating is not conducive to women.  Women who do participate tend to be creative and find unique ways to challenge the barriers.

### Concurrent Session 4.2
### Presentation 1: *Effective Practices for Intergenerational Environmental Learning*
Presenter: Jolie Mayer-Smith, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

Learning means …..
*"exploring reading, talking to others in a learning setting, from radio, TV, just talking to others, perhaps the odd lecture, talks, church sermons".*

Senior who completed questionnaire

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Jolie Mayer-Smith described how the Intergenerational Environmental Learning project benefits all ages involved.  Many seniors, despite their wealth of knowledge and expertise, experience a lack of direction and diminished self-worth and that society is not equipped to provide them with opportunities for continued productive engagement.   Many children are disconnected from their neighbourhoods and community because of busy and stressed parents and too many hours alone in front of the computer or TV.  Children suffer from "Nature Deficit Disorder", which means they are disconnected from nature – how to care for it and understanding where their food comes from.

Currently completing five years of an intergenerational environment and farm education project on a farm at University of British Columbia, this community-based learning opportunity involves groups of three or four children and one or two adult "farm friends" working together on raised beds to grow food crops. The children and senior farm friends meet at the farm, explore food growing and build relationships with support but few directives from project staff.  The research examined a number of aspects including how the experience could change children's environmental consciousness and ideas about food and how the experience enriches the lives and learning for seniors. Guidelines on effective practices for intergenerational learning have been developed through this project.

### Presentation 2: *Portfolio Learning and Community Development: Possibilities and Challenges*
Presenter: Doug Myers, Prior Learning Assessment Centre, Halifax, NS

Doug Myers spoke about the divide between formal learning and experiential learning; that learning is still predominately associated with schooling.  He referred to the PLA Centre's experience between 1996 and 2007 and its research on the *Hidden Iceberg of Adult Learning* phenomenon, from both the perspective of learners and research evidence. PLA recognizes that learning takes place in many settings and through many activities, not only through formal education and training programs. Other settings include the workplace, family and community life, volunteer, church and union activities, travel and hobbies. PLA believes that learning which can be identified, described and documented deserves to be recognized.

The presentation illustrated the three faces of the PLAR continuum: Portfolio Learning (individuals/organizations and communities), Competencies (essential skills, jobs/roles) and Qualifications Recognition (certificates/degrees) and the interrelationship between all three. However, the post-secondary education approach supports an academic/experiential learning sequence such as with internships, articling, work terms and practice teaching, but not the sequence of experiential/academic. The progress after two decades of evidence and demonstration finds that colleges are more open than universities but still there are only a few colleges that recognize PLA.

It is encouraging to note that the Canadian Council on Learning in their report, *State of Learning in Canada: No Time for Complacency, 2007,* calls for a more holistic view of Aboriginal learning and for more life-wide/lifelong approaches to be applied equally to "mainstream" adult learning.  It

"Seniors speak about learning about pedagogy and children, recognizing their own knowledge and gaining new knowledge on farming and food systems…."

Presentation by
Jolie Mayer-Smith

refers to the "four pillars of learning". To *know;* to *do;* to *be;* and to *live together effectively.*

Portfolio learning is both an individual and group learning process, but can it be applied more broadly at a community level?  Is there a place for a pan-Canadian PLAR/Portfolio learning framework that is dynamic and not static, would be holistic and multi-faceted and include composite learner profiles? Ongoing consultation will be integral to its development.

**Concurrent Session 4.3**
**Presentation 1:** *Community Connections Circle and the Francophone Reference Group*
Presenter: Charline Vautour, Moncton, N.-B.
*This community outreach project was an initiative of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

Charline Vautour reported on the first meeting of the Francophone Reference Group, established by AdLKC.  The notes from the meeting are in the document, Report on the Community Connections Circle, which was distributed at the symposium.

The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: to discuss the challenges and needs related to adult learning in French in a community milieu and to increase participation of francophone groups in AdLKC.  A number of challenges were identified for both learners and programs.  Learners face barriers such as transportation and duration of programs.  Programs have difficulty in recruiting learners and maintaining their motivation as they move through the different steps and at the same time experience funding challenges.  Accessing learning-related services in French such as psychology, guidance and screening for learning disabilities are also a concern.

The reference group offers a valuable meeting point for Francophones in the Atlantic region to exchange ideas, tools and best practices, all within the context of the francophone culture.  More groups are still to be recruited which will increase networking, the dissemination of information and common efforts to identify and address issues. A communication plan is recommended in which AdLKC could meet with groups to identify their issues and promote its resources.

Since literacy statistics among Francophones in the Atlantic region are of significant concern, the *Société éducative de l'Île-du-Prince-Édouard* invited all participants to a forum on September 8, 2007 International Literacy Day.  Perhaps this could be the next meeting of the reference group.

**Presentation 2:** *Workplace Essential Skills for Adults at Literacy Level 1*
Presenters: Liliane Lavoie and Charline Vautour, Department of Post-secondary Education, Training, and Labour, New Brunswick

Liliane Lavoie introduced the Workplace Essential Skills (WES) model which is based on HRSDC's model of essential skills.  The model, *Passerelle d'accès,* was piloted between 2002 and 2007, through a partnership between New Brunswick Community College in Bathurst and the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour. The WES model includes a toolkit for prior

learning assessment, learning the nine essential skills, and internships in the private sector. The WES program is tied to lifelong learning and will help an individual go from level 2 to level 3 (i.e. aimed at persons who have not finished Grade 7 or 8). The learner chooses the workplace, for an internship of between 4 weeks and 6 months. Partners included private enterprises in the manufacturing sector and the hospitality industry, with a view of matching the essential skills to the jobs that are available.

The WES project included training Francophone teachers in the different regions of N.B. The program will be translated and presented to four Anglophone classes and four Francophone classes – Community Adult Learning Centres – in early 2008. It deals with formal and informal skills. The course will consists of 34 weeks of classroom instruction, 800 hours of which are mandatory and 400 hours optional.

**Concurrent Session 4.4**
**Presentation 1: *Post-Secondary Education in New Brunswick***
Presenter: Tim Andrew, Commission on Post-Secondary Education, Fredericton, NB

Tim Andrew explained that in 2007, the Province of New Brunswick established a Commission on Post-Secondary Education to examine all areas of post-secondary education, including formal and informal education. The report will be released shortly. Recent data indicate that in 2005-2006, there were more than 44,000 individuals attending university or college in New Brunswick. If one considers work-related training there are over 100,000 more (in 2002, over 100,000 undertook job related training, 53% provided by employers).

Post-secondary education (PSE) occurs in a number of settings - universities, community colleges, career colleges, apprenticeship and employer training with the following results:
- Education goes on and on: 55% of students with first degree went on to further studies (2002). Career colleges attract a significant number of students who have attended other PSE. The decision to go into apprenticeship comes later in life and often after other PSE.
- Not attending or dropping out: National data (Malatest - forthcoming) for the class of 2003 show that the biggest reasons for not attending PSE are lack of finances and career indecision. The most common reasons for dropping out are lack of interest or poor program fit. Community Colleges lose a number of students and in New Brunswick experiences graduation rates between 60 and 79%. In looking at the retention of university students from high school, approximately 60% stay for four years, however some of those students may have transferred to other PSE institutions or returned to school later.
- Cost of education: Most university graduates have loans of over $30,000. Increasing the transparency and speeding up the transferability of credits would help make education more affordable.
- A current number of students enrolled in literacy programs was not available.

**Presentation 2: *A Fully Literate Canada: What Does it Mean? What is it Going to Take?***
Presenter: Wendy DesBrisay, Movement for Canadian Literacy, Ottawa, Ontario

Wendy DesBrisay began her presentation by introducing the report, Towards a Fully Literate Canada - *Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy*[3] released in the fall of 2005 by the previous federal government under Minister Claudette Bradshaw.  The report was from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills, chaired by Wendy DesBrisay.  The advisory committee consisted of representatives from government, labour and community groups.  It identified seven principles to inform the development of a Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy: adopt a broad view of literacy; focus on the learner; seek community solutions and support learning communities; create and support literate environments, respect culture and language; involve stakeholders; and measure and report on results.

This blueprint in the form of a 10-year national literacy action plan would be built on four "pillars":
- building capacity in the adult literacy and basic education system - requiring the involvement of all levels of government with federal leadership.
- ensuring access to the system – an inclusive approach to reaching more learners and provide resources to track the outcomes.  Also integrate literacy into other initiatives such as United Way's Action for Neighbourhood Change and in the health sector.
- building and sharing knowledge – address the needs of the field and influence the research agenda of organizations such as CCL and others; and
- building partnerships among employers and other stakeholders.

Literacy is a non-partisan issue as is the blueprint.  With the change in federal leadership, the federal policy on literacy is now unclear and in fact the field has experienced decreased federal funding support.  Whose responsibility is literacy?  The federal government views literacy as a provincial issue although the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC) has placed literacy as a priority for action.

The Movement for Canadian Literacy is operating under twelve months of transitional funding and among its priorities is the goal of laying the groundwork for a sector study, an environmental scan of who is doing what.   A discussion followed on the experiences of other countries, the advantage of a national plan, and ways to encourage greater attention to the need for a national strategy.

**Concurrent Session 5.1**
**Presentation 1: *Immigrants: The New 'New Students' in Canadian Post-Secondary Education***
Presenters: Paul Anisef and Robert Sweet, York University, Toronto, Ontario
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

Adult newcomers face many challenges with finding work in Canada including non-recognition of credentials and past work experience, barriers within the regulatory processes for professional licensing and registration and unfamiliarity with a new country.  More immigrants are arriving with

[3] *Towards a Fully Literate Canada - Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy* can be accessed on the website of NALD,  www.nald.ca

a university education (rose 26% between 1980 and 2000), but the real earnings for recent immigrant males fell by 7%.

Half of all participants in the *Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada* (LSIC) who possessed a university degree prior to immigration planned to pursue further post-secondary training in Canada.  Paul Anisef and Robert Sweet explained that the purpose of this research initiative was to examine the results of the LSIC to compare student engagement issues across traditional, minority and adult immigrant students to better understand how recent immigrants use PSE to facilitate transition to the workforce.  LSIC shows that immigrants with higher levels of education and skills are more likely to participate in PSE.

Some of the barriers to success for adult newcomer students include language fluency, financial constraints (many go part-time), cultural expectations for women, and unfamiliarity with the institutional culture.  They primarily use campus services that are more academic in nature and there is a lack of engagement with fellow students and faculty.  As with minority students, they do better when their cultural identities are affirmed.

There is little research to document what happens to immigrant students when they enter PSE and most of the literature focuses on traditional students with little on mature, minority or immigrant students. One of the next steps includes a pilot study of three universities and three colleges in Toronto to better understand the awareness of adult immigrant students and the policies and practices geared to this group.

## Presentation 2: *English Second Language Learning Objects for Mobile Devices*
Presenter: Rory McGreal, Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta
*This research project received funding from the Canadian Council on Learning.*

This presentation was a demonstration of innovative approaches to ESL (English as a Second Language) learning using mobile devices in a variety of learning contexts. Rory McGreal explained that learners were able to learn the basic grammatical forms of English in an interactive modular format, accessible on mobile and fixed computing devices – pocket PC's or mobile phones.  The methodology included a pre-test and post-test design, working with three groups of independent learners (aboriginal, community and immigrants), and learners' evaluation on usefulness.

The kinds of devices, their technical capacities, exploring the transition to using the mobile devices for learning and the cost of line charges and appropriate equipment were all important considerations.  In addition, other technical components were explored as part of this project.

The study showed that there is a "mobile benefit".  Students have greater flexibility and options for accessibility and connectivity; they can study anywhere and anytime.  Mobile learning activities can be implemented on mobile devices.  But it is important for course developers to understand the limitations and that only limited interactivity is possible.

All Canadians have the right to develop the literacy and essential skills they need in order to participate fully in our social, cultural, economic and political life.

Towards a Fully Literate Canada: Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Literacy Strategy, HRSDC, 2005

**Concurrent Session 5.2**
**Presentation 1:** *Picture it! Publish it! Read it!*
Presenters: Jane Baskwill and Mary Jane Harkins, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, NS
*This knowledge exchange project received funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

There are multiple factors that impact on low-literacy rates in rural Nova Scotia, including a lack of professionally trained pre-school childcare workers, low parental involvement, few organized programs for families, and lack of confidence among parents.

Researchers, Jane Baskwill and Mary Jane Harkins described an initiative, *Picture It! Publish It! Read It!* which helps parents understand the relationship between reading and writing by working together with teachers and community-based organizations. The intent was to assist parents in writing books with their children about the local area and then reading together. Two three-hour writing workshops took place with parents and their children. An early childcare education caregiver also participated in the workshops, working at times just with the children. The children were given cameras to take pictures of whatever they wanted, which were then incorporated into the books.

The parents talked about their own experiences where their parents didn't take an active role in their education and there were no programs or organized childcare. They were also uncomfortable with schools. Feedback from the parents at the end of the project was very significant, not only did they learn more about having fun with their children but they now enjoy reading more to them and talking with them. The provision of childcare, transportation and food was integral to the success of this project. The school became a more comfortable place by beginning the project outside of the school first. It is hoped that the enthusiasm of the parents will transfer to other parents and with the commitment of the school principal, the initiative will continue.

**Presentation 2:** *Community Connections: Aboriginal Reference Group and Diverse Communities Reference Group*
Presenters: Barb Martin, Han Martin Associates, Burnt Church First Nation, NB and Rick Hutchins, Policylink, Fredericton, NB
*This community outreach project is an initiative of the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre.*

**Aboriginal Reference Group**
Barb Martin reported on the first meeting of the Aboriginal Reference Group in March of this year when nine Aboriginal participants from across Atlantic Canada and Quebec participated in the Community Connections Circle sponsored by AdLKC (report distributed at the symposium). The purpose was to identify major challenges in promoting adult learning at the community level, ways that an Aboriginal Reference Group fits with AdLKC and next steps.

A number of issues were raised, particularly in relation to ensuring that the adult learning field is truly inclusive of Aboriginal people. The most significant concern was the lack of recognition of the Aboriginal knowledge and culture including how traditional knowledge and life experiences are

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valued, the role of elders in adult education, and how learning situations can be more flexible in Aboriginal communities to accommodate unique cultural or geographic practices. Accessing childcare and technology are also issues.

Particularly in remote areas, training is not always geared to the needs and circumstances of the community (will it lead to jobs or further education?) but rather seen as an industry itself. There is often the expectation that an adult educator can meet the needs of everyone in one class including youth, adults, and individuals with special needs and that "one shoe fits all". Expectations are raised with the development of innovative initiatives but these are not followed through by some post-secondary institutions.

There needs to be accountability back to the community for research and training initiatives carried out in communities, which would include definite outcomes. Training Aboriginal teachers will be instrumental in addressing these issues.

Continued dialogue with AdLKC will assist in addressing the needs of the Aboriginal adult learners, but there is concern that Aboriginal issues may be lost with other competing priorities. If a concrete initiative around Aboriginal issues and adult learning can be identified and implemented, the results will point to true progress. The next step is to meet again and invite others from the Aboriginal community to attend.



### *Diverse Communities Reference Group*

Rick Hutchins reported on a meeting of 25 individuals around the concept of a Diverse Communities Reference Group which was part of the Community Connections Circle sponsored by AdLKC (report distributed at the symposium). It was an excellent opportunity to connect with others and learn the extent of adult learning work and to celebrate the differences. One of the observations is that there is not a lot of cohesion in the adult learning community as many groups are working in isolation.

Participants emphasized the importance of connecting practitioner research and qualitative research to policy. Lack of funding was a common concern as was ensuring that programs meet the needs of learners, and to provide for more prior learning assessments.

A continuing dialogue is important to learning more about the needs of communities and ways to fill the gaps. It may be premature to decide if a reference group is most appropriate or if the term diverse is applicable. Participants did identify a strong need to meet about issues facing racialized groups.

**Concurrent Session 5.3**
**Presentation 1:** *Accessibility to College Training in French in Rural Areas*
Presenters: Claude Blaquière, Société éducative de l'Î-P-É, Wellington, NS
Subtitled: *"Reaching students in a rural milieu – Directed studies, emerging clientele, a marriage favourable to pedagogical innovation in a rural milieu".*

Prince Edward Island has approximately 6,000 Francophones (5%) and about 11% of the population speaks French. The *Société éducative de l'Î-P-É* offers continuing training services to businesses and the community and regular training services at the college level in French.

Claude Blaquière described the partnership with the Campbellton campus of the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC), in a distance education project to help students finish the human service counsellor training program, which had been abolished when the Collège de l'Acadie merged with the Université Sainte-Anne. The opportunity was widely promoted, including through a newspaper delivered to every home.

The NBCC credited a full year of the program previously taken. Using a variety of methods and supports, students participated in an independent studies program which included well-defined timetables and summative and formative evaluations. Components included a 1-800 line, video conferences, site visits, face to face courses, and facilities (such as computer labs) available on site at the *Société éducative.* Diplomas were awarded in June 2007 in the students' regions. The program is recognized by the PEI Department of Education, which means that students can work in their own province.

This innovative partnership between the two institutions will extend to other training programs. It demonstrated a unique opportunity to reach students in rural milieus who cannot go to urban institutions and who want to remain in their community and contribute to its progress. Other partnerships are possible through technology; the Breeze software makes it possible to extend the program to other training centres across Canada.

Participants were encouraged to view the website of the *Société éducative* at www.socedipe.org.

**Presentation 2:** *How to Succeed in Creating Online Effective Adult Training*
Presenter: Louise Sauvé, TÉLUC, Université du Québec à Montréal, Québec

Louise Sauvé presented the results of a case study with an on-line train the trainer program www.savie.qc.ca/personnalisa/accueil.asp. It examined the conditions of success in providing tailored, personalized training in an adult education context. Certain conditions needed to be met: first, heterogeneous skills among trainers of adults (skills in teaching, technology, distance training, on-line training) and secondly an environment that allows for a virtual interactive class (VIC) that included on-line training with a tutor.

Access to a Web environment of communities of practice and learning is important to enable learners, trainers of adults and the administrators of an institution to collaborate effectively on projects and to quickly share teaching, organizational and human solutions. Access to templates for designing contents for distance training and sharing training contents is also required.

Three key elements in the 'train the trainer' program were the *skill profile, learning profile* and *learning object.* Using online forms, trainers established skill profiles identifying their training needs and their learning profiles (including their learning style). The training content has 382 learning objects and 30 virtual sessions that are available to trainers. Some skills in the online train the trainer program require between six and 54 hours of training.

The results indicate a significant increase in trainers' CIT skills. Personalization of the learning increased the participants' motivation to continue their lifelong learning after the experiment. On the teaching level, the analysis grid gave trainers a tool for pedagogical and technological evaluation. The on-line references are: the catalog at www.savie.qc.ca/formation/index.asp and the virtual campus at www.savie.ca/campusvirtuel.

## 6.  Closing Address by Dr. Tim O'Neill

*Dr. Tim O'Neill, Founder and Principal of O'Neill Strategic Economics, gave the closing address for the symposium.  His comments focused on providing a framework for the economic aspects or consequences of literacy and the costs of inaction.  His talk expressed the urgency for a more focused approach to move forward.*

The International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALSS) in 2003 indicated that 48% of Canadians function at levels one and two, while level three is considered the minimum skill level to cope with everyday demands of work and personal lives.  One's initial educational attainment is important for the retention of literacy skills.  A higher level of literacy means a higher retention of literacy skills and a higher participation rate in adult learning and employment opportunities that continue to use those skills such as document writing, numeracy, computers etc.

Individuals who are functioning at levels one and two are more apt to be unemployed or if working are at risk of losing their job, experiencing a greater frequency of unemployment and a lower capacity for retraining.  Fundamental skill levels are linked to income.  The income gap is very large; individuals with medium to high literacy levels are five times more likely to be in the top 25% of income earners.

On a macro scale, an increase in an individual's employability has an aggregate impact on the whole economy.  One percent increase in Canada's literacy levels increases the GDP by 1.5%, which means the payoff to the investment in human capital is not only to individuals, but also to the economy.  An investment in physical capital doesn't generate a payoff at anywhere near this level. More skilled workers mean more productivity, less absenteeism, less accidents, and more capability

for retraining.  This also saves in the hiring process which is becoming more and more expensive with high turnover and a shortage of workers.

Society as a whole benefits from increased literacy levels.  The incidence of poverty goes down and the reduction in social transfers frees up money that can be invested elsewhere.  An increase in dependency means a strain on the labour market and reduced capacity to deliver social services. In addition, a strong correlation exists between health and well-being, participation in cultural activities, volunteerism, lifelong learning and level of literacy.

The immigration levels won't increase to a high enough level to compensate for the retiring workforce. Thus we cannot afford to have people marginalized in the labour force.

A number of improvements are required:
- Clarify how and where money needs to be spent on literacy; what is most effective;
- Focus on setting priorities with programs for levels one and two;
- Understand the importance of diversity in programs as needs (and solutions) are different;
- Provide better diagnostic and assessment tools; and
- Develop measurement and monitoring tools.

Dr. O'Neill concluded by stating that partnerships between federal and provincial governments are needed and that the public policy issue is *'how do we make the best use of our resources'.*

### Discussion
A number of questions and comments were shared in the discussion.  One participant stated that Dr. O'Neill's address is *'very beneficial for making the case'.*  Others were concerned with ways to deal with the demographic, social, and other pressures and how to effectively integrate other nationalities.  One participant stated that it is important not to confuse ESL (English as a second language) and FSL (French as a second language) with literacy as many immigrants are literate in their own language.  It was pointed out, by a participant, that Francophones have few adult learning opportunities in their own language.

Attention was drawn to the position paper, *Towards a Fully Literate Canada – Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy,* and the need to outline the dialogue and debate[4].

## 7.  Conclusion
The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre's 2007 symposium demonstrated the diversity and breadth of adult learning.  Manifested by the 32 concurrent sessions and 4 plenary sessions presented at the symposium, the field of adult learning was shown to be wide, broad, and multi-faceted.  The symposium's overarching theme, *The Right to Learn,* offered a pivotal point to the discussions that

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[4] *Towards a Fully Literate Canada - Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy* can be accessed on the website of NALD,  www.nald.ca

animated the presentations.  Despite a high level of activity and engagement evident in adult learning activities, it is clear that much work needs to be done to ensure that Canadians have full access to learning opportunities as adults.

Canadians are very familiar with the concept of fundamental legal safeguards which form a protective shield around our society.  The right to vote, the right to free expression, and the right to a fair trial are examples of rights that Canadians expect and demand as part and parcel of the social contract, as is the right to an education granted to children and adolescents.  But the right of adults to learning opportunities does not enjoy the same enshrined status. Not always valued, not even always understood, the importance of adult learning to individuals, communities, and the nation is too often unseen.



The question of rights inevitably raises the corresponding issue of responsibilities.  What are the responsibilities of adults to pursue advanced learning opportunities?  Who is responsible for identifying and removing barriers to learning?  How much access to learning is sufficient?   What learning is deemed to be critical?  Who is responsible for monitoring and assessing adult learning?

As Dr. Hasan noted in his keynote address, the issue of the right to learn is closely connected to questions of available resources and equitable allocation of resources.   The right to learn panel agreed that, unless learning opportunities are available and barriers to learning opportunities are dismantled, the right to learn is only a theoretical right.  Equitable and adequate access to learning requires resources.  And it requires decisions about how these resources are allocated.

These are very large questions.  And they resonate most appropriately in the arena of social policy.  As Dr. O'Neill emphasized in his closing address, limited adult learning opportunities result in a negative impact on Canada's growth and economic productivity.  And the impact is not evenly distributed, affecting some communities more than others.  There is much work to be done to ensure that there are adequate resources, well-developed policies and practices, and effective measurements of success for adult learning.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre has clear responsibilities in advancing adult learning.  The symposium's plenary speakers and individual presentations served to highlight the challenges, opportunities and best practices that relate to AdLKC's mandate.  In its 2007-08 plan, AdLKC identified four key priorities in its activities: to develop a right-to-learn strategy for Canadians with learning needs related to literacy, high-school completion and prior learning recognition; to build action research capacities among adult learning practitioners; to raise the profile of adult learning; and to develop benchmarks for monitoring progress in adult learning activities.  The 2007 symposium strongly reinforced the significance of AdLKC's four targeted priorities.

Raising adult literacy and promoting a culture of lifelong learning must be a collaborative effort involving governments, business, labour, institutions, communities and individuals.

CCL's State of Learning in Canada 2007

## PARTICIPANTS AT ALKC 2007 SYMPOSIUM

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