



The Big Picture Literacy in Canada

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OUTLINE

Part 1: Literacy in Canada

Part 2: Literacy Facts

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Literacy in Canada

LITERACY IS A SERIOUS ISSUE



The International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) was released in 2005

It clearly shows that millions of Canadians struggle with literacy challenges

UNESCO DEFINITION OF LITERACY



Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society.

Adopted by CLLN

LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS



HRSDC has introduced the term *Essential Skills* to define the transferable skills that everyone needs to succeed in life

- ▶ There are 9 Essential Skills
- ▶ Gradually people across Canada are becoming familiar with the term and its meaning

Essential Skills are also a structured way of thinking about Literacy

Literacy is the foundation of every Essential Skill

A FOUNDATION



Literacy and Essential Skills provide the foundation for learning all other skills

- ▶ They are needed for work, learning and life
- ▶ We need them to do things in our daily lives as parents, students, workers, community members and citizens

SOME EXAMPLES



- ▶ Reading a bus schedule
- ▶ Reading the newspaper
- ▶ Using a computer
- ▶ Completing an application form
- ▶ Understanding medications and how to take them
- ▶ Voting in federal and provincial elections
- ▶ Understanding the justice system

WHO HAS LITERACY ISSUES?



- ▶ People who experienced poverty, abuse, neglect, or discrimination when young may have poor reading skills due to interrupted schooling
- ▶ Some children had undiagnosed learning disabilities and never became good readers
- ▶ Seniors with an elementary education - reading skills not at today's standard
- ▶ Aboriginal People

WHO HAS LITERACY ISSUES?



- ▶ On average, immigrants are better educated now than in the past
 - ▶ However, many come from countries that do not have English or French as a main language
- ▶ Some immigrants
 - ▶ may be literate in first language but struggle with English or French
 - ▶ are not literate in first language and find it difficult to learn to read in a second language

USE IT OR LOSE IT



- ▶ Skills need to be used to stay sharp
- ▶ Age is not important:
 - ▶ children, teens, adults and seniors can lose skills
- ▶ Skills are lost when people read less
- ▶ Instead of reading they:
 - ▶ get news from television and radio
 - ▶ get their entertainment from TV, movies, and concerts

LITERACY AND ESSENTIAL SKILLS



- ▶ Essential Skills provide a common language for educators, employers and service providers
- ▶ Everyone needs Essential Skills to be able to function effectively at work, at home and in the community
- ▶ Essential Skills are adaptable to all situations
- ▶ Essential Skills help people to be more productive and to more easily learn new tasks

ESSENTIAL SKILLS



- ▶ Reading Text
- ▶ Document Use
- ▶ Numeracy
- ▶ Writing
- ▶ Oral Communication
- ▶ Working with Others
- ▶ Continuous Learning
- ▶ Thinking Skills
- ▶ Computer Use

For more on essential skills go to hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills

READING TEXT – EXAMPLES



- ▶ Read and understand information in written messages and reports
- ▶ Carry out written instructions
- ▶ Read job ads
- ▶ Read product warning labels

WRITING – EXAMPLES



- ▶ Write telephone messages
- ▶ Write e-mails
- ▶ Write notes from a meeting
- ▶ Keep a “to do” list



We need literacy to:

- ▶ find good health services
- ▶ make healthy lifestyle choices
- ▶ understand doctor's information
- ▶ take medication correctly
- ▶ find and understand health and safety information

LITERACY AND THE WORKFORCE



We need literacy to:

- ▶ describe our skills and qualities
- ▶ find jobs
- ▶ do tasks in the workplace
- ▶ change jobs
- ▶ get promotions

LITERACY AND THE FAMILY



Parents are a child's first teacher

Children learn best with supportive families and caregivers:

- ▶ They follow the example of their parents / caregivers
- ▶ They need literacy-rich homes
- ▶ They need adults who are comfortable with the school environment

This helps them to be more successful in school

LITERACY AND ESL



- ▶ New immigrants need strong literacy skills to integrate into Canadian society
- ▶ Some immigrants are highly educated; some are not – many need support to improve their literacy skills in English
- ▶ Some immigrants have been in Canada a long time and can speak well but have literacy issues

ESL LITERACY LEARNERS



- ▶ Less than 6 years of learning in home country
- ▶ Not able to read their home language
or
Have limited reading skills in home language
- ▶ Use a different alphabet
- ▶ Have 8 years of schooling but have not developed study skills

LITERACY CONNECTIONS



- ▶ Justice
- ▶ Finance
- ▶ Consumer
- ▶ Social Justice
- ▶ Poverty

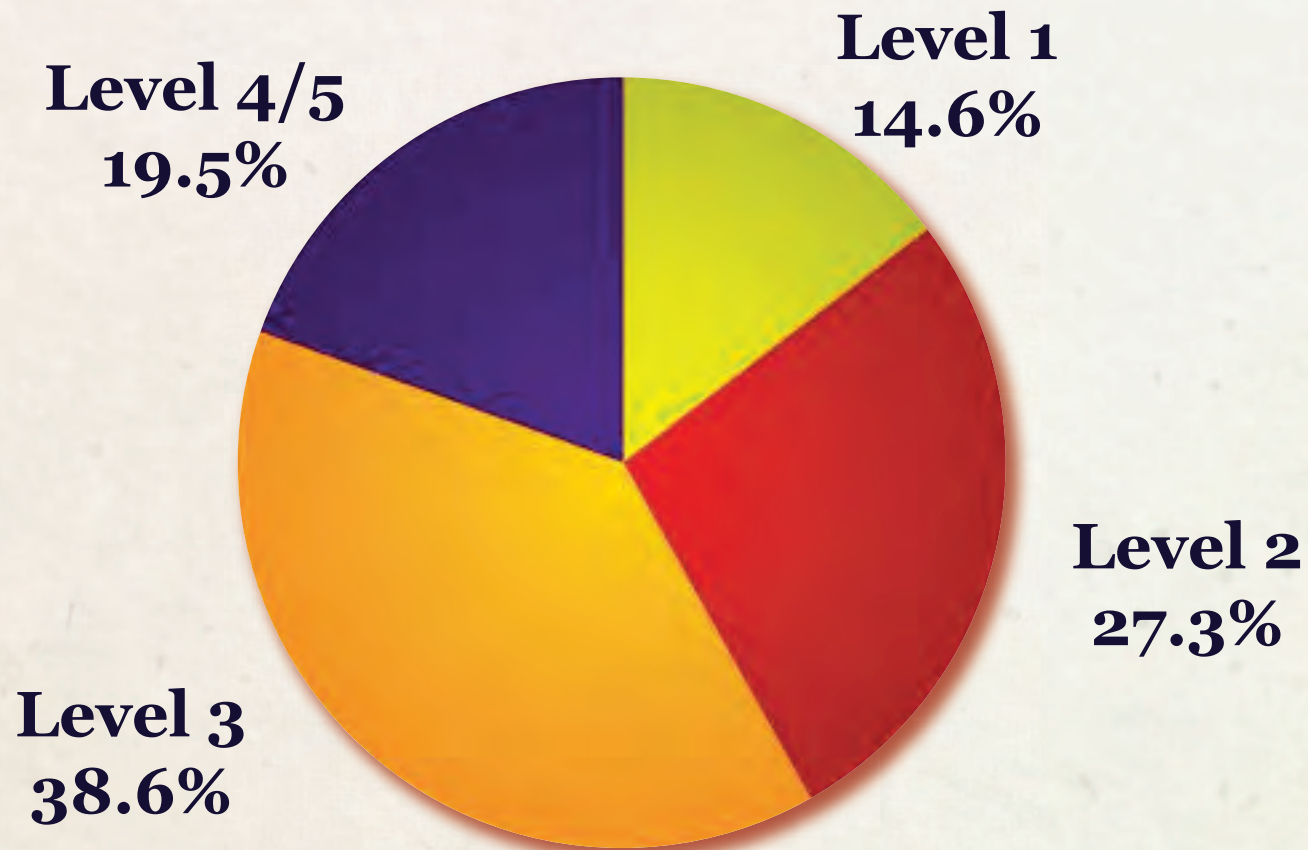
Literacy Facts

CLLN'S LEADERSHIP



- ▶ 14% of working age Canadian adults find everyday literacy difficult. Another 27% struggle with more complex materials
- ▶ That's 9 million adults
- ▶ Over 7 million of them don't identify literacy as an issue
- ▶ The number is likely to rise to 15 million over the next 20 years

LITERACY LEVELS FOR CANADIAN ADULTS



ADULT LITERACY AND LIFE SKILLS LEVELS



Level 1 Task

- ▶ Use the label to find out how long you can take headache pills at any one time

Level 2 Task

- ▶ Look at a magazine to find out about a plant for the garden – size, sun/shade, zone

Level 3 Task

- ▶ Compare a movie review to see which of four was most popular

LEVEL 1 FACTS



- ▶ 3.1 million adult Canadians read at this level
- ▶ 1.4 million of them are immigrants
- ▶ 54% are male and 46% are female
- ▶ 60% employed, 12% unemployed, 28% not actively seeking employment
- ▶ Education:
 - ▶ 50% have less than high school
 - ▶ 30% finished high school
 - ▶ 20% have post-secondary education

LEVEL 2 FACTS

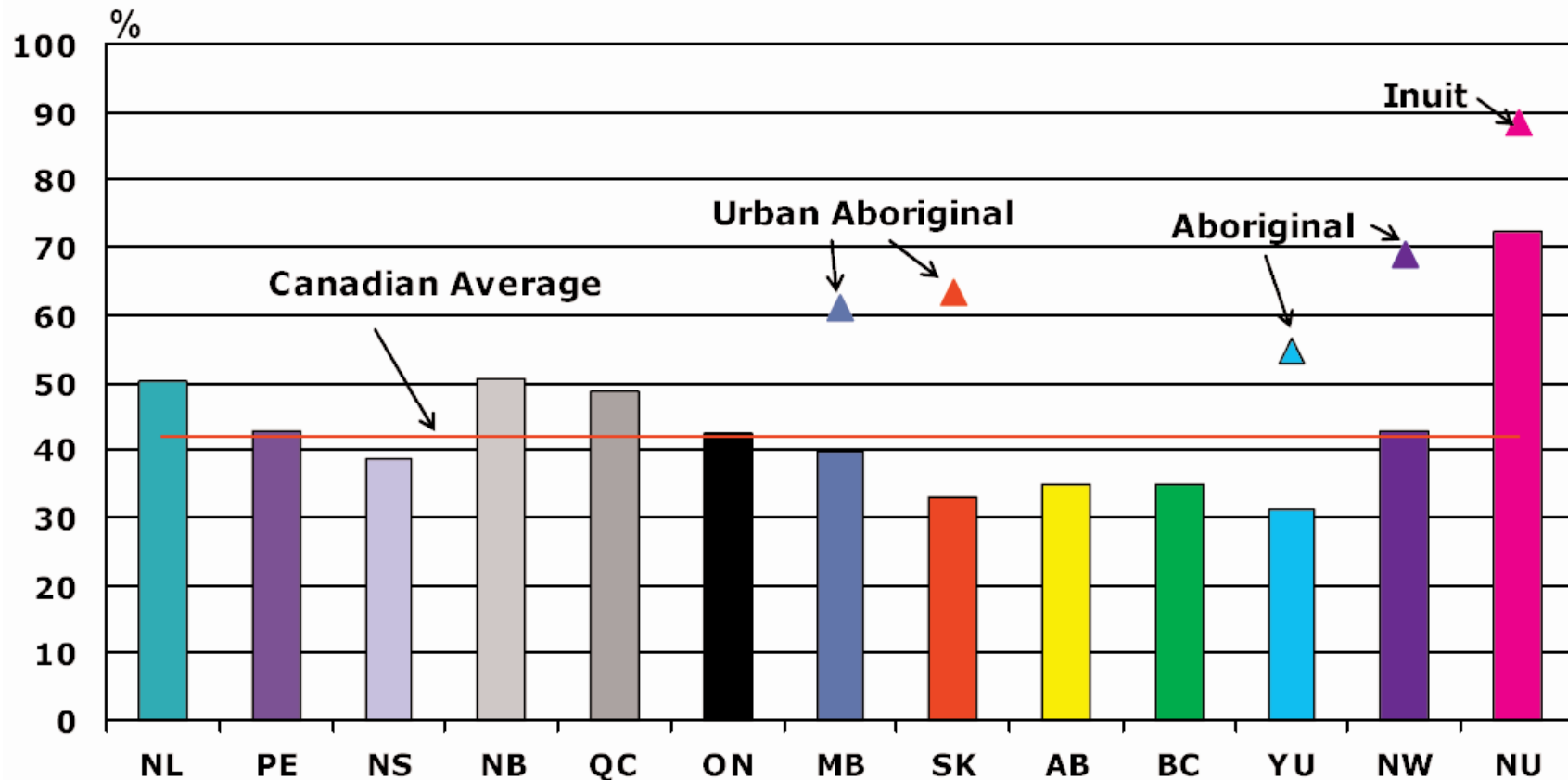


- ▶ 5.8 million adult Canadians read at this level
- ▶ 1.2 million of them are immigrants
- ▶ 52% are male and 48% are female
- ▶ 70% employed, 8% unemployed, 22% not actively seeking employment
- ▶ Education:
 - ▶ 28% have less than high school
 - ▶ 37% finished high school
 - ▶ 35% have post-secondary education

LITERACY IN CANADA



Percentage of Population Aged 16-65 with Scores at the Bottom Two Levels of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey



Source: *Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey 2003*, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada and Statistics Canada, 2005.

Challenges and Barriers

THE CHALLENGES



How to:

- ▶ Promote literacy awareness
- ▶ Encourage people to improve their literacy and essential skills
- ▶ Provide the best programs to meet people's needs
- ▶ Provide training for internationally trained professionals
- ▶ Increase employers' awareness of importance of essential skills for employees

BARRIERS TO JOINING A PROGRAM



- ▶ Fear
- ▶ Gaps in education
- ▶ Negative experiences with education
- ▶ Low self esteem
- ▶ Lack of confidence
- ▶ Family circumstances
- ▶ Learning disabilities
- ▶ Poverty

OVERCOMING BARRIERS



Literacy practitioners are often skilled at helping learners to:

- ▶ Feel accepted
- ▶ Grow in self-esteem
- ▶ Have confidence to try new tasks
- ▶ Learn new skills
- ▶ Reach their literacy goals
- ▶ Have skills to enter chosen transition path

Canadian Literacy and
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ROLE OF CLLN



- ▶ Networking
- ▶ Research
- ▶ Government liaison
- ▶ Communication
- ▶ Collaboration
- ▶ Capacity building
- ▶ Learner development

- ▶ Informs and advises the federal government, policy makers and the general public through:
 - ▶ reference groups and advisory committees
 - ▶ CLLN website
 - ▶ requests for information
 - ▶ research
 - ▶ project results

Recent projects include:

- ▶ Family Literacy
 - ▶ Mapping the Field of Family Literacy in Canada
- ▶ Connecting ESL and Literacy
 - ▶ Linkages
- ▶ Accountability
 - ▶ examining accountability-related practices in literacy

Proposed projects include:

- ▶ Scan of Literacy and Essential Skills in Canada

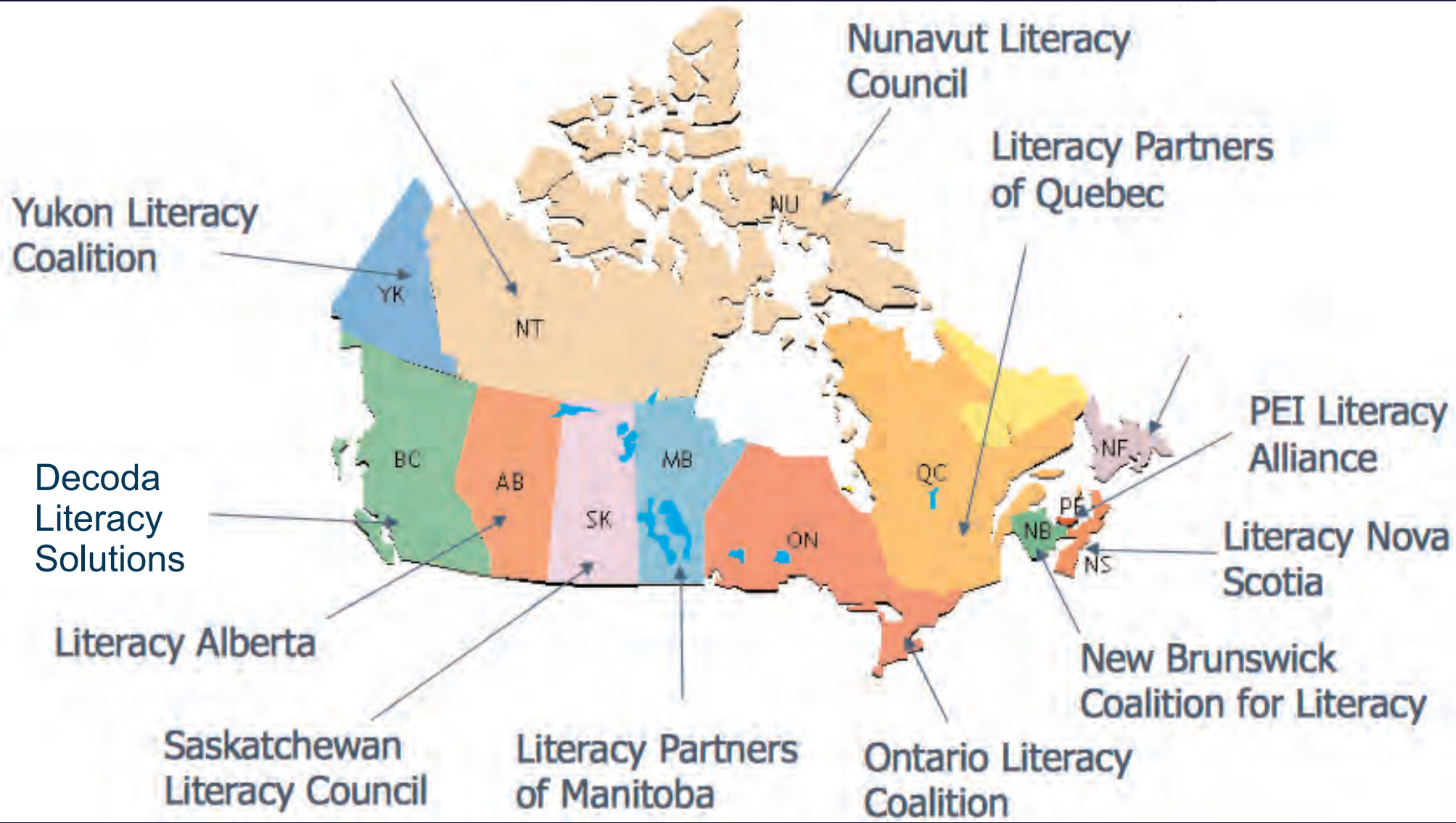
CLLN COLLABORATES AND SHARES



- ▶ Meets regularly with national literacy organizations to help improve literacy levels for adult Canadians
- ▶ Publishes LiteracyExpress for the literacy field
- ▶ Consults and partners with organizations dealing with justice, health, ESL and family literacy
- ▶ Has a comprehensive website (www.literacy.ca) that is regularly updated

CLLN AND ITS NATIONAL LITERACY NETWORK

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Thank You.

