

**Adult Learning Knowledge Centre  
National Symposium  
June 21-23, 2006**

In an atmosphere charged with a spirit of collaboration and networking, more than 150 symposium participants discussed the challenges, successes, and next steps to enhancing adult learning programs and activities across the country. The symposium provided a venue for learning, reflecting, and developing priorities for action for ALKC, CCL and other stakeholders in the practice and research of adult learning.

The first-day sessions focused on the State of the Field review, which is the first comprehensive documentation of adult learning research in Canada. The State of the Field review provided an excellent foundation for discussing seven key areas of adult learning: barriers to participation, culture, e-learning, gender, learning communities, literacy and social movements. Some concerns were common across the seven areas; these included

- removing barriers to participation
- linking research and practice to policy changes
- strengthening the work of practitioners and researchers and their relationship to each other
- incorporating the experience of francophone communities, and
- identifying areas that require further exploration.

The second-day sessions gave participants an opportunity to reflect on what had been learned from the presentations and discussions on the State of the Field review. Using four broad discussion areas (communities of practice, diversity of adult learning, community-based research, and university-community research alliances), participants identified recommendations for action, intended to assist with the work of ALKC and its consortium.

The recommendations offered by the discussion groups centered around three fundamental proposals:

- 1. Strengthen the culture of adult learning in Canada** by promoting a better understanding of informal learning, by making the link between community movements and adult learning, and by sponsoring pan-Canadian events that celebrate adult learning.
- 2. Build the capacities of practitioners and researchers to exchange knowledge, to mobilize information, and to undertake research** by offering accessible, inclusive, bilingual, and interactive tools and events (such as symposiums, skill-building workshops and web-based portals) designed to exchange, disseminate, and expand the information generated by the state of the field work as well as other information relevant to adult learning communities. These tools and events must be responsive to the needs, concerns, and experiences of individuals, communities, and organizations across the country in both language groups.
- 3. Foster collaborative adult learning initiatives** by facilitating partnerships between, and among, practitioners and researchers within diverse communities of practice, by assisting with the provision of tools and mechanisms for collaboration (such as a thesaurus of definitions and terminologies, handbook of protocols, etc.), and by encouraging mentorships and other partnering opportunities, inclusive of language, culture, and sector.

The Adult Learning Knowledge Centre was established by the Canadian Council on Learning with the goal of advancing adult learning across Canada. Its first national symposium brought together the rich expertise of adult educators based in a wide range of locations across Canada and engaged in a vast plethora of concerns, issues, and challenges. The symposium elicited a dynamic discussion and many fertile recommendations, which will serve to guide the work of ALKC and its partners.