

# Write ON

Magazine

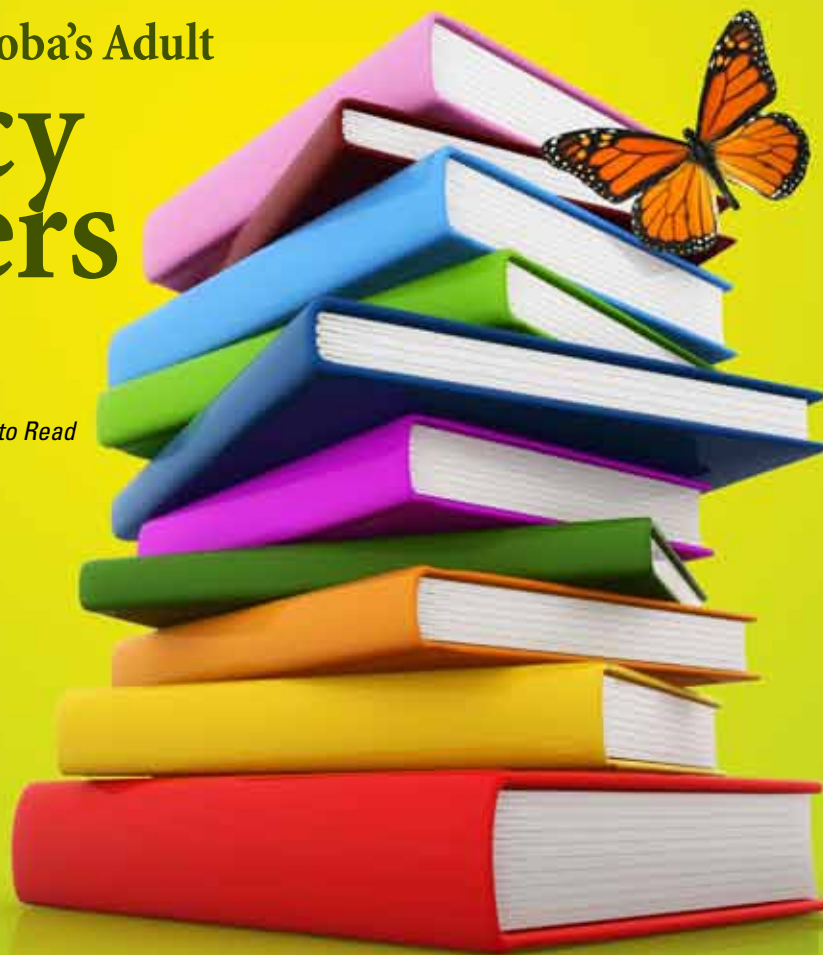
SPRING 2011

A Literacy Partners of Manitoba Publication

A Focus On Manitoba's Adult

## Literacy Learners

- *I Used To... But Now I...*
- *An Elderly Couple*
- *My Excuses for not Knowing How to Read*
- *This is My Goal*
- *My Literacy Journey*
- *A True Valentine*
- *My Dream*
- *The Bite in Your Sleep*
- *Owls*
- *Web of Conscience*
- *Where are you Claudette?*
- *A Memorable Event*
- *Overcoming Adversity in My Life*



**See Yourself**  
as a Learner

Celebrating Adult  
Learners' Week  
April 2-9, 2011



“EDUCATION IS ALSO THE STRONGEST PREVENTIVE MEDICINE. A CHILD BORN TO A MOTHER WHO CAN READ IS 50 PERCENT MORE LIKELY TO SURVIVE PAST THE AGE OF FIVE.”

**Welcome** to the Spring Issue of *WriteOn*, a publication produced by Literacy Partners of Manitoba to celebrate the new and emerging writing skills of adult literacy learners in Manitoba.



This issue is a wonderful mix of poems and short stories that have a magical and honest tone that seems to come directly from the heart of the writers as they learn to find their voice in written form.

As an organization dedicated to encouraging and facilitating literacy and learning, it is especially encouraging for us to see the courage and skill these new writers display and to sense their growing confidence.

Building and enhancing these essential skills in Manitoba is so important to our future as a broader community of people. These stories show how meaningful literacy is for the individuals who have taken steps to create a new future for themselves and their families.

We are very appreciative of the funding support for this publication from The Province of Manitoba Adult Literacy and Learning and UNESCO, and delighted to highlight *International Adult Learners' Week* that runs from April 2- 9.

Join with us in celebrating these new writers and *International Adult Learners Week*. Together we can help to realize the benefits of learning and literacy.

## Herman Hansen

*Chair, Literacy Partners of Manitoba*

*Senior Manager, Human Resources Employee Training, Training and Development, Boeing Canada*

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## See Yourself as a Learner

*A message from the Canadian Commission on UNESCO*

### **What did you learn today? What would you like to have learned? What prevented you from learning?**

These are questions that will be asked in some of the projects taking place across Canada during International Adult Learners' Week 2011. Other projects will choose to focus on the importance of sharing our experiences to transform our ways of doing things and improve the ways we live together for a sustainable future.

In the 21st century, the need to embed principles of lifelong learning in education and broader development policies is more urgent than ever. Lifelong learning principles, if systematically implemented, will be able to contribute to more just and equitable societies.

According to UNESCO's Director-General, we will never achieve the Millennium Development Goals without integrating education into all of them:

“Education is the path to reach all of the Millennium Development Goals and to ensure the sustainability of progress across all the other MDGs.” Studies estimate that one extra year of schooling can increase an individual's earnings by up to 10 percent. Education is also the strongest preventive medicine. A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to survive past the age of five.

These reasons and many more are why we need to invest in the transformative power of lifelong learning, better

organize the sharing of knowledge and experiences, and learn from the results to reach as many as possible.

Across Canada and around the world, adult learning and literacy festivals and events share a common purpose – they are advocacy tools for raising the profile of adult learners and lifelong learning; they mobilize individuals to take advantage of the multitude of learning opportunities open to them; and they serve as a reminder that adult learning can be a powerful instrument for change.

Each autumn, the Canadian Commission for UNESCO organizes a planning meeting in Ottawa where an increasing number of government and non-governmental partners involved in adult learning interested in International Adult Learners' Week come together to plan approaches to International Adult Learners' Week in Canada.

At the meeting of September 10, 2010, partners from across Canada recognized the importance of adapting pan-Canadian initiatives to local needs. They also agreed on the advantage of having a common date for the Week across the country, while keeping in mind the international framework. International Adult Learners' Week 2011 will therefore focus particular attention on access, participation and inclusion, and on innovative policies that will help improve adult learning programs to meet everyone's needs. ■

# Principles for Adult Learning In Canada

Canadian Commission on UNESCO

Inclusive education is fundamental to the achievement of human, social and economic development. Equipping all individuals to develop their potential contributes significantly to encouraging them to live together in harmony and with dignity.

There can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment.

Combating the cumulative effects of multiple disadvantages is of particular importance. Measures should be taken to enhance motivation and access for all. To these ends, we commit ourselves to:

- Promoting and facilitating more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education by enhancing a culture of learning and by eliminating barriers to participation;
- Promoting and supporting more equitable access to, and participation in, adult learning and education through well-designed and targeted guidance and information, as well as activities and programmes such as Adult Learners' Weeks and learning festivals;
- Anticipating and responding to identifiable groups entering trajectories of multiple disadvantage, in particular in early adulthood;
- Creating multi-purpose community learning spaces and centers and improving access to, and participation in, the full range of adult learning and education programmes for women, taking account of the particular demands of the gender specific life-course;

- Supporting the development of writing and literacy in the various indigenous languages by developing relevant programmes, methods and materials that recognize and value the indigenous cultures, knowledge and methodologies, while adequately developing the teaching of the second language of wider communication;
- Supporting financially a systematic focus on disadvantaged groups (for example indigenous peoples, migrants, people with special needs and those living in rural areas) in all educational policies and approaches, which may include programmes that are provided free of charge or subsidized by our governments, with incentives for learning such as bursaries, fee remission and paid study leave;
- Providing adult education in prison at all appropriate levels;
- Adopting a holistic, integrated approach, including a mechanism to identify stakeholders and the responsibilities of the state in partnership with civil society organizations, labour market stakeholders, learners and educators;
- Developing effective educational responses for migrants and refugees as a key focus for development work. ■

**There can be no exclusion arising from age, gender, ethnicity, migrant status, language, religion, disability, rurality, sexual identity or orientation, poverty, displacement or imprisonment.**



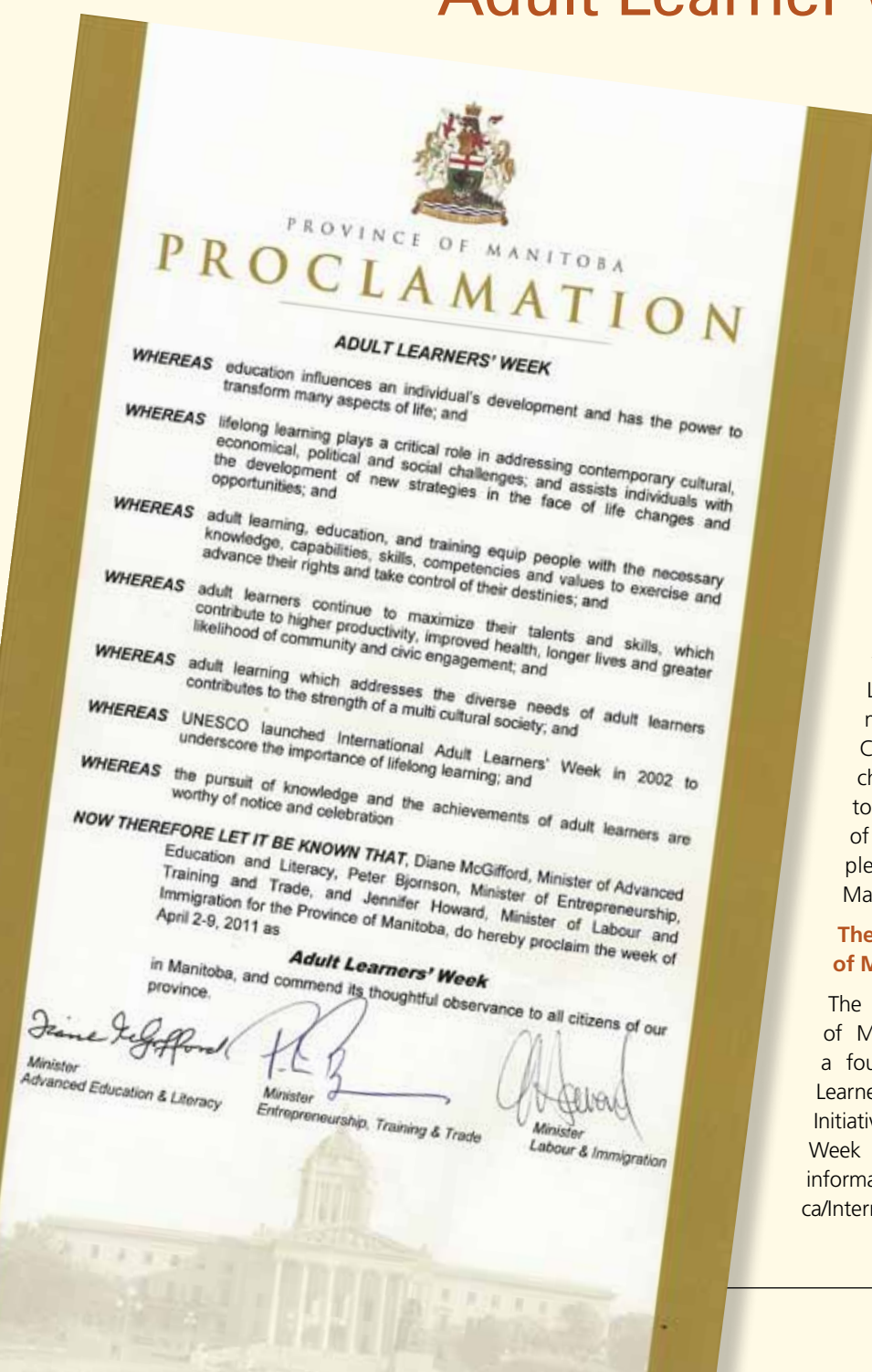
**Mark International  
Adult Learners' Week  
2011 from April 2nd to  
9th on your Calendar**

*and participate in your  
workplace, community and  
your family. Spreading the word  
about the importance of lifelong  
learning contributes to more  
opportunities for all. You can  
also learn more about existing  
programs; you could find the  
right program for you.*



The Manitoba International Adult Learners' Week Committee

# Supporting and Encouraging Adult Learner Week in Manitoba



### Literacy Partners of Manitoba

Literacy Partners of Manitoba (LPM) is pleased to be a member of the Manitoba International Adult Learner Week planning committee.

Literacy Partners of Manitoba, as a non-profit organization, is committed to supporting learners and practitioners in their efforts to improve Literacy and Essential Skills in Manitoba, and to raise the awareness of the importance of Literacy and Essential Skills with stakeholders and partners.

We extend sincere best wishes to all those who are striving to improve their learning and knowledge opportunities and we thank those who work so diligently to provide this service to so many across our province.

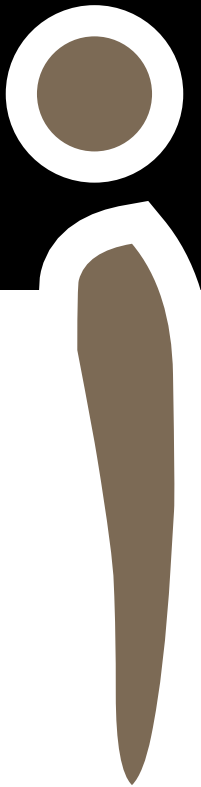
### The Adult Secondary Education Council

The Adult Secondary Education Council (ASEC) is pleased to be a member of the Manitoba International Adult Learners' Week Committee planning committee. Our members are educators found in both Adult Learning Centres and Literacy programs across Manitoba, and who champion and encourage adult learners. We are excited to be joining this celebration for the first time. For details of many of the events that are happening during the week please visit [www.asecmanitoba.ca/Adult\\_Educators\\_in\\_Manitoba/home.html](http://www.asecmanitoba.ca/Adult_Educators_in_Manitoba/home.html) and click on the IALW logo.

### The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba

The Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba Newcomer Literacy Initiative is proud to be a founding member of the Manitoba International Adult Learners' Week Committee. The Manitoba Newcomer Literacy Initiative has been celebrating International Adult Learners Week since 2008. For details of past celebrations and more information on the events for 2011 please visit <http://www.ircom.ca/InternationalAdultLearnersWeekIALW.htm> ■

"I USED TO BE THERE  
BUT NOW I'M HERE"



# *Used To...* But now I...

**By Elliot Beardy,**  
*Ashern Manitoba*

I used to smoke butts  
**But now I smoke cigs**  
I used to be good  
**But now I'm bad**  
I used to follow the rules  
**But now I disobey**  
I used to like cops  
**But now I hate them**  
I used to think fantasy  
**But now I'm in reality**  
I used to be there  
**But now I'm here**  
I used to love you  
**But now I don't**  
I used to be a drop out  
**But now I'm in school**  
I used to be there for you  
**But now I can't**

" I MAY NOT SEE THEM ANYMORE  
BUT I FEEL THEIR SPIRIT AMONGST  
THE LEAVES"

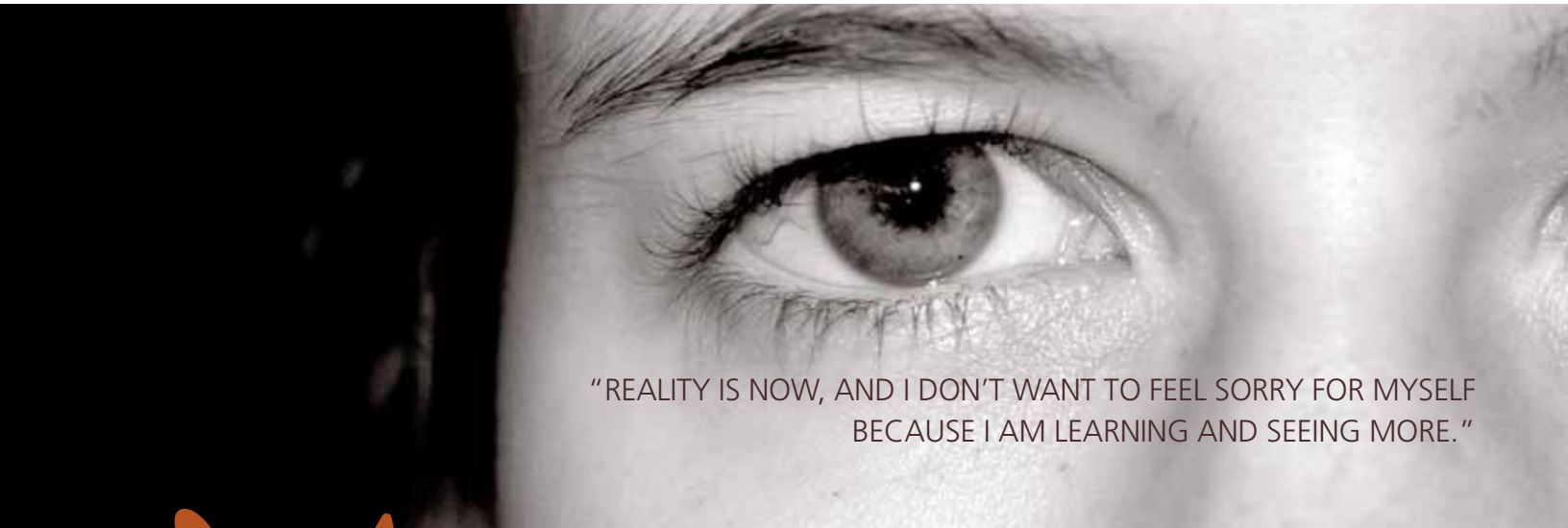
# An Elderly Couple

**By Vivian Kowtow,**  
*Swan River Adult Education Centre*

As I was walking through the park  
A couple I did see  
They were sitting in the shade  
Of a Maple Tree  
The Flowers were blooming  
The leaves a blowing  
And the river a flowing  
As they sit there so quietly holding  
Hands, enjoying the peace and quiet  
Of this beautiful day  
Now as I walk through the park  
I no longer see them  
Sitting under the Maple Tree  
For they have moved on  
To the world above and beyond

For God has chosen them  
To come sit under his Maple tree  
Where the birds are chirping  
And the angels are singing  
Now as I walk through the  
park once more  
I may not see them anymore  
But I feel their spirit amongst  
the leaves  
In that Maple Tree.





“REALITY IS NOW, AND I DON’T WANT TO FEEL SORRY FOR MYSELF  
BECAUSE I AM LEARNING AND SEEING MORE.”

# My Excuses for Not Knowing How to Read

**By Agnes Philbrow,**  
*Portage la Prairie Learning and Literacy Centre*

I would use many excuses:

- I am busy go play
- Not now, go ask your father
- Saying I forgot my glasses
- I am new in this area, and I am lost
- Does this bus go to so and so place?

I would repeat excuses over and over. I would change topics and create distractions. I would look at pictures familiar to me, as a guide. This was the world I lived in, and it blocked me from the wonders of the world.

These wonders included fiction, science, recipes, news, bulletins, music, and travel. I mostly stayed in my comfort zone, but I longed to go further.

Many years ago there were no computers, and TV did not have a lot of channels. In the last 50 years things have changed so fast. There is more immigration, and more people are travelling to far off places. People

are now speaking up that they want to learn.

For me, I am very happy with the changes. Sometimes I sit and wonder “What If I knew how to read before? What could I have been?”

But, reality is now, and I don’t want to feel sorry for myself because I am learning and seeing more. As I learn and grow, I am seeing the world in a different way. My excuses have become less and less.

I am not ashamed that people know I come to the learning centre. I have teachers that care, and teach us at our own pace. They teach us the wonders of learning at any age. There are no limits, and nothing can stop us. The teachers are encouraging and they are heroes to me. Their motto is: “NO MORE EXCUSES.” They are here to help, teach us, and guide us through and through.

Thank you. ■

"KEEP DREAMING  
IT TAKES WORK IT TAKES TIME."

Goal  
Dream  
What's Yours?

# This is My Goal

**By Kathy Kopichanski,**  
*Open Doors Adult literacy Program*

I have always chased dreams  
I've wanted to become a writer  
A poet  
Short stories are my favorite.  
I have taken time to write  
And have written all my life  
I can't think of anything else to do.  
I write to soothe my soul  
To quiet my mind  
I dream a lot  
This is how I get my words  
A dream leads the way.  
I was told to practice  
Write and write some more

My goal is to become an author  
Without dreams  
You close doors  
Keep dreaming  
It takes work It takes time.  
What's your goal?  
What's on your mind?

“EVERYONE TELLS ME HOW PROUD THEY ARE OF ME, BUT THE MOST REWARDING FEELING IS WHEN MY SONS TELL ME THAT.”



# MY LITERACY JOURNEY.

**By Angela Keno,**  
Westgrove Learning Centre

I have been living in the Westgrove Housing Complex for three years. When I first moved here, there was no place for me to get support in reading and writing important letters and filling out documents for my children and me.

When the Westgrove Family Resource Centre opened in 2008, the Advisory Committee worked hard to get a literacy program in our community. We were successful and the Westgrove Learning Centre was opened in September 2009. This literacy program is a two year pilot program. I hope this program continues after this year because it has really helped me to improve my reading and writing.

In the past years my children had to help me read and write. My three boys have been a big support. We moved to the city to get a better education. They encouraged me to go to the school at the Westgrove Family

Resource Centre. They told me it was my turn to go back to school.

In my first year at school I had a hard time to get myself going, but my boys always reminded me of our goals. I knew I had a lot of hard work to do as I have dyslexia. I never tried to hide my problem. Thankfully, I had an understanding teacher in Norm Koe. He and I worked on different ways to help me with my reading. These strategies have greatly improved my reading. This year I am working in Stage 2 of the Certificate in Literacy and Learning.

In June of this year my five year old boy brought home a package of books for him and me to read during the summer. I was able to easily read these storybooks to him. In past years when my older boys brought home books to read I had to memorize the story and make up words

if I didn't know them. Being able to read to my five year old son made me feel proud of myself.

With my improved literacy I was able to get a part time job at the Westgrove Family Resource Centre. I like this job because I am able to help others here. Everyone tells me how proud they are of me, but the most rewarding feeling is when my sons tell me that. ■

*In September 2010 Angela Keno was awarded the Manitoba Council of the Federation Literacy Award by Premier Greg Selinger, in recognition of her impressive achievements in literacy.*



# *A True Valentine*

**By Dione C. Haynes,**  
*Westgrove Learning Centre*

When I think of literacy, my first thought is about reading and writing. I also think of the barriers to accessing and increasing literacy skills: condescending teachers or counsellors, violence (often called ‘bullying’) and before that even gets started, the sometimes complicated process of registering.

Speaking about these barriers with a former colleague, Literacy Partners of Manitoba Learner Outreach Coordinator, Jeremy Johnson, I realized the magnitude of supports available. During our conversation, I had mentioned an interest in upgrading Algebra and Chemistry and he quickly informed me that the Literacy Partners of Manitoba assists present and potential students of all levels in finding more information about upgrading.

“I WAS REGISTERED AND SITTING IN ALGEBRA AND CHEMISTRY CLASSES, FALLING IN LOVE AGAIN WITH LONG LOST EQUATIONS AND FORMULAS.”

I was surprised and pleased. Of course, sciences and math are part of the literacy spectrum!

I was contacted by a volunteer regarding the location and times of classes. Most of the classes are no cost or low cost and there are day and evening schedules available. Thanks to the efficiency of Jeremy and Literacy Partners of Manitoba volunteer, Hannah, I was registered and sitting in Algebra and Chemistry classes, falling in love again with long lost equations and formulas. ■

*Dione will be nominating her teacher for the Literacy Partners of Manitoba Practitioners’ Award because he is “funny, increases the joy in class and truly makes learning fun.”*

“I WOULD DONATE MONEY TO DIALYSIS FOR HELPING ME THROUGH ALL MY HARD TIMES, AND TO WILLIAM WHYTE SCHOOL FOR HELPING MY SON”



# MY DREAM

**By Anita Spence,**  
*Lord Selkirk Adult Learning Program*

My dream is to win a lottery. I would buy a new house, a new car, new furniture and some new clothes for my son and myself. I would also open an account that would collect interest, so we could live on it for a long time.

I would donate money to Dialysis for helping me through all my hard times, and to William Whyte School for helping my son Daniel to get through school. I would donate some money to Harvest to help the hungry families and children out there.

I would give my son Daniel some money, so he could buy whatever he wants. He and I would take a trip to Las Vegas. We would

gamble a little and check out the sights there. We would stay for a couple of days and nights, but I would get a motel outside of the city because it would be a little cheaper.

After two days and nights in Vegas, we would take off for Hawaii and spend a week there. We would get a hotel to stay in, and check out the sights. We would relax in the sun, and just enjoy ourselves. After all this, maybe I would find a man and live “happily ever after.” ■

"JANE TRIED DESPERATELY TO GET RID OF THE PESTS...  
DESPITE ALL HER EFFORTS, SHE COULDN'T GET RID OF THE BUGS."



# The Bite

## in Your Sleep

**By DeAnna McCallum,**  
Mayfair Learning Centre

Jane Wells stayed at a resort in the Catskill Mountains of New York.

When she returned home to Toronto, she noticed bites on her arms. Later, she got an email from the resort informing her they had bedbugs. For the next few weeks Jane tried desperately to get rid of the pests. She tried vacuuming and laundering her clothes and personal items that could be washed and dried. Despite all her efforts, she couldn't get rid of the bugs.

The reason Jane and so many other people have such a hard time killing bedbugs is that North America has put a ban on the use of DDT in insecticides. Putting limitations on what insecticides we can use has caused bedbugs to become resistant to some.

Finally, Jane had to call an exterminator to do the job professionally.

They sprayed residue insecticide, steam cleaned her furniture, and fogged her place. In the end, the bedbugs were gone.

I think the government should step up and use some of the taxpayers' money to heat blast (the most effective way of killing bedbugs) the buildings, apartment blocks, and businesses infested with the bugs. This way we can get an upper hand on this problem and get rid of them once and for all. ■

*This is a summary of a Readers Digest Article, completed for a Stage 3 Certificate of Literacy and Learning*

“SOME PEOPLE SAY THEY’RE BEAUTIFUL  
AND LOOK SHARP AT TIMES.”

# Owls



**By Robert Wiens,**  
*Mayfair Learning Centre*

There are many ways one can describe owls. They have shiny fluffy feathers. Their colours range from grey, white, and brown or a combination of the three. They have sharp curvy claws which help them to catch and kill their prey quickly.

Owls are wise and can adapt easily to their environment. They are able to survive in a rural or urban setting and can change their diet as such. Some people say they’re beautiful and look sharp at times.

People would be lucky to see owls in the city because they have excellent night vision and are nocturnal hunters. ■



"TODAY AT 11:30 GMT  
I WILL ATTACK MY SCHOOL  
WITH ARSON AND OTHER  
FORM OF VIOLENCE. THOSE  
BASTARDS WILL PAY."

# Web of **CONSCIENCE**

**By DeAnna McCallum,**  
*Mayfair Learning Centre*

JP Neufeld was a second year student at Montreal's Concordia University when he became an international hero by making one simple phone call.

He woke up one morning, St. Patrick's Day to be exact. He got something to eat and went back to his room to surf the web before class as he did most mornings. This morning something caught JP's eyes. On the site Newground.com was a thread, which read, "This is it." JP couldn't help but be intrigued. He clicked on the thread, "Today at 11 :30 GMT I will attack my school with arson and other forms of violence. Those bastards will pay." Along with the post were links and pictures of an out of focus hand holding a gas canister with the date 04/20/99, the day 15 people were killed in the Columbine High School shootings.

After contemplating about calling the Norfolk, England police, JP felt he had no other choice. He couldn't just sit by and do nothing in case it wasn't a joke. He bought

some Internet phone minutes, googled the Norfolk Police Department's phone number, and called them.

Despite his fears of them thinking they wouldn't believe him, the dispatcher transferred him to a detective who took down all the information. The kid who made the threats was arrested without incident in front of the school, so quietly in fact that his peers had no idea what was even taking place. When the boy was apprehended, he had lighter fluid and a knife on him.

This story just goes to show you that you have to take things people say seriously, especially on the Internet. If JP Neufeld hadn't acted, many people could have been hurt. ■

*This is summary of a Readers Digest Article,  
completed for a Stage 3 Certificate of Literacy  
and Learning*



“THE CHILDREN ARE WONDERING AND WORRYING ABOUT THEIR MOMMY AND WHY SHE’S NOT COMING HOME.”

# Where are You? Claudette

**By Crystal Tataquason,**  
*Westgrove Learning Centre*

Claudette Osborne was a 21 year old mother of four beautiful children whom she loved dearly. When she was away, she would always call home just to tell her babies she loved them. Claudette was a beautiful woman with a big heart and would help anyone who needed it. Her biggest downfall was having a drug addiction.

I remember going roller skating with her when we were younger. Other times we would hang out at the mall and shop. When we were done, we went home to our babies and just relaxed. I liked her sense of humor and she would always make me laugh no matter how down I was.

But, now I find it hard to believe that is she has been missing for two and a half years. This is not like her as she would never do something like this to her fiance, Matthew Bushby, and children. I know she had an addiction but she is still a human being like

anyone else. When Bushby last heard from her, she said that she was hemorrhaging a lot from having a baby and that she wasn't thinking clearly. I think she was suffering from postpartum depression.

Two weeks later Claudette left and hasn't been seen since. Her family has been continually seeking information on her whereabouts. At home waiting for her are her children and fiance. The children are wondering and worrying about their mommy and why she's not coming home.

Claudette was last seen leaving the Lincoln Hotel on July 24, 2008. But now there is new information that she was seen on Selkirk and King around 6:00 a.m. on the same day. This does not give the police a whole lot to work with.

Bushby says that the police have exhausted many leads and believes they are following up on any information with due diligence. The police continue to search

for more information and leads. They even made and aired a video on Crime Stoppers about her disappearance. So far, all their efforts have been in vain.

Someone out there has information that will help but no one is coming forward. It has been two and a half years since Claudette disappeared and hopes of finding her alive are very slim. Finding Claudette, whether she is alive or not, will bring closure for all involved.

(I miss you cousin, Claudette) ■

"PRIOR TO LEAVING FOR THE TRIP I WASN'T ABLE TO GET MUCH SLEEP, DUE TO THE EXCITEMENT, WONDERING WHAT IT WAS GOING TO BE LIKE TRAVELING TO ONE OF THE BIGGEST CITIES IN CANADA."



# A Memorable Event

**By Brain Whiteway**  
*Selkirk Adult Learning Program*

My most memorable event of 2010 started by finding out that I was chosen, along with Kyle and Ashley, to attend the Numeracy-at-Work Summative Forum in Toronto. Marcey, Program Coordinator of Selkirk Adult Learning Program, accompanied us. We left Winnipeg December 2, 2010 on a flight with Air Canada, all expenses paid for by the Labor Education Center. We stayed at the Primrose Hotel for two nights, which is where the Forum took place.

Prior to leaving for the trip I wasn't able to get much sleep, due to the excitement, wondering what it was going to be like traveling to one of the biggest cities in Canada. The flight to Toronto was all right, but I wasn't able to see the landscape from the air, which would have been nice. This wasn't possible due to the clouds that surrounded us like snow covered ground.

Taking the taxi from the huge airport was an eye-opener. Along the way we saw streets going in all different directions and overpasses and underpasses here and there. We drove by so many high rise buildings with more being constructed everywhere.

The first day of sight-seeing was exhausting because of all the walking we did. We went on a subway ride to our first destination, the CN Tower. The subway ride was awesome! To ride underground with numerous people and vehicles traveling above us was amazing.

As we walked closer and closer to the CN Tower I became more and more excited knowing that we were going to look at the city from way above ground level. Seeing the city landscape as far as the eye could see was breathtaking. My mind wandered off into the creation of this big city, thinking about all the work involved during construction of streets, buildings, bridges, etc. We stayed in the tower for about an hour and decided to walk back to the hotel and sight-see along the way.

The day at the Forum was excellent. We met new people that were also taking part in the event. The group activities were great. I enjoyed the laughter and stories from participants as they talked about their learning experiences in their own Adult Learning Centers. Doing our skit about Social and Holistic Approach as a group

(Kyle, Ashley and Myself) was fun too. We also did another project with Marcey. Everything in the Forum was excellent and I would go again if given the opportunity.

Early the next morning Ashley, myself, and two other Forum participants headed off to see the Hockey Hall of Fame. Going without Marcey was a challenge but we knew we were capable of the adventure. We found the directions on our map and took the subway for the second time without a problem. Walking into the building was breathtaking, knowing this could be a once in a lifetime experience.

I will cherish the moment we walked into the place where they had all the memorabilia of the Hockey Inductees. I loved seeing all the pictures of the players, the equipment they wore, the trophies they won. Seeing and feeling the new and original Stanley Cups was awesome. This trip to Toronto was a blessing and I thank everyone involved for making it happen. ■

“ONE DAY, I WAS THINKING ABOUT MY DRINKING PROBLEM VERY SERIOUSLY. I ASKED MYSELF, ‘WHY AM I DOING THIS TO MYSELF? THERE MUST BE ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE MY LIFE BETTER.’”



# Overcoming Adversity in *My Life*

**By Andrew Captain,**  
*Swan River Adult Education*

I started drinking at the age of 15 and drank for 25 years. I thought drinking was fun and normal. I saw my parents, relatives, and friends drink. It looked like it was a lot of fun to drink. Also, the bad experience I had in residential school contributed to my problems.

Many times I would go on a drinking binge for 1-2 weeks, sometimes a month. I would go on without eating once in a while. Believe me I was very sick when I stopped. I had very bad withdrawals, shakes, throwing up nothing. I tried sleeping but couldn't, just sweat. One time I remember I saw snakes and got up screaming. Many times, I remembered looking up asking God for help. In past and now, I always believed in God.

During the years of my drinking, I never thought of getting help. Example: going to a treatment centre, detox, or talking to an addictions counselor. Even if I went, it couldn't have worked, because I wasn't ready to stop drinking.

One day I was thinking about my drinking problem very seriously. I asked myself, "Why am I doing this to myself? There must be

another way to make my life better." This was the first time in my life to do something about my drinking problem. I remembered getting up from the couch, going to my bedroom, closing the door behind me, went down to my knees, and prayed. Crying, I told God from the bottom of my heart, that I surrendered my drinking and my life to him. I told him, "I'll do what I have to do, please give me strength and guidance." When I finished praying, I got up and felt very peaceful, happy, knowing later that I had a spiritual awakening.

Every morning when I get up, I am always happy and feeling good, no more hangovers. Thank God for helping me.

It's been 23 years since my last drink. I am sober and happy now, and I never look back. Since my spiritual awakening, I now attend church regularly, participate in A.A. Meetings and A.A. Round-Ups, and attend Adult Education. I feel positive about moving forward with my life, and all the possibilities that my life has to offer.

Thank you God for your blessings, guidance, and your love. ■

“LET’S RALLY BEHIND OUR NEW NEIGHBOURS FROM DISTANT LANDS BY RECOGNIZING AND SUPPORTING THEM AS THEY STRUGGLE WITH DEVELOPING THEIR EDUCATION AND PURSUE THEIR DREAMS IN EVERY WAY WE CAN DURING INTERNATIONAL ADULT LEARNERS WEEK THIS SPRING.”

## Retrospective

### Learners Take Possession of Their Writing

# It's Mine and I'll Do It Write

**By Ron Hajes,**

*Instructor – Victor Major Adult Learning Centre*

How often have we as instructors wondered when our learners would transfer all the stuff: grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and form, into those fine sentences we hope to see them write? We give them in-class demonstrations, in-class exercises, and often homework to prove they understand. They do beautiful work, when it is structured, but when they do creative writing, they often fall back into their same patterns. What is the answer? How do we get them to take possession of their own writing using editing skills to create good writing?

When I lived and worked abroad teaching EAL this became one of the problems I encountered daily. Trying different strategies didn't have the effect I had hoped for until one day when I met a teaching friend over lunch. I discovered this teacher who taught a grade 6 class in a Canadian sponsored school was having the same difficulty. During a discussion about this problem we came up with a eureka solution where the students would take possession of their writing, an intergenerational letter writing project!

The grade-six students who had a better command of the English language started with an introductory letter to each of my students. Once the letters were received by my students they read them, checked unfamiliar vocabulary, and wrote draft copies, which I checked and noted necessary changes in, then discussed with each learner. Within a short period of time they were well on their way to

independently using dictionaries, interacting and helping each other with editing and spelling.

A miracle had occurred; the learners were starting to move this experience into their creative and classroom writing, errors were becoming less obvious, and more importantly, the learners had taken possession of their own learning.

When I taught EAL to older adults in Canada the same issue arose, and the eventual solution became an intergenerational/cultural project. Eventually the older adult students and the younger Canadian students met. By this time a rapport had begun so when they met there was a foundation upon which to meet and talk. The immigrant students brought food from their first country and wore traditional clothing, which excited the Canadian born students.

Five years ago, when I switched gears and became a literacy instructor, the issue of taking possession to improve writing once again became apparent. By this time the continuous experiment of letter writing was the answer and true to form – it worked once again.

Very shortly, the learners at Victor Mager Adult Literacy, mostly immigrants who do not yet understand the complexity and art and science of writing, will be starting a letter writing project with a school in Winnipeg. Besides the obvious of learners taking responsibility for their own written work, this project shows younger participants the



importance and necessity of education.

Immigrant learners who have joined us in their further exploration of education are often highly educated in their first countries, however, upon arriving in Canada so many barriers exist as they attempt to integrate into a strange new world. Education usually consists of language training, of which speaking and listening are developed quickly. It is reading and especially writing skills, however, which fall way behind, leaving learners to use creative methods for spelling which in time become habits. This is fine for the early stage learner, but as they progress accepted forms of spelling, grammar, and sentence structure should become part of their academic growth. ■

# Manitoba's Certified Adult Learning and Literacy Centres

The Adult Learning and Literacy Branch of the Province of Manitoba funds eighty agencies and organizations who provide a continuum of adult learning services in Manitoba. There are adult literacy and learning centres located in all regions of Manitoba including First Nations and Francophone communities.

For a complete list of Certified Adult Learning and Literacy Centres visit the directory at: <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ael/all/directory/index.html>

Literacy Partners of Manitoba hosts the LEARN Line with support from the Adult Learning and Literacy branch.



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- ✓ Maintains a library of literacy resources, reports, and research materials
- ✓ Offers workshops & training in plain language and related topics
- ✓ Hosts literacy events and fundraisers
- ✓ Administers grants and bursaries for learners and practitioners
- ✓ Publishes learner & instructor writing in Write On! Magazine twice a year
- ✓ Empowers and engages adults in continuous learning through networks and strategic partnerships

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