

The Centre for Family Literacy is dedicated to helping Alberta grow and prosper.



# The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

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“When language does not develop in the context of caring relationships, we lose the beauty and meaning that words can convey.”

Dr. Bruce Perry,  
2005



## Centre Announces New Honourary Chair

The Centre for Family Literacy is proud to announce that Dr. Eric Newell, Chancellor of the University of Alberta and former Chairman and CEO of Syncrude Canada Ltd., is our new Honourary Chair, championing the cause of family literacy in Alberta.

Dr. Newell is an Officer of the Order of Canada, Member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, Chairman of CAREERS: The Next Generation Foundation, and a member of numerous corporate and community boards. He is well known for his

efforts to strengthen the relationship between education and business and played a key role in implementing literacy programs for Syncrude employees.

The Centre is delighted to have a person of such stature as our Honourary Chair. Dr. Newell is a staunch advocate for literacy and will be an excellent spokesperson for family literacy in our province.

“He is a strong figure in the corporate and academic world,” Maureen Sanders said of Dr. Newell. “We look forward to working with him to help build, develop and improve literacy in Alberta.”

“I am honoured to be asked to serve in this capacity,” said Dr. Newell. “Initiatives that endeavor to remove or at least lower those barriers related to literacy will benefit anyone and everyone who has made a commitment to lifelong learning.”

## Books for Babies

Books for Babies is a program for parents and their young babies, up to one year. The focus is not on teaching babies to read, but on parents supporting their children’s literacy development and on strengthening parent-child bonds. Literacy begins at birth, and it is never too early – or too late – to read and talk with your child.

Did you know that the brain of a toddler is more active than that of a college student, and the first years are critical to a child’s brain and overall development? Reading and talking with babies are important sources of stimulation for the baby brain.

Children’s early experiences – either positive or negative – have a decisive impact on the way their brains develop. A safe, loving and stimulating environment provides the right start for all children.



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## Second Anniversary for Alberta Prairie C.O.W.

Over the past two years, residents of communities across Alberta have seen a strange looking black and white bus parked on their streets. The Alberta Prairie C.O.W. Bus, which is painted to look like a Holstein cow, has traveled throughout the province promoting family literacy to more than 24,000 children and adults in 180 communities.

The bus has been as far north as Rainbow Lake and south to Coaldale and Taber. It has visited urban and rural communities including Hutterite Colonies, First Nation and Métis Settlements. It has created a stir wherever it has travelled, and has been greeted with incredible enthusiasm.

“We visited three times! This time was just as nice as the first time.”

Parent

An amazing 800 community agencies have partnered to support the visit of the bus. Each community, working with staff from the Centre for Family Literacy, develops programs around the buses' two-day visit that uniquely fits its needs.

In addition, a visit from the Alberta Prairie C.O.W. Bus leaves a permanent gift for the community in the form of a small Legacy Library containing approximately 100 children's books with an emphasis on Canadian authors and Aboriginal stories. These libraries have been accepted with great enthusiasm. "This is more books than we add to our entire collection in a whole year," said one librarian.

*This project is funded by Alberta Advanced Education, Alberta Lottery Fund, National Literacy Secretariat of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Petro-Canada, The Calgary Foundation, United Way "Working together in Alberta".*



## Books for Babies *Continued from page 1*

A nurturing and language-rich environment helps children develop their social and communication skills, including language and literacy, as well as their overall resiliency and ability to deal with life's challenges.

When a baby smiles, coos and makes noises, he is communicating. When her eyes light up as she looks at bright colours and pictures of other babies in books, we can see that she is responding to such stimuli. Babies are born to learn, and parents are their children's first – and most important – teachers.

The Books for Babies program alerts parents to all of these things. To lay the foundation for language and literacy development, and all future learning, parents need to talk, sing, rhyme and read with their babies. No special educational toys or programs are needed.

Each family in the program receives 4 quality children's books thus ensuring that children - who might not otherwise have them - have books to explore from an early age. Children without exposure to print and books can be up to two years behind their peers when they start school.

Books for Babies is delivered to Edmonton families who are referred by partner agencies.

*This program is funded by CIBC World Markets Children's Miracle Foundation, Edmonton Journal, Raise-a-Reader, United Way of the Alberta Capital Region.*



## Edmonton Celebrated Family Literacy Day

Family Literacy Day was launched at the *Alberta's Next Generation Breakfast* with Mayor Stephen Mandel giving the keynote address. Business, government and community leaders learned the impact of having four out of ten Albertans struggle with literacy. On a brighter note, they also learned how family literacy programs and initiatives help reduce that number.

Partnering with the Edmonton Public Library, Royal Alberta Museum, and Art Gallery of Alberta, a variety of programs were offered on Friday, Saturday and Sunday so that Family Literacy Day became Family Literacy Week!



*Jim Hole (left) presenting Legacy Library to Brad Seneca from Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society*

The Library launched Talespinners "Let's All Read Together," a family literacy kit that was a collaborative project between the Centre and the National Film Board.

The Edmonton Literacy C.O.W. bus and the Alberta Prairie C.O.W. bus toured the City making stops in the Caenarvon, Balwin and Calder communities.

The Alberta Prairie C.O.W. also visited the Royal

Alberta Museum. The museum staff planned family literacy activities throughout their galleries and gave away free *i spy shapes and patterns* activity books.

During the C.O.W. Bus visit to the museum, a special ceremony was held to celebrate Family Literacy Day. Jim Hole was on hand to present Legacy Libraries to KARA Family Support Centre and to Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. Mr. Hole's mother, the late Honourable Dr. Lois Hole, launched the C.O.W. Bus two years ago.

Family Literacy Day was a great success. We hope that by building awareness of the key role that families play in supporting literacy, every day will be family literacy day.

## Family Literacy Quiz

*(The answers are found in the Books for Babies article.)*

1. Babies are born ready to learn.
2. It is not necessary to begin reading to your children until they are 6 months old.
3. A toddler's brain is less active than that of a college student.
4. The first year of life is critical to overall development.
5. Babies like bright colours and pictures of other babies in books.
6. Children need special help and specific educational toys and programs to develop foundations for literacy and learning.
7. Intellectual stimulation is important to babies.

*True or False?*

## Bill's Story

Bill is a 68-year-old farmer with level 1 literacy skills. He went to Grade 6 at the country one-room school nearby until he was needed to help his father on the family farm.

Bill knows his farm business inside out – he and his wife Pearl always talked everything through at the kitchen table over cups of coffee. Pearl handled all the bookkeeping, banking and correspondence until she died two years ago from cancer.

Bill is now struggling with all the literacy tasks involved with running the farm. He also wants to write the birthday and Christmas cards to his children, grandchildren and friends that Pearl used to take care of. This fall Bill decided to get help and was given a volunteer tutor at the Centre. Before Christmas, Bill and his tutor worked on messages he copied into the Christmas cards he wrote and sent for the first time on his own.

## Alberta Literacy Statistics

The most recent survey released by Statistics Canada shows that four out of ten adult Albertans do not have the literacy skills required to function in today's society.

The Alberta statistics revealed that 14% of our adult population is at level 1 – the lowest level. They are unable to read a bedtime story to their children. A further 26% are at level 2 which means they can only deal with material that is simple and clearly laid out.

The discouraging news is the number of people at level 1 and 2 has increased over the past nine years. The 1994 survey found that 33% of Albertans were at levels 1 and 2 and the 2003 survey found 40% at those levels.

"Some have estimated that Alberta needs 1 million new workers to handle all of the work projected over the next decade," said Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel.

**“We all know that new jobs will require higher literacy skills to facilitate rapid changes in technology – limited literacy all but shuts a person out of this future.”**

Edmonton Mayor Stephen Mandel

It is critical that we all advocate for a strong commitment from all levels of government to increase literacy levels.

## Legacy Program Begins

In our August 2005 Newsletter we announced that the Centre was part of a pilot project developed by the Edmonton Community Foundation to support organizations in their efforts to build endowment funds.

Over the past several months, we have been working with Charles Nunn to develop a program that will provide a variety of ways for individuals and families to support the Centre in their long-range planning.

Periodically, in this newsletter, we will be sharing information about these gift planning techniques. We will also offer small informational sessions where you will have the opportunity to meet and ask questions of Charles Nunn and our staff. We hope these articles and sessions will provide you with useful information that you can use when meeting with your own professional advisors.

Should an individual or family make the decision to include the Centre for Family Literacy in their plans, they will become part of our newly created Legacy for Literacy Club.

If you would like to know more about this subject or if you now qualify for membership in the Legacy for Literacy Club please contact Donna Lemieux at the Centre for Family Literacy.

## Everyone Counts in the 2006 Census

On Tuesday, May 16, take part in a new Canadian tradition and "count yourself in!" online at [www.census2006.ca](http://www.census2006.ca)

## Literacy Develops in Families First

The Centre for Family literacy is dedicated to helping Alberta grow and prosper. Our innovative programs, training and research help Alberta families achieve what they imagine - improved education, jobs and health.

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