

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



The Centre for Family Literacy Centre Page

March 2009

Travelling Alberta with the Family Literacy Message

Alberta encompasses over 660,000 square kilometers, and the Centre for Family Literacy's Alberta Prairie Classroom on Wheels (C.O.W.) bus has traveled to its farthest reaches, from Cardston in the south to Rainbow Lake and Fort Chipewyan in the North.

Now in its fifth year, the "C.O.W. bus" has made over 400 community visits and delivered programming to over 25,000 children and their families. On the bus, staff interact with parents and children to share and model parent-child interaction and activities that support early literacy development. *Continued on next page*



“Research shows the earlier parents become involved in their children's literacy practices, the more profound the results and the longer-lasting the effects.”

*Mullis, R. L.,
Mullis, A.K.,
Cornille, T.A.,
Ritchson, A. D. and
Sullender, M. S.
2004.*

*Early literacy outcomes
and parent involvement.
Tallahassee, Fl:
Florida State University.*

2009 Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Award Winners Recognized

Over 200 people attended the Centre's annual Leading with Literacy Breakfast. Manmeet Bhullar, MLA for Calgary-Montrose and parliamentary assistant to the Alberta Minister of Advanced Education and Technology was the keynote speaker. Jim Hole was on hand to congratulate the winners of the Lois Hole Memorial Literacy Awards.

Colin DesJardine received the Adult Learner Award in recognition of the courage he demonstrated in stepping forward to ask for help to improve his literacy skills, and his commitment to staying with the program until he reaches his goals.



Colin DesJardine and Jim Hole

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When the Prairie C.O.W. bus comes to town, the visit becomes an opportunity to promote participation in local family literacy programs and to leave communities with a Legacy Library of 50 quality children's books. The C.O.W. bus visits are coordinated by local organizers, in consultation with C.O.W. bus staff, and involve and strengthen local community partnerships around the common goal of family literacy.

A visit to the C.O.W. bus shows families that literacy is important and fun. On a recent visit a parent commented, "to this day my son still regularly talks about the fun day that he had on the C.O.W. Bus".

By delivering a family literacy project that travels throughout the province, the Centre is able to provide ideas for homemade and low-cost literacy activities to families and practitioners who often work largely in isolation.

“The C.O.W. Bus advertises literacy in a way that catches everyone's eye.”

Some of the highlights of the past year have been first-time visits to the isolated Aboriginal communities of Trout Lake, Peerless Lake and Small Boys' Mountain Cree Camp and to a number of Hutterite colonies in the Brooks area. However, no matter what the size and location of the community that we visit, families leave the bus excited and enthusiastic about sharing the love of learning with each other.

Alberta Prairie C.O.W. Bus is funded by Alberta Advanced Education and Technology, Community Programs and United Way "Working Together in Alberta"

Lois Hole Award Winners *Continued from page 1*

Born and raised in Canada, Colin's courageous journey began in March 2006 when he came of to the Centre for help with his math skills. Soon he realized he also needed to vastly improve his literacy skills in order to achieve his goal of getting his level 4 power engineering certification. When he first came to the Centre he had trouble with basic addition and subtraction and his math was at a grade two or three level. He now is learning algebra and working through more complex problems in addition to making huge strides in his reading levels. Colin used to have panic attacks at the prospect of taking conceptual skills tests at work. Now he is signing up for courses and going out of his way to learn more and take those tests. His intellectual confidence has grown in leaps and bounds in a short period of time. After discovering the joy of literacy, he's now taken up reading in his spare time at home.



Randy Boissonnault

The Community Leadership Award was presented to Randy Boissonnault for his outstanding commitment to family literacy in Alberta. Randy has contributed immensely to the work of the Centre for Family Literacy as a Board member, Chair and Past Chair of the organization. In addition to his work with the Centre, Randy represented the Alberta literacy field on a Steering Committee put together by the Minister of Advanced Education to review the shape and scope of advanced education in the province for the next 15 years. He also facilitated an Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills that presented a national literacy strategy to the Federal Government. In his time with the Centre, Randy helped usher in an era of significant growth assisting to build an organization that now serves over 5,000 participants each year. Randy has volunteered thousands of hours to the cause of literacy locally, provincially, and nationally and it is for his major contributions to the field that he is received this distinguished award.

Boys Love to Learn!

“Yet, even with such marvelous minds and curious instincts, they generally lag behind their female peers...”

Boys can be amazing scholars, especially if they are interested in the topic. This fact is obvious to anyone who has had the pleasure of listening to a young boy recite the statistics of his favourite sports team, the details of natural phenomena or the amazing powers of a video game hero. Yet, even with such marvelous minds and curious instincts, they generally lag behind their female peers in language acquisition, reading scores and early school success. While generalized statistics cannot be applied to all boys, it would be ill-advised to ignore the alarming drop-out rates of boys, the higher number of boys identified as being at-risk of not achieving scholastic success and their tendency, more often than girls, to declare themselves non-readers.

Barry MacDonald, author and founder of MentoringBoys.com, has put serious thought into the issue of boys and literacy. Here are just a few of his suggestions on how to get boys excited about reading:*

- **Begin with books that boys choose** – and dialogue with them about their choices.
- **Reach out to the reluctant** – find interesting books for them at early ages.
- **Make literacy a social affair** – the dialogue and social interaction that emerge during social gatherings support the development of literacy.
- **Read to boys** – listening to stories will help boys develop more complex language structures.
- **Boys love humour** – even if it is not your kind of humour, remember to laugh with them.
- **Electronic literacy is popular with boys** – try to find a balance but do not ignore these important learning tools and the complex problem solving skills that emerge when boys use electronic mediums.

Barry will be delivering a keynote address and full day session at the Centre for Family Literacy, Training Institute in August 2009.

* Found at: www.mentoringboys.com/literacy.html

Circle the Date

Thursday, May 21, 2009

The Second Annual

An Evening of Wine & Words

At the

Fairmont Hotel Macdonald, Empire Ballroom

With guest speakers

Jim Cuddy & Greg Keelor of Blue Rodeo

• 6:00 p.m. cocktails • 7:00 p.m. dinner

Order early as this event sold out last year.

For more information, call 780.421.7323 or email donna_lemieux@famlit.ca

Family Literacy Day 2009

Thanks to everyone who braved the very cold temperatures Saturday, January 24 to participate in the first-ever Family Literacy Day World Record Attempt!



The numbers are still coming in, but at last count Alberta had over 7,300 participants.

Edmonton Eskimo, Chris Ciezki reading to participants.

Online donations to the Centre can be made through CanadaHelps.org



The Centre for Family Literacy gratefully acknowledges the ongoing support of the following:



Centre Launches New Library System

Until recently, tutors, students and staff using the Centre's library signed out books using the old method of stamping cards. This outdated system did not allow students to become comfortable and familiar with the system used at public libraries. There was also no searchable database of library materials; you had to physically search the shelves for items.

A donation from the Rotary Club of Edmonton provided funding to purchase new library software that has automated our system. Patrons will now use a library card and electronic check out. Using any web server, they are able to search for books using our on-line catalogue and access their own account.

Automating the library also helps library staff keep better statistics on the library - tracking what books are circulating and how many people are using our library.

The automation process involved the creation of individual records for the over 3000 items in the library including workbooks, fiction books and non-fiction books at different reading levels, great for students to practice their new skills. There is also tutor material designed specifically to help tutors in their teaching methods.

Planning Today will Help Build for Tomorrow

We all make annual donations to our favourite charities, but do we think about how we could assist them in the future, so they can continue to address the important issues that mean so much to us?

There are many ways that you can make plans now to provide support to these charities in the future. Consult with your financial planning advisor who can assist you in determining the best way to include charitable giving as part of your plan. Some options you might explore include:

1. Leave a gift in your will for the not-for-profit organizations that made a difference in your life.
2. Use assets for your gift such as term deposits, real estate, or insurance. Such gifts may even provide tax savings.
3. Name a not-for-profit as a beneficiary of your RRSP, RRIF or pension.
4. Name your favourite not-for-profit as the beneficiary of an existing or paid-up life insurance policy.
5. Purchase a new life insurance policy naming your favourite not-for-profit as the beneficiary.

If you would prefer to receive the Centre Page newsletter via email rather than by mail, please send us an email at info@famlit.ca. Please reference Centre Page in the subject line.

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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