

# Festival of Literacies

## SPRING NEWSLETTER 2007

The Festival is wrapping up its current project at the end of March 2007. Like many other groups, we have lost our main source of project funding with the end of the Federal/Provincial grants program. But we remain hopeful and are busy looking for other sources of funds to continue our work of building bridges between practice, research, theory and policy.



Festival of Literacies  
Festival de l'Alpha

[www.literaciesOISE.ca](http://www.literaciesOISE.ca)

**Good news:** The journal *Literacies: researching practice, practising research* is relocating to make the Festival its home base, starting April 1st. We look forward to working more closely with Tannis Atkinson (editor) and Tracey Mollins (publisher).



Ningwakwe Press Board Members joined Janice Brant to launch her book *The Aboriginal Literacy Curriculum Tool Box* on November 28, 2006.

### Research in practice Podcasts!

Tracey Mollins is creating exciting podcasts about the highs and lows of research in practice. Thanks to funding from the Adult Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning, we have stunning podcasts about the research project, "Exploring Learners' Perspectives on Progress," featuring Nadine Sookermany and Susan Lefebvre. And in the interior of BC, Marina Niks has met with two practitioner-researchers Anne Docherty and Dee McRae to record their thoughts. Tracey is doing a final podcast with Judi Snively and Fran Zimmerman, practitioners at St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program, on their work about learning disabilities and what they are learning with Pat Hatt.

### UPCOMING FESTIVAL OF LITERACIES COURSES 2007 & 2008:

**Special Topics: *Is Learning Working? Revisiting Workplace Training***  
(AEC1131)

**Instructor: Peter Waterhouse**  
September - December 2007  
Wednesdays 5:30 - 8:30 pm OISE/UT

**Special Topics: *An Introduction to New Literacy Studies in Adult Education***  
(AEC1131)

**Instructor: Guy Ewing**  
January - April 2008  
Online course: using OISE/UT's  
WebKF website

The Festival of Literacies has been doing face-to-face and on-line workshops on research in practice over the past two years. We have learned how much practitioners value time to step back and reflect on their work, and begin to learn what research can offer to practice. We also learned that practitioners have trouble finding the time to do this, and appreciate opportunities to step back in this way.

### **“Yes I can do this.....” A Three Part Centra Workshop**

This interactive series, offered in February 2007, was designed to provide practitioners across Ontario with the opportunity to examine in greater depth issues and questions pertaining to their literacy work. Together with Guy Ewing, Susan Lefebvre, Joy Lehmann and Sheila Stewart, participants shared ways in which they explore, reflect on and learn from their everyday literacy experiences. Guest presenters Corry Wink, Nadine Sookermany, Tannis Atkinson, Judy Perry and Cheryl Reid introduced various methods and strategies of professional inquiry that greatly enriched the overall workshop conversation. They presented journaling, focus groups, art-based activities, and the sharing of personal stories as practical and creative ways to delve further into literacy-related issues and to integrate innovative approaches into literacy practice.

**The following messages tell us more about how participants felt about this workshop series:**

*I really appreciated the work that had gone into putting these sessions together. I know that on-line facilitation is not easy...you made it look seamless...so welcoming and honouring of people. I think this went a long way towards allowing people to open up and create a safe place to talk about what some might feel are sensitive things to talk about.*

*All the sessions were helpful, and I'm thinking of using Tannis's art as a form of research for a research project that I'm involved in. You have been like a lovely massage in the midst of much tension and busyness. I look forward to other sessions. It would be nice to see something like this offered on a regular basis. As a practitioner, it's easy to get safe and chatting with all of you gave me so much energy.*



### **Be the Change**

(Dawna Lee, Newfoundland)

This graphic was used as part of a process to develop a literacy network in Newfoundland and Labrador. It illustrates the values people across the province wanted the network to embody.

Dawna wrote a description of each element, and of the process, for the national project, A Framework for Research in Practice in Adult Literacy in Canada.

## Looking in Looking Out: Making Time for Reflection in Our Literacy Work

*Literacy Link South Central (LLSC), London*

In collaboration with LLSC, Guy Ewing and Joy Lehmann developed a workshop that began with literacy workers' own personal reflections about their work and moved to sharing and reflecting on literacy issues within the greater community. Sharon Cowan, a resource guest, described the process of reflection and learning she used while working on a LLSC Literacy Works Project that focused on special needs. She emphasized that literacy learning is played out in different ways in diverse community settings.

The following are some insights from the participants:



- ❑ It is important to take time to think about your relationship with the learner.
- ❑ All literacy practitioners struggle with how to best help their learners achieve their goals.
- ❑ Review your intake process to ensure that learners are not being frightened away.
- ❑ Take time to reflect on what you do every day.
- ❑ Reflection is an integral part of the learning process.

## Reflection in Action: a workshop

*Thunder Bay, Ontario*

In December, Sarah Dermer, Guy Ewing and Nadine Sookermany facilitated a workshop called "Reflection to Action" at the Literacy Northwest Annual Conference. Sarah, who works at Action Read in Guelph, and Nadine, who works at Parkdale Project Read in Toronto, led a discussion about research-in-practice as both opportunity and challenge for literacy practitioners. Both facilitators were involved in a research study called "Exploring Learner's Perspectives on Progress" which looked at how learners view progress. (See podcast announcement.) Guy engaged participants in an exercise on questioning assumptions, an essential aspect of research and reflective practice.



## **Nurturing Learning within Ourselves,**

*Festival of Literacies Workshop, Toronto*



"I could really relate to Tom's recounting his various moments of "ignition" by new ideas, materials and experiences. Those kinds of catalysts drive fresh learning."

"I particularly liked the "Wampum String" activity. It was a wonderful idea that effectively opens sharing, and provides a binding experience for all participants."

In late November 2006, Guy Ewing, Joy Lehmann and Sheila Stewart facilitated a day-long event titled "Nurturing Learning within Ourselves." Literacy workers from all parts of the province gathered with guest presenters involved in both literacy work and research in practice projects to share their stories and experiences. Participants reflected on the many kinds of learning and thinking they engage in as part of their literacy work. Presenters focused on ways in which they make space for their own learning, exploration and professional growth in a number of different areas including the following:

- Equity
- Violence and Learning
- Community Learning Circles
- Numeracy
- Learner Writing
- Perspectives on Progress
- Tutor-learner Relationship

Here are some comments shared with us at the end of the day...

*This has been an excellent "grounding" exercise – a reminder that literacy is more than learning the mechanics of reading and writing – it is about allowing students to communicate, be heard, feel safe, exercise critical thinking and be ready to change – all in an environment of support and openness.*

*"Empowering the Spirit" would be a suitable phrase for the day's event. A real rejuvenation for me to listen to the passions and commitment and dedication of these practitioners here today.*

*I am and have been feeling powerless with recent events at my school and with governments. An event like this gives you re-focus to what really matters and the very realization that we are not alone and we are doing what really matters. I very much appreciated being here.*



### ***Too Busy to Hear Myself Think***

*Labour Education Centre (LEC) Workshop, Toronto*


In July 2006, LEC invited union and community partners to participate in a process of visioning to explore the role of literacy within their own organization and, more specifically, the effectiveness and relevance of their literacy program for learners and other stakeholders in the wider community. During the workshop, participants engaged in passionate discussion about literacy both within LEC and also within the labour movement as a whole.



### ***Making Our Own Books***

*OISE/University of Toronto, Toronto*

In February 2007, Heather Hicks led a workshop where we explored bookmaking as a creative practice and as an activity that literacy practitioners can do themselves or with learners. Practitioners from Hamilton, Belleville and Toronto came together to think about books and what they can be. They also had the opportunity to create their own books.



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**Festival of Literacies / Festival de l'Alpha**

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