



## **Canada's Premiers Announce 2018 Literacy Award Recipients**

**July 18, 2018** – Canada's Premiers today announced the recipients of the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award. Presented in each province and territory, the Award celebrates outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

The recipients of the 2018 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

Red Deer Public Library Adult Literacy Program – Alberta  
Sara Grant – British Columbia  
Julie Black – Manitoba  
Suna Dau Yath – Newfoundland and Labrador  
Chantal Pelletier – New Brunswick  
Tyler Kerr – New Brunswick  
Diane Brule – Northwest Territories  
Samia Eldik – Nova Scotia  
Elizabeth Tunnuq – Nunavut  
TR Leger School of Adult, Alternative and Continuing Education – Ontario  
Alex Watts – Prince Edward Island  
Édith Loualou – Québec  
Judy Craig – Saskatchewan  
Isabelle Salesse – Yukon

“Literacy is a fundamental skill that helps unleash one’s potential and is crucial to the future prosperity of the Canadian economy,” said Brian Gallant, Premier of New Brunswick and incoming Chair of the Council of the Federation. “On behalf of my colleagues, Canada’s Premiers, we are pleased to congratulate the 2018 recipients of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award. Through tireless efforts and commitments to literacy, these individuals and organizations play an important role in strengthening our social fabric and our economy here in Canada.”

Premiers recognize literacy is an important part of every Canadian’s ability to participate as a full and active citizen in all areas of society. Created in 2004, the Award celebrates adult learners who undertake literacy training, as well as the valuable contributions made by Canadians in the field of literacy, including family, Aboriginal, health, workplace, and community literacy. The Award is presented to learners, educators, volunteers, community organizations, and businesses in each province and territory.

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Each Award recipient receives a certificate, signed by the Premier of their province or territory, as well as a Council of the Federation Literacy Award medallion.

The Council of the Federation comprises all 13 provincial and territorial Premiers. It enables Premiers to work collaboratively, form closer ties, foster constructive relationships among governments, and show leadership on important issues that matter to Canadians.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

### **2018 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients**

#### **Red Deer Public Library Adult Literacy Program – Alberta**

The Red Deer Public Library Adult Literacy Program has served English language and adult literacy learners in the community for over 30 years. The Program is currently providing learning opportunities to approximately 360 adult foundational learners through volunteer tutoring. With 215 tutors, it has the largest volunteer pool in the region. Because of the commitment of staff and volunteer tutors, adult learners are able to improve their reading and writing skills, become more confident, and ultimately improve their lives by continuing in further learning and/or gaining meaningful employment. The Program has demonstrated responsiveness to the needs of the community, including by adapting its programs to meet the learning needs of Syrian refugees and other newcomers. In addition to breaking down barriers to learning, the Program offers opportunities that facilitate newcomer participation in the larger community. By connecting learners to other service organizations and residents, the Program has demonstrated itself to be a community leader that promotes inclusivity in society for adult literacy learners in Red Deer.

#### **Sara Grant – British Columbia**

Sara Grant has championed literacy for over two decades as a children's librarian, including 19 years as Youth Services Manager for Surrey Libraries. Committed to improving children's literacy, Sara has helped establish innovative programs like *Curiosity Corner*, a hands-on station where families can develop their digital literacy skills and *Daddy Storytime*, a program that supports men to take a more active role in their children's early literacy. Sara has formed partnerships and advocated for staff training to ensure Surrey's diverse community needs are met and that families receive high-quality, public library services. Sara and her team continue to help children grow, develop and thrive by supporting creativity, encouraging discovery, celebrating the joy of reading and fostering community connectedness through the public library.

#### **Julie Black – Manitoba**

Julie Black, a single mother raising seven children, has overcome many obstacles including low literacy skills. Julie's life journey includes moving in and out of the Child Welfare system, experiencing abuse, child exploitation, trauma and addiction. Julie was surrounded by adults who had very poor literacy skills. She did not complete elementary school. Julie was determined to be the one to end the cycle of abuse, addiction and lack of education that plagued her family. By attending literacy classes, Julie has made significant skills gains in literacy, numeracy and computer use, which have increased her independence and confidence. Julie's goal is to become a Trauma and Addictions Counsellor. She has hope for a brighter future for herself, and more importantly, for her family.

### **Suna Dau Yath – Newfoundland and Labrador**

Suna Dau Yath has successfully overcome numerous literacy barriers. Born in Sudan, she began her education in Arabic, using an oil lamp and sometimes a streetlight to see her schoolwork. Upon arrival in Canada, she enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) training, improving her English by going to the library and reading books to her children. Upon completing ESL training, she successfully completed Adult Basic Education courses and graduated from high school. Suna is a positive role model to her family and a community leader in both Newfoundland and Labrador and Africa. She is an active member of her local community center, a volunteer at her children's school and an advocate for her fellow Sudanese immigrants. Suna plans to continue her education and pursue post-secondary education.

### **Chantal Pelletier – New Brunswick**

Chantal Pelletier quit school at age 15, not because she was disinterested in learning, but because she was bullied. She began working that same year but without a high school diploma she did not have many opportunities for advancement. She therefore decided to follow her dreams and go back to school, graduate, and go to college. Chantal is currently in an adult class in Saint-Basile, NB. She is working very hard and has managed to finish four grades in eight months. Returning to school has helped with her self-esteem, and she encourages and helps others in class. Now that she is on a new path, there is no doubt that Chantal will go very far in life.

### **Tyler Kerr – New Brunswick**

During his school years, Tyler Kerr struggled with spelling, reading and writing, and lacked the motivation to graduate. He quit school with a grade nine education. Last year, Tyler decided to improve his situation and set himself up for success; he started classes in Saint John with the goal of achieving a General Educational Development (GED) Diploma. He worked hard and spent his spare time studying to finish as quickly as possible. In 2018, Tyler passed the GED and received his diploma. Since then, he has volunteered his time to help other students prepare for the GED tests, always encouraging them to work hard. In the future, Tyler plans to attend New Brunswick Community College so that he can gain meaningful employment and make a positive contribution to society.

### **Diane Brule – Northwest Territories**

Diane Brule is a mature student from Yellowknife, who, after years away, returned to school for adult literacy classes to upgrade her education by enrolling in English, mathematics and science. Despite personal obstacles, she persisted in her studies and won top awards in English, science, work experience and attendance. Diane distinguished herself by putting in extra time researching topics of interest and worked hard to enrich her vocabulary and improve her understanding of science concepts. Diane is an inspiration and support to classmates and has shown much improvement in her capacity to express her thoughts and ideas. She is interested in Indigenous literature and history, enjoys reading to her granddaughter, and is considering a career in social work.

### **Samia Eldik – Nova Scotia**

Samia arrived in Canada as a refugee from Sudan in 2003. As a child, she was responsible for looking after her siblings while her parents worked and did not have the opportunity to attend school. She faced many challenges after arriving in Canada, including learning English and caring for five children after the death of her husband. In 2013, they became Canadian citizens. Samia promised herself “If I ever get the chance to learn things, I will do my best.” Samia did get the chance, thanks to the Halifax Community Learning Network. She attained her High School Diploma through the Nova Scotia School for Adult Learning in 2017 but she is not yet done. She is planning to attend the Nova Scotia Community College in fall 2018 to become a Continuing Care Assistant.

### **Elizabeth Tunnuq – Nunavut**

Elizabeth Tunnuq has been an Inuktitut language specialist at Rachel Arngammaktiq Elementary School in Baker Lake for over a decade. Improving student literacy levels is her primary goal, and she sees results by working with Elders, teachers and learning coaches. She is a strong promoter of Inuktitut and encourages others to speak it as well. Elizabeth has organized the new Inuktitut guided reading resources in the school and shows the educators how to use them to help improve student literacy. Elizabeth supports student curriculum with a focus on Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (Inuit traditional knowledge). She also encourages literacy growth in children and youth outside of class time by teaching traditional Inuit cultural activities like throat singing and drum dancing. Elizabeth’s enthusiasm and commitment to literacy development is inspiring.

### **TR Leger School of Adult, Alternative and Continuing Education – Ontario**

TR Leger School is the adult, alternative and continuing education arm of the Upper Canada District School Board, which spans eight rural counties in eastern Ontario. The school has delivered the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) program for over 20 years. In response to the increasing need for digital skills in the modern workplace, the LBS program develops resources and provides relevant, practical training to help students continue their educational pursuits or find employment. TR Leger School serves approximately 450 adult literacy students annually, including a class in the St. Lawrence Valley Correctional Facility. A pilot project to develop partnerships with community hubs in smaller rural communities will be launched in September 2018, which will address the growing need for educational support where transportation is a barrier and Internet service may be poor or unavailable.

### **Alex Watts – Prince Edward Island**

Alex Watts grew up in Prince Edward Island and left high school at a young age. After struggling with completing his GED, in 2017 he wrote and passed his Math GED, completing a journey that had begun years prior. Buoyed by his GED success and increased literacy skills, Alex remained committed to continuous learning by enrolling in and completing three upgrading classes. He emerged as a leader within the classroom and through his experiences, developed an interest in doing research and the judicial process. Alex applied to, and was recently accepted into, a Legal Administration program for the upcoming academic year. Alex epitomizes adult learning: he is engaged, resilient, curious and ready to tackle any learning challenges.

### **Édith Loualou – Québec**

Unlike her brothers and sisters, Édith Loualou did not get the chance to attend school in her home country. Accompanied by her husband and children, she moved to Québec in 2012, but having received no prior education, she was saddened that she could not help her children. She quickly came to understand the importance of literacy and with determination, she started developing her literacy skills. Édith developed her reading and writing skills impressively fast and she can now understand communications sent home by her children's school. As she continues to progress, she will be better able to support her children's education. One of her proudest accomplishments was successfully completing her Canadian citizenship exam, something which would have been impossible for her before she began her studies.

### **Judy Craig – Saskatchewan**

Judy Craig is a Family Literacy Leader who has contributed to building and strengthening family literacy development in Saskatchewan. As a result of focused efforts over her 35-year career at the Regina Public Library, she has played a significant role in moving family and early literacy services forward. Judy has demonstrated dedication and passion in engaging families, educating them on the importance of establishing good family literacy habits and sharing information about available library resources to support family literacy. In addition to her work with children and families, she has spent time providing services to newcomers and adults in need of literacy development. As a lifelong learner, Judy has continued to grow professionally throughout her career attending many literacy development workshops.

### **Isabelle Salessé – Yukon**

Throughout her extensive career in Yukon, Isabelle Salessé's work has focused on literacy in French in minority language environments, grounded in the concept that we are all lifelong learners. She has supported and contributed in the development of French literacy programs and resources both in Yukon and nationally. For many years, she managed the Association franco-yukonnaise (AFY) training and employment department, later becoming the organization's Executive Director. She consolidated a one-stop-shop to meet the French-language needs of adults and families in adult education, literacy, and pre-employment preparation. She has also taken on leadership positions with national organizations that promote French literacy outside Québec. Studies initiated by Salessé have led to the creation of tools still used today by Francophone communities.

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