



Canada's Premiers Announce 2021 Literacy Award Recipients

OTTAWA, September 8, 2021 – On the occasion of International Literacy Day, Canada's Premiers today announced the recipients of the 17th annual Council of the Federation Literacy Award. Presented in each province and territory, the Award celebrates exceptional achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

The recipients of the 2021 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) – Alberta
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society – British Columbia
Fatima Malika Auktaeva – Manitoba
Ashley King – Newfoundland and Labrador
Bob Stranach – New Brunswick
Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife – Northwest Territories
Debra Toney – Nova Scotia
Nunia Anoe – Nunavut
Summer Burton – Ontario
Ian Carr – Prince Edward Island
Yelli Coulibaly – Québec
Family Resource Centre Swift Current Inc. – Saskatchewan
Vera Brown – Yukon

Literacy is a fundamental skill, one that is crucial to families and communities, as well as the prosperity of the Canadian economy. Premiers extend their congratulations to the recipients of the 2021 Council of the Federation Literacy Award. The hard work and achievements of this year's recipients are truly deserving of this special recognition.

Premiers recognize the importance of literacy in enabling participation 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, Indigenous, health, workplace, and community literacy. The Award is presented to learners, educators, volunteers, community organizations, and businesses in each province and territory.

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.

For more information:

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

2021 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients

The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) – Alberta

Operating in Calgary since 1988, The Immigrant Education Society (TIES) offers language training, employment training, and settlement assistance to adult learners. TIES offers many programs that have a positive impact on the literacy, foundational learning, and essential skills of adult learners while consistently raising awareness about literacy and foundational learning in its community. It also serves as a collaborative hub and information centre. TIES is committed to reducing barriers so that learners can access programs and services while partnering with other community organizations to provide the best service to learners in their community.

Pacific Immigrant Resources Society – British Columbia

Pacific Immigrant Resources Society's (PIRS) mission is to ensure that immigrant and refugee women and their young children can participate fully in life in British Columbia, including through education, labour and everything community life has to offer. PIRS places a priority on responding to the needs of new learners and increasing accessibility in the community, offering English-literacy programs with childcare services and baby-friendly classrooms. PIRS supports learners' overall well-being by helping them to develop social and emotional connections; mental health support and trauma-informed practice are main components in all its programs. PIRS demonstrates outstanding leadership through innovative partnerships, including through its "train the trainer" digital literacy program and by teaching other service providers to apply trauma-informed perspectives and practices to their work.

Fatima Malika Auktaeva – Manitoba

Fatima Malika Auktaeva entered Stevenson-Britannia Adult Learning Centre as a literacy student in 2019/2020. She successfully transitioned into the adult learning centre and graduated in June 2021 with a mature student high school diploma. Malika came to Canada as a refugee from Tajikistan. Her story is one of resiliency in the face of extraordinary trauma and adversity – a single mother of four children, Malika is a tenacious, self-motivated learner who volunteers in her community and helps her peers with academic and personal concerns. Following her time in the high school program, Malika returned to volunteer in the literacy program. Malika's goal is to become an educational assistant, find reliable employment and be a role model to help her children realize their full potential.

Ashley King – Newfoundland and Labrador

Ashley King has overcome tremendous adversity to create a better life for herself and her family. Enduring a turbulent youth, she left school in Grade 7 and faced a series of hardships in the subsequent years. In 2018, she made the courageous decision to return to school after 17 years with the goal of having a career and being a positive role model for her young children. Though initially filled with anxiety, she excelled in her studies due to her positive attitude and determination to succeed. She is now a few credits away from obtaining her high school diploma, with plans to pursue post-secondary credentials in office administration. King describes her experience as life changing and is filled with hope for the future.

Bob Stranach – New Brunswick

Bob Stranach is an outstanding leader in the Central Valley Adult Learning Association Inc. and a source of inspiration for many who work and volunteer in the field of adult literacy. He grew up in a working-class family and his father impressed on him that learning is a gift, not to be taken for granted, and to be paid forward whenever the opportunity presented itself. Bob has been volunteering his time in support of adult literacy for more than 20 years. His devotion and dedication to adult learners cannot be fully expressed. Bob spends countless hours to ensure that each learner has the best learning experience possible. His ideas, research, and support are the cornerstone to the success of innumerable learners.

Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife – Northwest Territories

The Rainbow Coalition of Yellowknife (RCYK) is a fixture of support for 2SLGBTQQIPAA+ youth across the Northwest Territories. Their multi-faceted literacy work supports participants' development. RCYK promotes many forms of literacy through their programming, including academic learning through their homework club, cultural literacy through various sewing, beading and craft programming, health literacy through their advocacy work with the NWT and workshops for youth, as well as family literacy through the Little Rainbows program. RCYK also maintains an extensive library with books and other resources. A large impact of RCYK's literacy work is their promotion of inclusive and supportive language. Through their social media and traditional media outreach, they have helped NWT residents to broaden their knowledge of 2SLGBTQQIPAA+ history, current issues, and correct terminology.

Debra Toney – Nova Scotia

Born with spina bifida, Debra Toney never let her physical disabilities get in the way of her enjoyment of school. Debra struggled academically and dropped out after Grade 10. Her determination drove her to later return to obtain her high school diploma, after which she was diagnosed with a severe learning disability. With this new knowledge, and help from a local learning organization, Debra enrolled in the political science program at Acadia University. As she works towards her degree, Debra remains a force in the community where she advocates for Indigenous education and rights. She hopes to graduate within the next two years, study law and continue to support the Indigenous community.

Nunia Anoe – Nunavut

Nunia Anoe of Arviat is no stranger to the academic world. With over 30 years of experience, ranging from teaching elementary and high school to developing Inuktitut curriculum for the Nunavut Department of Education, Nunia is passionate about promoting Inuktitut to students across Nunavut. While her studies and work have taken her to different communities across the territory, she recognizes the importance of learning different dialects of Inuktitut to facilitate more meaningful communication with Elders, community members, students, and family. Dedicated to meeting students where they are at, and helping to strengthen students' Inuktitut language skills at all ages, Nunia embodies the qualities of a leader of literacy promotion. Nunia currently works as an elementary school teacher at Levi Angmak Elementary School in Arviat.

Summer Burton – Ontario

Summer Burton began her career in adult literacy in 2013 at Literacy Link South Central, a Literacy and Basic Skills Regional Network in London, Ontario. She has developed a reputation for innovation, developing curriculum and going above and beyond to meet the literacy needs of the adult learners, practitioners, organizations, and communities that she serves. Her love of play and game-based learning have driven her practice, such as using SMART basketballs to teach youth about math and statistics, applying Maker philosophy and tools to adult literacy, and developing soft-skills curriculum based on the principles of gamification. Summer is a skilled communicator, an outstanding webinar developer and presenter, and was instrumental in supporting the transition to on-line instruction at the onset of the pandemic.

Ian Carr – Prince Edward Island

As an educator and lifelong learner, Ian Carr has devoted his career to education. Retiring early from the classroom, Ian has worked with Workplace Learning PEI (WLPEI) for over twenty years. Since 2016, Ian has been an instructor at WLPEI's Workplace Essential Skills Program. The success of this program is in no small part due to Ian. When asked what he does, Ian responds that he "teach[es] people confidence". Ian's incredible skills as an educator, wisdom, professionalism, and sense of humour make him an effective learning coach and role model within the classroom. Ian's ability to accurately respond to individual learning needs has helped many learners reach their goals. From Ian's perspective, the world is a classroom rich with opportunities to make learning come alive.

Yelli Coulibaly – Québec

Yelli Coulibaly is a pre-secondary student at the LaSalle Adult Education Centre. Ms. Coulibaly, a 42-year-old mother of four, is an example of courage and perseverance. For two years now, she has successfully combined a return to school with full-time employment. Thanks to her efforts, Ms. Coulibaly has made progress in reading and writing, which has allowed her to increase her personal and professional autonomy and to better support her children in their schooling. Her continued commitment to her plan to return to school demonstrates she can achieve all her goals.

Family Resource Centre Swift Current Inc. – Saskatchewan

Family Resource Centre Swift Current Inc. (FRC) is a non-profit community-based organization with a mandate to support families and ensure that children are getting the best possible start in life. In collaboration with many community organizations, including the Southwest Literacy Committee in Swift Current, the FRC offers holistic programming which incorporates literacy development within their various programs. In the fall of 2020, the FRC expanded their programming to offer the 5-week Southwest Literacy Family Literacy Program which provided parents with specific strategies to support their child's literacy development and introduced them to the resources available at their local library. The FRC was innovative in their support of families during COVID-19, including dropping off kits which included books, craft supplies and puzzles.

Vera Brown – Yukon

Vera Brown is a lifelong Indigenous language educator and leader in adult literacy in Yukon. Vera inspires her community to enjoy learning their Southern Tutchone language by using simple, everyday vocabulary. At the age of 16, Vera left residential school and lived on the land with her grandmother, storyteller Mrs. Annie Ned, who taught her the Southern Tutchone language, culture and traditional skills. Vera started as a language teacher in the public school system; she taught the Southern Tutchone language to adult inmates to help them reconnect with their culture and supported Early Childhood Educators and community language development at Kwanlin Dün First Nation for over ten years. The impact her work has had on the preservation of the Southern Tutchone language is immeasurable.

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