



## **Canada's Premiers Announce 2022 Literacy Award Recipients**

**OTTAWA, September 8, 2022** – On the occasion of International Literacy Day, Canada's Premiers today announced the recipients of the 18<sup>th</sup> 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 2022 Council of the Federation Literacy Award are:

**Prospect Human Services Society** – Alberta  
**Margaret Sutherland** – British Columbia  
**Marilyn Freda Captain** – Manitoba  
**Krista Stephens** – Newfoundland and Labrador  
**Valarie Higgins** – New Brunswick  
**Jean-François Ouellette** – New Brunswick  
**Western Arctic Youth Collective** – Northwest Territories  
**Andrew Chacko** – Nova Scotia  
**Jeela Palluq-Cloutier** – Nunavut  
**Ontario's e-Channel Team** – Ontario  
**Sally Hitchcock** – Prince Edward Island  
**KidsFirst NORTH** – Saskatchewan  
**Donald Inverarity** – Yukon

“On behalf of Canada's Premiers, I am pleased to congratulate the recipients of the 2022 Council of the Federation Literacy Award,” said John Horgan, Premier of British Columbia and Chair of the Council of the Federation. “This year's recipients are truly deserving of this special recognition for their dedication and commitment to literacy.”

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.<sup>1</sup>

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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<sup>1</sup> Given the Québec general election taking place on October 3, 2022, Québec will announce its award recipient at a later date.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

### **2022 Council of the Federation Literacy Award Recipients**

#### **Prospect Human Services Society – Alberta**

Operating in Calgary for over 20 years, Prospect Human Services Society offers language training, employment training, support for new immigrants, and support for people with disabilities, mental health conditions or challenges, and those who are experiencing homelessness. Prospect offers programs that continue to make a positive impact on the literacy, foundational learning and essential skills of adult learners. Prospect consistently raises awareness about literacy and foundational learning in its community and serves as a collaborative and resourceful information centre. In collaboration with other community organizations, Prospect continues to be committed to reducing barriers and facilitating learners' access to programs and services and continually evolving to better address learner needs in the community.

#### **Margaret Sutherland – British Columbia**

As a leader in community literacy, Margaret Sutherland has had a tremendous and positive impact in the lives of literacy learners in B.C., helping people gain the skills they need to engage with the modern, digital world. From her beginnings as a literacy volunteer, to her most recent role as Decoda Literacy Solution's Executive Director, she has championed literacy at the local, regional, provincial and national level for over 20 years. Throughout her varied career, she has demonstrated innovative thinking and creative, collaborative problem-solving. She has served as editor of the West Coast Reader, a monthly newspaper for literacy and English learners. Margaret continues to raise awareness and foster successful partnerships, including in the business sector, that fund and support literacy and lifelong learning throughout B.C.

#### **Marilyn Freda Captain – Manitoba**

Marilyn Freda Captain registered with the Swan River Adult Literacy Program in September 2021 at the age of 54. While exceptionally shy upon entering the classroom, she was not shy about her goal of learning to read, particularly to her grandchildren. Marilyn's own education had been interrupted frequently – being moved as a child between foster homes – but she always dreamt of a better life for herself and her future family. She made that dream come true – her two daughters have each received their high school diplomas, and Marilyn, over the course of nine months, has learned to read. Today, Marilyn shares her newfound ability and love of reading and renewed interest in her Indigenous heritage with her neighbours, friends, family, and most importantly, her grandchildren.

#### **Krista Stephens – Newfoundland and Labrador**

Krista Stephens made the courageous and life-changing decision to return to school after 26 years away. She described her life as full of uncertainty: a young mom with limited education, personal challenges, and medical setbacks including significant vision loss. After deciding to pursue her educational goals, Krista demonstrated commitment, drive, determination and a positive attitude, excelling in her studies and receiving her high school equivalency diploma ahead of schedule. Krista wants the world to know that no matter how old, how many obstacles faced, or how difficult life's circumstances, that it is never too late to improve one's literacy skills. Krista is now completing a post-secondary program in Office Administration and Technology and hopes that her story can inspire others to pursue literacy.

### **Valarie Higgins – New Brunswick**

Valarie Higgins is a steadfast and supportive leader with the Moncton Regional Literacy Council (MRLC) and Laubach Literacy New Brunswick. She has led countless committees and councils to advance the cause of literacy in New Brunswick and has worked as a tutor, coordinator and board member. Valarie has helped hundreds begin their literacy journey. Though she has stepped down as the President of the board of MRLC, she continues to serve on the board, and continues to have a direct impact as a mentor for new tutors, taking them under her wing and nurturing their passion for literacy. Her dedication and passion for literacy are apparent to all.

### **Jean-François Ouellette – New Brunswick**

In Jean-François Ouellette's role as a teacher at the Tournesol Adapted Learning Centre in Edmundston, he works mainly with adult learners with disabilities. Jean-François is enthusiastic, respectful, patient, persevering, innovative, and has a well-developed capacity to adapt. It is a source of great pride for him when his students succeed at learning and achieve their ultimate goal of earning their GED certificate. To assist a learner with reduced sight, he learned Braille so that he could develop learning activities that incorporate a tactile dimension. His remarkable work has positively impacted learners on a provincial scale and is bound to continue generating benefits for future learners. Jean-François' outstanding achievement in teaching deserves recognition. Thanks to his dedication, he is helping to improve the skills of New Brunswickers.

### **Western Arctic Youth Collective – Northwest Territories**

The Western Arctic Youth Collective (WAYC) is a youth-led collaborative focused on empowering youth in the Beaufort Delta region of the Northwest Territories.

WAYC promotes family, Indigenous, health, and community literacy through its unique programming. The group promotes oral literacy through its virtual book clubs that invite participants to take turns reading the book aloud together. WAYC also promotes digital literacy through workshops on podcasting and video editing, land-based literacy skills through wilderness and leadership camps, and Indigenous language revitalization through events like Language Bingo and Language Scavenger Hunt and by distributing language learning kits. WAYC promotes strong mental health literacy through virtual wellness check-ins and annual workshops that include discussions on addictions, mental health and suicide, as well as life promotion and community empowerment.

### **Andrew Chacko – Nova Scotia**

Andrew Chacko arrived in Canada from India in 2008 and moved to Nova Scotia in 2015. Born without hearing and knowing only Indian Sign Language, he joined the Antigonish County Adult Learning Association (ACALA) to improve his reading and writing skills to build connections with others and improve his employment opportunities. Andrew was motivated to learn American Sign Language (ASL) and within two years, was able to reach intermediate level and helped to build a community of ASL learners in Antigonish. In addition to helping run ASL tutorials, Andrew spends his time volunteering with different organizations and community projects. His resilience and leadership have made those around him better at reaching out to others, adapting, and finding ways to be inclusive.

### **Jeela Palluq-Cloutier – Nunavut**

Jeela Palluq-Cloutier is a teacher, author, role model and mentor with a lifelong passion for language, teaching and ensuring the highest standards for Inuktitut, the Inuit language spoken throughout Canadian Arctic communities. Jeela has taught Inuktitut to individuals of all ages. She is a celebrated author with four books under her name. As a mature student, Jeela returned to school to complete a master's degree focussed on the history of writing systems and the views of Nunavut educators on the standardization of Inuktitut. She supports digital Inuktitut resources to close the communication divide that many unilingual Nunavummiut experience. Jeela has contributed to Inuit online engagement by translating over 11,000 Inuktitut words to social media. Jeela's incredible contributions to Inuktitut languages improve the quality of life throughout Nunavut communities and beyond.

### **Ontario's e-Channel Team – Ontario**

For over 15 years Ontario's e-Channel team has been developing and delivering Literacy and Basic Skills services for people in Ontario who rely on distance learning. e-Channel specializes in supporting Indigenous, deaf, and francophone clients and has helped thousands of learners gain the literacy skills needed to achieve their education and career goals. During the COVID-19 pandemic, e-Channel was able to support in-person literacy providers by sharing their resources and expertise, so they could quickly and successfully pivot to online service delivery for their own clients. The e-Channel team consists of a network of six not-for-profit organizations dedicated to the advancement of literacy skills.

### **Sally Hitchcock – Prince Edward Island**

Lifelong learner and educator Sally Hitchcock has taught the GED Preparation Program at Holland College for 23 years and has helped hundreds of students obtain their GED certificates. Sally possesses the devotion and patience required to work with her students who may experience challenges in their numeracy or literacy skills. Sally takes on initiatives that directly impact her students and the greater college community. This is evident in her empathic teaching style and in her ongoing commitment to professional growth. In 2021, Sally was recognized by Holland College with the Teaching Excellence Award which honours a faculty member who has exhibited consistent excellence in teaching and has had a significant impact on the personal and academic growth of students.

### **KidsFirst NORTH – Saskatchewan**

KidsFirst NORTH (KFN) is a non-profit, community-based organization that encourages families to be the best they can be. KFN was a key player in the establishment and oversight of the first Northern Family Literacy Hub, which provides families with access to culturally appropriate early literacy activities and programming. At the height of the pandemic, KFN provided almost 700 families with story sacks connected to the Indigenous Seven Sacred Teachings of love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth. Literacy carnivals were held in 11 communities and included activities such as rhyming, Elder storytelling, book readings, using technology, and puppet theatre performances. KFN, under the leadership of Tina Roberts, uses family literacy programming to strengthen families and support children in Saskatchewan's north.

**Donald Inverarity – Yukon**

Donald Inverarity has pioneered digital literacy and technology education since 1974. Over the past half century, Donald served as a board member during the early development of what is now the Challenge Disabilities Resource Group and executive director of the Yukon Entrepreneurship Centre Society. He now travels to rural Yukon communities to teach Digital Skills for the Work World with the Yukon Learn Society. He played a crucial role advocating for the successful operation and continued development of Computers for Schools Yukon. A lifelong educator, he taught life skills through Junior Achievement, e-commerce in rural communities and financial management within Yukon First Nation communities. Donald is admired and respected for his long-term role in improving the literacy of others in practical, meaningful and wide-ranging ways.

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**For more information:****Paola St-Georges**

Manager, Events and Communications  
Council of the Federation Secretariat  
(343) 961-5811  
[paola@canadaspremiers.ca](mailto:paola@canadaspremiers.ca)