



The CAMA Connection

NUMBER 4, SPRING 2007

LINKING MUNICIPAL PARTNERS – PROMOTING LITERACY AND LEARNING



**CAMA
Literacy Project
Since 1993**

INSIDE

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CAMA National
Awards of
Excellence for
Municipal
Workplace Literacy
Achievements**

Each year, CAMA celebrate the efforts that outstanding people and organizations have made to municipal workplace education and literacy programs. This year, for the first time, CAMA is also recognizing leadership in clear language.

Congratulations to all the winners!

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Coming Events**

We're Back!

Funding Renewed for *Literacy and Learning in the Workplace and Community Project*

After a break of 5 months, CAMA received word in February 2007 that the next phase of the *Literacy and Learning in the Workplace and Community Project* would be funded by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) for 15 months, to May 2008. Many other national organizations that promote literacy were not so fortunate. Many experienced gaps in funding that seriously affected their programs. Some learned that their funding had not been renewed. The loss of these programs will affect literacy efforts all across the country. CAMA was happy to learn that our long-time partner, the CUPE National Office, also received funding. We will once again be working with CUPE to promote clear language in municipal communications.

This phase of the CAMA project will focus on:

- **Building capacity to benefit learners** through activities such as: establishing a

learners' council, building links with Quebec municipalities, supporting new municipal literacy initiatives, and expanding partnerships.

- **Research and development** activities, including: developing a clear language strategy, documenting the short, medium and long-term impact of workplace education programs, and evaluating the CAMA project.
- **Communications and promotion** activities, including: publishing **The CAMA Connection** in English and French, maintaining the project Web site as a valuable resource for information on workplace learning, and recognizing leadership and good practice through the CAMA Awards of Excellence.

For more information on the program, and how you can get involved, visit the *Literacy and Learning* section of the CAMA Web site at www.camacam.ca

Workplace Learning Programs: A Sign of Respect



Outgoing CAMA President, Simon Farbrother, describes workplace literacy/learning programs as “*one way in which a municipality can demonstrate respect for its employees*”. He points out that all organizations face the on-going challenge

of ensuring that employees have the skills and knowledge to deal with changing workplace demands. When municipalities offer a range of learning programs, they give employees the opportunity to increase their capacities over time. They encourage employees to become engaged in their own development as well as the

development of the municipality. An investment in workplace learning programs pays off – in a better-skilled workforce, improved quality of work life, and employees who have an increased commitment to the organization.

In Simon's view, ‘respect’ is also an important component of the CAMA program, one which has led to its success. The program's approach to workplace literacy/learning gets people thinking positively about what they can do. Its flexible model allows each municipality to determine what activities will be most relevant. The program also encourages collaboration with a range of partners from the very beginning. CAMA provides support

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2007 CAMA National Awards of Excellence



Learner Achievement

**Rob Snyder, CUPE 109
City of Kingston, Ontario**

In February 2007, after 10 months of intensive work, Kingston Transit bus driver Rob Snyder achieved his life-long goal of completing his Grade 12 Diploma – and he did it with Honours! Rob is the first graduate of an innovative workplace education program organized by the Kingston Joint Employee Education and Development Committee (JEED) and the Limestone School Board.

Completing all the required courses and maintaining a full-time job was a big challenge. Nights and weekends had to be devoted to school work instead of family activities. But Rob's family understood his desire to complete his education and supported him all the way.

Although Rob had no formal computer training before he started the program, he taught himself the skills he needed to use the computer for Internet research and to prepare his assignments. Some of his most successful assignments were based on his life experience – for example, a brochure and newsletter that explain the transit system to the public.

CAMA recognizes Rob's hard work and determination. He has been a great example for other employees. He has also inspired his youngest son to complete his Diploma. Congratulations to Rob for all his achievements!

Development of Effective and Successful Partnerships

**City of Calgary, Alberta
Calgary Board of Education (Innovative Learning Services), Calgary Police Services**

Faced with a number of City groups all delivering classroom safety presentations, the City of Calgary decided that it needed to develop a coordinated approach and more effective learning tools. The City partnered with the Calgary Board of Education's Innovative

Learning Services to develop *Think Responsibly*, a literacy-based safety education Web site that includes 5 inter-active modules (www.thinkresponsibly.ca). The project is designed to help young people (grades 4-7) make responsible decisions about personal safety. The Web site includes educational games, videos, and other tools to appeal to a broad range of abilities and interests. The Web site also includes information for teachers and parents.

This innovative learning resource is jointly owned by the City partners and the Calgary Board of Education. They have expanded their partnership to promote the program by recruiting local TV stations and retailers that have an obvious connection to the project (such as bike stores and paint stores).

Think Responsibly has already had a significant impact on the capacity of municipal employees and teachers to engage youth. The program is easily accessible for parents, community organizations and people in other locations. Schools from BC and Ontario have requested permission to use *Think Responsibly*. Many also want to know more about the partnership approach.

CAMA congratulates the City of Calgary and its partners for their innovative approach and successful collaboration!

Organizational Commitment to Workplace Literacy and Learning

City of Windsor, Ontario

The City of Windsor has a longstanding commitment to workplace and life-long learning. Training has always been viewed as an investment to improve employees' job skills and confidence, as well as the quality of municipal services.

The City's approach to training and development has evolved since the 1990s when it offered a range of generic skills-development courses. The City has now adopted a comprehensive *Learning and Development Policy* which has increased access to educational opportunities for staff at all levels of the organization. Over the last six years the City has offered more than 350 staff development programs and trained more than 9400 employees. It has sponsored a computer technology

certificate program and a Master's certificate in Municipal Management. In addition, it has reimbursed more than \$300,000 to employees who have completed higher education programs. The City has established partnerships with industry leaders to develop coaching and mentoring programs. It now offers employees a variety of flexible e-learning opportunities.

CAMA recognizes the City of Windsor's commitment to becoming a learning organization that invests in the future of the organization, the community and its most important asset – its employees.



Recognition of Educators, Practitioners or Organizations

**Gayle Constable, Instructor
City of Moncton, New Brunswick**

Gayle Constable has been devoted to literacy and learning for more than 25 years. She has been an instructor in Moncton's Workplace Education Program since 1998, and has developed a wide range of programs to address participants' needs. Low-cost, innovative teaching methods keep people engaged in the program. Since 1998, 738 people have taken part, and 20 learners have completed their GED. Other learners report results such as – being promoted, taking a more active part in union activities, and completing workplace forms and reports more easily.

Gayle's students appreciate her dedication, determination and great personality. Her support has increased their confidence and helped them meet their goals. Many say that if they had had a teacher like Gayle early in their lives they would never have dropped out of school. Gayle believes she has an advantage – she works because she wants to and she knows her students well.

In addition to teaching with the City, Gayle has been an active volunteer with Laubach Literacy for many years. She has also helped other local organizations get started with literacy/workplace education programs.

CAMA recognizes Gayle's dedication, her talent for getting people involved in learning, and her outstanding contribution to helping others achieve their goals.

Recognition of New Workplace Literacy and Learning Initiatives

City of Grande Prairie, Alberta

Over the past two years, Grande Prairie has transformed an interest in lifelong learning into a dynamic Workplace Learning program. Partners in the program include Aquatera Utilities Inc, CUPE Local 787, the Grande Prairie Firefighters' Association Local 2770, Grande Prairie Council on Lifelong Learning, and three regional colleges.

Following the model suggested by CAMA, the Workplace Learning Committee carried out a Needs Assessment to identify topics for the program. Over 50% of the City of GP and Aquatera employees completed the survey, identifying oral communication as the number one priority. The Committee responded within two months – offering the CUPE course *Face to Face Communication* in the Fall of 2006. The Committee refers to the Needs Assessment regularly to identify learning opportunities. It also assesses progress monthly to ensure that the program is meeting learner needs.

Quick response and a wide variety of courses that address job-related and personal topics have been important features of the program. Topics have included: union contract negotiations, basic income tax, use of digital equipment (cameras, phones etc), bookkeeping and environmental awareness. Almost every employee at the City and Aquatera has had some form of training in the past year, including union-sponsored conferences and educational programs.

The Mayor of Grande Prairie has declared May 2007 as Workplace Learning Month with "Spring Into Learning!" as the theme.

CAMA recognizes the City of Grande Prairie and its partners for their leadership in launching a successful workplace learning program and for their commitment to lifelong learning.

CAMA Awards continue on page 4

Recognition of New Workplace and Community Clear Language Initiatives

City of Toronto, Ontario

As Canada's largest city, Toronto has a diverse population, including many newcomers to Canada. As Canada's 6th largest government, Toronto City Council has a heavy volume of work, which is managed by the City Clerk's Office. Consultations undertaken by the City in 2003 indicated that many Toronto residents had difficulty understanding how Council made decisions. As a result, the City Clerk's Office established the Meeting Management Initiative to make the City's decision making process more open, transparent and accessible to citizens.

Recognizing that Toronto residents have diverse reading skills, varied familiarity with English and mixed knowledge of municipal matters, the Clerk's Office set out to make written material going to Council meetings easier to read and understand. The clear language project provides staff report writers with new tools and resources. New report templates and training on clear language help writers organize and present information clearly. This helps members of City Council, the Toronto Public Service and the public to more easily understand what staff have recommended to committees or City Council, and also what committees and City Council have decided. In this way, the City improves the way that it engages Torontonians in decision-making.

The project began in 2006 with research into best practices from other organizations, analysis of the staff reports in use at the time and a survey of departmental needs. Experienced clear language consultants developed new report templates that were tested and refined, and a number of online tools. Staff training began in February 2007. By May more than 600 staff had been trained on the new report template and clear language techniques.

Senior managers have all endorsed the clear language project. Staff evaluation of the training has been very positive. The City Clerk's Office will be evaluating the project over the coming months by randomly assessing the readability of staff reports, asking trained staff to evaluate their own skill level 3 months after training, and by reviewing the amount of information going to Council and committees.

CAMA congratulates the City of Toronto for its leadership in initiating the first city-wide clear language campaign in Canada. We commend your efforts to make municipal decision making more accessible to the public.

S. Farbrother (continued from page 1)

to establish a joint worker-management committee or to facilitate the planning and implementation process. Getting started may take some time if a number of stakeholders are involved, but CAMA recognizes the importance of that process. CAMA facilitates learning among workplace programs and celebrates their achievements.

What role should CAMA play in the future? Simon believes that CAMA has demonstrated its strength in coordinating and facilitating; the program should continue to support municipalities that are doing good work. At the same time, by encouraging partnerships with unions, educational organizations and community groups, CAMA has demonstrated the importance of leveraging other resources to match the limited funds available for workplace learning programs. He hopes that CAMA will continue its efforts to advocate for increased, secure funding for such programs from all levels of government.

Coming Events

Adult Learning Knowledge Centre National Symposium – *The Right to Learn*

June 10-12, 2007 – Halifax, Nova Scotia
Information: www.ALKCSymposium.ca

Laubach Literacy Ontario (LLO) Conference 2007 – *Pathways to Progress*

June 22-23, 2007 – Waterloo, Ontario
Information: www.laubach-on.ca/conf2007.html
Or contact LLO by email at literacy@laubach-on.ca

Please send information about conferences, workshops or other events to: pnutter@lincsat.com

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