



# 2016

Life Of Learning Awards

# Welcome to the 17th Annual LOLA Celebration!

The Life of Learning Awards (the LOLAs) celebrate contributions in Calgary's adult learning field. This year, we will present awards in the following categories:

- Learning Champion for an educator who makes a great contribution to community-based adult foundational learning.
- Learning Communities for a learning program/project that stands out in innovation, effectiveness and breadth of reach into the adult foundational learning community.
- Adult Learner for a learner at a foundational level who loves learning, stands out in his or her efforts to keep learning and inspires others by example.
- Thanks A Bunch showcases a funder (individual or corporation) whose commitment and financial contribution help support the needs of adult foundational level learners.



## Agenda

**Welcome**

**Monique Fry** - Master of Ceremony

**Bill Brandon** - Executive Director

**Keynote Speaker**

**David Bouchard**

**Award Presentations**

**Nabila Ghaffar** - Learning Champion

**Humanities 101** - Learning Communities

**Lloyd Thornhill** - Adult Learner

**Calgary Foundation** - Thanks A Bunch

**Closing Remarks**



## Keynote Speaker - David Bouchard

“An acclaimed author of children’s books, David Bouchard is also a champion of literacy. This former teacher and school principal has written more than 50 books in English and in French. Many of them combine poetry, prose and visual arts, and explore topics such as the environment, history and the traditions and cultures of Canada’s Aboriginal communities.



Also a storyteller and sought after public speaker, he has traveled across the country to promote the importance and joy of reading and writing. In his presentations to children, parents and teachers, he addresses his own struggles with dyslexia. Proud of his Métis heritage, he is a former president of the Métis Nation of Greater Victoria and continues to serve as a community leader.” taken from the investiture ceremony of the Order of Canada

David Bouchard’s books have won numerous awards, including a Special Mention for Non-Fiction in the 2010 Bologna Ragazzi Awards for *The Drum Calls Softly*, a Gold Medal in the 2008 Moonbeam Award for *I am Raven*, the 2004 Governor General’s Award for *The Song Within My Heart*, the 1999 Red Cedar Award for *The Great Race* and the 1997 Lee Bennett Hopkins Poetry Award for *Voices from the Wild. An Aboriginal Carol* was included in the 2008 White Ravens Catalogue.

In April 2009, Bouchard was named as a Member of the Order of Canada “for his contributions as an author of children’s books and an advocate who has championed the cause of reading and writing, and who has shared his pride as a member of the Métis community through his stories.”

Most recently, David has received a remarkable honour: in 2013, in Oshawa, the David Bouchard Public School opened its doors.

David lives in Victoria, British Columbia, with his wife Vicki and their daughter Victoria.

## Learning Champion - Nabila Ghaffar



Nabila Ghaffar is the kind of team member that most organizations can only dream of. When Nabila joined the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association as a teacher assistant in 2012, her bold, enthusiastic talent for teaching and commitment to foundational learners quickly shone through. She was soon promoted to literacy teacher, and she's been propelling her students to success ever since.

Having immigrated to Canada from Abu Dhabi Nabila knows first-hand of the struggles and stresses newcomers face as they adjust to life in Canada. New students arrive timid and afraid of failing. After a few short weeks in Nabila's welcoming class, they are comfortable and confident, excited to try out new skills.

Nabila pours her own passion for learning into experimenting with new approaches. She makes learning fun, designing each lesson around practical needs. Her students learn how to phone the doctor's office or call Calgary Transit to find out when their bus will arrive. They open g-mail accounts so they can chat with other students. They create personalized books with sentences that match photos they've snapped in grocery stores. In every case, these new skills make their daily lives in Calgary easier.

Nabila works tirelessly, in and out of the classroom. She recently completed a collaborative two-year action research project aimed at supporting low-literacy learners who experience the most difficulties. She has since shared her work and strategies through presentations, workshops and conferences.

Nabila's faith in her students' abilities has shaped her into a truly exceptional learning champion. Nabila's students have equally high faith in her, describing her as, "The best of all teachers in life... wonderful...special and unique." We couldn't agree more!

# Learning Communities - Humanities 101

Since 2009, the St. Mary's University campus has been home to Humanities 101. Learners in this unique program have faced poverty, immigration, violence, negative educational experience, addictions, homelessness, and other interruptions to learning.



They meet two days a week for four months, where history, culture, and the arts come alive through storytelling and the lens of multiple perspectives. Field trips to the theatre, art galleries and museums—a first visit for many—round out their learning experience.

The Humanities 101 program provides a safe, welcoming and innovative learning approach, all while removing the barriers these students would face elsewhere. Tuition and textbooks are free. Transit tickets are supplied. Childcare is covered. Volunteer tutors are available for extra help. A hot, nutritious meal is shared around a community table before each class.

During celebrations at the end of each semester, student after student comes forward to speak about the life-changing and profoundly positive effects they've experienced because of Humanities 101. Graduates have gone on to degree studies, further course work, employment and meaningful volunteer roles.

We applaud the tremendous dedication of Dr. Tara Hyland-Russell, who has been a driving force in creating and sustaining Humanities 101, as well as the St. Mary's faculty and larger student body that have rallied around the program to ensure it stays. Each year, students raise thousands of dollars, and students and faculty line up to volunteer their time and expertise.

Social change is at the heart of Humanities 101, giving learners real hope for the future. This model learning community is a true cause for celebration!

## Adult Learner - Lloyd Thornhill



Lloyd Thornhill, who turns 69 this year, was born and raised on Brunette Island, a tiny island off the south coast of Newfoundland. Learning was extremely difficult for Lloyd in his all-ages school class. With no supports in place, he spent many a day colouring at the back of the classroom. After struggling to achieve a Grade 6 education, Lloyd led a quiet and sheltered life for the next several decades, living with his parents and working as a janitor in a nursing home.

Fast forward to 2000, when Lloyd moved west to be closer to his siblings. Since living in Calgary, his love for learning has exploded. Lloyd's action plan to independent living has included non-stop participation in a broad range of programs: literacy, financial literacy, life skills, arts classes, computer training, personal safety and photography, to name just a few.

Lloyd is a hardworking and attentive student. He also serves tirelessly as an advocate for the disability community, joining advisory boards and action groups and clocking hundreds of volunteer hours for such organizations as the Interfaith Thrift Store, Vecova, and CareWest. Lloyd speaks passionately in public forums for the rights of all citizens to be able to access educational opportunities throughout their lifespan.

Lloyd has a dogged determination to reach his learning goals. It has been his life-long dream to be able to read and write, and through persistence and hard work, this dream is now coming true. But he's not stopping there. In Lloyd's own words, he's just getting started. Bravo, Lloyd! You're an inspiration to us all.

## Thanks A Bunch - Calgary Foundation

The Calgary Foundation has provided outstanding leadership and tireless efforts in addressing the issues faced by poverty-stricken adult foundational learners in our community. A shining example of their commitment is their support of *Taking Charge*, a collaborative initiative of CanLearn and the Sunrise Community Link.



*Taking Charge* is a multiple-week program that specifically targets individuals experiencing poverty and life stressors. The Calgary Foundation funded the program's launch in September 2015 and has been a highly supportive partner ever since.

*Taking Charge* moves past short term solutions to address underlying issues that are rooted in poverty and low-literacy. With funding from the Calgary Foundation, the program provides dedicated facilitators, childcare, program incentives, and a myriad of resources. The Calgary Foundation has been a flexible and encouraging partner every step of the way, allowing adjustments to the original program design and the addition of a second round of the pilot, which started in February of this year.

The nine graduates of the first *Taking Charge* cohort give the program top marks. For some, it's the first time in years they've been able to leave their house. Others say that after struggling with depression, this program has given them their life back. All participants have found new ways to cope with day-to-day challenges, address conflict, set and achieve goals, and build their sense of self confidence and self-esteem.

This program is a game changer in the lives of long-term clients who have chronically struggled with a variety of issues. The Calgary Foundation, through its generous financial support and willing spirit, has made this possible. Thanks a bunch and then some!



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