



LIFE OF LEARNING AWARDS



Welcome to the 18th 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 - An educator who makes a great contribution to community-based adult foundational learning.
- Adult Learner - 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

- Leslie Horton** - Master of Ceremony
- Nancy Purdy** - Executive Director
- Colleen Smereka** - Keynote speaker

Award Presentations

- Berniece Gowan** - Learning Champion
- Sade Makerra Auger** - Learning Champion
- Laura Helm** - Adult Learner
- IRCC** - Thanks A Bunch

Closing Remarks



After 20 years in broadcasting, Leslie Horton still has a huge passion for live TV and covering breaking news. She also states that a few highlight of her career, thus far, has been working on the Pan Canadian Students Choice awards program, as well as hosting the Annual Stampede Lottery Show, working on the Grandstand Show at the Calgary Stampede and emceeding the Calgary Police Chiefs awards for Chief Jack Beaton. Favorite People: My daughter, Avery – she is the light of my life! My family, who always inspire me to live well and give back.

Keynote Speaker - Colleen Smereka



Colleen Smereka has been working for Accessibility Services at SAIT for the past three and a half years. In her work she supports students with disabilities and medical conditions to get the supports and services they need to be successful in their educational pursue.

Colleen graduated from St. Francis Xavier University with an honors degree in Sociology. After a few years in the work force she returned to school to complete a bachelor's of education degree at St. Mary's university in Calgary.

Colleen also serves on the Learning Disability and ADHD Networking committee and Foothills Academy Society Board of Governors. This volunteer work is important to Colleen because she is passionate about advocating to improve the lives of other people with learning disabilities and ADHD. She is also an Assistant Coach on the SAIT Women's hockey team.

Colleen spent the first 22 years of her life pretending. In her words, she spent her life hiding - until she was diagnosed with a learning disability. After getting the help she needed, Colleen is now an advocate for those dealing with this invisible disability. Check out her video here:

Searching for Words: A Woman's Fight to Learn
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HOo1JQEzWU0>

Berniece Gowan – Learning Champion 2017



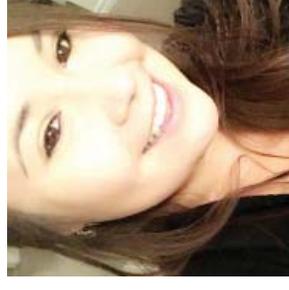
Berniece Gowan learned about adult literacy through volunteering as a literacy tutor. She became passionate about adult literacy when she discovered the work of Dr. Jenny Horsman, research on the impact of violence on learning. Dr. Horsman's work connected Berniece's long background as a Social Worker to her new work as a project manager and trainer with Literacy Alberta. Berniece joined Bow Valley College in 2013. She has been involved with adult literacy research and programming and is currently the project manager for the Adult Literacy and Essential Skills Research Institute. Berniece is responsible for developing and coordinating research projects, building partnerships with community stakeholders, and working to support the Literacy and Essential Skills area at Bow Valley College. Berniece is also supporting a team of instructors and staff working with Bow Valley College's most vulnerable learners, those with low literacy and learning or developmental disabilities.

By all accounts, Berniece is an attentive and decisive leader who places the needs of her literacy staff, projects, and learners above and beyond her own. She has a deep empathy for the needs of the learners and has built upon and redesigned programs to best meet their needs. No matter how busy she is, she always has time to personally address any learner's concern.

Her reach extends far beyond the college walls into the adult foundational learning community. She is committed to the development of meaningful community relationships and partnerships. This past year she was instrumental in the development of Bow Valley College's relationships with Indigenous post secondary's in Alberta. An avid literacy practitioner, she delivers workshops and supports staff and learners to use the literacy tools she has developed.

Just as learners bring their whole lives to learning, Berniece brings her whole self to work and to everything she does. The effect of her work can be felt locally, provincially and nationally through her relationship building, her research, and her authorship of literacy tools such as *writeforward*. A true visionary with tremendous heart, we're so pleased to celebrate Berniece's accomplishments as a model learning champion.

Learning Champion - Sade Makerra Auger



Sade Makerra Auger has become an invaluable member of the Aboriginal Career & Training Centre, where she has served as an educator/facilitator for over five years. Sade has led the Aboriginal Workplace Learning Circle since its inception in 2012, helping to adapt and strengthen the program all along the way. Today, this unique six-week program blends traditional career planning and job search training with culturally specific tools such as the talking stick, medicine wheel teachings, and Elder visits.

Sade places dignity and respect at the heart of all she does. Her clients describe her as patient and caring, a good listener, and readily able to guide others to see their inner strength and self-worth.

Sade brings a solid understanding of her culture and traditions, and a facilitating style that incorporates humour and a strong knowledge of adult learning principles and labour market demands. Whether she is working with individuals or small groups, or sharing her wisdom with the larger community, she is both passionate and determined to help remove the barriers that her Indigenous clients face.

Her high levels of success have placed the Aboriginal Workplace Learning Circle into the spotlight recently. Other agencies are now asking for Sade's help with job shadowing or mentoring so that they, too, can establish similar programs for their communities.

For many clients, Sade enters their lives when they need to feel supported and accepted. She is gifted in her ability to do just that. As one client states, "Sade's humour, excitement and celebration of success will forever be treasured." We completely agree!

Adult Learner - Laura Helm

Born and raised in Calgary, Laura Helm was a thoughtful and keen student with her sights set on a bright future. The year was 2007, Grade 12, and the day started like any other. On her way to school that morning, Laura was struck by a motor vehicle and tossed 20 feet, her head taking the force of the brutal landing.



After a gruelling and lengthy rehabilitation period, Laura's prognosis remained grim. She was told by experts that her permanent brain injury would make it extremely difficult for her to continue her studies, get and keep a job, or move through life independently day to day.

Not one to give up, Laura took this a challenge. Determined to take ownership of her education, she signed up for the Never Too Late program with Catholic Family Service, a program that provides support to learners who want to complete their GED (General Equivalency Diploma). Despite chronic pain and often crippling anxiety attacks, Laura poured everything she had into her GED studies, proudly graduating in 2016.

While continuing with her own studies, Laura is also passionate about helping others. She volunteers weekly with #BeThe ChangeYYC, a movement that inspires people to be the change they wish to see in Calgary, and she's a regular ambassador for the Never Too Late program, sharing her story and bringing inspiration to others.

Laura is the best kind of learner – hard working, determined, resilient, and courageous in the face of enormous challenges. Driven to make meaning of her accident and injuries and to live a life of purpose, Laura now aspires to assist others who have been affected by traumatic brain injuries. We wholeheartedly share her optimism for her bright and reimagined future.

Thanks A Bunch - Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has long been making an impact on the Calgary scene, helping to ensure newcomers are given a fair chance to start a new life.

IRCC focuses on low to mid-literacy clients in the areas of language training and employment services. Their funding support has made a huge difference at the Calgary Immigrant Women's Association (CIWA).

IRCC funds a number of the CIWA's vital programs and services dedicated to integrating immigrant women and their families in the community. With IRCC-funded programs that provide employment, food service, and retail training, and benefits like free day care and first language support, barriers are removed and women are able to take control of their Canadian futures. IRCC also funds CIWA's Learning Support Services, which provides extra help to both instructors and learners who are struggling to learn English.

IRCC funding and guidance gives service providers like CIWA the support they need to customize and adapt programs to be the best they can be. This tailored approach is exactly what's needed to help clients achieve goals.

IRCC has been a committed funding partner to so many agencies over the years, including the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society, Bow Valley College, the Centre for Newcomers, and the Agape Language Centre, to name just a few. These and other agencies work passionately to address literacy issues for newcomers. Their success is dependent of the receptiveness of funders to advocate on their behalf. Through its generous support, IRCC gets top marks as an exemplary funder in its investment towards building a better Canada for all.



108, 1330 - 15 Avenue SW
Calgary, AB T3C 3N6
Phone: 403-266-6444
Fax: 403-266-6449
www.calgarylearns.com

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