



For Immediate Release:

The Learning Exchange from Saint John, NB awarded \$20,000 as Top Winner of Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award

Outstanding programs in Antigonish NS, London ON, Miramichi NB and Kitchener ON earn honourable mentions of \$5,000 each

Toronto, ON – August 30, 2016: ABC Life Literacy Canada (ABC) is thrilled to announce the winners of the 2016 Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award (LIA). This annual award recognizes up to five Canadian organizations developing and implementing innovative adult literacy and essential skills programs that provide leading-edge learning opportunities for their clients and communities. This year the jury selected one top winner and four honourable mentions.

The 2016 winning programs represent leadership in creative programming that connects hard-to-reach communities with learning opportunities to improve literacy and life skills. Recipients of the LIA make a significant impact on the literacy and essential skills of many Canadian adults and their families. The ripple effects of these positive changes can be felt across Canada as communities become stronger, one learner at a time.

“When looking at this year’s winners, if there is one theme that emerges, it is that organizations across the country recognize the need to embed literacy and essential skills learning in real-life applications. We see learning happening through programs that feature business, media, cooking, technology, and life skills—all being undertaken in high-engagement environments. These programs are truly forward-looking and set a standard for adult learning in the coming years,” said Gillian Mason, President of ABC Life Literacy Canada. “ABC is proud to partner with Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life to improve adult literacy and essential skills and we are ever grateful for their commitment to champion life-long learning through the LIA.”

“I congratulate this year’s winner and the four honourable mention recipients who are finding innovative ways to teach literacy and essential skills,” said Stefan Kristjanson, President and Chief Operating Officer at Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life. “A surprising 40% of Canadians struggle to some degree with literacy and essential work skills. Together with ABC Life Literacy Canada, we’re dedicated to supporting and encouraging the efforts of those organizations working to reduce that number.”

TOP WINNER, receiving \$20,000

The Saint John Learning Exchange, Saint John NB

Program: Stone Soup

Stone Soup is a food education and employment social enterprise developed by Saint John Learning Exchange (SJLE). *Stone Soup* runs a School Food branch that prepares in-house no-fee daily lunches to 100 students in need, as well as a Café and a Catering branch, where the employers and managers are the teachers. Participants go through ten weeks of training—in the classroom to develop literacy and workplace essential skills and rotating between the three branches of the social enterprise, where they apply and expand their knowledge, skills and confidence. Participants are involved in planning, daily food production, using a cash register, communicating with customers, completing work documents, as well as building soft skills such as self-awareness, receiving and responding to feedback.

For 32 years, SJLE has been providing innovative, no-fee education and employment services for adults. Its staff work with learners along all points in their path to learning, from addressing barriers to work and literacy gaps, to developing workforce skills and accessing meaningful employment. Today, the organization serves over 400 learners annually through two social enterprises and programming that includes academic upgrading, GED preparation, workforce and essential skills training, job coaching, and job developing services.

HONOURABLE MENTIONS, receiving \$5,000 each

Antigonish County Adult Learning Association (ACALA), Antigonish NS

Program: ACALA First Voice Media

The *ACALA First Voice Media (AFVM)* program builds literacy and essential skills into community engagement work. Working with facilitators and experts, learners determine a media project and build the skills required to take it on, including: researching, story-boarding, writing, interviewing, shooting video, editing, and holding a post-project wrap-up discussion. Projects range from documentaries to TV shows to online classes. Through *AFVM* learners engage in issues that are personally relevant and pressing to the community and gain simulated work experience to practice tangible skills like time management and effective oral and digital communication.

Literacy Link South Central, London ON

Program: Innov-8

Literacy Link South Central has developed *Innov-8* for young men aged 16–29 who are disengaged from school and work. The program builds literacy and essential skills into short-term ‘Maker Modules’ on highly engaging topics such as augmented reality, SMART basketball and 3D printing. Project staff bring the necessary equipment and learning materials to organizations where youth are already engaged, thereby delivering programming in new ways and in non-traditional settings. *Innov-8* helps difficult-to-reach participants improve their literacy and essential skills while building confidence and a new positive relationship with learning.

Miramichi Literacy Council Inc., Miramichi NB

Program: Cooking to Learn

Miramichi Literacy Council Inc.’s *Cooking to Learn* program uses cooking together in a supportive environment as a way to teach literacy and math skills, as well as life skills such as budgeting, teamwork, conversational etiquette and food safety. Food mentors work with the students to create a healthy meal from start to finish: making a shopping list, grocery shopping, cleaning the kitchen, following a recipe, prepping food, cooking a meal, washing dishes, and serving meals. The program focuses on adults with learning disabilities and poor mental health—two groups that experience difficulty finding and maintaining employment—and strives to increase learner confidence and teach skills that could lead to work.

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo Wellington, Kitchener ON

Program: Learning Together

The *Learning Together* program from Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo Wellington supports grandparents who are providing daily or frequent childcare to their grandchildren or are raising their grandchildren full-time, often on a very low income. It has two components: a ten-week family literacy program for grandparents and grandchildren and a workshop series for grandparents only on current caregiver topics, such as Technology, Communications and Media: Your Grandchild's World and Health, Discipline and Self-Esteem: How to Contribute to a Healthy Family and Community. *Learning Together* helps grandparents improve their own literacy, learning and confidence so they can better support the early literacy development of their grandchildren.

On Thursday, September 15, ABC will host a webinar by LIA top winner, Saint John Learning Exchange, to showcase *Stone Soup* as a model for best practices in the literacy and essential skills sector. The 2016 Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life Literacy Innovation Award will be presented that evening as part of ABC's Life Literacy Night. The Dr. Alan Middleton Workplace Literacy and Learning Award, which recognizes an individual for their outstanding achievement in workplace literacy and essential skills, will also be presented at this year's awards ceremony.

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About ABC Life Literacy Canada

ABC Life Literacy Canada is a non-profit organization that inspires Canadians to increase their literacy and essential skills. We mobilize business, government and communities to support lifelong learning and achieve our goals through leadership in programs, communications and partnerships. We envision a Canada where everyone has the skills they need to live a fully engaged life. For the latest news and information on adult literacy please visit www.abclifeliteracy.ca, follow us on [Twitter](#) or join our [Facebook](#) page.

About Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life

Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life have been major supporters of ABC Life Literacy Canada since 1999. Through their involvement with ABC Life Literacy Canada and other national literacy programs across the country, the companies are helping promote literacy and lifelong learning – key needs in helping many Canadians realize their potential at work, at home and in the community. As an Imagine Caring Company, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life donate a minimum of one per cent of average pre-tax profits to non-profit, charitable and community organizations each year. Through their national corporate citizenship program, Great-West Life, London Life and Canada Life work with these organizations to build stronger communities together and help achieve lasting change.

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