



2025 Annual Report

Introduction

The Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy (PGFL) is pleased to present this annual report.

Established in 2002 through a federal government endowment following the death of Peter Gzowski, the PGFL continued the work of the Peter Gzowski Invitational (PGI) golf tournaments. Created by Peter in 1986, the PGIs raised awareness and funds to support literacy initiatives across Canada. The Foundation supported the tournaments until 2022.

In 2022, the Board of Directors recognized an opportunity to expand the Foundation's impact by using the endowment in new ways to support literacy activities. The decision was made to conclude the PGIs and, beginning in 2023, carry forward Peter's vision through a grants program funded by the PGFL endowment.

2025 marked the third year of the PGFL Grants Program. This year, the Foundation offered both one-year and multi-year grants. We received 98 applications and approved 20 grants: 15 one-year grants and 5 multi-year grants. We extend our thanks to everyone who applied, and congratulations to the successful recipients. Your commitment to strengthening literacy skills across Canada continues to inspire us.

I would also like to thank the Board of Directors for their dedication and volunteer efforts throughout the year, which made the successful completion of the 2025 granting cycle possible.

Finally, sincere thanks to Eric Plato for bookkeeping services; Ashley Ibrahim, Melody Penic, and Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP for corporate support; and Tracy Guinchard of REP Here in Canada for technical support.

Sincerely,

Brigid Hayes

Chair, Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy

PGFL Board of Directors

Brigid Hayes – Chair

Ottawa, ON – Consultant, strategic planning and policy development adult literacy and skills. Formerly, Canadian Labour and Business Centre and the National Literacy Secretariat, HRSDC.

Fiona Bramble – Director

Victoria, BC – Founder-CEO, REP Here in Canada and managing editor of Here Magazine. Member of Creative BC Magazine Advisory Committee and the Greater Victoria Alliance for Literacy. Former ELL educator.

Meghan Dillon – Secretary

Toronto, ON – Intellectual property lawyer, specializing in trademarks. Formerly worked in book publishing, negotiating author contracts.

Alison Gzowski – Director

Toronto, ON – Gzowski Family representative for the Board, writer, editor, producer, and event organizer for non-profits.

Debbie McInnis – Director

Moncton, NB – Executive Director of the United Way of Greater Moncton and Southeastern NB Region. Formerly Executive Director for Laubach Literacy New Brunswick. Member, Greater Moncton Literacy Advisory Board, and a volunteer for the Children’s Wish Foundation for over 25 years.

Leah Patry – Treasurer

Toronto, ON – Enjoyed a more than 25-year career in finance, the majority of which was spent as a global equity portfolio manager at one of the country’s largest pension funds. Most recently provided financial expertise to institutional clients within the global asset management division of one of the country’s chartered banks. Currently, Chair of the Friends of Bon Echo, a fundraising and advocacy group for the provincial park.

Mary Ruby – Director

Toronto, ON – Former Chief Administrative Officer and legal counsel for a global entertainment technology company. Over 30 years experience in corporate governance, legal, HR, real estate and facilities operations. Past Chair of a women’s crisis centre in Collingwood, Ontario.

Scott Walter – Director

Ottawa, ON – Over 35 years’ experience working in the literacy/education sector domestically and internationally. Recently stepped down as Executive Director of CODE (Canadian Organization for Development through Education); previous positions include Team Leader Education at CIDA; Director, International Development at International Literacy Association; Chair of the Global Book Alliance.

Amadeo Ventura – Director

East Garafraxa, ON – A transformational strategist with over 14 years of experience in community development and engagement. Proven expertise in leading nonprofit organizational growth and management of complex projects.

Remembering Peter Gzowski

Founder of the Peter Gzowski Invitational (PGI)

For three hours a day, five days a week, for 15 years, millions tuned in to CBC Radio's Morningside to listen to Peter Gzowski talk with Canada from coast to coast to coast. His insightful yet informal interviews with everyone from the Prime Minister to a chili sauce expert was one reason the award-winning broadcaster, author and journalist was often referred to as Mr. Canada. What many might not know is the legacy he left outside of his broadcasting life.

The Peter Gzowski Foundation for Literacy (PGFL) recognizes and honours the work of the late Peter Gzowski in raising awareness and funds for literacy. Peter devoted the last 16 years of his life to raising awareness of adult literacy issues. The PGFL supported his PGI ("Peter Gzowski Invitational") fundraising events, held across the country for 37 years, ending in 2022.

The PGFL continues to support Peter's legacy and his passion for, as he once put it, "playing for a better world," by providing grants to literacy groups to support their work.

PGFL Grants Program

The 2025 PGFL Grants Program launched on February 10, 2025, with applications closing on March 21, 2025.

The program is open to registered charities delivering adult or family literacy services. This year, funding was available for both one-year and two-year initiatives. Two funding streams were offered:

1. Project Funding

Project Funding supports discrete initiatives with defined timelines and outcomes, such as:

- Curriculum development
- Tutor or practitioner training
- Development of new approaches within existing literacy programs
- Expansion initiatives designed to reach new learners

2. Program Funding

Program Funding supports operational expenses associated with delivering an organization's existing programs and services. Initiatives involving the development of new programs or expansion into new locations are considered under Project Funding.

The 2025 call for proposals resulted in 98 eligible applications for review. The Foundation approved fifteen one-year grants of \$20,000 each and five multi-year grants of \$80,000 over two years, representing a total annual commitment of \$500,000.

PGFL GRANTS PROGRAM STATISTICS – 2023 - 2025

Province/ Territory	2023			
	All Applications		Awarded	
Alberta	7	19%	3	30%
British Columbia	11	31%	3	30%
Manitoba	1	3%		
National	0	0%		
New Brunswick	1	3%		
Newfoundland and Labrador	1	3%	1	10%
Nova Scotia	3	8%		
Northwest Territories	0	0%		
Nunavut	0	0%		
Ontario	9	25%	3	30%
Prince Edward Island	1	3%		
Quebec	1	3%		
Saskatchewan	1	3%		
Yukon	0	0%		
TOTAL	36	100%	10	100%

2024			
All Applications		Awarded	
11	20%	6	38%
8	15%	1	6%
2	4%	1	6%
1	2%		
2	4%		
1	2%	1	6%
1	2%	1	6%
1	2%		
0	0%		
24	44%	6	38%
0	0%		
2	4%		
1	2%		
1	2%		
55	100%	16	100%

2025			
All Applications		Awarded	
20	20%	4	20%
23	23%	3	15%
3	3%	1	5%
1	1%		
1	1%		
0	0%		
2	2%	1	5%
1	1%		
1	1%		
37	38%	10	50%
1	1%		
5	5%		
2	2%		
1	1%	1	5%
98	100%	20	100%

TOTAL TO DATE			
All Applications		Awarded	
38	20%	13	28%
42	22%	7	15%
6	3%	2	4%
2	1%		
4	2%		0%
2	1%	2	4%
6	3%	2	4%
2	1%		
1	1%		
70	37%	19	41%
2	1%		
8	4%		
4	2%		
2	1%	1	2%
189	100%	46	100%

% Awarded vs Submitted	36		10	28%
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	55		16	29%
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	98		20	20%
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	189		46	24%
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PGFL Grant Recipients – 2025

ONE-YEAR SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Centre d'éducation et de formation pour adultes | Sault Ste. Marie, ON

www.cefassm.com

Adult Literacy for Francophone newcomers to Canada

CÉFA will develop our literacy and basic skills programming directed toward Francophone newcomers, who need specialized training and services to enhance their French reading and writing proficiency and successfully integrate to our community.

Community Learning Alternatives (Hastings County and District) | Belleville, ON

<https://learnwithcla.ca>

CLA Capacity Building

CLA will invest in creating an updated volunteer development strategy to provide a sustainable adult basic education program that addresses staffing limitations through a volunteer recruitment and training model—supported by strong staff coordination, effective marketing, thoughtful design, defined operations, and engaged community partners.

Deafblind Community Services | Toronto, ON

<https://deafblindservices.ca>

Enhancing Training Excellence for Skills Development Specialists

CNIB Deafblind Community Services Skills Development Program is seeking funding to update our program manual and develop an intensive training program for instructors. This will ensure effective training and development, equipping specialists to provide essential Literacy and Basic Skills training to adults who are blind, Deafblind or have low vision.

Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society | Fort Nelson, BC

fncls.com

The Little Town That Could

We are seeking operational funding to sustain literacy programs, advocacy services, and vital community resources. With funding cuts and limited opportunities, this support is crucial to keeping our centre open and ensuring continued service for those who rely on us. Despite economic downturns, including devastating job losses in forestry and oil and gas over the last 15 years, Fort Nelson has endured. We continue to reinvent ourselves, and now, our population is shifting again. The Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society is prepared to meet this moment—to support individuals as they settle, adapt, and thrive.

Gateway Centre for Learning | Midland, ON

www.gatewaycentreforlearning.ca

Communication Plan Implementation for Outreach & Organization Awareness

Our project applies our strategic Communication Plan to a new website and rack cards creating a unified/effective message. These will showcase the breadth of our initiatives, share success stories/achievements, develop new channels to reach new learners and build awareness.

Hamilton and District Literacy Council | Hamilton, ON

hamiltonreads.ca

Divergent Learner Tutor Training

The funding will enable us to certify our Tutor Coordinator as an Orton Gillingham Practitioner. Once certified, the coordinator will develop and teach selected tutors from our volunteer tutor pool the techniques and approaches used and then match them with one of our divergent learners.

Iroquois Falls Adult Learning Centre | Cochrane, ON

alctraining.ca

SafeServe: Inclusive Safe Food Handling Training Certification

The Iroquois Falls Adult Learning Centre will develop the course SafeServe: Inclusive Safe Food Handling Certification designed for adult Ontarians with literacy challenges. This course will be submitted for Ministry of Health approval to gain Safe Food Handling certification to support employment in the food service industry.

Literacy in Kamloops Society | Kamloops, BC

literacyinkamloops.ca

Bridging Generations

Bridging Generations fosters intergenerational literacy by connecting older adults with younger learners through storytelling, reading, and writing activities. This family literacy program strengthens literacy skills, preserves cultural narratives, and promotes lifelong learning. By engaging multiple generations, it builds connections and supports literacy development in a learner-centred, community-based environment.

Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy | Toronto, ON

www.mtml.ca

Exploring Canada's Literacy Landscape: Innovative Approaches

In this project, we will research, highlight and share an innovative approach/program from each of the provinces and territories through 13 podcasts. An accompanying printed resource will be developed (English and French) explaining each model, implementation process, outcomes, and strategies for programs wanting to introduce the approach into their framework.

Peterborough Native Learning Centre | Peterborough, ON

www.pnlp.org

Advancing Adult Digital Literacy for Inclusive Access & Workforce Growth

The Peterborough Native Learning Program (PNLP) seeks support to enhance adult digital literacy, ensuring equitable access to education, employment, and community resources. Through culturally relevant, learner-centered training, we empower Indigenous and non-Indigenous adults with essential digital skills, fostering workforce readiness, economic participation, and lifelong learning opportunities.

Prince Edward Learning Centre | Picton, ON

www.pelc.ca

Prince Edward County - Calling all Volunteers

Prince Edward Learning Centre will update all areas of its literacy volunteer program, including outreach, intake, orientation ongoing training and recognition to expand program reach in a rural area, ensure excellence, and enable volunteers to support adult learning and contribute to PELC's mission.

Project READ Literacy Network Waterloo-Wellington | Kitchener, ON

www.projectread.ca

Get Set Learn Together

We propose to develop, run and evaluate family literacy programs for newcomers in the Muslim and Somali communities in Waterloo Region. Many of these families and especially the mothers feel isolated and want to have a sense of belonging to the community. Our family literacy programs not only develop literacy skills in parents and enhance the skills of pre-school children, but they also create a new community and a sense of well-being. The program will be run once in coordination with the Coalition of Muslim Women and the Somali Canadian Association of Waterloo Region.

READ Surrey/White Rock Society | Surrey, BC

<https://readsurreywhiterock.com>

Tutor Training and Website Update

We will update and digitize our tutor training materials to build capacity and increase the effectiveness of our adult literacy program. Tutors need current, user-friendly resources to provide the best tutoring possible to the learners. We will revamp our website and include short videos so that we can reach new learners in an engaging, non-print way.

The NorQuest College Foundation | Edmonton, AB

www.norquestadultlearning.ca

Literacy on Location: Meeting Learners Where They're At

The Literacy on Location project will extend foundational skills programming, literacy supports and learning opportunities to the most vulnerable neighbours in Alberta's Whitecourt area, meeting learners where they are at – including the local soup kitchen, transitional housing and homelessness program site, and the women's shelter.

Yukon Learn Society | Whitehorse, YK

www.yukonlearn.com

Seniors Outreach Tutor Program

Yukon Learn's Seniors Outreach Computer Tutor Program provides free, hands-on support to help seniors build confidence using digital technology. Through drop-in labs and direct support, participants learn essential skills like internet safety, email use, and device troubleshooting, empowering them to stay connected, informed, and independent in an increasingly digital world. This funding will allow Yukon Learn Society to expand our Seniors Outreach Computer Tutor Program by reaching more communities across Yukon.

MULTI-YEAR GRANTS PROGRAM

The **Multi-Year Grants** program provides grants of \$80,000 over two years. These grants are for larger projects or more intensive activity that can not be completed in one year. Supported are projects that build capacity or enhance promising practices. This year we received 48 applications and awarded 5 grants.

John Howard Society of Manitoba | Winnipeg, MB

www.johnhoward.mb.ca

Growing and Sustaining Adult Literacy Education for Justice-Involved Learners in Manitoba

This project aims to more than double the reach of learner-centered literacy programming for currently and formerly incarcerated adults in Manitoba over two years. This program funding will act as two-year bridge funding that will allow the JHSM literacy department to rise beyond the limitations we've historically faced in both time and resources, and in doing so, expand our services to better meet actual population need while actively working to secure sustained funding beyond those two years.

Literacy Association of Nova Scotia | Truro, NS

www.literacyns.ca

Pathways to Understanding: Culturally Responsive Education for Teaching Mi'kmaq Adult Learners

The current training for adult literacy practitioners in NS lacks comprehensive modules on Mi'kmaq history, culture, and treaty education. This gap hinders the ability of educators to provide culturally responsive and inclusive education to Mi'kmaq adult learners. Addressing this gap is crucial for fostering decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation. By equipping practitioners with the knowledge and skills to support Mi'kmaq learners, we can create a more inclusive and respectful educational environment. New training modules will be developed by Literacy Nova Scotia for the Nova Scotia Practitioner Training Program, expanding on our previous PGFL-funded work with Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey. These modules will enhance educators' understanding of Mi'kmaq history, culture, and treaty education, fostering decolonization and Truth and Reconciliation through culturally responsive and inclusive teaching practices.

PALS - Project Adult Literacy Society | Edmonton, AB

www.palsedmonton.ca

LEAD - Literacy, Empowerment, Advancement and Development

Over the next two years, PALS aims to develop a model literacy program for out-of-school youth that acknowledges their specific developmental characteristics and needs. It will be designed for youth aged 18 – 25 to acquire and improve basic reading, writing and comprehension skills to help them successfully transition into adult roles as workers, parents, and citizens, along with other valuable skills such as problem-solving, teamwork and leadership effectively.

Rainbow Literacy and Learning Society | Vulcan, AB

www.rainbowliteracy.com

Enhancing Capacity for Rainbow Literacy and Learning Society

Building capacity to create a safe and welcoming environment where adults learn foundational skills in relevant and engaging learning opportunities that meet their personal goals. With this initiative, we would "make the case" that an increase in funding, along with changing the thresholds of where money is allocated, has direct impacts on program delivery and how life-altering this is for our learners.

Willow Creek Community Adult Learning Society | Fort Macleod, AB

willowcreeklearning.ca

Project Full Circle

Our approach is two-fold; coordinate and set-up safe, accessible and welcoming spaces for learners to learn from, either online, hybrid or in-person, from seven different locations in southern Alberta. Secondly, they have access to five distinct programs; Potential Best, I-LAPS, Employment & Education, Adult Basic Education and high school equivalency made possible through the collaboration of five separate learning centres. Students will have access to wrap around services such as tutoring, referrals and community connections. When the effectiveness of this collaborative model has been demonstrated, we can present this to Advanced Education with the merit of the education and employment outcomes and secure support and funding to grow Project Full Circle.