

# Linking literacy to communities

In Canada, 42 per cent of adults do not have the minimum literacy skills required to cope with everyday life and work.



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Edmonton Public Library provides the space and helps advertise the programs throughout branches in the city.

"We believe learning can take place anywhere. It doesn't have to be in a classroom," Jimmy emphasizes. "Our philosophy is based on student-centred learning. We talk directly with our students and ask them what it is they want to learn. We try to meet those goals through our programs."

The programs rely solely on volunteer contributions. Without enough tutors, the waiting list for students hoping to

## Learning to read is the key to a productive life

improve their literacy skills continues to grow longer. "A love of reading and a commitment of at least one hour a week is all that's needed to volunteer," she says.

### SCRABBLE ANYONE?

If volunteering isn't an option, Jimmy encourages Edmontonians to attend their Scrabble Night event at Amiskwacy Academy on March 19 from 2 to 8 pm.

Scrabble enthusiasts are invited to come and play fun, competitive games of Scrabble to help raise money in support of literacy.

The entry fee is \$2 and will be donated directly to Frontier College. Individuals unable to attend can still donate to the

event by visiting [www.scrabblenightincanada.ca](http://www.scrabblenightincanada.ca).

To learn more about literacy, Scrabble Night and how you can help, visit [www.frontiercollege.ca](http://www.frontiercollege.ca), call 780-487-4787 or email [edmonton@frontiercollege.ca](mailto:edmonton@frontiercollege.ca).

For information about volunteerism, visit [www.volunteeredmonton.com](http://www.volunteeredmonton.com).

Look here to see the work that the city's volunteers are carrying out and what it is that Volunteer Edmonton is involved in. For more information or suggestions for story ideas please contact Evelyn Pham at [epham@volunteeredmonton.com](mailto:epham@volunteeredmonton.com), call 780-732-6655 or check out our website at [www.volunteeredmonton.com](http://www.volunteeredmonton.com).

Frontier College, one of Canada's oldest literacy organizations, is hoping to change that.

Celebrating 110 year in operation, the college has played a fundamental role in helping to improve people's literacy skills.

Miranda Jimmy, regional co-ordinator for Alberta, explains that the college began training university students as literacy teachers to tutor workers in logging and mining camps shortly after the turn of the century.

Today, the need is still present.

"A lot of people think that the need to improve literacy isn't relevant anymore. Everyone has access to education, and there are people who don't believe it's an issue," says Jimmy.

Without basic literacy skills, simple everyday tasks like reading a bus schedule, applying for a job or opening a bank account would be impossible.

**Almost 97 per cent of them reported that it was the first book they ever owned.**

As a national non-profit group, Frontier College currently operates in six communities in Alberta.

While some literacy organizations have a specific focus on early literacy or ESL, Jimmy

Miranda Jimmy

says Frontier College's focus is on meeting the needs not being met in the community.

"We don't want to duplicate the services already provided by other great organizations. We want to fill gaps."

### PILOT PROJECT

In 2007, the college launched a pilot project that offered a day camp designed to introduce literacy outside of a school setting to children.

This past summer, the project was introduced to four different communities in Alberta at no cost.

"We provided the kids with free books to take home. Almost 97 per cent of them reported that it was the first book they ever owned," Jimmy notes.

In conjunction with the camps, the college offered workshops to help educate parents about how they can continue to support and encourage literacy at home.

In Edmonton, Frontier College provides two ongoing programs in partnership with Edmonton Public Library - a reading circle and homework club, where volunteers work one-on-one with students to help strengthen reading and writing skills.

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