


Each One Teach One

A Personal Approach to Literacy

By Lynda Paziuk and D. Lark Gamey

Le modèle d'enseignement mis sur pied par Laubach Literacy, "Each One Teach One" (chaque personne enseigne à une autre personne), offre une méthode personnalisée d'alphabétisation grâce au secours de bénévoles

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communautaires. À l'aide de ressources sophistiquées, chaque volontaire enseigne à une personne comment lire, écrire et compter.

The Laubach Literacy Program is used successfully by Thompson Reading Aides Corporation (TRAC) to teach non-readers in northern Manitoba to read. The program attracts primarily women of all ages. They may be single parents or married, unemployed or employed, on social assistance or in one-income families. What they all have in common is an inability to read well enough to function in today's society.

Thompson Reading Aides Corporation (TRAC) is an example of how community members can develop a volunteer literacy program following the Laubach model which uses a one-on-one approach to teaching literacy skills.

In the late 1920s Dr. Frank Laubach, a young Congregational missionary, began work among the Moros on the Philippine island of Mindanao. Their language, Maranaw, had never been written. Dr. Laubach devised a system of writing their language using the Roman alphabet. He used key words to represent each specific sound in the Maranaw language. A series of charts matching key words with pictures was developed. The results were amazing. The Moros learned to read and write in two weeks or less! Soon there were those literate enough to teach others in their own and in other villages.

A decade later, Dr. Laubach's missionary funds were cut. He told the Moros that the literacy campaign would have to end. One of the village chiefs, sensing the importance of literacy for his people, came up with an alternate plan. "I'll make everybody who knows how to read teach somebody else—or I'll kill him" (Laubach 1992). No one died. The chief's harsh words together with Dr. Laubach's

method of picture-word-sound association set in motion what has become an international organization. The "Each One Teach One" motto of Laubach Literacy is used by volunteers around the world.

Laubach Literacy International (LLI), the oldest and largest non-profit adult literacy organization in the world, currently supports projects in countries such as Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Literacy is a tool through which community education, social reform, and local development can take place. Literacy is the first step toward ending the suffering and exploitation of the world's disadvantaged people. LLI provides financial support to projects staffed by people from the country requesting help.

The first Laubach tutor training workshop came to Canada in 1970. In June 1981 Laubach Literacy Canada (LLC) was incorporated as a non-profit charitable organization. To date, there are councils affiliated with LLC in each of the ten provinces.

A survey conducted by Laubach Literacy of Canada (1990), identified various reasons why people turn to literacy programs. Most students begin with the need to acquire basic skills. Examples of this need were expressed as a desire to read to their children and to read instructions on household products. Also, many students turn to literacy programs because of job-related concerns. Some have specific goals including getting a driver's licence, applying for a promotion, or finding a job. Others wished to improve their educational levels by taking the GED (General Equivalency Diploma) passing Grade XII, or taking a trade.

The survey supports what others have stated: adults are highly motivated to learn in areas relevant to their current developmental tasks, social roles, life crises, and transition periods (Brundage).

TRAC, a non-profit charitable organization, is strongly committed to helping adults acquire literacy life skills. TRAC has a team of volunteer tutor trainers who explain the "Each One Teach One" method to individuals in the community interested in becoming tutors. The largest group of volunteers are women searching for a rewarding experience. The qualifications of a volunteer are to have a love for reading and an interest and willingness to teach others.

In a recent telephone survey of TRAC students and tutors exploring students' commitment to learning, several common themes emerged. These responses can be grouped under one or more of the following headings: practicality, flexibility, security, and friendship.

Women become interested in TRAC because they want to learn to read for practical reasons. The Laubach Literacy Skill books include lessons on many life skills. There are

lessons on how to write cheques, how to shop economically, how to use the telephone book, plus many other practical skills. Many of these lessons lead to field trips where the tutor and student check out the resources available in the community. In this way, students receive much more than reading lessons; they develop life skills.

Learning to do things for themselves such as getting a driver's licence and filling out forms, strengthens an individual's sense of self. They become empowered to continue growing and learning.

The following comments point out the connection between basic literacy and self-esteem.



Thompson Reading Aides Corporation training team on their way to Churchill, Manitoba. Michelle Tomchak, Lynda Paziuk, Kate Roth, Lark Gamey, and Steve, the pilot.

I got my Beginner's Licence. I couldn't do that before. Now I feel I can do things and I feel good about myself.

I used to feel uptight before when filling out forms. Now I feel fine. I can pronounce any word I come to in reading anything.

I can do things now that I could not do before. For example I can go to baby showers without feeling worried when they play games. I don't have to disappear to the washroom or say I forgot my glasses. Now I have more courage.

(personal communication 1994)

Flexibility of both time and place appear important in the initial stages of the tutor-student relationship. Literacy classes, because of their increased number of students, are by nature scheduled at fixed times. The one-on-one Laubach model used by TRAC allows the tutor and student to work out meeting times acceptable to both of their schedules. Most pairs meet once a week for approximately

one and a half hours. Schedules which are flexible work well for women since most women have to juggle multiple responsibilities. Evening hours are not necessarily the best times for all women nor are day classes acceptable, especially for single-parent families. It is easier for women to accommodate a flexible hour and a half in a busy schedule than it is to accommodate a regular three-hour evening or daytime class.

Security is another common theme that emerged from the telephone interviews. Students expressed comfort with the one-on-one approach because they viewed it as non-threatening.

I feel nervous and frustrated around people. The one-on-one approach was good because I feel more relaxed.

There was no classroom pressure. I could work at my own speed. (personal communication 1994)

Another factor that may contribute to the students' sense of safety and security is TRAC's commitment to confidentiality. As a Laubach Literacy organization, TRAC is set up in a manner that protects the identity of students. The person who matches the tutor to the student and the tutor are the only individuals in the organization aware of the student's identity. It is up to the students if and when they wish to publicly acknowledge their involvement in this literacy program.

Learning is a social process so it is not surprising to hear friendship identified as an important factor in the student-tutor relationship. The tutor takes on the role of a mentor. They become involved in the student's lives and many discussions centre around daily living problems which all women face regardless of their level of literacy.

All students expressed gratitude towards their tutors for the friendship that developed. Both students and tutors commented on shared experiences. As one tutor stated, "We would often set the lesson aside and just chat about concerns about the job and family." One student commented, "My tutor is always there for me. I used to go to my family for help but now I go to my tutor. She helps me" (personal communication 1994).

Students who have experienced the Laubach model through community councils, such as TRAC, develop the practical skills they seek in a secure environment that is flexible enough to accommodate their individual circumstances. Along the way, meaningful relationships develop that enrich both the lives of students and tutors.

The Laubach approach to literacy is easy for tutors to follow and easy for students to learn. Anyone interested in teaching another individual can follow this format because it is set up in a systematic, organized manner using a step by step teaching method. Extensive preparation by the tutors is not required since well-developed reference materials are provided. A series of systematic skill books develops skills step by step at the student's individual pace.

Local Laubach councils are organized by community volunteers interested in literacy. All tutoring is provided

free of charge to students. There are no wages paid or tuition collected. The skill books and other print resources are available through LLC distributorship at minimal cost. Communities that feel the need for a literacy program can request the help from the Development Office of Laubach Literacy Canada. With a minor financial investment, interested volunteers can organize a Laubach community council and achieve observable results.

Using the help of LLC and TRAC a council was recently formed in Churchill, Manitoba. Noting the high number of non-readers in the community, one woman decided to make a difference. She talked with members of her community about the Each One Teach One approach to literacy. A small group of people became interested in developing their own council to increase the literacy skills in the community.

Laubach Literacy's "Each One Teach One" approach has made a difference to many people. It can make a difference to someone you know.

Lynda Paziuk and Lark Gamey, long-time northern residents, have been members of Thompson Reading Aides Corporation for over five years. Both have tutored students and currently train others to become tutors for their local council. Lynda Paziuk teaches in the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Manitoba at Thompson. D. Lark Gamey is the Centre Coordinator of the Brandon University Northern Teachers Education Program at Thompson.

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Joy Coldwell A Yukon Learner

Whitehorse born, Southern Tutchone Native Joy Coldwell is the mother of two girls, and a strong advocate of returning to learning.

Joy is quick to chuckle about life. She sits now in the Yukon Learn Offices and we talk about her and her ongoing desire to learn. She also recalls how painfully difficult it was to take that initial plunge and walk in our doors about seven years ago.

"At the beginning," says Joy, "I was scared and I was afraid of people making fun of me. I wouldn't talk out loud. I would talk low..."

"Now, I am bragging that I am going to school. I go to school at home or at Wordpower one hour a week. I try to tell the young children to stay in school as long as they can."

Joy first went to school in Carcross, Yukon, then moved briefly to Edmonton. Her education was interrupted and it wasn't until much later that she became involved with literacy programs offered through the Yukon Literacy Council (now called Yukon Learn). She has worked on reading, writing and math including multiplying and dividing.

Joy says, "I feel that I have improved as I started with phonetic books. Later I moved into the Challenger series which were harder to understand. I recently started reading from Reader's Digest condensed books." Joy also enjoys reading to her grandchildren.

In 1993 Joy received the Superior Propane Learners Award, presented by Peter Gzowski at a fund-raising golf tournament in the Yukon. This year Joy wrote a story called 'Fishing at Tagish,' published in *Wordpower Stories*, June, 1994.

Joy plans to continue learning. She aspires to take a course at Yukon College.

Her advice to anyone who has thought about learning to read and write is "Walk by the building, like I did, and hesitated. Walk by it every day and when you get your courage up come in, like I did. It took me a long time. It was worth it."

"Even if we study to old age, we shall not finish learning. To open a book brings profit."

By Liesel Briggs, a literacy tutor and coordinator of tutors and learners—matching, and doing follow-up work, such as advising on materials and lesson plans. She has been writing a weekly clear-language column for the Yukon News called "Freedom to Read" since 1990.