



Tracey Mollins

community storytelling // community development

Working with communities of practice

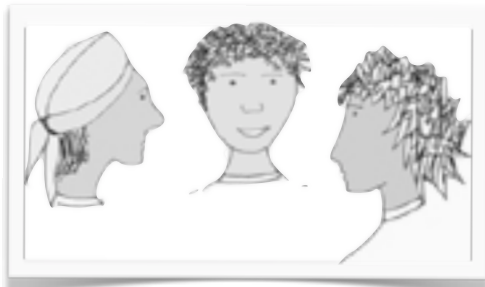
at school boards, colleges, community programs,

network organizations and unions

to bring stories to voice.

www.greedyhouse.ca

Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. ~ Etienne Wenger



Literacies: Researching practice, practising research

is a journal, website and blog where adult literacy practitioners, researchers and policy makers share experiences and knowledge about their work.

project host: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

project funder: National Literacy Secretariat

my role: publisher; website design, writing and production; blog design, author and production; web forum design, research and moderation; oral history and ‘crazy wisdom’ animation; evaluation through consultation, reflection and surveys

Literacies is where the education community shares ideas and experiences about how research and practice connect and how each informs the other. We provide a medium for a range of inquiries including analysis, discussions, debates, reflections and creative work in all aspects of research and practice in education. We support writers from a diversity of experiences and backgrounds to develop writership. In order to do this, we support a series of projects each year to animate writing from literacy practitioners. Animation includes workshops, working with project developers to include animation as part of their projects, and working with authors and artists to create content for *Literacies* and spread the word about their work, knowledge and understanding. We have represented some of this work on our *Crazy Wisdom* pages at <http://www.literacies.ca/cw.htm>. By communicating and documenting individual scholarship and experiences, *Literacies* advances a collective understanding of literacy work in the field, promotes the exchange of ideas with policy-makers and theorists, and builds and strengthens the community.

Festival of Literacies Research-in-Practice Podcast Project

is a series of podcasts where adult literacy practitioner/researchers share knowledge, learning and teachings from reflective practice projects and learn about presenting their work through podcasting.

project host: *Festival of Literacies*, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

project funder: Canadian Council on Learning

my role: project design and coordination; research (podcast production using different recording technologies to produce the recordings in different contexts); design and develop podcast recipe and scripts in consultation with each group; record and edit the podcasts; enhance podcasts with artwork and photographs in consultation with the interviewees; design and produce the podcast pages

These audio podcasts are dialogues between experienced literacy practitioner-researchers about key findings and issues in recent literacy research in practice projects. We set up the project as a conversation between three research circles, two from Toronto, Ontario and one from Hazelton, British Columbia. The goal of the project was to find another way for literacy workers to talk to each other about their work. Most funded research in practice and reflective practice projects result in a report and/or a manual but many workers say that they do not have time to read all of this print material. We expect that being able to listen to the researchers talk about the projects will make the findings of the projects accessible to a larger group and will help more members of this community of practice join the conversation.

The Learning Circles Project

is a project where learning circle facilitators and participants share experiences and knowledge about how to create accessible learning opportunities for communities of practice with diverse memberships.

project host: Metro Toronto Movement for Literacy

project funder: National Literacy Secretariat

my role: research models of informal learning and community capacity building; collect stories and experiences; design and facilitate storytelling animation workshops; write, illustrate and produce a plain language guide to learning circles based on the stories and experiences collected (*The Beginner's Guide to Learning Circles*); design, write and produce the website

This project is about how adults can learn about a variety of topics in an inclusive environment. We look at a kind of learning that is an alternative to academic learning. In these learning circles, adults with various levels of formal education and different histories of learning, come together to share and create new knowledge. In this project we worked with adult education workers, learners, researchers, and policy makers to share knowledge, learn from each other and develop understandings, strategies and policies for inclusive, participatory, democratic and sustainable 21st-century learning.

Connecting the Dots

is a project where adult literacy workers and funders share experiences and knowledge about how to create accessible learning opportunities while meeting funder requirements for accountability.

project host: Movement for Canadian Literacy, Centre for Literacy of Quebec & RiPAL BC

project funder: National Literacy Secretariat

my role: conduct a field review to document the impact of accountability frameworks in literacy; coordinate data collection and analysis and reports writing with six other regional field reviewers

As I read over the one hundred plus pages of quotes and sentences about who feels accountable to whom and how, I struggle to find a way to include the multitude of perspectives and all the knowledge, understanding and wisdom I find there. ... There are so many stories I can tell with the data. In some projects, looking for the story was like playing with a snow globe. I shook it this way and then I shook it that way. Each time, the snow rested differently over the tiny landscape. Something different was covered and something different was revealed. Eventually I learned what was under each snow bank and I could tell a story. I checked back with the original storytellers and they said, "Yes. That is the story." In this project, I felt as though I was looking at one of those lenticular postcards where the picture changes as you tilt it back and forth. I can include this and discard that and the picture is a rose garden in full bloom. I can include that and discard this and the picture is a rose garden in winter. Or not a rose garden at all.

Learning Our Way: Women, Computers and Literacy

a project where adult literacy learners share experiences and knowledge about how they use computers and how they would like to use computers.

project host: St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program

project funder: National Literacy Secretariat/ Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities

my role: coordinate a participatory research project into how women want to work with computers in literacy programs; work with illustrator and designer; write and produce a report and curriculum guide

Learning Our Way: Women, Computers and Literacy is the story of a computer class for women at the St. Christopher House Adult Literacy Program. We noticed that not very many women were signing up for the computer course. Women who did sign up often stopped coming to the class before the end. More men signed up for the class and the most of them completed the class. We wanted to find out why so we asked the women.

Literacy and Basic Skills Online Courses

are where adult literacy learners share experiences, understanding, and knowledge and learn about writing.

project host: Alpha Plus

project funder: Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities

my role: design and facilitate writing animation workshops; design and produce websites to reflect the work of the group and present their writing; consult with Alpha staff; evaluation through consultation, reflection and learner feedback

These courses are for adult literacy students who want to learn more about reading, writing and community development, and for students who want to try out an online course. Students learn and practice reading stories and poems; writing reviews and opinions; writing poems and stories based on their own experiences and ideas; analysing their experiences; and developing leadership strategies.

The Literacy Enquirer / Literacy Enquirer 2.0

a learning circle where adult education practitioners and researchers share knowledge, learning and teachings about how policy affects literacy work and learning.

my role: learning circle convener; online discussion designer, researcher and moderator; collect stories and experiences; bulletin layout, design and production; website design, writing and production, cartoonist

The Literacy Enquirer is a reflective practice bulletin and website for adult literacy workers. The writing comes from policy learning circles that meet informally from time to time in a variety of venues to discuss

- how practitioners can have input into policy decisions;
- how to bring our knowledge to the policy-making process; and
- the future of adult literacy education, education for adults whose primary way of learning is not print dependent, and the literacy movement.