

Nilima's and Loraine's speech for Literacy Alberta Award November 3, 2006. Palliser Hotel, Calgary, AB

Nilima

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Literacy Alberta, Janet Lane and members of the review committee: Thank you very much for this award.

For me, personally, there could be no honour more cherished than recognition by one's peers. It is a privilege indeed to be in your company tonight.

How did we get here.

Back in the early 1990s, two researchers from the VRRRI attended a conference where they saw written information presented in plain language specifically tailored for people with developmental disabilities.

They immediately understood the potential of this new approach. And the power it could give to people who have difficulty reading. Since those early days, VRRRI has not only been producing information in plain language but also teaching others across the province how to do so.

I sincerely thank those researchers for their vision and foresight.

As many of you know, writing in plain language is not a simple task.

Neither is it mere technique. Underlying this commitment of ours is our fundamental belief in the right of EVERYone, to make informed decisions.

We are ardent and constant advocates for information to be accessible and meaningful to those whom it impacts.

It is with sadness, therefore, that I accept this award tonight in the wake of the recent cuts by our federal government to literacy programs nation-wide. In my opinion, the decision is unconscionable, uneconomic and self-defeatingly short-sighted.

Those of you who are affected by it – and there are many – may count on us to lend our voices to yours in the effort to get this funding reinstated so that essential programs may continue . . .

Programs that give people the skills to participate in society, and not be marginalized while the rest of the world forges ahead.

Also here to accept this award tonight is one of my respected colleagues, Loraine Luterbach. Loraine is the longest-serving member of our plain language translation team. She's one of those fortunate people who leads a very full life thanks in part to her ability not only to read for herself, but to produce useful information that is accessible for others to read as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, Ms. Loraine Luterbach . . .

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Loraine

**I have been doing plain language for over ten years.
I have gone to many conferences to talk about my work.**

Plain language is important because people should know about things in their life.

**If people can read they will not feel left out.
They will be able to make their own decisions.**

**Plain language has helped me speak up for myself and for others.
I can read better now. I can read things about my health.
Doing plain language makes me feel good about myself.
It makes me feel proud to help other people learn.**

**My first project was to write a charter of rights for people with disabilities.
I am very proud of this project.
The charter of rights is used all over Canada.
It helped me learn about my own rights.**

**I also helped on a group to learn about what is fair.
We did a video for this project.
I like the video.
It is easy to learn if you can see something and not just read about it.**

**Plain language is very important for me and
for people who need help to read.**

**Thank you for giving this award to the VRRRI.
Thank you for inviting us to this lovely evening.**