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The 26th Annual PLAR Conference

“PLAR as a Catalyst for Change: Casting the Net Wide and Deep”

February 2015

Dear Colleague:

The 26th Annual PLAR Conference planning committee enthusiastically invite you to join us Tuesday May 26th to Friday May 29th, 2015 at the Travelodge Hotel, Belleville ON. This conference offers an opportunity for participants to experience a welcoming, supportive, interactive and respectful teaching and learning environment in which our collective PLAR wisdom gained within a variety of cultural settings is shared.

26 years of PLAR and Adult Learning practice has proven and is continuing to prove that PLAR is an effective catalyst for creating positive change within individuals, family, community and culture. Never before has it been as critical for post-secondary institutions, workplace environments and communities to fully understand and respect the value of all human beings and engage in innovative, respectful, practice that serves to develop and enhance human potential.

Faced with constantly changing conditions, the pressure on post-secondary systems to innovate is growing. To thrive in a rapidly changing global environment all organizations need to reflect on the effectiveness of their current reality and practice, try new approaches and develop new models. This is certainly the case in higher education. Working towards creating positive change takes courage and this conference aims to demonstrate the flexibility and adaptability of PLAR in a variety of contexts and in so doing, highlight its significance as a key component of a larger change strategy.

A group of skilled practitioners will share their experience with, and passion for, PLAR from several perspectives. Their practice is based on and organized around, general principles of adult-learning and related skills, knowledge and attitudes essential to effective PLAR implementation in a variety of settings. These settings include: community; mainstream post-secondary institutions; teaching and learning with youth at risk; and national and international Indigenous learners and their communities. Collectively, this community of PLAR practitioners has in excess of 150 years of successful PLAR experience.

The format for this year’s conference is based on offering a series of focused, in-depth, interactive workshops in five key areas of PLAR practice:

1. Introduction to PLAR and Portfolio Development
2. PLAR Practitioner (Advisor and Assessor) Training
3. Indigenous Approaches to PLAR and Portfolio Development
4. Portfolio Development with Youth: Unearthing the Wisdom Within
5. The International Indigenous Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Collective

(Summaries for each of the five workshops are included as a separate attachment to this e-mail.)

Conference participants are invited to register for **ONLY ONE** of the five workshops and to remain in that session for the duration of the conference. Upon completion of the workshops Loyalist College will issue certificates of completion to participants for their involvement in the various workshops identified above.

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A series of plenary sessions highlighting key issues in the field will be woven into the conference program offering participants the opportunity to reflect on key issues in the field and to engage in a dialogue.

Plenary session highlights include a presentation by Malcolm Day, Nottingham University, ***“Prior Learning Assessment for Multi-National Health Care Professionals”***. Malcolm is Assistant Professor in Adult Learning and PLA Coordinator in the School of Health Sciences, Nottingham University, England. He will describe the key components of the PLAR process at Nottingham that includes work with health care professionals who possess Registered Nursing credentials from countries such as India, Nigeria, Philippines, Zimbabwe, Bulgaria, China, Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Poland and Tanzania, who are seeking health care certification in England.

A second plenary session led by John McMahon, Senior VP Academic and Student Success, Loyalist College, will examine the relationship between ***“PLAR, Quality Assurance and Accreditation in a Changing Post-Secondary Environment.”***

Other plenary highlights will include an update on the continuing development of the International Indigenous RPL Collective that has a revamped website and which has recently embarked upon a membership drive. A key component of this presentation will be a summary of the fifth annual symposium on Ancestral Knowledge and Interculturalism held in Coquimbo, Chile at the end of October 2014. There were approximately 185 delegates in attendance and interest in the Recognition of Prior Learning and its relationship to strengthening and sustaining Indigenous Knowledge and language was strong.

A final plenary session scheduled for Friday morning May 29, ***“Sharing Our Learning and Sustaining Our Practice”***, will engage conference attendees in a participatory activity designed to identify learning that may have taken place during the conference and the strategies and resources needed to strengthen and sustain RPL and adult learning practices in one’s own organization. This session will be facilitated by Mark Gallupe, Paul Zakos and Carolyn Mann.

The conference begins at 1:15 pm, Tuesday May 26 and concludes at noon on Friday May 29, 2015.

Attached you will find a conference registration form, a hotel registration form, workshop descriptions and information on conference sponsorship opportunities. We hope that either you or your organization will give serious consideration to assisting us with conference operating costs.

This year, in an effort to attract more adult learners to the conference, we have created a sponsorship opportunity to help support learners and minimize the financial burden which may be a barrier to their participation. For more information, please see the sponsorship information sheet included in this package for details.

For updates on the conference program please check out the following websites: www.loyalistcollege.com, www.plar.ca and www.theindigenouscollective.org.

The conference provides us with the opportunity for ongoing dialogue and collaboration as we attempt to improve our individual practice and strengthen and sustain our collective knowledge of PLAR as a change strategy for individuals and organizations.

It has been our pleasure and privilege to host this conference. If you have any suggestions for ways to strengthen the program please let us know.

Looking forward to seeing you in May!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Zakos", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul Zakos, Chair, Conference Planning Committee