

Introducing...

The PGI Golf Tournaments for Literacy

F O U N D E D B Y P E T E R G Z O W S K I

The PGIs were created 19 years ago by celebrated broadcaster and journalist Peter Gzowski to raise funds for literacy. The vision grew, and before this man of letters (and son of a librarian) knew it, one event held by one concerned person had expanded into 15 PGIs across Canada.

Now, 2200 highly educated, energetic movers and shakers from business, the arts, politics and media play each year. Most provincial premiers have played in a PGI, and so has former Prime Minister the Honourable Jean Chretien. They play in PGIs in every province and territory on some of the finest courses in Canada, as well as on the frozen Arctic Ocean, and in the NWT on oil-sand greens where the ravens like to “borrow” errant golf balls.

In 2004, funds raised from the PGIs helped some 45,000 people who struggle with basic reading and writing to connect with 253 literacy programs in every province and territory.

The PGIs are among the leading forces promoting public awareness of literacy. They are the largest fundraisers for literacy in Canada.

Since his passing on January 24th, 2002, many of Gzowski’s celebrated friends have taken up where Peter left off in support of the PGIs and literacy. Peter Mansbridge, Murray McLauchlan, Shelagh Rogers, Stuart McLean, Rick Mercer and Bill Richardson are among those who volunteer their time and host PGIs.

Why do they get involved? Because **22 percent of** Canadian **adults** have difficulty with reading, writing and math skills in everyday situations, and their children are also at a risk of having low literacy skills. Simply put, too many people do **not have** the **literacy skills** they need for today's working environment or to realize their potential.

The human costs and economic implications of this situation **affect us all.**

This explains why many leading **Canadian corporations are** involved as national, regional and local **sponsors** of the PGIs. Air Canada, Great-West Life, London Life, Canada Life, CBC Radio, The Cooperators, Canada Post, **and** Epson Canada **know that** Canada's future is as strong as its weakest link. Their involvement is an example of forward thinking and is encouraging for the future of our country.

All sponsorship **funds are used for** literacy activities. This means **teaching** adult **learners** in local literacy programs, recruiting **and training** volunteer **tutors**, and supporting literacy referral services and family literacy programs.

Sponsors also know that there are benefits to being involved. The PGIs are a great way to **entertain guests**, mingle with leaders and celebrities, and reward **suppliers and employees.**

In truth, there is no natural connection between golf and literacy. Furthermore, **Peter Gzowski** had no burning desire to create yet another fundraising golf tournament. Instead, he **used golf** as a way **to attract** friends, colleagues, **the influential, and** the **inspirational to** support **the cause.**

To link literacy and golf, he added uniquely **PGI features: music, learner awards, and a poet laureate**—a celebrated Canadian **who writes** a poem about the day, and delivers it as the final event of the PGI.

This immortalizing of the day in verse links the 15 PGIs. As Peter Gzowski once put it, *in the days before radios and newspapers, nothing happened until somebody wrote a poem about it.* Margaret Atwood, Michael Ondaatje, Dennis Lee, Sheree Fitch, Alistair MacLeod, and Manitoba Premier Gary Doer – all have commemorated a day at the PGIs with **a poem of humour, pith and substance**. Each poem is written on golf day, and is read as the finale.

The written word ends the day because that **is** the reason people are there (not just to play golf – which is secondary). They come away from the day with a better understanding of the power of the written word and **an appreciation of** what it means to a person to gain **the gift of literacy**.

The PGIs began through the initiative of one person. From sea to sea to sea, they **provide** needed **funds for literacy programs that** are teaching people to read and write. Your financial support will keep Peter's vision of a literate Canada alive because the PGIs are achieving what Gzowski wanted to do: to simply **make a difference** in the lives of people who struggle to read and write.