



# **Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)**

**Advancing awareness, acceptance and quality practice of PLAR**

## **Strategic Plan**

**Review/Revision 2009, 2011**

**The following definitions have been developed to create consistency in terminology within this document.**

**PLAR:** Prior learning assessment and recognition defines processes that allow individuals to identify, document, have assessed and gain recognition for their prior learning. The learning may be formal, informal, non-formal, or experiential. The context of the learning is not key to the process as the focus is on the learning. PLAR processes can be undertaken for several purposes, including self-knowledge, credit or advanced standing at an academic institution, for employment, licensure, career planning or recruitment.

**Clarification Statement:** Some organizations in Canada use PLAR to describe processes associated with assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning *only*. Tools such as challenge exams, demonstrations, structured interviews, simulations and portfolios can be used alone or in combination, for experiential learning and competency assessment in such instances.

**RPL:** Recognition of prior learning is a holistic term and relates to all aspects of formal and informal recognition and assessment by combining PLAR processes and QR processes. In the case of foreign-trained individuals, RPL would also include recognition of international credentials.

**CR:** Credential recognition refers to formal documents such as diplomas, degrees and licenses.

**QR:** Qualification recognition, sometimes referred to as international or foreign credential recognition, is a process usually associated with internationally-trained individuals who require concrete recognition for their learning. In Canada, some jurisdictions consider 'qualifications' as a combination of formal and informal learning, as it pertains to opportunities related to employment.

## **Strategic Plan 2007**

Guiding the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) in ongoing operations and into a preferred future (2007-2012)

## **Background**

The Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization. CAPLA has been operating since 1994 and has over 400 members nationally and internationally. The Association was created in Belleville, Ontario, thanks, primarily, to the support of First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI) and the efforts of its first president, Paul Zakos. From the beginning, aboriginal customs have influenced the organization and their legacy is reflected in these sustaining beliefs:

- respect learners
- be inclusive
- value cultural diversity
- provide formal recognition for appropriate learning achievements
- reduce barriers to labour force participation
- advocate for improvements to formal educational and credentialing systems.

In 2002, CAPLA became an independent organization, and has yearly workshops and conferences. It has been instrumental in bringing the fields of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and formal credential recognition (qualification recognition QR) together in order to support the recognition of prior learning (RPL) as a holistic process.

Today, CAPLA maintains its web sites at [www.capla.ca](http://www.capla.ca) and [www.recognitionforlearning.ca](http://www.recognitionforlearning.ca). CAPLA has developed the RFL site into a world renowned model in leadership for sharing information as an on-line community of best practices for PLAR stakeholders and a hub for national and international research in PLAR and QR.

**Mission** CAPLA is committed to advancing the **awareness, acceptance, and quality practice** of prior learning assessment and recognition in Canada and internationally.

**Vision** CAPLA envisions a society in which all people have the opportunity and necessary resources to pursue learning that promotes personal and career goals and enhances the quality of community life.

CAPLA advocates for educational and human resource practices which are flexible and respond to changing societal needs and circumstances.

CAPLA advocates for continuous learning opportunities and formal acknowledgement of previous learning through prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) and qualification recognition (QR) processes.

**Strategic Objectives**

1. To promote the recognition and credentialing of prior learning in Canada, and internationally.
2. To promote professional development and enhance expertise among members and related stakeholders.
3. To foster and contribute to the creation and distribution of research and the development of resources for the improvement of PLAR practice.
4. To continue to develop and grow as a not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the awareness, acceptance and practice of PLAR and QR.

## Detailed Plan for Implementation of Strategic Objectives

<b>Objective 1</b>	<b>To promote the recognition and credentialing of prior learning in Canada and internationally as part of an adult learning strategy</b>
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### **Initiative 1.1 Collaborate with local, provincial, national, and international organizations in the advancement of recognition and assessment of formal, non-formal, and experiential (informal) learning**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Activities/ Deliverables</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
i. Foster and support development of provincial/regional and international networks	- Educate and promote through presentations and contacts	- CAPLA Board - Executive Director - Individual CAPLA Members	On-going
ii. Identify and communicate PLAR research issues and topics	- Update the Recognition For Learning (RFL) website	- CAPLA Board - Executive Director - RFL Administrator	On-going
iii. Create a forum for collaboration and sharing of research and development (R&D)	- Post current research on the RFL website - Offer presentations on R&D at every CAPLA conference & Fall Focus Workshop	- RFL Administrator - CAPLA Board - Executive Director - Sub-committees as appropriate	Annually
iv. Respond to initiatives and research with recommendations for action and implications for public policy	- Create proposals and implement partnerships on new research opportunities - investigate the interest in developing a research sub-committee of the CAPLA Board	- Executive Director - CAPLA Board Members	January Focus 2008
v. Support and conduct research that advances PLAR practices nationally and internationally	- Develop an annual research plan - Ensure there is varied representation on research projects from all stakeholders	- Executive Director - CAPLA Board - Proposed research committee	Funding dependent
vi. Share resources in collaborative partnerships	- Share through the RFL site, at conferences and workshops.	- Executive Director - All CAPLA members - RFL Administrator	On-going

**Initiative 1.2      Develop and strengthen relationships with PLAR practitioners, networks and organizations provincially, nationally and internationally**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Activities/Deliverables</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
i. Maintain the inventory of stakeholders who support and/or deliver quality PLAR and QR services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Update the inventory of stakeholders</li>   <li>- Develop a definition of “quality service” then post endorsed principles of Quality Practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> <li>- Individual CAPLA Members</li>   <li>- CAPLA Board</li> </ul>	<p>On-going</p> <p>January 2008 Possibly funding dependent</p>
ii. Incorporate appropriate stakeholder linkages to CAPLA and RFL web sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Expand web sites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	On-going
iii. Pursue opportunities for projects with stakeholders for key beneficiary groups of PLAR networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Write proposals and develop projects to support PLAR and QR initiatives</li> <li>- Pursue and respond to partnership opportunities to develop PLAR and QR proposals and projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	On-going
iv. Maintain productive relationships with partners and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to update and share information through the HUB and through the CAPLA electronic membership data base</li> <li>- Initiate discussion through CAPLA workshops and conferences to facilitate specific groups interested in PLAR and QR i.e. older workers, aboriginal workers, women at home, internationally trained workers, individuals in non-regulated careers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Members</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> <li>- Sub-committees as appropriate</li> </ul>	On-going



**Initiative 1.4 Advocate for awareness, acceptance and practice of PLAR and QR**

Action	Activities/ Deliverables	Responsibility	Timeframe
i. Research then create opportunities to serve learner needs in PLAR and QR, and respond to public requests for input	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presentations</li> <li>- Proposals to seek funding for focus groups, workshops, public forums and conferences on specific topics</li> <li>- Form partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> </ul>	On-going
ii. Ensure CAPLA's representation on advisory committees and working groups to influence the development of social policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Raise the profile of CAPLA through networking and volunteer activities</li> <li>- Inform the Executive Director of possible opportunities</li> <li>- Document activities where CAPLA was represented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- Sub-committees</li> <li>- Individual CAPLA Members</li> </ul>	On-going
iii. Continue to formally and informally advocate and implement CAPLA's vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Website</li> <li>- Networking</li> <li>- HUB publication</li> <li>- Identify and profile learner success stories</li> <li>- Create/implement/maintain workshops, conferences, board meetings and focus groups that put CAPLA's vision into action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	On-going
iv. Advocate for action on research and activities that support continuous learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respond to requests for letters of support to groups that relate to CAPLA's vision</li> <li>- Address concerns and requests for research activities that support PLAR by meeting with representatives at the provincial and federal level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> </ul>	On-going



**Objective 2 To promote professional development and enhance prior learning expertise among members and related stakeholders**

**Initiative 2.1 Support professional development in PLAR and QR**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Activities/Deliverables</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
i. Continue to sponsor and promote professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ensure informative, relevant, empowering annual conferences and learning events</li> <li>- Increase awareness of professional development by offering current information related to industry standards in PLAR</li> <li>- Host national conferences and workshops</li> <li>- Deliver virtual professional development opportunities through RFL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- Education and Training Committee</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	<p>Annually</p> <p>Funding dependent</p>
ii. Continue to facilitate communication among members in appropriate ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Publication of newsletter, RFL site, and membership emails</li> <li>- Collect, compile, and distribute information on PLAR to CAPLA membership</li> <li>- Continue to develop CAPLA's committee structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	On-going
iii. Share innovative practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Keep RFL site updated</li> <li>- Focus on best practices at workshops and conferences</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- Individual CAPLA Members</li> </ul>	On-going
iv. Encourage participation and involvement of French speaking membership in CAPLA publications and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Offer translation services at all conferences and workshops</li> <li>- Encourage the submission of bilingual articles to the HUB</li> <li>- Provide bilingual CAPLA website (translation in both English to French and French to English)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> <li>- Membership committee</li> <li>- French speaking CAPLA members</li> </ul>	On-going

**Initiative 2.2 Utilize the expertise of our membership to deliver quality products and services**

Action	Activities/Deliverable	Responsibility	Timeframe
i. Continue to create in-person and virtual forums for PLAR to facilitate knowledge and skills transfer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create and share an inventory of member's skills and expertise in the practice of PLAR</li> <li>- Promote discussion amongst groups with similar interest e.g. human resource/career development, trades, community education, older workers, FCR, and post-secondary institutions</li> <li>- Link PLAR experts with new members through a new mentorship program</li> <li>- Continue to develop the International PLA network by linking PLAR professionals in Canada with PLAR professionals in other countries</li> <li>- Design a brokering process to manage/link customer need with member skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> <li>- Education and Training Committee</li> </ul>	<p>On-going</p> <p>Funding dependent</p>
ii Design and maintain tools to facilitate delivery of CAPLA services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Research training and development</li> <li>- Design and implement a training service model</li> <li>- Create a price structure for training and training materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- Education and Training Committee</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	<p>Funding dependent</p>
iii. Orient CAPLA contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop and deliver orientation sessions to possible contractors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- Education and Training Committee</li> </ul>	<p>2009</p>

**Initiative 2.3      Continue to enhance and promote an inclusive communication strategy toward growth and development**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Activities/Deliverables</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
i. Continue to develop and maintain avenues of communication with all interested parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Maintain comprehensive, current communication modes (RFL and CAPLA web sites, HUB newsletter, telephone, and emails Os and As)</li> <li>- Continue to use and expand the use of the RFL website as an optional delivery system for professional development and/or training workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	On-going  Funding dependent
ii. Continue to develop, review and renew promotional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Revise and format promotional materials to maintain currency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	Funding dependent

**Objective 3      To foster and contribute to the creation and distribution of research and the development of resources for the improvement of PLAR practice**

**Initiative 3.1      Foster innovation through the design and development of products and services for the emerging needs of the learner**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Activities/Deliverables</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
i. Share information and enhance communication products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Capture conference feedback from effective evaluation forms/procedures</li> <li>- Implement recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> </ul>	On-going
ii. Advance awareness, acceptance, and practice of PLAR and QR activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to distribute ideas through communication venues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> </ul>	On-going
iii. Maximize use of websites to implement CAPLA's strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Support the creation of new professional development activities including research, resource sharing, and training to help meet the needs of practitioners and learners</li> <li>- Continue periodic mass emails to all CAPLA members highlighting new website posts, research items, and resources</li> <li>- Develop an on-line Catalogue of Training for the RFL website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- RFL Administrator</li> <li>- Education and Training Committee</li> </ul>	<p>On-going</p> <p>Funding dependent</p>

<b>Objective 4</b>	<b>To continue to develop and grow as a not-for-profit organization committed to advancing the awareness, acceptance and practice of PLAR and QR</b>
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**4.1 Continue developing as an autonomous organization**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Activities/Deliverables</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
i. Review and renew CAPLA policies, procedures, and the strategic plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brainstorm and exchange ideas through CAPLA communication channels</li> <li>- Investigate the development of a business plan and HR strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> </ul>	<p>On-going</p> <p>Funding dependent</p>
ii. Secure external funding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Respond, reflect, and follow up on recommendations from CAPLA sponsored research projects to grow new initiatives (i.e., Recognizing the Prior Learning (RPL) of Immigrants to Canada: Moving towards Consistency and Excellence 2006)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> </ul>	Funding dependent
iii. Pursue fundraising opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop a fundraising strategy</li> <li>- Continue to offer a trade show opportunity at conferences and market it to publishers of PLAR, QR, and adult literacy resources</li> <li>- Develop a marketing strategy for CAPLA and RFL</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Executive Director</li> <li>- CAPLA Board</li> <li>- Finance Committee</li> </ul>	On-going