

# Literacy and our Community: Building Stronger, Healthier Communities

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# Who Is Robert Wright?

- A child and family, clinical, forensic social worker
- Exec. Dir. Child & Youth Strategy, N.S.
- Former County Exec. Dir. Child Welfare
- Former Dir. Race Relations, DDSB
- Former community/anti-poverty activist
- Parent of 2, foster parent of several, surrogate uncle to many

If You Can Read This . . . . :  
Linking Literacy, Crime, Health, and  
Injury Among Children and Youth

5<sup>th</sup> Atlantic Summer Institute  
on Healthy and Safe Communities

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# Determinants of Health

## Key Determinants

- Income and Social Status
- Social Support Networks
- Education and Literacy
- Employment/Working Conditions
- Social Environments (Some speak of Discrimination or Racism and other forms of oppression)
- Physical Environments
- Personal Health Practices and Coping Skills
- Healthy Child Development
- Biology and Genetic Endowment
- Health Services
- Gender
- Culture (see above)

If you can  
read this

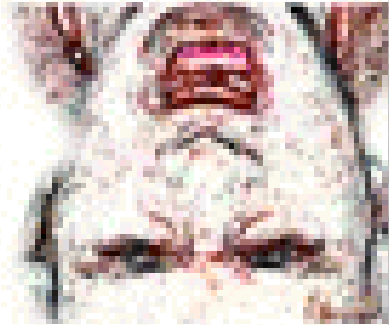
you're too  
close.



**If you can read this  
thank an evolutionarily  
successful hominid**

HELP ME!!!!

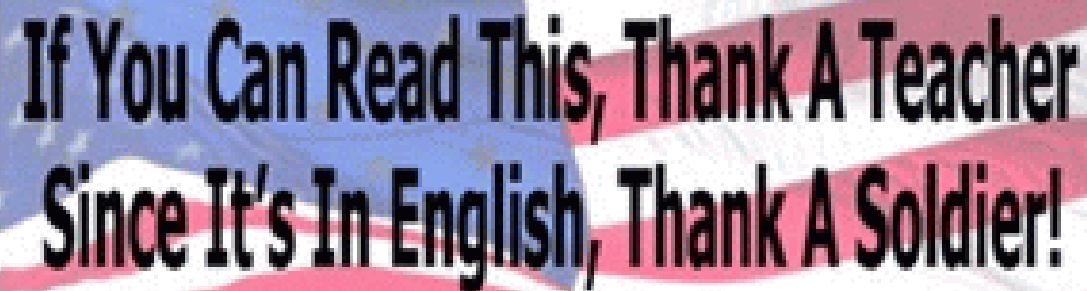
IF YOU CAN READ THIS



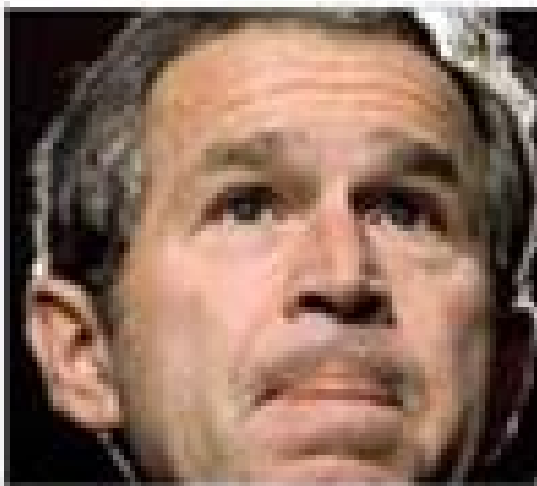
**IF YOU CAN READ THIS**  
I lost my pull-behind grill!







**If You Can Read This, Thank A Teacher  
Since It's In English, Thank A Soldier!**



**If you can read  
this, you're not  
the President**

If you can read this

You can read

If you can read this (likely)

A complex constellation of various personal, familial, neighbourhood, community, social and political, factors have serendipitously come together to create the conditions that have allowed you to gain literacy skills

If you can read this (likely)

Your parents could read

If you can read this (likely)

You're not poor

If you can read this (likely)

You're healthy

# Literacy and Health

- Instances of disease and epidemic increase markedly in areas in which the literacy rates are low.
- Violent death is also more prevalent in low-literate areas than elsewhere in Manitoba
- Hospital usage by children is highest in low-literate communities
- the difficulties of low literate life on reserves are attested to by the virtual absence of old people in the population



If you can read this (likely)

You're not in jail

# Literacy and Crime

- Criminal offenders have lower average literacy levels than the general population.
- Neighbourhoods with lower literacy levels have higher crime rates.
- Literacy programs in prisons have resulted in positive outcomes (such as being able to maintain employment) and reduced rates of re-offending.

If you can read this (likely)

You haven't suffered a TBI

# Literacy, TBI and Crime

## “fanciful leap”

- A consecutive series of 100 admissions to Broadmoor high security hospital showed that there was a high prevalence of trauma to the central nervous system in this population. Definite obstetric complications were found in 26% (compared with 8% of the general population) and 31% had a history of traumatic head injury with loss of consciousness. Almost 60% had neuropsychological impairment. Of the population with brain scans, about 36% were abnormal. Alcohol abuse, a significant risk factor for CNS damage, was found in 69%. Combined risk (obstetric complications, head injury and substance abuse) was noted in 90% of the population. (Lumsden, J., Chesterman, LP., & Hill GM. (1998) Neuropsychiatric indices in a high security admission sample I: Estimating the prevalence. *Criminal Behaviour & Mental Health*, 8, 285-310.)

Illiteracy is a complex social problem both in cause and effect and is highly correlated with other social determinants

New models of collaboration among government and community stakeholders must be developed to ensure (not promote) a literate populace

A bumper sticker campaign  
won't get us there

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