

# Delta District Literacy Plan Report

June 2010

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## **Part 1 - Addressing Delta's Literacy Priorities 2009 to 2010**

Delta's key literacy priorities are to:

- Establish Delta as a literate community, building a supportive culture.
- Continue to strengthen collaborative school, public library and community partnerships.
- Provide opportunities for all Delta residents to participate in a wide range of learning opportunities.
- Locate and support the literacy needs of hard-to-reach individuals and families.
- Secure funding to expand and enhance effective and promising literacy programs and practices.

Through the Delta Literacy Steering Committee and the Delta Literacy Action Group meetings and related activities, key school, library and community partnerships were strengthened. The strengthening of this literacy partnership in Delta has led to a fuller understanding of literacy, related activities and programs, partnership mandates, and the identification of gaps.

### **ACTION GROUP**

The action group reconvened in October to develop implementation plans for the 2009-2010 year. The membership consists of a diverse group of stakeholders from the Delta School District, Delta libraries, Boys and Girls Club, Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN), Kla-how-eya Aboriginal Centre, Delta Police, retired community members, and students. The intent was to form 3 action groups to develop implement plans for 3 groups – Aboriginal families with an early years program focus, new immigrants with a program focus on older youth and business with a focus on education, outreach and literacy awareness. However, due to the overlap of membership, it was decided that it would be more efficient to have one action team with sub groups forming to work on specific projects, as needed.

### **BUILDING CAPACITY**

#### **Aboriginal Early Years Literacy Kit**

A subgroup reviewed existing literacy kits with an aboriginal focus. Due to cost and other factors it was decided to create an Aboriginal Early Years Literacy Kit for the seven StrongStart Centres and two ECD centres in Delta. The purpose of the Kit is to ensure that all ECD centres are representative and inclusive of Aboriginal cultures.

The development of the Aboriginal Early Years Literacy Kit has been a community effort as it required consultation with and the involvement of Aboriginal communities and literacy experts, including the developers of Surrey's Multi-Faith Aboriginal Kit and Fraser Valley Regional Library's H.A.N.D.S. kit. During the development process Steering Committee and Action Group members provided feedback. An introductory letter accompanying the kit will provide additional ideas about how to expand the kit, how to access other local Aboriginal resource kits, and other Aboriginal literacy related content. The Aboriginal Early Years Literacy Kits are still in development and will be formally distributed to the nine ECD centres fall 2010.

#### **Literacy Volunteer**

The Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) received training to design and implement a volunteer literacy tutor program. The program is designed to recruit and train community members to provide

one to one literacy support. The volunteers can be used in a variety of settings to assist those requiring additional support. Volunteers were recruited with support from local high schools, community organizations and the media. Two tutor training orientation sessions were offered in November 2009 and February 2010. Additional individual sessions were facilitated as required.

At the request of the Education Support Worker of Tsawwassen First Nation (TFN), volunteers were provided for the TFN Youth Centre Homework Club. TFN provided funds to cover the costs associated with the Education Support Worker's position to oversee the homework program. The tutors have been in place on a 4 day per week basis, since September 2009. As a result of implementing the Literacy Volunteers at TFN, the program was expanded in February 2010 to include the homework clubs at the Boys and Girls Clubs in North Delta, Ladner and Tsawwassen.

#### Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) Workshops

PALS is a family literacy program that gives parents and caregivers new strategies to encourage learning in their pre-school and kindergarten-aged children. Our committee was able to offer training for early childhood development practitioners in PALS for Aboriginal Communities (APALS) and PALS for Immigrant Communities (IPALS).

The IPALS program is newly developed and our training session was the first to be offered in the province. The majority of costs associated with the training were covered by 2010 Legacies Now through a variety of grants, so we were also able to offer seats to ECD staff from outside of Delta. A total of 39 seats were occupied by Delta ECD related staff for the two PALS workshops. Another 45 PALS training seats were allocated to ECD staff from 17 diverse communities across British Columbia.

This training has greatly enhanced the skill sets of ECD staff across Delta. It is believed that this knowledge will be used to enhance existing programming and activities at StrongStart and ECD centres. Literacy partnerships were essential to the coordination and implementation of these workshops, specifically the Delta School District and TFN. The Delta Literacy Action Group has begun discussing PALS next steps and the LOC is developing a draft PALS budget to present for review to the Action Group and Steering Committee. The opportunity to offer PALS in Immigrant communities in North Delta and PALS in Aboriginal communities in South Delta, would meet our literacy priority of offering effective literacy programs, and continuing to better meet the literacy needs of immigrant and new Canadians as well as Aboriginal people.

## **SUPPORTING AND ENHANCING LITERACY**

### Christmas New Book Drive

During late November, 2009, to support the literacy needs of hard-to-reach individuals and families, we organized a new book drive and collected hundreds of new and used books for distribution to the Delta toy bank and food hampers. The Committee is planning to coordinate another new book drive for Christmas 2010 and to begin the book collection process earlier in order to engage interested business and community partners.

### Food Bank Literacy Support Program

In January 2010 the LOC began developing a relationship with the North Delta Food Bank (operated by the Surrey Food Bank) and the Ladner Food Bank. Beginning in late February with the North Delta Food Bank location, we began distributing literacy supplies including used books, age-specific literacy kits containing items such as flash cards, activity books, journals, craft supplies as well as information brochures, the Westcoast Reader, local newspapers and the Province newspaper. We quickly realized that we needed an ongoing stock of books for redistribution. Reading Tree, a non profit

society that collects and redistributes books is providing books. We also approached the Delta Teacher-Librarians to organize school library-based used book drives. To date 940 books have been collected for redistribution. This partnership has the potential to grow further in support of our efforts to provide literacy supports and resources to hard-to-reach individuals and families.

### Literacy Resources

Throughout the year, in conjunction with many of the above activities, literacy resources were provided – see following:

- Dual Language Books

One of the connections made through our committee is with the Delta South Asian Student Support Initiative (DSASSI), a school district committee formed to support South Asian students and their families. They decided to purchase dual language (Punjabi and English) books for specific school libraries to facilitate the opportunity for Punjabi speaking parents, grandparents and other caregivers to read stories in their native language, and to have the English version of the story available for reading as well. Working in tandem with this project, our committee purchased dual language books for the Strong Start Centres, Family Resource Centres and preschools of Delta Parks and Recreation – 10 centres in total. The School District Literacy Coordinator for primary recommended the titles to purchase and made the arrangements for purchasing and distribution.

- Book Donation for Kindergarten Readiness Program (KRP)

At the request of the KRP Coordinator for books to send home to families, a donation was secured from Reading Tree for this purpose. The committee also purchased a dual language book for the 6 North Delta programs. An English book was purchased for the Ladner program.

- Service Enhancement

In response to improving access for Aboriginal families to programs and literacy supports AFROG Bus (Aboriginal Family Resources on the Go) from Tsawwassen First Nations began making weekly trips to two schools with a significant Aboriginal population in North Delta – Hellings and Gibson Elementary. This change resulted from information sharing at an action group meeting about the literacy needs of Aboriginal families.

- Literacy Supplies

Literacy resources and advice were provided to Tsawwassen First Nations Youth Centre and AFROG. Interactive Globes were presented to 3 Boys and Girls Club Homework Clubs and the TFN Homework Club. Three refurbished computers were provided to TFN and the Delview Adult Learning Centre.

### **IMMIGRANT NEWCOMERS/NEW CANADIANS**

In order to better understand the literacy needs of immigrant newcomers and new Canadians, a focus group was held with ESL students at the Delview Adult Learning Centre. The Literacy Outreach Coordinator facilitated a group with Level 2 adult learners. For many of these adults, as indicated in a lack of adequate transportation and accessing and/or paying for childcare is an ongoing concern.

We were reminded at a recent Action group meeting that parents learning English in order to work in Canada need to have literacy programs and supports brought to where they are, as they are combining family and work responsibilities with their learning. As a result it was arranged for the Every Child Reading @ Every Library workshop – provided by Community Librarian of George Mackie Library to ESL parents at Delview Adult Learning Centre.

## **FACTORS LEADING TO SUCCESS**

### **PARTNERSHIPS**

Partnership building and strengthening activities to engage and better understand the literacy needs of Delta residents is growing as connections are strengthened with a number of groups including the Delta Teacher Librarians Association, Delta Museum and Archives, Boys and Girls Clubs, Delta libraries, Delta Child and Youth Committee, Delta ECD Committee, Corporation of Delta Parks and Recreation, and the DSASSI Committee. Through working together the literacy stakeholders strengthen their relationship with each other, learn more about each other's mandates and create projects that address gaps in literacy support and enhance programs.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Raising the profile of literacy across Delta through marketing and communications is a means by which our Committee is working to build Delta as a literate community, building a supportive culture. This year we worked to broadcast targeted, succinct literacy messages by engaging Delta media outlets and regularly sharing these messages with our key community contacts. Various media outlets published our media releases as stories and/or included the information in the newspapers' community section in print and/or online. These media releases resulted in the community supporting the call for tutors, books for the new book drive, and invitations to present and/or participate in local community organizations and their events. During the year we have noticed an increased openness to participate in literacy dialogue and an increased awareness that literacy is important across the lifespan.

Marketing and communication strategies we used:

- Family Literacy Day - January 27, 2010
  - o Interviewed The Higgins country music group to promote Family Literacy Day through a media release.
  - o The LOC also encouraged local choirs/music groups, StrongStart and ECD Centres, TFN, and other school and community groups to organize singing related literacy activities to celebrate literacy.
  - o Delta libraries also organized several well-attended events to celebrate singing literacy.
  - o Promoted International Literacy Day through a media release to local print publications, the Corporation of Delta Mayor and Council, and all contacts in the Delta literacy contacts Excel database.
- Gathered literacy quotes and kernels of wisdom, and distributed a literacy quotes document to Delta School District principals for use in conjunction with school bulletin boards and other media. The document was also distributed to all contacts in the Delta literacy contacts Excel database.
- Created an informative ECD literacy related display board for showcasing at the ECD Committee's website launch at the three Delta libraries. Literacy kits, books and other materials were also distributed to participants.
- Promoted Freedom to Read Week February 2010; Aboriginal Languages Month and International Adult Learner's Week March 2010; Edible Book Day, Canada Book Day and National Poetry Month during April 2010.

As we move forward, our communication strategy will continue to include accessing the media to share our message with a wider audience. The Committee is interested in sharing personal literacy success stories to encourage community members and families to seek out and participate in literacy enhancement activities.

## **Key learning about collaboration and the community development process**

Community development is an on-going process that requires the involvement of many energetic community stakeholders. These same people tend to be the key stakeholders that are involved in other community committees as well. Generally, people are excited to be involved and to plan literacy-related initiatives and activities. It was through collaboration and partnership that we were able to accomplish the projects that we did in 2009-2010. Stakeholders demonstrated a strong ability to bring literacy messages and resources to the places where Delta residents go to participate in work, play and life activities. However, despite good intentions to quickly move forward, it often takes much longer than initially planned to gather input from the community and from specific stakeholders, to allow planned initiatives and activities to move forward cohesively and effectively. This is a longer-term process that requires many short, medium and long-term steps.

## **Delta District Literacy Plan Next Steps 2010-2011**

### **New opportunities, challenges and/or issues in Delta**

- We will continue to build a stronger connection with supporting partners from last year such as Aboriginal groups, settlement services for new comers, volunteer literacy tutors, the Food Banks and the Delta Teacher-Librarians, and others.
- Challenges – Many of the challenges experienced during the previous year have been outlined throughout this report. The key challenges are:
  - In Delta we still need to develop a better understanding of adult literacy generally, and specifically the needs of immigrant newcomers, new Canadian and Aboriginal adults, and how to address these needs. For many of these adults, as indicated in the Delview Adult Learning Centre focus group, a lack of adequate transportation and accessing and/or paying for childcare is an ongoing concern.
  - Literacy is important across the lifespan and is connected to all aspects of community development. It is important that the business community and local government in supporting initiatives for improving literacy throughout the district.

### **Adjustments to the plan, New Initiatives Planned, Initiatives to be expanded/continued**

During December 2009 minor adjustments were made to the Delta District Literacy Plan as we were meeting 2010 Legacies Now-Literacy Now reporting requirements. Once again, as we prepared this report, minor plan updates were made to reflect activities and changes during the preceding six months. Many of the 2010/2011 planned initiatives have been outlined throughout this report. The key initiatives are highlighted below for easy reference:

- The Committee is looking into the feasibility of offering two pilot PALS programs in Delta during the 2010/2011 school-year.
- The Committee will continue to support the coordination of volunteer tutors to offer support to afterschool homework clubs. We will also explore the possibility of placing volunteer tutors at specific afterschool homework clubs run by Aboriginal Support Workers. The LOC will look into securing a volunteer to coordinate this initiative to ensure that the initiative continues to move forward regardless of LOC involvement.
- With support from Action Group members, we will continue to build connections with clients at the Delta food banks. Further, we will explore offering additional resources and activities in partnership with other organizations and companies, for example, offering access to a mobile computer lab and a preschool story time session.
- Also, we will continue addressing the need to ensure that all Delta's early years centres reflect Aboriginal culture and the culture of other major cultural groups in Delta, and are welcoming to people of all cultures.
- We will revisit the strategies pertaining to adult literacy including Aboriginal adults and immigrant and new Canadian youth and adults. Our plan from last year indicated a number of barriers and challenges facing adult learners which need to be addressed in implementing adult literacy strategies. New Foundational Curriculum for Adult Education is now in place and the impacts of this change will also be monitored with respect to our plans.
- The implementation of Full Day Kindergarten will result in the elimination of Language Enhancement for ESL students. As implementation proceeds this impact will be monitored to determine appropriate community literacy supports.

### **What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?**

June 2010 concludes the first year of implementation of the Delta District Literacy Plan. The primary focus of Action group projects was strategies relating young children, family literacy and hard to reach individuals and families with an emphasis on Aboriginal and immigrant and new Canadian. Projects were initiated to build capacity as well as support and enhance. In developing other implementation priorities for 2010 – 2011 it will be important to ensure that capacity developed this year is deployed effectively to achieve literacy outcomes desired as a result of adding these resources to our community.

In preparation for the projects of 2010/2011, the tradition, established by our Steering committee, of a community roundtable to celebrate our successes, promote literacy and provide input for new actions for 2010-2011 will be held in September. In preparation for this event, over the summer the LOC will be reconnecting our supporting members and other stakeholders and community committees to explore their involvement, possible collaborations and partnerships for implementation of priorities for adult literacy, building a community that supports literacy, etc. The LOC will also meet with the agencies currently using literacy volunteers with the view to expanding this resource. Other activities will include exploring volunteer opportunities for the food bank program and conversation circles.

In the coming year we will continue to require the LOC position to lead the coordination of literacy efforts across Delta. This position has allowed Delta to forge ahead with plan implementation, development of the Action Group, and to provide opportunities for a variety of stakeholders to come together and to discuss steps to implement specific literacy actions. The coordinator was able to meet with many committees and groups to discuss literacy and bring it to the forefront. The coordinator is able to participate in a number of community committee meetings with a focused literacy lens to

increase understanding and awareness of the plan, and to gather implementation support. The LOC is able to share information about events, funding opportunities, and other information with the community through an email listserv and media connections. Further, the LOC is able to take a good idea from the Steering Committee and/or Action Group, and quickly turn it around into an action.

## **How will you measure or assess your progress**

Measuring literacy improvements like other types of preventative initiatives, is a long-term process. During our first year of implementation the Steering Committee/Action Group did not take the opportunity to discuss a process whereby we could measure our success. It is agreed that we will have these discussions in our second year. In our plan, the various strategies have indicators for success which we can use as a basis to determine how to gauge our progress.

The following are examples of measurements for current initiatives that will help us to assess progress:

- document progress and participation in the two pilot PALS programs.
- record the number of homework programs supported by volunteer tutors.
- count the number of new and used book collection drives, and the number of community literacy supply distributions.
- outline examples of how Committee and Action Group stakeholders are increasingly working in a collaborative manner.
- gather qualitative feedback from clients, community partners, as well as Committee and Action Group members.

## **CONCLUSION**

In closing, in our first year of implementation we have forged strong partnerships, worked collaboratively, learned a lot from each other and the learners in our community. We were able to increase our capacity to provide culturally relevant literacy programs and provide literacy support and enhancement. We have only put a dint in our ambitious community plan, but progress has been made. We can learn from our experience, do a better job of reviewing and monitoring our progress and look forward to building on the strong foundation that was built this year.