

## Nanaimo – Ladysmith Community Literacy Plan For School District 68



Chief Douglas White III Kwulasultun, Chief of the Snuneymuxw First Nation  
Reading "Legends and Teachings of XEEL'S, The Creator" a story written by Ellen Rice White,  
Chief White's grandmother and respected community Elder.

**Submitted by**  
**School District 68 on behalf of the**  
**Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council**  
**July 15, 2010**

---

**Nanaimo – Ladysmith 2010 Community Literacy Plan  
Table of Contents**

**Our Vision ..... 1**

**Our Team..... 2**

**Plan Update..... 3**

    Background ..... 3

    Community Literacy Priorities..... 3

    Summary of 2009 Nanaimo-Ladysmith Community Plan ..... 4

    Reflections on the 2009-10 Year ..... 5

    Thinking about the 2010-11 Year ..... 10



## **Our Vision**

---

### **Nanaimo-Ladysmith Community Literacy Vision**

*“By 2020, we will live in a community  
that encourages and supports every person  
to be a self reliant, literate, lifelong learner.”*

### **Guiding Principles:**

The Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council used the Guiding Principles of Literacy Now as a starting point to establish the following guiding principles that will lead the work of our Community Literacy Plan.

#### **Relationships and Collaboration**

Communities build and support networks, partnerships, and mentoring relationships.

#### **Innovation**

Communities value new ways of viewing existing programs, new partnerships, and new ideas for programs.

#### **Respect**

People will be treated with respect and will be encouraged to freely share their ideas. Diversity will be welcomed and valued.

#### **Capacity Building**

Initiatives promote and sustain lifelong learning for all participants and focus on improving the life changes of children and adults. People feel empowered to act.

#### **Access for All**

All community members have the opportunity to be part of the planning process and the programs. Community members respect the hopes and dreams of everyone and there is a place for all.

#### **Strength Building**

Success grows from long-term, sustained commitment to literacy learning.

#### **Sustainability**

Communities respect, build on, and enhance past and current practices.

#### **Knowledge and Understanding**

Community will work to better understand the diverse literacy needs of all members.

#### **Joy**

People are involved in friendly and enthusiastic ways, celebrating success

**Our Team**

---

**Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council Members:**

Steve Arnett	Executive Director, Nanaimo Youth Services Association
Stella Bates	District Principal, Aboriginal Education SD 68
Lynne Brown	Chief Operating Officer, United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island
Gregg Halfyard	District Principal, SD 68
Terri Mack	Child Care Manager, Chemainus First Nation
June Famer	Coordinator, Library Delivery Services, Altrusa International
Valerie Fullford	Manager, Costco
Leona Gadsby	Director, 2010 Legacies Now
Rebecca Kirk	Executive Director, Literacy Central Vancouver Island
Anita McLeod	Community Services Coordinator, Town of Ladysmith
Elizabeth Pennell (Chair)	Coordinator Early Years Program, SD 68
Christine Southwick	Assistant Superintendent, SD 68
Scott Vallance	Deputy Warden, Brannen Lake Correctional Center
Sandy Weeks	Supported Child Development Coordinator and Children First Liaison, Ladysmith
Bob Yip	Corrections B.C.

**Steering Committee Members**

Tony Bellavia	Director Career & Academic Preparation, Vancouver Island University
Lynne Brown	Chief Operating Officer, United Way Central and Northern Vancouver Island
Gregg Halfyard	District Principal, SD 68
Rebecca Kirk	Executive Director, Literacy Central Vancouver Island
Elizabeth Pennell (Chair)	Coordinator Early Years Program, SD 68
Christine Southwick	Assistant Superintendent, SD 68

## The Plan

---

### Background

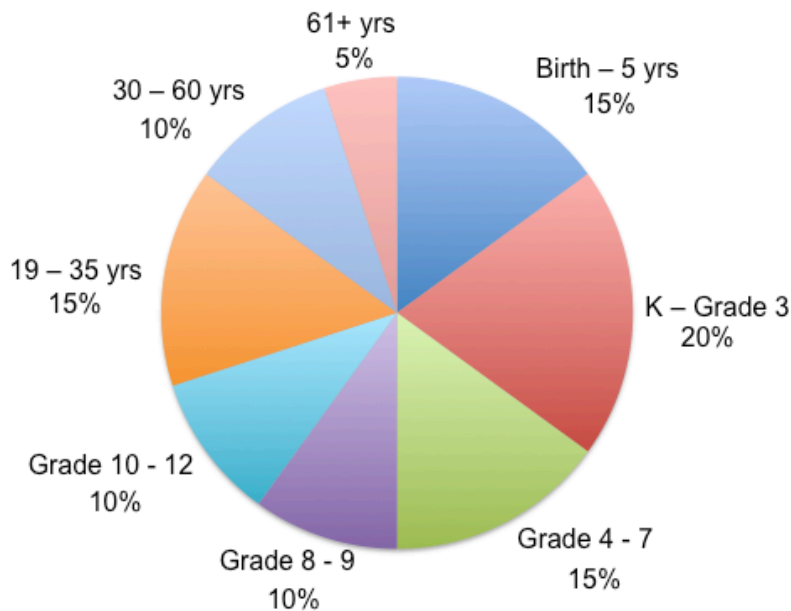
The Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council developed the Community Literacy Plan in 2008 based on community consultation, socio-economic research, a literacy asset review of current literacy programs offered in our community, and identification of community literacy needs and priorities.

Significant action was taken in 2009/2010 to implement the plan and achieve the goals that will be outlined in detail in the following sections.

The following is a summary of the programs & priorities that our plan was grounded upon.

### Literacy Program Review by Age Category Nanaimo-Ladysmith Community Literacy Plan

This chart represents the number of literacy programs serving each age category.



### Literacy Gaps/Needs/Priorities as identified in 2009:

- Sustainable funding and resources
- Increased awareness in the community
- Support Early Childhood Development programs (ages 0 – 5)
- Identify and support adult learners (19 years +):
- Engagement and collaboration with Aboriginal community
- Recruitment and training of parents, staff, volunteers and community partners

The following is a summary of the 2009 Nanaimo-Ladysmith Community Plan to address literacy gaps, needs and priorities in our community.

**Summary of 2009 Nanaimo-Ladysmith Community Plan  
Goals & Objectives**

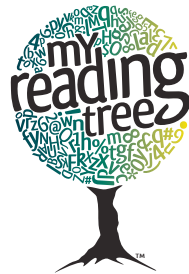
<p><b>Goal #1</b> Develop, maintain and promote a public, web-based “virtual hub” (database) of literacy programs and resources within our community (SD68 Nanaimo-Ladysmith)</p>	<p><b>Objective #1</b> Develop the public web-based “virtual hub” and launch website</p> <p><b>Objective #2</b> Maintain &amp; Sustain Virtual Hub</p> <p><b>Objective #3</b> Promote Virtual Hub</p>	<p><b>Success Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The website is successfully launched</li> <li>• People are accessing the website (monitored through usage stats)</li> <li>• Feedback from users (monitored through blog, on-line feedback)</li> <li>• Feedback from program providers</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goal #2</b> Maintain the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council to identify, support and promote evidence based, universally accessible literacy programs and services</p>	<p><b>Objective #1</b> Maintain &amp; Sustain the Literacy Council</p>	<p><b>Success Measures:</b> We know that we have been successful when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council meets on a regular basis</li> <li>• Council terms of reference are in place</li> <li>• Council has memberships around the table of key partners. For example,             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic (municipal and band)</li> <li>• Public (including libraries, social and health services)</li> <li>• Economic (private to social economy)</li> <li>• Education (public, private and post secondary)</li> <li>• Voluntary/Community</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Collaboration and partners working well to increase literacy opportunities and support for vulnerable learners.</li> </ul>

**Reflections on the 2009-2010 year:**

---

**1. What priorities / objectives and actions from your 2009 District Literacy Plan have you addressed this year?**

We are excited to report that the “virtual hub” website identified in Goal #1 of our plan was developed and launched to the public March 26, 2010.



[www.MyReadingTree.com](http://www.MyReadingTree.com) is the URL of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith virtual literacy hub containing literacy resources for all ages within the region of School District 68.

Goal #2 to Maintain & Sustain the Literacy Council was also implemented in 2009 as the Literacy Council was the key source of strategic input for the development of MyReadingTree. The Literacy Council will continue to evolve and be sustained throughout 2010 and 2011.

**Key Activities In Developing MyReadingTree**

Toro Marketing was contracted by the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council in October 2009 to act as coordinators to develop, populate and promote the literacy hub.

Focus groups and interviews were conducted with potential end users of the Literacy Hub to gain an understanding of what elements are important to consider when building the Literacy Hub.

Focus Groups and individual interviews were conducted October 2009 to January 2010 in both Ladysmith and Nanaimo with the following user groups:

- Parents & Children ages 0 to 6
- First Nation Youth
- ESL Students & ESL Teachers
- Seniors
- Adults with low literacy
- Tutors of adults with low literacy
- Literacy Council

A strategy session was held with the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council October 26, 2009 to develop a project brief for the Literacy Hub including: requirements of the Literacy Hub, target audiences, look & feel, etc.

Toro conducted “best practices” research of other websites to gather learnings to incorporate into the Literacy Hub.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was issued on BC bid November 16, 2009 to solicit proposals from website designers and programmers to create the virtual hub. A total of twenty-one (21) proposals were received from firms located in BC, across Canada and two proposals were received from firms based in USA.

Evaluation criteria were developed to objectively rate each firm according to nine metrics within the categories of capability, capacity and value for money. Each firm was rated against the criteria and given a total score.

The Vancouver-based firm Evolving Digital was the successful proponent and they were contracted in December, 2010 to design and develop the virtual hub. A sub-committee of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Literacy Council was formed to act as the website design team to provide input and direction throughout the website design. The Nanaimo-Ladysmith Steering Committee and Council were involved in development of the virtual hub at key milestones throughout the process.

An innovative, interactive, colorful, text to speech website was created for individuals of all ages and with all levels of literacy in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith region. A video host walks users through the website navigation and all information is available with text for users to read, or the option of clicking a button and having the text read to them. MyReadingTree has a consolidated events calendar highlighting literacy programs and events held by all literacy service providers in our region. All of the literacy assets identified in 2008 have now been integrated into the searchable, user-focused calendar. MyReadingTree also features stories of Nanaimo-Ladysmith community members highlighting what book they are currently reading, podcasts of stories and cool links to other literacy tools and resources.

MyReadingTree was launched at a luncheon held in Nanaimo March 26, 2010. Between 100 – 130 community leaders attended the event to generate awareness of MyReadingTree and to ask the leaders for their help in spreading the word throughout the community. Lesra Martin was a keynote speaker at the event to help launch “My Reading Tree”. Mr. Martin is world renowned for his own literacy journey and role as a literacy advocate. Originally from New York, Lesra Martin was illiterate at the age of 16 but overcame obstacles he faced growing up in Brooklyn; becoming literate and completing high school in two, short years. Lesra went on to become a lawyer and now calls Kamloops his home. As seen on Oprah and Larry King Live, Lesra Martin is best known for his part in helping set the boxer, Reuben ‘Hurricane’ Carter free from prison. Copies of Lesra Martin’s book “The Promise” were available for sale at the launch with all proceeds generously donated by Mr. Martin to the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Community Literacy Council. A B.C. printing company, Hemlock, donated the development of 30,000 bookmarks of MyReadingTree for use as a promotional tool to aid in word-of-mouth marketing. Launch attendees were given three MyReadingTree bookmarks– one bookmark for themselves and two to give away to friends to generate further awareness of MyReadingTree.

**a) What have been the major impacts or outcomes?**

Key success factors of our virtual literacy hub are collaboration, integration, and leverage of resources for the community as a whole. Our asset inventory developed in 2008 identified a wealth of literacy programs in our community. The intention of our literacy plan was to



promote alignment of our literacy initiatives and offer an integrated resource to our community highlighting all of our assets under one “virtual roof”. The Literacy Council met regularly throughout 2009 to collaborate as literacy service providers throughout our region to develop MyReadingTree.

The following is an overview of the outcomes of Goal #1 – Develop, maintain and promote a public, web-based “virtual hub” (database) of literacy programs and resources within our community – assessed with each of the 4 key success measures identified during the development of our Literacy Plan. The outcomes of Goal #2 – Maintain & Sustain the Literacy Council are interwoven in the success measures below as the Literacy Council was the key strategic stakeholder involved in the development of MyReadingTree.

Impacts and outcomes for each success measures from the 2009 plan:

**The website is successfully launched:**

- MyReadingTree launched March 26, 2010

**People are accessing the website:**

- Since MyReadingTree launched March 26, 2010 the site has received a total of 552 visits.
  - 341 new visitors
  - 211 returning visitors
- The number of new users coming to MyReadingTree has grown at a rate of approximately 40-50 % per month since the site launched 3 months ago.
- The average length of time spent on MyReadingTree is 5.16 minutes (double the amount of time since it launched) with users viewing an average of 7 pages per visit. The top pages visited are MyStories, Programs, Extras and Calendar of Events.

**Feedback from users:**

In the 2.5 months since the website launched, feedback from users has been provided to the Literacy Outreach Coordinator and members of the Literacy Council. Initial feedback has been very positive and users are helping to promote MyReadingTree through bookmark distribution and referrals. The best marketing is a personal referral from a trusted source. The following is some of the feedback received to date on MyReadingTree:

- The Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society is using MyReadingTree as part of their English course curriculum. Here is what one instructor had to say about MyReadingTree:
  - "My name is Maggie Wouterloot and I am an Instructor for the ELSA program at the Central Vancouver Island Multi Cultural Society (English Language Services for Adults). The Literacy Outreach Coordinator for my region was a guest speaker at our professional development day at CVIMCS. It was a great opportunity to learn about the new MyReadingTree website and what it has to offer, both as an instructor and as an end-user. I was especially interested in the "Tools & Games" section of the website where I found excellent resources that I was able to use as part of my curriculum in class - the very next day."
- Corrections BC are distributing MyReadingTree bookmarks to children and families as they come to visit inmates. An inspirational video obtained from Lesra Martin at the launch of MyReadingTree is being shown to inmates at Corrections BC along with promotion of MyReadingTree bookmarks.
- Altrusa and Retired Teachers of Ontario (175 individuals) have distributed MyReadingTree bookmarks and are placing an article on MyReadingTree in the Retired Teachers of Ontario District 47 newsletter.

- Bruce Williams, local weather forecaster and events coordinator for A-channel was featured for a monthly Story in June and highlighted MyReadingTree on A-Channel TV in June.
- Central Vancouver Island Library staff is promoting MyReadingTree by distributing bookmarks during StoryTime and in registration packages for their summer reading programs. The following is what librarians had to say about MyReadingTree:
  - We appreciate the strong functionality and search ability of the calendar in MyReadingTree. We are now starting to use MyReadingTree calendar as the Library's key source to share upcoming programs and events.

**Feedback from program providers:**

Literacy service providers, who are also members of the Literacy Council, fulfill a variety of roles with regards to MyReadingTree. Literacy Council members are the strategic drivers, users and sales team for MyReadingTree. The following is feedback received from Literacy Council members:

- MyReadingTree is becoming part of planning discussions with a variety of stakeholders. We have heard MyReadingTree discussed as a tool to be used in helping schools in our community meet their goals.
- All literacy program providers in our region have been given a supply of MyReadingTree bookmarks to hand out at various literacy events they are hosting to cross-promote MyReadingTree during their event.
- All audience members at a Parents event featuring Michelle Borba as guest speaker viewed a pull-up banner on MyReadingTree upon entry to the event and each audience member received a bookmark.
- Literacy Central Vancouver Island is promoting MyReadingTree through bookmark distribution, placing a banner in their reception area and in the Summer 2010 newsletter. Ninety (90) Literacy Central Vancouver Island tutors are further promoting MyReadingTree to their students.

**b) What are the factors that contribute to success?**

- Funding for literacy outreach coordination has been a major factor contributing to our success.
- Including all community stakeholders early enough so they were engaged and felt ownership in the process from the beginning.
- Launch of MyReadingTree has "reinvigorated" all stakeholders.
- Stakeholders on the Literacy Council are the sales team. We built it, believe in it and are selling it.
- Our focus on word-of-mouth marketing has provided community ownership of the website and been very successful in helping generate awareness through personal, trusted referrals.
- Community opinion leaders highlighted for the monthly Stories are helping to spread the word to their colleagues, families and friends.
- The launch helped target a broad group of community leaders. This added a sense of prestige to our launch and the website. The launch was an initial step in bringing community business leaders together to focus on literacy – as a partnership.
- There is a trust factor amongst service providers that wasn't there before. The community is working together.
- Something that has come full circle is the willingness from people from south of the district to become part of the consolidated process. As much as we want to identify as a community, the fact that it is Nanaimo-Ladysmith we justify the regional approach and

- there has been no push-back from the merge. This project is integrating community projects throughout all of Central Vancouver Island.
- Our definition of literacy will help to keep a broader opportunity as MyReadingTree grows and evolves. The International Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALLS 2005) has defined literacy as:  
“The ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community – to achieve one’s goals, and to develop one’s knowledge and potential.”  
This means literacy can include social, emotional and interpersonal communication skills, the use of technology, and arts and creative expression.

**2. What has changed in the past year that affects literacy in the community? What has been the impact of these changes? How are you addressing these changes?**

- This Literacy Council’s role is to collaborate, integrate, and leverage resources for the community as a whole. We are looking at how we can improve the reach of programs & services into the community and for sustainability.
- Strategic approach by literacy service providers and stakeholders to collaborate holistically. Service providers are now asking themselves what is being done in the broad community and then bringing in supports from other service providers.
- The fact that we are not operating on a program service level, but a more strategic, coordinated, leveraged area of partnerships. Summer reading programs, My Story, Your Story extended to other geographic areas.
- One Council member said “We are looking at the big picture and avoiding duplication. I have seen a change in the past few years to hear providers say “that is not me, that is X”.
- Literacy Outreach Coordination is a positive change that has allowed us to focus resources and successfully implement our plan. The work required to implement our plans needs this level of support provided by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator.
- Direction of the School District to encompass a broader mandate towards a continuum of learning from early learning to beyond grade 12.
- Change of name and philosophy from Literacy Nanaimo to Literacy Central Vancouver Island.
- Development of therapeutic community by Corrections BC. Preparation of inmates to reenter society with literacy and confidence. They are currently the only Therapeutic Community in all of Canada and in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of delivering services through building partnerships with community groups including Literacy Central Vancouver Island, John Howard Society, etc.
- New program at Altrusa “Power to Change” with several bursaries for all types of people that need tools for a job, clothing, etc to help them gain employment.
- Financial literacy embedded into strategic plans of local Credit Union.
- How people communicate has changed. People are communicating digitally – and we are capitalizing on this.

**3. What have you learned about collaboration & the community development process?**

- Broad stakeholder input at the Council table is important.
- Collaboration and community development is a slow, sometimes “messy” process that requires commitment, leadership and passion.
- Early involvement of stakeholders in the process was successful.
- The Literacy Council has developed a level of trust based on human connection. Through collaboration we have developed trust and come to see that synergy is created

- when we come together. We have a common understanding that we are more effective if we work together.
- The ability to create an understanding of leveraging resources takes time.
  - We are more open to looking at things from a broader perspective.

#### **Thinking about the 2010-11 Year:**

#### **4. Are there new opportunities, challenges or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?**

##### **Opportunities**

- Links to business and the fact that businesses are building literacy into their initiatives (i.e. Coastal Community Credit Union).
- Identify free public service opportunities to promote the website – i.e. community leisure guide.
- Increase and expand partnerships. I.e. Literacy Central is linking to Ladysmith Resources community, Corrections BC, etc.
- Look at ways to re-engage individuals and ensure our Council is well-represented.
- Provide more information and content on MyReadingTree.
- Create a sustainability plan including new opportunities within the community for ongoing funding for sustainability.
- MyReadingTree can be seen as a leader in the province. Other jurisdictions may use MyReadingTree as a model.

##### **Challenges & Issues**

- Due to the downturn in the economy:
  - People are focusing on their core activities and doing away with optional activities. Sometimes optional activities fall off the desk and we can look for opportunities to collaborate.
  - People using MyReadingTree may be looking for resources to help them.
- Change of demographics in the community and large number of multi-cultural individuals. Need to look at ways to embrace the diversity within our community.
- Need to improve graduation rates.
- Increasing number of seniors.
- Less support for youth.
- Seniors literacy levels are very low in some cases. In some cases not able to read their prescriptions.
- Expanded definition of literacy means more and more people becoming illiterate (literate with print, illiterate with technology).
- Creating opportunities for combining and leveraging funding.
- Competition for finite dollars.

##### **How will you respond?**

- Clarify the role of the Council. Terms of Reference will be developed in the fall, 2010. As the Literacy Council we will identify stakeholders, set priorities, work on collaboration and conduct regular meetings.
- In the fall, 2010 the Literacy Council will hold a strategic planning day to address challenges and issues.

**5. What adjustments have you made to your plan? What new initiatives are planned?  
What initiatives have been expanded or continued?**

We have not made any adjustments or planned any new initiatives as of yet. As the Literacy Hub was just recently launched, our immediate plan is to “stay the course” in the implementation of our plan with a focus on promoting, maintaining and sustaining the literacy hub and renewing the Literacy Council to support the hub through its next evolution. Our key activities will be to:

- Continue to raise the profile of the virtual hub and keep it current. We are focused on increasing the usage of MyReadingTree so it is constantly refreshed to the needs of the community.
- Further involve the people in our community as to what we are doing. The initial framework has been developed in MyReadingTree, but the users define the materials to be included in the website.
- Develop a sustainability plan for MyReadingTree in the fall, 2010 to consider a variety of enhancements including interactive uses of the website, shopping cart to purchase books and other literacy resources and fundraising and partnership opportunities.

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

- Continued funding for the Literacy Outreach Coordinator.
- Continued involvement of the Literacy Council.
- Development of a plan to renew the Literacy Council membership to ensure representation of partners at the Council table -- planned for the fall, 2010.
- Development of Terms of Reference for the Literacy Council -- planned for the fall, 2010.
- Community scan to update research regarding literacy priorities and make any adjustments to the plan for implementation in 2011.

**7. How will you measure or assess your progress?**

We will continue to employ the same measurements as outlined in our original plan to measure our success.

- People are accessing the website (monitored through usage stats from Google Analytics including number of new users, number of return users, average time spent on site, number of pages visited, most frequent pages visited).
- Feedback from users (monitored via on-line survey).
- Feedback from program providers (monitored from information gathered at Literacy Council meetings).
- Council meets on a regular basis.
- Council terms of reference are in place.
- Council has memberships around the table of key partners. For example,
  - Civic (municipal and band)
  - Public (including libraries, social and health services)
  - Economic (private to social economy)
  - Education (public, private and post secondary)
  - Voluntary/Community
- Collaboration and partners working well to increase literacy opportunities and support for vulnerable learners.