

It Takes a Whole Community



The Sunshine Coast District Literacy Plan

**Submitted to the BC Ministry of Education and
Decoda Literacy Solutions by the Sunshine Coast
Literacy Coalition and School District No. 46
(Sunshine Coast)
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Introduction

The Sunshine Coast District Literacy Plan reflects the collaborative efforts to promote literacy on the Sunshine Coast.

The Literacy Plan is directed by the Sunshine Coast Literacy Coalition (formerly Council), composed of representatives of educational and community organizations (see below for a list of Coalition members in 2012/13). Representatives of School District No. 46 (Sunshine Coast) sit on the Literacy Coalition committee and support the District's commitment to work with community partners to improve literacy in our community. Capilano University is the steward of the literacy funds and hires and supervises the Literacy Outreach Coordinator.

As of June 2013, we have completed our fourth year of implementation of the Literacy Plan. The current report provides a description of activities and outcomes over the past year and an action plan for 2013/14.



Our Approach to Literacy

Literacy is the ability to accomplish tasks and to participate in the world around us. Literacy is about how we are able to use what we learn and to apply our knowledge. We think of literacy as the foundation – the “glue” – that makes other learning stick.

We look at literacy in context. Our goal is to provide opportunities for people to develop literacy in relation to the issues that are important in their lives – for example, health, food, housing, job preparation, parenting, homework, obtaining a license to operate a car or a boat, and other situations in daily life.

Literacy includes reading, writing, numeracy, and more. It also includes other essential skills such as oral communication, document use, problem-solving, working well with others, critical thinking, continuous learning, and using digital technologies.

New technologies are changing what it means to be literate. In the information age the ability to find relevant and useful information quickly is a key skill. Evaluating the information we find is even more important. Perhaps most importantly, the ability to keep learning new things is a key skill in a digital world.

We recognize that culture and literacy are connected. Culture and language shape how we view literacy and are pathways to literacy. Aboriginal literacy, for example, reflects aboriginal worldviews and philosophical approaches to learning.

We celebrate the joys of reading, writing and storytelling and look for opportunities to share that joy with people of all ages.

Our Vision

Residents of the Sunshine Coast have opportunities to develop literacy throughout their lives; to achieve their educational, work and social goals; and to realize their potential.

The Sunshine Coast Literacy Coalition

The Literacy Coalition Committee oversees the implementation of the Literacy Plan and reviews and sets priorities each year. In 2012/13 the Literacy Committee met six times and a Literacy Events sub-committee met four times.

The Literacy Coalition works effectively because of several key partnerships. The longstanding core collaborations at the heart of the Literacy Coalition are: Capilano University, School District No. 46, Sechelt Public Library, Gibsons & District Public Library, Pender Harbour Community School and Sunshine Coast Community Services Society. Other partners and organizations involved in the work of the Literacy Coalition in 2012/13 are:

- Celebrating Authors, Books and Community
- Childcare Resource and Referral Program
- Community Resource Centre
- Early Childhood Development Planning Table
- Festival of the Written Arts
- Halfmoon Bay Community School
- Sechelt Indian Band
- Sunshine Coast Credit Union
- Open Door Group (Sunshine Coast Employment Centre)



A new logo to celebrate Family Literacy Week was created in 2012/13.

Community Context

Approximately 30,000 residents live on the Sunshine Coast, the traditional territory of both the shíshálh (Sechelt) and Skwxw7mesh Uxwumixw (Squamish) Nations. Almost half the population lives in either the District of Sechelt or the Town of Gibsons. The majority of the population is rural and lives in the five Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) electoral areas of Egmont/Pender Harbour, Halfmoon Bay, Roberts Creek, Elphinstone, and West Howe Sound. Members of the Sechelt Nation live within the Sechelt Indian Government District (SIGD).

We know that literacy and poverty are “joined up” issues. In 2009, approximately 20% of Sunshine Coast families were living in poverty. Almost 7% of seniors on the Coast live in poverty, while 26.9% of children come from families living in poverty. Between September 2008 and September 2010, dependence on income assistance increased from 1.3% to 2.0%. Young adults are particularly dependent on income assistance, with 3.7% of those 19-24 dependent on basic income assistance, well above the provincial average of 2.1% for this age group. In 2005, 28.9% of unattached individuals were low income. The use of food banks, another strong indicator of poverty, has risen by 39% in the last two years. (Source: *We Envision*, Sunshine Coast Regional District , <http://www.onecoast.ca/The-Coast-Today>)

Another continuing issue facing the community is the need for a demographic revitalization. Research shows that residents aged 20-45 are struggling to live, find employment and raise families on the Sunshine Coast. Coupled with an increase in older residents entering retirement, this trend indicates an ageing population and a shortage of young people.

Several initiatives are taking place to address community issues. VOICE is an organization committed to ensuring the Sunshine Coast is a place where young people and young families are able to live and work. Ignite is a pilot program for generating social enterprise on the Coast, a project of FUSE Community Work Hub and other partners. The longstanding Early Childhood Development Planning Table, a Success by Six initiative, advocates for families with children aged 0 – 6. The Progress Plan is a three year community planning process to improve women’s economic well-being. Funded by Status of Women Canada and coordinated by Sunshine Coast Community Services Society and the Community Resource Centre, the Progress Plan has conducted community research and is now getting ready to implement key initiatives that address women’s needs for food, shelter, transportation, income, shelter, learning, care, and belonging. The Welcoming Communities project, led by Capilano University, Sunshine Coast Community Services Society, the Community Resource Centre and many other partners, began in March 2013 and is working with immigrants and other community members to facilitate the integration of immigrants into the community and to provide settlement services.

These and other initiatives are building a stronger community on the Sunshine Coast. The Sunshine Coast Literacy Coalition's work complements the work of these initiatives by focussing on community needs for literacy as we broadly define it.

One of the challenges we face as we enter a new year of literacy work, is the funding environment. The English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program delivered by Capilano University in partnership with the Sechelt Public Library will end as of March 31, 2014 and so too will the Welcoming Communities project described above. Unless other funding is secured, immigrants on the Sunshine Coast will be left with no direct services and without the supports these important programs provide.

Moving Literacy Forward in 2012/13

Six priority strategies were identified in the 2012/13 Literacy Plan. Every strategy was addressed in some way during the year.

In 2012/13 we began to focus on strategic planning and we continued to support and enhance our partnership base. Our project work included embedding literacy in several initiatives coordinated by the Sunshine Coast Food Bank. Embedding literacy makes literacy part of everyday activities in life such as cooking or gardening. Participants strengthen literacy in the context of developing new skills and knowledge in other areas.

We supported continued literacy development in Pender Harbour and Egmont. The Money Skills program of the Sunshine Coast Credit Union and the Community Resource Centre continued to be hugely successful and many of our literacy partners supported the Money Skills program in various ways. This year we reached seniors through the expansion to Pender Harbour of the DriveABLE program begun by the Gibsons & District Public Library. And the Literacy Coalition partners are supporting the work of the Welcoming Communities project, funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, which is working to ensure the Sunshine Coast is a welcoming and inclusive place for immigrants.

One of our most exciting projects this year promoted the importance and pleasure of reading among schoolchildren and their families. Initiated by the teacher-librarians of School District No. 46, and run in partnership with the Sechelt and Gibsons & District Public Libraries, *Coast Reads* introduced young people to wonderful books by Canadian authors and gave them the opportunity to make a personal connection with the authors through author visits to the schools. The power of this project in fostering a love for reading in young people, and especially in reaching youth who do not see themselves as readers, is best expressed in the simple words of a Grade 11 student at Elphinstone Secondary School who said, of *Pain and Wastings* by Carrie Mac, that "*This was the first book I ever finished!*"

In 2013 we deepened our experience with and expertise in digital storytelling through train the trainer workshops and a digital storytelling project with youth from the Shisha. shíshálh Nation. Digital stories are a relatively new and powerful art form. By weaving together images, music, voice and narration, digital stories speak to viewers in compelling and deeply personal ways. The act of creating these stories, as well as the stories themselves, strengthens relationships and builds new connections across generations and across cultures. The stories become vehicles for celebrating and honouring the personal stories of community members and for creating community awareness of history, culture and lives lived. The stories also become vehicles for transferring storytelling, writing and technical skills to participants through the storytelling process.

In addition, the Literacy Coalition was the recipient of funding from the Vancouver Sun's Raise-A-Reader program for the second year in a row. Funding from 2011/12 was used to support programming that continued into the fall of 2012; funding for 2012/13 was received in March 2013 and was used to support two new projects that have been completed in spring 2013. The Raise-A-Reader projects are integrated into the description of the strategies below. These projects are:

- The Sechelt Public Library used funds received in 2012 to update and add to its collection of pre-school literacy kits. The collection is heavily used and appreciated by parents and children. The collection emphasizes a tactile, visual and audio connection with the written word and encourages home literacy.
- The Gibsons and District Public Library used funds received in 2012 to facilitate experiences and activities that foster intergenerational learning and family literacy.
- Capilano University and the Sechelt Indian Band used funds received in 2013 to work with Aboriginal youth to create digital stories about elders and other respected members of the Sechelt Nation.
- The Childcare Resource and Referral Program used funds received in 2013 to develop literacy bags and an interactive children's play area at the Program's office in Sechelt.

Details about our work are described under each of the priority strategies below.

Priorities addressed in 2012/13

Strategy 1: Create a sustainability plan

In 2012/13 the Literacy Coalition began strategic planning to look at sustainability on the Sunshine Coast. We changed our name from Council to Coalition in order to better reflect the diverse partnerships and collaborations at the heart of community literacy work. Time was devoted to looking at our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. A preliminary list of alternative sources of funding has been prepared. It is

anticipated that the work of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator in 2013/14 will include more time devoted to researching and acting on sources of alternative funding



School District No. 46 Board members share in the joy of reading as part of the Coast Reads project.

Strategy 2: Maintain and build active partnerships and promote awareness of literacy and diversity all along the Sunshine Coast.

In 2012/13 the Coalition:

- Developed a logo for use during Family Literacy Week in January (see page 5).
- Partnered with several agencies to develop and implement literacy projects as described in this report.
- Worked together to promote literacy during Family Literacy Week, including an online scavenger hunt that showcased the partnerships embedded in the Coalition.
- Solicited a newspaper article about the Coalition in Fall 2012 (<http://www.coastreporter.net/article/20120910/SECHELT0101/309109999/-1/sechelt/council-works-to-fill-literacy-needs>)
- Collaborated with the Sunshine Coast Credit Union (SCCU) to deliver Money Skills workshops throughout the community in 2012/13. For example, both Pender Harbour Community School and Capilano University hosted Money Skills workshops. The Literacy Outreach Coordinator also participated in Money Skills workshops at Chatelech Secondary School as a co-facilitator with SCCU staff.
- Revamped the Literacy Coalition website and created a website for the *Coast Reads* project.
- Developed and expanded our digital storytelling expertise to promote literacy and storytelling.

Strategy 3: Develop creative solutions to reduce isolation and improve access and participation to literacy and learning opportunities in Pender Harbour and Egmont.

The Literacy Coalition continued a longstanding partnership with Pender Harbour Community School (PHCS) and reallocated resources for literacy development in that community. This community development approach has given the communities of Pender Harbour and Egmont the opportunity to make their own decisions about how best to meet literacy needs in the area. Over four years, the community has utilized these resources to build a strong foundation for literacy development across the lifespan. Given the fact that we do not anticipate receiving further implementation funding, the Literacy Coalition will not reallocate funding in 2013/14; however, PHCS will continue as a Coalition partner and the communities of Pender Harbour and Egmont may be included in future Coalition projects.

Principal activities and achievements under Strategy 2:

- A workshop about the DriveABLE program was offered to a group of seniors. More than 30 people from Pender Harbour and Egmont attended. The workshop was facilitated by Lynda Kennedy, Outreach Coordinator for the Gibsons & District Public Library, a collaboration facilitated by the Literacy Coalition. Plans are in place for a community member, trained by Lynda Kennedy, to offer the workshop in 2013/14.
- Planning was begun to initiate a study group to give people help with the intimidating instruction manual required to obtain a Class 4 licence. When these community members receive their Class 4 they will be able to support the community as volunteer drivers.
- A literacy drop-in for adults and seniors was held at the Harbour Learning Centre, especially focused on computer literacy.
- A drop-in homework club was started in October 2012 at the school library and was run by five Grade 12 student tutors.
- Sponsorship for one-on-one tutoring of high school students continued.
- Donations of children's books to Serendipity Preschool and the local libraries were facilitated.
- A Literacy Fair was organized at the Pender Harbour Secondary School in February 2013. The Literacy Fair included a daily lunchtime "scavenger hunt" focusing on different literacy themes, songwriting and storytelling workshops, a money skills workshop for grade 12's, among other activities.
- The student tutors are developing a series of mini-workshops covering topics such as: nutrition and food shopping skills; 'living on your own'; and finding employment. The idea for these workshops comes directly from feedback from students who feel they need further preparation for the next steps after high school. These workshops are being developed as prototypes so that they may be used again next year.

Strategy 4: Support aboriginal people to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

In 2013, using funds from the Raise-A-Reader initiative, the Literacy Coalition sponsored an intergenerational digital storytelling project that was a partnership between Capilano University and the Sechelt Indian Band (SIB). With the guidance of Becky Wayte, Capilano University Instructor, four youth from SIB created digital stories to honour important people in their lives including elders. The stories were shown at the Aboriginal Storytelling Festival at the Sechelt Band Hall on May 2 and to students from Chatelech Secondary School, the Learning and Parenting Program and the Alternative School during Aboriginal Awareness Week in May 2013. The stories can be seen on the Literacy Coalition website www.sunshinecoastliteracy.org.

The project led to an application to the Sunshine Coast Community Foundation by Capilano University in partnership with SIB, to continue digital storytelling under the leadership of one of the SIB youth and to involve aboriginal people and immigrants in an intergenerational and cross-cultural project.



Moms and children enjoying programming at the Gibsons & District Public Library, funded by the Raise-A-Reader program.

Strategy 5: Support adults and seniors with low literacy skills to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

As in previous years, the Literacy Coalition partnered in several literacy projects with community partners. These included:

- Sunshine Coast Community Services Society, the Sunshine Coast Food Bank. We partnered in three projects with the Food Bank where literacy was embedded in different types of activities:
 - A series of gardening workshops for members of the Arrowhead Clubhouse. Five two-hour workshops covered topics such as how to build a garden; the nutritional value of eating “from the rainbow”; tree identification; gardening with flowers; raw food meals and fresh processed juices; and the cost of nutritional fresh produce verses fast food .
 - Food and nutrition workshops at Rockwood where participants learned how to select the most nutritional food items for their budgets and then cooked and shared meals together over five weekly meetings. .
 - Coupons were provided to patrons of the Food Bank for the purchase of fresh food items at the Sechelt Farmers Market.
- As mentioned in Strategy 3 above, the DriveABLE program was offered to senior residents of Pender Harbour.

The Community Access to Literacy and Learning (CALL) Program, funded by the Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology is embedded in the Literacy Plan. CALL is a volunteer tutor literacy program, a partnership of Capilano University, the Sechelt Public Library and the Gibsons & District Public Library. CALL provides adults on the Sunshine Coast with the opportunity to develop their literacy skills in reading, writing, math, and computers, as well as their participation skills, by working one-on-one or in small groups with trained volunteer tutors. As the only adult literacy program on the Sunshine Coast it benefits underserved adults and assists them to achieve their personal literacy goals and to transition to further education and work.

Strategy 6: Support youth and young adults to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

The teacher librarians of School District 46 launched the first district-wide reading program for elementary and secondary students called “Coast Reads.”. The reading program was loosely modeled under the CBC’s *Canada Reads Program*. Students ranging from Grades 6 to 11 read a variety of books written by Canadian authors. They are currently taking part in the voting process for their favorite book.

The titles chosen for elementary students were: *Word Nerd* by Susan Nielsen, *Camp Wild* by Pam Withers, and *Trickster*, a graphic novel collection of aboriginal legends edited by Matt Dembicki. Students at the secondary level read the novels *Indian Horse*

by Richard Wagamese, *The Hunt of the Unicorn* by C.C. Humphries, *Pain and Wastings* by Carrie Mac, *Room* by Emma Donoghue, and *Crescent Star* by Nicholas Maes.

A number of the authors came to speak at various schools and at the public libraries on the Sunshine Coast. C.C. Humphries was the first author to speak to students at Elphinstone Secondary and Chatelech Secondary, along with students from West Sechelt Elementary and Kinnikinnick Elementary schools. Susan Nielsen, the author of *Word Nerd*, was a huge hit at Gibsons Elementary, Robert Creeks Elementary, and West Sechelt Elementary schools. The last author to speak at the high schools was Richard Wagamese, the author of *Indian Horse*, (which was also chosen for the Canada Reads program.) Richard's visit was an added bonus to students as he was also a participant at the Aboriginal Storytelling Festival in May. He also participated in an in depth question and answer session with students at Chatelech Secondary School.

An important goal for the Coast Reads program was to embrace literacy within the community, not just at the school level. Public librarians were an important part of the process by including multiple titles in their collection, and hosting Coast Reads authors. The Sechelt library hosted C.C. Humphries, giving home-school students and the general public the opportunity to participate in the reading program. Susan Nielsen spoke to students and community members at the Gibsons & District Public Library and Richard Wagamese spoke to a large audience at the Sechelt Nation Band Hall.

Youth were also supported through our digital storytelling project with the Sechelt Indian Band (see Strategy 4 above).

Strategy 7: Support immigrants to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

The Literacy Coalition partners supported the Welcoming Communities project which is working to ensure the Sunshine Coast is a welcoming and inclusive place for immigrants and providing settlement services through the hiring of a Settlement and Outreach Coordinator. Led by Capilano University and Sunshine Coast Community Services Society, a host of literacy partners are supporting the Welcoming Communities project and participating in project activities.

The English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program at Capilano University is embedded in our literacy plan and offers English language services to immigrants in the community.

We also participated in the Embrace BC project, Organizing Against Hate and Racism, sponsored by the District of Sechelt and coordinated by Alofi Consultancy.

Action Plan 2013/14

Strategy 1: Create a sustainability plan

Actions

- Explore various options to ensure sustainability of community literacy work on the Sunshine Coast.
- Identify – with partners – sources of government and non-governmental funding to ensure sustainability.

Statement of Success: The Literacy Council makes decisions regarding the future of community literacy work on the Sunshine Coast and takes actions to ensure sustainability.

Indicators: Examples of options being considered; list of potential funding sources; examples of new initiatives and successful funding applications



The Literacy Events sub-committee planning for Family Literacy Week in January 2013. From left to right: Sandy Middleton, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Capilano University; Bev Craig, District Literacy Teacher; Lynda Kennedy, Outreach Coordinator, Gibsons & District Public Library; Kim Foster, Literacy Coordinator, Pender Harbour Community School; Jodi Fichtner, Marketing Manager, Sunshine Coast Credit Union; Bonny Creak, Children's Librarian, Sechelt Public Library; Kirsten Deasey, District Early Learning Teacher; Christabelle Kux-Kardos, Information and Referral Coordinator, Community Resource Centre.

Strategy 2: Maintain and build active partnerships and promote awareness of literacy and diversity all along the Sunshine Coast.

Actions

- Maintain and enhance the Literacy Coalition website.
- Actively seek new partners.
- Develop diverse opportunities for partners to participate in the work of the Council.
- Develop a cross-sectoral approach to professional development and training in literacy-related areas.
- Use existing initiatives such as Family Literacy Week, International Adult Learners Week, National Aboriginal Day and International Literacy Day, among others, to promote literacy and learning on the Sunshine Coast and to draw in new partners and champions and to increase public awareness of literacy.
- Nurture a relationship with local media to keep literacy visible in the community and to tell stories of literacy on the Sunshine Coast.

Statement of Success: New partners at varying levels of involvement increase literacy capacity on the Sunshine Coast. There is an increased awareness of literacy and community literacy development.

Indicators: The website is up-to-date; number and type of new partnerships; examples of collaboration; examples of different levels and type of involvement; examples of professional development and training; number of workshop participants and evaluation of workshops by participants, examples of changes in public perception; number of events; number of participants at events; number of newspaper articles and examples of coverage in other media (for example, local radio and television).

Strategy 3: Support aboriginal people to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

- Collaborate with aboriginal educators to discuss and develop holistic literacy initiatives for youth and adults that are culturally sensitive and grounded in aboriginal principles of community and culture.
- Address a skills gap among aboriginal youth to improve their reading skills and facilitate bridging to ABE and other post-secondary programs.
- Collaborate with aboriginal educators to develop innovative strategies and programs that assist aboriginal children, youth and adults to develop their English skills and to develop and retain their traditional languages.
- Collaborate with aboriginal educators to explore ways that literacy and other learning and employment related programs in the community can facilitate participation by aboriginal learners.
- Collaborate with aboriginal educators to explore ways of redefining how success is measured for aboriginal people in the context of literacy and learning.
- Explore opportunities for learning from and building on the intergenerational learning traditions of aboriginal people.

Statement of Success: Aboriginal and non-aboriginal educators and agencies work together to increase literacy and learning opportunities and success among aboriginal learners.

Indicators: Examples of collaboration; examples of enhanced and new literacy initiatives; number of aboriginal youth who increase their reading skills and bridge to ABE; examples of new insights and learnings about aboriginal approaches to intergenerational learning and measures of success; joint planning and hosting of an event in June 2012.

Strategy 4: Support the development of early childhood literacy initiatives

- Liaise and collaborate with the Early Childhood Development Planning Table.
- Identify early childhood initiatives that require literacy support.
- Participate in meetings about early childhood initiatives.
- Investigate training opportunities for parents and professionals in the field of early childhood and literacy.

Statement of Success: The Literacy Coalition contributes literacy expertise to existing early childhood initiatives.

Indicators: Examples of collaboration; number of early childhood meetings attended; examples of training events in early childhood literacy.

Strategy 5: Support adults and seniors with low literacy skills to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

- Work with agencies on the Sunshine Coast to embed literacy in other contexts such as health, food security, social welfare and justice.
- Liaise with the Community Access to Literacy and Learning (CALL) program at Capilano University to ensure collaboration and complementarity of services.
- Collaborate with other organizations to ensure the literacy needs of adults with special needs and developmental disabilities are met.
- Offer workshops in how to use social media tools to targeted groups (e.g. Arrowhead members, seniors groups) and the community at large.
- Collaborate with seniors groups to identify and address the literacy needs of vulnerable seniors in the community.

Statement of Success: Organizations on the Sunshine Coast are working together to address gaps in literacy services and programs for adults and seniors including those with special needs.

Indicators: Examples of collaboration; examples of “embedding” literacy; ideas for new services and programs identified; number of workshops offered in using social media; number of workshop participants; evaluation of workshops by participants.

Strategy 6: Support youth and young adults to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

- Collaborate with partners working with youth on the Sunshine Coast.
- Develop specific outreach strategies for youth with low literacy and innovative programming options that speak to youth. Explore projects with youth that employ digital storytelling and/or social media.

Statement of Success: Agencies on the Sunshine Coast are working together to address literacy needs of youth and young adults.

Indicators: Number of partners; examples of initiatives or projects.

Strategy 7: Support immigrants to achieve their educational, employment and social goals.

- Collaborate with existing initiatives such as the English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program at Capilano University and the Welcoming Communities project to identify immigrants' needs and to develop programs and services to meet those needs.
- Collaborate in the search for funding to ensure services and programs related to language training and settlement are provided to immigrants on the Coast.

Statement of Success: Community agencies and institutions are working together to identify and address needs within the immigrant community.

Indicators: number of funding proposals; examples of new programs and services.