

DISTRICT LITERACY PLAN RICHMOND 2012

Community Context

Richmond is an ethnically diverse, growing and dynamic urban centre. The 2011 Census lists the population as just under 200,000 with more than 60% being of Chinese or South Asian heritage. Life expectancy on average in Richmond is 83.4 years. Richmond's economy supports 135,000 jobs mostly in the hospitality, retail, light manufacturing, fishing and agricultural sectors. The average price of a single family home in Richmond is approximately \$1 million. The proportion of rentals is 29.1%.

Although statistics generally indicate a vibrant and wealthy community, Richmond has two statistics which are a continued source of concern. Richmond has an overall poverty rate in excess of 22% with the second highest child poverty rate in Canada. Increasing use of the Food Banks and the Community Meal Programs, are evidence of these statistics. In addition the 2008 Canadian Health Literacy study listed that more than 60% of Richmond residents have a health literacy level below level 2. Seniors, new immigrants and the unemployed are the most vulnerable in the population. These statistics create a distinct challenge in enhancing the literacy levels of Richmond's population beyond the basic level of functioning in English.

Task Group

The central task group for Literacy Richmond consists of representatives of a variety of community agencies. They oversee the work of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator, ensure that the goals of the Richmond Literacy Plan are being addressed, make suggestions for further literacy work and monitor the spending of the community grants. Meetings are held on an as needed basis. Members of this group are:

Margaret Dixon	Literacy Outreach Coordinator
De Whalen	Women's Resource Centre (Financial Steward)
Lee Ann Smith	Richmond Public Library
Barbara Fitzpatrick	Sunrise Rotary Club, Chair of Task Group
Anne Swann	Vancouver Coastal Health
Pinky Dang	SUCCESS

In addition, a Community Partners Meeting is held bi-monthly. Participation in these meetings varies from 16-24 people representing the wide spectrum of not-for-profit organizations in Richmond. At these meetings progress on the Literacy Plan is discussed and suggestions for further enhancements are made. Each group that has received community funding reports on the progress of their project. Various guest

speakers dealing with a particular aspect of literacy are often received at these meetings.

Community Development & Literacy Collaboration

The culture of collaboration is well established in the Richmond context. With respect to Literacy, all community funds expended require a partnership between at least two community groups. In almost all partnerships, the Public Library is one of the links. Some of the best partnerships have happened when intergenerational collaborations are established. An example would be the Richmond Family Place (young children) and the Women's Resource Centre (adult women). In particular it is evident that the issue of poverty is emerging as a crucial factor in the literacy needs of Richmond residents. Consequently the Food Bank and the Poverty Response Committee have established a strong bond with the Women's Resource Centre and the Richmond Family Place.

Goals and Actions for the Current Year

The majority of the work of Literacy Richmond this year has been focused on the following goals.

- Coordinate and streamline Richmond Literacy activities and resources
- Organizations in Richmond will work together in a collaborative fashion to increase literacy in Richmond
- Develop the level of literacy within vulnerable adult population

The goals of coordination and collaboration have been developed through several initiatives. 2011 saw the opening of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre. This facility serves the Richmond community and is open year round. Its goal is to provide an array of services, support and resources for the individuals from infants to seniors. Groups that have rented the facility have a focus on literacy. Although no long term renter has yet come forward, the short term rentals have been successful.

A second initiative has been through continued support of a variety of inter-generational programs. The Cook Early Learning Centre was established through a partnership with Richmond City Centre Community Association and Richmond School District No 38. The program is inspired by the pre-schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy which are known for their high quality of care and for their use of natural and sensory materials. The Cook Early Learning Centre provides a rich, nurturing and responsive learning environment for pre-school aged children and their families. Many of the families who use the centre are new to Canada, speaking little or no English and many are just learning how to navigate themselves in the community. This centre is unique in that it is walk-in only. Families using this centre live in the neighbourhood. The Early Learning Facilitator works closely with City Centre staff to provide the supports that these families need. The Centre operates at full capacity two afternoons per week.

Another new initiative was a partnership with Volunteer Richmond and The Women's Resource Centre to offer weekly parenting sessions in Mandarin from July to November 2011. A partnership with Richmond Multicultural Community Services offered sessions for new immigrant and refugee families.

Get Ready for School is a play based literacy program at the Food Bank where children have literacy activities supported by two volunteers while their caregivers pick up the weekly family food supplies.

Continued support has also been given to programs supporting the literacy learning of caregivers and their children through the following programs:

- **Gardening Fun for Families**, a community garden literacy based program working with the South Asian community.
- **South Asian Women and Tots Reading Program**, developing the skills of both caregivers and their children.
- **Strong Start/Mother Goose**, offering support for Muslim families.
- **Speak, Read Succeed**, offering oral conversation, resume preparation and interview skills for immigrant populations.
- **Chai at Chaupal**, offering oral conversation circles at the Temple to Sikh women.
- **Each one, Teach one**, offering financial literacy courses on a variety of topics.

Indications of Success

Each community group that receives funding is required to submit a final report detailing their expenditures and an evaluation of the success of the initiative. In each of the projects funded there were common themes:

- more time for the sessions
- more sessions for more participants
- repeat or extend the sessions
- increase the frequency of the sessions
- more conversation opportunities
- more individual tutoring

For many projects the intergenerational aspect of the program was a major component of its success. In particular caregivers, especially elderly ones, benefitted greatly from learning with the children. They felt that it was a safe environment in which to learn literacy skills. In addition, this helped with childcare issues.

Raise-A-Reader

For the first time Raise-A-Reader funds were received by Literacy Richmond distributed through Decoda Literacy Solutions. After consultation with community partners it was decided to develop an adult based literacy group with the Phillipino live-in caregivers (FIRST). This has been done with the support of the SD #38 SWIS (Settlement Workers in Schools). It will focus on developing their literacy skills to enable them to participate more fully in Canadian society. The literacy skill development is done within the context of Canadian culture. A second goal is to raise their level of literacy to a higher vocational level so that when they are able to repatriate their families into Canada their employment opportunities will be greater.

Challenges

As usual, sustainability is a major challenge. The need to provide child minding is often an issue. Many of the initiatives do not run year round and so gains in learning may be lost. We continue to find ways the address each of these challenges and for many, the increased partnerships have resolved some issues.

2012-2013

For the coming year, the goal of coordination of services and cooperation will continue to be addressed. Promotion of the Neighbourhood Learning Centre throughout the Richmond community will be actively pursued. Ways to enhance the health literacy of Richmond residents will be explored in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and the public library. Financial Literacy courses for both youth and older adults will be provided. A CALP grant partnership between Literacy Richmond, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, and the Richmond Public Library has been sought with additional community support from the Richmond Women's Resource Centre, the Family Integration and Resource Support Team (FIRST), and Let's Read Together. Ways to further utilize Raise-A-Reader funds will also be examined. Exploration of initiating an Immigrant Parents As Literacy Supporters (IPALS) within the Spanish community has begun. Finally cooperation with the Richmond Public Library will continue as they adjust and implement their Strategic Plan, "Richmond-City of Readers."