

District Literacy Plan

Community Literacy Plans



July 15, 2012

School District No. 57 (Prince George)



Acknowledgments

The District Literacy Plan is a demonstration of commitment by a school district to work with community partners to improve literacy for young children, school-aged children, adults and Aboriginal people. Literacy planning is a community-wide process that includes the school district as one of many partners. The most important aspect of building the plan is developing working relationships within the community to recognize valuable work in the area of literacy outside of the K-12 system.

This plan includes a summary of literacy initiatives within the communities encompassing School District No. 57. We would like to acknowledge all of the efforts of our community partners to promote literacy in our communities and to thank them for their efforts in this area. We hope that we can continue to build strong supportive structures to improve literacy.

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District Principal, Curriculum and Instruction
School District No. 57 (Prince George)

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Introduction

This District Literacy Plan (School District No.57) is grounded in the belief that building strong relationships between the community and the school district is a crucial component for life-long learning. The purpose of this document is to continue to develop and sustain working relationships within our community. The intent of this document is to be inclusive from early learning through to adult learning. This District Literacy Plan has been collaboratively developed with direct input from literacy outreach coordinators in McBride, Prince George and Valemount.

District Context

School District No. 57 (Prince George) is located in the centre of the province, extending north to Mackenzie, south to Hixon, and east to McBride and Valemount. The district encompasses 52,000 square kilometers and is the second largest school district in the province in geographical size. It has a student population of approximately 13,325 students enrolled in 31 elementary schools, 8 secondary schools, and a Centre for Learning Alternatives which includes Continuing, Distance, International and Alternate Programs. The district administers an operating budget of \$126,000,000 and employs 695 (f.t.e.) teachers and 440(f.t.e.) support staff.

Overview

Since School District No. 57 includes four distinct community areas, this District Literacy Plan includes a summary of literacy planning in all four communities. Each community's literacy planning is at a different stage of development. Community literacy planning and initiatives in McBride, Prince George and Valemount are reflected in the tables below. Mackenzie is currently seeking a designate for the development of their literacy plan. We will continue to work with the community to identify a coordinator to build a plan outlining the literacy work being done in the community.

Mackenzie Community Literacy Plan

Planning Stage:

At this time, Mackenzie continues to go through significant community changes. There is an interest in the community to create a Literacy Plan. The community is seeking a coordinator to take on the task of developing a Literacy Committee and a Community Literacy Plan

Literacy Committee: N/A

McBride Community Literacy Plan

Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Nancy Taylor

Literacy Committee:

The McBride Literacy Plan was created through collaboration of

- Naomi Balla-Boudreau - Librarian, McBride and District Public Library
- Bridget Uhl - Adult Literacy Coordinator - Robson Valley Support Society
- Nancy Taylor - Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator - Robson Valley

1) Task Group

Members of the McBride Community Learning Project (CLP) Task Group represent diverse perspectives, including those of: youth, families, seniors, people living on low or fixed incomes, people with disabilities, visible minorities, various educational backgrounds, and people from outlying communities. The following organizations also take part: Robson Valley Support Society (RVSS), RCMP, Old Age Pensioners' Organization (OAPO), McBride & District Public Library, Northern Health, Village Council, School District #57, Robson Valley Growers, Dunster Fine Arts School Society, and the Dunster Community Association.

The Task Group meets twice a month to develop and implement shared projects. Opening and closing rounds at each meeting help to ensure that every member's voice is heard, and that there is space to discuss arising issues.

As an active and inclusive group, the Task Group organizes its work according to the values of:

1. **Collaboration:** We believe diverse ideas and contributions create impactful literacy and learning solutions.
2. **Courage:** We embrace innovation and take action.
3. **Kindness:** We treat colleagues and others as we wish to be treated, with care, respect and appreciation.
4. **Accountability:** We demonstrate, measure and share results.

5. Capacity building
6. Access for all
7. Strength building
8. Sustainability
9. Joy

2) Community Context

Over the past year our community continued to face economic challenges. With the down turn in the forest industry and agriculture, unemployment levels remain high at approximately 14% (Prince George Region) and many community members rely on jobs that are seasonal, low paying, or located elsewhere. The relationship between unemployment, poverty, and low literacy is well established. It is also intergenerational. In 2006 only 27% of the adult population had more than a high school education.¹ With a thriving forest industry, it was still possible to obtain a well paying job without a high school diploma. This is no longer the case. Addressing issues of low literacy, whether through GED support or more informal methods is essential in this context.

Without local jobs many families move away or are split, leaving a single parent to raise the children for most of the year. As a result of families leaving, school enrollment continues to decline. Small class sizes can create an intimate and engaging learning environment. They can also mean that high school students rely on distance learning in order to graduate.

A number of dedicated service organizations are active in the community. These organizations provide essential support and offer intergenerational recreational programs, from weekly badminton to the delivery of Christmas hampers for those in need. Their contributions to the Valley are numerous; however, their volunteers are at risk of burning out and the groups struggle to recruit new members.

Despite these challenges the Robson Valley remains a vibrant and resourceful community, and a number of positive developments have taken place over the past year to support literacy. Various programs continue to cultivate and celebrate a culture of learning in the Valley. The Women's Opportunity Fair hosted by RVSS, for example, drew 80 participants for a day of workshops and relaxation. Women between the ages of 16 and 86 chose between woodworking, yoga, health literacy, financial literacy, crafting, drumming, and more. Participants enjoyed an opportunity to connect with neighbours, exercise their creativity, and expand their skills for lifelong learning.

In addition, as a partnership between the Robson Valley Support Society and the RCMP, police officers in uniform have begun reading stories to children in the elementary school and the Stepping Stones daycare. The program has been extremely successful in developing relationships between the children and the RCMP and in connecting the act of reading with local heroes. It is also a weekly highlight for both the officers and the children.

The OAPO began a community kitchen that will partner seniors with youth to cook traditional recipes and deliver them to isolated seniors in the area. The Dunster Fine Arts School Society

¹ www.statscan.ca; Community Profiles – Education Attainment, Census 2006



offered a number of evening and weekend classes on topics such as computers, music, bike repair, tree grafting, and biodiesel. The McBride & District Public Library expanded their programming to include Scrabble and chess tournaments, a writers' group, a poetry coffeehouse, authors' readings, and free legal advice clinics. Indeed, there are numerous formal and informal opportunities for lifelong learning that are relevant to, and representative of, the Valley's considerable talents. Coming together to participate in these programs also develops relationships amongst neighbours, reduces social isolation, increases civic engagement, and improves our community's health.

In April the Community Learning Project Task Group hosted the conference "Cultivating Community: Gardening Together in the Robson Valley" to generate and assess local interest in a community garden project in McBride. Over 75 residents attended workshops. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, and the Task Group decided to move ahead with the garden. As with any project, there have been obstacles. Finding suitable, accessible, and available land is a challenge, and until the building begins the garden remains conceptual. As such, negativity continues, whether due to lack of sustained interest or the threat of deer. In order to maintain enthusiasm for, and provide opportunities to learn about gardening, Garden Grow & Smell participants rotate biweekly to weed gardens throughout the community.



Other factors have also contributed to literacy development in the area. Transformation at Beaverview Lodge (McBride's low income housing complex), for example, serves as an inspiring model of civic engagement. After years of advocating for a staff change at Beaverview, residents' complaints were taken seriously and charges were laid. The issue is currently in court. Empowered, residents are now organizing around elder abuse education and awareness.

Staffing changes this year, whether at Beaverview, the library, or in literacy coordinator positions, have also brought new ideas and new approaches for literacy development. CLP activities have been generating interest, and new members continue to join our CLP Task Group meetings, Café Show & Tell, and Garden Grow & Smell. With each new addition comes new strengths and fresh perspective as we work to build an inclusive environment conducive to learning.



3) **Collaboration**

The "Cultivating Community: Gardening Together in the Robson Valley" conference was a result of significant collaboration in our work. Funded by Decoda Literacy Solutions, the Robson Valley Support Society, the Regional District of Fraser-Fort George, and the McBride Community Forest

Corporation, conference partners also included Village Council, McBride's Economic Development Officer, the RCMP, the Evangelical Free church, local farmers, local businesses, the McBride & District Public Library, the OAPO, the Royal Purple, the Dunster Fine Arts School Society, members of other outlying communities, and community garden experts from neighbouring regions. Each group held an interest in assessing whether a community garden in McBride was viable. The range of involvement speaks to the broad appeal of a garden and its potential for economic, social, health, educational, and spiritual impact. It also suggests the sustainability of the garden.

Given the nature of the Task Group, both in terms of its diverse composition as well as its method of working together, the Task Group itself is the essential ongoing collaboration. The Group strives to balance task with process, and demonstrates the success of using community economic development principles as a model for other initiatives in the community. The Group provides an inclusive and consistent place for information-sharing and developing new ideas, and it will therefore be able to adapt its priorities to meet our community's evolving needs.

From this group a number of spin-off collaborations have taken place. The Adult Literacy Coordinator at RVSS and the Library, for example, partnered this winter to offer 'For the Love of Languages'. 'For the Love of Languages' was an attempt at coordinating volunteer tutors and ESL students. This weekly group became a participant-driven support group who wanted to meet regularly, in an accessible location where they could speak freely. The McBride & District Library was the perfect location to help create learning opportunities for group work, as well as one-on-one learning. The Library had a weekly display showing the variety of relevant library resources.

Through this work we've found that the following are essential elements in ensuring that our collaborations are successful and sustainable:

- diversity of perspectives;
- a coordinator to facilitate the group's efforts;
- courage, kindness, and accountability (as outlined in our values above);
- conscious effort on the part of everyone involved; and
- laughter.

4) Goals and activities for 2011/2012 and our success to date

Community Learning Project:

In our first year we've come a long way. We've worked to establish a broad definition of "literacy" in the Robson Valley. In doing so our aim was to reduce the stigma associated with the term, especially in a community with low levels of formal education, and instead recognize that we are all teachers and we are all learners and that each community member has much to contribute. We've also sought to recognize that learning needs vary depending on location, interests, and experience. As such, we tried to create awareness about literacy, a culture of readiness for learning, and activities that embrace diversity in learning.

In the fall we created the Task Group described above and developed resources and procedures for working together. We formulated our mission statement: “The mission of the Robson Valley Community Learning Project is to respectfully advocate and facilitate lifelong learning for everyone in our community, thereby improving the human condition.” We updated our inventory of learning assets and gaps in the Robson Valley. Throughout we’ve sought to create a sustainable, responsive group.

Ongoing evaluation and refocusing in response to participant feedback have helped us to adapt to change. As an energetic Group we’ve been able to maintain momentum and face challenges with enthusiasm. All of these factors contribute to our project’s sustainability.

Café Show and Tell

We developed new activities like Café Show and Tell as a means of welcoming learners to an inclusive and casual event in a public space. Café Show and Tell is a bimonthly coffee session held in different locations throughout McBride to ensure its accessibility. Participants bring something that they are learning and share it with others. The Cafés emphasize that we are all learners and we are all teachers, and they help to foster a supportive environment for learning. Their success can be measured by the new participants that join each session. When the group was asked more formally what the Café has meant for them, participants responded that they were noticing more opportunities within the community, they were becoming more comfortable in social situations, and they were finding their own voice. They also expressed interest in taking the group further, and began exercises like poetry writing and contributing to a word bank.

A Community Garden



The idea of a community garden emerged from Task Group discussions as a project that would engage learners from all segments of our rural community and create ripple effects like: the promotion of local food and good nutrition, partnerships such as with the community kitchen, social enterprise, and improvements to the aesthetic value of McBride. The Task Group organized a conference, ‘Cultivating Community’, to assess interest in a community garden and offer informal learning opportunities. Local growers and

community garden organizers from surrounding communities joined participants for a lively day of talks, hands-on workshops, and displays. The community’s response was overwhelmingly positive. Over 75 participants joined us, some driving 100km to attend. Every member of Village Council was present. Conference evaluations reported a sense of belonging to a vibrant community and increased civic engagement. Many volunteered their time and resources to the project.

Garden Grow & Smell

Given the area's interest in gardening and the enthusiasm



generated at the Conference for a community garden, the Task Group decided to shift the biweekly Café Show & Tell to Garden Grow & Smell for

summer months. Like Café Show & Tell, participants circulate between different locations every two weeks to facilitate the program's accessibility and to maximize its impact. Our weeding will include public places like the library as well as the plots of senior community members who can no longer garden themselves. Having a mixture of experts and new learners digging beside each other in the soil provides natural opportunity for sharing and socializing, while making visible impact in the

community.



The Dunster Parent-Run Play Group

The Dunster Fine Arts School Society received funding through the United Way's Success by Six initiative in Prince George to set up a play room in the community owned and run Dunster Fine Arts School. Two years ago School District #57 closed the school and now a committed group of residents are creating a community learning centre in the building. The Parent-Run Play Group is for preschoolers and their parents to engage in early learning activities. Weather and illness resulted in low turnouts, but after concerted effort on the part of many volunteers the room is now set up for families to gather and play. It is also available for skills development for parents. In the spring the Group hosted a workshop by local early childhood educators entitled "Process vs. Product": Supporting creativity in young children".

Other Developments

Several other projects have emerged in response to, or in conjunction with, the CLP's core activities. These include:

- A review of the learning and violence network website
- Increased awareness of, and advocating against, elder abuse
- The Women's Opportunity Fair
- 'For the Love of Languages' participant-driven second language learning sessions
- Civic engagement, such as presentations made by Task Group members to Village Council

In order to achieve the programs listed above the Task Group made revisions to the original plan. In forming the Task Group we sought to involve the voices of those not previously represented. As we moved beyond planning to implementation we chose to work together on CLP-specific projects. As such, our focus became less about information-sharing between professionals and more about creating an inclusive and active forum for learning in the Robson Valley.

5) **Indications of Success**

Apart from the indicators of success listed with each project above, a number of less tangible achievements are also of note. As previously mentioned, new members continue to join us at each meeting or gathering. This fact implies that our work is interesting and inviting. With regular meetings and relevant events, we're creating a buzz about learning in the Valley. Task Group members have become ambassadors for our projects, generating excitement in their various communities and growing our network of learners and teachers. As ambassadors, we're expanding our communication skills and becoming more engaged in the community. As our projects continue they're becoming more visible, whether in the form of gardens tended to or an increased presence in local media.

Organizing an event like the 'Cultivating Community' conference also provides opportunities for hard and soft skills development. One Task Group member, for example, took responsibility for the day's technology despite never having worked with PowerPoint nor a projector before, and met the inevitable challenges with confidence. Others members were responsible for conference registrations, scheduling, and communication and as such, developed their organizational, facilitation, and leadership skills.

Another result of our work is the social interaction and support that the meetings and activities provide. Task Group members report feeling energized by the meetings, and note an improvement in mental health afterward.

The Task Group strives to maintain open communication and integrate a constant feedback loop. Together with debriefing and honest assessments of our events, this means that we are constantly evaluating how to improve upon our work. The Coordinator has created an archive of all project communications as a means to ensure accountability as we move ahead.

6) **Challenges**

Time is a core challenge, both in terms of paid staff time and busy Task Group members' schedules. It is difficult to keep Village Council members and other fulltime workers involved because we meet during the day. We will look at alternative meeting times in the year ahead. Another key challenge is to create engaging projects during the long winter months, especially when our current focus is a seasonal community garden. Isolation and transportation are major issues in this area year round, but both are heightened in the winter months. It is essential, therefore, that we provide programs that engage our community in learning in all seasons.

7) **2012/2013 Goals and Actions:**

As we move ahead building a foundation for learning that is meaningful, diverse, and inclusive of our entire community, secure funding will be a challenge in addition to those listed above. Opportunities for expansion, however, are numerous and we will continue to meet our challenges with creativity and collaboration.

The Task Group outlined the following goals for the upcoming year:

1. Celebrate

We will host a harvest supper to celebrate our achievements to date, reap the bounty of our garden (to be), and enjoy each others' company.

2. Continue with current projects

We will determine a site and create the infrastructure for a community garden. In order to do so we will secure funding for materials and labour.

Until the community garden is built we will meet twice a month during summer months to garden in the McBride area as needed.

We will support the Dunster Parent-Run Play Group by securing funding for 2013, attracting families from the whole Valley, and encouraging parent ownership of the program.

In the fall we will re-evaluate our Cafe Show & Tell model and look to host a similar program.

3. Develop additional learning opportunities that are:

- a. Intergenerational
- b. For teens

These may include games, music, video making, a mural project, woodworking and other crafts, and contests (such as for garden sculpture).

4. Expand our outreach initiatives

We will build relationships with other communities in the Robson Valley to better understand their issues and include them in our work. We will suggest joint Task Group meetings by video or teleconferencing, if in-person is not possible. We will visit the communities to learn about their strengths and challenges first hand.

We will explore ways to partner with local schools to provide intergenerational learning opportunities, especially in after school hours.

We will consider alternative meeting times in order to meet the schedules of other interested community members.

5. Fundraise to increase our capacity for supporting local learning and teaching

We will host a Trivia Night fundraiser in the fall.

6. Advertise

We will expand our use of social media in order to better communicate our goals and activities to a broader audience.

We will create a CLP logo that will represent a more cohesive identity, and that may identify and endorse all learning opportunities in the Robson Valley.

We will increase awareness about CLP activities.

In order to meet our goals, additional staff hours are essential for coordinating our varied activities. For the Task Group as a whole, flexibility, adaptability, and fun will also be indispensable.

Prince George Community Literacy Plan Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Helen Domshy

Planning Stage: 4th year implementation.

1. Task Group: Members of the Prince George Literacy Advisory Committee are:

Marc Saunders, Prince George Public Library, Co-Chair
Carolyn Tiefensee, Prince George Native Friendship Centre, co-chair
Rod Mulligan, Community member and tutor
Jackie Stokes, Dean of Arts and Sciences, College of New Caledonia
Gohar Ashoughian, University of Northern British Columbia
Cindy Heitman, School District 57
Tim Bennett, School Trustee
Cathy Wiegand, Carney Hill Neighborhood Centre, Steward

The task group meets every month. They review the completed work from the previous month, and suggest and support plans for the coming month. At the end of each fiscal year, an additional planning session guides the planning for future projects and reviews projects completed. Sub committees may be formed, as required, to do a specific piece of work, or to join a collaborative venture with other groups. The task group is also responsible for overlooking the financial progress of the task group. The LOC has access to this committee as a whole, or can partner up with committee members as needed for different projects.

2. Community Context:

The unemployment rate in Prince George is improving. In April, Stats Canada reported the Prince George jobless rate at 7.4% for March. This is an improvement from the 8.1% in February of 2012, but still higher than the provincial unemployment rate of 6.9%.

Despite the noted improvement, the amount of those without work is still far greater than last spring (2011), when the unemployment rate stood at 5.8%. The size of the Prince George workforce has grown as well by about 4000 over the past year. This past April, Lakeland Mills sawmill was totally destroyed after an explosion and fire. This tragedy put approximately 150 out of work and has the potential to impact on about 500 jobs in associated industries.

The need for re-training and increased literacy skills will be high. The work being done on Essential skills and Life Skills in the employment area is exciting. This could be an area of increased participation and promotion for us.

3. Community development and literacy collaboration:

We partnered with the PG Native Friendship Centre in January for Family Literacy Day, 2012. They provided room for the event, food, and shared in the advertising process. This relationship is successful and works well. We support their application to the CALP program every year. We have developed community partners that support our events either by donation or by reducing the costs for their product. Books and Co. supports us for every project, and has instituted literacy events at their location. They have raised the visibility of literacy as a topic and as part of community development. We have partnered with Northern John Howard Society, AWAC (advocacy for women and children), Child Care Resource and Referral and Services, Child Care Centres, Kikino Metis Family Centre, Northern

Health authority, Elizabeth Fry Society, UNBC, Prince George Council of Seniors, Sacred Heart School, Self-Design Learning Community, Immigrant Multicultural Settlement Services Society, YAP-Youth around PG. We do a presentation to PG City Council every fall to bring the good news of literacy support in our city.

The essential collaboration for us is the community. We receive feedback from the community, as they support our programs, on what they need in their particular situation. Their ongoing evaluation of our programs is essential for our growth. The agencies that partner with us are indispensable in identifying a program specific to their literacy needs.

Collaboration works well when the specific literacy needs of Prince George residents is clearly identified and a concrete plan of action is developed. Partnership is more successful when there is a sense of shared responsibility and leadership. A good team consists of members with similar goals, who are willing to develop and deliver a solid plan and identify an expected outcome. Clear communication by e-mail, letter, telephone, or via direct conversation is a priority.

4. Goals and Actions for the current year:

Our goals were to continue to address literacy gaps in adult literacy, and to continue with the workshops offered in previous years. We adjusted our plan at the end of 2011, due to a visible shift away from the need for community based tutors, and towards assisting parents, grandparents and other caregivers to help their children read. We were asked for information on this topic, so we developed a program to address this area.

Summary of Focused Community Programs this year:

Actions/Event/Program	Goal	Attendance
Train the Tutor Program	To build capacity of tutors available to tutor adult learners.	14 new tutors
Special Speakers Day	To provide an opportunity for community members to hear about literacy issues and strategies to support literacy development.	27 participants
Parent and Children Partners in Talking, Learning and Listening	To create a family partnership in literacy learning.	79 participants
Family Literacy Day	To bring the community together to participate in literacy activities.	250 participants
Plain and Clear Language and Writing Workshops	To support community members in communicating public messages to ensure all members of the community are able to understand the information presented.	36 Participants

5. Indications of success:

The attendance at programs and the evaluations are always positive and supportive. Sometimes participants send friends or family to the next workshop on that topic.

Train the Tutor Programs

“The course has taught me the skills I need to teach and help others that are learning to read. I am now running an adult literacy class that is composed of 4 adults at a reading level of grade 1-2yrs. The class is held at AimHi once a week for 2hrs.”

“Yes, the course specifically gave me new insight into how to interact with individuals who are in need of tutoring and their various levels of literacy ability. For example, the specific strategies discussed during the course dealing with encouragement, sensitivity, respect, etc., have been particularly useful in discreetly determining how literate some members of the public, as well as friends and family, are, and in which areas they could benefit from tutoring.”

“I have become more active in our local independent bookstore (where I work) in encouraging participation in national literacy days and events. I have a particular focus on increasing and encouraging literacy for children through our storewide events and story times. I have started an ESL conversation night on a weekly basis to help speakers of other languages to practice their English conversational skills”.

“I am amazed at how relevant the information was and just how soon we start finding out about people in our own circle that have issues with literacy.

Special Speakers Day

“I felt that Special Speakers day was very informative. I really was fascinated by the different approaches to dealing with literacy issues and the enthusiasm of the speakers was infectious. What a dedicated and caring group of people.”

Parents and Children Partners in Talking, Learning and Listening

This program is becoming more successful and at the request of some participants, a level 2 workshop is being looked at for development. A positive outcome of this program was the LOC was asked to join a panel of speakers for a discussion of early learning literacy, increasing our network for sharing and learning.

Another outcome was that we found the ‘we will come to you’ approach successful. Groups were able to contact us and we would come, evenings, weekends or weekdays, and present at their location. The first session looked like a Tupperware party: parents around a table, interacting, laughing, and learning together. The workbook that we created for the workshop has been well received and is into its second printing. We give each parent a book for their child and have found that books allow the child and the parent/caregiver to learn together thus, creating a partnership for literacy. This promotes our goal of increasing adult literacy, and is in fact a good model of Family Literacy.

Our recruitment is becoming by word-of-mouth as more workshops are held. For example, we partnered with the Fraser Lake chapter of the Learning Difficulties Association of BC, to combine two existing programs into one 3 hour workshop.

“I never knew that children learn to talk and read by watching lips. I will increase my reading to my children at night. We will read together”

“Thank you for all the tips. Sitting around a table with other parents made me feel accepted.”

Family Literacy Day 2012

Family Literacy Day in Prince George was a partnership between PG Native Friendship Centre, PGLAC and community businesses. The event was called “Bannock and Books”, and was held at the PGNFC building. There were free books, literacy bags, bannock and stew, toys, games, storytelling, fitness demonstration/class, prize gift subscriptions to children’s magazines, coloring sheets, puzzles and bannock recipes. We received many thank you cards from individual families as well as several daycare centres who attended.

Plain and Clear Language and Writing Workshop

These workshops were well attended and the evaluations very positive. The indicators for success for this program are very practical. The LOC collaborated with individual agencies and staff members to re-write posters, information sheets for the Health authority, Success by 6, and the local Canadian Mental Health agency.

“I plan to have a look at my posters and notices to see if they say what I want people to understand.”
“This workshop should be given to anyone who writes for others.”
“Simple message, what do you want to say, what do you want readers to know or do. Clarity, not dumbing down, just clarity.”

One of the indicators of success that occurred this year was being contacted by an out of town agency to put on a two day workshop in PG. *Self-Design Learning Community*. The *Visualizing and Verbalizing* workshop was a success for everyone.

What are the things that support literacy work:

- Literacy work needs constant stable funding. Grants and other one-time funding is not reliable for long term planning.
- Literacy work needs time and patience. Expanding your contact base and staying in touch is important.
- We need people of passion and dedication. Spreading the word, offering programs and public speaking requires a public face and voice.
- Community support and involvement contribute to the success of Literacy work. It is important that the whole community is aware of opportunities for literacy programs.

6. Challenges:

The biggest challenge is to identify and break down barriers to learning and to accessing learning. Even when we think that we have addressed multiple issues successfully, we are reminded that empowering people to ‘want to learn’, is a slow process. To have communities understand that literacy is not just reading and writing requires a huge campaign, lots of high visibility events and good role models. One of the difficulties we see here in Prince George is that the general population has little or no idea of literacy statistics as they pertain to everyday life in Canada. After every workshop, we hear: “I thought those literacy stats were for a third world country, not us”. Getting folks to take advantage of literacy opportunities is difficult. One challenge we also faced was although we trained tutors, we were not in a position to match learners with tutors. The PG Library would like to do this, but space and funding issues prohibit this. Although the PG Native Friendship Centre runs a very successful CALP program, library hours would increase access.

The provision of opportunities for meeting, sharing knowledge and questions between provincial LOC’s would be helpful. Even in these days of heightened connectivity, face to face networking still works well. Stable funding seems to be a constant issue, but we will do the best we can with what we’ve got.

For the Coming Year:

We meet in June to develop our goals and identify projects for 2012-2013. We have several options which will be thoroughly evaluated at that meeting. A Disabilities Conference, a Health Literacy project, continuing with established programs, or developing new projects in response to community needs will be discussed. The increased relationship with service groups may contribute to a new project or may inform us on how to better connect with seniors. Community members do write to the LOC with requests and information on possible offerings throughout the year.

We will also be partnering with Success by Six to do a literacy needs assessment for Prince George. The scope of this project will be lifetime literacy.

In order for the us to be successful with our goals next year, we will need some funding partners. If Decoda could keep us up to date for possible funding opportunities, and we can continue to be successful with our community partners, we will be successful. The necessity of having a LOC is clear.

**Valemount Community Literacy Plan
Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Kim Thorn**

Valemount Community Literacy Plan 2012/13

REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRENT YEAR

1) Community Literacy Planning Committee (CLPC):

(listed in alphabetical order)

Irene Blackman	Aboriginal community
Wendy Cinnamon	Head Librarian, Valemount Public Library
Penny Courtoreille	Aboriginal community, Valemount Elementary PAC
John Grogan	Retired
Sarah Keatley	Teacher, Valemount Elementary School
Dan Kenkel	Principal, Valemount Secondary School
Louise MacLean	Retired
Andru McCracken	Mayor, Village of Valemount
John McGuire	Aboriginal Education Board
Pat Powell	Adult Literacy Coordinator, Valemount Learning Centre
Priscilla Prosser	Principal, Valemount Elementary
Bobbie Roe	Seniors Housing Society
Kim Thorn	CLC, Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy; Success By 6
Kathy Udot	Tete Jaune Community Club, Aboriginal community
Jan VanderZwan	Valemount Secondary School PAC

All members, to varying degrees, have shown commitment to and/or involvement in the community's literacy endeavours. Two meetings over the past year covered current plans and programs, progress toward the goal of promoting stronger literacy skills within the community and local response-based planning for the future.

This year's planning process has seen renewed levels of interest and participation from committee members.

2) Community context:

Valemount continues to struggle economically. Several more businesses have closed their doors this past year, more residents have relocated to find employment and a large proportion of homes and businesses are for sale.

Significant economic development projects are in progress for the area, all of which will have both positive and negative impacts on the community's social, economic, environmental and cultural conditions; to date none have come to fruition and some may not for many years. A substantial portion of the population remains uncertain about the future of the Village.

Many members of the community have entered into a seven month Integrated Community Sustainability Planning process, with two out of five Priorities for Success having the potential to foster opportunities for literacy skills growth: #3 Strengthening Community Well-Being and #5 Creating Success and Learning Together.

The Valemount Learning Centre and the Adult Literacy Coordinator have relocated to a fully accessible, highly visible business sector location on Valemount's 5th Avenue. The centre now has Work BC Employment Service Centre status.

The Robson and Canoe Valleys Success by 6 Advisory Committee has completed its 2012-2014 Community Plan Supporting Children, Youth and Families, with the first of five goals being the promotion of early literacy.

Observations of on-going and/or increasing pressures, include:

- continued income loss from logs leaving the valley to be processed elsewhere
- lack of development of several proposed projects of substantial size
- greatly reduced business sector
- critically low enrolment at both schools
- fluctuating visitor numbers and related income and employment options
- high real estate values and related taxation
- rising fuel prices, remote location, global economic uncertainty

Most local organizations continue to cope with reduced budgets, but still exhibit a desire to support literacy initiatives and programs, particularly those for families with young children.

3) Community development and literacy collaboration:

Strong collaborative efforts continue throughout the community, largely unchanged from previous years. Important collaborations that support literacy are generated between these organizations (listed alphabetically):

Canoe Valley Recreation Centre

Child Care Resource and Referral

Children First

Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy

Northern Health, which includes:

Valemount Health Centre

Public Health

Mental Health

Home & Community Care

Parent Advisory Councils of Valemount Elementary and Secondary Schools

Robson Valley Support Society, which includes:

Infant Development Program (IDP): 0-3

Supported Child Development (SCD): 3-19

Children Who Witness Abuse (CWWA) counseling

Stopping The Violence (STV) counseling

STV Outreach Services

Safe Shelter Program (SSP)

Child and Youth Mental Health (CYMH)

Family Support services (FSS)

Success By 6

Valemount Learning Centre, which includes:

Adult Literacy

College of New Caledonia (Valemount Campus)

ESL

Work BC Employment Service Centre

Valemount Lions Club

Valemount Public Library, which includes:

North Central Library Federation

Public Library Services Branch/CAP

Village of Valemount

Essential on-going collaborations (in alphabetical order) include:

Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy
Children First
Robson Valley Support Society and its affiliates
Success by 6
Valemount Learning Centre- Adult Literacy
Valemount Public Library and its affiliates

Collaborations work well as a result of:

- on-going belief in literacy and life-long learning
- remote location of the community
- creative and realistic goals
- time availability of partners

Challenges to collaborations working well include:

- time/schedule constraints due to “sole-charge” positions of service providers
- reductions in organizations’ budgets

4) Goals and actions for the current year:

On-going priorities, goals and objectives addressed this year include:

- to strengthen and support emerging literacy skills (0 – 6)
- to strengthen and support the family literacy skills growth
- to strengthen and support adult literacy skills, at many different levels, in all areas of life (e.g. employment, education, recreation, and health)
- to encourage and support learning and literacy in elementary school-aged children
- to encourage and support learning and literacy in secondary school-aged children and youth
- to identify and support Aboriginal literacy needs in the community
- to provide support for children/youth in life skills, coping mechanisms and learning
- to provide school-based violence prevention awareness program
- to support women’s personal growth, safety and life-skills
- to support and adapt to literacy needs of health care system users

- to provide training opportunities towards growth in literacy skills
- to support community celebration of literacy and life-long learning
- to promote literacy through the sharing/recycling of books
- to bring literacy to the forefront in everyday community living

- to support the literacy needs of Food Bank recipients
- to create a Community Hub or Centre

Actions and collaborations include:

- On-going adult literacy opportunities - *successful*
- Valemount Learning Centre Adult Literacy, College of New Caledonia, Valemount Public Library, CBAL
- On-going public library services - *successful*
- Valemount Public Library, B.C. Libraries and Literacy Branch
- 2, 3 and 4 year old screening fairs - *successful*
- Northern Health, CBAL
- Computer training - *successful*
- Valemount Public Library, B.C. Libraries and Literacy Branch
- Play & Learn program - *successful program*
- CBAL, Success By 6, Children First, Valemount Lions Club, Pepe's Restaurant
- Community Book Exchange - *on-going success*
- CBAL, Canoe Valley Rec. Centre, Valemount Public Library
- Books for Babies - *on-going success*
- CBAL, Valemount Public Library, Northern Health
- Family Literacy Day - *moderate success*
- CBAL, Valemount Public Library, Valemount Learning Centre Adult Literacy, Valemount Lions Club
- Take Note! program (music notation) - *successful program*
- CBAL, Valemount Lions Club
- I Am The Future program - *postponed*
- CBAL, Pepe's Restaurant
- Aboriginal resource use - *limited success*
- CBAL, Success By 6, Children First, Aboriginal community
- Community Hub or Centre - *limited success*
- CBAL, Canoe Valley Community Association, Success By 6

- Cookbooks for Food Bank - *limited success*
- CBAL, Valemount Food Bank
- Children's books for Food Bank - *limited success*
- CBAL, Valemount Food Bank
- On-going Family Support program - *successful*
- Robson Valley Support Society
- On-going support for women - *successful*
- Robson Valley Support Society
- Respectful Relationships program - *successful*
- Robson Valley Support Society, Valemount Secondary School
- Children's Summer Reading program - *Summer 2012*
- Valemount Public Library, B.C. Libraries and Literacy Branch
- Valemountain Days Literacy challenge - *June 23, 2012*
- CBAL, Aboriginal community
- On-going home and community care - *successful*
- Northern Health
- On-going mental health care - *successful*
- Northern Health
- Support for health care system users - *in progress*
- CBAL, Valemount Adult Literacy, Northern Health
- Joanna Chapman-Smith and the Travelling Songbirds Music School - *successful*
- Valemount Elementary School, Valemount Secondary School, VES PAC, VSS PAC
- Jay Sherwood, author presentation - *successful*
- Valemount Public Library
- Bob Hayes, author presentation - *successful*
- Valemount Public Library
- Norden the Magician presentation - *successful*
- Valemount Public Library, North Central Library Foundation, Valemount Elementary School
- Annual book fairs - *successful*

-
- Maria Lerch
 - Valemount Elementary School

The plan, for the most part, has been followed without adjustments.

5) Indications of success:

CBAL program participants have been enthusiastic learners and all have reported that they have enjoyed and benefitted from the programs.

A brief final survey (see attached), given to the CBAL Play & Learn group at the end of the program, shows a general overall success rate of 89.63%. The survey reflects a very high agreement with such statements as: "I know more about how important I am to my child's early learning." 88%; "I know more ways to encourage a love of reading in my child." 90%; "I know more about how early literacy skills contribute to my child's development." 90%; "I know more about the importance of rhymes, songs and stories." 95%; "My child plays better with other children." 97%; etc. The results of the survey will be used in planning the program for the coming year, but are useful here as concrete indicators of success.

CBAL Take Note! program participants all indicated a desire to enroll in future music notation programs and report that they are practicing what they learned at the program. Many participants showed up ½ hour early for the program and wanted to stay late at the end of each session. A brief final survey (see attached), given to participants at the end of the program, shows a general overall success rate of 95.86%. Comments from the survey such as: "It was wonderful getting a glimpse of this language and the possibility to understand and use the structure of music. It is a road to literacy which opens doors in an amazing way. Can we get more?"; and "Thanks for coming up with a new "take" on literacy." are again, very strong indicators of success.

Note: CBAL was the only organization submitting indicators of success.

6) Challenges:

Many Valemount and area residents continue to show limited interest in literacy and/or literacy skills growth.

A reluctance to register and/or fully commit to literacy programs is evident among the general population and prevalent among the "at risk" population.

CBAL faced some challenges with program venue difficulties that were affecting attendance; an arrangement was made for a venue in the business district, which is still not ideal, but decidedly warmer, brighter and more easily accessed.

Teens continue to be a challenge to attract, despite opportunities that offered a substantial prize.

There is evidence of many children/youth still in need of literacy skills support, beyond the school system.

Fifteen hours per week is insufficient for community literacy coordination.

The community is in need of, and would greatly benefit from, the creation of a central public space for intergenerational, social interaction and developmental growth.

PLANS FOR THE COMING YEAR

1) New opportunities, challenges, or issues

- to engage youth (teens) in literacy skills growth
- to address the need for tutors for school-age children/youth

2) Goals, priorities, objectives and related actions

In addition to our on-going goals and actions (listed previously), the Valemount CLPC has decided on these specific focuses for the coming year:

- to continue, and improve where possible, literacy skills development opportunities for families with young children
 - Play and Learn program (CBAL, Success by 6, Children First)
 - I Am The Future program (CBAL)
 - Take Note! program (CBAL)
 - Joanna Chapman-Smith and the Travelling Songbirds Music School (Valemount Elementary and Secondary Schools and PACs, Valemount Arts and Cultural Society, CBAL)
 - 2, 3 and 4 year old screening fairs (Northern Health, CBAL)
 - Community Book Exchange (CBAL, Valemount Public Library, Canoe Valley Recreation Centre)

 - Books for Babies (Northern Health, CBAL, Valemount Public Library)
 - books for Food Bank recipients (CBAL, Valemount Food Bank)
 - continued efforts toward a Community Hub or Centre (CBAL, Canoe Valley Community Association)

- to increase support for literacy skills development for school-age children
 - Orton-Gillingham tutoring (CBAL, Valemount Public Library, Valemount Adult Literacy)
 - teen program utilizing video and technology, not yet developed (CBAL, Valemount Public Library, Valemount Adult Literacy)
 - Take Note! program (CBAL)
 - Summer Reading program (Valemount Public Library, CBAL)
 - Joanna Chapman-Smith and the Travelling Songbirds Music School (Valemount Elementary and Secondary Schools and PACs, Valemount Arts and Cultural Society, CBAL)
 - Community Book Exchange (CBAL, Valemount Public Library, Canoe Valley Recreation Centre)
 - books for Food Bank recipients (CBAL, Valemount Food Bank)
 - continued efforts toward a Community Hub or Centre (CBAL, CVCA)

- to support the Aboriginal community in numeracy and cultural literacy opportunities
 - Yvonne Chartrand workshops and event for National Aboriginal Day (Success by 6 Aboriginal Engagement, Valemount Arts and Cultural Society, CBAL)

3) Requirements to meet goals and employ actions

- *sufficient program and coordination funding*
- *commitment from collaborators*
- *suitable venues*
- *commitment and support from municipal, regional and provincial governments for a Community Hub or Centre*

Future Planning – District Literacy Plan

District staff is committed to continuing to work with community partners to support literacy initiatives in Prince George, McBride, Mackenzie and Valemount.

District staff will

- work with the Literacy Now Coordinators to explore and identify ways in which we can work together and benefit from having a District Literacy Plan, we will meet next fall to share best practice
- continue as members of the local Literacy Now groups
- continue to explore the expanding area of early childhood literacy programs
- expand district participation in community events that promote literacy
- work with the literacy community in Mackenzie to identify a Literacy Coordinator to lead the community's literacy plan

Summary

The District Literacy Plan (School District No.57) is grounded in the belief that strong relationships between the community and the school district are a crucial component of life-long learning. The purpose of this plan is to document working relationships that support literacy within our communities. The plan encompasses initiatives from early learning through to adult learning. The District Literacy Plan has been collaboratively developed with input from literacy outreach coordinators in McBride, Prince George and Valemount. It is a statement of commitment by School District No. 57 to work with community partners to improve literacy.

By working as a community we can increase the life chances of everyone in our community.