



2009 District Literacy Plan  
Implementation Stage  
Merritt, BC  
December 2008 – June 2009

Literacy Merritt  
District Literacy Plan  
Implementation Stage

June 24, 2009

Report prepared by: Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Literacy Merritt

Contact Information

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Reflecting on the 2008 Plan:

1. What priorities/objectives and actions from your 2008 District Literacy Plan have you addressed this year?

*Robyn Grebliunas was hired as the Literacy Outreach Coordinator in December 2008. The Literacy Merritt Task Force had a visioning session in January 2009. An outcome of this visioning session was to expand the task force to include partners from the school district, social development (represented by Merritt Youth and Family Resources or MYFRS), crime prevention (community policing), health (Interior Health), economic development, municipal government, early years (MYFRS and Imagination Library), K-12 (school district), adult (Nicola Valley Institute of Technology or NVIT), aboriginal (SD #58 First Nations Principal) and public library. All partners, with the exception of the municipal government and economic development have been regularly attending the monthly meetings since April 2009.*

2. What has happened as a result of the work this year? What have been the major impacts?

*The following is a timeline of the project to date:*

December 2008 – the task force hired an LOC

January 2009 – a Literacy Merritt Task Force visioning session was held

February 2009 – the task force was expanded to include community partners, the LOC attended the provincial literacy conference, a Reach a Reader campaign was held and funds raised went to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library project

March 2009 – there was a continued focus on working with local media to educate the community on literacy, partnerships were formed with the public library for programming, and a literacy presentation was made to City Council

April 2009 – the Literacy Celebration was held, funding and partnerships were announced and ESL and a Computer Literacy for Seniors program were announced, a Literacy Merritt Website was launched and logo designed

May and June 2009 – delivery of a successful Computer Literacy for Seniors program in partnership with the public library, an ESL instructor was hired for curriculum development and planned ESL deliver for October – December 2009. LOC attended the VCC Family Literacy course at TRU.

3. What was the most successful aspect of the initiative this year? What was challenging?

*Literacy Merritt was successful at focusing on the community gap in literacy, which is adult literacy. The challenge was getting the partners on the expanded task force to the table and involved in the project. This challenge has now turned into a successful part of the project with almost all partners attending meetings on a regular basis. Getting involvement from the municipal government continues to be a challenge.*

4. Evaluation

*Literacy Merritt has no formal evaluation tools at this time. An informal evaluation of the instructor and delivery was done at the end of the Computer Literacy for Seniors course. Success has been deemed on the successful registration and completion of the Computer Literacy for Seniors course and the funds raised for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library through the Reach a Reader campaign. The governance of this project through the task force is another indication of success.*

5. LOC

*The LOC position has enhanced literacy services in Merritt through communications and building partnerships in the community.*

6. Collaboration and Community Development

*Literacy Merritt has successfully built community partnership around literacy.*

## 7. Partnerships

*Collaborations and partnerships are working well on the Literacy Merritt Task Force. The early years are covered thoroughly in our community through many initiatives and programs, as well as the K-12 level. NVIT is working to expand their adult literacy services. Literacy Merritt has formed successful partnerships with the Merritt Library to offer programs and ESL resources. A partnership with Merritt Herald raised funds for Dolly Parton's Imagination Library.*

## 8. Resources

*We have achieved our desired outcomes through communications, partnerships and funding.*

Thinking about the 2009 Plan

### 1. Community Changes

*The community is talking about literacy and understanding that literacy affects all aspects of our community from social to economic. Literacy Merritt will continue to build on this success through communication, program development and delivery and building partnerships in literacy.*

### 2. Stage

*Literacy Merritt is at the stage of implementation.*

### 3. Challenges and Opportunities

*It is a challenge to keep the community focused on literacy. Literacy is so broad that it is a challenge to not get lost in the sea of opportunity and stay focused on filling the gaps for our community. The LOC contract at 15 hours a week can be challenging for production and moving the project forward.*

### 4. Adjustments and Initiatives

*Literacy Merritt will be rolling out a community ESL course in October 2009. The curriculum is being developed this summer. Literacy Merritt hopes to continue to run Computer Literacy for Seniors periodically. The Computer Literacy for Seniors Course has been expanded to a four week, 12 hour course, and will be delivered again in September 2009. The Literacy Merritt Task Force will continue to meet monthly and has scheduled a 2010 visioning session for October 2009.*

### 5. ROC/LOC

*Literacy Merritt has requested regional meetings, regional communications and shared train the trainer in the region from the ROC. The LOC will continue to implement the community plan.*

### 6. Evaluation

*Literacy Merritt will continue to evaluate each program delivery.*

7. Resources

*Literacy Merritt requires a list of all literacy community training programs (i.e. Writing Out Loud) and a list of all train the trainer opportunities, as well as more contact within the region.*

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2009 Literacy Merritt Task Force

Wendy Hyer, SD #58

Steve McNiven, SD #58

Opal Charters, SD #58 FN Principal

Tony Broman, Merritt Youth and Family Resources Society (MYFRS)

Jill Fitzer, Early Years (MYFRS)

Deborha Merrick, Merritt Public Library

Iris Hodson, Interior Health

Tracy Dunsmore, Community Policing Office

Marla Price, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Kurt Christopherson, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology

Dee Arduini, Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator

Municipal Government – tba

Economic Development - tba



Literacy Merritt's Dolly Parton's Imagination Library volunteers got in the spirit in February running a Reach a Reader campaign to raise funds for their program. This project was done in partnership with Merritt Herald. Pictured here is a committee volunteer dressed as Dolly Parton.



Literacy Merritt task force member Wendy Hyer announces funding at the Literacy Celebration.

May 31, 2009



**For Immediate Release**

**Literacy Merritt Launched and Gaining Momentum**

Literacy Merritt has now launched the first Computer Literacy for Seniors Course. The course is being offered in partnership with Merritt Library. "We have hired an instructor and filled the first class, which is now running," reports Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator. "We are excited to have this first project off the ground so quickly and we are happy to be working with such an experienced instructor." Computer Literacy for Seniors is currently running classes two days a week. Interested participants are welcome to sign up at the library for courses in the Fall 2009. The courses are offered free to the community.

"Participants can also sign up for ESL courses at the Library," adds Grebliunas. "We are really fortunate to be working in partnership with the Merritt Library, making these projects possible." ESL courses will be offered at no charge starting in September 2009. Registration is taking place at the library.

Youth Asset Development Day is coming up on June 2, 2009 and Literacy Merritt is getting involved to promote literacy as an asset. "We are organizing a book exchange down at Rotary Park," announces the Coordinator. "We are hoping that every youth at the park will leave the event with a book that is new to them. We welcome community support to make this happen. If you have any used books for ages K-7 that are collecting dust please bring them to the park Tuesday or call us to arrange pick up." The book exchange is sponsored by Literacy Merritt and Murray GM. "We plan to fill a GM vehicle with books for kids so that every child has a book new to them this summer," explains the coordinator. Youth Asset Development Day is taking place on Tuesday, June 2, 2009, 9:00am-2:00pm, at Rotary Park.

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For more information about Literacy Merritt contact:

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Reach a Reader – Merritt Herald

February 10, 2009

Why Not Start With Literacy?

Submitted by Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator

The traditional definition of literacy is the ability to read and write. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines literacy as, “Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate, compute and use printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning to enable an individual to achieve his or her goals, to develop his or her knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society.” That definition is an eye-full for anyone to read, but read the last line again – enable an individual to reach goals, reach potential and participate in society. That’s key to building a thriving community. Today, illiteracy is seen as a social problem, one that can be addressed through education and community support. So while we strive to build a vibrant economy we must focus equal effort on building a healthy social base to support that economy. Why not start with literacy?

The Yukon Literacy Coalition took the definition of literacy one step further and defined family literacy as, “all of the different ways parents, children and extended family members develop and use literacy skills to accomplish day to day tasks and activities, at home and in their community.” Our Northern neighbors are promoting literacy through family development, teaching children and adults skills together in recognition that literacy starts at home. The foundation of literacy may be reading and writing, but there are many levels to building community literacy. The four pillars holding up the structure of community literacy are preschool, school age, adult and aboriginal literacy. English as a second language (ESL), computer literacy, numeracy and more are family members of literacy.

This community is currently launching its community literacy project. Community leaders like School District #58, Merritt Youth & Family Resource Services and the Merritt Library have worked hard to secure funding and develop a community literacy plan. Literacy Now, a 2010 initiative, is providing the seed funding for community literacy projects. The local literacy team will utilize the research, the expertise of other communities and the needs of this community and roll out a plan that works towards their goal: “we envision that literacy will mean that Merritt is a healthy and vibrant community where we have the literacy skills, knowledge and support to attain and sustain our goals.”

There are many programs already running in our community. Preschool programs include Success by Six, Strong Start, Ready- Set- Learn, Headstart, Imagination Library and library reading programs. School age programs include literacy and numeracy mandates within schools, literacy teachers, speech therapy,

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homework clubs, lap top computer program, AVID, DART, LINKS and more than can be listed here. Adult

programs are not as abundant in our community, but we do have the local library offering basic computer skills and NVIT rolling out a community adult literacy program. While sustaining and enriching existing programs, a goal is to develop new programs that are self-sustaining and independent to ensure a lasting legacy of literacy in our community.

There are some well known names to be found in the world of literacy. I ran into ELMO while doing some research. ELMO stands for Exemplary Literacy Materials Online. This site is an initiative of Literacy BC; it's a resource to find and review adult and family literacy materials. Learners, tutors and teachers can contribute to this site. Check it out at [www.ELMOreviews.ca](http://www.ELMOreviews.ca) or ask Mr. Google for directions.

Dolly Parton has made a strong commitment to children's literacy. Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is an international program and we are fortunate to have a hard working group of volunteers rolling out this program here in Merritt & the Nicola Valley. The program is sponsored by the Canadian Invest in Kids Foundation. How does it work? Children ages 0-5 can sign up for free and receive a book a month in the mail until their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. Businesses and individuals can sponsor a child in the program. For \$300.00 a business can sponsor a child for five years of sponsorship benefits, the biggest one being the opportunity to build a healthy community through support and development of our children. It's cliché to say, but it's true, "it takes a whole community to raise a child".

"The seed of dreams are often found in books and the seed you help plant in your community can grow across the world," Dolly Parton.