

# Literacy Plan

School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)



July 15, 2009

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**LITERACY PLAN**  
**School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)**  
**July 15, 2009**

**Our Guiding Philosophy**

Nechako Lakes School District's actions in the District Literacy Plan align with the District Achievement Contract in that the work undertaken attempts to involve as many people and reach as many people as possible. We strive to contribute to the creation of positive outcomes in peoples' lives by creating opportunities for community members to participate more fully in their lives through fun, innovative and purposeful learning. A more detailed description of the K-12 initiatives can be found within the Nechako Lakes Achievement Contract. A common thread that runs through all District actions is one that prioritizes respect for one another, the importance of positive relationships and the value of building supportive collaborative networks as its educators continue to develop their skills, and as the District reaches out to our communities to work more effectively together.

**Nechako Lakes Context**

The district's population is over 27,000. People in our area are facing considerable uncertainty regarding the security and sustainability of employment. Economic insecurity has increased the transient nature of our population. The population is highly dispersed with an average population density of 0.6 persons per square kilometer. The district has a higher proportion of its population in the 0 to 24 years of age category (41%) than the province (32%). In addition, those over 55 years old constitute only 16% of the population compared to the provincial average of 25%. It should be noted that the large percentage of Aboriginal persons living on-reserve are not properly represented in these statistics. Had Statistics Canada included on-reserve First Nations populations in all its calculations the district's statistics would likely diverge from the province's to a greater extent than has been stated. The Early Development Instrument (EDI), a UBC study, shows children in Nechako Lakes are the fifth most vulnerable population group of the 60 school districts in the province. Overall vulnerability has increased over the initial and most recent study. Typically, the adults living in this region have 10 or fewer years of formal schooling. Median family income for the district and the province is highly similar, yet the district's unemployment rate is usually 40% higher than the provincial average.

**Unique Characteristics and Strengths**

In recent years extra emphasis has been placed upon the important role that each and every employee plays in the success of each student. As a result each of us can measure the success of our actions and strategies through the lens of graduation.

The district has excellent working relationships with our employees, with our community and with other educational partners. Employees are able, willing and motivated to devote significant effort to improve student achievement. Our growing learning communities in literacy and numeracy show positive indications for student success. Our district's ten year FSA trend lines for grade 4 and 7 reading and numeracy show positive growth over time. Although many students enter kindergarten with significant deficits, these students make good gains over the kindergarten year as evidenced in our fall and spring assessment results.

The First Nations Education Council (FNEC) plays a key role in our plans to improve Aboriginal student achievement. FNEC is working to develop the next Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement which will align with the goal of student success.

Our strength is in our people and our partnerships. Our local college and many First Nations bands work closely with us to provide educational services within the traditional K to 12 area. We also work together on initiatives for adults, preschoolers, parents, trades training, and staff development. The district's storefront adult education operations are extensive and serve over 400 students. They provide an opportunity for a large percentage of people who have not completed high school with a means of doing so. We have early learning programs underway in four communities as well as an outreach program serving a number of communities. Both a fifth early learning program and an additional outreach program are expected for the fall pending qualified ECE applicants. Our distributed learning school provides alternative learning opportunities to students within the district and around the province. It is a source of technical innovation, collaboration, and cooperation. The district is proud of its hands-on "projects" which provide students with real world experience in health, forestry, agriculture, fire fighting, metalwork and the operation of heavy equipment. They also help students understand the relevance of school to the world of work.

Bridges for Adult Learning Success:

Even though the adult learning programming is an asset in Nechako Lakes School District, there is a gap in services for the many adults who are not ready for high school level curriculum that will lead to graduation. As we learn how to engage and build relationships with these learners in our community literacy work, we will begin to change the conceptual frameworks that we use to structure opportunities for learning for a wider range of learners. We will need to continue to honour the service groups that are already working with these learners and consider alternate ways and likely atypical settings in which to deliver and support learning for adults with low literacy skills. The School District will also need to build its capacity to deliver the new English Foundations curriculum by exploring schools programs that might already align with it, and by attracting teachers to this field of work.

## **Brief Overview of Community Literacy Initiatives**

Nechako Lakes School District has taken the responsibility of the expanded mandate seriously. It continues to use operating dollars to fund a Literacy Coordinator position full time, enabling that person to focus on school-aged literacy needs, early learning developments and programs as well as community literacy initiatives. The senior management team, the trustees, and the Literacy Coordinator initiated the process of engaging communities in two major town-sites and they also participated in the same movement led by the College of New Caledonia in Fort St. James. The School District is the steward for the funds from Literacy Now in an effort to provide infrastructural support to the literacy groups in the Burns Lake region and in the Fraser Lake/Vanderhoof area.

In the past twelve months, three community literacy task forces designed plans to improve literacy in our region and all have moved into the implementation phase. Each group has a few goals that are similar, as well as some that are unique. Coordinating time varies as does the amount of involvement from the table members. The process has been invigorating and sometimes challenging and confusing as the committees have wrestled with the concept of community literacy. The opportunity to ‘write our own story’ or draw our own roadmap has occasionally stymied table members and yet each group has been successful in either making dynamic changes or in supporting other groups to achieve that aim. The movement can aptly be described by an Aboriginal concept (word) discussed in an important article on Aboriginal ways of learning by Lorna Williams and Michelle Tanaka (2006), *Transforming pedagogies: Pre-service reflections on learning and teaching in an indigenous world*. We are beginning to be open to a somewhat nebulous process of learning which is resulting in kamucwkalha, “when the energies of people in a group come together, and collectively everyone becomes clearly focused towards a common goal” (p.12). One step at a time, we are moving in the right direction. The diagram on page 7 describes the cycle of action and work that will continue on an annual basis.

### **Engaging First Nations**

Recognizing that Carrier First Nations in our region have often faced higher than average failure rates in traditional educational settings, all the literacy committees are attempting to engage our Aboriginal communities in this learning journey. Initial success is evident in many ways, and is the result of the efforts of many committee members, the Literacy Outreach Coordinators and the Regional Literacy Coordinator.

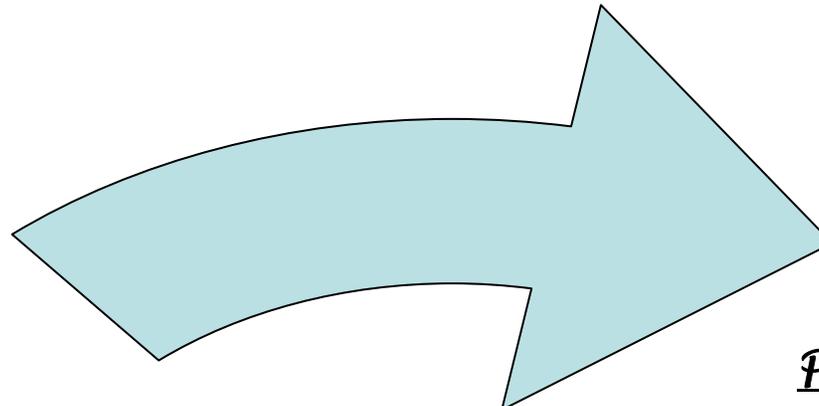
Two of our communities show strong Aboriginal participation in the new learning opportunities. In these communities, the connections are strong between Literacy Now and the two main educational institutions as well as with community businesses and service providers, empowering all who are involved. In Fort St. James, College of New Caledonia (CALP funding) and Literacy Now funding have been linked to provide community generated learning activities twice a week. One session is called *Nak’azdli Learning Group* and the other is the *Fort St. James Learning Nights*, and they both attract many First Nations learners in creative ways to learn. (see table 3).

The other intertwines several Vanderhoof groups, including the School District Literacy Department and SD 91 First Nations Education Council with a group of vulnerable, young mothers who meet to create photo-memory books twice a week at local community service group’s building. Many of these

participants are a compilation from Saik'uz First Nation and off-reserve individuals from a variety of Aboriginal backgrounds.

Another development materialized as a consequence of making connections at a workshop with First Nations individuals or representatives. This resulted in a request for funding for a project in Stellat'en Nation near Fraser Lake, involving elders and youth sharing traditional ways.

Additionally, Lakes District Literacy Now's presentation of a concept for a mobile service bus to the SD 91 First Nations Education Council and a later meeting with the Burns Lake office for Carrier Sekani Family Services have both built bridges between the literacy committees and these important guiding and serving bodies for First Nations families. Carrier Sekani Family Services has expressed a desire to send staff to various First Nations reserves using the redesigned bus. It would support an initiative they are already undertaking and they think it would add value to their work.



## Planning Process

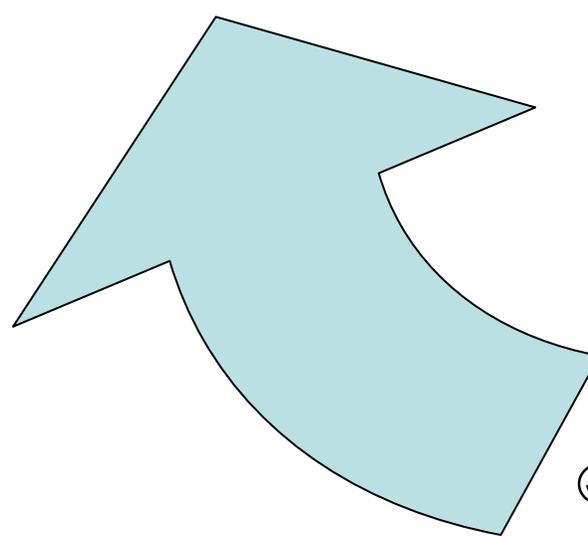
June-Nov. 2008

- ✓ Engaging & Motivating Interest
- ✓ Taking Stock (Birth to 100)
- ✓ Setting Goals

## Evaluation/Assessment

Nov-Dec. 2009

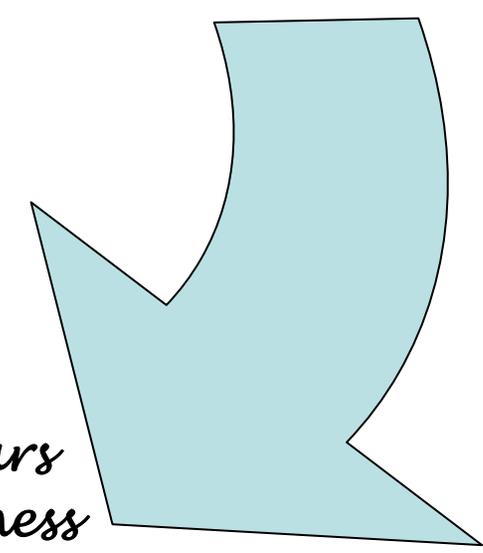
- ☞ Attendance in programs
  - ☞ Sustainability
- ☞ Surveys & Interviews
- ☞ Project Completion



## Implementation

Jan. 2009-Dec. 2009

- ☺ Diverse Community Flavours
- ☺ Sustaining Interest/Awareness
- ☺ Ongoing Flexibility



## Lakes District Literacy Now Task Force

Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Joan Clancy

**Table Members:** Colleen Needoba (SD 91), Scott Zayac (College of New Caledonia & SD 91), Lori Boychuk (SD 91), Eileen Wiebe (Burns Lake Public Library), Beckie Watts (SD 91), June Moulton (Burns Lake author & senior), Michelle Miller-Gauthier (SD 91).

<b>Goal/FocusArea</b>	<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Progress to Date &amp; Considerations for the Future</b>	<b>Who</b>
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ a Community Literacy Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 2009 Joan Clancy hired for 10 hours per week</li> </ul>	Committee decided to continue to employ the Planning Coordinator
Support & Expand Existing Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide transportation vouchers for needy families to attend programs</li> <li>• Advertise to help increase community awareness of programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning in progress; late fall 2009 the committee will refocus on this goal.</li> <li>• The newsletter will be a source of advertising for programs.</li> <li>• Will research the idea inserting the newsletter into the local newspaper once a month.</li> </ul>	<p>-Committee</p> <p>-Coordinator</p>
Transportation & Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, retrofit and equip a W.O.W. bus (Words on Wheels), a project that would bring services to isolated communities in the form of a transformed school bus redesigned to accommodate programs for children and adults.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds were provided to extend the Coordinator's trip to the Provincial Literacy Forum in Vancouver to include a one-day W.O.W. bus mentorship training for a team from the Nechako Lakes region in Parksville, B.C. The original concept for the bus has been developed by the Parksville School District and their programs have been established for ten years.</li> <li>• Funds were provided to send one other committee member to Parksville with the team.</li> <li>• The School District applied for and received funds to house a mobile StrongStart Outreach program on a retired school bus donated by the School District.</li> <li>• The School District is in the process of recruiting an ECE facilitator to run the StrongStart program.</li> <li>• The bus will be redesigned during the summer months.</li> <li>• Volunteer bus drivers will be solicited over the summer months</li> <li>• Presentations to potential community partners have begun and</li> </ul>	<p>-Coordinator</p> <p>-School District Literacy Coordinator</p> <p>-Public Librarian</p> <p>-SD Literacy Coordinator</p> <p>-SD Literacy Coordinator</p> <p>-SD Facilities Dept.</p>

		will continue into the fall. Groups that have received presentations to the Burnsville Education Board, First Nations Outreach Coordinator, Neaksa Valley Community Services, and Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Society.	-Coordinator & table members -Coordinator, SD
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Coordinator has applied for a \$25 000 Horizons Senior's Grant. Notification will come in August.</li> <li>•Ads for volunteer bus drivers and donations are currently being run in the local newspaper.</li> </ul>	Literacy Coordinator, table members  - Burns Lake Christian Supportive Society -Coordinator
Workplace Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Build partnerships with industry by contacting safety committees and human resources personnel</li> <li>•Create plans to help increase workplace literacy and remove barriers to learning</li> <li>•Encourage the use of plain and clear language as well as multisensory information</li> <li>•Encourage industry to support literacy programs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Will look for support from the Regional Literacy Coordinator in fall 2009.</li> </ul>	
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Community information campaigns.</li> <li>•Weekly literacy 'mottos' on the local newspaper</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A newsletter is in the design phase</li> <li>• An information pamphlet is ready to be distributed to families with new babies (Books for Babes packages), at the library, the hospital, and the Burns Lake &amp; Southside medical clinics</li> </ul>	-Coordinator
Cultural Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Video-tape elders and seniors telling traditional and personal stories and provide the community with access to the videos</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has not been possible to follow through with this task due to human resource constraints.</li> <li>• Carrier Sekani Family Services is interested in putting staff on the bus to help them deliver their 'Community Days' Program in the region's First Nations Band Offices.</li> </ul>	-Table member Scott Zayac  -Carrier Sekani Family Services -First Nations Bands

**Table Members:** Robyn Hendrikson (Nechako Valley Community Services Society), Wendy Galvin (College of New Caledonia), Jane Gray (Vanderhoof Public Library), Jennifer Barg (Vanderhoof Public Library), Audrey Fenema (Fraser Lake Public Library), Charlene Smilinski (College of New Caledonia), John Stafford (SD Trustee), Gloria Olafson (Learning Disabilities Society), Michelle Miller-Gauthier (SD 91)

<u>Goal/Focus Area</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Progress to Date &amp; Considerations for the Future</u>	<u>Who (responsibilities &amp; partnerships)</u>
Committee Coordination	Hire a part-time coordinator to help implement goals (initially planned for 30 hours a week)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 2009 Larissa Cormier hired for 20 hours per week.</li> </ul>	Interview Panel -John Stafford (trustee) -Calvin Desmarais (Ab Ed Principal) -Michelle Miller-Gauthier (SD 91 Literacy Coordinator)
Communications & Marketing	Purchase an electronic display board for Vanderhoof & Fraser Lake to be managed by the Public Libraries	(strategy changed dramatically) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First edition of <b>monthly newsletter</b> titled <i>Care to Learn: Lifelong Learning</i> distributed in <b>May</b>. It highlights one program in detail and provides information about other services. It may grow to include a calendar of events. Businesses, service providers, schools, and bulletin board displays are the distribution network. The School District provides black &amp; white copying services for community distribution at a reduced cost, and schools that are participating are doing so for free. The Coordinator uses her personal business (local free publication) distribution route to deliver the newsletter. (Appendix)</li> <li>The committee decided on small <b>card or one page of information listing resources</b> and services with contact phone numbers. This is still in the development phase.</li> <li>Waiting for a <b>provincial brochure</b> that may be coming before designing a local one</li> <li>Coordinator spends a great deal of time meeting people, businesses and service groups face to face spreading the word about the committee's work and mandate</li> </ul>	-Coordinator with input from committee members and service providers  -School District providing copying services (black & white) for a reduced price

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Haven't begun dealing with workplace literacy, but will look to the RLC for professional development support.</li> </ul>	
Transportation & Isolation	Research a project that would bring services to isolated communities in the form of a transformed school bus redesigned to accommodate programs for children and adults. (W.O.W. bus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funds were provided to extend the Coordinator's trip to the Provincial Literacy Forum in Vancouver to include a one-day W.O.W. bus mentorship training for a team from the Nechako Lakes region in Parksville, B.C.</li> <li>• The bus may include visits to Fort Fraser and Nadleh First Nation if drivers can be secured.</li> <li>• A pamphlet was designed to leave with groups after they receive the presentation (Appendix)</li> <li>• As the project becomes established in the Burns Lake area, the committee will consider more ways in which it could become involved, (i.e. by financially supporting programs on the bus, or by assisting with coordination of the schedule if it travels to this area)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Coordinator</li> <li>-School District Literacy Coordinator</li> <li>-Fraser Lake Trustee</li>   <li>-Coordinator</li> </ul>
Support literacy in the surrounding communities	Receive proposals from community service providers and projects that need financial support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$175.00 given to Nechako Valley Community Services to help purchase two new videos to use in school presentations regarding FASD and effects of other drugs on unborn children. The titles are <i>And Down Will Come Baby</i> and <i>The Score</i>.</li> <li>• \$3700 towards a First Nations summer literacy project in Stellat'en Nation "<b><u>Our ways values are still the same</u></b>" <b><u>A traditional approach to teaching and learning</u></b>. The project seeks to engage youth and elders in traditional and cultural literacy learning by using storytelling, legendry, folklore, songs and song, in transmitting oral knowledge from the older generation to youth. To be implemented July – August 2009. Elders and youth will meet every Sunday, 5p.m. – 7p.m. at the Stellat'en New Hall. Activities will be document both in written and video recording formats for store and future use. (\$2700 towards Documentation of Activities and \$1000 towards the Teaching and Learning Materials)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-FASD worker Robin Hendrikson made the purchase and will do a presentation for the committee in the fall</li>   <li>- Angela Reynolds, Education Coordinator, Stellat'en First Nation</li> </ul>

	<p>Support/Initiate projects that attempt to reach vulnerable families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$4000 to Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Literacy Project to match the funding that Neighbourlink has contributed. Two Vanderhoof residents took the first half of a training to learn the Orton Gillingham method of teaching reading skills. One of the trainees is the instructor for a local creative scrapbooking group that is working with young disadvantaged moms. One person connected to the scrapbooking group has had an initial literacy assessment, and another has had a numeracy assessment along with a few lessons.</li> <li>• A pilot project involving young mothers who are considered 'at-risk' or vulnerable has developed in Vanderhoof. The mothers (and two or three fathers who are on the periphery) meet twice a week to develop their literacy and expressive skills by creating photo-memory books (scrapbooks). For a detailed description see appendix.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gloria Olafson, trainer &amp; table member, Henry Bucher, Coordinator of Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Society</li> <li>-SD Literacy Coordinator</li> <li>-Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Society</li> <li>-School District First Nations Education Council</li> <li>-Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program</li> <li>-Nechako Valley Community Services</li> <li>-Community members donate supplies</li> </ul>
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## Fort St. James Literacy Now Task Force

Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Christie Hoy

**Table Members: Planning Committee:** Jody Prince (Nak'azdli First Nation), Don Prince, (Nak'azdli First Nation), Michelle Miller Gauthier (SD 91), Mary Huffman (retired teacher), Cam McCormick (Principal, Sowchea Elementary), Lisa and Bridget Bystrom (Figure Skating Club), Lynette Plamondon (ESL Coordinator), Megan Wood-Koch (Literacy Planning Coordinator, College of New Caledonia), Christy Smith (Regional Literacy Coordinator, College of New Caledonia), Ann McCormick (Project Planner, College of New Caledonia)

The table members by and large did not want to continue to sit on a committee for the long term. They helped to establish the plan and have left the implementation to the Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Christie Hoy and the College of New Caledonia.

<u>Goal/Focus Area</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Progress to Date &amp; Considerations for the Future</u>	<u>Who</u>
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employ a Community Literacy Coordinator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• February 2009 Christy Hoy hired for 18 hours per week</li> </ul>	Posted through the college system
Build Relationships & Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding presentations</li> <li>• Community Learning Evening every Wednesday night</li> <li>• Nakazdl'i Learning Group</li> <li>• Circulating a newsletter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plain &amp; Clear Language offered to community groups and 20 individuals participated.</li> <li>• The question is asked of potential participants: <i>If you could learn one thing what would it be?</i> Some topics that have been pursued are: making sushi, email, facebook, quilting, rustic furniture making, going green. Through this there has been a lot of advertising (posters &amp; emails) and information sharing at the beginning of the evening. The learning evenings hosted to date brought 70 people into the Hub to learn about literacy.</li> <li>• Open to all community members, it meets Wednesday mornings and engages in the same projects as the evening group. They also made bookmarks for kids, and gave them out at the Children's Festival and to the local first Nations Elementary School.</li> <li>• Plot in the community garden that has the label "Literacy Garden" is beginning.</li> <li>• Cooking sessions coming up over the summer</li> <li>• <i>Coffeetalk</i> is circulated biweekly. It is an easy read, and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Regional Literacy Coordinator</li> <li>-Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator</li> <li>-Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator</li> <li>-Regional Literacy</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Coordinator to build partnerships with service providers &amp; local government</li> </ul>	<p>it is becoming quite popular.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The local government partnerships will begin to develop in the fall of 2009 (Initial presentation to the municipality on June 24, 2009)</li> <li>• Through hosting the Learning Evenings partnerships have been developed with Kettle Creek Quilts, Greening Up the Fort, Adult Education, the ESL settlement assistance program, and Driftwood Designs.</li> </ul>	<p>Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator -Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator</p>
Continual research & environmental scanning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely connected with the RLC</li> </ul>	-Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator
Increase community ownership to literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intent of the learning evenings is to promote literacy as lifelong and life wide learning and get rid of the stigma sometimes attached to literacy. Promoting this definition of literacy makes it applicable to everybody in the community and therefore increases ownership.</li> </ul>	-Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator
Centralize Community Literacy Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The Learning Hub</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A space that provides information, links to services, and houses the learning nights opened in January</li> </ul>	-Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, College of New Caledonia (CALP Funding)
Support family literacy in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Supporting the development of an outreach program</li> <li>•Sit on Success by Six &amp; ECD committees</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Success by Six has decided not to do an outreach component at this time, so the Lit Now Committee has not transferred the \$2500.</li> </ul>	
Support literacy in the community of Fort St. James and surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Sustain existing community literacy services and resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grandparents &amp; Tea at Sowchea Elementary, an afterschool event every Thursday where grandparents can come and have tea and do activities with their grandchildren. Literacy Now provides books, support and promotion of the event.</li> <li>• Bought books for children at the Children's Festival</li> </ul>	Success by Six, Sowchea Elementary, Regional Literacy Coordinator, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, College of New Caledonia.

## **Future Directions**

### **Becoming More Connected as a Region**

As the literacy committees have grown in their understanding of their role in improving the lives of people in the communities, so has the realization that the job and its purpose could be much bigger and more powerful than first imagined. To assist with building stronger connections between service providers, from the early childhood world to senior citizens, the Regional Literacy Coordinator will help the three local committees host a regional literacy symposium, likely in October. Anne Docherty from the Storyteller Foundation from Hazelton will facilitate the day. One of the main goals is to **increase** knowledge about who provides services in our region and how we can connect and coordinate with each other more effectively.

### **Workplace Literacy**

All literacy groups have identified this as an important part of building community literacy, but have not been able to move forward with ideas or strategies. The Fort St. James Chamber of Commerce recently passed a policy that focuses on workplace literacy for their organization. Speaking with the employers in the community is part of the strategy, but employers are struggling to stay afloat and do not want to take on any extra expensive projects. One idea that is being considered is to have the Regional Literacy Coordinator do a presentation to employers and businesses about marketing to an audience with low literacy skills. The intent is to raise the awareness and grow interest in employers offering literacy training for employees.

### **Learning from Others' Successes**

All three task forces have expressed a desire to learn how other literacy movements have become successful, especially those with a similar context. Houston, B.C. has built a complex web of supports in this field that are touted as very successful. The Regional Literacy Coordinator will help the task forces connect with the Houston Link To Learn Society and arrange a day's mentorship visit in the fall if possible.

### **Sustaining and Growing Interest**

One of the task groups, the Fraser Lake/Vanderhoof Literacy Now Task Force, has a fairly wide representation of community groups and organizations from both towns and they meet monthly. The Lakes District Task Force is comprised mainly of school district employees along with the coordinator, a public library representative and most recently, a senior citizen representative. The Fort St. James Task force helped create the plan, but has not agreed to meet on a regular basis, so implementation is largely the responsibility of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator in tandem with the Regional Literacy Coordinator. The number and scope of activities the groups can manage is directly related to the composition of the tables and the capacity for the table members to add to or to change their roles.

While there are many positive results happening in each area, keeping people at the literacy table and attracting more and varied members could help the groups become even more effective in their impact in communities. Even though we don't have representation from First Nations on any of the committees, we are learning that the ways to engage those groups do not involve inviting them to meetings, and we are creating other opportunities. As the awareness campaigns become sustained, and projects publicized, it is likely other groups will want to know more and engage with this important literacy work.

## APPENDIX

### **Vanderhoof Scrapbooking for Literacy**

#### **Intro/Background**

A group of young parents in the Vanderhoof area expressed a desire to gather on a regular basis to do things that enrich their lives. Many were already participating in the Honour Your Health Challenge led by a local First Nations community member. Two project ideas they suggested were to create memory books for their children, and to make regalia (traditional vests) for their children. They also like the idea of coming together to support each other and have a little time without their children if that is possible.

#### **Goals:**

- To strengthen relationships and support networks that involve Aboriginal and non Aboriginal parents of school-age students, preschoolers, & infants supporting each other.
- To learn together and enrich our lives through projects participants are passionate about, and that have a component that develops our literacy (both written and oral)
- To strengthen relationships between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal parents and support people in the community.

#### **Future Goals**

- Create a literacy corner, and possibly a learning hub with community partnerships.
  - Two volunteers have participated in the first half of a literacy tutor training
  - This goal has been underway and is being nurtured, but it is proving to be very difficult to build connections between the tutors and possible learners. There have been two initial assessments (one for literacy and one for numeracy), but consistency in providing lessons has been a challenge.

#### **Activities**

The memory book idea has taken on a life of its own, and with support and partnerships from a host of organizations and people, the group meets twice a week to 'scrapbook'. The women are developing their creative literacy skills and documenting their family history through scrapbooking. Writing is not a common activity, but is being encouraged and supported gently through an emphasis on the importance of labeling and explaining photos in the layouts. Instructors try to explain that in 60 years, people looking at their scrapbooks won't know the names of the people in the pictures, nor will they know what is occurring unless there is some written information.

Other activities that have occurred are herb garden planting, community kitchen, 'Make the Connection' parenting program, and a visit to StrongStart Outreach.

Future activities:

- making traditional First Nations vests
- gallery display in the public library of scrapbook pages with short biographies
- infant/toddler first aid instruction

### **Partnerships:**

- Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Society provides the space for free and volunteers make lunch on Mondays.
- Vanderhoof Neighbourlink society pays monthly honorarium for one of the Aboriginal participants to co-coordinate the group's schedule, meals, and communications.
- Neighbourlink also supports (funding) and **organizes** the community kitchen and herb garden opportunities.
- Vanderhoof Success by Six pays a monthly honorarium for an Aboriginal community member to assist with the coordination and provide instruction for projects.
- School District First Nations Education Council funds dinner & snacks on Thursdays.
- School District #91 Literacy Dept. pays for transportation via taxi when needed and for purchases consumable supplies for scrapbooking.
- School District Literacy Coordinator played the initial coordinating role and continues to provide support in any way needed, including attending as many meetings/sessions as possible.
- Fraser Lake/Vanderhoof Literacy Now shared the funding with Neighbourlink to train two volunteers to become literacy tutors (\$4000 each)
- Community donations are solicited, and many have been received
- Carrier Sekani Family Services provides their Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program (CPNP) worker with hours to attend, support, transport, and childminding.
- CPNP purchased many tools and supplies as well as albums for the group.

### **Other partnerships being sought:**

- Omineca Safe Home may be able to offer childminding services
- Katimavik volunteer application for childminding support has been submitted

### **Attendance:**

During the Monday sessions 3 to 8 women attend, and some bring their children or infants. During the Thursday sessions, 8 to 12 women attend, and many bring their children. In total 15 women/families participate. One father-to-be attends with his wife/partner to help care for their infant and 3 year old, and others sometimes come to pick up children or to wait for their partners to finish for the day. Another father who works for Neighbourlink helps with set up and clean up, and has made a connection with the literacy tutor for numeracy tutoring.

### **Rich Literacy Learning**

Many bring their young children and infants because they don't have child care, and this has provided them the opportunity to know each other's children, to support each other when parenting challenges arise, and to provide information and model strong parenting practices like singing to and interacting with infants, and distracting, redirecting or warning toddlers when their behaviour is inappropriate.

As the participants work together, they provide parenting advice for each other. **This may include them asking each other for** ideas to help them deal with challenging behaviours they face with their children. **They also** provide emotional support when one or another is facing a difficult life situation. When a parent is struggling to get their child to school, others provide moral support and suggestions for making the transition from home to school easier. The group has helped each other stay updated about others who sometimes leave town unexpectedly, or when children have been hospitalized due to health conditions.

Participants also have made recommendations for outreach support when they know of a mother who is in need.

The childminding support also provides a model for engaging with children. The adult reads stories, sings songs, and interacts with the children in the toy centre while the parents work on their projects.

**Comments from Moms:**

“Like getting together with other moms, getting out of the house to do something fun.”

“Coming to just visit, not even scrapbooking sometimes.”

“Actually *doing* scrapbooking is good because I never have the time at home.”

“Having the tools has been great because I couldn’t afford to buy any of this. I couldn’t have started scrapbooking otherwise.”

“I like documenting my family.”

“When I get really mad about something, I just get my scrapbook stuff out and it calms me down.”