

School District 84
Vancouver Island West

District Literacy Plan

July 2010

Vancouver Island West School District 84 serves 456 students enrolled in the District's six schools:

School Name	Community	Grades	Projected FTE 2010- 11
Captain Meares Elementary Secondary School (CMESS)	Tahsis	K-12	42
Kyuquot Elementary Secondary School (KESS)	Kyuquot	1-12	49
Gold River Secondary School (GRSS)	Gold River	8-12	117
Ray Watkins Elementary School (RWES)	Gold River	K-7	163
Zeballos Elementary Secondary School (ZESS)	Zeballos	K-12	47
Continuing Education			1

Three of the schools, Kyuquot, Zeballos, and Captain Meares, are located in remote rural communities. Travel to these schools from the District Office in Gold River requires a commute by logging road of one and a half hours to Tahsis, two and a half hours to Zeballos and four hours to Kyuquot by logging road and water taxi.

The District serves a diverse community which includes:

	# of Students	% of Total Students
Aboriginal	226	50
Special Needs	76	17
English Second Dialect	107	23

In the Achievement Contract 2010-2011, the District lays out two goals:

- 1) Improve student literacy
- 2) Improve the success of the District's Aboriginal students

The District recognizes that in order to address these goals successfully, we must be in partnership with our communities. To address the success of Aboriginal students, the District has signed and is implementing our first Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement. To improve student literacy, the District is working in partnership with our four community literacy committees.

Gold River:

The community of Gold River has undergone substantial changes in the past 15 years as a result of the closure of the pulp and paper mill and more recently the downturn in forestry. As a result, the community has faced significant reductions or eliminations in many support services and the demographics have shifted as management and skilled workers and their families have left the community to seek employment.

The Gold River Literacy Committee (GRLC) was established to create opportunities for all citizens to improve their literacy skills, regardless of age. The focus for the past year has been to open a literacy centre offering free literacy services to Gold River residents of all ages. The work towards this goal has not yet had a major impact on Gold River due to the centre not opening until September 2010. The hope is that all the preparations from the past year will allow the centre to have a significant impact on the lives of Gold River residents.

The Committee had four major objectives this year:

1. Sustainability – A new coordinator is in place for September, 2010.
2. Provide literacy support for adult learners – This will start in September, 2010 at the new literacy centre.
3. Provide free supported computer access – This will start in September, 2010 at the new literacy centre.
4. Community celebrations – The usual June celebration was postponed this year until the fall to tie in with a community celebration/Grand Opening for the literacy centre.

The GRLC applied to become a society this past year. In May, 2010, they were approved and are now the Gold River Literacy Society (GRLS).

Tahsis:

Due to extreme economic circumstances, the morale of people in the Tahsis community has been greatly diminished. The closure of the major employer in town, the Tahsis Mill, saw the disappearance of 1200 jobs and a decline in population from 2500 down to 350 people. Housing prices collapsed and a number of service and supply businesses closed or relocated to other communities. More recently the downturn in tourism spurred by the global recession has caused further economic concerns. The community continues to face significant reductions or eliminations in many support services and the demographics continue to shift as families leave the community to seek employment.

Founded in 2008, the Tahsis Literacy Society (TLS) works closely with Captain Meares Elementary Secondary School (CMESS), which is the main literacy delivery organization in Tahsis. Further, TLS is committed to identifying other opportunities to support community literacy.

CMESS Strong Start – Funding was provided to this early learning program to purchase large soft building block toys to nurture learning through play.

Puddle Ducks Day Care – Funding was provided to purchase books and a leap-frog learning system for the young learners at the day care.

CMESS Missoula Theatre Production of “The Princess and The Pea” – Funding was provided to introduce the children and youth of CMESS to live, professional theatre production and to host the production for the community.

CMESS First Nations Cultural Program / Potlatch Entertainment – Funding was provided to facilitate cultural language, drumming and dance education for students at CMESS in preparation for the June 11th Potlatch

Seniors Life Long Learning – Funding was provided to the Tahsis Heritage Society in order to document the lives of Tahsis Seniors in order to preserve their stories and the collective history of Tahsis. An interactive exhibit will be established in the Tahsis Museum to share these stories with visitors to the community.

Youth and Adult Learning - Tourism and Eco-Tourism Workshop was hosted by the Tahsis Chamber of Commerce and was attended by both youth and adults seeking a career in the tourism industry as well as local service providers who shared their expertise in the field of Tourism. The CEO of Tourism Vancouver Island was the keynote speaker.

Tahsis Food Security/Community Garden Group - Tahsis Literacy Society was presented with an opportunity to apply for funding from the Vancouver Island Health Authority to address issues unique to Tahsis regarding access to healthy food sources. They required a non-profit agency to apply for the funds. Based on the mind-body connection between a healthy diet and the ability to learn and concentrate, TLS pursued this funding and established a Committee within TLS to carry out the work required.

The funding allowed TLS to conduct a community wide survey looking into the needs of the community regarding access to healthy food as well as other core issues vital to the success of the community included questions regarding literacy. They also determined the support in Tahsis for a community garden. Residents were very engaged in this process with over 30% of adults involved in the survey.

TLS secured additional funding to establish the community garden and build a greenhouse, ensuring year round access to healthy local food.

TLS are developing a website to share the work we do with the community and have registered the domain name www.tahsisreads.com. The site should be launched in the near future.

TLS's Board of Directors along with input from the LOC will identify additional sources of funding both through grant applications as well as community support in order to raise the funds needed to sustain the organization and the service delivery groups they continue to support.

Kyuquot:

Our most remote community of Kyuquot is accessible by air or by logging road to Fair Harbour followed by a 30-40 minute water taxi ride. The majority of the community are members of the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nation. The community faces major challenges with limited community capacity and employment opportunities.

The focus in Kyuquot has been on establishing an Adult Education program. The community sees this as a way to increase confidence and self esteem, enhance employment options, further formal education, and generally increase the life opportunities for the people of Kyuquot.

The community would like to see the Adult Education program continue and in fact grow over the next few years. Ultimately, it would be ideal for the Adult program to have its own facility on the reserve. The major challenge will be in securing funding in order to sustain and expand the program.

Zeballos:

The Village of Zeballos was once a bustling mining town, but now gets by on an economy of seasonal tourism, fish farms, fishing, logging, and hydro generation. The location of the Ehattesaht and Nuchatlaht First Nations near the community of Zeballos is a relatively recent development. Approximately 20 years ago, these two First Nations communities relocated to Zeballos from their reserves in Nootka Sound to gain closer proximity to school and services. In the past five years, the school has expanded to offer a K to 12 program but prior to this expansion, students wishing to continue their education beyond Grade 10, were required to leave the community.

The focus of the literacy plan for Zeballos has been on providing Adult Education. The School District provided the facility and staffing for the program in 2009/2010. While the response to the adult program has been less enthusiastic than in other communities, the hope is that with some perseverance the program will grow. The major challenge in Zeballos has been communications as there are two separate reserves as well as the Village of Zeballos to serve and they all operate somewhat independently of one another.

SD84:

The District has worked with each community's literacy committee either through District or school staff. The District has opened its facilities for community literacy activities, started Adult Education programs in Tahsis, Zeballos, and Kyuquot, and is actively working through the

Enhancement Agreement and other strategies to build the literacy of the students and communities we serve.

The District continues to operate a dual site StrongStart program serving the preschoolers and parents of Tahsis and Zeballos. The Early Childhood Educator commutes between the two communities on a weekly basis and opens the Center two or three days per week in each community depending on the schedule for the week. The enrolment has increased substantially this year to 24 registered children between the two communities.

School District 84 and the Ka:'yu:'k't'h'/Che:k'tles7et'h' First Nation are continuing their partnership for the staffing and operation of the Houpitsas Kindergarten Preschool. The program is staffed by the District while the Band maintains its authority for the school's program content and daily operations. Prior to this agreement the Kindergarten/Preschool was operated solely by the Band. This partnership has created a much closer link between the programs and initiatives of the Kindergarten/Preschool and Kyuquot School.

The District sent 13 staff members to Port Alberni to learn about Precision Reading in 2009/2010. This research based reading intervention holds much promise both as an intervention and scaffolding program to support student literacy. The program was piloted in three schools in April/May 2010 and will run in all District schools in 2010/2011.

Conclusion:

Literacy is a priority for the communities and schools of District 84. Our remote geography and sparse population present many challenges; however, by working together we are able to overcome many of these obstacles and move literacy forward in all our communities.