

Literacy Plan

School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)



July 15, 2010

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LITERACY PLAN
School District No. 91 (Nechako Lakes)
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Our Guiding Philosophy

In collaboration with our community literacy groups, School District No. 91 strives 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 enjoyable, relevant, 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.

As the community literacy work has grown and become more established, it has helped the district extend beyond the traditional ways of thinking that typify school life and learning. This community work is creative, open ended, and when it works to reach those who are marginalized or may not have been successful in the education system, it is largely because the work doesn't look like typical school life.

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. Typically, the adults living in this region have 10 or fewer years of formal schooling, but according to research completed by UBC, families have an "advantaged" level of socio-economic status. 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, indicating that many of those people who do have jobs, earn very strong salaries. Despite the strong income levels, the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a UBC study, shows approximately 35% of the kindergarten children in Nechako Lakes demonstrate vulnerability in one or more areas of development.

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 numeracy shows positive growth over time but our students' achievement in reading and writing is not as positive as we would hope. The development of district assessment tools that are performance based is providing us with more accurate and timely information about growth over the school years.

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 and we are working hard to build upon and improve these relationships. 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 two outreach programs serving a number of communities. 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 continues to be a gap in services for the many adults who are not ready for high school level curriculum that will lead to graduation. The School District will 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. 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. This work is slow and relationships are paramount to success. Time is of the essence, and yet it takes a great deal of time to make inroads with groups of adults who did not find success in the school system.

Reflections on 2009/10

Brief Overview of Community Literacy Initiatives & Successes

Nechako Lakes School District has taken the responsibility of the expanded mandate seriously. Even in the face of financial challenges and cutbacks, it will continue to use operating dollars to fund a Literacy Coordinator position half time, enabling that person to focus on school-aged literacy needs and community literacy initiatives. The School District is the steward for the fund for two literacy groups and the College of New Caledonia is the steward for one. All groups have moved forward with their plans and implementation successfully.

Major Impacts/Outcomes

Recognizing that Dakelh (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 willingness of the First Nations to partner with us as we learn together.

- ☞ First Nations families and community members are accessing literacy programs (broadly defined as well as traditional literacies)
 - lending library on WOW Bus; Neighbourlink Best Moms & Dads Program; Stelat'en Head Start Book Club for parents and lending library for families; numerous service providers working directly with First Nations families are financially supported by literacy funding; Community learning events in Fort St. James both on Nak'azdli territory and in the literacy hub attended by First Nations members; two First Nations moms accessing free tutoring.
- ☞ WOW Bus has been welcomed to four First Nations communities (official welcoming in Wet'suwet'en for the StrongStart Outreach Grand Opening in March 2010)
- ☞ The Neighbourlink Best Moms & Dads program employs two local First Nations women as co-coordinators. One organizes the creative and learning activities and the other, a Band Councillor, organizes the transportation for Saik'uz participants.

The major project for the Lakes District Literacy Committee (Burns Lake) involved successfully partnering with School District No. 91 to fund the retrofitting of a donated old school bus and turn it into a mobile literacy service bus. It houses a StrongStart Outreach program, a lending library for all ages, and a nutritious food box program that provides small amounts of healthy food to participants who are in need. The bus visits four First Nations Communities, a rural school and a rural health clinic. This community literacy group has attracted partnerships that involve donations of funds. Success by Six, Make Children First (CYSN) and the Village of Burns Lake have all made financial contributions to the WOW Bus because they see the potential that this project has to touch and improve lives.

The Fort St. James Literacy Committee continues to operate a hub for literacy and learning in a centrally located building. They have expanded the awareness relationship building campaign and sustained the

creative learning events initiated last year. Many First Nations adolescents and young adults use the hub as a place to further their learning and/or as a safe place to be during the day.

Many projects/services have been provided financial support by the Nechako Literacy Committee (Vanderhoof/Fraser Lake). The regular publication of a literacy newsletter was initiated this year and a few presentations have attempted to raise awareness of the importance of literacy. A major recipient of funding was the Neighbourlink Best Moms & Dads program in Vanderhoof, which helped provide transportation and coordination for the young, mostly Aboriginal parents who attend twice a week.

Evaluating Success

Even though it is challenging to evaluate the success of community partnerships, we can look to indicators that help us know if we are effective. At this time we use program attendance/use, number and depth of partnerships with other service groups/agencies, and to a very small degree learners' growth in a traditional way. Because the foundational relationship building piece of this work takes such a long time, the learning represented by a traditional educational system view will only be realized after three to five years of a program's existence and we can not predict the number of people who will take steps to upgrade or improve their reading and writing skills directly. Many are improving their own self confidence, their appearance, their connections to support networks, their options for services for their children, and at the same time developing life skills that are creative in nature.

Reflections on Our Progress **Supporting People to Live their Best Lives** **We are all Diamonds in the Rough**

In many ways, the efforts described below are attempts to improve the life outcomes for all people in our region. The intentions behind the initiatives are infused with hope, confidence in the future, and a strong desire to be part of the picture that helps people overcome obstacles and achieve their dreams. Many of the projects and initiatives involve segments of our communities that typical 'systems' are not reaching; people living in poverty, many affected by racism, unemployment and isolation. It is our intention to acknowledge the importance and value of every person in our region, to honour their dreams and to support them as they take steps to move forward. On many levels, the metaphor of "diamonds in the rough" is an apt image to describe this growth. The committees, the table members themselves in their roles, the projects they are supporting, the School District's efforts, and the participants and service providers are all diamonds in various stages of polish and shine.

The new projects and programs that are attempting to engage those who are disengaged from the formal learning process are in their infancy. They are slowly taking shape as the participants teach the organizers about their needs and interests. Over time the programs are more polished and professional in their presentation, yet they remain casual enough to be appealing to many. The coordinators and facilitators are developing their skills in building relationships with the participants, as well as increasing their own personal sense of contribution, self confidence and self-efficacy. Many participants are visibly increasing their confidence, their creative and knowledge based skills, as well as parenting and relationship and friendship skills.

The participants have sufficient literacy skills to assist them in many of their daily tasks, like texting family and friends, making doctor appointments, navigating the social services they access, but some don't have the confidence and perhaps the skills to pursue more formalized learning or personal development. As the service providers, literacy tutors, program coordinators strengthen their relationships with the participants, gain their trust, they will become advisors and advocates for them as they begin to dream even brighter futures for themselves and their children.

Factors Affecting Our Successes

- ☞ Having a bold vision and following through with it by assertively pursuing partnerships with already established organizations or institutions. For example: WOW Bus concept brought to fruition with the help of the School District & Literacy Committee (funding, expertise, collaboration in planning); Reaching families with young children through a strong partnership with Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Society. Both of these ventures have spawned a web of further partnerships.
- ☞ Making that bold vision visible to community members and influential organizations. Advertising, telling our story at meetings, on street corners, in coffee rooms, all played a role in articulating the work and helping people understand that it was important for them to become involved.
- ☞ Regular monitoring and adjusting as new situations or obstacles are encountered. Without responsive, nimble coordination and management, we wouldn't be able to respond to the changing needs of our communities. For example, the WOW Bus has added and dropped locations depending on where people are gathering and living (sometimes it changes monthly). The Neighbourlink group has sought & secured transportation when attendance dropped, has planned a wide variety of activities and special events, and has involved respected elders in projects in an ongoing way.
- ☞ Salaried Coordination at a community level as well as at a project level. Without a champion steering the project or the committee, the work would lack consistency, organization and professionalism, all of which are critical for sustainable success. All of this relationship building and consistent program offering will require many years of commitment if there are to be any tangible results.

The process of literacy support and literacy learning at the community level has moved forward in our region. The implementation process is well underway and the committees and the groups they support are attempting to be nimble and responsive to the dynamic nature of community needs. Successes bolster the enthusiasm and convince us that we are making a difference. The graphic below illustrates the addition of a new level of growth in this work.

Lakes District Literacy Now Task Force (Lakes District Literacy Now Task Force - Burns Lake Region)

Table Members: Colleen [unclear], Lori Boychuk (SD 91), Elaine Wiebe (Burns Lake), [unclear] & senior), Michelle [unclear]

Goal/Focus Area	Strategies	Considerations for	Planning Process	Who
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ a Community Literacy Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2010 Joan Clancy's contract 	<p>10 hours per week</p> <p>✓ Engaging & Motivating Interest</p> <p>✓ Taking Stock (Birth to 100)</p> <p>✓ Setting Goals</p>	<p>Committee decided to continue to employ the</p>
Support & Expand Existing Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Books for Babies Program Family Literacy Nights at [unclear] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Donation made to support this program Donation made to support this program 	<p>Sept. 2010-June 2011</p> <p>✓ Words On Wheels Bus- School Bus was retrofitted and the W.O.W. Bus went on the road in the fall of 2009. The bus traveled four days a week throughout the Fall, Winter and Spring and will continue to run 1-2 days during the summer. It has been hugely successful in every community it visits and there are many success stories. The community continues to donate many hundreds of books that are lent out to children and adults in very isolated communities, Service providers have also gone with the bus to bring the service out to the people there.</p>	<p>Committee</p> <p>Jan. 2009 - Dec 2009</p> <p>SD 91 BTL Garage & Maintenance Dept.</p>
Transportation & Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retrofit and equip a W.O.W. bus (Words on Wheels), a project that brings services to isolated communities in the form of a transformed school bus redesigned to accommodate literacy based programs for children and adults. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> StrongStart Outreach is housed on the W.O.W. Bus and provides early learning opportunities each of the four days the bus visits communities. StrongStart funds paid for half the cost of retrofitting the bus. Volunteer bus drivers were solicited from the community. One volunteer drives two days a week (M/W), and school district bus drivers are employed two days a week (T/Th). Initially a second volunteer drove two days a week, but was unable to continue in the spring. Presentations to community partners were made throughout the year. Some of the groups that have received presentations were the Lakes District Community Service Network and the Community Council for Seniors. 	<p>Jan. 2009 - Dec 2009</p> <p>✓ Diverse Community Involvement</p> <p>✓ Sustaining Interest/Awareness</p> <p>✓ Ongoing Flexibility</p>	<p>SD 91 BTL Garage & Maintenance Dept.</p> <p>-LOC</p> <p>-SD 91 Literacy Coordinator</p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nov. 2009-June 2010 	<p>✓ Attendance in programs</p> <p>✓ Sustainability (funding, capacity building)</p>	<p>Outreach (SD 91)</p>

Forward Thinking

Ongoing Problem Solving

Dancing with dynamic needs

Visioning 3 to 5 years ahead

Evaluation/Reflection

Attendance in programs

Sustainability (funding, capacity building)

✓ Surveys & Interviews

✓ Project Completion

Support literacy in the communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Community Literacy Hub in a primary school that is closing due to low enrollment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hub Model Plans- A concept being discussed for next fall (2010) is to establish a Community Literacy hub in a portion of the IDP office that will be moving into a recently closed primary school. We will have a much more visible presence in the community and can unify our approach to literacy in one location. The Hub will prompt Literacy awareness, have a Family Resources Lending Library, a Special Needs Resource Lending Library, and house the Books for Babies Program, The W.O.W Bus coordination, and the Parent & Child Mother Goose Program. 	-LOC
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community information campaigns. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter/Calendar is published monthly during the year and distributed along the W.O.W. bus route and at the Community Service Network meetings (appendix) • An Information pamphlet was published and inserted in the Books for Babies packages distributed by public Health to all families with a newborn • Restaurant Table Tripods promoting Literacy have been developed and will be distributed around the community • W.O.W. Bus Special Events- the W.O.W. bus will be set up at the Children’s Fair this September and will feature a “Reading Rocks” craft and literacy promotion. 	-LCO -LOC -LOC
Aboriginal Cultural Content		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrier Sekani Family Services is still interested in putting staff on the bus to help them deliver their ‘Community Days’ Program in the region’s First Nations Band Offices. • The W.O.W. Bus will be in the Aboriginal Days Parade on June 21st and will set up for the day afterwards at “Spirit Square”, promoting literacy and giving out Aboriginal coloring books in the Carrier language to each family. 	-Carrier Sekani Family Services -First Nations Bands -Coordinator

Fraser Lake/Vanderhoof Literacy Now Task Force – “Nechako Literacy Committee”

Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Larissa Cormier

Table Members: Robin Hendriksen (Nechako Valley Community Services Society), Don Rudland (Teacher, Musician, Volunteer), Jane Gray (Vanderhoof Public Library), Jennifer Barg (Vanderhoof Public Library), Audrey Fennema (Fraser Lake Public Library), Charlyne Smilinski (College of New Caledonia), John Stafford (SD Trustee), Gloria Olafson (Learning Disabilities Society), Michelle Miller-Gauthier (SD 91), Melissa Meikle (Success By Six Coordinator),

<u>Goal/Focus Area</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Progress to Date & Considerations for the Future</u>	<u>Who (responsibilities & partnerships)</u>
Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employ a Community Literacy Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> January 2010 Larissa Cormier’s contract renewed for 20 hours per week 	Committee
Support literacy in the surrounding communities	Receive proposals from community service providers and projects that need financial support	<p>Funding was provided to different groups/organizations for resources. Without this support, some of these literacy programs may have been cancelled. Programs included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nechako Valley Community Services Society CAPC Program (Fraser Lake) – Wheel of Misfortune game to be used in FASD presentations and workshops (an excellent tool for discussions around alcohol and drug use and the identification and effects of various substances.) They also purchased 25 copies of Trying Differently, A Guide for Daily Living, a booklet that will support families and service providers involved with children and adolescents living with FASD. Fraser Lake Public Library – funding towards “Books for Babies” so that this program was able to continue Vanderhoof Public Library – funding towards “Books for Babies” so that this program was able to continue Nechako Valley Community Services Society Infant Development Program – funding towards the purchase of books, rhymes and games to help make literacy fun for both the child and parent. The IDP Consultant takes these resources during her visits to families which assist in building a stronger relationship with families. Fort Fraser School Library – Funding for books. The school has opened the school library to the families that attend StrongStart and required financial support in order to purchase books for the library. Success By Six has already contributed towards the first shipment of books. 	<p>FASD Resource and Family Support Worker, Robin Hendriksen</p> <p>Audrey Fennema, Lib., Fraser Lake Library</p> <p>Jane Gray, Librarian, Vanderhoof Library</p> <p>Connie Neilson RN, Infant Development Consultant</p> <p>Fort Fraser School Success By Six</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stellat'en Head Start Literacy Programs – financial support towards promoting literacy to the families they are working with which includes Book Club (novel), Lending Library Expansion, and “Reward” books for children. The Book Club was a success ... 10 novels “Reservation Blues” by Sherman Alexie was purchased & 10 participants took part in this program. 19 books were purchased for the Expanding Lending Library for Parents ... a great resource for Head Start parents. Reward books were purchased to start program right away. The reward system works by parents/caregiver taking an opportunity to read to their child during their visit at Parent and tot drop in. After reading to their child during four visits their child may choose a book to keep. They have enough books to continue this rewards system into next year! • Annual Family Literacy Day in Fraser Lake & Vanderhoof – Funding for both communities to support the continued success of this event. 	<p>Lorna Luggi Program Coordinator Stellat'en Head Start Stellat'en First Nation</p>
<p>Communications & Marketing</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletter Care to Learn: Lifelong & Lifewide Learning is being distributed seasonally (Spring, Summer, Fall, & Winter). It highlights one program in detail and provides information about other services. Businesses, service providers, schools, and bulletin board displays are the distribution network. The School District provides black & 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) • Two brochures created: Literacy At Work (Business Brochure); Power To Change Your Life (Public General Brochure) distributed throughout the community. • PP Presentations: Care To Learn Presentation to Organizations, Agencies, and Service Groups. Although this is a good initial contact, because the size of the groups is small, the presentation reaches very few people. The presentations are also constricted by time constraints – usually the presentations have to be kept to a 15 – 20 minute presentation with very little time given to discussion. Even so, this is a great way to network, collect contact names, and get an 	<p>-Coordinator with input from committee members and service providers</p> <p>-School District providing copying services (black & white) for a reduced price</p> <p>-LOC with input from committee members -LOC -School District providing projector/screen -LOC</p>

		<p>idea of where the Committee can fit in as a partner in future projects. Will continue with presentations but will need to change the pp presentation each time depending on what group will be seeing it and what information they need to receive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Tables At Community Events: Fraser Lake Leisure and Recreation/Small Business Fair, Vanderhoof Ready Set Learn Family Fun Day, Saik'uz Health Fair. We have learned that having a table with just stats and info didn't work as well as having fun projects and sheets such as puzzles, colouring sheets, games, etc. The fun/games theme was a much more approachable style. Once people approached it was easier to talk with them about literacy. • Bulletin Board in Fraser Lake – A bulletin board has been built & placed in a much used area of the Fraser Lake Mall. Information on Literacy and literacy programs, services, etc. is being posted to get the word out. 	<p>-Nechako Literacy Committee member, John Stafford built it -LOC will make sure info gets out</p>
Transportation & Isolation	Research a project that would bring services to isolated communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this point the W.O.W. bus idea for this area of the district has been put on the back burner. Other ways were researched to address the transportation and isolation gap. One way was to partner with NeighbourLink and the Elders in Saik'uz to make sure the Best Moms & Dads Literacy Group program (with a tutoring component to it, running since April/09) was available to more families. Funding was given towards getting a transportation van (from Saik'uz) road worthy in order to bring participants to the program. Since the van has been on the road, numbers of participants has increased. Challenges: Finding a substitute for the Communications/Transportation Coordinator (maternity leave), plan for second year (keeping in mind nothing can be final until the evaluation report is in), getting learners to come forward to participate in the tutoring program. See appendix for more detailed reports. 	<p>-NeighbourLink -Elders Saik'uz -School District Literacy Coordinator</p>
UPDATES	Support literacy development in First Nations Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Nations 2009 summer literacy project in Stelat'en Nation "Our ways values are still the same" A traditional approach to teaching and learning. 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. Activities will be document both 	<p>- Angela Reynolds, Education Coordinator, Stelat'en First Nation</p>

	<p>Support/Initiate projects that attempt to reach vulnerable families</p>	<p>in written and video recording formats for store and future use. The project was a success with 11 elders, 14 parents & 15 children taking part over a period of 14 nights in a two month period. The project continued on for 2 more months into the fall. The project did intend to document and record stories and songs of the Stellat'en First Nation, but, in the first session elders expressed their concern for sharing information when their words may not be fully understood and taken out of context. From the past experience elders were not comfortable with signing consent forms and, in not wanting their information to be put on the web site. Without consent forms the summer literacy project had to be geared towards a more traditional and oral style of learning. Many recommendations came because of this project: making books for children, dictionary of Stellat'en language, games, etc. The Nechako Literacy Committee has been keeping contact with Angela in case we could support them again in any way. At the moment, Stellat'en First Nation has applied for a grant towards starting one of these projects (book, dictionary, encyclopedia type book, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Best Moms & Dads Program (Formerly called Neighbourlink Literacy Project). The program began as a way to engage and learn from community members from Saikuz First Nation and Vanderhoof who weren't participating in early learning or other educational programs for themselves or their children. The concept involved providing a place for people to learn a broad range of literacies from activity ideas that were participant generated (moccasin making, hand bag sewing, scrapbooking) and to provide free literacy tutoring for those who might need it. It has evolved into this and much more, although the tutoring continues to be a challenge to expand. People are reluctant to come forward to request help for reading, but three people have engaged in long term one to one tutoring to date (2 high school upgrading/finishing, 1 reading tutoring). It takes time to build trusting relationships plus overcome the stigma of illiteracy, and many of the participants operate at a fairly comfortable level of literacy for most of the tasks they are faced with on a day to day basis. <p>Those providing support for the program have the vision to offer a safe, supportive, non-judgmental, nurturing environment for parents who are typically marginalized in our community and society. They are often</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Society -SD Literacy Coordinator -Saik'uz First Nation -Vanderhoof Success by Six -School District First Nations Education Council -Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program -Nechako Valley Community Services -Community members donate supplies -Vanderhoof Public Library
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		<p>living in poverty, dependent on social assistance, and have few advocates for dealing with the government systems that they face and need to interact with on behalf of their children or their families.</p> <p>The program has strong connections to Saik'uz First Nation and many of the participants are from Saik'uz. 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 report and assessment see appendix.</p>	
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<p>Fort St. James Literacy Now Task Force Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Alex Michaels</p>

<p>Table Members: Christy Smith (CALP Instructor, College of New Caledonia), Ann McCormick (Project Planner, College of New Caledonia) Michelle Miller Gauthier (SD 91), Mary Huffman (retired teacher), Suzanne Lorimer (StrongStart Facilitator, SD #91), Cheryl Work (Success by Six Coordinator), Cam McCormick (Principal, Sowchea Elementary), Lisa and Bridget Bystrom (Figure Skating Club), Lynette Plamondon (ESL Coordinator),</p>
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<u>Goal/Focus Area</u>	<u>Strategies</u>	<u>Progress to Date & Considerations for the Future</u>	<u>Who</u>
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Coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ a Community Literacy Coordinator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alex Michaels hired for 10 hours per week from October 2009-December 2009; March 2010 –June 2010 	Posted through the college system
Build Relationships & Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Learning Evening every Wednesday night in the fall • Nak’azdli Learning Group • Circulating a newsletter • Coordinator to build partnerships with service providers & local government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 & 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. • 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. • Coffeetalk is circulated biweekly. It is an easy read, and it is becoming quite popular. • A large banner promoting literacy was purchased and is displayed near the major intersection in the community. • Posters promoting literacy and volunteering have been developed and distributed to local businesses and schools. • Local businesses joined in a “Find the Letters” literacy awareness contest where contestants had to find the letters which spell LITERACY posted in various businesses around town to be entered into a prize draw. This contest had an unexpected response from the local Rotary Club which donated over 100 dictionaries to us for distribution. • Table tents promoting the Learning Hub and Literacy have been developed and distributed to local restaurants. • Regular public awareness articles promoting the benefits of Literacy to businesses, parents, seniors and others, and encouraging reading, Lifelong Learning and the acquisition of Essential Skills are routinely published in our local newspaper. These articles have been requested by other literacy coordinators interested in using their own community newspapers to raise awareness in their communities. • Regular mail-outs to our local Business Distribution List promoting the benefits of workplace literacy and advising employees and employers of the local services available have been distributed. 	- Literacy Outreach Coordinator, College of New Caledonia (CALP Funding & Instructor)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 600 lapel buttons promoting Literacy have been produced with about 500 having been distributed to date. 	
Centralize Community Literacy Information and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Learning Hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A space that provides information, links to services, and houses the learning nights continues to develop as a central place for learning and information. It is becoming the local central clearing house for all things pertaining to literacy. • The Learning Hub supports a Youth Drop-In which is popular with students and youth who are not participating in the regular school system and which encourages them to undertake self-directed learning, resume production etc. 	- Literacy Outreach Coordinator, College of New Caledonia (CALP Funding & Instructor)
Support family literacy in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit on Success by Six & ECD committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are members from both groups who also sit on the Literacy Committee and there is frequent, regular communication between these tables. 	- Literacy Outreach Coordinator
Support literacy in the community of Fort St. James and surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustain existing community literacy services and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community partnerships will be further strengthened when the Little Green Book Bins have been completed and distributed to Book Bin hosts around town. The bins/shelves are being built by the CNC carpentry program. They will store donated books for all ages that can be borrowed or taken by anyone in the community. They will be located in several businesses and service buildings around Fort St. James • Our "Literacy Rocks" contest was a major success in promoting awareness with over 200 entries submitted and over 200 dictionaries and storybooks distributed. Since then other communities in the north have undertaken similar initiatives of their own. • A Literacy Presentation for youth "Literacy is Magic" has been produced and is ready for piloting in the schools upon request. 	-Literacy Outreach Coordinator, -College of New Caledonia Carpentry program

APPENDIX

Vanderhoof Neighbourlink Best Moms & Dads Program

Supporting People to Live their Best Lives We are all Diamonds in the Rough

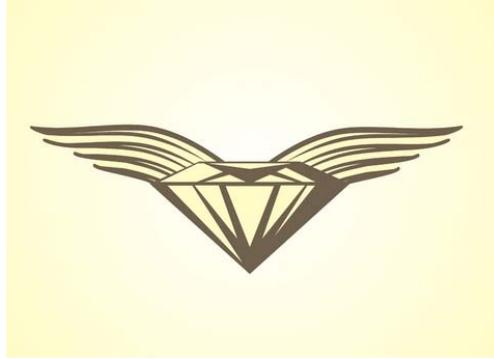


Reflections on Our Progress

The Vision

In many ways, the efforts described below are attempts to improve the life outcomes for all people in our area. The intentions behind the initiatives are infused with hope, confidence in the future, and a strong desire to be part of the picture that helps people overcome obstacles and achieve their dreams. This project involves segments of our communities, Saik'uz and Vanderhoof, that typical 'systems' are not reaching; people living in poverty, many affected by racism, unemployment and isolation. It is our intention to acknowledge the importance and value of every person in our communities, to honour their dreams and to support them as they take steps to move forward. On many levels, the metaphor of "diamonds in the rough" is an apt image to describe this growth. The steering committee, the members of supportive agencies in, the projects they are supporting, the School District's efforts, and the participants and service providers are all diamonds in various stages of polish and shine.

The tutoring program and the creative activities that are attempting to engage those who are disengaged from the formal learning process are in their infancy, but are maturing. They are slowly taking shape as the participants teach the organizers about their needs and interests. Over time the programs are more polished and professional in their presentation, yet they remain casual enough to be appealing to many. The coordinators and facilitators are developing their skills in building relationships with the participants, as well as increasing their own personal sense of contribution, self confidence and self-efficacy. Many participants are visibly increasing their confidence, their creative and knowledge based skills, as well as parenting and relationship and friendship skills.



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 young parents and support people in the community.
- To strengthen knowledge of local and Aboriginal culture and pride.
- To ensure what has begun is sustainable in the long term by seeking continued partnerships and funding

Description & Its Participants

Formerly called Neighbourlink Literacy Project, the program began as a way to engage and learn from community members from Saik'uz First Nation and Vanderhoof who weren't participating in early learning or other educational programs for themselves or their children. The concept involved providing a place for people to **learn a broad range of literacies** from activity ideas that were participant generated (moccasin making, hand bag sewing, scrapbooking) and to provide **free literacy tutoring** for those who might need it. It has evolved into this and much more, although the tutoring continues to be a challenge to expand. People are reluctant to come forward to request help for reading, but three people have engaged in long term one to one tutoring to date (2 high school upgrading/finishing, 1 reading tutoring).

Over time it has developed strong connections to Saik'uz First Nation as many of the participants are from Saik'uz, whether they live on reserve or off. The Band is in full support of the project and has offered the use of its van for transportation with the stipulation that gas is paid for by the program.

Creative learning and crafting sessions are offered every Tuesday from 10:00am to 1:00 pm and every Thursday from 3:30 to 6:00 pm. Childminding on site is provided, food is prepared and served by volunteers from Neighbourlink and transportation has been provided on a fairly consistent basis since the beginning of March 2010.

Those providing support for the program have the vision to offer a safe, supportive, non-judgmental, nurturing environment for parents who are typically marginalized in our community and society. Best

Mom's & Dads employs two local First Nations women as co-coordinators. One organizes the creative and learning activities and the other, a Band Councillor, organizes the transportation for Saik'uz participants.

It takes time to build trusting relationships plus overcome the stigma of illiteracy, but many of the participants have sufficient literacy skills to assist them in many of their daily tasks, like texting family and friends, making doctor appointments, navigating the some of the social services they access, but some don't have the confidence and perhaps the skills to pursue more formalized learning or personal development. As the service providers, literacy tutors, program coordinators strengthen their relationships with the participants, gain their trust, they will become advisors and advocates for them as they begin to dream even brighter futures for themselves and their children.

Activities & Successes (Evaluating Effectiveness)

This year's activities have included:

- Scrapbooking
 - skills: measuring, design, appreciation and use of line, colour & design, expression of thoughts & feelings through written word, pictures & colour, preservation of family memories.
- Moccasin Making
 - An elder from Saik'uz spent two months teaching participants to make baby moccasins using moose hide and beads.
 - skills: traditional Aboriginal hand sewing with hide, beading, persistence, patience, fine motor development, eye-hand coordination, auditory direction following.
- Craft Sale Table
 - The group coordinator taught participants to make decorative boxes, paper Christmas tree decorations and cards to sell at a local Christmas Craft Sale.
 - skills: creation of paper crafts for sale, salesmanship, marketing, design, entrepreneurship
- Shoulder bags
 - A community member spent two months teaching and helping participants make beautiful shoulder bags.
 - skills: using a sewing machine, measuring, following pattern directions, cutting fabric following a pattern, creative colour matching, patience, persistence.

Other Special Events/Activities:

- Paper crafts for special occasions like Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Easter
- Cookie baking for Father's Day
- March Barbeque at Riverside Park
- Easter Egg Hunt
- Display at local library
- Concession at Career Fair
- Baby Shower
- Attend Aboriginal Day at Riverside Park

Attendance

- Summer activities (once a week) saw 41 adult visits (6 families came to the fall fair, three that included dads) and 55 children visits
- From September to June 22, a total of 287 adult visits and 265 children visits to the group sessions have occurred.
- **Total: 648 opportunities to touch lives** and learn from each other!

Impact

This year the group seems to have become a place for young mothers to be that is alcohol and drug free, safe, and engaging. Some are very consciously choosing to attend the sessions as a way of occupying their time in a way that is safe for their unborn babies. They are staying drug and alcohol free and are a support to each other in this endeavor. Three healthy babies have been born (and a baby shower was held), and one baby was inexplicably stillborn. The mothers were able to rally around the young girl who suffered this tragic loss by creating a card and sending her messages and by attending the funeral.

Two other participants were successful for a time at maintaining a drug free lifestyle, but have had struggles with this most difficult life journey. One attended a treatment centre and has returned to the area, healthy and hopeful. The other is seeking out supports for her children and herself. They occasionally drop in for moral support, to say hello, and to give everyone updates about their successes and challenges.

Because families from different backgrounds attend and because some of the service providers are from different segments of the community than the participants, new relationships of support and mutual respect are being born. The children of the participants are learning about each other and building bridges between communities.

The school district employees are becoming 'friendly faces' that some parents can turn to if they need help navigating the education system. They are becoming a line of communication between schools and families, as well as advocates for the needs of the children because they have a greater understanding of the situations they are facing.

Partnerships & Connections to Community

To say this project has become a model for community partnerships would be an understatement. It would not function without the continued support from the many organizations that are participating in various ways.

<u>Partner Organization</u>	<u>Contribution</u>
Vanderhoof Neighbourlink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director oversees many of the activities and attends steering committee meetings • coordinates the funds donated by organizations (employs two co-coordinators & a childminder) • liaise with community groups and constantly seeks our funders • contributes financially • provides the space for the group • provides free meals twice a week • supports special events like barbeques, field trips (food, funds) • funds additional personal growth activities like Community Kitchen
SD No. 91	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literacy Coordinator time as needed and attends steering committee meetings, seeks funding partners, advocates for sustainability • funds for activity supplies, honorariums for instructors • funds part time TOC to support teenage mothers to complete graduation courses at the centre (tutoring)
Carrier Sekani Family Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canadian Prenatal Nutrition Program worker attends sessions, creates a monthly calendar of events, provides support for educational pieces & general support for moms (some transportation), attends steering committee meetings • funds supplies • purchased a laptop to support learning using current online resources
Nechako Valley Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAPC worker attends sessions (provides some transportation)
Saik'uz First Nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insures a van and allows its use to provide transportation for Saik'uz participants
Nechako Literacy Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds for literacy tutor training & actual tutoring sessions • Funds for transportation, coordination & childminding
SD No. 91 First Nations Education Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • funds snacks and some supplies
Vanderhoof Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's librarian offers story time a few times a month for the children in attendance
Success by Six	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds for coordination
Make Children First (CYSN through Success by Six Committee)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds for childminding and resources for the childminding area.

Future Directions

As summer approaches, the steering committee has plans to offer once a week sessions through July and August. Activities include possible field trips (swimming trip to a lake; a visit to the Fort St. James National Historic Site; Vanderhoof Fall Fair), and crafting submissions to the Vanderhoof Fall Fair. A major project that the committee would like to try is to hold a contest called “Dreaming a Dream” whereby participants could create a visual representation of their dreams for themselves and their children five to ten years from now. There will be prizes and a celebration in early September. The entrants’ work will be peer-judged and voted on.

Literacy and high school course tutoring will continue to be offered, as will endeavors that support creative expression and self esteem building. This project is a model for other communities to look to duplicate in terms of reaching marginalized young families in small communities. Some of the core values that are being honoured through this group are inclusion, empowerment, creative expression and learning together.

Although Best Moms & Dads is in its early phases of development, over time it is predictable that through the ripple effect of webs of supportive networks the Best Moms & Dads program will begin have a tangible effect on many people. Strong social skills and friendships developed through the group will support many as they navigate the world around them. Doors will open and options will grow as long as the organizers can be responsive, nimble and reflective in order to ensure the program evolves to always meet the needs of the participants.

The future looks bright with the continued support of the many groups and agencies that have participated in this venture to improve our lives.

Arts Unlimited and the Vanderhoof Public Library present an exhibition



Neighbourlink Parents *Scrapbook pages and more*

opening reception

Thursday, April 22

3:30 pm - 5 pm

in the multipurpose room of the Vanderhoof Public Library

show continues until April 27