



Literacy Merritt & Nicola Valley Society

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Purpose: Literacy Merritt & Nicola Valley Society builds community partnerships to help identify and fill the gaps in community literacy.



June 1, 2013

Literacy Merritt & Nicola Valley Society District Literacy Plan 2013

Reporting period July 2012 – June 2013

Prepared by Robyn Grebliunas, Literacy Outreach Coordinator,
Literacy Merritt & Nicola Valley Society

SUMMARY 2008-present day

In 2008 Merritt received the three year grant for community literacy implementation funds. A Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC), Robyn Grebliunas, was contracted in late 2008. Robyn continues to work as the LOC on the project. A Literacy Merritt Task Force (LMTF), representing sectors of the community, provided leadership and governance to the project, through a steward agreement with Merritt Youth and Family Resource Society, from 2008 – April 2012. In April 2012, Literacy Merritt formed a not for profit society called Literacy Merritt & Nicola Valley Society and signed a steward agreement directly with Decoda Literacy Solutions. A board of directors, representing literacy sectors of the community, provides governance and leadership to the society.

Implementation

Coordination and plan implementation is carried out by the LOC, directors, contracted instructors and volunteers. The board of directors represents a broad sector of the community: literacy, library, school district, social development, early years, Aboriginal, crime prevention, adult education and business. The recent changes in governance will continue to strengthen the group's leadership. Literacy Merritt continues to focus on keeping a balance of community representation on the board of directors and ensures that the voices at the table represent the four pillars of literacy: early years, k-12, adult and Aboriginal.

Board of Directors:

Board of Directors:

President: Steve McNiven, Assistant Superintendent, School District #58

First Vice President: Faye Adhemar, NVIT

Secretary/Treasurer: Deborah Merrick, Merritt Public Library

Directors at Large: Tracy Dunsmore, RCMP, Community Policing

Liz Touet, Work BC

Jane Kempston, SD #58

Leanne Joe, ISETS

Shelley Oppenheim-Lacerte, SD #58

John Chenoweth, NVIT

Barbara Sobaszkiwicz, Conayt Friendship Society

Staffing:

LOC: Robyn Grebliunas, R Brand Productions

Bookkeeper: Jeet Panghali

Volunteers: community volunteers, high school students, community policing volunteers

Community Partnerships

Literacy Merritt has been very successful at building community partnerships. Community partners have included: School District #58, Community Policing Office, Interior Health, Merritt Public Library, Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT), Merritt Youth and Family Resources Society, CFDC Nicola Valley, Merritt & District Chamber of Commerce, Work BC, Conayt Friendship Society, City of Merritt, local media and private business.

Community Awareness

Literacy Merritt works in partnership with local media to create community awareness about literacy services, literacy tips and literacy challenges. Merritt Herald, Merritt Morning Market, Q101 radio, and Shaw TV have been very supportive media partners. Articles and stories have been published in local media, along with information about courses and events. Stories have been covered on Shaw TV. Events have been coordinated to help create community awareness. Direct contact has been made with community representatives. Presentations have been made to Merritt City Council, School District 58 Board of Directors, and the Rotary Club of Merritt. A website exists at www.literacymerritt.com and more recently a Face Book group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/literacymerritt/?fref=ts> .

Programming and Services

Literacy Pillar: early years, K-12, Aboriginal, adult

Project: Bright Red Bookshelves

Project Partners: school district, community policing, local businesses and services

Project funders and supporters: school district, CPO, Success by Six, community

Project summary: in 2011 we formed partnerships with CPO and the school district to implement this community program. High school students built and painted our bookshelves at school. A special needs class at the high school assists us with the maintenance of the project. We have now have 26 bookshelves located in the community. The expansion of this project has recently been focused on books for Aboriginal children, with ten bookshelves and books being set up in Aboriginal communities and at service providers in 2013.

Literacy Pillar - Adult and Aboriginal Services:

Since 2009 Literacy Merritt Task Force chose to focus on the largest gap in literacy services, which was at time, and continues to be, adult literacy in our community. The following action has been taken since then:

Computer Literacy for Seniors & Community

This year we have advertised and supported computer literacy courses taking place at the

public library. Literacy Merritt donated 10 lap tops, a laser printer, a portable printer and a power point projector to Merritt Public Library. These computers were purchased in 2010 through a New Horizons for Seniors grant. The equipment is being utilized by the library in innovative ways that include a Learn How To Skype Station, and library loans of the lap tops. Literacy Merritt can access the equipment anytime we require it. The library offers a 12 hour computer literacy for seniors course and one hour community courses focused on one subject like email, copy & paste, internet, etc.

Get Your Grade 12 for Free

Literacy Merritt continues to promote the Adult Dogwood and GED programs available at NVIT and SCIDES.

English as a Second Language for Adults (ESL)

This year we have advertised and supported ESL classes in partnership with the public library. A volunteer ran a 12 hour conversation class over six weeks. Seven adults took the course, which will be offered again in September 2013.

Literacy Pillar - Early Years:

We continue to sponsor and coordinate the Dolly Parton Imagination Program in our community. Hundreds of children have benefitted from the program since 2009.

Literacy Pillar K-12 :

In 2010 Literacy Merritt successfully worked in partnership with the school district to implement ***One to One Tutoring Program*** in the elementary schools. This program had existed in the past in the district but had not continued for various reasons. A One to One Program presentation was made to the school administrators in November 2010. In December we received notice from the district that four Merritt and two Princeton schools had agreed to launch the program. In January 2011 we ran a public relations and advertising campaign to recruit parent and community volunteers to the One to One Program. In February we trained the One to One School Coordinators and volunteers through funding from 2010 Legacies Now. Literacy Merritt sponsored the books for the four Merritt schools and coordinated the book orders for the two Princeton Schools, with billing to Princeton Leaders in Literacy. In the Fall term of 2011 Literacy Merritt worked with the school district to transition into the schools. In this school year all five of the Merritt elementary schools participated and the school district provided coordination services for the program. Approximately 50 students have benefitted from the program, and an estimated thirty volunteers have worked in the program each year.

Events

In January we hosted a literacy lunch called Community Literacy – Why Bother. Approximately 75 people attended the event. Maureen Kehler from Decoda was our guest speaker. Attendees identified gaps in community literacy during lunch. The outcomes of the literacy lunch have been part of the planning and implementation of community literacy services this year.

Funding:

The 2010 Legacies seed funding ended in 2011. Our society has managed sustainability since then. The seed funding has been essential to creating Literacy Merritt & Nicola Valley Society, building community partnerships, developing programs and creating community awareness. LOC funding for 2012/2013 has now been received. Earlier this year, when LOC funding was thought to be cut, Literacy Merritt focused on emergency and short term planning.

Literacy Merritt has successfully received \$18,250.00 from New Horizons for Seniors help immerse seniors in community literacy projects where they will work as volunteers, and to connect seniors with youth.

Literacy Merritt has partnered with NVIT to submit a CALP grant for \$40,000.00 for adult literacy services. The decision on this funding will be made by September 2013.

Literacy Merritt has applied to Success by Six for \$3,000.00 for early years books for the Bright Red Bookshelves. The decision on this funding will be made by June 2013.

Literacy Merritt will apply to the City of Merritt for a grant in aid to host another literacy forum. Applications are to be submitted in November 2013.

Literacy Merritt will be seeking sponsorships from the community to sustain the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program.

Reflections:

Community Context: The economic state of British Columbia is affecting the need for adult literacy in our community. The declining forestry industry is forcing people who depend on large incomes to make career changes. This often requires the person to seek out a dogwood or grade 12 diploma. The local economy is putting more demand on programs like DPIL, Success by Six and Strong Starts that provide services for free to the community. Literacy Merritt stays in contact with these programs. We have supported the funding efforts of Dolly Parton Imagination Library since 2009. The task force continues to discuss gaps in community literacy services and form partnerships to help fill those gaps. The economy is negatively affecting the ability for private business to sponsor programs. The change in government at all levels continues to slow down the grant application process. There is more demand on literacy needs and less

resources available. The socio economic rating of our community along with the unemployment rates demonstrates a great need for community literacy services.

1. Board of Directors (task group):

a) Board of Directors:

President: Steve McNiven, Assistant Superintendent, School District #58

First Vice President: Faye Adhemar, NVIT

Secretary/Treasurer: Deborha Merrick, Merritt Public Library

Directors at Large: Tracy Dunsmore, RCMP, Community Policing

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John Chenoweth, NVIT

Barbara Sobaszkiwicz, Conayt Friendship

2. Staffing:

SocietyLOC: Robyn Grebliunas, R Brand Productions

Bookkeeper: Jeet Panghali

Volunteers DPIL: Callie Langlois

Volunteers Bright Red Bookshelf – community volunteers, high school students and community policing volunteers

Volunteers for One to One Reading – parents and community volunteers

The LOC is contracted 15 hours per week to carry out the work of Literacy Merritt.

The instructors are contracted for delivery of programming. Volunteers carry out the promotion of DPIL. The board of directors meets once monthly to provide governance and leadership to the project.

3. Community Collaborations:

Literacy Merritt has been a leader at creating community partnerships and bringing a diverse group to the table to tackle community literacy services.

4. Goals and Actions:

Literacy Merritt has met its goal to start to fill the gap on adult and Aboriginal literacy services. Our partners in providing these services have been New Horizons, NVIT, SD #58, Merritt Public Library, Community Policing and community partners. We exceeded our goal by also offering services to the early years and k-12 sector also.

5. Indications of Success in 2012/2013:

Bright Red Bookshelves -

Computer Literacy for Seniors – expanded our services to ten more locations

focusing on Aboriginal children. We now have 26 Bright Red Bookshelves in Merritt

& the Nicola Valley.

ESL – worked with seven ESL adults and one volunteer in 2013

Get Your Grade 12 for Free –connected the two service providers NVIT and SCIDES and continue to promote the services available

Adult Tutoring – we promote the free adult tutoring available NVIT

One to One Tutoring Program – worked with 50 students and 30 volunteers in five schools

DPIL – an average of 100 children benefitted from this program last year

Funding: successfully brought in additional community funding for literacy services

The factors that contribute to the success of Literacy Merritt are:

- An experienced, educated and dedicated board of directors that represents all sectors of the community
- volunteerism
- educated and experienced instructors and volunteers delivering all programs
- an LOC and board of directors who are passionate about their programs and about community development
- Maintaining a qualified LOC since 2008. The LOC has 23 years of successful experience in the areas of teaching, communications, events, non-profit management, HR mgt, building community partnerships, granting, fundraising and community development
- Continuous evaluation of program delivery is done casually in the classrooms at the end of each course. Instructors then submit a report that includes recommendations, concerns, and student feedback. Evaluation of community partnerships is measured through repeat partnered programs and events and the continued support of the partners. Evaluation on creating community awareness is measured through direct feedback from the community.

6. Challenges:

a) Funding continues to be a challenge, along with volunteerism. While we have been successful with our programming, we need to still fill the gap of adult literacy services for adults who cannot read and write at any level.

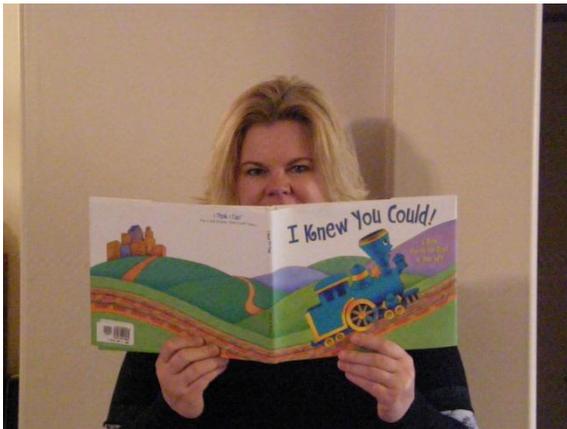
b) New funding and sustainability funding is key for our community. We are focusing on this, but resources, partnerships and support will help. We are campaigning for more volunteers.

Looking ahead:

1. There may be an opportunity to work more closely with local government, the local college, early years programs and the school district to build community literacy services. These opportunities will continue to be pursued and maintained in the future. We recognize the need give a stronger more direct message of what we need from the local government to build community literacy. School District #58 has shown great leadership and is has been working more closely with Literacy Merritt since 2008. 2011 marked the end of our start up funding. The focus is now on sustainability of all programs and sustainable funding. Literacy Merritt requires support in accessing sustainable funding. We want to learn from other community literacy organizations that are sustainable. With the cancellation of the RLC at TRU in 2009, Literacy Merritt had hoped to see this region take initiative and continue to meet quarterly. We do appreciate the regional meetings and training sessions when they are available.
2. In 2012/13 we will be focused on new funding, sustainability funding, strengthening and expanding our community partnerships and planning for Literacy Merritt services and structure beyond the seed funding. The actions planned against these goals will be funding research and application, volunteer drive, public relations campaign, sponsorship research and invitation, research of communities who are sustaining their programs and services and hosting a community literacy forum to strengthen partnerships. In 2013/14 our goals are to continue to build and strengthen community partnerships that help to identify and fill the gaps in community literacy.
3. To meet our goals we require the board of directors remain focused on sustainability and planning. We need our community partners to join in our efforts for sustainability and planning.
4. Our progress in 2012/2013 will be measured through evaluation of program delivery, community participation in literacy activities, growth of volunteerism, obtaining sustainable funding, community partnership and expanded partnerships.



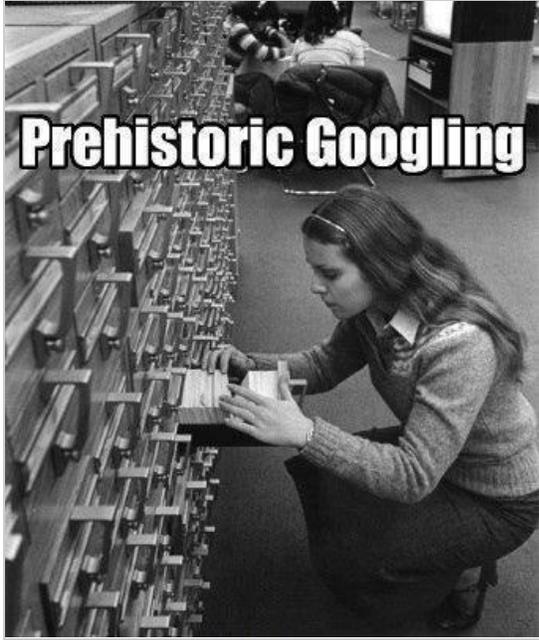
Bright Red Bookshelf student volunteers



DPIL Promotion



Literacy Promotion



Fun promotions used on social media



Literacy Lunch: Community Literacy - Why Bother?