

# **Vancouver Board of Education**

## **Annual Literacy Plan**

**July 2012**

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# Vancouver District Literacy Plan

## Introduction

Boards of Education are mandated, on or before July 15 of a school year, to establish and make available to the public a district literacy plan for the school year, setting out the plan for improving literacy in the district. A District Literacy Plan is a statement of commitment by a school district to work with community partners to improve literacy locally in the spirit of ongoing community development.

The purpose of the Vancouver District Literacy Plan is to provide an update on the work and goals outlined in the 2011 Literacy Plan. It continues to be a summary of the collaborative work of the community literacy partners and a blue print for future action. The plan reflects the ongoing energy and commitment of all the partners who are working together to improve the lives of people working and living in communities throughout Vancouver.

For the purposes of the plan, a definition of literacy that has been agreed upon by Literacy Now and ReadNow and that aligns with the VBE Core Purpose is being employed. Literacy is defined as “the broad set of skills that enable people to participate more fully in social, economic, family and community (ReadNow BC Literacy Planning Guide).

This report will provide a context for Literacy Planning in Vancouver, an update on Community Plans, work of the Vancouver Community College, the Vancouver School District, and the Vancouver Public Library

## Vancouver – Context

According to the latest census data (2011) Vancouver continues to grow. There are some significant shifts in the population. For example, the percentage of the population represented by children under 15 dropped from 15% to 13%. At the same time, the percentage of seniors increased from 16% to 18%.

- The City of Vancouver grew since the last census in 2006 from 578, 141 to 603, 502
- Over 40% of the growth took place in the Downtown Peninsula, which had just under 100,000 residents in May 2011. The City of Vancouver represents 26% of the Metro Vancouver population of 2.3 million people, on 4% of the region’s land base
- Metro Vancouver had the second highest population growth among Metropolitan areas in Canada, following Toronto which added 470,000 residents – from 5,113,149 in 2006 to 5,583,064 in 2011. However, Metro Vancouver remains the third largest Metropolitan area, following Montreal’s 2011 population of 3,824, 221.
- The Province of BC population increased by 286,570, from 4,113,487 in 2006 to 4,400,057 in 2011. Metro Vancouver absorbed about 69% of the provincial growth, resulting in Metro’s share of BC total population increasing from 51.5% to 52.5%.

- Within Metro Vancouver, Surrey absorbed 73,275 additional residents, about 37% of Metro growth. The City of Vancouver took the second largest share with 25,461 additional residents, about 13% of the population growth.
- Metro Vancouver's average household size increased from 2.56 to 2.60 over the past 5 years, reversing a trend of decreasing average household size seen over past Census periods.

The City of Vancouver identifies 23 distinct neighbourhoods that make up Vancouver (City of Vancouver Planning Department). The chart below shows the population of each and changes from the 2006 to the 2011 census.

| <b>Neighbourhood</b>     | <b>2006</b> | <b>2011</b>   |
|--------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Arbutus-Ridge            | 16,144      | <b>15,908</b> |
| Downtown                 | 43,417      | <b>54,690</b> |
| Dunbar-Southlands        | 21,478      | <b>21,754</b> |
| Fairview                 | 29,294      | <b>31,432</b> |
| Grandview-Woodland       | 28,206      | <b>27,297</b> |
| Hastings-Sunrise         | 33,127      | <b>33,992</b> |
| Kensington-Cedar Cottage | 44,664      | <b>47,471</b> |
| Kerrisdale               | 14,618      | <b>14,732</b> |
| Killarney                | 27,178      | <b>28,458</b> |
| Kitsilano                | 40,597      | <b>41,371</b> |
| Marpole                  | 23,783      | <b>23,832</b> |
| Mount Pleasant           | 23,616      | <b>26,400</b> |
| Oakridge                 | 12,726      | <b>12,443</b> |
| Renfrew-Collingwood      | 48,885      | <b>50,495</b> |
| Riley Park               | 21,815      | <b>21,794</b> |
| Shaughnessy              | 8,896       | <b>8,807</b>  |
| South Cambie             | 7,070       | <b>7,682</b>  |
| Strathcona               | 11,925      | <b>12,170</b> |
| Sunset                   | 35,231      | <b>36,286</b> |
| Victoria-Fraserview      | 29,196      | <b>30,711</b> |
| West End                 | 44,556      | <b>44,543</b> |
| West Point Grey          | 12,990      | <b>12,803</b> |

The City of Vancouver has a large multicultural population and growth in the city is largely due to immigration. The city includes some of the most affluent and impoverished urban neighbourhoods in the country. This setting provides wonderful opportunities as well as serious challenges for literacy planning. On the one hand, many people, due to poverty and other inhibitors, are excluded from the choices and opportunities that a city the size of Vancouver can offer. On the other hand, many living in this urban environment are able to take advantage of opportunities to experience and learn from diverse cultures and reap the benefits of involvement with highly sophisticated and experienced arts and recreational groups that you would expect to find in a world-class city.

Half of Vancouver's population is made up of immigrants. Of this group 50% settled prior to 1991, 33.4% arrived between 1991 and 2000, and 16.7% arrived between 2001 and 2006. One quarter of Vancouver's population have Chinese as their mother tongue followed by Punjabi, Tagalog and Vietnamese.

According to Decoda Literacy Solutions (formerly Legacies Now and Literacy BC) , immigrants with a first language other than English have significantly lower literacy than other Canadians, with 60% below Level 3 according to the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. This proportion does not improve with time and those immigrants who are here for 10 years or more have the same literacy profile as new arrivals. Two thirds of BC's working-age people at Level 1 are immigrants (Decoda Literacy Solutions, Library, <http://decoda.ca/resources/library/>).

## **Vancouver Community Literacy Planning Overview**

Each of Vancouver's neighbourhoods is unique in its history, culture and population and each has developed resources and planning processes to meet the needs within their community and to respond to the varied and significant changes. This has implications for literacy planning. A Vancouver Literacy Plan is a compilation of neighbourhood literacy plans.

But all of the neighbourhoods share similar challenges. High immigration, increasing numbers of seniors, the isolation of families and residents due to multiple barriers of language, poverty, and access to transportation, housing, child care, information and appropriate services are issues that all communities face.

Literacy Planning in Vancouver is focused in eight neighbourhoods at different stages of implementation. Decoda Literacy Solutions, working in partnership with the Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Public Library, Vancouver Community College and neighbourhood representatives identified the eight neighbourhoods using criteria that included need, current levels of resources, and a community development model of planning within the neighbourhood. Need was determined by population trends, EDI scores, immigration patterns, languages spoken in the home, and the education and poverty levels of the residents. The communities that are part of the Literacy Planning are Collingwood – Renfrew, Downtown East Side (DTES), Hastings North, Kensington Cedar Cottage, Kitsilano (now West Side

Vancouver), Marpole, Mount Pleasant, and South Vancouver.

Representatives from all the communities as well as Decoda Literacy Solutions, the Vancouver School District, the Vancouver Public Library, and Vancouver Community College sit on a Coordinating Committee that meets three or four times a year. The meetings provide opportunities to share ideas and celebrate successes.

The funding for development of literacy plans in Vancouver has been allocated incrementally over the past three years. As all the plans are now in the implementation stage, the Coordinating Committee has been involved in a visioning exercise with a goal, ultimately, to bring some cohesion to literacy planning across the City. Led by Gavin Perryman, this work shows great promise for a more supportive and potentially powerful model for planning.

The following report is the first step in this direction. There are plans to revisit this direction in the fall of 2012.

## **Vancouver Literacy Visioning and Planning Session - June, 2012**

*Literacy is the broad set of skills that enable people to participate fully in social, economic, family, and community life.*

*Literacy skills enable each of us to listen, view, communicate, represent, and evaluate knowledge in many different ways.*

*Literacy is about the skills to be engaged with others, to be full citizens.*

*Literacy includes: reading, writing, communicating, using technology, understanding finances, being able to navigate community resources, and essential skills in the workplace.*

### **Introduction**

With supports from the Ministry of Education and Decoda Literacy Solutions (a provincial non profit organization), eight neighbourhoods within Vancouver have been working, in partnership with city-wide public agencies including the Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Community College, and the Vancouver Public Library, to build a stronger literacy movement within the city.

These notes summarize the discussions and the agreements reached at a joint visioning and planning session.

People's hopes for the session included:

- Developing a common vision and framework to underlie and support the neighbourhood work in the future
- Identifying ways to sustain the local neighbourhood literacy community development work through shared learning, joint city-wide infrastructures, and sustainable on-going funding

- Clarifying what is actually expected (and can be reasonably expected) of local literacy coordinators, task groups, and host agencies
- Exploring what needs to be done city-wide, and by whom and how, to support the local neighbourhood literacy work
- Identifying ways to pay attention to the literacy and learning interests of children and youth, as well as the interests of adults
- Identifying ways to work with special groups of people who need more particular attention in addressing literacy and learning needs and barriers

Eight neighbourhoods are involved with the literacy planning funded by Decoda Literacy Solutions. In each case, there is a:

- Host agency that receives, manages, and stewards the funds, and has an agreement with Decoda Literacy Solutions
- A local literacy coordinator hired by the host agency who acts as a facilitator, animator, researcher, program developer, and advocate
- A task group or series of task groups of local citizens and service providers to ensure local perspectives and local ownership of the literacy work

There are also city-wide meetings to bring the local work together, and to connect the local work with the broader work of city-wide agencies such as the Vancouver School Board, Vancouver Public Library<sup>1</sup>, and Vancouver Community College.

- Bi-monthly meetings of the local literacy coordinators<sup>2</sup>
- Semi annual meetings of the local literacy coordinators, representatives of the host agencies and neighbourhood task groups, and staff of the city-wide agencies<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Vancouver School Board and Vancouver Public Library have local schools, families of schools, and branches that are able to connect with the neighbourhood level work. The same does and could apply to the Vancouver Board of parks and recreation, and local community centres.

<sup>2</sup> This is a more recent development.

<sup>3</sup> Some interest has also been expressed in having an annual meeting of the host agencies with Decoda Literacy Solutions, to be clear about the roles and responsibilities of the host agencies in stewarding the monies and overseeing the local literacy coordinators.

## Common Approaches, Challenges, and Principles/Beliefs at the Neighbourhood Level

|                          | Literacy Plan Complete | Age Group Focus <sup>4</sup>            | Resource Guide Complete | Community Development Approach | Special Target Groups                                                     |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| DTES                     | Yes                    | Mostly adults                           | Yes                     | Yes                            | Aboriginals<br>People with learning Differences<br>People with addictions |
| Hastings Sunrise         | Yes                    | Adults                                  | Not yet                 | Yes                            | Families                                                                  |
| Kensington Cedar Cottage | Yes                    | Adults                                  |                         | Yes                            | Newcomers<br>Seniors<br>Families                                          |
| Kitsilano Westside       | Yes                    | Adults                                  | Yes                     | Yes                            | Newcomers                                                                 |
| Marpole                  | Yes                    | 0 – Grade 3<br>Adults<br>Starting youth | Not yet                 | Yes                            | Aboriginals<br>Newcomers                                                  |
| Renfrew Collingwood      | Yes                    | Adults                                  | Yes                     | Yes                            | Newcomers<br>Seniors                                                      |
| Mount Pleasant           | Yes                    | Adults                                  |                         | Yes                            |                                                                           |
| South Van                | Yes                    | Adults                                  |                         | Yes                            | Newcomers                                                                 |

<sup>4</sup> Three age groups have been suggested: birth to grade 3, grades 4 to 12, and adulthood. The grade 3 divide makes some sense because the experience in schools is that if children do not learn to read by then they will likely face continuing and widening learning and literacy development challenges.

## Common Approaches

There are some clear commonalities among the eight neighbourhood action groups.

- All groups see literacy and learning as being closely connected to community development and engagement.
- All groups have focused, at least initially, on the literacy and learning interests and needs of adults.
- Most groups now have a completed local literacy plan.
- Most communities have literacy and learning resources, but these are not necessarily well known and connected, or easy to access for local residents.
- Most groups have developed or are developing local resource guides, or resource maps.
- The literacy and learning issues of newcomers (i.e. immigrants and refugees), and the connections with building culturally inclusive communities, are a common theme.

There are also differences, for example, in:

- The composition of the local task groups (e.g. the balance of citizens, service providers, and adult educators, and the active participation of city-wide service delivery agencies; or the engagement of people from city-wide agencies or community centres)
- The level of direct programming (i.e. intentionally none in some communities, and more in others) versus supporting the existing programming of other agencies
- The focus on a range of literacy dimensions (e.g. food literacy, financial literacy, and computer literacy)
- The focus on different adult target groups (e.g. Aboriginal people, newcomers, seniors, people with addictions, people with learning differences)
- The focus on recruiting and training volunteers and peers to support adult learning and literacy development
- The focus on acquiring other financial resources through grants and partnerships

## Common Principles and Beliefs

The following common principles and beliefs have been identified:

- Local collaboration is important to create synergies and efficiencies in existing literacy and learning resources, to promote access for learners of all ages, and to avoid duplication of effort and resources
- Embedding literacy and learning in the everyday life of individuals, families, and communities, and in the work of all local organizations (public, private, and non profit), is essential
- Connecting literacy closely to all forms and ways of learning is important as literacy needs to be understood as a diverse set of skills required for functioning well in today's society
- Embedding attention to and action on literacy and learning issues in the work of all local service providers is essential

- Literacy and learning need to be based on an asset model, where the work always builds on people's strengths and gifts.

## Common Challenges

The following common challenges have been identified:

- Lack of information among adult learners about the literacy and learning resources that already exist, how to access and use them, and how to give them feedback<sup>5</sup>
- Lack of on-going sustainable funding to carry the local literacy work forward, and to support the salaries and work of local literacy coordinators
- Lack of clarity about the expectations (e.g. from Decoda Literacy Solutions) about the roles and outcomes of the work of literacy coordinators, host agencies, and community task groups
- Lack of connections to city-wide service delivery agencies that work closely with some of the identified target populations (e.g. newcomers and Aboriginal people)<sup>6</sup>
- Role confusion among the local literacy coordinators<sup>7</sup>
- Role confusion among the neighbourhood task groups once the local literacy plan has been developed
- Lack of a common message that explains the “literacy focus and agenda” and provides the rationale for making literacy and learning a priority<sup>8</sup>
- Role confusion arising among the local neighbourhood task groups when they are given responsibilities for allocating funds (e.g. Raise a Reader funds)
- Increasing workloads of staff of all local service providers, resulting in difficulties getting people to attend additional meetings and/or to make literacy and learning issues priorities in their already crowded agendas
- Lack of community spaces to expand existing local programs

## Building a Common Framework and Vision for the Next Five Years

There is agreement that, while each neighbourhood has its own unique characteristics and literacy priorities, much can be gained by working together and supporting each other, sharing learning about good practices, and creating appropriate city-wide approaches that might increase efficiency and effectiveness.

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<sup>5</sup> In a number of communities, this has led to the development of resource guides.

<sup>6</sup> Unlike city-wide agencies such as the Vancouver School Board and the Vancouver Public Library, these city-wide service deliverers do not have local branches.

<sup>7</sup> This confusion is lessening as the local literacy coordinators meet together more often, and focus on their joint work and understandings.

<sup>8</sup> The challenge is that literacy and learning is and needs to be part of everyone's work. The rationale for having a separate literacy planning table is unclear. The common message needs to focus on the benefits for individuals, families, workplaces, and communities of a stronger, neighbourhood based literacy and learning movement.

## Literacy Pathways

Two core literacy pathways were noted.

- For many people, there is a natural learning curve where, starting at birth, they learn the full range of literacy skills, and are able to function well in families, workplaces, and communities<sup>9</sup>.
- For some people, literacy and learning challenges occur at different ages, their learning slows, and they begin to fall behind their peers in the natural development of their literacy skills<sup>10</sup>.

Along the first pathway, literacy work is more about prevention; it is about enhancing natural literacy development and learning for people of all ages. Along the second pathway, literacy work is more about intervention, it is about identifying and reaching out to those people who face barriers to learning, and who have not been able to identify the full range of literacy skills required to function in today's society.

## Five Year Joint Outcomes

The following five year outcomes were identified:

- Local communities are places where learning and literacy skills are publicly valued and supported for all people of all ages through both formal and informal resources
- There is a full continuum of literacy and learning resources that is locally available and/or accessible in each neighbourhood, and the pathways between these resources are clear so that people can continue to learn and move from one place to another smoothly
- The stigma experienced and felt by people with literacy and learning challenges is reduced
- Local literacy work is present in all of the city neighbourhoods

It is important that the local literacy community development work be able to demonstrate influence and positive change both locally and city-wide.

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<sup>9</sup> This pathway can be best seen along three age groups: birth to grade 3, grades 4 to 12, and adulthood. In each age group, there are different sets of resources and responsibilities to enhance the natural learning activities (e.g. birth to grade 3 - parents, libraries, and schools, grades 4 to 12 - schools, libraries, and peers, adults – schools, colleges, and workplaces).

<sup>10</sup> The factors are many, diverse, and interconnected: parents without the skills and motivation to support the learning of their children, children with special needs and learning disabilities, families that are isolated or breaking down, lack of fit with schools and other age appropriate learning resources, lack of adult role models and trusted teachers, difficulties in making transitions (e.g. preschool to kindergarten, and elementary school to secondary school), jobs that pay good salaries but require limited literacy skills, adults with addictions and special needs, and newcomers who are literate in their own home language but challenged with English.

## Common Strategies

Several common strategies for building local literacy movements were identified:

- Access - Ensuring that everyone has knowledge about and access to the literacy and learning resources that are locally available
- Access - Establishing accessible and welcoming community hubs for literacy development and learning
- Outreach - Identifying and acting together on local literacy and learning issues such as barriers to people accessing existing resources
- Embed - Embedding attention to and action on literacy issues, and the importance of opportunities for learning for all people, in all community planning tables and in the work of all community service organizations
- Embed – Including literacy and learning issues in all neighbourhood and city-wide visions statements and plans
- Advocate – Creating strong cases for increased literacy and learning resources, programs, and infrastructures, particularly targeted to those people facing significant literacy and learning challenges and barriers
- Share – Sharing learning and good practices in literacy community development work across local neighbourhoods
- Share – Building city-wide approaches, including common language and tools, for more effective, coordinated, and synergistic local action

## Next Steps

Several next steps were identified:

- Develop a joint job description for local literacy coordinators that can be used by all of the local neighbourhoods and host agencies<sup>11</sup>
- Develop a joint “case for support” for local literacy work (why is this important, why is it separate but connected from other issues) that can be used by all: local literacy coordinators host agencies, and members of literacy task groups
- Identify those issues, resources, and approaches that need or would be better done using a city-wide approach, and create a joint infrastructure for this to happen
- Create a joint sustainability strategy (i.e. finances, shared learning, and joint infrastructures) for expanding, supporting, and sustaining local literacy community development work in more city neighbourhoods.

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<sup>11</sup> See the Appendix for a possible draft set of ideas.

## The Community Literacy Plans: Report on Progress

The following table outlines the eight neighbourhoods, the stewards of the Community Literacy Plans and the Literacy Outreach Coordinators in the neighbourhoods. Following the table are the updates from each of these neighbourhoods.

### Vancouver Literacy Planning Neighbourhoods

| Neighbourhood                         | Steward                                                                                                                                 | LOC                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Downtown Eastside Literacy Roundtable | First United Mission<br>Stephen Gray<br><a href="mailto:sgray@firstunited.ca">sgray@firstunited.ca</a>                                  | Angelika Sellick<br><a href="mailto:Sellick.angelika@gmail.com">Sellick.angelika@gmail.com</a>       |
| Hastings North                        | Kiwassa Neighbourhood House<br>Nancy McRitchie Exec. Director<br><a href="mailto:NancyM@kiwassa.ca">NancyM@kiwassa.ca</a>               | Meseret Taye<br><a href="mailto:Meserett@kiwassa.ca">Meserett@kiwassa.ca</a>                         |
| Kensington Cedar Cottage              | Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House<br>Donna Chang Exec. Director<br><a href="mailto:dchang@cedarcottage.org">dchang@cedarcottage.org</a> | Naomi Klingle Watt<br><a href="mailto:nkinglewatt@cedarcottage.org">nkinglewatt@cedarcottage.org</a> |
| Vancouver West Side (Kitsilano)       | Kits Neighbourhood House<br>Catherine Leach Exec. Director<br><a href="mailto:Catherine@kitshouse.org">Catherine@kitshouse.org</a>      | Emily Palmer<br><a href="mailto:Emily@kitshouse.org">Emily@kitshouse.org</a>                         |
| Marpole                               | Marpole Oakridge Family Place<br>Tracy Howard<br><a href="mailto:ED@mofp.org">ED@mofp.org</a>                                           | Andrea Krombein<br><a href="mailto:AndreaK@mofp.org">AndreaK@mofp.org</a>                            |
| Mount Pleasant                        | M.P. Neighbourhood House<br>Jocelyne Hamel Exec. Director<br><a href="mailto:jhamel@mpnh.org">jhamel@mpnh.org</a>                       | Blanca Salvatierra<br><a href="mailto:BSalvatierra@MPNH.ORG">BSalvatierra@MPNH.ORG</a>               |
| Renfrew Collingwood                   | Collingwood Neighbourhood House<br>Jennifer Gray-Grant , Exec Director<br><a href="mailto:jgg1@shaw.ca">jgg1@shaw.ca</a>                | Melissa Chungfat<br><a href="mailto:literacyrc@gmail.com">literacyrc@gmail.com</a>                   |
| South Vancouver                       | South Van Neighbourhood House<br>Wei Wei Siew<br><a href="mailto:weiwei@southvan.org">weiwei@southvan.org</a>                           | Chelan Wallace<br><a href="mailto:chelan@southvan.org">chelan@southvan.org</a>                       |

## **Downtown Eastside Vancouver Community**

Project Steward: First United Church

Literacy Outreach Coordinator: Angelika Sellick

Current Stage: First year of implementation completed in April 2012

### **Reflections on the current year**

#### **Literacy Task Group**

During the past year, the literacy task group in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) community has been comprised of over 30 adult educators who sit on the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable and represent a wide spectrum of literacy/educational organizations in the DTES community. These organizations (in alphabetical order) are:

Aboriginal Front Door Society; AIDS Vancouver; Capilano University Community Development and Outreach Department; Carnegie Learning Centre; Carnegie Library; Children Need Care Now-Community Action Program for Children; Downtown Community Court; Downtown East Education Centre (VSB); First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council; First United Church; Frontier College; Harbour Light Learning Centre; Joint Effort; Neighbourhood Care International; newSTART; Strathcona Community Centre; SFU Community Education Program; The LivingRoom; UBC Humanities 101 Community Programme; UBC Learning Exchange; Union Gospel Mission Hope Learning Centre; WISH Drop-In Centre Society; Vancouver Community College; Vancouver Eastside Educational Enrichment Society; Vancouver Native Health Society; YWCA Crabtree Corner; YWCA Metro Vancouver.

The DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable also regularly communicates with a network of over 100 supporters, made up of individuals and organizations residing in and/or working in partnership with the community.

The DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable is unique in that they are self-organized and have been coming together since 2006 for the purpose of sharing skills, ideas, support and information. The work of the Roundtable is organized through monthly meetings hosted by a rotation of its members. At these meetings, members share new developments in their organizations and the community, as well as offer each other opportunities for professional development and support through workshops and guest speakers.

#### **Community Context**

The Downtown Eastside is a dynamic, vibrant, low-income Vancouver neighbourhood located on unceded Coast Salish Territory. Also known as 'the Heart of the City', the DTES has historically been a hub of rich cultural life for Aboriginal, Chinese, Japanese, Latin American, Black, working class, and low income peoples. The strong, community-driven DTES neighbourhood prides itself on insider knowledge, lived experiences, volunteerism, social justice efforts, multicultural diversity, unity and support.

In the past year, a number of developments, issues and decisions have directly impacted people—both positively and negatively-- living in the Downtown Eastside community, as well as the ability of organizations to support literacy development.

Some of these include:

#### Positive Impacts:

- The DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable itself continued to foster important connections between educators and literacy organizations
- Union Gospel Mission expanded its capacity for community and resident learning opportunities in its new building, including several classrooms and a large computer lab.
- Housing shortages and gentrification, as a rallying issue, has gotten learners and volunteers involved and honed their activism skills in the process.

#### Negative Impacts:

- Gentrification continues to result in less affordable housing and services for low-income people. The consequence is that some have moved to other areas in Vancouver and beyond. It is expected that the number of people relocating outside of the neighbourhood will only increase in the coming years. (Yet despite relocation, many of former residents still keep their connections strong with the DTES community through their ongoing participation in its educational programs, services, advocacy work, artistic initiatives, and social life.)
- In the spring of 2012, the BC government moved into a centralized model of employment services. Employment programs in the Downtown Eastside such as Pathways and newSTART were closed. This shift into a 'one roof employment service' is problematic for many especially when considering the diversity of people in the Downtown Eastside community who seek computer access and support from individualized employment service programs.
- Changes to the policies around welfare and the administrative procedures of the welfare office have created systematic discrimination against low income people. For example, the requirement to download more documents has resulted in increased barriers for those without regular access to computers or for those with lower digital literacy levels.
- Traditional Adult Basic Education, as offered by many organizations in the Downtown Eastside, is under threat. Shifts towards austerity inside of colleges, new universities,

and the school board are driving decisions that make it more difficult for low income learners to access free adult literacy education.

- Funding for the Carnegie Newsletter--provided by the government for the past 10 years--was cut in February 2012. The Carnegie Newsletter is a 25 year old community newsletter (produced completely by volunteers) which has provided a forum for Downtown Eastside residents to publish their poetry, stories, and to write about politics and issues relevant to them. The Carnegie Newsletter currently exists on funds provided by individual donations.

The government grant (CALP) that Capilano University has had in partnership with Carnegie Community Centre and WISH Drop-In Centre Society for many years was reduced this past year.

### **Community Development & Literacy Collaboration**

In the past year, some of the important collaborations that have taken place in the Downtown Eastside community to support literacy and the work of the task group have included:

- Vancouver Community College's partnership with the Lookout Society to provide a literacy and numeracy learning centre
- Launch of computer literacy facilitator training programming at UBC Learning Exchange; trained facilitators from the program are supporting other community members/organizations in accessing computers
- Continued collaboration between Capilano University, Carnegie Community Centre, and WISH Drop-In Centre Society
- Collaboration between SFU's Community Education Program and Megaphone (a magazine sold on the streets by homeless and low-income vendors).
- SFU's Community Capacity Building Certificate program in partnership with Health Initiative for Men (HIM), PHS Community Services, Positive Women's Network (PWN), Vancouver Native Health Society (VNHS), Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), Youth Community Outreach AIDS Society (YouthCo), and Dr. Peter Foundation
- The Roundtable partnered with the Aboriginal Front Door Society in developing and delivering the First Nations Languages Sharing Circle

- The Roundtable has played a key role in linking graduates of SFU’s Community Capacity Building Certificate program to opportunities in the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood
- The 2012 DTES Professional Development Workshop Series involved volunteer tutors in the workshops as participants; Union Gospel Mission, the Carnegie Learning Centre, and the Downtown Eastside Education Centre each hosted one of the workshops

## Addressing Our Goals & Priorities

The literacy task group in the Downtown Eastside community completed their literacy plan “Strengthening Literacy in the Downtown Eastside” in October 2010.

The two overarching priorities in the plan were to *work together* as a community and to value the *self-determination* of community members. Within these overarching priorities, six literacy goals and possible actions were outlined.

In the past year, the Literacy Outreach Coordinator working in conjunction with the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable has taken steps to address the literacy goals. The following table describes each literacy goal, how it was addressed (action taken), indications of success, and any challenges that were encountered along the way.

| Literacy Goal                                   | Action Taken                                                                                                                                                                       | Indications of Success                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Challenges                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>Connect, Exchange Skills and Share Ideas</b> | Continued monthly Roundtable meetings<br><br>Expanded Roundtable website to include information on current events & programs<br><br>Launched ‘Round DTES Literacy Life’ newsletter | Roundtable membership increased; lively participation<br><br>Website views in 2012: May (298), April (492), March (495), February (555), January (349)<br><br>11 issues since September 2011; stories written collaboratively with community members and groups; stories appear as URL links on website to facilitate sharing | Members finding the time to attend meetings |

|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |
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| <p><b>Support Revitalization of Aboriginal Languages and Cultural Practices</b></p> | <p>Worked in collaboration with the Aboriginal Front Door to develop and deliver the First Nations Languages Sharing Circle; some of the Raise a Reader funds allocated to this program</p> <p>Raise-a-Reader funds also allocated the 'Books, Bags &amp; Babies' at YWCA Crabtree Corner; through crafts, storytelling, and drumming, program provides First Nations family with a connection to their culture in a positive learning environment</p> | <p>Facilitated by the same 2 Elders since it started in Sept. 2011; average attendance of 8 to 10 people; First Nations participants have shared that it's a safe place for them to remember and share their language</p> <p>Program will run in the Fall of 2012 supported by the Raise a Reader funds</p> | <p>newSTART employment program had incorporated the Circle into their schedule; when they closed in March 2012, participation in Circle dipped for awhile</p> |
| <p><b>Fund Low Income Resident Teaching and Learning Opportunities</b></p>          | <p>Hourly living wages paid to community members for their work in the following roles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Elders leading the First Nations Languages Sharing Circle</li> <li>-Assistant Coordinator of the First Nations Languages Sharing Circle</li> <li>-Events Assistant Coordinators for the 2012 DTES Professional Development Workshop Series</li> </ul>                                                              | <p>40% of implementation funds spent in this area</p> <p>Literacy Outreach Coordinator has written references letters for these community members as they seek further/additional employment</p>                                                                                                            | <p>So many opportunities to employ people from the community, but not enough money</p>                                                                        |
|                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                               |

|                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Increase Awareness of Literacy Resources</b></p>                                  | <p>Distribution of over 1600 copies of the “Literacy, Learning, Training and Education Services in the DTES” quick reference guide through the Carnegie Newsletter and at various community events</p>                                                                                                                               | <p>Community members and organizations have repeatedly commented: “We need more of this!” and “Can I have a few more to share with others?”</p>                                                         | <p>Keeping the guide current</p>                                               |
| <p><b>Build Capacity to Support People with Learning Disabilities / Differences</b></p> | <p>The writing and submission of a proposal to Rotary Club of Vancouver Arbutus resulted in funds for professional development</p> <p>“Supporting Learners &amp; Learning Differences: 2012 DTES Professional Development Workshop Series” was a free three-part series held at 3 different locations in Feb., March, April 2012</p> | <p>Full houses; attended by educators, volunteers, learners, and service providers from across the community</p> <p>Feedback indicated that similar workshops in the future were desired and needed</p> | <p>Finding the space to accommodate all who wanted to attend</p>               |
| <p><b>Create Momentum through Neighbourhood Learning Themes and Events</b></p>          | <p>Fostered momentum through each DTES Professional Development workshop (above) by keeping participants updated through e-mail</p> <p>Supported recent graduates of SFU's Community Capacity Building Certificate program in their initiative to open a resident-directed, in-house community library at the Bosman Hotel</p>       | <p>Many participants attend at least 2/3 of the workshops in the series</p> <p>The Bosman Community Library opened at the end of May 2012</p>                                                           | <p>Due to lack of time, no resident-based steering committee was initiated</p> |

## Goals and Priorities for the Coming Year

Thinking about the upcoming year (July 2012 to June 2013), the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable has identified some opportunities, issues, and challenges in the Downtown Eastside community, particularly pertaining to strengthening literacy and learning.

### Opportunities:

- To continue with the momentum of the DTES Professional Development Workshop Series and coordinate a learners/volunteer tutor conference, with a possible theme of “What has worked for you to support your learning?”
- To become more involved in providing literacy opportunities/encouragement to the ever growing population of youth in the DTES
- To collaboratively write and submit joint grant proposals as many foundations seem to favour applicants in partnerships
- To support more learning opportunities for seniors, as well as children and families in the DTES (these requests were raised during the 2010 community discussions)

### Issues:

- Raising the profile of literacy and embedding its importance across the community. Asking the question: ‘Where does literacy fit into the big picture?’

### Challenges:

- Ongoing gentrification (re-zoning and re-development) in the DTES neighbourhood will continue to impact on learners and volunteer tutors
- Changes in funding structures; continues to makes creating sustainable programs difficult

In response to these opportunities, issues, and challenges, the goals for strengthening literacy in the DTES community during the upcoming year are highlighted in the following diagram. They also include a continuation of the literacy goals identified in the original literacy plan (October 2010). *Working together* and *self-determination* will continue to be the overarching priorities.



A general plan for how these literacy goals will be addressed in the upcoming year—and why they should be addressed—is outlined below. The people involved in actualizing them are the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable members and supporters, First Nations Elders, volunteer tutors, learners, artists, other service providers, and the Literacy Outreach Coordinator as a central coordinating point.

*Connect, Share Ideas, Exchange Skills, and Collaborate*

**Why:** Working together can create more opportunities for peer/colleague support, professional development, and creating new cross-organization initiatives to better support literacy and learning in the community.

**Action:** Continue and expand the invitation for other groups to join the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable. Continue sharing about programs and events in the community through the 'Round DTES Literacy Life newsletter and Roundtable website. Set up an 'Idea Bank' on the Roundtable website where people can share their ideas for future projects, programs, and initiatives.

**Resources:** Already have an extensive supporters contact list, and the website and newsletter are up and running. Will need guidance on how best to set up digital 'Idea Bank' and promote it throughout the community.

### *Increase Awareness of Literacy Resources*

**Why:** To ensure that learners of any literacy level, volunteer tutors, educators, and service providers in the community are aware of the many opportunities available around literacy and learning. This awareness will facilitate the self-advocacy of learners, improve referrals between organizations, and encourage potential collaborations and pooling of resources.

**Action:** Update the "Literacy, Learning, Training and Education Services in the DTES" quick reference guide. Hire community artist to produce a poster communicating the same information, but in mainly a visual format that can be widely distributed. Continue to publish the 'Round DTES Literacy Life newsletter highlighting literacy programs, collaborations, and issues in the community. Hire social media artists from the community to produce videos featuring various literacy programs/resources which can be posted on the Roundtable website.

**Resources:** Already have an established quick reference guide, website, and newsletter to build on. Will need funding to hire artists to create visual poster and media videos.

### *Advocacy*

**Why:** Awareness needs to be created of what it is like to try to access and continue in education (literacy) given the range of cuts and array of new policies that work against access to resources.

**Action:** Become more vocal with the government, policy makers, and educational institutions about the impact of funding cuts. Share this literacy plan widely.

**Resources:** Already have extensive contact list and Roundtable meeting as a forum for sharing new information and for planning steps in terms of advocacy.

### *Increase Engagement with Non-Profit Service Providers & Community Councils*

**Why:** To raise profile and importance of literacy across the community. Increasing engagement with these groups will also provide more insight into where they see potential opportunities, issues and challenges.

**Action:** Through outreach work, connect with organizations in the community and inquire if they require more support in terms of literacy, education or training. Engage volunteers from the community to participate in the project. Actively invite service providers to attend the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable meetings. Asking the question of "Where does literacy fit into the big picture?" at community council meetings.

**Resources:** Already have extensive network through Roundtable members and supporters contact lists, as well as the “Literacy, Learning, Training and Education Services in the DTES” quick reference guide. Need volunteers from the community to help in the outreach work.

*Explore How to Support Literacy Opportunities for Youth, Seniors, and Families*

**Why:** The focus of the DTES Adult Literacy Roundtable is primarily on Adult Education. However, discussions at Roundtable meetings in the past year have indicated that more literacy support and encouragement is needed by youth, seniors, and families in the DTES community.

**Actions:** Through outreach work, connect with organizations in the community that work with youth, seniors, and families, to inquire if they require more support around literacy, education and training. Invite organizations involved with youth, seniors and families to attend a consultation/brainstorming event.

**Resources:** Already have extensive network through Roundtable members and supporters lists. Need space to host community meetings.

*Support Revitalization of Aboriginal Languages and Cultural Practices*

**Why:** Many residents during the community consultations in 2010 stressed the need to teach and learn more about Aboriginal languages and cultural practices. It is integral to Aboriginal rights, reviving Aboriginal languages, and healing the residential school legacy.

**Action:** Continue to administratively support the First Nations Languages Sharing Circle at the Aboriginal Front Door. Make further connections with other Aboriginal programming in the community such as the First Nations Journey class at the Carnegie Learning Centre and the ‘Books, Bags & Babies’ program at YWCA Crabtree Corner. Host meeting with groups (and other organizations with an Aboriginal focus) to discuss potential collaborations. Facilitate joint application writing for further funding.

**Resources:** Already have collaborations with the Carnegie Learning Centre, YWCA Crabtree, and the Aboriginal Front Door Society. Will need space to host community meeting. The First Nations Languages Sharing Circle will also require more funding in the future to pay for the work of the Elders and Assistant Coordinator.

*Expand Support for Learners through Community-Wide Professional Development*

**Why:** Feedback from participants of the DTES Professional Development Workshop Series indicated that similar events were desired and needed in the future.

**Action:** Apply for funding to host similar opportunities, and to hire event coordinators from the community. Bring together a steering committee comprised of volunteer tutors and educators to plan for a community-wide volunteer tutor conference. This same committee could also plan for the 2013 DTES Professional Development workshop series.

**Resources:** Already have momentum, interest and contact list created by the 2012 workshop series. Will need to secure funding and locations to host the committee meetings, conference, and professional development workshops.

## *Fund Low-Income Resident Teaching and Learning Opportunities*

**Why:** To recognize and share resources with the many skilled and talented residents in the DTES who want to teach and learn, but are under-funded.

**Action:** Facilitate partnerships between community organizations and collaboratively write proposals which include funds for hiring community members. Provide mentorship and training to community members who are hired.

**Resources:** Already have people in the Downtown Eastside community who are eager and able to teach and learn. Will need funds to support low-income resident learning/teaching opportunities, as well as provide the training, space, and tools which they will require to do their work.

## **Hastings North**

### **Reflections on the current year**

#### **Literacy Task Group**

The Hastings North Literacy steering committee was created in May 2011 and is comprised of eight organizations: Kiwassa Neighbourhood House, the Vancouver Public Library-Hastings Branch, the Vancouver School Board through the Kiwassa Alternative Adult Education Program, Templeton Community School, Tillicum Elementary School, Relevant Education for Adult Learners (REAL), The Nisga'a Ts'amiks Society and the Adult Learning Centre at Carnegie. Community residents and interns have also been involved in this steering committee.

The steering committee has been instrumental in shaping the framework and development of the community literacy plan. The committee meets once a month and used the following four guiding principles for developing the plan and defining the outcomes:

- Learning as a lifelong activity: We found that for our community “literacy” means the same thing as “learning” – it is an *accessible, lifelong activity* that supports people in their daily lives in a variety of ways.
- Asset-based approach: we recognize the *existing* learning-based programs and services. We also recognize the strengths, skills and experiences of community members that foster lifelong learning in our community.
- Building capacity and relationships: we facilitate opportunities for service providers to build better networks and partnerships to enhance the capacity to use their resources effectively. We also value approaches that strengthen capacity building at the community, individual and family level. This includes increased awareness and discussion about literacy and learning initiatives as well as ways people use and can strengthen literacy skills.

- Participatory: service provider organizations and community members participate throughout the development of the plan. We engage diverse sectors of the community in the planning process.

Guided by these basic principles, interviews, surveys, dialogues and discussions were conducted by the literacy outreach coordinator and two interns over a period of six months. The information gathered was used to identify literacy assets, opportunities, challenges, gaps and priorities of our community.

The Steering Committee members helped guide the process of the data collection and looked at the data gathered and brainstormed on doable and realistic project ideas in order to develop practical and manageable goals and action plans for the future.

## **Community Context**

### Opportunities and Challenges in Literacy and Learning in Hastings North

Our research findings as highlighted below show the various learning related opportunities and challenges in our community.

- Community members in Hastings North are enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge and experience and they are also interested in learning new skills. Community members are involved in many different learning activities in the neighbourhood mostly through community special events and celebrations, English as a Second Language (ESL), fitness and recreation, library use and reading, volunteering as well as food-oriented programs.
- Our community has many accessible and affordable learning programs and services. Partnerships amongst community organizations have made this possible. Community organizations in Hastings North are good at working together to offer learning programs that are barrier free. Some of these programs are open to the general public while others are tailored to specific needs.
- Many of the learning programs are created for intercultural and intergenerational groups and settings. In other words, programs make sure to invite people from different cultures and they also welcome grandparents to grandchildren. Programs use many different approaches to support learning in the community. They are creative and use a variety of tools to support the building of new skills while also fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment and confidence.
- Funding continues to be a challenge to service providers! There is a real need for sustained funding to maintain and/or expand programming to meet needs. Many programs have to apply every year for funding or they have to find different funding every year to support a successful program. This creates a barrier in supporting lifelong learning.

- There are many challenges to developing and sustaining up to date and accessible information for service providers and community members about current programs and services.
- While there are many different service provider network meetings that some agencies are part of, until now, there has not been a neighbourhood, literacy focused network for agencies to know about programs and services to share best practices, experiences and knowledge.
- There are very limited resources and capacity to provide support to adults with learning challenges. People are worried that many community members are falling through the cracks.
- Community members are not keeping up with the need to be computer literate. There are only limited resources to provide sufficient computer access and training in Hastings North.
- People are wondering how to translate the skill-building and life skills learning into meaningful employment opportunities.
- People identified the need for training in critical thinking skills and value based education for youth and adults.

#### Community Development and Current Literacy Collaborations:

The Hastings North Literacy Steering Committee brought diverse literacy and learning based organizations together to strengthen the already existing collaborations between them. The literacy plan development process helped us to connect with 27 service provider organizations in the neighbourhood to understand and learn how their diverse learning programs are structured, the types of collaborations and partnerships they developed, the impacts and outcomes of their work and the opportunities and challenges that they are experiencing.

The information gathered from service providers along with the input and feedback from community members is used to develop the literacy vision and action plans for enhancing the quality and effectiveness of literacy programs and activities for the neighbourhood. The steering committee plans to continue to work with the organizations that we are connected with and others at various capacities in the implementation phase as well.

In addition, while the process was somewhat challenging, the financial support that came from the Raise the Reader Funding helped us to strengthen our collaborations through three family literacy programming activities.

- three six week family literacy sessions through Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House focusing on isolated immigrant families with young children
- three six week family literacy sessions delivered by Vancouver Public Library-Hastings Branch in partnership with Kiwassa NH with focus on parents/caregivers and children under the age of 4

- three family literacy support groups delivered to immigrant families through Tillicum, Hastings and A R Lord schools in partnership with Capilano University's Relevant Education for Adult Learners (REAL) program.

## Goals and Actions for the Current Year

The Hastings North Literacy steering committee developed the following seven purposes when it was initiated in May 2011:

- define literacy in the context of our community
- identify the literacy assets in our community – programs & services
- improve communication - strengthen relationships and a sense of shared knowledge among service providers
- increase public awareness about non-formal and informal literacy and learning
- decrease the stigmatization and discrimination associated with having low literacy
- recognize the literacy-based needs, priorities, opportunities and challenges in our community through consultations with residents and service providers
- develop a literacy vision and action plans based on identified priorities and needs

We are pleased to report that the steering committee has accomplished all the goals that it has set out for itself within the past year. Below are some highlights of our work:

- We define literacy in our neighbourhood as *“different ways of knowing, learning, exchanging, sharing and developing of broad ranges of skills, experiences and knowledge that occur every day between people. This learning has to be practical, accessible, adaptable and inclusive of diverse learning needs, abilities and styles”*.
- We identified the following non formal and informal literacy based services and programs in our neighbourhood that happen in close collaboration with schools, neighbourhood houses, community centres and public libraries.
  - Home and community-based informal learning and information sharing
  - Early childhood development and family learning
  - After school Children's learning
  - In and after school youth focused learning
  - Immigrant and refugee settlement learning
  - Seniors focused learning
  - Community health, wellbeing and safety learning
  - Learning programs for people with disabilities and various challenges

- Technology based information learning
- Aboriginal specific learning
- The Hastings North literacy steering committee helped us to strengthen our existing relationships and create new opportunities to collaborate further on various literacy and learning programs and activities.
- We developed buttons as shown below for creating public awareness about learning and literacy for distribution to community members. We participated in various public events including the yearly Summer Kickoff festival put together by the Hastings Business Improvement Association and other local organizations in July 2011 as well as the Kiwassa Neighbourhood House Open House in September 2011.



- We used interviews, surveys, community consultations and continual dialogue and discussions with our steering committee to successfully identify and understand the literacy related opportunities, challenges, needs and gaps that exist in our neighbourhood as we have highlighted them in our community literacy plan.
- One additional action that we have accomplished is related to Raise the Reader funding provided to our group. The committee has identified the four organizations that would implement family literacy activities for this current year through this funding and made the decision on how the funds will be distributed.

#### Indications of Success and Challenges:

The positive and energetic momentum that exists within the literacy steering committee that we built over the past year is a good indication of our success. Our collaboration became successful because committee members are passionate and excited about the possibility of working for a common goal of enhancing literacy and learning programs and services in the community. We did a reflection of our work and assessed our group's dynamic in our May 2012 meeting and committee members expressed their satisfaction by what has been accomplished so far and gave recommendations to involve more organizations and individuals for our future initiatives.

We developed the community literacy plan and identified both our vision as well as long and short term goals successfully based on the various community engagement approaches we used that helped generate valuable information on understanding the status and factors affecting literacy. We developed four priority action plans and outcome targets for 18 months starting from April 2012. We are currently setting up the framework for implementing our plan through the development of an implementation oriented job description for our Community Literacy Developer and terms of reference for our literacy steering committee.

Our biggest challenge at the current time is

- adequate funding support. We had to stretch our budget to cover 18 months, which means that the budget only covers eight hours of our literacy coordinator's position which limits us in various ways.
- time constraints and workload challenges of agencies and members of the steering committee. This is in part due to the very real challenges agencies and their staff are under in terms of workloads, community needs and underfunding.
- the responsibility for decision making around Raise a Reader funds, and other funds that may be given to the steering committee to distribute, has caused some tension around the question of geographical boundaries and steering committee membership. We believe that Decoda Literacy Solutions needs to understand where our boundaries and mandate stand.

## **Goals and Action Plans for the Coming Year**

Our long term goal is to develop small-scale, cost-effective and realistic initiatives that: help build the capacity of service-provider organizations, volunteers and community members, while enhancing the effectiveness and quality of the learning that occurs in a daily basis and widely promoting the concept of literacy.

Based on the above goal, our steering committee developed four actions plans for 18 months starting on April 2012 that can help strengthen the existing, diverse learning programs and services without duplicating efforts. They are

### **1) *Sustain the Hastings North literacy planning table***

- Develop terms of reference for the group including roles, partnerships and frequency of meetings
- Formalize the job description of the literacy community developer, which will include coordinating and supporting the literacy planning table
- Determine funding allocation process for the future
- Continue to meet, share information and enthusiasm for literacy support.

### **2) *Enhance awareness of literacy and learning activities***

- Develop and publish print and online directory of literacy resources

### **3) Strengthen the capacity and networks of service providers**

- Organize four networking meetings for service providers over the 18 months
- Organize professional development workshops for front-line service providers and volunteers, and when relevant, for community members on various literacy and learning based issues and challenges as identified by community members
- Determine funding allocation process for future activities

### **4) Strengthen the literacy capacity of community members**

- Enhance family literacy activities in the community through Raise the Reader Fund including the implementation and reporting of the current funded projects
- Deliver two workshops tailored to the needs and interests of the various segments of the community. Workshops are offered in partnership with different service providers at various dates and times
- Developing book exchange 4-6 kiosks with bulletin boards in few locations in the neighbourhood
- Tool kit and curriculum development for value based education including respect, compassion and social inclusion

We plan to meet our goals through our existing steering committee that will continue to support and guide our Community Literacy Developer. The family literacy programs are currently being delivered by the four organizations that we identified through our steering committee. We also plan to hire a short term intern and experts on various literacy and learning topics to conduct the various workshops to support our literacy initiative.

## **Kensington Cedar Cottage**

### **Reflections on the current year**

#### **Literacy Task Group**

The Kensington-Cedar Cottage literacy task group is made up of residents and organizational representatives from the local community. These include:

##### *Organizations:*

- Donna Chang, Steward and Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House Executive Director
- Marion Broadbent, Laura Secord Elementary Principal
- Naomi Klinge-Watt, Literacy Outreach Coordinator
- Kim Whaley, Lord Selkirk Elementary Community Assistant
- Sarah Maitland, Kidsafe Writer's Room Coordinator
- Yukiko Tosa, Kensington Public Library Branch Head

##### *Residents:*

- Bridget Rivers-Moore, Resident and English conversation group volunteer facilitator
- Heather Legal, Resident and Tecumseh Annex Elementary PAC Chair

- Pedro Su, Resident and Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House Board member
- Penelope Bacfalsvi, Resident
- Linda Stanfield, Resident

The Kensington Cedar Cottage literacy task group was newly formed in September 2011. The task group was able to work with the Literacy Outreach Coordinator and/or the steward to complete the following:

- Hiring the Literacy Outreach Coordinator
- Creating the terms of reference
- Developing a framework for literacy projects, vision and purpose
- Developing the Raise a Reader proposal

## **Community Context**

In the past year, we have transitioned into our first year of implementation with our first activities beginning in April 2012. These activities include developing Laura Secord Elementary, Kensington Public Library and Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House as community literacy hubs. The task group also received Raise a Reader funds that added another component to the task group structure and to their role in the community.

## **Community Development and Literacy Collaborations**

Key collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group have been between Laura Secord Elementary, Kensington Public Library and Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House including:

- Hiring a Literacy Outreach Coordinator
- Supporting two community potluck/skill exchanges held at Laura Secord Elementary
- Promoting book sales, which raise money for new bilingual library books and first language resources

Ongoing commitment from the community organizations and residents who compose the literacy task group will remain an essential component to the success of the literacy plan. The planning stage and first year of implementation have been successful due to a commitment to shared values and a core belief that in increasing social capital through community development work, we will effectively impact literacy in our community.

## **Goals and Actions for the Current Year**

This year has included the following actions:

- Hiring the Literacy Outreach Coordinator as an employee of Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
- Creating the implementation committee that meets regularly

- Promoting the Kensington Cedar Cottage literacy plan in three issues of the “Neighbour” community newspaper, as well as at the Neighbourhood Small Grants Celebration, Kensington Cedar Cottage monthly all-agencies meetings, Trout Lake Community Centre opening celebration, Laura Secord Elementary PAC meetings and newsletter, Tecumseh Annex PAC meetings, and the Kensington Public Library
- Sharing the Kensington Cedar Cottage literacy plan with various community organizations including, Family Services of Greater Vancouver, Vancouver Community College Adult Education, Vancouver Coast Health, Vancouver Tool Library, and the John Howard Society
- Supporting a parent committee at Laura Secord Elementary to guide family/community literacy initiatives that showcase and share community skills
- Launching SHARE night, a group skills exchange program, at Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
- Supporting the Kidsafe Writers Room, a community literacy initiative, and the Kensington Public Library summer adult book club
- Organizing, promoting and hosting two book sales at the Kensington Public Library to raise money to purchase books and develop first language resources

From our goals outlined last year, we have extended the timeline for producing first language books kits and holding a Community Learning Showcase. The task group wants to allow enough time to develop a strategy alongside these actions asking ourselves *“how can we engage community in the process?”* and *“how will we support community interaction?”*

As a result of Raise a Reader funding, we will host three seniors’ information teas this summer/fall, which will be jointly developed and implemented by Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House, Laura Secord Elementary and the Kensington Public Library.

## **Indications of Success**

Initial indications of success include:

- Continued involvement of the task group, with the addition of new members
- Creation of a parent committee at Laura Secord Elementary that guides the focus for family literacy activities and shares the responsibility for planning, promoting and implementing the events
- Ongoing attendance of a core group of women attending the English conversation group at Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House with a standout community volunteer facilitating every week
- Attendance of three isolated families at SHARE nights who have identified skills they have that they would like to share as well as literacies they would like to develop. One resident is a single mother with three children who is an avid crafter and would like to share her sewing skills. She enjoys the opportunity to connect with others, while learning and contributing in an inclusive environment.

What are the things that support literacy work?

The ongoing support and guidance of the literacy task group is ensuring that activities and initiatives are directly impacting a need in the community and are embedded in a sustainable manner. The Raise a Reader funding has given the task group the opportunity to implement family literacy activities. The role of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator has also been key in facilitating the task group and supporting the activities

## **Challenges**

Many of the residents and families of Kensington Cedar Cottage have multiple time commitments (more than one job, young children, school activities), making it difficult to connect because of time constraints. In addition, our community offers many services and programs, but there is no centralized source of information, making it difficult to access information easily. Service providers are also busy and focused in their area, and are often unaware of the resources available in the community.

We also recognize that it remains a challenge to connect with isolated and disconnected community members especially those whose literacy skills prevent them from accessing traditional models of communication, specifically print and web-based information.

What would help?

It is integral to find ways to embed our literacy work to avoid duplication of service and contributing to taxed schedules. We will continue to look for opportunities to collaborate with other community organizations and to find ways to embed literacy into existing programs.

We are looking into ways the community can respond to the need for centralized information, perhaps coming from local businesses, organizations, the city or ideally, a combination of all those.

Additionally, it would be helpful to further examine citywide approaches to literacy and find effective ways for Literacy Outreach Coordinators, stewards and task groups to share information, resources and experience.

## **For the Coming Year**

We have received an additional year of implementation funding that will allow us to further strengthen the task group and roll out our literacy plan. The possibility of more funding from Raise a Reader creates opportunities for the task group to support literacy on a neighbourhood level.

What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?

**Goal #1: Nurture Cultures and Languages**

- Hold book sales at the Kensington Public Library to raise funds to purchase bilingual books and resources
- Develop a strategy to encourage and support the use of first language books and resources

**Goal #2: Celebrate and Share Community Skills and Knowledge**

- Further develop Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House, Laura Secord Elementary and the Kensington Public Library as community literacy hubs
- Facilitate ways in which community members can access existing community resources and learn from each other
- Continue to support Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House SHARE nights and Laura Secord community potlucks
- Explore meaningful and significant way(s) in which to showcase the richness of knowledge and resources in the community

**Goal #3: Making Connections**

- Focus on ways to communicate across literacy barriers – through storytelling, visual narratives and clear, simple language
- Continue to find ways to collaborate with other community organizations

What will be required to meet the goals?

The established partnerships between the three main organizations of the task group are essential to meeting the outlined goals. The work of the task group is needed to continue supporting the literacy plan and ensuring that it reflects and responds to community needs. In addition, the role of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator to initiate and facilitate is pivotal in keeping momentum going.

**Vancouver’s Westside (Kitsilano)**

**Reflections on the current year:**

**Community Context**

*What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development?*

In the past year, the Westside Literacy Task Group has moved into our second year of implementation and has worked on the goals set in the Community Literacy Plan-

<http://www.kitshouse.org/2010/05/06/kitswestside-literacy-plan/>. Activities this year have extended to neighbourhood that were not covered in the original plan. The UBC Endowment lands have been identified as an area with a growing number of isolated newcomers.

Ongoing programming such as the Welcoming Neighbour Program (volunteer literacy training, English conversation circles and socials and out-trips) continues to address literacy needs across the Westside. In addition, the Westside Newcomers Hub was formed in September 2011. The Hub meets every 2 months to share information and develop strategies to support newcomers in the community. Active participation of service providers at UBC in the hub has increased the capacity to meet the needs of newcomers in that community.

## Literacy Task Group

*Who takes part in the task group?*

|                 |                                                      |                                     |
|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Emily Palmer    | Kitsilano Neighbourhood House                        | Literacy Outreach Coordinator       |
| Catherine Leach | Kitsilano Neighbourhood House - Executive Director   | Task Group Member & Project Steward |
| Diane Ash       | West Side Family Place - Executive Director          | Task Group Member                   |
| Daniela Esparo  | Vancouver Public Library –Area Manager               | Task Group Member                   |
| Janet Chung     | Vancouver School Board- Settlement Worker in Schools | Task Group Member                   |
| Morie Ford      | Staff at Brain Boost Education & local resident      | Task Group Member                   |

*How is the work of this group organized?*

The Task Group advises the work of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator. This year the group’s participation has dropped and we are now exploring ways to integrate the work into other groups such as the Westside Service Providers Group. We are also looking at ways to check-in with wider community service providers through the Literacy Outreach Coordinators participation in other networking tables (e.g. Early Childhood Development Hub- Area 4, Seniors Empowerment Coalition & the Westside Newcomers Hub).

## Community Development and Literacy Collaboration

a. *What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group?*

- The task group hosted a Literacy Awareness Skate at Kitsilano Community Centre in July. The goal of the event was to connect residents to literacy resources in their

community. The Community Centre had not been involved in the literacy task group until this point and we are working to explore that collaboration.

- A new networking group ‘the Westside Newcomers Hub’ was formed this year with the support of the Literacy Outreach Coordinator. Members of the task group and other service providers actively participate in this new group. The hub supports goals from the Community Literacy Plan (see terms of reference below)

### **Westside Newcomers Hub- Terms of Reference**

#### **As members of the Westside Newcomers Hub we:**

- Are a collaborative group of, service providers, community members & business representatives
- Work together to identify and support the needs of newcomers on the Westside: through sharing information, best practices, strategies and resources
- Work to raise community awareness and increase the profile of newcomers needs on the Westside
- Build connections that will forward action and deepen learning around newcomer issues & initiatives on the Westside
- We motivate, support and coordinate action in support of newcomer needs on the Westside
- We use a topic focused dialogue approach and educational presentations to explore issues and learn from each other
- We will meet: Every two months at rotating locations

#### *What are the essential ongoing collaborations?*

- i) Settlement Workers in schools supported (financially and promotionally) a new Immigrant Women’s Support Group hosted at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House.
- ii) The UBC Community Learning Program has proven to be an impactful and ongoing collaboration. The Vancouver Immigrant Field School placed a student with the Welcoming Neighbours Program. The student co-led an English Conversation Circle this Spring.
- iii) New collaborations have arisen through the Westside Newcomers Hub which consists of members from the following organizations: Our City of Colour, UBC Campus and City Planning, Vancouver School Board Settlement Workers in Schools, SUCCESS, Old Barn Community Centre (UBC), Pacific Immigrant Resources Society, Vancouver Public Library, University Chapel, College Educacentre, West Point Grey Presbyterian Church.
- iv) The Community Access and Youth Internship program continues to support one-on-one tutorials with seniors and low-income residents including outreach to a new site which houses over one hundred low-income seniors.

### *What makes collaborations work well?*

Collaborations in literacy works well when there are mutual benefits to partners, openness, flexibility and on-going communication. A culture of collaboration with service providers was important in addition to the ability to address clearly defined needs. Funding for the Literacy Outreach Coordinator was an essential part of the success and the Outreach Coordinator facilitated the literacy task group and made connections between individuals and organizations.

Collaborations work well when there is energy behind a certain issue or opportunity. The response to the development of the Westside Newcomers Hub has been amazing and has allowed service providers to share what they are doing so that we can work collaboratively and avoid duplicating service.

### **Goals and actions for the current year**

#### *What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?*

Goal 1: To engage residents in supporting literacy programs through the recruitment, training and support of volunteers.

Goal 2: To support English language literacy programs for those in greatest need.

Goal 3: To support and enhance current literacy programs and projects through collaboration with partners, sustainability planning and awareness building.

Goal 4: To increase computer literacy among low-income residents and seniors by improving access to training and supports for computer literacy.

*What actions were taken to reach these? What organizations and groups participated in these actions?*

#### **Goal 1: To engage residents in supporting literacy programs through the recruitment, training and support of volunteers.**

We continued the Welcoming Neighbours Volunteer Program which was launched in August 2010. This year funding for the program was supported by a grant from the Vancouver Foundation. To build sustainability into the program we integrated the volunteer training and English Conversation Circle coordination into the Volunteer Program at Kits House. We also held a volunteer training session in the Fall where 5 new people were trained as English Conversation Circle Leads & Welcoming Neighbourhoods Volunteers. In addition, 4 previously trained volunteers lead conversation circles and volunteered with community potlucks, special events, seniors programs and social and out-trips for newcomers. This year volunteers trained in the Welcoming Neighbours Program contributed more than 400 hours to literacy work.

## **Goal 2: To support English language literacy programs for those in the greatest need.**

Programming continued to support English Language learning, most notably, eleven conversation circles were led by trained volunteers at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House. Other programming, such as the Welcoming Neighbours socials & out-trips and Immigrant Women's Support Group, had integrated English Language learning components. We continue to source out new opportunities for supporting language learning as it is a priority in our community. The Newcomers Hub has provided opportunities to share what various service providers are offering and the development of a Westside-wide online calendar for service providers has been initiated. This online calendar will allow service providers to share information about newcomer and English language services in the community. The aim is to support information and referral and identify gaps in service.

11 English Conversation Circles  
5 English Conversation Circle volunteers  
46 participants.

## **Goal 3: To support and enhance current literacy programs and projects through collaboration with partners, sustainability planning and awareness building.**

A number of strategies were implemented this year to embed successful literacy programs into ongoing programs. This supports the sustainability of successful programs.

- English Conversation Circle volunteer training and coordination were integrated into the volunteer program at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House.
- Socials and Out-trips for newcomers will continue on a quarterly basis in conjunction with Family Programs at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House

In terms of collaboration with partners and awareness building, the following activities were occurred this year.

- Establishment and Coordination of the Westside Newcomers Hub
- Coordination of the Literacy Awareness Skate at Kitsilano Community Centre
- Hosting of English Conversation Circles at St. Marks' Church, Vancouver Public Library and Kitsilano Neighbourhood House.

## **Goal 4: To increase computer literacy among low-income residents and seniors by improving access to training and supports for computer literacy.**

Volunteers have been trained and supported in one-to-one computer tutoring placements at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House, Steeves Manor (BC Housing) & Maplecrest Seniors Apartments. Training materials were developed in collaboration with the Vancouver Public Library and the Computer Access Internship program. Computer tutorial outreach to Maplecrest apartments is a new collaboration and 26 different tenants were supported with 70 hours of one-on-one tutorials.

In January 2012, Kitsilano Neighbourhood House's offices moved location due to re-development of the main site. The two public access computers are available in the new office space but because the space isn't wheelchair accessible, usage has declined.

Vancouver Public Library's 5 branches on the Westside continue to offer the majority of free public access computers in the community and offer group tutorials on a regular basis. Workshops covered topics such as basic computer skills, eBook basics & internet basics.

## **Indications of Success**

*How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact have the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impact.*

A monitoring framework was used to ensure goals and outcomes were met in relation to the community goals set in the literacy plan.

Goal 1:

Success Statements: We will know we have been successful when –

1. A diverse group of residents are trained in community literacy needs and supports and are placed in meaningful volunteer activities.
2. A number of programs in the community are benefiting from the placement of literacy-focused volunteers.

Indicators of Success:

- We delivered two volunteer training sessions for 11 diverse community members to gain skills in cultural inclusion, community literacy and language support for newcomers to the Westside
- The following are examples of events, conversation circles, out-trips and trainings aimed at developing relationship, providing accesses to community resources and increased support for newcomers:
- Examples of community events and outreach: Welcome booth (Kits House Celebration), presentation at local school PAC meeting, Westside Literacy Awareness event, community potluck focused on multiculturalism and newcomers in the community.
- Examples of English Conversation Circle topics: education in Canada, stories of coming to Canada, accessing the health system, food
- Examples of Out-trips: Granville Island, City Hall, MOSAIC, Vancouver Public Library.
- Volunteer training topics: outreach to isolated newcomers, diversity, community resources

Goal 2:

Success Statements: We will know we have been successful when –

1. More newcomer and immigrant organizations are connected to Westside community tables and service provider networks.
2. English Conversation Circles are developed and sustained over a period of two years and serve newcomer and immigrant populations in our community.

3. English Conversation Circles are supported by volunteers who have been trained in literacy.

Indicators of success:

- The following newcomer and immigrant organizations connected to the Westside Newcomers Hub this year: SUCCESS, Little Mountain Neighbourhood House- Settlement Services, Kiwassa Neighbourhood House- Settlement Services, Settlement Workers in Schools & Pacific Immigrant Resources Society.
- 20 Out-trips and socials and 11 volunteer-led English Conversation Circles (8-10 weeks duration) were delivered
- 119 newcomer participants & volunteers involved socials, out-trips, conversation circles & training sessions

Goal 3:

Success Statements: We will know we have been successful when –

1. Service providers and residents are aware of literacy needs and can refer residents or themselves to appropriate services.
2. A sustainability plan is developed for literacy on the Westside including funding sources, volunteer capacities and service provider networks.

Indicators of Success:

- development of a Westside-wide online calendar for service providers of newcomer resources
- Establishment of the Westside Newcomers Hub provides a space for service providers to share information and work collaboratively
- Sustainability plan has been developed by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator and is updated every 6 months

Goal 4:

Success Statements: We will know we have been successful when –

1. There is an increase in computer literacy programs and public access computers in our community.
2. Seniors and low-income residents feel that they can access affordable computer training.
3. Seniors and low-income residents feel they can access computers and the internet.

Indicator of Success

- One to one free computer tutorials established at new seniors residence.

Some narrative examples of the impact of the work this year are as follows:

From a Social & Out-trip Participant- supports English Language learning and connecting newcomers to community resources:

“I am from Spain and I am living here with my husband and my 10 year old daughter for almost 4 months. I don't speak English well, just few words and I am feeling alone most of the time. My daughter is at school and my husband studies. A month ago, I went to the VSB to register my daughter and I met a very nice SWIS worker who referred me to Patricia. She told me that Patricia works in a neighbourhood house near to my house and

that she speaks my language too. As soon as I sent an email to Patricia, she answered me and provided me not only with information about programs but with many words of encouragement and faith. I really needed those words since I have always been an active and independent person back home and now I felt that I took the wrong decision coming to Canada. She encouraged me to go to the next out-trip to Tourism Vancouver and that day, as soon as I met her in person, she hug me and made me feel good. Now I am attending the out-trips without missing any and I am also participating in the Peer Support Training in UBC because I want to volunteer and be part of this community and give back to other what I received and continue receiving. Now, I am so excited and busy every day, planning my next step to achieve one by one my goals. Thanks!"

A few quotes from English Conversation Circle surveys:

"The volunteer was excellent and my group was so nice. We talked about a lot of things (about Canadian and our countries). The ambience was relaxed and we could talk without problems. The volunteer knew good English grammar and resolved our doubts"

"My favourite thing about the ECCs was meeting with the group on a regular basis. The possibility to ask questions about Canadian grammar or any other topics."

*What are the things that support literacy work?*

This year the keys elements to support literacy work on the Westside were funding for coordination, commitment of the Task Group and the contributions from volunteers.

## **Challenges**

*What are the difficulties?*

The difficulties were finding to coordinate collaborations and partnership with limited hours of the literacy coordinator. A part-time position is funded and with limited hours it is hard to address the full spectrum of literacy needs & opportunities in the community.

Supporting and developing new public access sites has been challenging this year with cuts in federal funding to the Community Access Program.

Participation in the Literacy Task Group has declined. As we move into a longer term implementation of the plan, new strategies to engage service providers and residents are being explored.

*What would help?*

Continued funding at the provincial level for both neighbourhood and regional literacy coordination.

## **For the coming year**

*Are there new opportunities, challenges, or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?*

The newcomer population continues to grow on the Westside so we will continue to work on English language and community resource needs with this population. A key area of connection next year will be the Westside Newcomers Hub.

In terms of computer literacy, a new Seniors Resource Centre is being opened in September at West 8<sup>th</sup> and Vine where a computer access station can be established.

*What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?*

The following areas are priorities for the upcoming year:

- Explore new strategies to engage service providers and residents to support literacy work as participation in the Literacy Task Force has declined
- Expanding opportunities for public computer access and volunteer led tutorials
- Working with the Westside Newcomers Hub to collaborate across organizations and creatively respond to community needs
- Strengthen community connections to offer English Conversation Circles in a variety of locations.

*What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?*

To support the upcoming goals the following are need:

- Ongoing funding for Literacy Outreach Coordination
- Commitment & openness of Westside and Immigrant service providers to collaborate to serve emerging needs
- Access to community spaces to expand public access computer sites
- Continued volunteer support

## **Marpole**

### **Reflections on the current year**

#### **Literacy Task Group**

Who takes part in the Task Group?

- Andrea Krombein- Literacy Outreach Coordinator for Marpole.

- Tracy Howard – Executive Director of Marpole Oakridge Family Place and Steward of the LOC and Literacy Funds.
- Tracey Macleod Yerxa – Manager of Marpole Oakridge Area Council Society (MOACS) at Marpole Oakridge Neighbourhood House.
- Desiree Baron - Branch Head of Vancouver Public Library Marpole Branch.
- Marisol Petersen - Community Schools Coordinator for District 1 of Vancouver School Board.
- Debbie Osborne of Marpole Oakridge Community Centre.
- Pinky Dang of S.U.C.C.E.S.S.(City Wide)
- Mona Nair – Community Coordinator of VanCity Credit Union Marpole (City Wide)
- Charlotte Humphries of YMCA Langara (City Wide)
- Claudia Laroye of Marpole Online.
- Jan Weiten of VSB ESL (City Wide )
- Tammy Harkey – Hippy Canada BC (City Wide)
- Pastor Keon of Cornerstone Church in Marpole

How is the work of this group organized?

- The Marpole Literacy Task Group (MLTG) is chaired by the Marpole Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) and minutes are taken by the Executive Director of Marpole Oakridge Family Place (MOFP) who is the Steward of the literacy funds through Decoda and the Ministry of Education.
- Agendas, implementation of action points and report writing is done by the Marpole LOC.
- The Marpole LOC has a policy of partnering with MLTG members, where appropriate, for programming.
- The Marpole LOC communicates informally with members of the MLTG as needed in addition to communication at meetings.
- For formal communications with and on behalf of the MLTG the Marpole LOC has implemented a Marpole Literacy Blog ([marpoleliteracy.blogspot.com](http://marpoleliteracy.blogspot.com)) and a LOC monthly newsletter which exists to capture all literacy initiatives in Marpole. MLTG members are asked to contribute their information each month. A rack card advertising Marpole Literacy initiatives with the contact details of the LOC has been produced with the support of VanCity.
- The Marpole LOC goes out in the community twice a month to raise awareness and distribute information on literacy. Places visited include Marpole Preschools, Marpole Elementary Schools, and community hubs such as the Characters Bookshop, VPL Marpole Branch, the Scottish Cultural Centre, the Vancouver Coastal Health South Mental Health Team offices, and local coffee shops.
- The Marpole LOC meets regularly with the other Vancouver LOCs, and attends the South Vancouver Service Providers meeting and other local Marpole meetings to keep up with developments and increase visibility of literacy initiatives.
- The Marpole LOC is working on a Literacy Resource Guide for the Marpole Community. A community mapping project was undertaken in 2010 by the Marpole Oakridge Family Place summer students and this is being incorporated.

## Community Context

What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people and the ability of organizations to support literacy development? Consider both positive and negative impacts.

- The Marpole Literacy Task Group (MLTG) appointed a new Literacy Outreach Coordinator in January 2012.
- Implementation has now begun on the community developments pending in Marpole. One is the development on the Safeway site on Granville and West 70<sup>th</sup> where the Safeway is being redeveloped and two residential towers are to be built. This process will take approximately two years.
- The other is the high rise development, entertainment and shopping facilities pending on the Cambie Street corridor adjacent to the Canada Line station on Marine Drive. The aim is to re-energize Marpole as a “Gateway to Vancouver” from the Vancouver International Airport. Marpolians will have access to more amenities, winning back consumers who habitually cross the bridges to shop in Richmond. The developments will add density to Marpole and possibly attract more immigrants and young people to the residential opportunities. Literacy planning and outreach in Marpole will need to change and respond to these new scenarios.
- This year the City of Vancouver’s Planning Department rolled out various community outreach initiatives in Marpole during May and June 2012. Marpolians were asked for input on their priorities for their neighbourhood. The community outreach included a guided walk, a storytelling evening at the Metro Theatre on Marine Drive and several open houses for residents to communicate with the City. Residents were polled for their opinions through long and short form online and paper questionnaires. The City released the new Marpole Community Profile of 2012 with up to date information on the community of Marpole.
- The first Connecting Marpole Day was held in August 2011 – bringing key Marpole hubs such as Marpole Place and Marpole Oakridge Family Place and other service providers together. The focus of this day was to get community members out into the street and talking to each other. This community day is set to become an annual event, taking its place with the Marpole Summerfest run by the Marpole Business community and other neighbourhood community days to put Marpole on the map.

## Community development and literacy collaboration

What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group?

- The Marpole LOC has partnered with the librarians of VPL Marpole Branch to deliver two parent skills workshops – the first concerning teaching parents how to read effectively with toddlers and babies, and the second a discussion group on how to support reading in children aged 6 years to 13 years. The librarians also used the workshops to promote the VPL Summer Reading program.

- The Raise-A-Reader funds have been implemented in support of early year's literacy programs in the Marpole Oakridge Family Place and environs. These programs include the popular Dad and Me program for fathers and children (breakfast and literacy circle time), the Outreach Mother Goose program at the Food Bank, parenting programs with meals on weeknights and weekends so working parents can attend, multicultural family literacy circles specific to the cultures of Marpole (Korean, Chinese, Japanese and English), literacy celebration events, food literacy programming and – coming up in the Fall – several workshops to introduce parents and young children to the use of electronic books - with the aim of fostering reading while embracing the skills needed for this inevitable technological advancement.
- Marpole Literacy supports and advertises all family literacy programming at Marpole Oakridge Family Place. This includes Mother Goose sessions in English and Chinese, music literacy circles, health literacy through a Parent and Baby Salsa group, gym sessions for children and speakers on health topics, phonetics circle times, circle times in various languages, story times with the VPL librarian, cultural celebrations such as Mothers' Day, Fathers' Day, Chinese New Year, Indian cultural celebrations, St. Patrick's Day and Canadian Multicultural Day and parent skills workshops on many topics.
- The Marpole LOC, believing that collaboration with the Musqueam Band on Salish Drive makes sense even though the Band is not specifically inside Marpole boundaries, has reached out to meet and open dialogue with staff at the Musqueam Band. Marpole is home to much treasured history of the Musqueam and to the Marpole Midden. Between January and June, three meetings were held – with the Band Grant Writer and with members of the Education Committee – to discuss the possibility of creating a reading room for the Musqueam community at the new Community Centre on Salish Drive. The Marpole LOC has offered to support this and any other initiatives the Musqueam want to take forward, and in her capacity as a librarian, has written a proposal about these options, which proposal has been handed over to the Musqueam staff. The LOC has also identified an opportunity for Vancouver Community College to open dialogue on the possibility of an adult literacy outreach centre on the Musqueam premises. Results from all of these discussions are still pending – with the Musqueam Band focusing full attention at present on the protest against the disturbance of sacred Musqueam burial sites by developers in the Marpole area.
- The Marpole LOC has collaborated with Mona Nair of the Marpole Branch of VanCity, producing a rack card advertising free financial workshops for Marpole residents and planning for financial workshops for children to be implemented from September 2012. This has been advertised through a mailshot to parents of David Lloyd George School through the PAC.
- The Marpole LOC supports and advertises VCC adult education classes, S.U.C.C.E.S.S ESL and cultural integration classes and PIRS ESL classes in Marpole as well as the ELSA classes presently held in the Marpole area.
- The Marpole LOC has supported the Food Skills for Grandparents course (Mondays for the duration of 2012) by providing support materials, advertising the program extensively and opening discussion on building a relationship between the program participants and the community garden of Marpole Place.

- Family Literacy Day was celebrated on January 27, 2012, in collaboration with Marpole Oakridge Family Place and VanCity. It was attended by VPL representatives and families with children. The LOC made use of the ABC Literacy Family Literacy Day Passport to Learning materials for the event.
- Marpole Oakridge Family Place and the Marpole LOC provided a table at the Marpole Oakridge Community Centre Spring Fest Day June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2012 to promote literacy and Family Place services to the community.
- Regular information sharing through the South Vancouver Service Providers meeting once a month enables the Marpole LOC to bring a wide range of literacy information back to Marpole and to share Marpole news with South Vancouver literacy and community workers.
- The Marpole LOC supports the health literacy work of the Vancouver Coastal Health Mom and Baby groups in English and Mandarin that take place at Marpole Oakridge Family Place. The annual Toddler Round Up event is also supported.
- The Marpole LOC supports the YMCA Single Mothers' Group, and will shortly begin advertising talks and workshops to the group via the Facilitator.
- The Marpole LOC also works as a co-facilitator for the Mother Goose program at the Food Bank at St. Augustine's Church. This increases the visibility of the LOC in the community and provides a bridge for literacy information to be shared. Community members have an opportunity to ask questions directly. Enquiries are on the increase and concern all types of issues affecting the community.
- In Marpole, according to the last population census in 2006, 57% of the population was born outside of Canada. Of those born abroad, 65% are from Asia (China, Hong Kong, Philippines, Taiwan, or South Korea). In Vancouver, 45% of the population was born outside of Canada. In Marpole, 13% of the population is recent immigrants (immigrated to Canada less than 5 years ago), compared to 7.5% citywide. The Marpole LOC is aware from interactions with the community that there are many residents who struggle with English and lack access to materials in their own language. The available ESL classes are not always the answer as residents may be caring for children and not able to attend. This issue remains to be solved. Another approach taken is to provide key information to these immigrants in their own language. The VPL librarians have supplied leaflets in several languages and the Marpole LOC has ordered Newcomer Guides from Welcome BC in certain specific languages for community members. Guides in Spanish and Arabic have been especially well received.

What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

Every effort will be made for all of the collaborations described above to be ongoing. Collaborations going forward will be discussed further on in this report. Marpole Literacy workers believe it is important to work to sustain programs and create a sense of permanence and stability so that families can continue to be supported and new families can come in to strong and historically sound programming. This supports the belief that families feel more secure and connected if they can rely on programming. Ongoing programming builds relationships between families in the community. This would be an appropriate place to share the story of an Indian family who arrived in Canada four years ago. The family was isolated until the mother found out about Marpole Oakridge Family Place and brought her son in. She

then began to take part in regular programming and has since become a volunteer and a Parent Connector – reaching out to orientate other new parents. She recently related that the Family Place is her home from home and that all of the friends and infrastructure she has established in her new country has been found through the Marpole Oakridge Family Place. This parent vigorously promotes the literacy programming of the Family Place and has become a key player in the community.

What makes collaborations work well?

Partnerships between Task Group members in promoting literacy and providing programming work well in Marpole due to shared goals and identified outcomes. Partnering lends strength to a program in terms of resources and credibility and the literacy customer receives double value. Sharing literacy resources and marketing makes good economic sense and community networking is also strengthened and streamlined.

Collaborations also build strong working relationships between partners which strengthens the literacy framework for the community. Literacy programming can be overwhelming to community members as there is so much available and it helps if those offering literacy programming can “speak with one voice” Collaboration also helps to make literacy activities cohesive for participants – for example, participants in a Food Skills course can be directed to library resources such as recipe books and also to the community garden. Space sharing is also crucial in Marpole where space is at a premium.

### **Goals and actions for the current year**

What priorities, goals and objectives have you addressed this year? And b) what actions were taken to address these, and who participated?

1. Goal: Create a Literacy Round Table to explore opportunities to work together on improving communication with all low literacy community members.

This action point has been met and continues through the work and renewed energy of the Marpole Literacy Task Group and the Marpole LOC.

2. Goal: Develop a closer connection with the community’s multi-faith groups.

Reaching all of the multi-faith groups of Marpole still has to be accomplished but relationships already exist with the Cornerstone Church and with the St. Augustine’s Anglican Church where the Marpole LOC and a VPL librarian conduct Mother Goose sessions at the Food Bank. These relationships have been built over the years by the Marpole Oakridge Family Place Executive Director and staff.

3. Create an inventory of communication tools including print, online and networking.

Part of this action point has been accomplished through the creation of the Marpole Literacy Blog, the LOC monthly newsletter listing literacy programming in Marpole, and the LOC brochure/rack card profiling opportunities for learning financial and life skills literacy in Marpole.

4. Goal: Develop an action plan on how to improve communication tools targeted at ESL families.

More work is needed on this action point to see what would be best practice for reaching ESL families. While answers are sought for this, the Marpole LOC is concentrating on plain language posters placed in strategic points in the area to advertise programs and events and on word of mouth through community and Family Place members.

5. Goal: Disseminate communications action plan to service providers in the community.

Greater networking and communication is taking place to reach community service providers through the communications tools already developed and through meetings and networking and informal contact.

6. Goal: Identify potential funding opportunities.

This action point has not been sufficiently addressed but the Executive Director of Marpole Oakridge Family Place constantly seeks funding opportunities and Task Group members bring funding opportunities to the attention of the group when they are available.

7. Goal: Provide grant and proposal writing assistance to service providers that lack ability and capacity.

The Marpole Literacy Task Group and Marpole Oakridge Family Place do not currently have the capacity to provide this service. A future possibility is the sourcing of a volunteer grant writer or student of grant writing.

8. Goal: Enhance communication between service providers to decrease program redundancy and overlap.

This action point is moving forward daily with the use of the communication tools in place, word of mouth and continued relationship building and collaborations.

9. Goal: Develop an inventory of accessible spaces and add such inventory to service provider's websites.

This action point has not yet been addressed. Marpole will learn from the space inventory program being run by the South Vancouver Family Place.

10. Goal: Identify ways of engaging isolated community members.

The main way identified thus far is to reach people in the community by word of mouth and on the street. Another way is to ask current Marpole Oakridge Family Place members to act as community outreach and the eyes and ears of the LOC for people whose languages they can speak. Work on this continues in the context of community building.

11: Goal: Create partnership based events and activities.

This model is being followed - as per the various partnership based events described previously in this report which involved partnerships between the Marpole LOC and components of the Marpole Literacy Task Group.

What adjustments were made to the plan – were there new opportunities or changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?

No formal adjustments have been made to the Marpole Community Literacy Plan since its inception but some of the goals and objectives have not yet been completed due to turnover in the LOC position and a period in which there was no LOC in the position. The new LOC has been in position since January 2012 and has focused on learning the job, networking and relationship building and ensuring the continuation of literacy programming and outreach. The remaining action points are on the agenda and the Marpole LOC will continue to work towards achieving these in the months to come.

### **Indications of success**

How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact have literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impact

- The Family Literacy Day celebration of January 27, 2012 drew in over 80 people made up of families, children, new immigrants, local community members and representatives from VanCity, VPL and other community nodes. Good conversations took place around literacy and people showed great interest in the ABC literacy materials used.
- The two workshops provided by the Marpole LOC in collaboration with the VPL librarians from Marpole Branch were well attended. Reading with Babies and Toddlers drew 17 parents and 20 accompanying children attended a child-minding entertainment program. 15 parents attended the workshop for parents on how to encourage reading with 6-13 year olds while 12 children attended a child minding program run by the VPL librarian. Both workshops included lively participation by parents and good camaraderie. Parents were provided with materials to take home.
- An average of 25 children and 18 parents/caregivers/grandparents attend the daily drop in at Marpole Oakridge Family Place for literacy programming and circles. We are seeing more and more regulars as well as newcomers and relationships are building between participants.
- The popular Saturday Dad and I program draws in an average of 24 participants each Saturday morning and relationship building and camaraderie has been observed among the fathers that attend.

- The Mother Goose program at the Food Bank draws in between 50 and 70 participants to each session. Information on literacy and community programming is shared with participants each week and some participants have been observed attending advertised events.
- The Food Literacy Course Food Skills for Grandparents draws in an average of 66 participants per each six week course and shows positive relationship building between participants and between parents / grandparents and children as they learn together.
- A measure of the success of a formal literacy presence in the Marpole area is the increase in enquiries from the community being directed to the Marpole LOC. There is clearly a need for an information hub in the neighbourhood for informational and directional enquiries. The role of the LOC seems to be becoming more visible in the community. Recently a young mother was referred to the LOC at the Food Bank Program for information. She needed help to find a preschool that would take her special needs child. The LOC provided listings of preschools in Marpole that could help and discussed issues with the mother. The mother has now found the support she needed through UBC and through a preschool. Recently an immigrant grandmother came to ask for help with a personal issue and a senior came by asking to be referred to a department that could help him with income assistance.
- Frequent word of mouth feedback from our customers indicates that programming has a positive effect on their lives.

What are the things that support literacy work?

- A strong Literacy Task Group underpins strong literacy work and the enthusiasm, support and encouragement of the Marpole Literacy Task Group is greatly valued and appreciated by the Marpole LOC.
- Regular funding received supports literacy work as it means that programming can be sustainable.
- The professional support from Decoda Literacy Solutions (discussion forums and professional development opportunities and information) as well as free access to the excellent Decoda Library resources greatly supports the LOC which benefits literacy work directly.
- Professional development and training for LOCS is of great support. The visioning day held at the VSB on June 5, 2012 with facilitator Gavin Perry in attendance was invaluable for clarifying the role of the LOC and literacy work in the city of Vancouver – and for building the team of Vancouver LOCs.
- Resource sites such as ABC Literacy and other literacy sites.
- Regular attendance at community meetings such as the South Vancouver Service Providers meeting and other community forums keeps LOCs connected and keeps literacy initiatives front and centre.
- The Vancouver LOCS meet every two months and this is a valuable forum for sharing information and addressing common challenges.

## Challenges

What are the difficulties?

- The specific role of the LOC needs clarifying as LOCs work very widely and communities differ. The Vancouver LOCS have identified that a job description is needed to help LOCS to explain their role in a more professional and succinct way to people they want to work with.
- Space in Marpole specifically is always a challenge. Confidential meetings cannot be held due to a lack of confidential space and it is a scramble to book the limited space available for workshops or events. The Marpole Oakridge Family Place is very short of space.
- The Marpole LOC is relatively new so some relationship building in Marpole had to be re-started and new trust built up.
- A need exists to develop a sharp and clear way of defining exactly what the word “Literacy” means. The Marpole LOC has attempted a definition “Literacy means having the skills to manage your life” as have other LOCs but more discussion is needed in the context of the literacy work being done in Vancouver.
- Job action at schools made it tough to reach out to teachers with initiatives and even Parent Action Committees were stretched this year. This prevented some of the literacy plans for school aged children in Marpole from being taken forward in this time.
- The Marpole LOC works 12 hours a week and this is sometimes inadequate for the amount of work that needs to be done.

What would help?

- Access to space for programming.
- Continued funding and support
- Continued training and support for LOCS as well as job descriptions and protocols.
- Publicizing the LOC role to all levels of government and civil society and making sure that LOCS are well represented – which in turn ensures strong representation of the communities they serve.

### **For the coming year**

Are there new opportunities, challenges or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?

Marpole will grow increasingly more dense and busy due to the changes in the infrastructure of the area. More language diversity, more immigrants moving in to the area and more low income families can be expected. Greater focus will be needed on life skills for all ages and more attention must be paid to supporting school age children as school age programming is not as embedded and established as early years programming.

What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year and what actions are planned against these goals.

- The Marpole LOC has invited the Kelty Mental Health Centre to present their newly created multicultural video at Marpole Oakridge Family Place – at an event to be extended to wider South Vancouver. The video is currently being finished and translated so this is expected to happen in October or November.
- Marpole Literacy work will be part of Connecting Marpole day on August 18, 2012
- Marpole Literacy work will be part of Sunset Multicultural Day on June 27, 2012
- The Marpole LOC will participate in the Musqueam Aboriginal day on June 21, 2012 and will advertise this day in Marpole.
- Marpole Literacy work will be part of the Marpole Summerfest on July 18, 2012
- Financial workshops for children will be available the first Saturday of each month at Marpole Oakridge Family Place from September 2012 onwards.
- A free workshop for seniors on Investment and Retirement – delivered by VanCity, is due to be held in collaboration with Marpole Oakridge Neighbourhood House on June 29, 2012.
- Three workshops for parents and children on reading E-Books are coming up in the fall, presented by VPL Marpole and supported by the Marpole LOC and Marpole Oakridge Family Place.
- Efforts will continue to develop a strong enquiry service generated by the LOC and the Marpole Literacy Task Group to serve community members with answers to informational and directional enquiries.
- The Marpole LOC will try to get support and permission for erecting a local literacy information notice board near the new Safeway dedicated to advertising literacy opportunities in Marpole.
- The Marpole LOC would like to create a regular monthly community night with a community meal on the subject of “what can you teach?” for Marpole residents to connect with each other and provide each other with new skills of any nature – this to facilitate community and friendship building and offer much needed skills support.
- The Marpole LOC will attempt to re-energize the original idea launched in February of having a spelling bee program run by six Marpole schools and culminating in a community celebration spelling bee competition. This initiative was temporarily shelved due to the stresses and lack of capacity caused by the job action this year.
- A story telling intergenerational art project collaboration between the Marpole LOC / Marpole Oakridge Family Place, Marpole Oakridge Neighbourhood House and Emily Carr is planned.
- In addition to taking action on the above points, the Marpole LOC will work to address the goals and objectives of the Marpole Community Literacy Plan which have not yet been addressed.

## **Reflections on the current year**

### **Community Context**

What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development?

The community of Mount Pleasant is in transition, with increasing gaps in the social and economic abilities of long term residents and newcomer immigrant populations on one hand, and a rapid process of gentrification on the other hand. In large parts of the community, housing prices and rents are increasing together with private housing development; and therefore, affordable housing for low income families is becoming scarce. While the average income in the neighbourhood increased (according to Census 2006 data), areas in Mount Pleasant such as the north east and south east areas bordering the communities of Grandview Woodlands and Kensington-Cedar Cottage continue to have large numbers of low income families.

Furthermore, we have also seen an increasing numbers of homeless (and near-homeless) individuals in the community, high numbers of single parents and young families, high numbers of immigrants with second languages other than English, aging population and large percentages of urban Aboriginal populations in the City of Vancouver. In our planning process we identified an emerging need for services for immigrant and Aboriginal populations, and some new partnerships have emerged to address these issues.

### **Literacy Task Group**

Who takes part in the task group?

- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
- Vancouver Public Library – Mount Pleasant Branch
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver School Board – Sir Charles Tupper Community School Coordinator
- Frontier College
- Mount Pleasant Family Centre
- UBC Learning Exchange
- Coast Mental Health
- Little Mountain Neighbourhood House
- Pacific Immigrant Resource Society

As one of the first neighbourhoods to implement literacy planning, Mount Pleasant only receives a limited amount to sustain the LOC, and in this year the task groups were focused only on the discussions related to Raise-a-Reader funding. It was through this decision making process that the task group was expanded to Riley Park and Little Mountain Neighbourhood House joined.

How is the work of this group organized? See Section V and VI for information about how task groups are organized.

As indicated above, in this reporting year we received very limited funding and our focus was to maintain the work that had been started the previous year, as directed by the task group. This related to sustaining and building on a volunteer-based computer training program for adults in Mount Pleasant. The group was mobilized to make decisions about the Raise-a-Reader funding, and currently has directed the LOC to conduct asset mapping / literacy inventories to include Riley Park.

Additionally, members of the task group, or their representative staff, who will be responsible for the Raise-a-Reader projects, attended a meeting at Decoda Literacy Solutions on family literacy. This meeting helped staff and partners to learn more about family literacy and the reporting needs for this funding source.

### **Community Development and Literacy Collaboration**

What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group?

- UBC Learning Exchange and Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House continue to partner to offer training to computer users who have no teaching experience to develop tutoring skills to deliver basic computer literacy classes to people new to computers. We were able to develop and deliver three programs of 6 weeks (1 hour/week) training sessions for our local members that ran October to December 2011, February to March 2012, and again from April to May 2012. Our trained volunteers were able to deliver the basic computer training to our community members, mainly seniors and immigrant families.
- MPNH provided community kitchens through a literacy and food literacy lens for Aboriginal (in partnership with Vancouver Native Health Society) and Spanish-speaking families. MPNH successfully partnered with the Unitarian Church to further enhance the community kitchens and food security programs which run last Fall.

Furthermore, there were some key partnerships and programming initiatives that emerged with the Raise-a-Readers funding:

- Mount Pleasant Family Centre's Circles of Care and Connections program, in partnership with Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House, will collaborate in a family literacy project to support the Jarai / Montagnard refugee families. The Jarai are an indigenous group from Vietnam, and are a pre-literate / aural / oral culture. Currently the group meets monthly at MPNH as a family group for orientation, discussion and community development activities; however, the partners are exploring to enhance programming for the group. Ideas for the program include adding a community kitchen;

however, one of the challenges is the need to develop bridging tools to make adaptability from an oral culture to a writing culture. Thus, the need to develop visual aid material was clearly stated and identified.

- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House offers an Aboriginal Family program in partnership with Vancouver Native Health Society (through the Aboriginal Child and Family Support Services). This program has families with children eating together, learning together and having a space to share cultural stories, crafts making, keeping history together and intergenerational activities as identified by families. The program received Raise-a-Readers funds to implement a successful community kitchen program last year. However, limited funding strains the project on many counts, but specifically in our ability to sustain the project throughout the summer when, due to funding constraints, almost all of the family resource programs in the neighbourhood are shut down for the summer or are greatly reduced. The suggestion is to enhance the project by sustaining programming throughout the summer months in July and August.
- Mount Pleasant Family Centre identified a gap in programming for families with babies, and this is consistent with gaps analysis conducted by the Network 5 ECD Network in the past two years. Mount Pleasant Family Centre with the aid of Raise-a-Readers fund will be able to offer a Baby and Me program which allows for family time for parents and babies to develop emotional literacy, social literacy and parenting skills. The program has a lending library for children and adults, and ABC time part of the school readiness component.

What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

Each of the above mentioned collaborations are ongoing. However, the main focus of the LOC's work this year was to focus on computer literacy programs for adults and seniors. We had identified that a large segment of this population does not have basic computer skills and there are few opportunities to access free or low cost programs related to computer training. Furthermore, the work focused in making a collaborative decision about the allocation of the family literacy funds received from Raise-a-Reader and the expansion of the geographical area of Mount Pleasant to include Little Mountain/Riley Park area.

What makes collaborations work well?

The traits of successful collaboration have been vividly portrayed in the work of the Task Group when deciding over how to best make use of the Raise-a-Reader funds. The Task Group during one of the sessions this year began a preliminary process of gathering information on the family literacy programs in our area. This resulted in organizations talking about sharing resources and expertise in order to make the most of the limited funding and still deliver programs to cover gaps in services due to recent funding cuts or changing in demography of the area.

The process of having all task group participants sharing about the existing resources, skills and expertise of these organizations allowed for the greater collaboration and effective disbursement of limited funding sources.

## **Goals and actions for the current year**

What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?

Supported by the vision and guiding principles, three goals were identified and prioritized based on progressive community development.

1. Improve awareness of community literacy among citizens and service providers in an effort to improve access to services.
2. Establish mechanisms to improve collaboration and communication among service providers that leads to enhanced services and improved access to community literacy for citizens.
3. Support the sustainability of current and new programs through partnerships.

What actions were taken to reach these? What organizations and groups participated in these actions?

## **Actions**

- Began to develop and expand a network for collaboration –such as the updating and expanding the Literacy map completed in 2008 to reflect 2012 programming and geographical area expansion.
- Created and supported new partnerships to meet the needs in the community –such is in the implementation of the Raise-a-Reader activities.
- Supported existing programs by continuing to seek opportunities for funding.
- Conducted outreach to marginalized communities through literacy programming.
- Continue to grow the current partnership with UBC Learning Exchange and recruited / trained volunteer trainers.
- Hosted Basic Computer Literacy classes for our community members.
- Hosted information sessions for Midtown Service Providers on Community Literacy.

## **Community organizations and groups**

- UBC Learning Exchange
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
- Vancouver Public Library
- Vancouver Community College
- Frontier College
- Vancouver School Board
- Mount Pleasant Family Centre

- Vancouver Coastal Health
- Pacific Immigrant Resource Society
- Vancouver Native Health
- Little Mountain Neighbourhood House

What adjustments were made to the plan? That is, as the year progressed were there new opportunities or were there changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?

The plan's main adjustments have to do with an expansion of the geographical area and the renewed role of the Task Group in the allocation of the Raise-a-Readers funds in a collaborative way. The decision to expand the network to include Riley Park has shaped some goals for next year's funding, including updating the literacy resource list to include Riley Park, and identifying new goals that will be inclusive of new partners.

### **Indications of Success**

How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact has the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impact.

- Despite the reduction in funding due to the completion of the implementation stage of the Plan from 2008, MPNH was able to carry through with the partnership with UBC Learning exchange and offered three computer literacy programs for 40 participants. Furthermore, despite the awkward role of having the Task Group members deciding over how to allocate Raise-a-Readers funds for family literacy, the process went well and everyone experience it as a collaborative opportunity for the Group to address community needs.

What are the things that support literacy work?

- Ongoing communication and collaboration between local organizations (from non-profit, to for profit to government agencies and institutions) and community member's willingness to explore other forms of learning and affluence.
- There is a strong culture of collaboration among service providers in our community.
- Ability and willingness of organizations to provide resources (either through staff hours or space allocation) to make it possible to implement activities and programs.
- Funder's (Decoda Literacy Solutions) knowledge about community development and their flexibility by placing less restriction in how to apply funds for the delivery and types of activities.

### **Challenges**

What are the difficulties?

- Despite avid networking and follow-up, the LOC limited hours limits the feasibility of regular meetings with the Task Group or ability to do more hands on work in supporting field activities.
- Community partners are stretched and it is difficult for them to attend meetings, particularly for smaller organizations, so participation in the task group meetings was inconsistent.
- The process of decision making about the Raise-a-Reader funding put some stress on the Task Group about the role of allocating funds. Much clarification was required on behalf of Decoda until everyone felt ready to participate in the decision making process.

What would help?

- Stable funding.

### **For the coming year**

1. Are there new opportunities, challenges, or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?
  - a. Opportunity: Expanding the network may result in other partnerships that can strengthen literacy activities in our neighbourhoods.
  - b. Challenge: The erosion of funding for literacy implementation (LOC) has an impact on our involvement in community literacy.
  - c. Challenge: The shifting environment regarding the transference of funding from non-profits to public institutions, such as the VPL for Strong Start programs, erodes the capacity of community agencies.
2. What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?
  - With the limited funding, we anticipate that MPNH's community developer will only be able to focus on sustaining the partnership with UBC learning exchange and organizing volunteer lead computer literacy classes for adults, follow up with the reporting requirements for the Raise-a-Reader funds, and the completion of the Literacy program mapping of Mount Pleasant area (inclusive of Little Mountain/ Riley Park area).
3. What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?
  - a. Maintenance of partnerships to delivered the family literacy programming and the continual partnership with UBC Learning Exchange; ability to recruit volunteers; identification of facilities; advertising of program, and reporting requirements.

## Reflections on the current year

### Literacy Task group

Who takes part in the task group?

- Heather Brown, Collingwood Community Policing Centre
- Zeena Chopra, Office Assistant, CNH
- Melissa Chungfat, Renfrew-Collingwood Literacy Outreach Coordinator (since May 2012)
- Gavin Clark, Community Schools Coordinator, Windermere Family of Schools
- Angela Evans, BIA Coordinator, Collingwood BIA (Business Improvement Area)
- Jennifer Gray-Grant, Executive Director, CNH
- Kulwant Kaur, Director of Operations, CNH
- Anita Kwan\*, Community Services Coordinator, Learning Disabilities Association Vancouver
- Christine Macer\*, Community Schools Coordinator, Windermere Family of Schools
- William McMichael, Former President, CNH, and Language Education Coordinator, UBC
- Wenhuan Ren, Renfrew-Collingwood Literacy Outreach Coordinator (till June 2012)
- Linda Tang\*, Chinese Settlement Worker, CNH
- Vincent Vezina, Library Technician, Vancouver Public Library Collingwood Branch
- Catherine Wong, Local Senior, and Cultural Connector, CNH

The order is arranged according to the alphabetical order of people's last names. People with a \* mark on their names were part of the task group but stopped to be involved because their positions ended or some other personal reasons.

How is the work of this group organized? (See the following section "Reflecting and Renewing: Ways to review and set priorities for the community literacy plan each year" for information about how task groups are organized.)

- Service providers and active members in the community were recruited onto the committee. The task group meets every other month to set priorities for the literacy plan, keep track of the current projects, and share highlights from their work. Several new members were recruited this year, so we could have new ideas on improving literacy work in the neighbourhood and gain more support from various service providers in the community.

### Community context

What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development? Consider both positive and negative impacts.

- Some successful initiatives we started last year have been very well maintained and participated. The Collingwood Towers project, a weekly English conversation class for low-income seniors living at local residential building the Collingwood Towers, has been running since September 2010. Seniors from a range of linguistic backgrounds enjoyed informal English classes and conversations. Other activities, such as pool, ping pong and Chinese mahjong, were incorporated into this literacy project. The participants also enjoyed tours to the local library branch and the neighbourhood house. They have become more willing to engage in community events outside their building. Many seniors also bring homemade desserts and food to the group to share with their neighbours.
- The ESL Read On! Page in the *Renfrew-Collingwood Community News* was renewed for another year. Every month, 5,000 copies of the *Renfrew-Collingwood Community News* are printed and distributed to local residents. Each monthly issue has an ESL Read On! page with teacher resources and a podcast for learners on the website. The ESL Read On! Page is a very good resource for local ESL teachers, students and new immigrants.
- Renfrew-Collingwood successfully received \$10,000 in Raise-a-Reader funds from the *Vancouver Sun* through Decoda Literacy Solutions. The money will be used in family literacy programs at CNH. The participants in the family programs (parents and children attend together) Families Branching Out and Family Place will benefit from increased family literacy initiatives. With the funds we can enhance the literacy component in these existing programs.
- Community Action for Seniors' Independence (CASI), a pilot project aiming to help seniors live in their homes longer in Renfrew-Collingwood, has been running since fall 2010. CASI provides local seniors with services from a community shuttle for seniors, and a light housekeeping service to a seniors walking club and a written guide to seniors' services in Renfrew-Collingwood. Seniors from the Collingwood Towers used the CASI shuttle to go on tours to the Collingwood library branch and CNH.
- Renfrew-Collingwood was one of the first communities to complete a literacy plan. We finished the last year of implementation in 2011. With no further implementation funds and very little money for coordination, we find it challenging to keep all our initiatives sustainable. Luckily, more money for coordination and more funding opportunities were made possible, and with these funds we have been able to sustain our current projects, and also to support some new initiatives in the following year.

### **Community development and literacy collaboration**

What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group?

- Collaborating with our task group members and the organizations they represent, such as the school board, the library and CNH, we are able to bring out more ideas and discussions on how to support literacy in Renfrew-Collingwood. In-kind resources brought by them made it possible for us to maintain existing initiatives even with very limited funding.
- Financial support from Decoda Literacy Solutions, and free space provided by Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Evergreen Community Health Centre, and the Collingwood Towers helped us maintain the ongoing literacy programs.
- Cultural Connectors and the CASI program at CNH helped us reach out to more local seniors. Cultural Connectors are local residents from different cultural backgrounds who were recruited by CNH as volunteers to reach out to isolated individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds to tell them about and welcome them to programs and events in the community. Without the help of the Cultural Connectors, the ESL class at the Collingwood Towers would not be so successful.

What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

- We highly value the support brought by our literacy task group members and the collaboration established among those organizations they represent. The task group members give us different lenses to look at literacy in our community, and bring more ideas to the table. New members from the Collingwood BIA and the local policing centre joined our task group this year. With more service providers gathered together, more collaborations will be built around literacy.
- Our collaborations with Cultural Connectors, CASI and other projects at CNH are also essential ongoing collaborations. Those collaborations help to build and expand the capacity of local residents and seniors and make use of local resources and network. They are the key to building accessible, sufficient and sustainable lifelong literacy programs for Renfrew-Collingwood residents.

What makes collaborations work well?

- In Renfrew-Collingwood, we believe that literacy is more than mere reading and writing, more than the ability to calculate numbers or read charts and graphs. Literacy empowers people with the ability to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, with the opportunity to pursue personal dreams and build confidence, and most of all with the ability to access to social interactions. Our vision of literacy as a community building tool guides our steps and makes our collaborations more effective.
- Our literacy programs depend highly on the support of local residents and resources; in the long-run they also contribute back to local projects and events. The residents'

capacity building and service network expansion both benefit and are benefited from our literacy programs. Take the Collingwood Tower Project for example: the CASI program gave us the opportunity to reach out to isolated, non-English speaking seniors, the Cultural Connectors Project gives us the volunteers and ongoing support, and Collingwood Tower provides the space for activities. As the program goes on, over 30 seniors who live in the apartment have attended our literacy activities, and many of them also became active participants in other community programs, such as the walking club organized by CASI. One of the seniors from the Collingwood Tower was also recruited as a member of CNH's Seniors Advisory Group and is a Board Director nominee for the CNH Board of Directors (election is at CNH's AGM June 27).

## **Goals and actions for the current year**

What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?

### Priority 1: Connect Residents and Service Providers

- Encourage the active participation among local service providers in the task group.
- Ensure service providers and residents within Renfrew-Collingwood know about and have access to community mapping information.
- Link service providers to resident gifts and skills.

### Priority 2: Expand Capacity

- Work together to maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of existing resources and reduce duplications of resources and service.
- Develop an accessible, comprehensive and sustainable set of program options.
- Foster resident leadership and the collaborative development of local initiatives for sustainable lifelong learning.

### Priority 3: Maintain Existing Programs

- Address expressed needs for literacy, numeracy and social skills for Canadian-born adults and new immigrants with the initial focus on seniors, adults and immigrants.
- Sustain programs through concrete resources and in-kind support from public, private and community organizations.

What actions were taken to reach these? What organizations and groups participated in these actions?

### Priority 1: Connect Residents and Service Providers

- Maintained the existing Renfrew-Collingwood Community Services Database and the Renfrew-Collingwood Community Maps website (<http://www.cnh.bc.ca/communitymap/>).
- New members from the Collingwood BIA and community policing centre were recruited onto the literacy task group.

- Many local residents who participated in literacy programs are linked to programs and events offered by other service providers. One participant in the Collingwood Tower has become an Advisory Group member in the discussion around seniors at CNH.

#### Priority 2: Expand Capacity

- Literacy programs for seniors like the Collingwood Tower Project aim to give seniors accessible and convenient literacy activities.
- Tours to the library and the neighbourhood house were successfully organized and well attended by local residents. These tours introduced local facility and services to the participants.
- Last year, we created two self-guided walks in Renfrew-Collingwood. A heritage walk introducing local history and architecture around Collingwood, and an art walk showcasing art pieces created around the Renfrew Park area. The community walk website attracts over 100 hits every month, and attracts more people to explore the history and beauty of Renfrew-Collingwood.
- Cultural Connectors from CNH support the sustainability of many literacy programs and they are all local residents who become leaders and facilitators in community work.

#### Priority 3: Maintain Existing Programs

- With the support from many task group members a new ESL teacher was hired to continue to publish articles and compile resources for the ESL Read On! Page in the *Renfrew-Collingwood Community News*, The ESL Read On! Page has been successfully running for over two years now.
- With help from the Cultural Connectors, the Collingwood Tower Project provides local seniors with more accessible and friendly English learning opportunities. Started in September 2010, the Collingwood Tower Project has been well maintained and attended for almost two years.
- Renfrew-Collingwood Community Maps website (<http://www.cnh.bc.ca/communitymap/>) and the Renfrew-Collingwood Community Walks website (<http://sites.google.com/site/rccommunitywalks/>) were both well maintained and accessible to the public. Articles in both English and Chinese were published in the *Renfrew-Collingwood Community News* to introduce those websites to residents.

What adjustments were made to the plan? That is, as the year progressed were there new opportunities or were there changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?

- We were successful in keeping track and making progress in all the priorities we set for this year. Priorities from the previous years, such as to know our neighbourhood, and to connect residents, were also well addressed in our literacy work, because those priorities are interrelated to each other around literacy building.
- In late 2011, the Raise-a-Reader funding opportunity was introduced by Decoda Literacy Solutions. While applying for the funds, we had more discussions around family literacy.

## Indications of success

How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact have the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impact.

- Improved interpersonal communication and intercultural understanding has resulted in increased participation in literacy programs. Local residents from different cultural, language, and economic backgrounds participate in our literacy projects. For example, seniors, who participate in our Collingwood Tower English conversation sessions, are from Russia, Hungary, Romania, Kazakhstan, China, the Philippines, and Canada. They come to the weekly conversation group not only to learn English, but also to share their own culture, values, and traditions. After several sessions on food and cooking, the seniors had a potluck together. They brought home-made dishes, and also shared their recipes. Many other activities like the potluck, festival celebrations and board games are incorporated into our literacy projects to enhance English language skills. English learning provides local residents with ways to express themselves, to share their beliefs, and to build social connections.
- Improved confidence of local residents in daily communication and capacity sharing. Knowing more English gives people confidence to participate in community activities, e.g. at our Christmas Party, Chinese New Year Party, and local Collingwood Days celebration we are seeing higher numbers of participants from multicultural and multi-lingual backgrounds. Some seniors who participate in our literacy programs have become volunteers in other programs at the neighbourhood house. The ESL Read On! page in the *Renfrew-Collingwood Community News* also gives local residents space to share their own stories and read about things happening in the community in simple English language.
- We have seen improved connections built between residents and service providers. Participants of literacy programs are introduced to services available to them. Coordinators at Collingwood Neighbourhood House, the Vancouver Public Library, and the Community Action for Seniors' Independence (CASI) project have come to share highlights of their services with participants in our literacy programs. Tours to the library and the neighbourhood house were also successfully organized and well attended by our participants.
- Different dimensions of literacy were appreciated and celebrated in the community. In our programs, we want to address as many aspects of literacy as possible. That is why our programs range from English classes, the ESL Read On! page, to community resource maps and community heritage walks. The acquisition of English proficiency is never treated as the ultimate goal in our programs. We want to incorporate English learning into our community building process. We value the improved capacity and confidence of our participants more.

What are the things that support literacy work?

#### Local Residents

- Cultural Connectors, active local residents in the community from a variety of cultural backgrounds, are the main contributors and facilitators for many of our literacy projects.
- Local residents who agreed to sit in our task group made great contributions to our discussion about the literacy needs in Renfrew-Collingwood.
- Local residents who participated in and benefited from our programs offered impulse and reward to our literacy work.

#### Local Resources

- Representatives of local service providers who sit in our task group provided guidance for literacy work.
- Local service providers like Collingwood Neighbourhood House, Evergreen Community Health Centre, and the Collingwood Tower provided in-kind facilities for literacy projects.

#### Financial and Intellectual Support from Decoda Literacy Solutions and the Vancouver School Board

- The money we received for literacy coordination and the Raise-a-Reader funds will be used in building and supporting literacy-related projects.
- The literacy-related materials we received from Decoda, and the books we borrowed from Decoda Literacy Library, are very helpful in our work.
- Training sessions and meetings organized by Decoda Literacy Solutions and the Vancouver School Board give us valuable opportunities to share highlights of our work, hear from stories from other communities, and reflect on literacy and community building.

### Challenges

What are the difficulties?

- Our community was one of the first communities that started the visioning and planning for literacy. We finished the last year of implementation in 2011. With no further implementation funds and little money for coordination received, we found it challenging to keep all our initiatives sustainable. Luckily, more money for coordination and more funding opportunities were made possible by Decoda, and with the funds, we have been able to sustain our current projects and also to support some new initiatives.
- We still find it challenging to measure and evaluate some of our current projects. Every month, 5000 copies of *Renfrew-Collingwood Community News* with an ESL Read On! page in it are distributed in the community. We cannot find out who the actual readers are. Since we view literacy from a broader angle, many projects we created are website-based. It is virtually impossible to get information like numbers and ages of

participants. We tried to find ways to collect more information regarding those website-based projects by adding Google Analytics trackers to the websites. We are looking forward to finding out more ways to gather information on those projects.

- A close relationship is usually formed between participants and project facilitators. Sometimes if the project facilitator is replaced by a new person, we may face losing some participants as well. We find it challenging to attract more residents who can take on leadership roles without burning out the existing ones.

What would help?

- We would love to see more funding like Raise-a-Reader to enhance our existing projects and help us build new initiatives.
- During the past year, we received many literacy-related materials from Decoda. The Decoda Literacy Library also makes finding literacy-related materials a lot easier for us. We would like to have more resources like this available to our community.
- Meetings and training sessions for Literacy Outreach Coordinators and people who work to support literacy are very helpful. We would like to see more opportunities for these kinds of gathering and sharing.

### **For the coming year**

Are there new opportunities, challenges or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?

- With funds received for family literacy programs, we need to collaborate with more programs. In the meantime, we will also sustain initiatives we have developed in the past. We may form new working groups to address different priorities in our literacy work.
- A new Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) was hired in May 2012 to continue the literacy work in Renfrew-Collingwood. We may face some challenges and also new opportunities during the transition. The former LOC will help the new LOC get familiar with the context, and introduce her to the task group and the programs. The new LOC is also a co-coordinator for the CASI program at CNH.
- Some task group members left their position, and new people who are replacing them continue to sit in the task group. It is challenging to keep the same level of engagement and excitement within the task group, since such changes occur from time to time. We tried and will continue to try to let all of our task group members understand our interpretation of literacy as a tool to build our community. It is very important of us to keep people sitting together sharing ideas about literacy and provide guidance to literacy work in the Renfrew Collingwood community.

What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?

**Priority 1: Connect Residents and Service Providers**

- Outreach to more service providers.
- Connect residents to existing programs in the community.
- Link service providers to resident gifts and skills.

**Priority 2: Maintain Existing Programs**

- Address expressed needs for literacy, numeracy and social skills for Canadian-born adults and new immigrants with the initial focus on seniors, immigrants and families.
- Make sure the programs are accessible to local residents.
- Sustain programs through concrete resources and in-kind support from public, private and community organizations.
- Open to new opportunities to expand and improve existing programs.

**Priority 3: Review and Update Literacy Plan**

- Review the Renfrew-Collingwood Literacy Plan, which was created four years ago.
- Learn from our achievements and examine new gaps.

What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?

- Local residents who participate and help facilitate our literacy projects.
- Task group members and an LOC who supports and take part in our work.
- Local facilities which provide space and resources for our activities and events.
- Financial and intellectual support from Decoda Literacy Solutions and the Vancouver School Board.

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| <b>South Vancouver</b> |
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**Reflections on the current year**

**Task Group**

Who takes part in the task group?

The 3 subcommittees are:

1. Communication Strategy – The South Vancouver Area Service Providers (SVASPs)
  - Alecia Cooper (South Vancouver Family Place)
  - Alex Gist (YWCA)
  - Allison Reynolds (YMCA)
  - Ana Wear (SVYC)

- Andrea Krombein (Marpole Oakridge Family Place)
- Barry Goodwin (PICS)
- Charlotte Humphries (YMCA)
- Che Nolan (resident, volunteer)
- Chris Fuoco (VSB)
- Cyndy Chwelos (Moberly Arts and Cultural Centre)
- Darlene Richardson (BC Housing)
- Debbie Osborne (Parks Board)
- Emina Hurtic (SVNH)
- Erie Maestro (Vancouver Public Library - VPL)
- Geraldine Saul (SVNH)
- Helena Lee (MCFD)
- Hidy Cheung (VCH)
- Hidy Cheung (VCH)
- Humaira Imtiaz (SVNH)
- Iray Yu (VSB)
- Jan Fu (VPL)
- Jane Ho (South Vancouver Youth Centre)
- Janette Lau (River District Centre)
- Jessica Moerman (SVNH)
- Jinder Johal (VPL)
- Joan Wright (SVNH)
- Jonanne Gage (YWCA)
- June Wong (Family Services)
- Karen Anzai (Neighbours for a Sustainable Future)
- Karen Larcombe (SVNH)
- Karen Sadler (Middle Years Community Developer)
- Kathleen Potter (Scouts Canada)
- Kayo Devcic (Vancouver Coastal Health - VCH)
- Kelly Read (MLA representative)
- Kiran Takhar (SVNH)
- Koyali Burman (SVNH)
- Kyra Lubell (River District Centre)
- Lee Mclsaac (Boys and Girls Club)
- Leslie Kemp (Langara)
- Lisa McCune (VCH)
- Lori Harkins (Parks Board)
- Megan Langley (VPL)
- Nancy Olson (PIRS)
- Pat Agon-Chen (VCH)
- Patrick King (YWCA)
- Pooja Anand (Family Services of Greater Vancouver)
- Richard Baker (VSB)
- Rosalie (SVNH)
- Sally Chan (VSB)
- Sandy Young (River District Centre)

- Sarah O'Hagan (VSB) - Karla Kloepper (replacement)
- Sarah St. John (Langara Continuing Studies)
- Scott Grosvenor (YMCA)
- Sharon Babu (South Vancouver Family Place - SVFP)
- Sharon Tong (SVNH)
- Siu-May Lui (Family Service of Greater Vancouver)
- Skye Lin (Progressive Intercultural Community Services)
- Tamara Gorin (AHSS)
- Teri Corcoran (VSB)
- Tina Nagata (MCFD)
- Tracey Macleod Yerxa (Marpole Oakridge Neighbourhood House)
- Tracy Howard (Marpole Oakridge Neighbourhood House)
- Victoria Carrasco (SVNH)
- Wei Wei Siew (SVNH)

## 2. Family Literacy

- Chelan Wallace (LOC), Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Suzanne Smythe (Literacy Professor and Sunset resident), Sarah O'Hagan (South Hill Education Centre), Erie Maestro (VPL), Sandra Polinsky (One to One Literacy), Sharon Babu (SVFP)

## 3. South Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network

- Chelan Wallace (LOC)
- Julie Thomson (Food Security Outreach Worker – SVNH)
- Aja Peterson (Trout Lake Cedar Cottage Food Security Worker)
- Ross Moster (Village Vancouver)
- Jazmin Miranda (VCH)
- Lindsay Diack (VCH)
- Ander Gates (resident)
- Brendan Clyde (UBC intern)
- Vanessa Lam (VCH)
- Allison Franko (UBC intern)
- Crystal Lee (UBC intern)
- Heather Klassen (UBC intern)

The 2 working groups are:

- Community Spaces Inventory
  - Chelan Wallace (LOC), Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Fiona Zeng (volunteer), Mariya Todorova (volunteer), Kelsey Horning (UBC intern)
- Sunset Community Fair Planning Committee
  - Chelan Wallace (LOC), Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Sharon Babu (South Vancouver Family Place), Erie Maestro (Vancouver Public Library)

How is the work of this group organized? (See the following section “Reflecting and Renewing: Ways to review and set priorities for the Community Literacy Plan each year” for information about how task groups are organized.)

This past year, the Sunset Community Literacy Task Group took a new approach to task group meetings. We found it was a challenge for most members to attend a discrete “literacy” meeting on a regular basis, outside of their regular work demands. We also noted that our five goals were quite distinct and members interested in one particular literacy focus, weren’t necessarily involved in the others. Therefore, three separate task group subcommittees and two working groups were developed in order to address these needs.

The existing South Vancouver Area Service Providers Network was identified as an avenue for literacy collaboration. This long existing network meets monthly to share program and service information. Additionally, it hosts presentations about important community projects and collaborates on partners’ initiatives.

The LOC uses the SVASPs venue to discuss literacy events and strategies. Communication strategy initiatives are now implemented through the SVASP. At meetings, the LOC will create discussion around strategy, evaluations, surveys, and recruitment for the Digital Communication Strategy Workshop Series.

With the implementation of the Raise-a-Reader funding, a new Family Literacy Task Group Subcommittee emerged. This group met to discuss implementation for the next year, then morphed into the Sunset Community Fair (SCF) working group for the springtime. The SCF group meets bimonthly to prepare for the upcoming fair.

The South Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network is a task group subcommittee that operates as an independent entity. This group consists mostly of partner organizations that deal with food security in Vancouver, as well as a small membership of local residents. The group meets monthly to organize community potlucks, food security workshops, and special events plus has recently supported a food asset mapping project. Under the leadership of several UBC interns, the group has collaboratively developed the resource.

Subsequently, the Community Spaces Inventory was created under the goal of improving community access to spaces. While many local businesses and organizations are involved in providing spaces, promoting the inventory and hosting information booths, a task group is not required for the coordination of this work. Thus, a working group is in charge of managing the online inventory, promotion, updating and hosting information booths. The LOC and Steward coordinate volunteers and interns to help in the ongoing maintenance of the website.

In September, a consortium of the SVASPs will participate in a digital communication strategy workshop series wherein they learn the tools and strategies to improve information sharing, networking and promotion of programs and services in South Vancouver. This working group will take leadership to make advancements that will assist organizations across South Vancouver.

## **Community Context**

What has happened in the community over the past year that impacts people in the community and the ability of organizations to support literacy development? Consider both positive and negative impacts.

The South Vancouver area has noticed several program terminations that have adversely affected the community. For instance, Strong Start will no longer operate through community organizations; instead, they will be under the School Board. The Vancouver School Board teachers have been under job action for the majority of the school year. This has put pressure on students and parents with limited extra-curricular activities and academic reporting.

We've also noticed an increase in community events in South Vancouver including the long-running South Hill Festival, our new Sunset Community Fair, but also several other special events spread out across South Vancouver.

The VPL has had budget cuts which have had an impact on fewer partnerships to run Mother Goose programs. Because employment services are in a year of transition, the employment services of South Vancouver have had a restructuring, which effects have yet to be determined.

Having Raise-a-Reader funding streamed through the task group affected the structure of task groups. New groups were brought to the table, while city-wide organizations such as One-to-One Literacy, Big Sisters and PIRS, which had previously received these funds, were unable to participate in the task group neighbourhood-based framework.

## **Community Development and Literacy Collaborations**

What are the important collaborations that have taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group?

- Sunset Community Fair coordination with VPL, SVFP, SVNH
- Trudeau family literacy program operated by SVFP
- The community spaces inventory is made possible by the many business, organizations, schools, churches, etc. that have kindly offered their spaces for use. It is also coordinated in partnership with a UBC Arts intern, volunteers and the LOC.
- The Food Security E-newsletter gathers information from a network of over 40 partner organizations. Information is circulated through a list serve of 130 subscribers.
- First Books – donated hundreds of books to SVNH and SVFP
- Ajay Puri Consulting – facilitating communication strategy workshop series

What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

- SVASP – has roughly 50 members

- LOCs meetings – to collaborate on city-wide literacy work, share success stories and challenges, share resources and ideas

What makes collaborations work well?

Collaborations work well when all partners equally contribute and benefit from project outcomes. It is important for work to be relevant and valuable to each partner involved. Task group members are asked to commit to the group to improve community literacy rather than the literacy work of their individual organizations. It is essential for partners to understand the process of literacy work and commit to long term collaboration.

### **Goals and actions for the current year**

What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed this year?

The structure of our work in Sunset has been centered on the goals of our original Sunset Community Literacy Plan. With the exception that one goal was completed in the previous year “*To develop a peer mentoring program in the community in order to enable community members to feel a sense of belonging and to participate more fully in community life.*” This year’s 5 goals are:

*Goal 1: To identify and enhance ways for residents and service providers to have access to community space.*

*Goal 2: To inform residents about community opportunities through the development of a range of communication tools and by strengthening service provider networking and partnerships.*

*Goal 3: To support food literacy in the community in the areas of food security, environmental sustainability, and healthy living.*

*Goal 4: To enhance existing services, programs and projects that support our literacy vision and to communicate new developments with residents and service providers.*

*Goal 5: A new goal was established to support family literacy: to improve family literacy through programming and events.*

What actions were taken to reach these? What organizations and groups participated in these actions?

#### **Goal 1:**

The South Vancouver Community Spaces Inventory was created as an online resource for residents and service providers to have improved access to community spaces ([southvanspaces.weebly.com](http://southvanspaces.weebly.com)). The previous LOC and a UBC Practicum student began the collection of data last year. Local businesses and organizations were surveyed via phone and

door-to-door to build a list of available spaces. Since then, we recruited 2 new volunteers to develop a website to effectively publicize the data. Using the free website creator, Weebly, the website is user-friendly, colourful, organized and interactive.

Once the website was established, a UBC Arts Intern was found to get it off the ground. The intern was responsible for outreaching to new organizations, updating information, promotion, hosting information booths at local organizations and increasing awareness. Other volunteers continued to manage the website development such as data updates, creating a blog, photo gallery and map.

### **Goal 2:**

Improving the communication strategies of service providers in South Vancouver was identified as an important need. The LOC evaluated this interest at SVASP meetings and created a Communication Strategy task group subcommittee (CS). Subsequently, a well-known social media consultant was approached to help lead the development of a communication strategy for South Vancouver.

To gain initial interest, the consultant ran a Digital Communication Strategy training workshop. The workshop evaluated existing communications, discussed potential improvements and proposed future developments. Topics covered include social media, online tools, newsletters and evaluated case studies. Twelve service providers attended.

Thereafter, the LOC hosted a Mail Chimp E-newsletter workshop to teach service providers how to create their own effective email newsletter. Eight service providers were trained in Mail Chimp E-newsletter creation.

The Communication Strategy subcommittee continued to meet monthly to evaluate networking potential.

### **Goal 3:**

The South Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network was established in the summer of 2011 with a steering committee of eight members. A kick-off event was held where residents, service providers, local businesses, schools, multi-faith groups and more were invited to gather around the topic of food. We came together and planned a potluck and discussion around strengthening our local food webs, networks, and urban agriculture initiatives. Goals that arose from our initial meetings include creating a food asset map, continuing to draw in the community with special events and connecting neighbours through garden parties.

The LOC sends out a monthly Food Security E-newsletter about food-related programs, services, events, success stories, job/volunteer/funding opportunities or something neat to check out. Partner organizations contribute information each month and the newsletter is sent to a large list serve of partner organizations, service providers, residents, and volunteers.

Through the SVNH Food Security Project, another project connected to food literacy in the community, SVNH and Langara College have partnered to offer an innovative Food Security Community Leadership Certificate program that provides participants in South Vancouver with hands-on experience and classroom learning in the multi-disciplinary world of food security.

The South Vancouver Community Food Asset map is a result of the collaborative efforts of the South Vancouver Neighbourhood Food Network and the Community Learning Initiative project at UBC. The project's goal was to provide a comprehensive map of the food resources available to the community members of South Vancouver so that they might know where they can find places to buy fresh, healthy produce and make use of the food education programs

available in the area. What has come out of the project itself is not only the map itself but a strong relationship between UBC's community outreach program, the students of UBC, and SVNH. The map is currently accepting additions and will be made public over the summer.

#### **Goal 4 & 5:**

The Family Literacy task group subcommittee has outlined the following action plan.

- community wide community celebration event
- Family Literacy program at Trudeau Elementary
- Off-hours enhanced story time program at SVNH
- Story-time in the park summer program
- Senior's literacy program at Moberly Elementary

To date, we have run a successful Family Literacy program at Trudeau Elementary for parents, grandparents and their preschool age children. Facilitators cover material from the Leap BC curriculum and have established a lending library. This program will be repeated in the fall.

The Sunset Community Fair is happening June 27<sup>th</sup> and is anticipated to be a huge success. We are expecting 35 organizations to attend with an interactive table and activity, as well as 12 performers, and 4 special attractions including the Nylon Zoo, Mobile Dairy Classroom, VPL Story Bus and Drum Syndicate. The event will celebrate literacy, sustainability and multiculturalism from a local South Vancouver perspective.

The remaining family literacy programs will begin this summer or fall.

What adjustments were made to the plan? That is, as the year progressed were there new opportunities or were there changes that did not allow for some actions to be taken?

The major changes to the plan were the restructuring of task groups and incorporation of family literacy work through the Raise-a-Reader funds. Many city-wide (or wider-scope) organizations were unable to participate in the localized task group format and were not considered in the allocation of funds. Otherwise, all original objectives and goals were continued and supported.

The Communication Strategy task group identified the need for improving networking and online communication for the SVASPs. Thus, the group began working towards an online platform that would be a hub for networking information, have a database of programs and services in South Vancouver as well as easy to use and aesthetically pleasing. There was a long process in deciding which tool to use, what information to include and how this tool would be maintained. We considered an e-newsletter, website and blog. Eventually, we came to a realization that online program and service databases and already plentiful in Vancouver and another would only act to thin out information. Furthermore, most databases quickly become outdated and unused. Therefore, we decided to create a simple "Sunset Literacy" website for the use of the LOC to update, share information and host a "mostly permanent" list of service providers. This website will be launched in September 2012.

## Indications of Success

How do you know that actions taken are working to support literacy? What impact have the literacy initiatives had? It is important to include examples to illustrate the impact.

### Goal 1:

We are able to record the success of the South Vancouver Community Spaces Inventory both quantitatively and qualitatively.

- more features than originally anticipated (blog, photo gallery, data organized 3 ways)
- There are an average of 15 user hits per day, with operation since October = 4,050 visitors in 9 months
- positive feedback from SVASPS, “This will be a very valuable resource to the community. I can already think of how I’m going to use it today.” Sharon Babu Family Place

### Goal 2:

Our efforts to improve communication strategies in South Vancouver have taken a long process with several successes along the way. Attendance numbers are below.

- Digital Communication Strategy Training: Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Joan Wright (SVNH), Victoria Carrasco (SVNH), Che Nolan (volunteer), Carol Cordeiro (PICS), Zoe Wang (PICS), Barry Goodwin (PICS), Skye Lin (PICS), Sarah O’Hagan (South Hill Education Centre), Jessica Moerman (SVNH), Koyali Burman (SVNH), SVNH intern
- MailChimp Training: Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Joan Wright (SVNH), Victoria Carrasco (SVNH), Carol Cordeiro (PICS), Sarah O’Hagan (South Hill Education Centre), SVNH intern
- CS Meeting #1: Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Sarah O’Hagan (South Hill Education Centre), Che Nolan (volunteer), Charlotte Humphries (YMCA), Megan Langley (VPL), Carol Cordeiro (PICS), Barry Goodwin (PICS), Skye Lin (PICS)
- CS Meeting #2: Wei Siew (Steward), Sarah O’Hagan (South Hill Education Centre), Che Nolan (volunteer), Carol Cordeiro (PICS), Barry Goodwin (PICS), Skye Lin (PICS), Patrick
- CS Meeting #3: SVASPs (roughly 25 participants)
- CS Meeting # 4: Wei Wei Siew (Steward), Carol Cordeiro (PICS), Barry Goodwin (PICS), Humaira Imtiaz (SVNH), Pat Agon-Chen (VCH)
- #5 and onwards meetings happen monthly at SVASP meetings with roughly 20 participants on average

Quotes from Digital Communication Strategy Training

- “The meeting was very informative and education. It has revolutionized my understanding of social media with its focus on telling stories and engagement ladders. Thank you” Che Nolan, resident and volunteer

- “I loved this workshop. I can hardly wait to develop our e-newsletter and am anxious to go through the POSTE method to achieve a social strategy.” workshop participant.
- “Great intro workshops. Very interactive with lots of examples and case studies. I would like to participate in future workshops that provide more in-depth trainings. Thank you! Zoe from PICS” Zoe Wang (PICS).
- “Thought provoking session on Digital Communication Strategy. Very encouraging to help us wade deeper into social media and explore the possibilities.” Carol Cordeiro (PICS)
- “A chance to learn and to act together. Looking forward to working more on this aspect.” Workshop participant
- “I like the introduction to the different media tools/services. Didn’t know that there were so many, it was great intro on what all the tools can do! Awesome.” Workshop participant
- “Good: content, POSTE Ajay’s stories; brings material to life. Feels overwhelming; lots to learn! Would be great to have more training sessions. Great idea to combine brainstorming session at end.” Workshop participant

**Goal 4:**

Our Food Security E-newsletter has been very successful in its reach and efficiency. Our newsletter has a noticeably higher open and click rate than industry standards (see table below). Furthermore, recipient numbers are increasing each month, with the exception of one less recipient in May.

| Month                    | Open Rate | Click Rate | Recipients |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| <b>Industry Standard</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>3</b>   | <b>N/A</b> |
| September                | 66        | 34         | 51         |
| November                 | 54        | 26         | 74         |
| January                  | 45        | 9          | 105        |
| February                 | 42        | 7          | 122        |
| March                    | 39        | 5          | 128        |
| April                    | 38        | 1          | 133        |
| May                      | 42        | 10         | 132        |

Additionally, we have received much positive feedback from recipients:

- “The newsletter looks great.” Marguerite Leahy (Elementary Teacher)
- “Congrats! It looks great!” Cyndy Chwelos (Moberly Arts and Cultural Centre)
- “I have registered for your E-News, very nicely done.” Jazmin Miranda (VCH)
- “This is excellent! Well done!” Julie Thomson (SVNH)

What are the things that support literacy work?

We are fortunate for the dedicated collaborations that have been part of our literacy work in South Vancouver. For instance, the Family Literacy task group has dedicated huge amounts of time to organizing and coordinating the upcoming Sunset Community Fair. Partner organizations have developed interesting themed activities that many will provide for free. For instance, the Vancouver Tool Library will have a mason bee hive building activity for children and their parents to take home.

We are also very thankful for the interns and volunteers that have supported our work. We have had 2 volunteers and 1 UBC Arts intern support the community spaces inventory. Without their attuned web development skills and dedication, the resource would not be nearly as successful.

## **Challenges**

What are the difficulties?

Some of our challenges have included maintaining task group numbers. Many previous members no longer have the available time required for monthly meetings and often felt work was irrelevant to their specific job requirements. Hence, we created task group subcommittees to focus our efforts and we also relied upon existing group meetings such as the SVASPs.

What would help?

What would be helpful in maintaining our task group numbers is the guarantee that our literacy efforts will have long term support. Focusing on each year with limited funding and uncertainty of continuity limits our efforts and continued support from task group members.

As several LOCs have discussed, it would also be helpful to have training for LOCs provided by Decoda Literacy Solutions based around task group management, literacy-specific skills and program development. We also highly value the district-wide planning and support we are beginning to see from Decoda and the VSB, such as the visioning meeting facilitated by Gavin Perryman. We hope to continue developing a city-wide literacy vision as well as collaborative literacy work in the future. Vancouver LOC meetings have been very helpful and we look forward to continuing in September.

## **For the coming year**

Are there new opportunities, challenges, or issues in your community? How will you respond to those?

As the current LOC enters her second year of literacy work, we are excited to expand upon our efforts and take a new stance to energize and encourage a wider literacy effort. We will focus

on building capacity and shining a “literacy lens” on existing programs and services. We will challenge ourselves to welcome more residents into the task group and encourage more community champions.

Some of the challenges include the shift of strong start operation moving into the hands of the school board. Furthermore, the job action may continue in the fall, which may continue to limit the extra-curricular activities offered. Employment centers will also have a restructuring of services, which we will need to reach an understanding of the new services.

We hope to focus on greater partnership with direct programming through the Community Schools Teams for children, youth and parents.

What goals, priorities or objectives will you work on in the coming year? What actions are planned against those goals?

In September, the task group will meet to outline a new Sunset Community Literacy Plan for the upcoming year or years. Some current ideas include coordination a literacy month for existing programs and organizations to focus on literacy. We would like to focus more on supporting the basic literacy skills of children and youth in South Vancouver, which may focus on parenting or literacy support programs. The Communication Strategy workshop series will begin in the fall. We’ve also noted food literacy and health literacy as an emerging trend and great need for residents in South Vancouver, especially immigrants. Also, we will continue to run family literacy programs with the support of 2011 Raise-a-reader funds.

What will be required to meet the goals and effectively employ actions for the coming year?

In the coming year, our task group will re-evaluate our Sunset Community Literacy Plan and outline a new set of goals. While we may continue some of our current efforts, our plan needs to make sense for the strengths of our current LOC and task group members as well as meeting our community’s current needs.

The LOC also plans to have a greater online presence and celebration through the “Sunset Literacy” website. We hope this website will enable a stronger connection amongst task group members as well as community members and organizations.

Next year, it will also be important to assemble greater support from the task group through delegation and networking opportunities. In the past year the LOC, steward and a small group of dedicated task group members have undertaken the majority of literacy work. We would like to focus on embedding literacy into the work of more organizations, or using a “literacy lens” to interpret our services.

## **Summary of Community Plans**

As the visioning exercise confirmed, while each community is clearly unique, there are at the same time similar areas to celebrate and similar challenges to face. All communities are now in the implementation phase of literacy planning. Communities have given literacy the

broadest definition possible to support a wide range of the people living in the area. Most have made strides in making current resources more accessible. They have created tools and resources to help connect people in their communities to resources they need. New programs have been identified to fill in gaps. Different populations have been identified as needing support.

One common area for celebration is the collaboration this work has generated. Every community mentioned the value of the new connections made and the additional supports available as a result. Many talk about the capacity building and the expansion of volunteers and peer supports.

At the same time all mentioned the challenges of time to do the work and the funding to continue. This kind of community development is labour intensive. The funds currently allocated are stretched. Nonetheless these funds have permitted a rich array of programming that would not otherwise have been available to people in the communities.

## **Vancouver Community College**

Vancouver Community College, in addition to offering a full range of certificate, diploma and continuing education classes, is the largest college provider of adult literacy programs in Vancouver. It has a long and proud history of collaborating with a wide assortment of community constituency groups. Some recent partners include: the Aboriginal Community Career Employment Services (ACCESS), the Salvation Army, the Vancouver Public Library, the Vancouver Board of Education, Safeway, S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and the YWCA.

The following is a snapshot of adult literacy programming at VCC.

**The Basic Education Department** is the Adult Literacy Fundamental Level program at VCC. It encompasses beginning skills up to approximately Grade 9. Currently, the department offers classes in fundamental level English, Math and Computer Studies. It offers both group-based and self-paced continuous intake classes at the Broadway Campus. Basic Education has well-established adult learning centres at the Vancouver Public Library's Downtown Branch and at Salvation Army's Harbour Light, a drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre in the Downtown Eastside. This year, the department collaborated with the Vancouver Board of Education on the "Urban Connections: Learners Talking to Learners" project which was supported by Community Adult Literacy Program provincial funding. The department also received curriculum development money through the college to enhance literacy and numeracy resources centred on the Basic Education Community Garden which was started over a year ago.

### **Adult Upgrading**

Courses are offered at the Intermediate (Grade 10), Advanced (Grade 11) and Provincial(Grade 12) levels for students wishing to earn credit or obtain academic prerequisites

leading to high school completion and the BC Adult Graduation Diploma. Students can complete prerequisites: (1) for entry into institutions such as BCIT, Langara, Kwantlen, etc., (2) in preparation for entry into other VCC programs (e.g. Pharmacy Technician, Practical Nursing, or Electronics) or (3) for entrance into academic, career, or technical programs.

### **Intermediate Program for Youth: Broadway Youth Resource Centre**

The ABE Youth Program offers an Intermediate ABE Certificate Program (Grade 9/10) and Advanced ABE courses (Grade 11) at the Broadway Youth Resource Centre. The ABE Youth Program offers individualized and self-paced instruction in English, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies in a structured and supportive educational setting that allows youth to achieve their academic goals to develop the skills to be productive and responsible individuals. The Youth Program prepares students to enter adult graduation programs, public secondary schools, career and skills training programs and/or employment.

### **Essential Skills for College and Career Success**

In September 2009, a new Essential Skills Centre opened at the VCC Downtown Campus (250 West Pender). Course offerings include:

- Education and Career Planning; Self Assessment, career Explorations and Interview Skills
- College Success: Active Learning, Study Skills, Goal Setting
- Computer skills: Word, Excel, and Windows.

These courses are being offered in a flexible format that includes self-paced study and scheduled courses at various times to suit the student. Courses are tuition free (college application, student association and college initiative fee are charged).

### **Harbour Light Learning Centre**

Since 2007, VCC has offered the Harbour Light Learning Centre program in partnership with the Salvation Army Addictions and Rehabilitation Centre on East Cordova in the Downtown Eastside. Students are residents of the Rehab Centre and are referred by their counsellors. Students meet with the VCC instructors to discuss an education plan before being assessed and placed into the Learning Centre Program. Harbour Light Learning Centre offers upgrading from beginner level reading, writing and math up to the grade 12 level. It is operated by both the Basic Education and CCA Departments.

### **English as a Second Language**

Renowned for its English as a Second Language training, VCC offers ESL classes for immigrants and refugees living in Canada as well as for international visa students and visitors. VCC also offers the largest English language teacher training ([TESOL](#)) program in Western Canada. VCC ESL offers the following programs:

- ELSA - English Language Services for Adults - Broadway Campus
- English for Career Preparation and Advancement
- ESL at VCC - Literacy, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced - Broadway and

- Downtown Campuses
- ESL Literacy Classes in the Community
- Classes for ESL adults who have limited literacy skills in their first language as well as English are available through VCC's ESL Outreach Department. Classes are available at community locations as well as at the Downtown Campus for students who are at a pre-beginner level in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Two more classes, one at Broadway and one Downtown, are available for those who have intermediate listening and speaking skills (CLB 4) and very low-level English reading and writing skills. Classes are offered mornings or evenings. There are three 12-week terms starting January, April and September.
- ESL Classes in the Community - Literacy, Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced
- ESL – Homefront Learning: Homebound adult ESL students living in Vancouver or Burnaby can receive two free hours of English instruction per week in their homes by a trained volunteer tutor. Students can study at any level: Literacy, Beginner, Intermediate or Advanced. Students can stay in the program as long as they are eligible and a tutor is available.
- ESL Learning Centres in the Libraries
- In partnership with the Vancouver and Burnaby Public Libraries, VCC operates nine ESL Learning Centres. Eight are located in Vancouver and one in Burnaby. Learning Centres in Libraries provide free one-on-one and small group tutoring in ESL to adults. Each Learning Centre has various operating hours and is staffed by experienced Instructional Assistants with ESL training.

### **World Beat**

Vancouver Community College (VCC), in partnership with S.U.C.C.E.S.S. and YWCA, is offering an innovative program for vulnerable young immigrants and refugees. Called World Beat, this project combines educational, career and life planning with learning in music, literacy, language and essential workplace skills to engage and support the project participants in finding suitable paths for personal and career development. The program is open to young immigrants and refugees (aged 15- 25), having been in Canada for 5 years or less, who have low language and literacy levels, are no longer attending school, and have little awareness of how to access skill upgrading and career education opportunities. They may also face multiple barriers to settlement. Instructors from the VCC School of Language Studies and School of Music will deliver an integrated 16-week bridging program that is designed especially for youth. Outreach workers from S.U.C.C.E.S.S and YWCA will provide ongoing support to the project participants and connect them with community resources for their long- term development.

### **Initiatives focused on Aboriginal Learners**

Vancouver Community College is committed to increasing the participation and success rate of First Nations learners and provides First Nations learners with academic and cultural support. Aboriginal academic advisors assist with liaising with band administration, elders, sponsoring agencies, and referral to community resources, pre-admission advising, orientation to VCC facilities and resources, and advocacy. Recognizing that Vancouver Community College serves a large Aboriginal population that is under-represented in postsecondary education,

priority registration will be given to qualified Aboriginal students in all courses and programs at VCC.

VCC is a partner of the *Coastal Corridor Consortium (C3)*. The goals of the Consortium are:

- to create better cultural connections between and among the C3 post- secondary institutions and the Aboriginal partners
- to ensure a strong and consistent Aboriginal voice
- to remove barriers for Aboriginal learners to access quality higher education with focus on enhanced learner services and supported outreach programs
- to offer programs that meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and their communities, providing pathways to employment and/or further learning.

### **Courses for Students with Disabilities**

These programs are designed to meet the specific needs of students with disabilities.

VCC provides opportunities for students by offering skills and learning that will enhance career opportunities, personal potential and academic success. Adult Special Education courses and programs are designed for students with a disability, who wish to establish and/or upgrade prevocational skills that would enhance entry into further education or employment. The Community & Career Education Dept includes part-time literacy courses in; Reading and Writing for Every Day Use, Managing Your Money, Computer Applications and full time programs include Career Awareness, Retail Food & Hospitality Careers; and Food Service Careers. The Deaf & Hard of Hearing Department offers Job Readiness and Deaf and Hard of Hearing courses, and the Visually Impaired Department offers Office Administration for the Visually Impaired, and the Visually Impaired Adult Program.

### **Family Literacy Certificate Program**

Vancouver Community College, in partnership with Decoda Literacy Solutions, the Centre for Family Literacy, and Conestoga College is excited to continue its very successful online Family Literacy Certificate Program. Designed for those who currently work or plan to work in family literacy, this certificate program builds knowledge and skills in a wide range of areas that are key to high quality programs and services. Unique across Canada, this credential offers an excellent curriculum facilitated by leaders in the family literacy field. All courses are available online.

## **The Vancouver Board of Education**

### **Literacy K – 12**

There are 75 elementary schools, 17 elementary annexes and 18 secondary schools serving approximately 56,000 students in the Vancouver School District. In addition, there are over 60 district programs connected to the schools that address a wide range of student needs from enrichment to remedial.

The Board of Education annually submits to the Ministry an Achievement Contract which we call our “District Plan for Student Success”. The overall goal of that plan is success for each student with a focus on literacy. Specific areas of ongoing work and adjustments were identified as important to supporting success in the classroom and for each student in literacy:

- expanding early intervention and approval for a Five-Year Implementation plan for the district
- continuing to work on social emotional learning and social responsibility to ensure schools are safe and supportive environments for children and adults to work in
- continuing to focus on strong relationships with parents and caregivers
- work on models for Resource Team support in schools for children who need additional supports for learning
- differentiating instruction for all students according to their learning and behaviour needs, including making assessments for learning part of each classroom
- providing enhanced opportunities for Aboriginal students, including the implementation of a new Aboriginal Focus School
- implementing technology to support learning
- providing collaborative professional development funds for teachers to access in their work to support learners

### **Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement**

The Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement provides direction for the district focusing on three main goal areas: Belonging, Mastery, Culture and Community. The goals align with the district initiatives strengthening literacy skills, social and emotional learning conditions and using assessment for learning to ensure positive educational experiences for all learners. Action Plans have been developed through consultation with the Aboriginal Communities to provide a framework and a shared commitment.

### **School Libraries**

Teacher librarians continue to be integral to the literacy goals both within the school community and the community at large. Teacher librarians contribute to the development and promotion of literacy in many ways. They work collaboratively with classroom teachers to develop programs that build in literacy, promote reading for pleasure and information, integrate strategies to build multi-literacies in students, and engage in and support school-based, school-wide and district initiatives that promote literacy.

Over this school year, we further developed the model of a Learning Commons. This is both a real place and a virtual space. It is characterized by flexibility enabled by its movable furnishings, wirelessness, a variety of print and digital resources and up-to-date technologies, 24/7 access to resources and assistance, sufficient allocation of time for inquiry-based learning, as well as a service-oriented, tech-savvy, collaborative and qualified teacher-librarian.

The Learning Commons represents teaching and learning that is being transformed and is transformative, innovative, and responsive to the needs of the community. It is a common place for

information that supports learning and differentiation to meet the unique and personal needs of all students and teachers and every classroom. The Learning Commons provides accessible resources and custom-designed learning opportunities that enable students and teachers to develop sophisticated information and technology skills.

We believe this new vision of school library will enhance the learning of all students and support literacy in its broadest sense. Over the next school we will expand on this work. Some funds have been set aside to support the work of Teacher Librarians in this direction.

## **Early Learning**

The VSB maintained a strong commitment to supporting early learning in the district this past year. In addition, there were new initiatives:

- Welcome to Kindergarten in 72 elementary schools and annexes
- Ready Set Learn in every school
- Successful implementation of a new Strong Start in Strathcona
- A move to transition the other 18 Strong Start Centres to a direct service delivery model where the facilitators are Vancouver School District employees
- The reinstatement of an Early Learning Coordinator

## **Adult Literacy**

The VBE continues to operate six Adult Learning Centres in Vancouver providing adult learners with educational opportunities ranging from beginner literacy levels in English, Math and Computer Technology to high school completion. The six Centres provide courses to an estimated 7,000 students annually. The student population reflects the cultural, linguistic and economic diversity of the city and the students' ages range from sixteen to over seventy-five years old.

The Adult Education program that takes place in partnership with ten elementary schools in the District continues to provide access to adult education to the adult family members of the students attending the school

## **Vancouver Public Library - Highlights from Transformation and Community Engagement**

2011 was an event-filled year for the Vancouver Public Library. Alongside offering daily public library service to community members both in person and digitally, we opened a new branch, welcomed a new Chief Librarian (Sandra Singh), announced an exciting partnership for a future branch and celebrated the 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our landmark Central Library! The Library continued its unique role in the community as a place of learning and culture by offering extensive programming for children, teens and adults, providing specialized services and programs for those with English as a second language and responding to the digital needs of experienced and novice users.

Vancouver Public Library (VPL) values its relationship and partnership with the Vancouver School Board. As we strive to enhance our role as Vancouver's centre for informal and non-formal learning, significant effort in 2011 was spent on community engagement activities and fostering community partnerships for collaborative programming and service delivery. This report highlights some of the engagement initiatives undertaken at VPL and examples for children's, teen and adult programming we have undertaken in response to what we are hearing.

*Since 1886, when 400 books from the defunct Hastings Literary Institute were donated to the newly-established Vancouver Reading Room, Vancouver Public Library and our sister public libraries across the country have played a consistent critical role in our communities. As public libraries, we are the only community-based institution that is dedicated to ensuring that every community member – regardless of their economic situation, technological competence, age or other demographic characteristics – has access to the information, reading, and media materials that they need to enrich their lives, whether it be for personal learning and capacity building, for broadening their knowledge of the world around them, or simply for enjoying themselves. We provide the public informal learning spaces that people of all walks of life can access to learn about the world around them through individual quiet contemplation, presentations and lessons, or group dialogue. Libraries are the foundation of democratic society and enablers of civic and global engagement and participation. As communities, our investment in public libraries represents the best of humanism – we pool our resources so that, together, we have access to more information, expressions of culture, and better access to learning and, in so doing, we become stronger as a community.*<sup>12</sup>

Successful Community Literacy Planning involves collaboration with valued partners and forming relationships with community members. VPL has spent much of 2011 engaging with Vancouver residents, partners and agencies to determine how library services are being received as well as discovering opportunities for the future as we undertake our transformation as Vancouver's centre for informal learning. As we endeavour to better understand the needs of the public we serve, our plan is to consider these findings as we undertake our strategic planning process for 2013-2015. Several techniques were employed in 2011 including: one-on-one interactions with a variety of customer groups, the use of online and e-surveys, as well as formal and informal public consultation events.

VPL is experiencing unprecedented pressures including: rapid technological development and broad-based societal adoption of technology; increased sophistication of the digital community; increasingly divergent expectations for in-person versus digital services; changes in the publishing industry; pressures on and competition from allied sectors and institutions; significant demographic change; and global economic instability. As VPL's Chief Librarian Sandra Singh points out

*There is an important distinction to make: the role of public libraries and what we contribute to community has never changed. Some of the areas that are most pressing for VPL are: services to children, youth, and families; digital publishing and services; learning and enrichment programming; and responding to demographic changes in our community.*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Singh, Sandra (2012) *Transformation: Positioning Vancouver Public Library for the Future*.

<sup>13</sup> Singh, Sandra (2012) *Transformation: Positioning Vancouver Public Library for the Future*

In late 2011, VPL began an extensive "Free-for-all: Reimagining your library" community engagement process to help shape the library of the future. The series began in late November with activities focussing on public space and learning places. Facilitated activities and surveys were used to gather input from our library users as well as those who did not have (or no longer have) a relationship with VPL. The results will be analyzed later this summer, at the conclusion of the Free-for-All series. We will have extensive information to report in 2012 about this process – other topics explored included collections, programs & training, and services for children, families & youth. Extensive consultation with Trustees, members of the public, library users and non-users as well as staff, community organizations and partners will be analyzed in preparation of the 2013-2015 Strategic Plan.

Our goals in 2011 included: act on the information gathered and incorporate the feedback into our decision-making processes; incorporate our Community-Led Library model of service delivery throughout the library system, enhance technological opportunities and access to digital collections, reach out to children and teens, enhance services to new Canadians (job searching and ESL support for example), and develop new partnerships developments in areas such as program delivery. Achievements are listed below.

#### *Community Led Service Planning*

- Library staff and participants at Out of the Cold, a free lunch served every Tuesday in the Oasis shelter at the Tenth Church (Vancouver), and Mission Possible, an organization that provides numerous services in the Downtown Eastside developed recommendations for a Low Barrier Library card for residents facing multiple challenges when applying for a card.
- Teen-created and teen-managed projects generated by the Teen Advisory Groups and other youth-led groups (such as community centre councils) throughout the city. Library staff acted as facilitators, guiding participants in brainstorming activities, consensus-building, and project management. Staff also provided resources and support for implementing ideas that teens developed. Projects created in this way included: Wall Time, a graffiti-based concept where canvases are installed in branch libraries for a month to be "tagged" by teens. The canvases will be displayed in the Central Library gallery once completed. A canvas at one of the branch libraries attracted 330 teen participants.
- Poetry Folk, an open-mike program hosted by youth in the library. This program fills a gap identified by young poets who reported that almost all spoken-word programs in the city are available only to adults.
- Kraftz, a book-making program run in cooperation with an expert bookbinder. Teens provided content for the books they make, which will be shared with the public.

#### *Technological innovation for our users, information literacy and improved access to digital collections*

- Implementing the Bibliocommons discovery layer. This implementation increased self-service holds and improved access to library materials through the library's website ([http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/search?t=smart&search\\_category=keyword&q=communityled+library&commit=Search&searchOpt=catalogue](http://vpl.bibliocommons.com/search?t=smart&search_category=keyword&q=communityled+library&commit=Search&searchOpt=catalogue)).

- Piloting the loan of iPads to Outreach patrons (homebound, disabled and print disabled patrons), to improve their access to downloadable materials while providing staff support of their use of the iPads during the pilot. This increases the availability of content to Outreach patrons, particularly downloadable audiobooks.
- Increasing our budget dedicated eBooks so that we can better meet patron demand, ensuring that we continue to attract new patrons who rely heavily on mobile devices, and create a future for the library as the number of physical items we circulate decreases.
- Increasing our budget on graphic novels by nearly \$80,000, with the goal of improving the relevance of our collections to teens, and continuing to invest in our recently established gaming collection.
- The Tech cafe: VPL introduced the Tech Cafe drop-in computer lab in the summer of 2011 and continued it as a regular weekly program in the fall of 2011. The Tech Cafe is intended to allow for one-on-one assistance, and expand the reach of registered basic computer training, which is always full. Initial topics included computer and email basics, eBooks, Facebook, Twitter, Craigslist, and managing files and folders. In 2012, the Tech Cafe format was adjusted and in the 14 weeks from January to April 21, 2012, 28 sessions were held with a total of 209 attendees. Topics covered in mini-lectures have included: Facebook and Facebook privacy as well as general internet privacy, eBooks and eBooks before the basics managing your library account and using VPL's collaborative catalogue, Smartphones, Google privacy and alternative search engines open source software, PressDisplay, Twitter online, product reviews, Google Maps, saving files on a portable device. The questions that come up in the drop-in sessions cover the gamut from basic keyboarding and mousing to filling out online forms; from using social media platforms to navigating web-based email accounts. One positive for the library from all sessions is that we learn what new courses the library training team should develop through the recurrence of certain questions and interests. The drop-in format also allows learners who do not feel comfortable in a class setting to get valuable computer experience in a hands-on learning environment with assistance when they need it.

#### *Service to children and families*

- VPL continues to offer a wide range of programming and services that support and promote literacy and lifelong learning. These included Storytime Kits, a service used by daycares, preschools, Family Places and community centre programs to support early childhood literacy development and learning. Each kit is based on a theme and includes ten colourful picture books, a felt story, puppets, a CD, toys and lists of related books and rhymes. The service is extremely popular and supports studies that show that children who are exposed to nursery rhymes and songs at an early age improve their speech and language skills earlier than children who are not similarly exposed. With grant funding, it was possible to respond to requests for new themes from daycares, preschools and other groups by developing five new Storytime Kits and producing five copies of each.
- VPL also expanded the Baby Welcoming program series. Baby Welcoming programs promote awareness and use of the library and its early childhood services and collections by providing an opportunity for parents and babies to meet children's librarians and neighbours, learn and share baby rhymes, songs and stories, tour the library, obtain library cards, and socialize while enjoying light refreshments. Each baby also receives a book bag and book. Special funding allowed the Library to offer Baby Welcoming programs in languages other than English for the first time. A total of twelve Baby Welcoming programs were organized at the Central and branch libraries. Each

program was approximately one-hour in length and was offered in one of eight languages: Spanish (2), Korean, Punjabi, French (3), Cantonese (2), Mandarin, Aboriginal or Farsi.

- In 2011, VPL Early Years librarians worked with partners in community health to develop a program which focuses on nutrition and early literacy with the goal of fostering a love of language, reading and lifelong healthy eating. In 2012 the program was named "Tasty Tales" and it is currently running in two sites.
- In October 2011 VPL piloted "Reading Tails," a program where school-aged children read to registered therapy dogs in the library. The program, which provides a safe, non-judgmental, non-threatening reading environment, has become one of our regular bi-weekly programs.
- Expanded holdings of dual-language picture books for children, which are advocated by literacy experts for the purpose of helping bilingual children build literacy in both their home language and English. Titles were selected and ordered in languages including Chinese, Hindi, Punjabi, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese.

### *Teens*

- Expanded Teen Advisory Groups (TAGs) were formed in 2011 in neighbourhoods that had been identified by the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department as lacking in youth resources. The new TAGs have boosted overall TAG membership from 30 to 70 teens, representing diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The Vancouver Public Library's rate of youth participation in TAGs is now higher than any other library system in British Columbia.
- TAG led projects included: The Youth Economic Forum, an event intended to help young people understand the impact of global economics in their lives; Dialogue, screenings of documentary films and discussion groups for teens; Plant a Tree, a permanent installation of a large tree at the Central Library to symbolize youth commitment to environmental sustainability in Vancouver.

### *ESL*

- Book club sets – Library staff have reviewed the current ESL language kits and have determined that although we have a strong intermediate – high level literacy collection, there are gaps in the lower reading level collection. An effort is being made to address this gap.
- Adding the Gale PowerSpeak electronic resource which enables the library to provide increased language learning resources to patrons, including ESL modules specifically for Mandarin and Spanish speakers, helping our recent immigrants and visiting students improve their English so that they can access services and participate fully in their communities, as well as enhancing the travel experiences of our residents.
- Conversation circles and ESL Book clubs are underway in several locations throughout the city offering opportunities for new Canadians to practice English and discuss books and issues important to learning about Canada.

### *Job Searching/Career Planning/Skilled Immigrant Centre*

- Vancouver Public Library has many programs that in combination with our large collection of print and online resources support job seekers, employers and small business owners in the community.

We offer a free one-hour drop-in Career and Job Search Tour every Tuesday at 10:30 and every Thursday at 2:30 at the Central Library. We introduce the paper and electronic resources that can help patrons access the hidden job market or change their career. The centre also has bulletin boards on which we post job fair notices, free interview and resume workshops, and other information from employment organizations. Many of these organizations bring their clients into the library and show them the resources.

- VPL also offers a free, drop-in Small Business Tour every second Saturday from 10:30-12:00. Similarly to the job search tour, we share the small business paper and electronic resources with the patrons.
- Our Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre (<http://skilledimmigrants.vpl.ca/index.php/infocentre/>), is funded by the Ministry of Jobs, Innovation and Tourism and is another valuable service which we offer. Skilled immigrants can book a one-hour appointment with a librarian and be guided through the resources applicable to their industry. Our Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre librarian visits employment organizations and demonstrates the InfoCentre and Library resources to their clients and staff. We also participate in job fairs. We are now in the process of planning for the expansion of the Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre to offer greater support to skilled immigrants outside of the lower mainland and to library staff across the province who are helping immigrants in their employment search. We often present programs on job-search-related databases such as Career Cruising, Reference Canada, and Learning Express Library. In partnership with outside organizations we hold afternoon and evening sessions at the Central Library on a variety of topics including social media and small business, resume clinics, and industry information sessions for immigrants.

### *Partnerships*

- In October 2011, we were pleased to open the new 7,000 sq. ft. Terry Salman Branch at the Hillcrest Centre as part of the Olympic Legacy to Vancouver residents. The new branch replaced the 1200 sq ft Riley Park branch and is open 7 days a week and business is surpassing our expectations.
- VPL was also pleased to form a partnership with the Metro Vancouver YWCA to build the new DTES/Strathcona Branch in conjunction with the “Cause we Care” housing for single mothers and their children. The new 12,000 sq ft branch will be opening in late 2014.
- VPL offers musical performances and education in partnership with the Bach Choir, the Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra and the Vancouver International Song Institute. Partnerships with music organizations include: The Bach Choir, BC Chinese Music Association, Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra and the Vancouver International Song Institute. These are the music organizations that appear at the Library on a regular (some monthly) basis. These programs, which include a pedagogical component, benefit those who cannot attend concerts, those who want to experience a musical genre for the first time, and people who want to learn about the music as well as enjoy it. For our music partners, the programs at the Central Library provide a popular venue that is welcoming and comfortable both to regular Library users and those attending for the first time. In addition to hosting these popular programs, the Library benefits from the opportunities to inform people about the wealth of music and music education resources available at the Library and digitally through our online branch, [vpl.ca](http://vpl.ca).
- VPL partners with Incite @ VPL with the Vancouver International Writers Festival Incite @ VPL This partnership with the Vancouver International Writers Festival is just over a year old and had a very

successful first year. Local, national and international writers – both emerging and multi-award-winning – have appeared at Incite @ VPL in conversation with Writers Festival Artistic Director Hal Wake, local writers and journalists. The bi-monthly programs continuously draw 100 to 300 people. The Central Library is known as one of the premier venues in the city for author readings and programs, and the addition of this program with the Vancouver International Writers Festival has augmented that reputation. Those who cannot afford to attend regular Writers Festival programs or who are being introduced to a new author, can attend these free programs and listen to high-profile national and international writers. For the authors, the opportunity to present their work to hundreds of readers and potential readers at such a high-calibre program is coveted. Both the Writers Festival and the Library receive correspondence from agents, publishers and authors offering to appear at Incite @ VPL.

- The Library partners with Vancouver Opera to offer recurring programs such as Opera Speaks. The partnership between Vancouver Public Library and Vancouver Opera is a long-standing one. For each of its productions, Vancouver Opera holds an Opera Speaks program at the Central Library a week or two before the production opens as a way to introduce opera and the upcoming production to Vancouver residents. It is continuously one of the Library's most highly attended co-sponsored programs and often reaches our capacity of 300. The Opera Speaks program usually includes a short performance from cast members and often a discussion and Q&A period with the director, artistic director, and in the case of modern productions with the composer and/or librettist. This program benefits new and novice opera listeners and attendees have told VPL staff that they've enjoyed productions on a deeper level after attending an Opera Speaks program leading up to a performance. The series provides Vancouver Opera the opportunity to reach people who cannot afford to attend full performances, and it allows the Library to introduce its music collection and inform people of the information they can obtain after the program.

VPL's commitment of ongoing community engagement coupled with collaborative service planning with a variety of partners such as the VSB and cultural organizations remains a high priority. As we look ahead in 2012, VPL plans to build on the 2011 achievements and lessons learned from the Free for all process. Offering services and programs where and when people need and want them will remain foremost.

For further information, please refer to our Annual Report  
<http://pwp.vpl.ca/annualreport2011/>

## **Conclusion**

Members of the Coordinating Committee have met recently to celebrate the literacy initiatives in the various communities of Vancouver. Comment about the nature of the work, the breadth of the work, and the reach of the work were noted. Four years ago as this work began, the group had only imagined the possibilities. To see the communities reach this level of involvement and support has been remarkable. The need for stability in the funding will allow expansion of the programming. The partnerships with the School District and the Library have grown through this process. The links with the community have been extremely important and valuable for the growth of literacy and for other important engagements. With the visioning process underway, the possibilities for the future are even more exciting.