



School District No. 64 (Gulf Islands) District Literacy Report – July 2012

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Community Based Literacy Programming Geographical region: SD64

2012 Progress Update

Task Group

Community consultation facilitated by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) occurred in many ways in 2011-2012:

Salt Spring Literacy Board

The board represented a variety of community members; retired educators, politicians, government workers, social workers, university students, general community members and adult learners.

Working committees of 2011-2012

- Vocational Rehabilitation:
 - representatives from Salt Spring Literacy, Salt Spring Community Services, a vocational rehab expert, business owners and volunteer students
- English as a Second Language:
 - experts from local universities, ESL tutors and interested community members, Salt Spring Literacy representatives
- Free Voice trial:
 - a wide variety of the target audience (people with mental health and addiction issues), Community Services representatives, social workers, Island Women Against Violence (IWAV) representative and Salt Spring Literacy representatives

Extended community consultation

Members of the wider community are encouraged to give input through a variety of contexts. The LOC and other Literacy staff and volunteers do outreach in the community (community meetings, sitting on other boards or task groups, and one to one), the downtown Literacy Centre is a hub where people can drop in and learn about plans for the future, ways to participate or make their own suggestions, and a weekly news email is sent to approximately 300 community members.

Community Context

The economic downturn continues in the region. Food Bank usage continues to be unusually high and there is anecdotal evidence that once again this summer the tourist dollars will not equal those of previous years. In response the newly established Community Economic Development Commission is developing a short and long term economic development strategy for the island. It is hoped this will be finalised in time for next year's District Literacy Plan. As the strategy is likely to have recommendations for the community this may impact future projects for Salt Spring Literacy.

Career Assistance and Resources for Employment (CARE) - our local downtown unemployment center lost its funding this year. Beacon Community Services won the contract for the island and took over operations in April 2012. Although it is too early to know any long term outcomes for the island, the change in management did mean the downtown shop front unemployment office was closed. The new unemployment office is located inside a larger facility, slightly out of town, in the Community Service buildings.

The benefits of this move include a cheaper rent and easier access for those already using Community Services (mental health counselling, the Food Bank and the new vocational rehab program etc). The potential downsides however are the loss of visibility and the increased potential of stigma of attending Community Services.

It should be noted there is a change in the funding arrangement with Beacon operating under a fee for service model. Although this may offer taxpayers better value for money it might also mean that those requiring a greater input of time (the more needy) are overlooked in favour of a quick return (the less needy). Crucially however, some key staff transferred from CARE to Beacon. This means relationships between Beacon and existing community organisations (Literacy, IWAV, SSICS, Library etc) continue as does the relationships with community members. The full impact of the change in management will be reported in next year's DLP.

The Salt Spring Public Library closed its long-term facility in 2011 and relocated to a smaller temporary facility while the new library is constructed. In the short-term this meant some library services were discontinued (computer support, exam invigilation) but Salt Spring Literacy took over provision of these services for the community. The new library is due to open November 2012 with a much larger capacity, including meeting rooms and more computers. Once the library is operational it may impact the services Literacy operates. The strong partnership between the library and Literacy may mean that new services are provided through collaboration utilising the new space.

Affordable housing on the island recently made considerable progress with the purchase of a large property with multi residences for second stage and permanent housing. This purchase is a collaboration between Island Women Against Violence and Abbeyfield. As the Literacy Society has worked with a number of learners residing in the local Transition House, and has had

learners leave the island to pursue second stage housing, any increase in affordable housing assists literacy development in our community.

Community Education continues not to offer courses following an unsustainable decline in enrollment resulting in rising costs. Consequently, the board of Community Education decided to give away their assets to local groups. Salt Spring Literacy received \$10,000 and other community groups received smaller donations. In addition Community Education also gifted their annual fundraiser (a second hand book sale) to Salt Spring Literacy, and a number of former Community Education board members joined the Literacy board.

The Salt Spring Foundation undertook a community needs assessment. The top five concerns for the community were: affordable housing, mental health/health care education, poverty, agriculture and food supply and children, youth or family services. Some of which may be assisted through literacy programming.

Salt Spring Literacy successfully secured funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria to run a full time vocational rehabilitation program in partnership with Salt Spring Community Services. This program is intended for people with notable barriers to employment (addiction, mental health issues, long term welfare recipients). Through literacy support ranging from traditional literacy skills through to life skills, participants are fully supported for six months as they reattach to the workforce. This new program for the island was the result of research conducted by the Literacy Society in the previous year, and a successful trial of life skills workshops in 2011. Although the health authorities had identified the need for a vocational rehabilitation program for the island a number of years ago the funding was reassigned to another region before the program became operational.

Community Development and Collaboration

Collaborations continue to be one of the key factors in supporting literacy in our community. Perhaps the most important collaboration for literacy on Salt Spring Island in 2011-2012 is between Salt Spring Island Community Services (SSICS) and Salt Spring Literacy. Although there has been a connection for a number of years in 2011 it was formalised with a joint program funded by the United Way of Greater Victoria. This was a six month trial of life skill workshops for people with mental health and addiction issues. In 2012 the funding was extended to run a full time, year round program.

This much needed and overdue program is life changing for the more marginalised members of our community. The collaboration was the crucial factor both in securing the funding and in operating the program. This is an ongoing collaboration.

Other new important collaborations this year in our community include:

- Salt Spring Literacy, SSICS, Arts Council, IWAV, and the Copper Kettle hosted a Community Art Show to showcase the creative talents of marginalised members of our community: writing, music, performance, photography and art. This event was a success and will possibly become an annual three day event in our community.
- RCMP, Victim Services, IWAV, Salt Spring Literacy and many other Salt Spring and outer island organisations have met to create a Southern Gulf Island Partnership for Women's Safety (SGIPWS). They will form two committees, the Violence Against Women in Relationships (VAWIR) and Inter-agency Case Assessment Team (ICAT) on Salt Spring Island and the Outer Gulf Islands. In the future this will mean when staff or volunteers find out about serious abuse of their learners they will have an agency the danger can be reported to.
- IWAV and the local Abbeyfield Society collaborated to purchase a large, multi building B&B that will be turned into affordable housing and second stage housing. This is a much needed resource for our community, which should have an impact for a number of adult learners.
- Community Education's decision to use their accrued assets to support a number of organisations on the island provided a valuable support to a number of local groups: literacy, art and youth groups all received support from Community Ed. In addition Salt Spring Literacy was also gifted their annual fundraiser, a second hand community book sale which is expected to raise between \$10,000- \$15,000 a year.

Long established and ongoing collaborations between local organisations for community development and literacy include SD64, the Salt Spring Public Library and Salt Spring Literacy.

Current trends in funding, where preference is given to inter-agencies, goes a long way to combat long-held beliefs that collaborations endanger the potential funding for each organisation. Consequently organisations are no longer in competition for scarce resources: rather many funders encourage if not require collaborations before funding is offered. Although collaborations are now an effective method for securing funding, successful collaborations require more than funding. Collaborations work well when the workload and expertise of each organisation is mutually valued and respected. Both partners (or all partners) need to be treated as equally valuable. Effective collaborations are more likely when each organisation plays to its strengths.

For example, in our current partnership with SSICS, Salt Spring Literacy secured the funding and provided the administration and volunteers. SSICS provided the facility and the expertise on mental health and addiction. This plays to each organisation's strengths; Literacy has ample volunteers and a comparably lighter administration load but has very little facility space and no

expertise in mental health. SSICS houses many experts in mental health amongst their staff, has multiple large facilities but is heavily taxed regarding volunteers and has a heavy administration workload. By combining strengths the program is easily operated between the two organisations.

Goals and Actions for 2011-2012

Goal	Action	Partner	Adjustment
One to one tutoring	Continued	n/a (although many agencies refer learners to Literacy)	none
Employment support	The vocational rehab program	SSICS	A partnership with SSICS and funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria enabled this full time program
Support for mental health and addiction	The vocational rehab program- as above	SSICS	A partnership with SSICS and funding from the United Way of Greater Victoria enabled this full time program
Outer island support	Planning	Possibly SD64 and the libraries on the outer islands	As no funding has yet been secured Literacy is currently exploring a virtual expansion which would enable inter-island matching of tutors and learners through a website.
ESLSAP	Continued and expanded	Possible future support from SS Archives	In addition to our standard ESLSAP funding this year we got additional funding to run English Practice Groups.
Tutor support and handbook	Adjustments underway	n/a	Administration adjustments to tutor support should see an increase in tutor training workshops from the Fall onwards. Work on handbook was delayed.

Travelling Book Box	Continued	Soups On, SSICS	The loss of a volunteer meant we recently have had to temporarily stop attending Soups On with the book box and have yet to attend the Food Bank. The books however are still available at the Literacy Centre six days a week and the acquired book sale is boosting the collection.
Literacy Centre	Continued	n/a (although many agencies refer learners to Literacy)	none

Indications of Success

In 2011 Literacy enrolled 108 new learners. In the first five months of 2012 Literacy enrolled an additional 35. There are currently over 190 active learners matched and meeting with a tutor. In addition there are just over 80 active volunteer tutors available for learners. The 2011 census listed the population of Salt Spring Island as 10,234. Approximately 2.6% of the total population is either receiving or volunteering literacy support through Salt Spring Literacy. This indicates success at a grassroots or community level.

Partnerships have increased, both with new organisations collaborating in the last 12 months and with existing partnerships being expanded and solidified. This indicates success at a colleague level. Funding was increased significantly with the United Way of Greater Victoria. All existing major funding was renewed including ESLSAP (with additional funding for EPGs) and Decoda LOC funding. This indicates satisfaction from the funders.

Challenges

Literacy still has to replace the Legacies/Decoda implementation funding which Literacy used to operate its core programs and covered its core costs. The three year implementation funding enabled the community to have adult literacy support where none existed before. It is hoped that either CALP or the Gaming Grant application may be successful this year.

Looking Forward to 2012- 2013

The opening of the new library in November 2012 and the shift in the management of the unemployment center from CARE to Beacon will have an impact for literacy support in the community. Salt Spring Literacy will need to be ready to accommodate any new opportunities or challenges that arise from these changes.

Goal	Action	What is required
One to one tutoring	Continue	Continued LOC funding, and successful CALP or Gaming funding.
Employment support and support for mental health and addiction - The vocational rehab program	Continue	Funding renewal from the United Way of Greater Victoria for 2013.
Outer island support	Planning/launch- expanded digital/virtual presence. If trials are successful this will allow for tutors and learners on different island to meet virtually, tutor training to take place via either pre-recorded workshops or through live interactive workshops.	Successful trial over summer 2012, support from the outer islands (incl. SD64, libraries and outer island community members)
ESLSAP	Continue	Funding has already been renewed for the 2012-2013 period.
Tutor support and handbook	Increase workshops, provide virtual workshops (above) and create an online forum for peer tutor support.	Successful trial of online capacity.
Travelling Book Box	Continue and secure new volunteers to attend outreach points.	New volunteers able to commit to weekly attendance, with vehicle and in physical health for lifting boxes.
Literacy Centre	Continue	Continued LOC funding, and successful CALP or Gaming funding.
Book Sale	First year operating the annual giant book sale	
Free Voice	Upgrade the website, co-host another Community Art Show	For the Art Show the other community partners would be needed: Arts Council, Copper Kettle, IWAV, SSICS. For the website a suitable volunteer.