



Maple Ridge - Pitt Meadows - Katzie

**Community
Literacy Committee**

**COMMUNITY AND DISTRICT
LITERACY PLAN
June 2014**

Bringing Literacy to Life

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS _____	1
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY _____	3
ORGANIZATION OF LITERACY COMMITTEE _____	4
TRENDS IN OUR COMMUNITY _____	5
PARTNERSHIPS and COLLABORATION _____	6
2013 GOALS AND PRIORITIES _____	7
ACTIONS SUPPORT LITERACY _____	10
KEY DIFFICULTIES IN 2013 _____	13
LOOKING FORWARD TO 2014-15 _____	14

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Literacy Committee acknowledges the BC Ministry of Education and Decoda Literacy Solutions for its funding and ongoing support.

The Community Literacy Committee would also like to thank School District 42 and the Fraser Valley Regional Library for their assistance and support in 2013/14.

A sincere thank you is extended to the Community Literacy Committee, volunteers, tutors, partner organizations and businesses, and those who give their time and energy to support literacy in our community. We couldn't do it without you!

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS / DONORS

- Ministry of Advanced Education
- Post Media Raise a Reader
- Vancity
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Arts Council
- The Maple Ridge NEWS
- First Books Canada
- Tim Hortons Community Cruiser
- Janet Love Morrison
- Bean Around Books



MESSAGE FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Over the past ten years, the CLC has grown significantly and has been working to improve the lives of local residents with low literacy skills. In most cases, these individuals face multiple challenges, barriers that keep them from fully participating in our community.

As individuals become more literate, they become more confident, more employable, and they and their families will make healthier life choices. They often become active in the community and contribute their skills and talents; thus improving the quality of life for all members of the community.

Over the last number of years consistent funding, from the Ministry of Education through Decoda Literacy Solutions, has allowed for a centralized, coordinated focus on literacy support and professional development, easing distribution of funding, allowing for cohesive tracking and accountability, and opening up opportunities for province-wide and regional funding matches.

In the past, Decoda regularly received \$2.5 million in annual funding (via the Provincial government), which allowed for sustainability, continuation, and the ability to build on current work and current resources to provide ongoing and innovative community literacy programming. However, during the 2013 fiscal year there was only \$1 million initially allocated, later another \$1 million was allocated, but that still left Decoda scrambling with various other partners to make up the \$500,000 short fall. Projected funding for the 2014 year again will fall far short of meeting the needs of so many of the various literacy groups around the province.

We were very hopeful that the recommendation, through the “Report of the Budget 2014 Consultations, Select Standing Committee on Finance and Government Services” supported ongoing annual funding at the \$2.5 million dollar level. This static funding would help to sustain and stabilize community literacy work through the province and allow for some long term strategic planning and continue to allow opportunities for province-wide and regional funding matches.

The positive impact to community, as a whole, cannot be denied; it affects everything from healthcare, to employment, to the economy; and increased literacy rates improve the ability of community members to participate in the BC Jobs Plan. This funding has had a number of direct benefits to our community including an ESL women’s group, financial literacy workshops coupled with a tax project, our training of literacy volunteers, the training of members of a number of our partner groups in the PALS program (Parents As Literacy



Supporters), our adult book clubs at the library and the Caring Place, our book bins, our CALP grant working with low literacy youth, Family Literacy Day, and a number of our other community initiatives.

But as we wind down from another successful year we realize that government funding for next year will probably not meet the needs of our existing programs. We, like many groups provincially, look at the future of the Community Literacy Committee with great uncertainty. We would much rather spend our time and energy on building and maintaining our collaborative partnerships and existing literacy programs that meet the needs of our local community than spend time and energy on looking and applying for grants (in an ever diminishing market).

In this day and age literacy is a basic human right, one where the provincial government needs to step up to the plate and make a commitment to reasonable and sustainable funding.

Yours respectfully,

Bruce Grady
Co-Chair CLC

Jesse Hill
Co-Chair CLC



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Literacy Committee (CLC) set a new course in March of 2011. The Committee and its Literacy Outreach Workers (LOWs) worked together to re-establish a clear direction, goals, and to implement its new action plan for literacy.

Over the past three years the CLC, a community planning table and standing committee of the Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, Katzie Community Network, has focused its efforts on improving literacy outcomes in our community by increasing services to adult learners through collaboration while increasing awareness of literacy in our community.

The CLC has achieved many positive outcomes, built strong partnerships, actively engaged volunteers and members, enhanced existing literacy programs, and increased awareness of literacy using community development techniques and processes. This work forms a solid foundation upon which to build future literacy initiatives.

As with many community groups, the CLC has operated on a shoestring budget. Funding from the Ministry of Education for collaborative community literacy work is essential to the work that we do. Our financial reserves from previous years are now exhausted. Faced with the threat of further funding cuts, the CLC is assessing how to creatively maintain current literacy projects and initiatives.

The results achieved in the past three years have been remarkable. The personal stories included in this report show that the CLCs focused literacy work is helping individual community members. The Learning Room – our accessible and central literacy centre – has become the hub of literacy for learners and agencies. Conversations with partners highlight increased literacy awareness, growing desire to weave literacy into programs, and greater opportunities for literacy collaboration. Community outreach enabled the CLC to get over 6000 books out into the hands of families most impacted by low literacy.

Our goals for 2014-15 continue to reflect the same priorities and objectives as the three previous years. Given current financial constraints, and our objective to remain a literacy collaborator not a literacy programmer, the CLC is searching out creative ways to continue our literacy work.



MAPLE RIDGE PITT MEADOWS KATZIE COMMUNITY LITERACY COMMITTEE (CLC)

About the Literacy Committee

The Literacy Committee works in the communities of Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Katzie to promote and support adult, community, and family literacy. The Literacy Committee is a community group that is open to anyone who wants to be involved in literacy.

Mission

Our mission is:

The Literacy Committee promotes and supports adult, community and family literacy and provides leadership and coordination of literacy initiatives in the communities of Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows and Katzie First Nation.

Vision

We envision a community where:

- Literacy programs are available to people of all ages and all backgrounds;
- All people are encouraged to learn, read and participate;
- All learners are valued for all their skills;
- All learners feel safe to ask for help and use community literacy services; and,
- Literacy initiatives are coordinated and happen in many parts of our community.

ORGANIZATION OF LITERACY COMMITTEE

The CLC is a Standing Committee of our local Community Network. We work in collaboration with community partners to achieve its goals. Our key partners continue to be the School District 42 and Fraser Valley Regional Library. Both provide valuable resources and support for the CLC's work.

Since 2011 the CLC has grown its membership database to over: 120. This includes people from organizations and government, businesses, and the general community.

GUIDING QUESTION #1

*Who takes part in the
Task Group? How is
the work of the task
group organized?*



Our Literacy Committee includes a:

- Community Planning Table (members and partners)
- Steering Committee (Co-Chairs and LOWs)
- Work Groups (partner groups or volunteers working on specific tasks)

The Community Planning table sets the overall priorities and vision for the Literacy Committee. The Steering Committee further defines how these priorities will be achieved with concrete action plans. The work groups are either: groups of partners working together towards shared goals; or, active volunteers supported by LOWs to do specific tasks.

TRENDS IN OUR COMMUNITY

The following trends impact on the work we are doing:

Positive:

- Increased awareness of importance of literacy;
- Increase in literacy activities and events;
- Broader understanding of literacy;
- Increase in number of learners accessing literacy services in community;
- Increase in collaborative and partnership opportunities; and,
- Agencies and CLC looking for creative ideas to make things happen.

Negative:

- Decrease in literacy program / service funding;
- Limited funding for collaboration / administration of literacy; Ongoing funding constraints make it hard for non-profits to find time / money to partner on literacy activities;
- Continual struggle to engage learners in literacy activities;
- Decreasing funds available in schools; and
- Increase in immigrant population with few resources to support.

GUIDING QUESTION # 2

What has happened in your 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.



3

GUIDING QUESTION #3A

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

PARTNERSHIPS and COLLABORATION

The CLC's activities focus on partnering and collaboration to support and enhance existing literacy initiatives within partner organizations. The following collaborative efforts support literacy and the work of the task group:

1. Family Literacy Work Group
 - Pre-School Literacy Explorer Kits
 - Christmas Distribution for Children & Youth
 - Project Book Bin
2. Learning Room
 - Women's ESL Conversation Group
 - Tax Filing program
3. CALP Program
 - Adult Tutoring
 - Tutor Training
4. Financial Literacy
5. Adult Learners Book Club
6. Outreach Book Clubs
7. Family Literacy Day
8. Literacy Day at Haney Farmers Market

ESSENTIAL ONGOING COLLABORATION

The CLC has two essential partners: School District 42 and the Fraser Valley Regional Library (Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows). Both play a central role in terms of partnering on events, providing in-kind support (administration, photocopying, contacts, etc.) and hosting meetings.

GUIDING QUESTION #3B

What are the essential ongoing collaborations?

Other core partnerships include:

- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Network;
- CEED Centre;
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community Services;
- Maple Ridge Family Education and Support Centre; and,
- University of the Fraser Valley.



**GUIDING
QUESTION #3C**

*What makes
collaboration work
well?*

WORKING WELL TOGETHER

In January 2014 the CLC asked partner groups to reflect on collaborative / partnership efforts. Here are the responses we received:

What made the partnership work well?

- "A really great sharing of information."
- "Various types of communication (email / meetings); funding for projects; opportunities for input."
- "Great communication. Excellent follow through on plans. Flexibility and shared vision."
- "Excellent relationship between Coordinators. Great communication after meetings with meeting minutes and division of tasks."
- "Enjoyed working with your organization. Would be happy to do another session for service providers in the community."

How could the partnership be improved?

- "The more lead-time we receive, the better. We plan about a year out."
- "Increased representation on the Committee (Family Literacy Work Group)."
- "I think our partnership works well. No improvements needed."
- "It is very good already."

2013 GOALS AND PRIORITIES

In 2013 the emphasis remained on furthering the goals established in 2012, these were:

1. Identify and increase free and community based services to adult learners in Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie through partnerships with service providers
2. Coordinate and cooperate with community service providers to enhance literacy levels across our community to improve quality of life
3. Create an increased community literacy profile in Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows, and Katzie through awareness building, community outreach, and marketing efforts
4. Become a leader in literacy initiatives

**4
GUIDING
QUESTION #4A**

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



In addition, four priorities were defined to help the Committee and LOWs focus their attention:

- Build on existing programs and services that are currently underway
- Focus on finding sustainable funding and identify sponsorship opportunities
- Maximize use of various marketing opportunities (print and online) to improve literacy profile
- Evaluate activities for effectiveness and impact

ACTIONS

The following achievements moved the CLC towards its goals:

- Learning Room grew as a “hub” of literacy for referral agencies, learners, and volunteers
- Book distribution through Raise a Reader and First Book Canada opened up conversations with partner agencies and resulted in more free books for distribution in the community
- Work groups and sub-committees expanded volunteers and partners became active participants in CLCs collaborative work
- Fundraising, partnering, and in-kind contributions brought in over \$55,300
- Newsletter, website, Facebook, and Twitter strengthened online presence
- Bookkeeping system provides LOWs with financial information needed to make informed decisions
- Long-term collaborative processes and partnerships resulting in new programs, resources, and referrals

**GUIDING
QUESTION #4B**

*What actions were
taken to reach these?*



PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS & PARTNERS

Partners for 2013 included:

GUIDING QUESTION #4B

*What organizations
and groups
participated in these
actions?*

- Fraser Valley Regional Library – Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows, Literacy Outreach (LILI)
- School District 42 (various departments)
- Family Education and Support Centre
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Community Services (various departments)
- Cythera House Transition Society
- Katzie Youth Worker
- Ridge Meadows Education Foundation
- Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation
- Pathfinder Youth Centre Society
- Haney Farmers Market
- CEED Centre Society
- Fraser Health
- Immigrant Services Society of BC
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Parks and Leisure Services
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Arts Council (ACT)
- Ridge Meadows Education Foundation
- The Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows News
- Friends in Need Food Bank
- Salvation Army Caring Place
- University of the Fraser Valley
- SUCCESS
- Petals Woman's Ministry
- Maple Ridge Pitt Meadows Katzie Community Network

GUIDING QUESTION #4C

*What adjustments
were made to the
plan?*

ADJUSTMENTS TO PLAN

The CLC made few adjustments to its plans throughout the year as things progressed smoothly towards identified goals.

However, the following adjustments were made:

- Adult Literacy Worker was hired to manage Tutor / Learner process and deliver the CALP program; and,
- Collaborative model for financial literacy resulted in workshops being offered however means of tracking outcomes / outputs needed.



5

GUIDING QUESTION # 5

*How do you know
that the actions
taken are working to
support literacy?*

*What impact have
the literacy initiatives
had?*

*What are the things
that support literacy
work?*

ACTIONS SUPPORT LITERACY

The CLC is confident that our actions have supported literacy in our community. We are particularly proud of the following:

- Increased the number of ongoing literacy partnerships;
- Grown the number of adult learners accessing services via the Learning Room and referrals;
- Updated Tutor Training program and trained more tutors;
- Established two book clubs for low literacy adult learners;
- Introduced family literacy activity kits which are distributed through partners' lending library;
- Raised literacy profile using social and print media as well as community outreach at events;
- Distributed books to low income families as part of First Books Canada distribution and Raise a Reader funding;
- Coordinated First Books Canada book pickup and hosted book swap to ensure good selection of books available to each recipient agency. Over 6180 books were picked-up to be distributed in the community.
- Advocated for funding to be maintained by Ministry of Education by meeting with Marc Dalton and Doug Bing, local MLAs, and solicited letters of support from community;
- Fundraising resulted in new revenue streams (small, piece meal), in-kind donations, and sponsorships;
- Engaged partner agencies and volunteers to actively take part in community events, presentations, and work projects; and,
- Partnering enhanced existing literacy programming and better support for local service providers.



**GUIDING
QUESTION # 5**

*What impact have
the literacy initiatives
had?*

IMPACT OF LITERACY WORK

The Personal Stories...¹

JOHN

John is a recovering addict with a learning challenge and other health issues who lives in transitional housing.

He's looking to take a trades program at BCIT to return to similar work he once did. His memory and health issues make this difficult.

He had tried to upgrade his studies on his own, but found he needed more individual guidance. He would not enroll again without knowing he had the support needed to succeed.

He is dedicated and determined. He's working with a tutor to work on ongoing literacy, and grade 10 physics to obtain the prerequisites to reach his workplace goals.

SAM

Sam is a 48-year-old labourer who has struggled his whole life with reading and writing.

He's tried to reach out for help before but has been frustrated with a lack of positive individual help. He has great difficulty spelling all words and is forced to call his wife numerous times a day for help. He has lost work due to his literacy issues and was shamed into silence.

Since beginning one-to-one, once a week sessions with his tutor three months ago, he's built his own dictionary and is determined to improve his workplace literacy. He is beginning to shake his poor self-image and replacing it with pride as he embraces learning.

¹ To ensure that the Learners remain anonymous, the names in these stories have been changed.

SARAH

Sarah joined a conversational English circle at the Learning Room and has now become an integral part of the Literacy Committee's financial literacy tax assistance program.

She volunteers long hours to assist others to do their taxes. This allows her to improve her English and also led to her finding employment in the tax preparation field this year.

JILL – in her own words..

I enjoy going to the Adult Learner Book Club. I've had the privilege of meeting other people, some like myself, with low literacy ...

We, the group, all read easy written adult books and one novel is picked by the group's decision. We read a little at a time per week as we meet at the library to review what we have just read by asking questions openly and talking a little in depth about what the theme is about. I really like listening to others' opinions and how others express their thoughts about the events and characters of the novel. Keep in mind there is no such thing as a dumb question.

Wow! I must say the books I have read so far were really interesting and I couldn't put those darn books down. (And never mind about the housework, guilty smile). Sometimes I end up reading more than the weekly arranged chapters. That's the honest truth!

I like to conclude by saying if you or anyone else you know is in this category of difficulty, you and they are more than welcome to attend (if shy have someone escort you) and believe me when I say the friendly environment is so comfortable that you feel at home among the new friends you will meet and relate with. 😊

Note: Step by step from cover to cover you can do it with friends to help.

JENN

Jenn has worked steadily with a tutor for several years.

She began with improving her reading and writing, and has now widened her goals to include finishing high school. She is now upgrading her high school Math and English.

**GUIDING
QUESTION # 5**

*What are the things
that support literacy
work?*

SUPPORTS FOR LITERACY WORK

Essential literacy supports in our community include:

- Volunteers – events, tutors, social media, etc.;
- Partnerships with local agencies & libraries, educational organizations, and municipal partners;
- Access to free or low cost books for distribution in the community (Project Book Bin, Food Bank book distribution, give-aways at events);
- Collaborative nature of local community agencies to work together towards shared solutions;
- Marketing & media support from local newspapers, community publications, online event listings, etc.

KEY DIFFICULTIES IN 2013

Difficulties in 2013 included:

- Long-term sustainable funding an ongoing issue;
- Challenges with tracking outcomes and outputs when CLC acts as a liaison between agencies and facilitates processes that lead to programs / services outside of our control;
- Activities / Programs that engage learners where they are (i.e. homeless shelter) are supported in principle, but host organizations unable / unwilling to take over lead after pilot project completed;
- Time constraints (both at CLC and partner level) restrict the uptake of strong literacy programming ideas / processes / presentations; and,
- Link between literacy and success in life still not well understood which makes it difficult to engage businesses in literacy initiatives.

IT WOULD BE HELPFUL IF WE HAD...

- **Stable** annual funding as recommended by the Standing Committee to the Ministry of Education;
- Committee members with more time to become actively engaged in the work being done by the CLC;
- More money from funders for collaborative work;
- Our partner agencies could engage in collaboration without so many time / money restrictions; and,
- Broader understanding by public around what literacy is and how it benefits our communities.

**GUIDING
QUESTION #6**

*What are the
difficulties?*

What would help?

FOR THE COMING YEAR

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

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

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

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2014-15

The work conducted by the CLC since 2011 has set a strong foundation for literacy in our community. Learner contacts are up, partners are approaching the CLC, and new ideas for engaging learners in literacy are constantly being assessed. New ideas and opportunities present themselves regularly.

However, as the 2014 fiscal year starts the CLC is faced with a funding crunch that overshadows any new opportunities that may exist. The decrease in funds from Decoda Literacy Solutions (via the Ministry of Education) combined with the CLC's funding reserves running out means that the CLC has to make some hard decisions.

Over the summer of 2014, the CLC will explore various scenarios, in relation to the available budget and existing contract obligations, to determine how to respond to this new reality while achieving 2014 goals.

2014 GOALS & OBJECTIVES

In 2014 the CLC will continue to work toward goals established in previous years including:

1. Identify and increase free and community based services to adult learners through partnerships with service providers.
2. Coordinate and cooperate with service providers to enhance literacy levels and improve quality of life.
3. Create increased community literacy through awareness building, community outreach, and marketing efforts.
4. Become a leader in literacy initiatives.

WHAT'S REQUIRED?

To continue to achieve these goals the CLC needs to find **stable, diversified and sustainable funding** that supports collaboration and partnering on literacy initiatives.