



# 2015 Community Literacy Plan

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	3
Community Literacy Plan	3
1. Task Group	3
2. Community Context	4
3. Community Development and Literacy Collaboration	5
4. Goals and Actions for 2014-2015	5
5. Indications of Success	7
6. Challenges	10
7. Plans for 2015-2016	10

## INTRODUCTION

The Greater Victoria School District and its community partners enjoy a respectful and highly interactive relationship. The Community Literacy Plan serves as a wonderful example of how when various groups come together for a common cause and higher purpose, positive outcomes occur. We are pleased with the progress made to date

## REFLECTIONS ON THE CURRENT YEAR

### 1. Task Group

#### A. Who takes part in the Task Group?

- Greater Victoria School District #61 - (SD61)
- The Victoria READ Society
- Greater Victoria Public Library - (GVPL)
- Literacy Victoria - (LV)
- The Victoria Disability Resource Centre - (DRC)
- Together Against Poverty Society - (TAPS)
- The Learning Disabilities Association - (LDA)
- Camosun College
- Victoria Epilepsy and Parkinson's Society - (VEPS)
- Capital Mental Health Association - (CMHA)
- Child Care Resource and Referral - (CCRC)
- Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC)
- Paisley Aiken -Story Studio
- Fiona Bramble-HERE magazine

#### B. How is the work of this group organized?

- Operates within the Terms of Reference developed by the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) and TG members;
- Is open to community members and includes representatives from the social services and education sector;
- Works with the LOC to identify and respond to needs in literacy services and resources;
- Makes decisions by consensus;
- Determines the best use of implementation funding;
- Membership, meetings, consultations and activities are organized by the LOC;
- Meets on a quarterly basis, unless extra meetings are required;
- Has the LOC as their primary contact person.

## 2. Community Context

### A. Describe your community in one or two short paragraphs (e.g. size, economy, demographics, and trends).

The Greater Victoria School District serves students from the municipalities of Saanich, Esquimalt, View Royal, Oak Bay, the Highlands, the City of Victoria, and the following Nations and Aboriginal organizations: Esquimalt Nation; Songhees Nation; Métis Community Services; Métis Nation of Greater Victoria; Victoria Native Friendship Centre; Indigenous Interagency Team; Surrounded by Cedar Child & Family Services; and Hulitan Social Services Society. Schools draw from the urban, semi-urban and suburban areas. Five MLAs represent the Greater Victoria area. As of July 2011, BC Stats reports a total of 102,613 private households in the Greater Victoria School District with approximately 223,488 people residing within the School District.

### B. Are there any major changes that have taken place over the last year that impact the ability of organizations to support literacy development – positive or negative?

- Literacy Victoria closed its doors in August 2014 due to lack of sustainable funding; this was a huge loss to adults needing literacy tutoring at no cost; LV re-opened on a small scale in March 2015 with one part-time coordinator in an office at the Disability Resource Centre; offering adult tutoring only; outreach may continue dependent upon funding;
- Reduction in READ funding from past sponsors for some programs;
- LOC funding for 2014-2015 is a positive factor in support of community literacy in Victoria;
- Camosun College will continue to offer tuition-free ABE courses that include literacy and numeracy levels, through Spring and Summer 2015 terms: [www.camosun.ca](http://www.camosun.ca);
- Camosun College will continue to offer literacy and numeracy level classes both on campus and at community partner sites in Fall/Winter terms, including the Victoria Native Friendship Centre (VNFC), Bridges for Women (BFW), and the Songhees Learning Centre (SLC);
- Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL) committed to continuing Bookmobile service to Our Place Society and has expanded the service to include a weekly stocking and maintenance of the reading room at Our Place;
- GVPL's Central branch has created 2 new meeting rooms that are suitable for small groups or tutors to work in (rooms are free and sign-up sheets are available each day);
- GVPL committed to continuing the provision of book stock and monthly book rotation at Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre;
- GVPL has just signed a Memorandum of Understanding with VIRCC to institute a request system through a corporate card so inmates can place holds on specific authors, titles, and subjects;

- GVPL is supporting the Cowichan School District in delivering a K-12 schools program at VIRCC;
- GVPL is supporting the Victoria Read Society tutors providing basic literacy training at VIRCC.

### 3. Community Development and Literacy Collaboration

**Provide an example of an important collaboration that has taken place to support literacy and the work of the task group.**

- The Innoweave Collective Impact forums brought together several organizations including some on the task group and the LOC to explore more avenues to work together to impact literacy in Victoria. Out of these meetings a coach (from the Innoweave meeting) took on the role of guiding the Victoria Literacy Alliance (working title for group) to meet several times and plan a community consultation process entitled “The Challenge Dialogue”. Presently, the consultation organization process is underway with two literacy champions identified to date and a challenge paper being written to go to literacy stakeholders.
- Story Studio and READ are in the development stage of designing a post-remedial learning project for children and youth. The project will focus on new literacy skills acquired by children and youth and support children and youth to write their own story. This shows how remedial learning support can develop language arts skills.
- An important collaboration involves Camosun College piloting an on-site offering at Island Capital Mental Health (ICMH-formerly Capital Mental Health Association) in September: *Education and employment exploration and computer skills for work, life and college.*
- GVPL partnered with the Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Centre (VIRCS) to host a free beginner ESL conversation class at the Central branch which also introduced students to the Mango language learning database;
- Ongoing outreach of children’s programming for the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations.

### 4. Goals and Actions for 2013-2014

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

1. Increase community awareness of literacy.
2. Continue network development for literacy awareness, promotion of programs and services, interagency support and partnerships.

3. Support community groups engaged in the provision of literacy programs and services by identifying needs and potential solutions. Work with groups and individuals to facilitate the creation of new or enhanced literacy programs and services.

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

The LOC met with numerous organizations and groups in the community to promote and support literacy awareness, programs and services and identify gaps/needs including:

- Literacy Victoria
- READ Society
- Greater Victoria Public Library
- Greater Victoria School District #61
- Together Against Poverty Society
- Learning Disabilities Association
- Capital Mental Health Association
- Disability Resource Centre
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Community Action Plan on Poverty
- Early Years tables
- SHAW TV
- Decoda Literacy Solutions
- GT Hiring
- Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria
- Inter-Cultural Association (ICA)
- Outreach Coordinators from Sooke, Saanich and Westshore
- Community Partnership Network
- Collective Impact Initiative- Victoria Alliance for Literacy
- Provincial Outreach Coordinators

Examples of actions taken to implement goals:

- Provided literacy orientations to agency staff and/or groups;
- Participated in community networks;
- The LOC met with groups such as the new Collective Impact Initiative group and many others to ensure that literacy is included on various agendas and in service planning. In the example of the Collective Impact initiative the LOC has been a part of the development of the Victoria Literacy Alliance. See page 4.
- Identified program and service needs for people who require literacy and learning support;
- Identified vulnerable populations with barriers to improving literacy skills;
- Referred agencies to programs and services;
- Supported organizations with program development, coordination and promotion.

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

- A new opportunity emerged with local literacy organizations coming together in the Innoweave Collective Impact process- see page 4;
- The support of the [www.learnnowvictoria](http://www.learnnowvictoria) website has been a challenge due to lack of implementation funds for technical support;
- Lack of funding for literacy materials in community programs is a challenge.

## 5. 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 impacts.**

*READ Society:*

The Noisy Kids Reading Club has worked in partnership with School District #61 for the past 4 years. The program operates at Craigflower Elementary, Cloverdale Traditional School and Quadra Elementary. In September 2015, the program will be reintroduced to George Jay after seismic upgrading of the building. The objective is to serve more children and youth who come from vulnerable households and who may be struggling with fundamental literacy skills. READ's goal is to expand the delivery of the NKRC program to additional schools in the Greater Victoria region.

This after-school program serves children in Grades 2 and 3 who are not-yet-meeting or minimally meeting grade level expectations in Language Arts and who come from vulnerable households. In a creative, active learning environment, this program blends a remediation program using familiar reading, new reading, and word study with Readers Theatre, educational games and learning/sharing opportunities for parents. The invitation went to families whose children could benefit from extra literacy support and who would enjoy being part of something special. The program was designed to be fun and on more than one occasion groups of friends and siblings wanted to join. In 2014-2015, 34 children and their families participated in the program.

*Impact story for NKRC Volunteer:*

"I can tell that this program is immensely important for the students and community. The students were always eager to attend the program. They practiced their roles for the Readers Theatre with enthusiasm and were excited to present for their families. The turnout for the Readers Theatre was great. It was lovely to see the children's families support them. It was clear that everyone (including teachers and volunteers) was proud of the success of the students, both in their reading ability and confidence to present in front of such a large group."

### *Read is on the Road (RIOTR)*

RIOTR is partnership with Songhees First Nation developed by READ in 2013 and implemented in 2014 as a pilot project. The remedial literacy program is targeted specifically for First Nations families using culturally appropriate learning materials. It is delivered by certified BC teachers with a background in FN education. The target group has been grades 1-6 and will be offered in grades 2-3 in 2015-2016.

### *Literacy Victoria (LV):*

Literacy Victoria has been closed for the past 6 months. Literacy Victoria believes that community consultation and support around literacy issues is critical, especially at this challenging time. Several agencies from the Greater Victoria area are meeting regularly to discuss literacy issues and explore solutions and/or steps that can be taken to address common issues and concerns. This cooperation and communication is critical for quality service delivery.

### *Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL)*

GVPL regularly receives positive impact statements about children's programming. A few examples include:

Parent's feedback after attending a 'Lego in the Library' program: "Variety in the presentation was fabulous! From stories to video to hands on play and take home craft - my children were both over-the-top excited from beginning to end. We borrowed many books from the library on the topic as a result, and had a most lengthy story time in the evening too!"

Middle School teacher feedback after a team of librarians provided a *Booksmacked* program at the school: "Thanks again for your team's work in helping to make *Booksmacked* at Lambrick Park a success. We will definitely be recommending *Booksmacked* to our school library colleagues."

Parent comments after receiving a GVPL 'Books for Babies' bag: "Sarah handed out some little 'Books for Babies' bags today to moms who had not received one before. I had never heard of these (perhaps because my baby was in the NICU and so we never did have a home visit with a Public Health Nurse) and I have to say what a spectacularly wonderful idea the 'Books for Babies' program is! How unbelievably kind! How special to receive a book and a CD and some information about the library (I'm definitely excited now to look into using the library, something I haven't done since I was a child myself!) I think it's just a wonderful thing to do and a very special gift for parents of new babies. Thank you! We received a Raffi CD and I was so very excited. We've been listening to it all afternoon. It's the only children's CD we have (I'm on a very tight budget because I'm a single mom on maternity leave)."

Parent comment after child attended a science storytime for preschoolers: "He loves science and experiments and really enjoyed learning about molecules with new peers."



Parent comment after a 'Gruffalo' themed puppet play program: "My son was delighted with the puppets and eager to continue making up stories [at home] with the puppets provided and the craft mask and finger puppets."

*Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS):*

Together Against Poverty Society (TAPS) is able to provide literacy support by assisting people with low literacy skills:

- Completing government forms such as persons with disabilities, disability tax credit and tenancy forms;
- Dealing with wrongful dismissal.

*1000x5:*

The Greater Victoria School District's work with Success By 6 led to a District Initiative entitled "1000 x 5 Children's Book Recycling Project", which has elementary schools collecting gently used books from families in their school community for babies and preschoolers. These books are picked up from the schools, leveled, gift wrapped and distributed to the 6 Strong Start Programs and 18 other Community Agencies in the Greater Victoria School District. The agencies give a bag of 3 books monthly to each child attending their programs. The children take home up to 30 books a year, thus building a home library which research shows to be the single greatest variable in increasing literacy rates. The goal is for each child to read 1000 books before they enter kindergarten. In 4 years, 83,000 books have been collected and donated to young children and their families in our community.

*Literacy Outreach Coordinator:*

- Ongoing feedback indicates that the LOC plays a vital role in increasing recognition and awareness of the broad cultural definition of literacy, beyond reading and writing, to include technology, social media, financial, health and plain language. Most community organizations indicated that they consider this to be a very important issue.
- The media continue to support community literacy through media coverage and stories;
- Ongoing identification of needs in adult literacy programs and services was provided, including referrals to community services and identification of potential resource sharing and partnership opportunities;
- Agencies at the Task Group table supported each other's programs and sometimes partnered to deliver programs;
- Feedback was provided for staff literacy orientations and identification of further agency needs, such as plain language reviews and additional literacy resources.

## 6. Challenges

### A. What are the difficulties?

- Long term sustainable funding; implementation finds for literacy outreach coordination and agency projects/programs;
- Need for greater understanding of literacy issues and their impact on economics and quality of life (skills, confidence, employment);
- Stigma regarding lack of literacy remains a societal issue and needs to be reduced;
- Need for increased awareness about the variety of services and costs for those services through local literacy service providers.

### B. What would help?

- Sustainable funding for community literacy organizations and LOC;
- Free awareness and promotional materials provided to LOC, Task Groups and literacy agencies (including television, radio and internet).

## 7. Plans for 2015 - 2016

### A. Are there new opportunities, challenges or issues in your community?

- Bridging the gap of adult literacy services in Victoria after the closure of Literacy Victoria;
- Increase family literacy projects and secure ongoing funding from corporate sponsors and private sector supporters;
- Collective Impact initiative;
- Opportunity and challenge: growing demand for literacy support within community partner agencies serving disadvantaged clients and those living in transition requires increased infrastructure on the part of the service provider and, due to minimal resources, puts strain on the existing staffing.

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

The LOC is reviewing last year's priorities in consultation with individual task group members to determine highest priorities. Increased awareness of the broad spectrum of literacy and promotion of a variety of agencies and resources remains a high priority for 2015-2016. The priorities will likely continue to be within these goals.

1. Continue network development for literacy awareness, identification of issues and needs, connection to programs and services, interagency support and partnerships. This includes inviting new members to the task group.  
 Actions:
  - Provide literacy orientations to agency staff and/or groups;
  - Participate in community networks;
  - Promote the use of plain language to organizations and networks.
  
2. Continue with media promotion for literacy by collaborating with media sources and using social media to profile literacy issues and services.  
 Actions:
  - Identify programs to be profiled in media;
  - Use social media to promote programs, services and events;
  - Distribute literacy information to community groups;
  - Manage website: [www.learnnowvictoria.com](http://www.learnnowvictoria.com).
  
3. Support community groups engaged in the provision of literacy programs and services. Work with groups and individuals to facilitate the creation of new or enhanced literacy programs and services.  
 Actions:
  - Identify program and service needs for people who require literacy and learning support;
  - Identify vulnerable populations with barriers to improving literacy skills;
  - Refer agencies to programs and services;
  - Facilitate inter-agency collaborations, if needed;
  - Support organizations with program development, coordination and promotion.
 Additional Actions:
  - Invite additional community members to join the Task Group;
  - Inform the Task Group of funding opportunities. Assist with proposals where needed, including partnership proposals;
  - Act as a liaison at the provincial and community level. Meet with local and provincial Literacy Outreach Coordinators;
  - Attend conferences and workshops.

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

- Realistic framework and timeline for implementation of goals;
- Adequate staff time, including strategic use of LOC hours;
- Task Group availability to participate in meetings, email discussions and decision-making processes.

**D. How will you measure the success of actions taken to address those goals?**

- Feedback from community;
- Feedback from agencies providing literacy programs and services;
- LOC sharing of community outreach experiences.