

**SD71 (Comox Valley) District Literacy Plan
Comox Valley Literacy Now
September 2009- June 2010**

Submitted by:

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Background:

September 2009 to June 2010 is the second year of implementation of the Comox Valley Community Literacy Plan (July 2008). September 2010 to June 2011 will be the third and final year of Literacy Now funding of the Comox Valley Literacy Now (CVLN) Initiative. The Ministry of Education has committed funds to community-based literacy coordination, which supports the Literacy Outreach Coordinator position, for the past two years (September 2008 to June 2010).

Implementation of the literacy plan is guided by the Comox Valley Literacy Now (CVLN) Steering Committee which includes representation from School District 71, North Island College, Adult Learning Centre, Wachiay Friendship Centre, Vancouver Island Regional Library and literacy resource professionals. A larger CVLN Committee meets regularly to share literacy/learning information, services, and resources and to discuss literacy issues/events/programs. The CVLN initiative is coordinated by Danielle Hoogland, Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC). The Steward of the CVLN funds is the Vancouver Island Regional Library. (See Appendix 1 – Comox Valley Literacy Now Community Members)

Strategic Planning and Directions for 2009/2010:

A full day Strategic Planning session held in October 2009 helped the CVLN Committee to establish priorities for the year. A summary report from that session is attached: see Appendix 2.

The Strategic planning session provided a chance for the CVLN community committee to reflect on the progress of year one of the Community Literacy Plan and to develop directions for the future. The Comox Valley Community Literacy Plan focuses on literacy in three broad areas: early learning and literacy, school learning and literacy, and adult learning and literacy and the committee respects that there is an Aboriginal component in each of these areas.

This report highlights some of the successes and future directions of the work of the CVLN committee.

Early Learning and Literacy

Community coordination structures have been well established to promote literacy and learning for children from birth to the transition into elementary schools through the Early Years Interagency Council and the School District's Early Years Steering Committee. Leadership is provided jointly by School District staff and the Success by Six Coordinator (Success by Six coordination will be phased out spring 2010).

Over the past five years, the School District has become much more active in establishing early learning programs (e.g. Strong Start programs, Mother Goose Programs, Aboriginal pre-school program, and full day kindergarten programs), working with other community ECD professionals (e.g. conjoint professional development workshops), focusing on the transition to kindergarten (e.g. ensuring information about children is passed on from preschool and child care staff to school staff), and supporting community coordination efforts for this age group. The School District has become, along with public health and the libraries, a significant institutional supporter and leader in early learning and literacy efforts. Other community organizations such as the Child Development Association, Early Childhood Educators Comox Valley (ECEBC), Comox Valley Family Services and Aboriginal Head Start are actively involved.

The successes in this area provide a model for what might happen in the future in other areas. The early years learning and literacy agenda has been supported through:

- Increased public and professional awareness of the importance of early years learning and literacy;
- Use of regular data (e.g. the annual EDI results, SD K screening results) to evaluate and plan;
- The culture and infrastructure within the School District focusing on outcomes and concrete action priorities;
- The consistency of School District staff involved in the early years learning and literacy discussions;
- The readiness of the School District to commit sustainable resources (e.g. staff time and funds) to coordinate community efforts and to expand early learning and literacy programs and resources;
- Previous coordination experiences with children with special needs.

In effect, the School District, with its larger and more consistent resources as a public agency, has become an anchor for the work in the early learning and literacy area. *This has happened because the School District has come to see and embrace the positive value that the collective work adds to the District's mandate and desired successes in its traditional K-12 programs.*

Three challenges were noted in the early years learning and literacy area.

- Community based programs still tend to be supported by short term project funding, and are therefore less sustainable over the longer term.
- More needs to be done by everyone to reach out to isolated and vulnerable families and parents.
- There is a lack of common standards and benchmarks for measuring successes.

People also noted that the successful early learning and literacy programs do provide welcoming doors through which adults can become more engaged in their own learning and literacy work. These cross connections are beginning to happen more, and are welcomed by those concerned with adult learning and literacy issues.

School Learning and Literacy

The community literacy plan is not intended to duplicate information contained in documents prepared by the school district that outline literacy work that supports K – 12 learners. This information can be found in the District Achievement Contract and in the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement.

There are many district level initiatives that focus on literacy. Faye Brownlie and Leyton Schnellert have been working in our elementary and secondary schools on the reading/ writing connection. Carol Saundry has been working with our French Immersion students at the elementary level in the area of numeracy. Most schools are involved in professional partnerships where teachers are collaborating on best practices in the areas of literacy, numeracy and technology. Our district Literacy and Numeracy Lead teachers work collaboratively with their colleagues to make connections between educational research, curriculum, assessment, and classroom instruction.

There are also many active partnerships that support and augment the broad range of literacy activities that occur in schools. Many community groups are involved in partnerships with schools such as: Boys and Girls Club, Wachiay Friendship Centre, Courtenay, Comox and Cumberland Recreation Associations, Comox Valley Family Services, MCFD, MCFD Child Youth Mental Health Team, John Howard Society, North Island College, Community Living BC, RCMP, Seniors Reading Programs, Community Schools, Comox Valley Adult Literacy Centre.

Adult Learning and Literacy

The successes and strengths that have been established in the early years learning and literacy area are in the early stages in the adult learning and literacy context.

- The CVLN Committee and Steering Committee is beginning to provide a coordination infrastructure in the area of adult literacy through the work of the CVLN Literacy Outreach Coordinator.
- Programs and community partnerships are growing which is resulting in less duplication of service and more use of existing services.

- Cultural literacy has become a key thread through the work of the Wachiay Friendship Centre, Immigrant Settlement Services, the School District, as well as other community organizations.
- There are many different organizations (e.g. Women's Resource Centre, CALLS Adult Learning Centre, North Island College, private colleges, School District 71, Creative Employment Access Society, Military Family Resource Centre, Comox Valley First Nations, Social Planning Society, and Wachiay Friendship Centre) involved with the adult population, each serving the needs and interests of quite different groups of adults. The community literacy committee has provided means for these groups to network and collaborate.
- The value of coordination and the positive impact of coordination on different agencies achieving their own mandates and strategic priorities is less clear and less accepted.
- The value of learning and literacy is unclear and less accepted for employers and private businesses.

The core coordination challenge is that the adult population is much larger and more diverse than the early year's population. There is no single public agency playing a consistent and well supported coordination role. Some of the different adult subgroups related to learning and literacy issues in our community include:

- Immigrants
- Women
- Adults with multiple barriers
- People who are unemployed, underemployed, and/or poor
- Parents wanting to be more supportive of their children
- Young adults who have dropped out of the formal education programs
- Older adults and seniors
- Older adults no longer able to work in traditional economic areas, and needing to retrain
- Citizens wanting to continue to learn
- Employees needing to upgrade their skills related to the changing workforce
- Aboriginal people

Each of these subgroups represents a different perspective or different set of interests for developing and coordinating learning and literacy programs. No one public agency or non-profit organization is concerned with all of these different subgroups, nor with all of the different learning and literacy perspectives. Further, each subgroup is of concern to different provincial ministries (e.g. Health, Education, Small Business, Advanced Education and Labour Market Development, Child and Family Development, and Social Development and Housing).

Several key opportunities were identified as starting points for further and more focused coordination work in the adult learning and literacy area.

- Those people and organizations concerned with the early learning and literacy agenda want to see a more coordinated outreach approach to isolated and vulnerable families and parents – and suggest that the model of parent participation programming is a viable way to meet the needs of both children and adults – especially those in vulnerable populations.
- The Regional District has commenced a regional visioning and planning process, called “Shape the Future” and it is important for CVLN to be part of that planning.
- The Aboriginal community is pressing for a faster pace of social, education, employment, and economic development through treaty processes, negotiated arrangements with the provincial government, and increased self reliance.
- North Island College has initiated an outreach program to encourage more people to upgrade and pursue post-secondary education.
- The Ministry of Social Development and Housing is developing coordinated approaches to supporting adults with multiple barriers (e.g. homelessness, addictions, and mental illness), working particularly with the health authorities.
- As part of the transfer of federal employment services to the Province, the Ministry of Social Development and Housing is redesigning its package of employment services. This could result in the Creative Employment Access Society playing a much larger role locally, and becoming the lead agency related to employability issues.
- Various organizations and private employers are becoming much more concerned about the transition of young adults from secondary school and the college into the workforce.
- Technological literacy is becoming an increasing concern for employers and private businesses.

CVLN Priorities for 2009/10

Based on the opportunities, work already underway, and potential impacts on public and political awareness of learning and literacy issues, the CVLN Committee focused on the following three areas for the 2009/2010 Implementation year:

1. Youth in transition into adulthood, postsecondary education and the workplace (aged 15-25)
2. Literacy and learning related to employability of unemployed underemployed people
3. Outreach to isolated and vulnerable families and parents

Activities put in place to address the three identified areas 2009/10:

1. Outreach to isolated and vulnerable families and parents

- Parents As Literacy Supporters (PALS) programming coordinated between the Adult Learning Centre and School District 71.
(<http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/pals/>)
- Literacy Adventures for Parents (LAPS) and Aboriginal LAPS programming is coordinated between the Adult Learning Centre and School District 71.

- Mother Goose and More ESL program coordinated by Adult Learning Centre – ESL program, Immigrant Settlement Services, and School District 71.
- Continued coordination of services between SD 71 Aboriginal Education Department and Aboriginal Head Start
- Mother Goose Programs offered in schools and in community locations funded by the School District.
- Nutritional and health literacy workshops for vulnerable families coordinated by Comox Valley Children’s DayCare Society and Comox Valley Family Services.
- “Little Learners Literacy Project” coordinated by Comox Valley Family Services and VIRL – Courtenay branch (introducing marginalized families to the library).
- Storytelling circles at VIRL- Courtenay branch, CV Family Services, Aboriginal Head Start, Immigrant Settlement office, Wachiay Friendship Centre (Family Literacy Week).

2. Youth in transition into adulthood, postsecondary education and the workplace (youth aged 15-25 years)

- The CVLN LOC participated in the Frontline Workers interagency council, and the CAVE Council (Compassionate Aboriginal Vision Everyone), and connected with organizations and schools involving youth in order to learn about current issues and challenges regarding “youth in transition.” (see Appendix 4)
- Queer and Questioning Youth group engaged in writing circles, creation of zines, media literacy, etc. (ongoing).
- C.R. Avery Beatboxer/Slam Poet presentation at Glacier View Learning Centre (February 2010).
- Scrabble Tournament and Reading Promotion – Highland Secondary (Family Literacy Week).
- Nala’atsi Program – “Creating Aboriginal Role Models” interviews, desktop publishing, writing. (Family Literacy Week project).
- Health Literacy – Courtenay Recreation (Family Literacy Week project).
- Wachiay Friendship Program – Jam session (Family Literacy Week project).
- Creative Employment Access Society in collaboration with Courtenay Recreation Association (with funding from the United Way) created the “Fun-employment office” at the LINC (May 2010). The office is served by a part-time youth outreach employment officer. The CVLN is currently looking for ways to expand and support this position to address literacy-related needs of youth.

3. Literacy and learning related to employability of unemployed and underemployed people

- North Island Women’s Services Society (NIWSS) “It’s my business” – workshop for women to learn how to assist women entrepreneurs (Family Literacy Week project).
- NIWSS “Women’s Learning Shop” workshop series.
- Adult Learning Centre – literacy tutoring.
- North Island College – off site educational assessments for adult learners.

The CVLN Steering Committee has committed further allocation of funds to each of these three priorities through a co-development process. Co-development involves bringing together organizations and individuals whose mandates or interests include one or more of these priorities to collaboratively and cooperatively make decisions on actions that best address the priority.

Key Accomplishments 2008 - 2010:

- Participation in CVLN by non-profit organizations, learning institutions, and the general public has resulted in stronger working relationships on learning and literacy issues. By meeting regularly, each person and organization (non-profit and public) has been able to learn more about the literacy and learning interests, work, and resources of others in the Comox Valley. (list of members of the CVLN Steering Committee and Community Committee – Appendix 1)
- The development of a network of support for Literacy Outreach Coordinators (LOCs) on the North Island. A series of meetings for North Island LOCs was held in the Comox Valley April 13/14 with representatives from Legacies 2010 Leona Gatsby and Lori Walker. (Appendix 3)
- The broad community development framework of building a collaborative learning community and promoting community awareness on learning and literacy has resulted in moving literacy more to the forefront in community dialogue and planning processes, and has raised the profile of CVLN.
- People's understanding of learning and literacy has expanded to include the entire lifespan, health, citizenship and culture.
- Non-formal and informal learning, including cultural teachings, is increasingly supported and recognized by both formal and non-formal learning organizations.
- The micro-grants program initiated in May 2009 and the mini-grants program initiated in December 2009 has helped to raise people's awareness, support innovative projects, and build the profile of CVLN.
- Literacy promotion (particularly through Family Literacy Week activities and events) has increased awareness of literacy issues and barriers; increased referrals to literacy services; increased collaboration among organizations; and increased awareness of literacy services to the public.
- School District 71 has been able to move forward on their broad mandate of district-wide and community-wide literacy planning and implementation.
- School District 71 has enhanced learning and literacy programs and resources for younger children and their families.
- The work on developing transition processes between our Early Learning and school communities has been very successful and assisted in a clear process that values the work of early childhood educators and is creating a more seamless transition for families.
- School District 71 has been able to reach out to vulnerable and isolated families (e.g. Mother Goose and More) and youth (e.g. Queer and Questioning youth) who might not otherwise access learning/literacy resources/programs.

- North Island College has been able to reach out to potential adult learners through community-based, mobile academic assessments and thus increase accessibility to NIC. Furthermore, adult learners are able to start their actual learning activities prior to coming to the NIC campus.
- Non-profit organizations have further embedded literacy in their programming and delivery (LUSH Valley, WCDES, NIWSS, CRA, CEAS, Valleylinks etc.)
- North Island College has supported the connection among North Island communities through community-based literacy outreach coordination
- Professional development of Literacy Outreach Coordinator

Planning for 2010/11

The CVLN Committee will continue to focus on these three areas: youth in transition, unemployed and underemployed people, and vulnerable families and parents recognizing that there are many overlaps among these groups. A comprehensive, inclusive process called “co-development” will be used to develop initiatives thereby building community capacity and collaborative networks. Aboriginal voice will be part of each planning process.

The CVLN Committee will continue to work to develop a collaborative learning community by hosting and facilitating regular meetings and events for CVLN Committee members in order to connect and share literacy/learning information and the CVLN Committee will work collaboratively and cooperatively with other Community Development initiatives including the “Welcoming and Inclusive Communities Roundtable”. Ideas include co-hosting “plain language workshops”.

The CVLN Committee will continue to generate awareness and promote learning and literacy in the Comox Valley through celebration activities and events during Family Literacy Week and through other literacy campaigns.

The CVLN Committee will continue to work with the Ministry of Social Development and Housing and Creative Employment Access Society to address the literacy needs of unemployed and underemployed people.

The CVLN Committee will find new ways to disseminate local literacy information, resources, services and research. This might be through newspaper articles, radio and television broadcasts, newsletters, blogs, workshops, forums, etc.

Finally the CVLN Committee and Steering Committee will continue review their procedures and processes.

Appendix 1

Comox Valley Literacy Now Community Members

Comox Valley Literacy Now Steering Committee

Danielle Hoogland	Comox Valley Literacy Now Literacy Outreach Coordinator
Judy Brooks	Literacy Resource Person
Vivian Hermansen	NIC Acting Dean, Developmental, International and Aboriginal Programs
Karen Barr	Executive Director CALLS – Adult Learning Centre
Roger Kishi (April 2010)	Wachiay Friendship Centre
MaryAnn McCrea	SD71 – Director of Instruction
Mari Martin	VIRL – Courtenay Branch
Martin Petter	Literacy Resource Person – Former VP Education NIC
Wedlidi Speck (September 2009 to April 2010)	Wachiay Friendship Centre

Comox Valley Literacy Now Community Committee – 2009/2010

Bruce Brautigan	Creative Employment Access Society
Deborah Ross	Programs Officer Employment and Labour Market Services Ministry of Housing and Social Development
Lynn Joseph	SD71 Aboriginal Education and Aboriginal Education Council CV Aboriginal Early Childhood Development Council
Bev Moquin	Valley links
Dorica Skobalj	Immigrant Settlement Office
Kassandra Dycke	Womens Resource Centre
Elizabeth (Bunny) Shannon	Comox Valley Social Planning Society/ LUSH Valley
Anthea Kennelly	VIHA Public Health
Janice Nicklin	NIC- Adult Education
Joseph Dunn	Success By Six
Danielle Bernier and Danielle Porter	Military Family Resource Centre
Moss Dance	Frontline Youth Worker - CRA
Beverly Howden	The IMP Lady
Jane Hughes	CV Family Services

Jenny Jackson	4R's Tutoring
Robin Rivers	Our Big Earth Media Co
Marie Ducharme	NIC- Reaching Out Committee
Karen Roe	Irlen Screening
Carlene Steeves	SD71 Literacy Outreach - Early Years
Kathy Collins	Courtenay Recreation - the Linc
Kristine Klupsas	Courtenay Recreation - the Linc
Janet Hansen	WICR/CEAS
Peter Ashmore	Beaufort Children's Association
Katherine Frank	K'omoks First Nation
Suzanne Camp	Nala'atsi
Toresa Crawford	Nala'atsi
Colleen Allen	CV Children's Daycare Society
Adda Vallevand	Volunteer Comox Valley
Randy Wiwchar	City of Courtenay
Heather Nye	CV Transition Society
Wayne Bradley Janet Fairbanks	WCDES
Doug Hillian	City of Courtenay - Councilor

Appendix 2

Comox Valley Literacy NOW Planning Session - Summary

October, 2009

These notes summarize the discussions and agreements reached at a planning session for Comox Valley Literacy Now (CVLN).

The key questions for the planning session were:

- In a changing funding environment, what needs to be done to protect and enhance the community coordination and leadership that CVLN has been able to develop over its first two years?
- What should be the focus of the work and the priorities for the next year, where continued funding remains certain¹?
- How does CVLN remain true to its broader vision of learning communities and the importance of learning to maintaining healthy individuals, families, and communities, and building public and political awareness regarding learning and literacy issues, while achieving concrete impacts on particular literacy concerns and opportunities?

In reviewing the overall accomplishments of the past two years of the Literacy Now project, people pointed to:

- Each person and organization (non profit and public) has been able to learn more about the literacy and learning interests, work, and resources of others in the Comox Valley. These joint information sharing and learning processes have established stronger working relationships on learning and literacy issues
- The broad community development focus on building a collaborative learning community and promoting community awareness about learning and literacy has resulted in literacy moving more to the forefront in community dialogue and planning processes, and has raised the profile of CVLN
- People's framework for learning and literacy has expanded to include the entire life span, and to embrace cultural literacy issues
- The micro grants program, initiated in the past year, has helped to raise people's awareness, support innovative projects, and build the profile of CVLN
- School District 71 has been able to move forward in taking on the new broad mandate for a district-wide literacy plan, and in enhancing learning and literacy programs and resources for younger children

¹ Literacy NOW funding is committed for at least one more year, and will likely be there for one more year after that.

- The work on helping younger children transition successfully into kindergarten has been very successful

The review of accomplishments led to an agreement that more needs to be done to ensuring that everyone is kept well informed of what is happening in the three different circles: early learning and literacy, school learning and literacy, and adult learning and literacy.

Community Development

The top priorities for the first year of implementation (September, 2008 to July, 2009) were to build a collaborative learning community and to promote community awareness about learning and literacy. Considerable activities were undertaken in pursuit of these two priorities.

There is agreement that the concept of a learning community, and the importance of lifelong learning for individual, family, and community health, needs to remain the overarching frame of reference for CVLN and its work over the next year, but should not be a direct priority. Presentations to government, economic development, and public bodies will be continued.

There is agreement that the micro grants program needs to be more carefully evaluated later in the fall of 2009, when the current funded projects are further underway. The evaluation will look at whether and how much these projects have created organizational or community change, and have led to on-going and sustainable learning and literacy programs.

If the evaluation of the micro grants program is positive, then the current projects could be funded further, and/or a new micro grants round of funding considered in February of 2010.

Early Learning and Literacy

Community coordination structures have been well established to promote literacy and learning for children from birth to the transition into elementary schools through the Early Years Interagency Council and the School District's Early Years Steering Committee. Leadership is provided jointly by School District staff and the Success by Six Coordinator.

Three challenges were noted in the early years learning and literacy area.

- Community based programs still tend to be supported by short term project funding, and thus less sustainable over the longer term
- More needs to be done by everyone to reach out to isolated and vulnerable families and parents
- There is a lack of common standards and benchmarks for measuring successes

People also noted that the successful early learning and literacy programs do provide welcoming doors through which adults can become more engaged in their own learning and literacy work. These cross connections are beginning to happen more, and are welcomed by those concerned with adult learning and literacy issues.

School Learning and Literacy

There was little discussion about the learning and literacy issues related to children and youth who are of school age. Generally, this is seen as the responsibility of the School District through the regular and alternative K-12 programs. Other agencies (e.g. Boys and Girls Club and Wachiay Friendship Centre) are also involved.

Adult Learning and Literacy

The successes and strengths that have been established in the early years learning and literacy area have not yet been achieved in the adult learning and literacy area.

- The Comox Valley Literacy NOW Council and Steering Committee provide a beginning coordination infrastructure, with the support of the Comox Valley Literacy Now coordinator
- Programs and community partnerships are growing, resulting in less duplication of effort and the creation of new programs
- Cultural literacy has become a key thread through the work of the Wachiay Friendship Centre, the School District, and others
- There are many different organizations (e.g. Women's Resource Centre, CALLS Adult Learning Centre, North Island College, private colleges, School District 71, Creative Employment Access Society, Military Family Resource Centre, Comox Valley First Nations, Social Planning Society, and Wachiay Friendship Centre) involved, each serving the needs and interests of quite different groups of adults
- The value of coordination and the positive impact of coordination on different agencies achieving their own mandates and strategic priorities is less clear and less accepted
- The value of learning and literacy is unclear and less accepted for employers and private businesses
- There is no single public agency playing a consistent and well supported coordination role

The core coordination challenge is that the adult population is much larger and more diverse than the early years population. In addition to the diversity of the group itself there is not one key public agency or nonprofit organization that connects with all these subgroups. It is critical to identify some starting points in the area of adult literacy to focus the work of CVLN.

The group reached consensus that the following areas would be the priorities for 2009/ 10:

- Outreach to isolated and vulnerable families and parents
- Youth in transition into adulthood and the workplace
- Literacy and learning related to employability of unemployed people

The following priorities were established for the steering committee and literacy outreach coordinator.

- Continue the presentations to government, economic development, and public bodies regarding learning communities, and the importance of learning and literacy
- Evaluate the micro grants program, and make a decision whether to carry out a second round of grants
- Ensure that people and organizations involved with learning and literacy are kept informed of major developments in early learning, school age learning, and adult learning
- Outreach to isolated and vulnerable families and parents
- Youth in transition into adulthood and the workplace
- Literacy and learning related to employability of unemployed people

Appendix 3

Literacy Now North Island Meeting

Legacies 2010 Presentation Leona Gadsby and Lori Walker

10:00 am – 12:00 April 13

North Island Women's Resource Centre, McPhee Avenue, Courtenay

Lynn Joseph, Principal of Aboriginal Education, Courtenay School District #71, welcomed those in attendance and acknowledged that the meeting was taking place in the traditional territory of the K'omoks First Nation. She noted with appreciation Leona Gadsby and Lori Walker from 2010 Legacies Now who are able to be with the group over this two day session. Those in attendance included:

- Leona Gadsby, Director, 2010 Legacies Now
- Lori Walker, Program Mgr 2010 Literacy Now
- Danielle Hoogland, Literacy Now Project Coordinator
- Martin Petter, retired VP, Ed at NIC and current CV Steering Committee member
- Ed Carswell, World Community
- Lynn Joseph, Principal Aboriginal Education, Courtenay School District #71
- Jane Hughes, Comox Valley Family Services
- Tom Weegar, Principal, NIC Port Alberni; President, Literacy Alberni
- Vivian Hermansen, Acting Dean, Developmental and Aboriginal Education, NIC
- Theresa Gereluk, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, West Coast
- Sandra Reynolds, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Gold River
- Joanne Keeling, Comox Valley Transitions Society
- Kat Eddy, Adult Outreach Coordinator, Campbell River
- Anne Boyd, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Campbell River
- Robin Beaton, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Quadra Island
- Ann Vansnick, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Sayward
- Laura Thiessen, Sayward
- Bev McQueen, Valley Links, CV
- Janet Hansen, CV Welcoming and Inclusive Community
- Gabrielle Day, Comox Valley Adult Literacy and Learning Centre
- Karen Barr, Comox Valley Adult Literacy and Learning Centre
- Bruce Brautigan, Comox Valley Employment Society
- Emma Larocque – Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Powell River
- Karen Rowe, North Vancouver Island
- Cassandra Dyke, Women's Resource Centre, Comox Valley
- Deborah Ross, Service Canada Employment and Labour Market Services

- Dorica Skobalj – Immigrant Settlement Office
- Roger Kishi, Wachiay Friendship Centre (representing Wedlidi Speck)
- Bunny Shannon, Comox Valley Planning Society
- Bethany Scott, BD World Community
- Judy Brooks, Literacy Now Steering Committee, Comox Valley

Danielle Hoogland introduced Leona Gadsby and Lori Walker from 2010 Legacies Now who will discuss provincial literacy infrastructure and how our community initiatives are connected to the larger provincial initiative.

Leona Gadsby highlighted that work has been undertaken provincially with regard to a communications campaign that talks in different ways about literacy and which may be more compelling than what has taken place in the past. She asked the question: “What do we mean by Literacy?” Initially, she had thought it was about reading and writing - principally in terms of adults who didn’t have the skills and who would be provided with the remediation to acquire these skills. Over time, she has come to realize that when people work on reading skills, whether they are children or adults, other things are learned at the same time. Literacy skills are developed over a lifetime and never stop developing. No matter where an individual is located in the world, in order to function and participate, what matters is the ability to contribute, to participate, to belong in order to be a part of society. The key competencies required include reading, writing, numeracy, problem-solving, teamwork, thinking, computer use, continuous learning, and oral communication. We communicate for participation and it gives us the ability to understand and use information in daily activities, at home, at work, and in community. It is the nature of our beings to learn – and thinking is something we require in our communication age. Communication has to be very broad and practically anything can become literacy so we need to be cautious that we provide people with those skills that will allow them to learn other things.

A power point presentation entitled “The Velcro Effect” was distributed in hardcopy as well as being viewed. Literacy makes learning stick; it makes meaning and applies lifelong learning skills that are transferable. It was noted that we live in a world now where we have to figure out what is truth – what is reliable. In order to make these determinations, literacy skills need to be honed.

Leona Gadsby noted that an IELTS study conducted in 2004 shows that, 43% of our population has less than a secondary school education; 19% have post-secondary but not a high enough literacy level to get by in society. More recent studies are indicating that about 30% of high school graduates do not have the literacy skills required. It was noted that literacy happens in all areas of life – reading, home, work, volunteer participation, sports, and teamwork. We support the development of literacy skills throughout our communities and the entirety of our lives. What happens at home and during the early years of development is critical.

Literacy matters for individuals and for communities. While economic success is probably the most important at the moment; higher literacy levels help people make better health choices and it has been proven that those with higher skills live longer. Leona noted that the health budget is at 40% of the provincial budget and continually rising. One way to reduce that budget is to provide stronger literacy skills. It has been proven that people with higher literacy skills are more likely to participate in their civic areas, to vote, and to be involved in their community. It is also a known fact that 80% of people in prisons have low literacy skills. Leona suggested that we need to move from talking about literacy as an issue to using it as a strategy that provides a cohesive approach – make plans, form policy and develop programs in a cohesive way.

Presently, in terms of the Literacy Now process across the province, there are 104 task groups, representing more than 400 communities - virtually the entire province – developing and implementing literacy plans together. It is no longer just about school, college or literacy organizations, but includes all facets of life within community. Both Hazelton and Surrey have had their municipal governments recognize the priority of identifying the needs in order to build stronger, healthier communities.

Tom Weegar highlighted that in his community of Port Alberni, the issue of early childhood literacy is becoming more acute as 29% of children entering kindergarten are not ready and the concern for the long range is that they will be vulnerable to drop-out. Leona Gadsby informed that there are case studies indicating that an investment in literacy pays back for the whole community and the priority is to continue to pay attention to those levels across the life span. She announced that the government has increased funding to Success By Six from \$2.5 million to \$5 million – so it is a priority to keep the pressure on. While it is proving true that it takes a community to raise a child, it was noted that we are not being successful with Aboriginal students. There is a priority to ensure we have the Aboriginal voices at the various literacy tables because we cannot assume we are speaking for them. While Leona noted it is a priority to engage the people who know and listen to what they have to say, it is also recognized that literacy is a long term strategy and not a quick term fix. Tom Weegar applauded the work that is being done and believes we are on the verge of a paradigm shift in many of BC communities as we move from issue to strategy – which is a profound change. Leona provided that along with the video “The Velcro Effect” the Surrey and Hazelton presentations will also be available to the Literacy Outreach Coordinators. UBC will be focusing on 6 communities to compile a series of stories and there will be a website that will be made available to all. Discussion took place on how to pool and use the various resources within the individual communities.

Danielle Hoogland highlighted that in 2008, a Community Literacy Plan was written that contained 5 objectives:

- Build a collaborative community
- Promote literacy in the Comox Valley

- Support new and existing work-based literacy initiatives
- Continue to support family and cultural initiatives
- To make the above happen – hire a Literacy Outreach Coordinator

In the fall of that year, a strategic planning session was held to revisit the plan and draw out the priorities to determine where energy and resources would be placed. A couple of questions that came out of that session were:

- What is the focus of the work when continued funding remains uncertain
- How does Comox Valley Literacy Now remain true to its communities

Ron Faris from the University of Victoria, and a noted speaker with learning communities, was invited and addressed the importance and building of literacy. While we discussed literacy across the life span, it was determined that energies would be focused first into youth transitioning into adulthood – 15 – 25 years of age, post-secondary and the workplace. The second area of priority was to the unemployed and underemployed; thirdly, vulnerable and isolated families. The outcome was a successful micro-grant process where 10 organizations were funded to deliver service and/or create events around literacy. This year, through discussions with Leona Gadsby, we came to an understanding of why we should move away from the RFP process. (If anyone would like a copy of Danielle’s notes on the rationale, she would be pleased to provide them.) At the last Steering Committee meeting, feedback was provided on the process for allocation of funds to meet priorities. Martin Petter will outline further, the process.

Martin Petter noted that the Steering Committee built on the feedback that had been received at their last meeting with the intention of creating a process for organizations to connect and develop/write proposals together. The most promising approach was what is often referred to as a co-development model – where funders and those will who receive the funding work together from the beginning to create the proposals that come into being. Co-development is one term that is used, while Integrative and Collaborative are other terms for this model. He noted that this model has been used in various parts of Canada, e.g., Social Planning in Toronto, major family planning in Saskatchewan to name a couple. In British Columbia, five organizations in Williams Lake pooled their resources and are now doing quite innovative projects around literacy. We are also hearing of effective partnerships taking place in Kamloops and within our own area there is the Mother Goose program for instance, where you have the School District and Adult Literacy Centre working together. The intent is for the Steering committee to invite all those who have a particular interest to a stakeholder’s forum – to a very open day long discussion intended to explore the creation of government projects together and identify partnerships. Following that session, projects would be fleshed out, key funding requirements identified and formal consideration for approval being sought. While this co-development approach will probably take longer – and some might see this as a disadvantage – what we do get at the end of the day is sustaining

partnerships where potentially barriers could be dissolved, gaps could more clearly be identified, partnerships are built, and resources are shared. This process would avoid some of the competitive elements that can be identified with the RFP model and the mutual second guessing that may occur.

Danielle suggested that while there would be an initial meeting and forum to gather minds and ideas, the first priority of youth in transition into adulthood would be addressed – so she was encouraging members of the CV Literacy Now group to participate. They will be discussing youth who are going to school perhaps part-time, those who are not completing as well as those who are experiencing challenges. The plan is also to address the parents of those youth. An email will be sent out in April announcing the dates and we would hope that youth could be a part of these discussions.

Leona Gadsby clarified that the Literacy groups are not funders and therefore cannot initiate an RFP process. There is no internal need to request proposals for this funding – it can just be used. Those interested in the goals of the Comox Valley Literacy Now group could refer to their model.

Those in attendance were thanked for their participation. The afternoon session including Literacy Outreach Coordinators and Facilitators is scheduled to be held in the Boardroom at North Island College, 2300 Ryan Road, Courtenay.

Appendix 4

Youth in Transition Planning

In October 2009, youth in transition was identified as an area of focus for CVLN. As part of a process to gain a clearer understanding of the issues associated with youth meetings were held with a number of stakeholder groups (Glacier View Learning Centre, Wachiay Friendship Centre, John Howard, Boys and Girls Club, Community Justice, RCMP, Comox Valley Family Services, 19 Wing Comox, SD 71 Outreach Workers).

To guide the discussion the following questionnaire was used:

1. What is the age of youth you work with?
2. What are your experiences of their literacy/learning strengths/challenges?
3. What literacy/learning programs /initiative meet or have met some of these challenges?
4. Are there any literacy services/resources/supports that you regularly access (within SD71 or within the community)?
5. What do you perceive the gaps in literacy services/resources/supports to be?
6. Are there literacy/learning programs that you would like to explore with youth you work with? E.g. Power of Hope, Service Learning, speakers, etc.
7. Do you have any interaction with any community literacy programs or networks? (ALC, NIC, Wachiay, Frontline)

Summary of key points of informal conversations:

Glacier View Learning Centre (Secondary Alternate Programs)

- Drugs and alcohol, poverty, health and nutrition, and anxiety are the prevalent barriers to learning
- Glacier View works with public health nurse, John Howard, and SD71 outreach workers
- Youth respond to diverse non-formal educational approaches. E.g. Sue reads novels to her students
- Students require flexibility – some only come to school for a few hours.
- Speakers, workshops, projects are welcome!
- The school and staff are very open to working with community to better serve GV students

As a result of this feedback CVLN contracted C.R. Avery (beatboxer/ spoken word poet) to perform for Glacier View and other SD71 youth. We also looked at bringing other artists/speakers in to address youth/youth workers (Gabor Mate was one idea for example, podcasting workshops, and storytelling/art workshops)

Wachiay Friendship Centre – Kim Leming, David Dawson, Roger Kishi

- Raven Back Youth – ages 15-18 (60 registered youth)
- Programs/Partners include: RESPECT Ed – Red Cross Curriculum (Shannon Pickering), VIHA- tobacco awareness, ALC- Philip Diez, Snowboarding program, basketball, First Aid Certification, Yoga, Movie Nights
- One drop in night
- Youth Council involved in program planning
- Workshop with George Littlechild - art
- FLOW program – youth driven?
- Support for employment from Wachiay staff
- Homework club/peer tutoring
- Girls program for girls 13-18 once a week.
- Challenge: youth worker burnout (Potential for youth worker session through Pulse funds)

Frontline workers meetings – November 2009/January 2010/March 2010

John Howard, SD71 Outreach Workers, CRA, 19 Wing Comox, Boys and Girls Club, Family Services, Community Justice, RCMP, VIHA, Wachiay and Lake Trail Communities project)

- Issues with graffiti – RCMP graffiti prevention strategy
- Safer partying training – youth harm reduction
- Issues with drugs
- Sexual exploitation (CASEY) – Alison
- Father involvement network (FIN)
- Again, youth workers spoke of how busy they are – burn out was mentioned
- Note: that this school year there was no youth employment outreach person hired through CRA to assist youth with employment related activities (i.e. resumes, job applications, etc.)

CAVE (Courtenay Aboriginal Vision Everyone) – envisions a strong Aboriginal community (November 2009, January 2010, March 2010, April 2010)

SD71 Aboriginal Support workers from each of the high schools, Ravens Program (Vanier), Wachiay, ABE, John Howard, MCFD, VIHA, Aboriginal Health VIHA, David Sommerville (Elder)

- Large issues: poverty – those students who have jobs earn part of the family income.
- Erin from Wachiay mentioned that the parents of the children she has in her programs need a support group of their own
- Mentioned Dr. Martin Brokenleg- how to keep kids in the circle – Reclaiming youth
- Cumberland Jr. – trouble keeping kids in school
- Girls group – rites of passage
- Peer Support and Suicide Prevention/Intervention Training – 2009
- FLOW youth?

- David – cultural support team

Future directions

The following are ideas that have been mentioned through discussions.

1. CEAS has recently employed a youth employment outreach person to work 3 days for 3 hours/day at the LINC. There is an opportunity to expand this position.
2. Drug and Alcohol Youth Outreach position – this position operated for 2 years through John Howard (2004-2006). The position evolved through a youth outreach project involving SD71, John Howard, CRA, CV Mental Health (Addiction Service), Youth Mental Health team, RCMP, Community Drug Strategy Committee, MCFD, Probation, Wachiay, and Aboriginal Education.
3. Series of speakers/workshops for youth. Include Dr. Martin Brokenleg etc.
4. Support/professional development for youth outreach workers
5. Roving bus- “safe partying bus”- resources etc.
6. Parenting programs/support for parents of youth
7. Immigrant youth? – engagement through sport?