

Sooke  
Region  
District  
Literacy  
Plan

2016-  
2017



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## Reflections on the current year

### 1. Task group:

#### *a. Who takes part in the task group?*

Anne Bell - Community School Coordinator, Edward Milne Community School (EMCS) Society

Melinda Frelick – Community Volunteer, Book Bin Coordinator

Vivian Collyer – District Principal, Curriculum & Programs, School District 62 (Sooke)

Stephanie Croft – Sooke Region Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC)

Loretta Duetscher – Community Volunteer, Retired teacher

Chris Dykman – Community Volunteer, Book Bin Builder

Alice Gable – Community Volunteer, Book Bin Coordinator

Tara Munro – Education and Youth Programs Manager, Pacheedaht First Nation

Jean Lister – Community Volunteer, Sooke Rotary

Daphne Raymond - Children and Family Services Program Manager, Sooke Family Resource Society

Margot Swinburnson – School District 62 Trustee, Literacy Rotary Chair

Jessica Wade – Community Volunteer, Grant Writer

Adrienne Wass – Library Manager, Vancouver Island Regional Library, Sooke/Port Renfrew Branches

#### *b. How is the work of this group organized?*

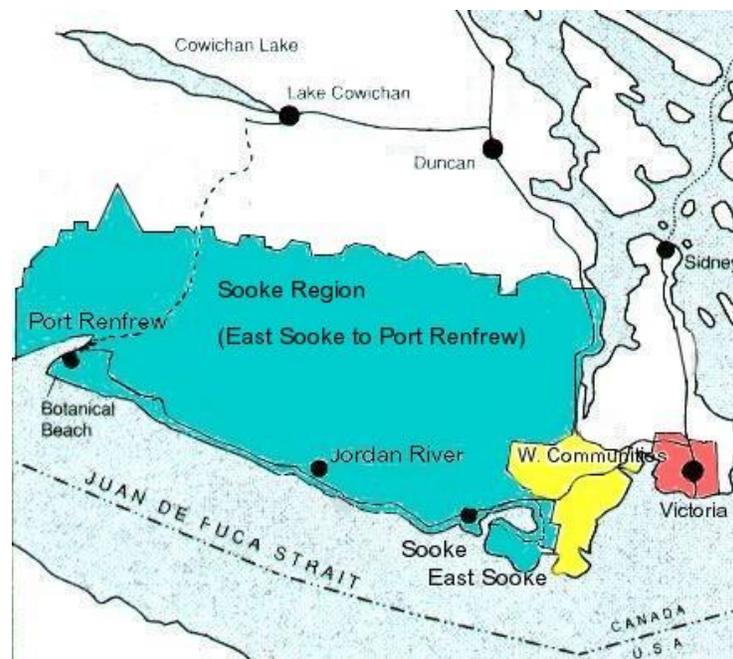
The Task Group meets every two months. Prior to a scheduled meeting, the Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) emails the notes from the previous meeting and an agenda. Meetings generally consist of the LOC discussing the activities with regard to the District Literacy Plan (DLP) and asking for guidance or feedback on various elements. The Task Group discusses the DLP budget and makes decisions about the disbursement of funds. The role of the LOC is to provide a summary of activities, share information, present ideas and opportunities, facilitate discussion, and provide consistent leadership for the DLP, as well as accomplish the daily tasks of implementing and evaluating the actions described in the District Literacy Plan.

## 2. Community context:

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

The Sooke Region is comprised of East Sooke (pop. 1435), the District of Sooke (pop. 11,435), Otter Point (pop. 2000), Shirley (pop. 600), Jordan River (pop. 100) and Port Renfrew (pop. 270). The total population for the region is approximately 15,840 across a 90 kilometer span of mostly coastline and forest.<sup>1</sup>

The population of the Sooke Region continues to grow at a rate of approximately two percent per year. The relatively affordable housing market, its proximity to Victoria, as well as the small community feel, make Sooke an attractive option for families and new homebuyers. Sooke's ongoing shift from a resource-based community to one with a large population of new residents (commuters, retirees and families), and a growing school district (SD 62), is altering community dynamics.



<sup>1</sup> These figures are estimates based on the most recent Statistics Canada Census (2011).

### **3. Community development and literacy collaboration:**

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

For a second year in a row, the LOC has been working closely with the local library.

To celebrate the week of National Family Literacy Day, the Sooke Region Literacy Project (SRLP) partnered with the Sooke Branch of the Vancouver Island Regional Library and the Edward Milne Community School (EMCS) Society, to host a free concert for families featuring Juno nominees, The Kerplunks. Promotion for the event was done by both the library and the LOC. The library provided the refreshments for the musicians, staff and volunteers as well as thank you gifts. The event was mostly paid for with SRLP (and Decoda) funds. The theatre was provided by EMCS Society. The free Sunday afternoon event was very well attended including 250 children, adults, volunteers and staff.

The SRLP also worked with the library to host a financial literacy information session. The session was facilitated by a local accountant who was trained by the Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) of Canada. Nine people attended the event.

In addition working together on this event, the library generously provides used and donated books to our Book Bin program and has offered their space as a potential venue for future programs. The Library Manager also is a member of our Task Group.

## 4. Goals and actions for the past year:

### *a. What priorities, goals or objectives have you addressed in the past year?*

The priorities for 2015-16 were to:

- Maintain existing **Book Bin program**: the focus was on finding a suitable and sustainable workspace and storage.
- Maintain existing **Books for Breakfast program**: we were looking at whether or not we should continue offering the Books for Breakfast program in Shirley or perhaps offer a second session in Sooke or in another small surrounding community such as East Sooke.
- Support the **Play and Learn Summer Camp**: we looked at the possibility of the SRLP providing consistent funding year to year.
- Create a **Family Literacy Week** event in partnership with the library: we needed to determine what type of event to organize in January.
- **Promote literacy** in the Sooke Region: we wanted to increase our presence by talking to community groups in addition to the promotional activities undertaken in the last year.
- Create an **adult literacy program**: we continued to flush out the idea of a Financial Literacy Lecture Series.
- Collaborate with the local library to create a **summer literacy event**: we wanted to support the library's Summer Reading Club by participating in the planning and execution of a fun end of summer event.

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

#### **Book Bin Program:**

The Book Bin program distributes approximately 7500 books to the community in a year. Currently, there are six bins: two at SEAPARC, two at the Sooke Family Resource Society (SFRS), one at T'souke Nation Reserve and one at the Pacheedaht Reserve in Port Renfrew. A Book Bin is being planned for the community of East Sooke and will be placed in the general store, which also serves as a community hub. We continue to assess where the Book Bins best serve the needs of the community.

The Book Bin operation was moved from one lead volunteer's home to a new lead volunteer. Some costs were incurred to make the new lead volunteer's space more accommodating to the program. Seven dedicated volunteers continue to manage the program. The Book Bin program continues to receive annual funding of \$600 from Sooke Rotary Club. The local Sooke Girl Guides conducted a book drive through January and February as part of their community service for a

second year in a row. They collected approximately 1000 books, 70 percent of which were children's books. The program continues to be in need of gently used children's books, and purchases are made at thrift stores to supplement the supply.

### **Books for Breakfast program:**

This is a preschool story time program that ran once a month in both Sooke and East Sooke from September to May (except for December). Children ranging in ages from newborn to five years old attended a monthly early literacy event that included reading, storytelling, music, movement, snacks and a free book to take home to help build their personal library of quality children's literature. Books distributed in the program have colourful artwork, innovative stories and some included a CD with songs and animation viewed on a computer. Each month followed a different theme according to the book that was being given away. Healthy snacks were provided. Each session lasted an hour and included time for parents and children to socialize and play. This program was developed and implemented by the SRLP with funding support from Ready Set Learn from School District 62 (*We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education*).

The Books for Breakfast program is a popular program. The LOC counted families as opposed to individual adults. Most of the time only one parent would bring his/her kids. Occasionally a spouse or grandparents would join the session. Sometimes a parent would bring a child that was a cousin or a friend so the LOC would count them as a separate family. The program was offered in East Sooke (for the first time) at the local community/former fire hall and in Sooke at the Sooke Family Resources Centre. East Sooke had an average of 11 children per session and 8 families. Attendance ranged from 7 to 18 children and 5 to 11 families. Sooke had an average of 8 children per session and 6 families. Attendance ranged from 4 to 16 children and 4 to 9 families.

In past years, the LOC sourced the give-away books from Barefoot Books. Due to the increased exchange rate this last year, the overall cost had increased significantly. The LOC is looking into an alternative publisher to source Canadian content books that come from a Canadian publisher and distributor.

### **Play and Learn Summer Camp:**

The SRLP is providing seed money to support the Play and Learn Summer Camp. This summer program provides a rich play-based learning environment for four weeks, immersing students in literacy and numeracy, and physical activities designed to foster their existing skills, and to improve their self-confidence and enjoyment in these subject areas. Candidates best suited to the camp are children aged six to nine years of age from low income families, many of whom are

of Aboriginal descent, and who had been identified by their school as not yet meeting expectations. Participating children are recommended by the elementary schools in this region.

### **Family Literacy Week event:**

As mentioned in Section 3.a., we organized a Family Literacy Day concert on January 31 featuring The Kerplunks. 250 children and parents attended the free event.

### **Literacy Promotion:**

The LOC attended a three day Decoda Literacy Solutions conference in November where she was able to do some networking and bring back many good ideas to the Task Group.

The LOC had an information table at the Watkiss Way Market in the fall, the Volunteer Fair in April and at the annual Rotary Auction in May. She also spoke to Rotary about the SLRP's programs and projects.

### **Adult Literacy program:**

The LOC and Task Group wanted to develop a program geared to adults in the community. They felt there would be a need for a Financial Literacy Lecture Series. We scheduled a session with CPA Canada to offer a financial literacy workshop on Ten Healthy Habits of Financial Management. It was held at the library on Tuesday May 10 from 6:30 to 7:30. The public could register through the library. The event was free and refreshments were served. The CPA who conducted the workshop was a local accountant. Nine people attended the event.

In addition, one of our volunteers offered an information session on Registered Education Savings Plans to new mothers at a Mom and Baby group called Baby Talk at the Sooke Family Resource Society. This information session was attended by 10 parents and their babies.

### **Summer Literacy event:**

The LOC and the local library did not work together to create a summer literacy event due to scheduling challenges.

*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?*

No summer literacy event was created.

## 5. Indications of success:

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

Overall, our programs were popular and received positive feedback.

The Book Bin program's success is attested to the sheer number of books going out into the community every week. Children's books are especially popular and hard to keep in stock.

The Books for Breakfast program is very popular and often has a waiting list. Parents provide positive feedback and keep coming back. This program is helping young children with their early literacy skills. Many parents say the books given to the children become favourites and the songs are often sung regularly in the household.

The Play and Learn Summer Camp consistently shows a progression in skills in every single tested student in numeracy. There is very little written work in the numeracy component of the camp, and all students are tested orally and the activities are primarily oral in nature. Literacy assessments showed all students improving in their reading levels. Initial assessments indicated a very low level of literacy. Overall, students made progress in the foundational reading skills of alphabetic knowledge, phonemic awareness and sight word recognition, benefitting from four weeks of targeted instruction. The principals of the Sooke region schools have shared that the children who participated in these Play and Learn camps demonstrate progress and confidence in their literacy and numeracy development upon return to learning at school in the fall.

The Family Literacy Week event was very well attended and there was a tremendous amount of positive feedback from the community for several weeks following the event.

## 6. Challenges:

### *a. What are the difficulties?*

One of the challenges we are faced with in the Book Bin program is keeping up with the demand of Children's Books. Donations alone do not provide enough books and the volunteers must supplement with books bought from thrift stores.

The cost of books for the Books for Breakfast program increased this last year due to the increased exchange rate. Although our representative from Barefoot Books work hard to find ways to save money, the cost had increased and the quality of books were not as great (many of the books did not include a CD as in the past).

The Play and Learn Summer Camp is challenged by finding ongoing consistent funding. Each year, the coordinator starts from scratch, applying for various funding opportunities, never knowing if there is going to be enough money to run the program at its fullest capacity. We are hoping the seed money provided by the SRLP will help give the Play and Learn Summer Camp a head start and more security.

Generating interest and participation in adult programs in our community appears to be a challenge for many groups. Although we feel that adult literacy is one area that is not being addressed by the SRLP, we are having a difficult time coming up with programs that will be needed, well received and well attended in our community.

### *b. What would help?*

The challenges faced by the Book Bin program and the Play and Learn Summer Camp would be solved by a source of ongoing and consistent funding.

It would also help to solve how to generate interest in the community for attendance to events.

## 7. For the coming year:

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

The Sooke Region and School District 62 continue to grow in population, which means opportunities for more potential programs and clientele.

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

- Maintain existing Book Bin program: the focus will be on expanding in to East Sooke.
- Maintain existing Books for Breakfast program: we will be running the program in East Sooke, Sooke and expanding to Port Renfrew. Port Renfrew is requesting that the program be offered weekly, that the SRLP cover the wage of the person offering it and the community will supply the books. The LOC is changing the book supplier from Barefoot Books to a Canadian one. The LOC is working with the Sooke Region Museum gift shop to source books.
- Support the Play and Learn Summer Camp: we will be looking at providing consistent funding year to year.
- Create a Family Literacy Week event in partnership with the library: we must determine what type of event to organize in January. It will likely have something to do with music to be consistent with next year's theme.
- Promote literacy in the Sooke Region: we will increase our presence by talking to community groups in addition to the promotional activities undertaken this last year.
- Support the summer literacy camp in Port Renfrew. The SLRP provided financial support to help cover the cost of wages and food. If the program is successful, we hope to continue to support it.

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

- Careful budgeting and a focus on maintaining programs to ensure the sustainability of certain programs
- Awareness of changing and emerging community needs
- Continued relationship building and collaboration
- Ongoing support from the Task Group, literacy organizations and funders
- Engagement of and feedback from the community
- Connection with community stakeholders in surrounding communities to ensure a broad geographic coverage of our services

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

We will maintain a record of books going into the community, attendance at events and programs, newspaper articles about our events and feedback from participants, partners, volunteers and organizers.