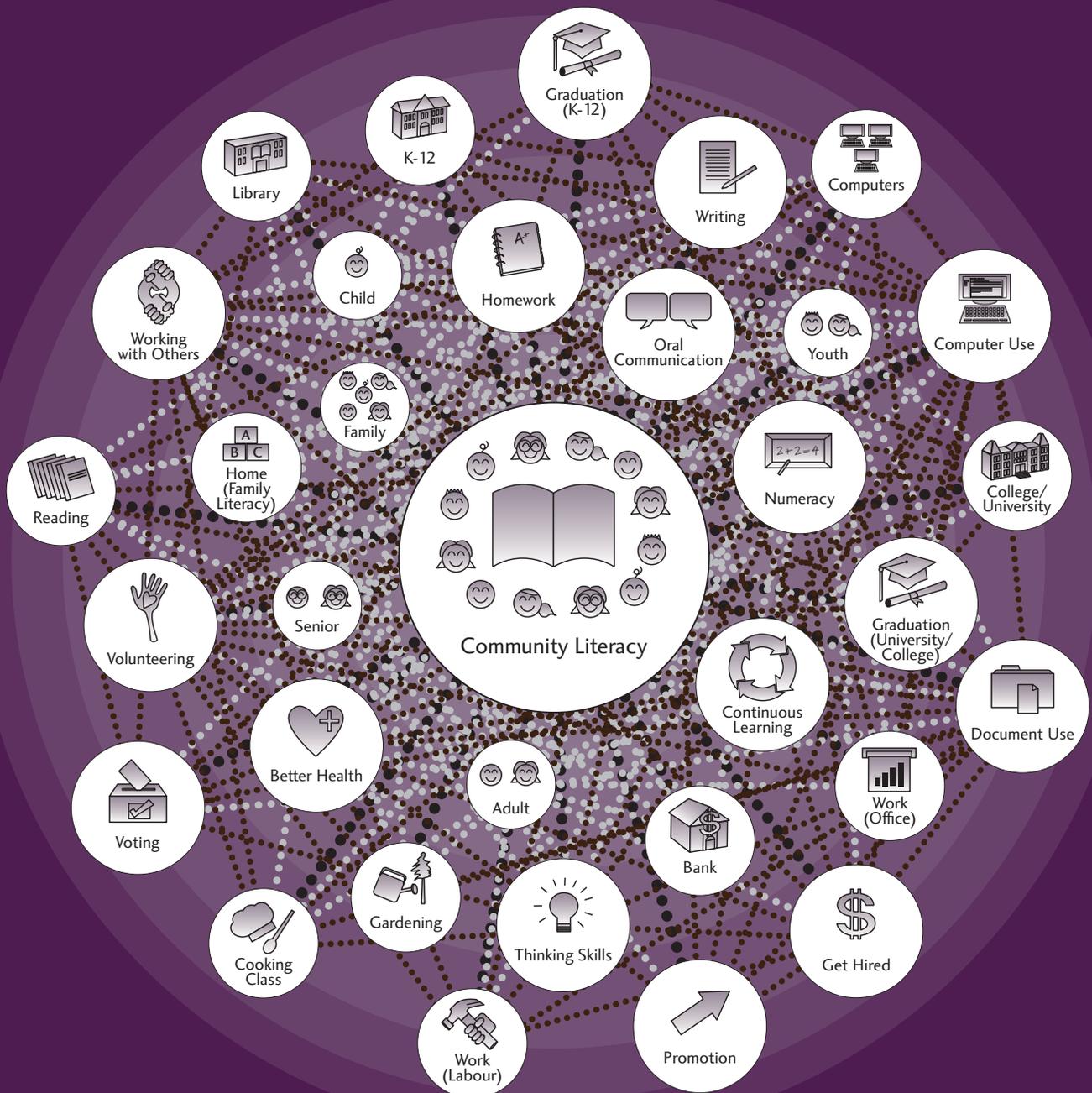


# Decoda

LITERACY SOLUTIONS

Annual Report 2011-2012



Making sense of the modern world

# Decoda Literacy Solutions Annual Report 2011/12

Message from the Chair .....	1
Message from the CEO .....	2
Decoda’s Commitment .....	3
Financial Statements .....	4
Communities.....	6
Zeballos: From Gold Rush to Learning Bonanza .....	10
Children & Families.....	12
Karen IPALS: Making Canada Home .....	13
Adult & Workforce .....	15
Mo’s Story: “I can do it” .....	18
Resources.....	19
Thank You .....	21



A tutor and student at the One-to-One Children’s Literacy Program in Vernon, just one of the hundreds of community literacy programs across BC. For 16 years, One-to-One has matched tutors with Grade 1 to 5 students. A student in Grade 3 told his tutor, “When you didn’t help me, I hated reading. Now that you’ve helped me, I love reading.”

Front cover graphic created by [Ash Tanasaychuk](#)

Contact Decoda: 560, 510 Burrard St. Vancouver BC, V6C 3A8  
 t 604-681-4199 | f 604-681-3006 | [decoda.ca](http://decoda.ca) | [info@decoda.ca](mailto:info@decoda.ca)

## Message from the Chair

Bringing forward 30 years of knowledge and expertise from our two founding organizations, Literacy BC and the literacy department of 2010 Legacies Now, Decoda Literacy Solutions officially opened on May 30, 2011. In the very busy year since then, Decoda has established a new office, gained new staff members, supported and expanded BC's literacy field, and become the recognized provincial voice for literacy and informal learning.

This work is possible only through the hard work and dedication of my fellow Decoda board members, the Decoda staff, all of those who work in literacy across the province, and the many volunteers, donors, partners and champions who support and promote literacy in communities across BC.

We have achieved much over the past year, and we plan to achieve even more in the year to come. Increasing literacy positively impacts every measure of individual and community health and resilience. Decoda's literacy network, the only one of its kind in Canada, is effective in reaching individuals and building communities. Our goal at Decoda is to ensure that this network can thrive and grow for decades to come.

BC's community-based literacy network is made up of 102 literacy task groups representing more than 400 communities. When literacy organizations work together with other community organizations through Decoda's network, they create a powerful lever for local economic and social development.

In today's economy, with the rapid and escalating pace of technological change, a competitive society must be a constantly learning society. Schools are not enough. Valuable learning happens in informal and non-formal contexts at work, at home and in the community. This learning is effective, and it can be intentional and encouraged. That's how BC's literacy network works: it supports local, informal learning opportunities, in order to create a culture of community-based learning and literacy in British Columbia.

Over the coming year, the board's focus will be on finding sustainable funding for literacy in BC. We are committed to supporting and expanding our unique approach to community building through a coordinated literacy network for decades to come.

Donna Wilson,  
Chair, Decoda Literacy Solutions



Donna Wilson

## Message from the CEO

The past year at Decoda Literacy Solutions has been filled with growth and achievement. Decoda has continued and expanded the literacy work of Literacy BC and the literacy department of 2010 Legacies Now, and we have launched new initiatives and partnerships. We have forged strong relationships with government, businesses, and other non-profit organizations to raise awareness of the importance of literacy to our society. Literacy drives our economy, and Decoda offers literacy solutions to communities, the service sector, and businesses.

It has been busy, but the rewards have been tremendous. The achievements of the past year would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Decoda staff, board and the multitude of literacy leaders and partners across the province. Thank you.

Over the coming year, we look forward to building on the strong foundation that has been created. Decoda will maintain a focus on collaborative community planning and implementation of literacy initiatives in communities across BC. In addition, we will work with partners and stakeholders to expand outreach and programs for second chance learners, those adults who need another opportunity to complete high school or build the skills needed for confident and independent living.

Perhaps most importantly, Decoda will continue to work toward sustainable funding for literacy work in British Columbia. Our goal is to make community literacy as central to our society's learning culture as schools and post-secondary institutions.

Local learning activities are the building blocks of a provincial literacy system. Here at Decoda, we look forward to working with and for communities to build the literacy foundation of a learning province.

Brenda Le Clair,  
Chief Executive Officer, Decoda Literacy Solutions



Brenda Le Clair

# Decoda's Commitment

## Mission

Decoda Literacy Solutions builds vibrant and resilient communities by leveraging literacy and learning opportunities.

## Core Values

**Collaboration:** We believe diverse ideas and contributions create impactful literacy and learning solutions.

**Courage:** We embrace innovation and take action.

**Kindness:** We treat colleagues and others as we wish to be treated, with care, respect and appreciation.

**Accountability:** We demonstrate, measure and share results.

## Distinctive Excellence

**Literacy Expertise:** We are recognized leaders in literacy and community development.

**Community Leverage:** We are able to mobilize a province-wide network of resources and expertise to leverage investments in literacy.

**Co-Creating Solutions:** We bring together public policy makers, business and industry, individual philanthropists, and communities to work together to meet our collective literacy priorities, goals and interests.

## Vision

More successful individuals, sustainable businesses and prosperous communities through a culture of literacy and learning.

## Strategic Goals

**Community Focus:** Actively support the literacy and learning needs of all who live and work in communities across BC.

**Capacity Building:** Increase literacy expertise and capacity within British Columbia.

**Leadership:** Provide thought leadership and promote expertise in practice.

**Workforce Development:** Improve the competencies of the current and future workforce.

**Financial Viability:** Build sustainable funding for community literacy and coordination.

**Organizational Effectiveness:** Ensure Decoda is operationally aligned to meet its business objectives.

# Financial Statements

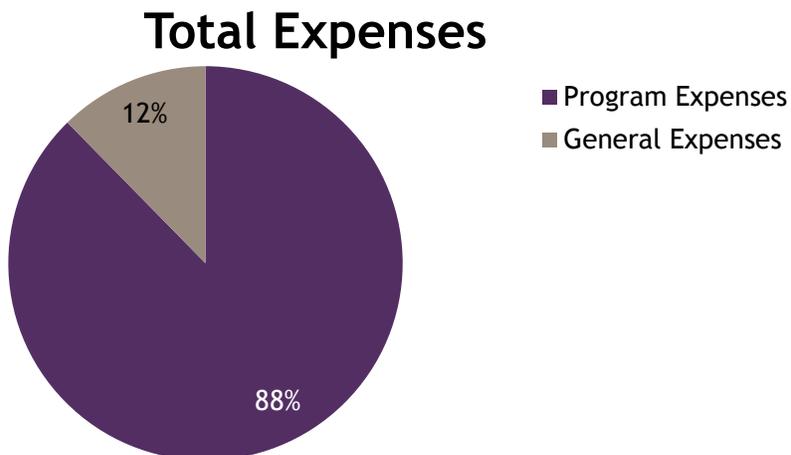
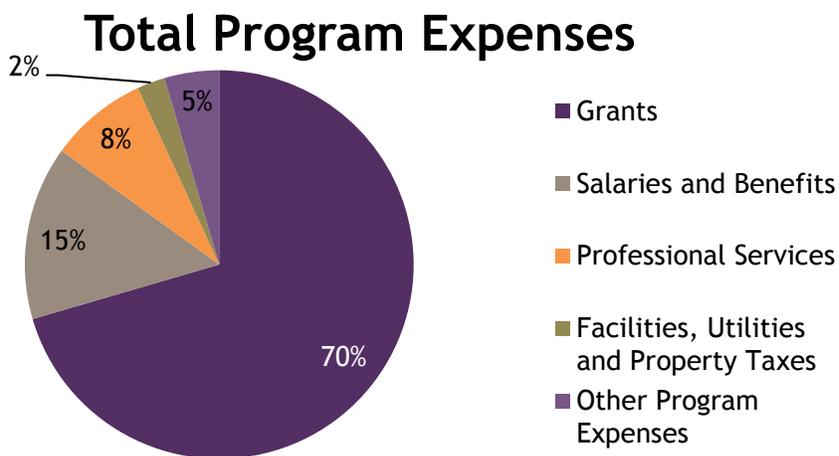
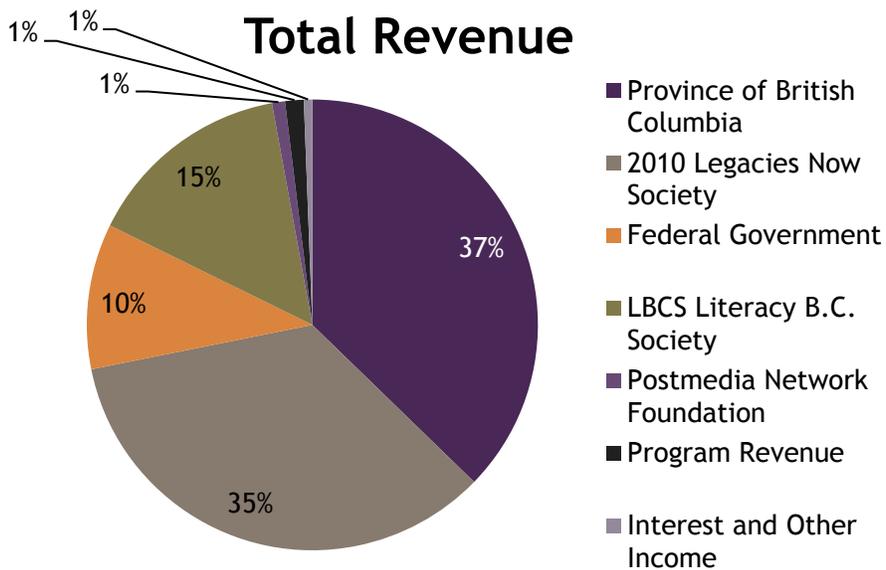
In its first year of operations, Decoda incurred total expenses of \$5.6 million, of which \$4.9 million or 88% was to support literacy programs across the province. Over \$3.4 million in grants was given out to support literacy initiatives including pilot Immigrant Parents as Literacy Supporters (IPALS) programs, 102 coordinated community literacy task groups representing literacy stakeholders in more than 400 communities across British Columbia, and additional funding to task groups for family literacy, made possible through Raise-a-Reader fundraising.

We would like to thank our significant financial supporters last year, the Province of British Columbia, 2010 Legacies Now Society, the Federal Government of Canada and LBCS Literacy B.C. Society, as well as other partners such as Postmedia Network Foundation.

<b>Total Expenses</b>	
Program Expenses	\$4,908,628
General Expenses	\$691,346
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,599,974</b>

<b>Total Program Expenses</b>	
Grants	\$3,459,037
Salaries and Benefits	\$711,664
Professional Services	\$400,247
Facilities, Utilities and Property Taxes	\$114,452
Other Program Expenses	\$223,228
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,908,628</b>

<b>Total Revenue</b>	
Province of British Columbia	\$2,124,020
2010 Legacies Now Society	\$1,970,294
Federal Government	\$594,487
LBCS Literacy B.C. Society	\$846,833
Postmedia Network Foundation	\$53,038
Program Revenue	\$75,990
Interest and Other Income	\$34,484
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,699,146</b>



Literacy and learning are essential throughout people's lives, from early childhood to senior years. Decoda works to support and promote literacy for all ages, in all sectors and all regions of British Columbia. Decoda's key areas of focus are communities; children and families; and adult and workforce development.

## Communities

BC's community-based literacy network is made up of 102 literacy task groups representing more than 400 communities. Members of these task groups are stakeholders from literacy organizations, social services, employment agencies, education, health, libraries, the justice system, and others. Each task group examines the specific literacy needs of its community, identifies gaps in service, and works together to find collaborative solutions to maximize scarce resources. Each task group employs a literacy outreach coordinator, who facilitates local literacy initiatives and partnerships.

Decoda Literacy Solutions continues the community literacy development work started by 2010 Legacies Now. Decoda is the central connection point for all of the task groups and literacy outreach coordinators. This model of community literacy development through a coordinated network allows information, ideas and processes to be widely shared, and then adapted to fit unique local situations.

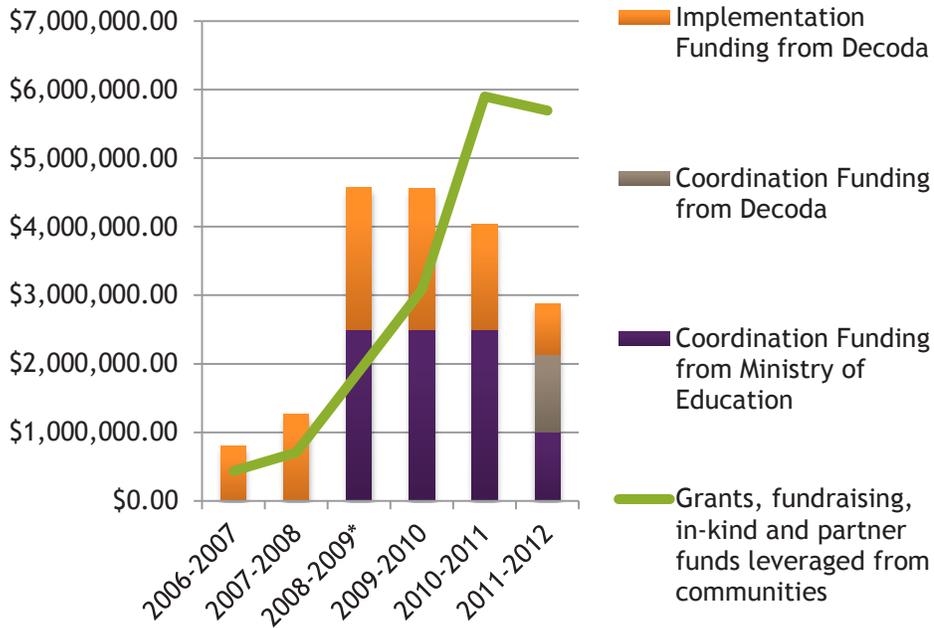
Each community across BC faces economic challenges specific to its area. Working with key stakeholders in specific communities, the BC community literacy network can take ownership of local workforce opportunities and address distinct needs.

By creating strong workforce development at the community level, local economies gain a competitive edge that contributes to the overall prosperity of all British Columbians:

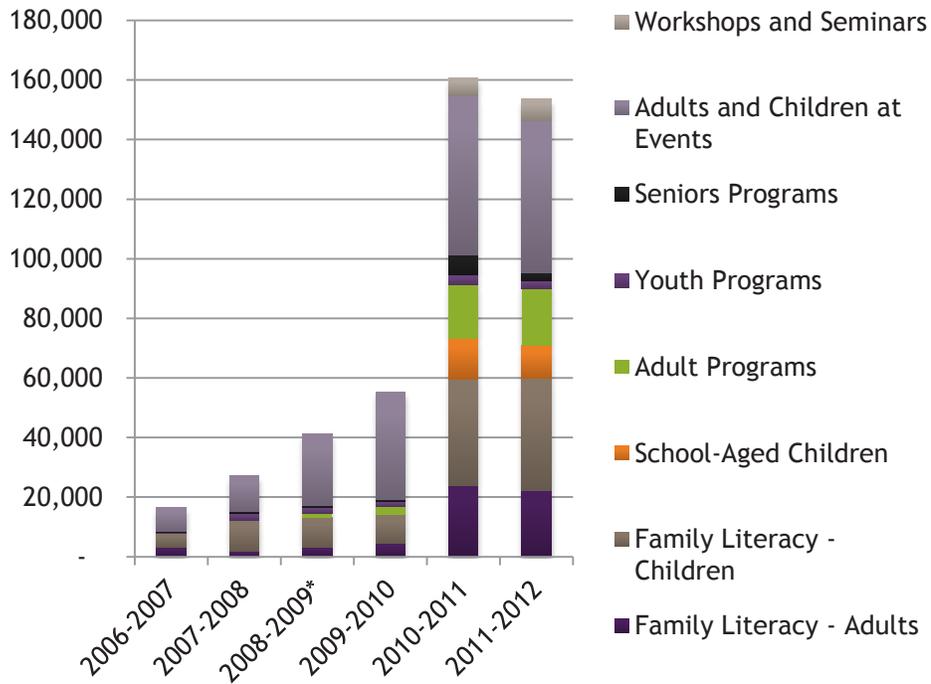
- In 2011-12, the BC community literacy network leveraged \$2,872,999 in funding from Decoda into \$5,693,171 from grants, fundraising and in-kind community support
- 1,673 organizations partnered for literacy program delivery and developed 493 new literacy initiatives, sustaining or expanding another 696
- 46,654 adults, youth and seniors and 48,620 pre-school and school-aged children participated in community literacy programs.

Community literacy task groups report on their impact each year. The following charts reflect those reports. There may be additional community programs and services that are not accounted for in these charts.

## Multiplier Effect of Literacy Funding

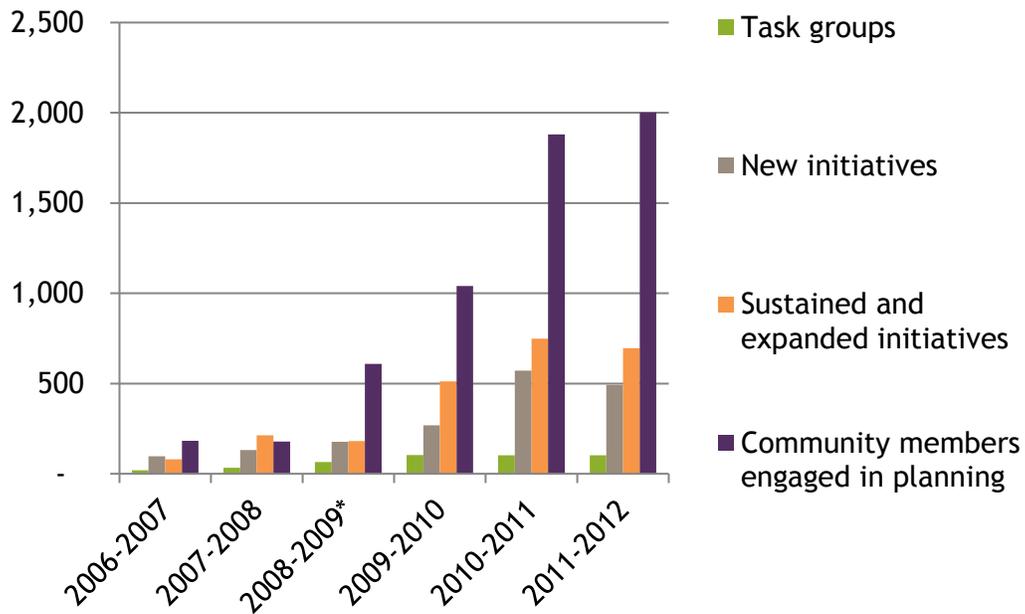


## Literacy Program Attendance Over Time



\*estimated - median of 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 amounts

## Community Involvement in Literacy



\*estimated - median of 2007-2008 and 2009-2010 amounts



# BC's Community Literacy Network

Penticton Comox Indian Band Brisco Davis Bay Hot Spring Cove Glen Vowell Tahsis  
 Firvale Grindrod Nadleh First Nation Shawnigan Lake Nakusp Balfour  
 Sointula Union Bay Port Fraser Beecher Bay First Nation Kyuquot Band Naramata  
 Machoia Valemount Campbell River Huu-ay-aht First Nation Queensborough Robson  
 Sechelt Beaverdell Lower Nicola District of North Vancouver Lac La Hache Malakwa  
 Merritt Gold River Huntington Tlell Radium Hot Springs Ymir Cedar Cottage Kitchener Comox  
 Bridesville Wilson Creek Squamish First Nation Sunshine Village Tulameen Hope  
 Falkland Salmon Arm Prince George Pacheedaht First Nation Ashton Creek Tsawout  
 Slokan Barkerville Kwantlen Band Ehatesaht First Nation Hartley Bay Royston Parson  
 Duncan Mill Bay Christina Lake Ouchige First Nation Spallumcheen Highlands Taylor  
 Celista Clearwater Harrison Mills Lower Kootenay Band Port Moody Abbotsford  
 Westside Wynndel Gitwanga Coldwater First Nation Thormanby Quilchena Tlingit  
 Quesnel Hesquiaht Surrey Toquaht First Nation Pouce Coupe Kimberley Whistler  
 McLure Fauquier New Westminster Sauteau First Nations N'Quatqua Fruitvale  
 Cawston Gitsequkla Cowichan Bay Lumblers Ridge Coquitlam Kitsilano  
 Ucluelet Kyuquot North Saanich Queen Charlotte City Grassy Plains Fraser Lake  
 Two Mile Ts'al'ah Band Tsawwassen First Nation West Vancouver Colwood Masset  
 Oliver Grand Forks Fulford Bay City of Kamloops Burns Lake Band Windermere Creston  
 Summerland 10 Mile Ranch Telegraph Creek Port Hardy Cortes Island Bamfield  
 Smithers Tahltan Band Fort St. James Halfmoon Bay Crawford Bay Edgewood Metchosis  
 Langley Buffalo Creek Quadra Island Kispiox Valley Meadow Creek Cloverdale Arnold  
 Errington Port Clements Penelakut First Nation Pender Harbour Powell River Ashcroft  
 Youbou Lions Bay Denman Island Stellat'en First Nation Vanderhoof Houston  
 Chase Barnston Island Ucluelet First Nation Nuxalk Nation Clearbrook  
 Wells Rutland Lake Haisla First Nation Prince Rupert Wasa Bella Coola Kaleden  
 Chilliwack Armstrong Bonaparte Indian Band Walnut Grove Lumby Hills  
 Holberg Courtenay Skin Tyee First Nation Oyster River Francois Lake  
 Winlaw Hagwilget South Vancouver Agassiz Shuswap Band Port McNeill Gibsons  
 Wierteron Forrest Grove Lower Similkameen Indian Band Nakazdli Band Oak Bay Tofino  
 Fernie Whiterock Carr's Landing Isk'waylacw Band North Cowichan Clearbrook Skatin  
 Kispiox Mt. Lehman Blueberry River First Nations Murrayville Kincolith  
 Cache Creek Mount Pleasant Nak'azdli First Nation Douglas Lake Langford Sorrento  
 Metlakatla Kingcome Inlet Saik'uz First Nation Shackan First Nation Ginglox Sardis  
 Stui North Delta Nooaitch First Nation Whiskey Creek Clayburn McBride  
 Canyon Lac des Roche Nuchalnath First Nation Fort St. John Greenwood Sirdar  
 Sicamous Port Renfrew Upper Similkameen First Nation Tseycum  
 Boston Bar Central Saanich White Crow Village Britannia Beach Nisga'a Boswell  
 Horse Lake Taku River First Nation Edgewater Rossland  
 Gambier Slokan Park Beaver Harbour Collingwood Kitwanga Ganges  
 Yahk Burnaby 100 Mile House Kamloops Indian Band Akiskinook Band Burns Lake  
 Grasmere Dawson Creek Cheslatta Carrier Nation Kitsumkalum Princeton  
 Ittatsoo T'Sou-ke First Nation Fort Rupert Canim Lake Band Hazelton Zeballos  
 Kelowna Barrowtown Gwa Sala Nakwaxda wNee Tah Buhn Hedley Mission  
 Golden Oyama Nelson Islands Matsqui First Nation Fort Langley Black Creek  
 Trail Parksville Willowbrook Tzeachten First Nation Ladysmith Marpole Kiwassa  
 Vernon Coldstream Fanny Bay Halfway River First Nation Upper Nicola Country Kaslo  
 Laidlaw Skidegate Spillimacheen Atlin New Hazelton Keremeos  
 Yale Jaffray Castlegar Xacli'p Band Tobacco Plains Band Silver Creek Sidney Iskut  
 Darfield Cobble Hill Qualicum Beach Downtown Eastside Elko Sandspit Elkford  
 Salmo Old Massett T'itq'et Band Good Hope Lake Okanagan Falls Decker Lake Victoria  
 Tipella Port Edward Doig River First Nation Aspen Grove Rock Creek Kitkatla  
 Barriere Egmont Hagensborg Matsqui Village Kitselas Band Little Fort  
 Wardner Cherryville Gitanyow Sekw'elw'as Band Baynes Lake Squamish Coombs  
 Sooke Montrose South Hazelton Port Coquitlam Aldergrove Gitanmaax Bowser  
 Clinton Alert Bay Brookwood/Fernridge Lax Kw'alaams Chu Chua  
 Coalmont Esquimalt Argenta Xwisten Band Osoyoos Nelson  
 Crofton Quatsino Westbridge Spence's Bridge Maple Bay Midway Erickson  
 Lister Winfield Bowen Island Sumas First Nation Maple Ridge Chemainus Nazko  
 Port Alice Roberts Creek St. Mary's Band Samahquam Revelstoke Merville  
 Pemberton Canal Flats Lake Babine Nation Williams Lake Ahousaht Lytton  
 Burton Sayward Nanoose Bay Honeymoon Bay Sliammon First Nation Pauquachin Cranbrook  
 Granisle New Denver Snawnavas First Nation Sparwood Enderby Delta  
 Lillooet Lake Cowichan Opitsaht/Esowista Hudson Hope Peachland Keats  
 Ladner sawwassen City of North Vancouver Kingfisher Richmond  
 Tsartlip Dease Lake West Moberly First Nations Cumberland Terrace

# Zeballos: From Gold Rush to Learning Bonanza

*Zeballos is one of the 102 literacy task groups in BC.*

Zeballos is a tiny village on the western side of Vancouver Island, at the head of Zeballos Inlet. To get there, you have drive for an hour on an unpaved road. During the 1930s and 40s, there was a gold rush in Zeballos. The rich gold vein produced \$13 million in gold bars, and supported a town of 1,500.



Zeballos in 1950.

Today, a bit of prospecting continues, but the key industries are forestry, fishing and tourism. The population has fallen to 231. According to Kim Johnston, literacy outreach coordinator for Zeballos, “the outside world doesn’t filter in” to this community. It’s so isolated, the nearest grocery store is an hour and half away.

Education hasn’t been a priority here, until now. Last winter, 43 adults attended an education program, and in the spring, eight people (just over 3% of the town) proudly received their Adult Dogwood. One of the graduates was the chief of the Ehattesaht Band, and three-quarters of the town were at the ceremony to celebrate. Her graduation has proved inspirational to the community. This fall, 50 people are back at school, and the program has expanded to four neighboring communities: Kyuquot, Gold River, Tahsis and Alert Bay.

The Adult Dogwood program consists of an English course, a math course and three electives. It runs from one to four every afternoon at the school. Many of the students have children in the StrongStartBC program at the same time, so they are able to travel to the school on the bus with their kids. There are evening classes, as well, in the neighbouring communities.

While it’s possible to complete the program in 10 months, that is a demanding schedule for adults who are not used to school and are juggling full lives. In order to recognize students’ life accomplishments, the program gives credit for prior learning. Many students gain credit for their work in the fishing industry. Two artists in Gold River have applied for credit for their artwork.

When Kim is asked why the adult education program in Zeballos has been so successful, she is quick to praise the hard work of the students. The Zeballos program works, according to Kim, because it’s built to be responsive to students. She says,

“The need is there. We’re just responding. The students are doing the work. They decided what they wanted, and we’re giving it to them.”

Even though the students in Kim’s program are working hard, it sometimes takes a bit of prodding to get busy adults to engage with an educational program. Kim acknowledges, “Fifty percent of the job is keeping in touch with students. Walking around the community, seeing what they need, and letting them know we’re here.” Kim is so persistent in encouraging her community, in fact, that people have been known to hide behind lampposts when she’s approaching. Still, “they know I’m coming!” says Kim.

It’s not just the students that need occasional prodding. To make a community program like this happen, many partners within the community have to work together. Kim’s job as literacy outreach coordinator is to facilitate collaboration among all of the various partners. Even though all partners have the same goals—to support literacy and learning in their community—they have very different views on how to achieve those goals. Like the master facilitator that she is, Kim’s role is to find common ground, and bring people together to achieve what’s best for the community. The process might be challenging, but in Zeballos and area, the results speak for themselves.



Zeballos is a beautiful but isolated community.

## Children & Families

Decoda supports child and family literacy across BC by offering training, support and resources. The past year was very busy for child and family literacy program staff as they delivered training throughout the province, developed new resources, and forged new partnerships.

In 2011, Decoda began a partnership with The Vancouver Sun Raise-a-Reader campaign, which raises funds to support family literacy in BC. Decoda coordinated and distributed the funds from the 2011 lower mainland campaign, which raised \$516,038, including a contribution by the Province of British Columbia. The funds were distributed to task groups around the province. Each task group distributed the funds to programs in its area based on the family literacy needs and priorities of that area.

Over the past year, Decoda continued to support the popular LEAP BC™ resources. These resources integrate Literacy, Education, Activity and Play. They are designed for families, caregivers and early learning practitioners. LEAP BC™ is available in English and French, and this year, thirty LEAP BC™ activity cards were translated into Punjabi. In November, 2012, the Punjabi cards will be available at [leapbc.decoda.ca](http://leapbc.decoda.ca).

The LEAP BC™ resources will also feature in a new partnership to promote healthy children. Decoda Literacy Solutions is collaborating with the Vancouver School District and Action Schools! BC on the Strong Start Action Resource (SSTAR). This project will help VSB StrongStartBC programs create individual action plans to promote healthy living. The SSTAR project introduces physical activity, healthy eating, early literacy, and learning through play to children, families and practitioners in StrongStartBC settings. The SSTAR pilot program is running several StrongStartBC programs throughout the Vancouver School District.



With help from Raise-a-Reader funding, the Tri-Cities Literacy Committee funded a summer literacy program, *Stories Galore and More!*

## Karen IPALS: Making Canada Home

Zipporah Min escaped Burmese military forces in 1992 and lived in a refugee camp for Karen people in Thailand. She was 13. In 2002, she came to Langley as part of a large group of Karen refugees. Today, she is a leader within her community, as a facilitator for a Parents as Literacy Supporters in Immigrant Communities (IPALS) program for Karen parents and their children.

IPALS, one of Decoda's programs, helps immigrant and refugee families support their preschool- and kindergarten-aged children's early literacy development, through interactions in English and their first language. Each session incorporates time for the adults and children to do activities together and time for the adults to learn while the children play (and learn!).

In the refugee camps, the Karen children did not have access to many toys. Zipporah says, "Back home, we play with nature, and when we go to school at eight or nine, we still want to play with nature. We are not ready for school. It's a different learning system." In the IPALS program, the children are introduced to books, toys, and guided play in a way that helps prepare them for school.

The Karen IPALS program meets at Douglas Park School, within walking distance of most of the Karen families. The program takes regular field trips to community resources, such as the library. Because of these library visits, the Langley library is expanding its collection of Karen language books.

Maintaining a connection to the Karen language and culture is an essential component of this program. Each session, the children are given books to take home, and Zipporah creates Karen translations for them. She says, "To me, the biggest thing is to make children and parents keep strong relationships. If they don't keep the language, it will be harder for them to communicate."

The "P" in IPALS stands for "Parents", and involving parents, caregivers and extended family in their children's learning is an essential part of this program. Through working with their children, the parents learn a great deal. Ralph Bereska, principal of Douglas Park School, says that by attending IPALS, "parents open up



Zipporah Min, watching children play at an IPALS session.



The Karen IPALS program has created a safe, welcoming space for Karen families in Langley.

more, begin to communicate more because they are not just by themselves. They are out there in the community, speaking English, meeting people. They are both learning and playing with their children.”

When Zipporah leads an IPALS session, her love for her work and her community is evident. She says, “I enjoy every moment. I love to see parents coming together and talking about their children. One mother said, by coming to our class, she realized that all children are different, they all learn in different ways. We help the parents learn to help their children.”

## About IPALS

IPALS has been delivered for four years in seven different communities and school districts, serving 535 families from 22 countries of origin and 14 language groups. Decoda currently works with school districts and community groups to offer this program: North Vancouver (Farsi/Korean), Burnaby (Spanish/Mandarin), Surrey (Arabic/Kurdish), Langley (Karen), Vernon (Japanese, French, Punjabi, German, Spanish, Tagalog, Polish, Vietnamese), Abbotsford (Punjabi), Prince Rupert (Vietnamese). Over the past year, IPALS in BC received new funding from Citizenship and Immigration Canada through the Provincial Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training. For more information, visit [pals.decoda.ca](https://pals.decoda.ca).

## Adult & Workforce

Over the coming years BC is facing a skills gap, where the number of skilled job openings will exceed the number of qualified candidates. At the same time, the unemployment rate for lower-skilled workers will remain high. Adult literacy and learning programs are essential to bridge the skills gap and build a strong, productive province. Decoda raises awareness of the importance of adult and workforce literacy and learning programs, and offers support to adult literacy practitioners across BC.

In September 2011, Decoda began an annual series of training, networking and idea-sharing sessions for literacy professionals around the province. Throughout the fall, Decoda staff visited nine regions and delivered training to 161 participants. Fall 2012 marks the second year of these training events.

One key initiative discussed at the training events is the Adult Literacy Database. The database was piloted over the past year and launched in September, 2012. The database fills a long-standing need for a simple and effective program management tool for adult literacy programs. Programs will be able to use the database to track learner progress, guide practice, and report to funders. Decoda will use it to collate provincial and regional data about adult literacy.

In BC, one in five youth do not complete high school in the expected time. Even among high-school graduates, skill upgrading and life-long learning is vital. BC's adult literacy programs offer targeted assistance that helps learners meet their goals, whether they want to complete school, enter training programs, move into better jobs, or help their children with homework. The Adult Literacy Database will provide important data about the scale and impact of this work. The database is housed at Edudata Canada, a secure research unit at The University of British Columbia.



Just as this Vancouver building rises from a strong foundation, literacy is the foundation of a prosperous, thriving province.

## Three Year Research Project on Essential Skills in the Workplace Wraps up

*Embedding Literacy and Essential Skills in the Workplace* is a three-year research project that wrapped up this year. The project report will be released in winter 2012/13. In the project, workplace learning professionals worked with a health care employer, Aboriginal Friendship Centres, and BC Corrections to explore how a focus on literacy and essential skills in the workplace could help people do their jobs with greater safety, productivity and joy.

Rather than targeting the workers with lower literacy skills, the project considered the entire working environment. Where were people getting stuck? What was going wrong? How did people's reading, writing, math and communication skills affect these problem areas?

The project revealed that if someone doesn't understand written instructions, managers often assume that person has a low reading level. However, this ignores the fact that workplace material is often poorly written, or laid out so that it is hard to read.

Through this project, people in the partner workplaces began to think about how their skills affected tasks and processes. They considered different or better ways to work. They even questioned whether some things needed to be done at all. In the three workplaces, a shift in culture and in systems developed as their awareness about literacy and essential skills grew. This project ended in September 2012, but the change in these workplaces will continue.



Whether the work is in a mine, an office or out-of-doors, improving workers' literacy and essential skills helps them be safer and more productive.

## Decoda Helps Legal Services Society Serve Clients

For businesses, clear language helps customers quickly and easily understand what a business offers. For social services, it's even more important. Literacy and language skills should not be a barrier to access. The Legal Services Society (LSS) of British Columbia is one organization taking steps to improve their website, publications, and other materials to reflect accessibility standards and the principles of clear language and design.

LSS is working with Decoda Literacy Solutions to evaluate how accessible LSS resources are to clients with low literacy levels. To achieve this goal, Decoda staff reviewed LSS publications, suggested improvements to the client intake process, and created training materials for LSS staff, local agents and community partners on literacy issues among clients.

### Making Connections, Making a Difference

The Westside Literacy Task Force is one of BC's 102 literacy task groups. It operates the Welcoming Neighbours Program at Kitsilano Neighbourhood House in Vancouver, which trains volunteers and supports newcomers to learn English.

One Welcoming Neighbours volunteer says, "My involvement with the English Conversation Circles has increased my sense of community and motivates me to be more aware of what is happening in my neighbourhood and the challenges faced by newcomers struggling to fit in and be accepted. I have loved the experience of facilitating, cherish the friendships I have made, and look forward to continuing with the program."



## Mo's Story: "I can do it"

*Mo tells her story of attending Street School in Kamloops in her own words. Street School is one example of the hundreds of adult literacy programs across BC. Decoda offers professional development and resources to these programs.*

"I go by anything with Mo – Mojo, Mosey, Moses..."

I just love this school. It opens your mind, and opens doors to opportunities that you didn't even know about. It is awesome. I tried to go back to school twice at [a college] but then I'd get a job and quit. I remember being in a class of about 15 students and getting kind of stumped. I looked out the window and my teacher said, "You aren't going to learn anything by looking out that window." I didn't think I was smart enough to learn again but once you find the faith in yourself, then you can carry on.

When I told a friend I really wanted to get my grade 12 because I wanted to get a better job, she said I should go to Street School. I didn't want to ask for funding again but she said it was free, open to the public, and had volunteers who helped students, and teachers who gave lots of support. I am now in my third year at Street school. I had to take a bit of time off to deal with family issues, but you can do that at Street School and then, just come back and start where you left off. I have five more units of Math to do and then I will be done. This place just lifts my spirits and gives me inspiration. I tell lots of people about it.

At Street School you just tell them your story and what you want to accomplish – and they say OK, let's get started. I didn't think there was a possibility to get my grade 12 but Street School gives that to you. They show you how to make it work. They are there for you. It was a challenge, but completing your grade 12 fills you up with inspiration. You feel, I can do it and start believing in yourself again.



Maureen Biccum graduated with her Adult Graduation Dogwood in June 2012.

## Resources

Decoda Literacy Solutions may be based in Vancouver, but we offer literacy resources to all corners of the province through **Decoda.ca**. **Decoda.ca** launched in September, 2011, and offers resources, news, and the Decoda Literacy Library. Over the past year, Decoda's Community of Literacy Practice, an online forum for BC literacy professionals to ask questions and share ideas, was re-developed. It launched as an integrated element of **Decoda.ca** in fall 2012.

The Decoda Literacy Library is a special collection of over 5,000 books on various areas of literacy. While the collection is developed to support literacy practice and the literacy network in BC, the books are available for anyone in BC to borrow, for free, by mail. Over the past year, the collection has grown by 437 items, and library circulation has increased by six percent. For more information about the library, visit **library.decoda.ca**.



With help from Raise-a-Reader funding, the Bamfield Community School Association ran five-week programs for children in Bamfield and Anacla to promote literacy and learning throughout the summer months. The camps included reading, storytelling, crafts, science experiments, environmental awareness and Huu-ay-aht cultural activities, including dancing and drumming.

## Helping Dreams Become Reality

Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) in Surrey offers literacy and English language learning programs. Roxana P., a PICS student, writes:

“My family – husband and two children – and I moved to Canada three months ago for a better life. My husband dreamt to work in marketing and sales and I dreamt to work in medical department, but in Rumania is impossible to make our dreams a reality because it has more corruption and worse services.

Here, we started taking an English class, because our language is not very good, and in time our dream will become reality.”



Seniors gather for tea, information and connection at a special event to introduce library services and get seniors' feedback on neighbourhood improvements at the Kensington Public Library in Vancouver.

# Thank You

The work of Decoda Literacy Solutions would not be possible without our many supporters, partners and friends.

## **We acknowledge and are grateful for the financial support of:**

The Province of British Columbia through the following ministries:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Advanced Education, Innovation and Technology and Responsible for Multiculturalism
- Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
- Ministry of Justice

The Government of Canada through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

2010 Legacies Now Society operating as LIFT Philanthropy Partners

LBCS Literacy B.C. Society

Languages Canada

Naramata Friends of the Library

Project Read Literacy Network

The Canadian Association of Public Schools – International

## **We are pleased to work with:**

Edudata Canada

The Vancouver Sun

Postmedia Network Foundation

Legal Services Society

Elections BC

Wintergreen Learning Materials

Vancouver Public Library

Rotary District 5040

BC Health Literacy Network

Health Literacy and Libraries Network

ABC Life Literacy Canada

Canadian Literacy and Learning Network

Arts Health Network

WorkSafeBC

School Districts

Post Secondary Institutions

Libraries across BC

Network of Performance-Based Schools

Literacy outreach coordinators, community literacy task groups, and literacy program providers throughout British Columbia

## **Decoda's Board of Directors 2011/12**

Donna Wilson (Chair)  
Dr. Greg Lee  
Hiromi Matsui

John McLaughlin  
Pommashea Noel-Bentley  
Linda K. Robertson

# Decoda

LITERACY SOLUTIONS | Making sense of the modern world

560, 510 Burrard St. Vancouver BC, V6C 3A8  
t 604-681-4199 | f 604-681-3006 | [decoda.ca](http://decoda.ca) | [info@decoda.ca](mailto:info@decoda.ca)