



2013/14 ANNUAL REPORT

Decoda
LITERACY SOLUTIONS



About Decoda

Decoda Literacy Solutions is the only province-wide literacy organization in British Columbia.

Working with a network of 102 Literacy Outreach Coordinators, Decoda provides resources, training and funds to support community-based literacy programs and initiatives in more than 400 communities across B.C.

In collaboration with community partners, our work supports children and families, youth, adult learners, and Aboriginal and immigrant communities in an effort to build strong individuals, strong families and strong communities.

As a non-profit organization, Decoda relies on the generosity of individual donors, corporate partners and government to fund community literacy work.

Our Mission

To address and support the full continuum of literacy and learning priorities identified by communities across B.C. so that people can better participate in society and the communities themselves become even more resilient.

Our Vision

A culture of community-based literacy and learning in British Columbia.

Message from the Chair

In 2013, Decoda Literacy Solutions turned a corner and positioned itself as an organization primed for growth and sustainability.

This past September, Decoda launched its first fundraising and awareness campaign, which put literacy directly in the public's eye. The *Literacy is Life* campaign showcased high-profile events, garnered media attention and aligned itself with several key community and corporate partners, including securing relationships with CTV, Starbucks, the Chimp Foundation and Eton College, to name a few.

In addition to the campaign, Decoda ran numerous training workshops for literacy professionals; held a provincial literacy conference; developed a workforce literacy and essential skills strategy; and led a community engagement campaign that was key to securing essential government funding.

The end result of all this work is quite simple - community-based literacy programs and organizations were better able to support the people who depend on them! Of course, Decoda did not accomplish this alone and thanks goes out to all of our partners, sponsors, donors and the literacy network.


This past year was significant for Decoda. I truly believe the organization is close to establishing itself as a force, not only in the literacy landscape, but as a charitable organization capable of long-term growth.

For the past three years, it has been my pleasure to serve as Board Chair. This year I have decided to step down as Chair to pursue another chapter in my life, but I will continue to serve on the Board because I believe in the people and the mission.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I can say with confidence that Decoda is living up to the standards of a provincial literacy organization and the future looks bright.



Donna Wilson
Chair, Decoda Literacy Solutions



“Decoda is guided by its values and a strong vision.”

Table of Contents

5 Message from CEO



6

Coming Together to Fill a Need...



7

Caring for her Community...



Can Comics Help with Literacy?



9

Signature Program Helps Families Learn Together...



Financials



12

An Open Door Leads to Opportunities...



13

The Challenge Has Been Answered...



16

A Good Neighbour is There to Help...



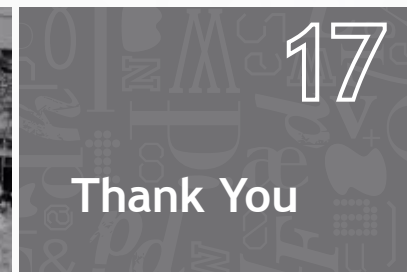
Literacy
is life

Raising Funds and Awareness for Literacy...



17

Thank You



18

Board of Directors



19

Acknowledgements



Message from the CEO

As the CEO of Decoda Literacy Solutions, I am excited about the future of literacy in British Columbia. While it's true that we faced some funding obstacles in 2013/14, we remained focused and steadfast in our approach and - with the help of the literacy community - we established key initiatives and partnerships that will help us advance literacy and learning across the province.

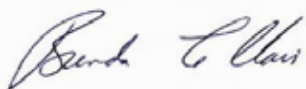
This year we secured federal funding through Citizen and Immigration Canada for our *Immigrant Parents as Literacy Supporters* or IPALS program, which will allow us to expand the number of programs that will benefit immigrant families in B.C.

We are excited about launching a campaign in January 2015 to celebrate *Family Literacy Week*. Our fundraising, awareness and education campaign will provide us with another platform to engage communities across the province and increase family literacy.

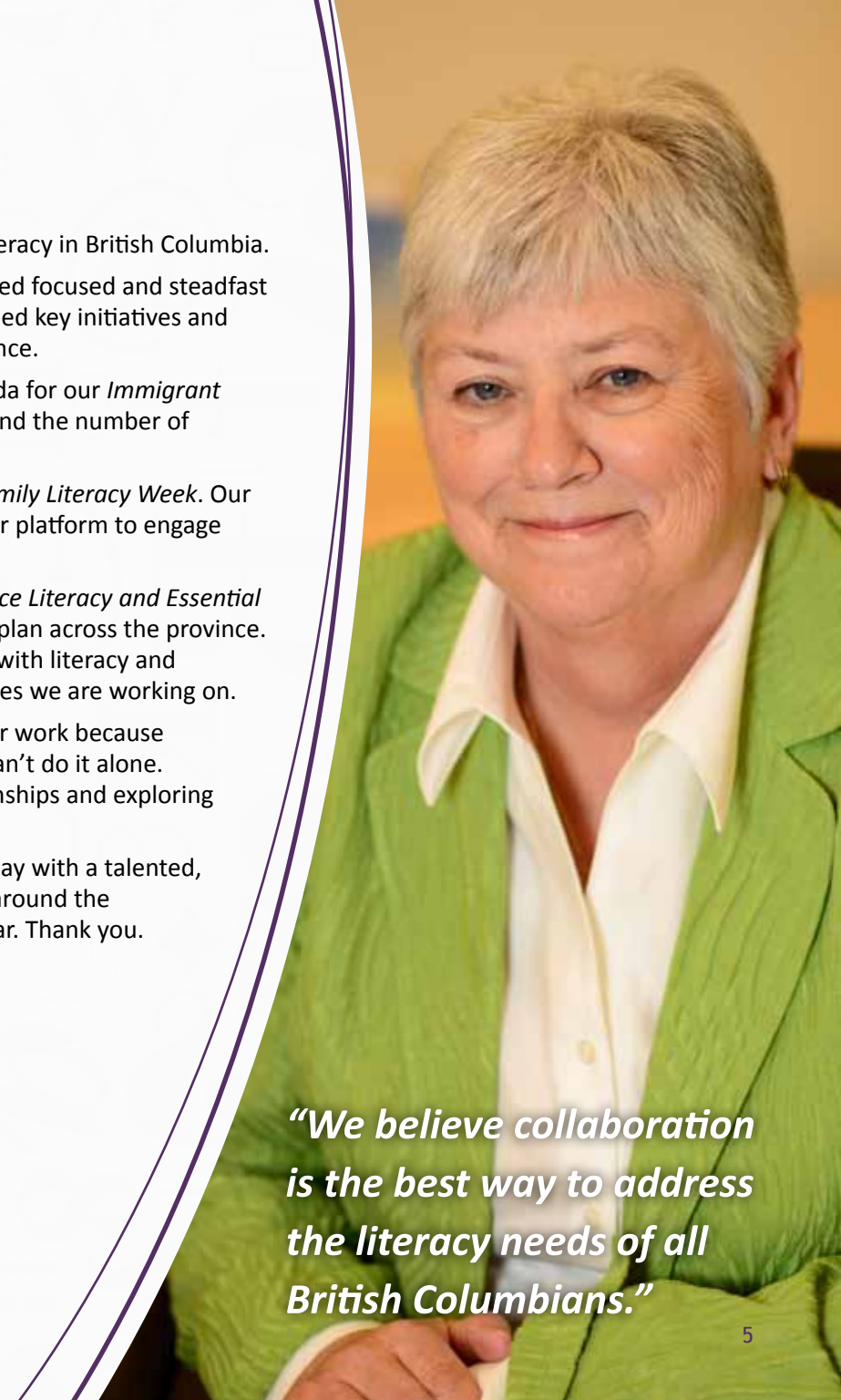
Another initiative that we are proud and excited to introduce is the *Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills Plan*. With the help of key community partners, we are rolling out the plan across the province. Our desired outcome is to provide current and future generations of adults with literacy and essential skills to thrive in the workforce. These are just a few of the initiatives we are working on.

Like other charitable organizations that serve our province, we engage in our work because there is a need and because we believe we can address that need, but we can't do it alone. Moving forward, we will continue to put an emphasis on developing relationships and exploring opportunities to advance literacy and learning in B.C.

The literacy world is rich with human capital. It is a privilege to work every day with a talented, caring staff, a committed and courageous Board and passionate colleagues around the province...it is because of your efforts that we have moved the needle this far. Thank you.



Brenda Le Clair
CEO, Decoda Literacy Solutions



***"We believe collaboration
is the best way to address
the literacy needs of all
British Columbians."***

Community-based literacy emphasizes the importance of the informal learning that happens in the home and community.



Community Literacy

Coming Together to Fill a Need...

Thousands of people across B.C. rely on community-based literacy programs to help them obtain the skills they need to participate in today's modern world.

Community-based literacy involves the range of literacy practices that people experience during everyday life, taking into account the unique needs of individuals and their surroundings and their experiences.

The benefits of these programs for individuals who participate in them are enormous: people go on to pursue higher education, they find employment, they lead healthier lives, they integrate more seamlessly in their communities and they generally find more fulfillment in life.

Community-based literacy also relies heavily on relationships and partnerships with organizations and individuals. *The Alphabet Soup Program* in Kimberley is a great example.

The Alphabet Soup Program utilizes the skills involved in cooking to facilitate and demonstrate the creation of a healthy learning environment for children. Cooking with preschoolers is a multifaceted learning experience that provides the children and parents/caregivers with a variety of outcomes. The program is designed to prepare children aged two to five for kindergarten.

In order to run the program, several groups and individuals come together, including the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), the Family Resource program, the Food Bank...even the aprons are donated by a local woman who sews them at her home.

In addition to families, community-based literacy programs often help some of the most marginalized people in the province – people who need a second and sometimes third chance to succeed.

Last year, 1,300 community-based literacy programs were offered in over 400 communities across British Columbia. To ensure these types of programs are available to the people who need them, we rely on the continued support of donors, sponsors, and government partners.

Community Literacy

Caring for Her Community...

Kailey Erickson did not set out to be a Literacy Outreach Coordinator (LOC) – in fact she went to school so she could work in a museum. But Kailey's passion for her community and for community development led the energetic university grad straight to community literacy.

As the LOC for the district of Langley, Kailey's job requirements vary. Some days she trains tutors for the one-to-one adult learning program; other days she coordinates meetings for the local literacy task group; another day might see her planning an event for her community... whatever the job requires, Kailey is there to see it through.

Kailey's role is vital to the development and advancement of community-based literacy in her region and she is passionate about ensuring that people in her community get the help they need and deserve.

"Growing up in British Columbia, I had no idea that so many people struggled with literacy. I also didn't realize that there were so few organizations that could help. Today I see a growing population, with diverse groups of people settling here... the need for literacy programs without barriers or requirements is a must and I'm here to do what I can to make that happen."

Langley is one of the fastest-growing municipalities in British Columbia. Many of Langley's residents are immigrants who need assistance with language skills, but have trouble qualifying for some of the more traditional literacy or English Language programs. Community-based literacy programs are often their only support.

"The beauty of community-based literacy programs is that there are no barriers. People can walk in, get assessed and get set up with a learning plan that will suit their needs. To me, that's practical and that's why I love this job so much... I see people get the support they need to thrive in our community."

Kailey is an emerging star in Langley – she has already started some new initiatives to advance literacy and learning for children and families, youths and adults. Her passion and commitment to her community is unquestionable, but she has one wish...

"I worry every day whether we'll have funding to run the next literacy program. I wish that wasn't the case. I wish I could focus all of my energy on providing people with the support they need."

We rely on our donors to fund literacy outreach coordinators across B.C.



Our full-service library contains more than 5,000 literacy resources and the demand is increasing.



Decoda Literacy Library

Can Comics Help with Literacy?

The Decoda Literacy Library is a service that we offer to all British Columbians – free of charge. The library provides access to a wide range of information on adult literacy, youth literacy, family literacy, early learning, non-profit management, and community development and is a valuable resource for practitioners and learners alike.

Our full-service library contains more than 5,000 literacy resources that are used by instructors and tutors, early learning practitioners, literacy program coordinators, and anyone else in British Columbia who has an interest in literacy.

The demand for a literacy-related library is increasing. Last year, over 2,200 items were circulated around the province. At the same time, 96 new borrowers joined the library and over 250 items were added to the collection.

The library's strength is the fact that it is user-focused, and its success is based on our librarian Tina's ability to quickly get information into the hands of library users when they need it. Tina is available Monday through Thursday by email, by telephone and in person...and she will field any question you may have.

"Can comic books help with literacy?" "Is there any research confirming the importance of reading aloud to children?" "Are there any free videos about family literacy that can be used for a presentation?" These are just a sampling of the questions Tina helps answer.

It's particularly rewarding when someone shares how the resources they've borrowed have helped them and/or their learners:

One literacy practitioner used the library resources to operate a small, easy-to-read fiction library in her class. She borrowed a selection for an extended loan period, and would in turn lend them to her learners. They recommended books they enjoyed to each other. Then, her learners started requesting specific titles from the online catalogue for their class. After a few months, they looked at publishers' websites and started requesting books for us to add to our own collection.

Family Literacy

Signature Program Helps Families Learn Together...

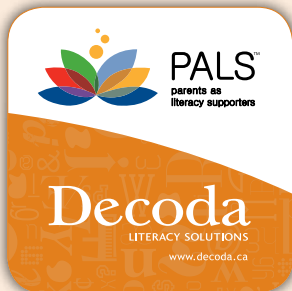
Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) is a play-based, culturally responsive program that helps families support their children's early literacy development outside of formal education and is one of Decoda's signature programs.

The program provides parents and caregivers with strategies that encourage the learning of their preschool and kindergarten-aged children in creative and interactive ways. PALS programs enhance communication and understanding between home, school and community and reflect the diversity of British Columbians.

The PALS philosophy is to create a safe, respectful environment that both honours families' first languages and allows for open communication and dialogue.

"Since the IPALS happened in our school, I try to speak English with little fear and a lot of confidence. I am learning how to read, to write and to play with my three daughters. I didn't know how to do that before. They are so happy and I can see their eyes sparkling when I spend time with them. Thank you."

Tien Tram



PALS includes additional programs such as:

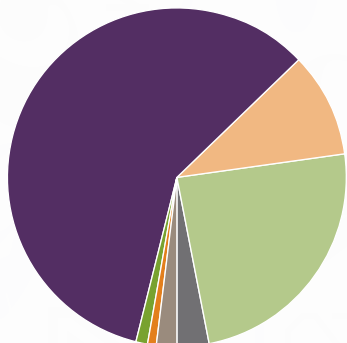
Immigrant PALS (IPALS): provides immigrant parents and young children with an accessible, welcoming, and supportive learning environment to help them settle and integrate into new communities while developing language and literacy skills.

In recent years, Immigrant PALS teams have seen a noticeable increase in parent/caregivers' confidence in understanding the Canadian school system, which has resulted in far more participation in school and community activities.

Aboriginal PALS: honours traditional values and forms of knowledge to guide literacy development in First Nations families. Respecting differences in each community, the program recognizes the diversity in language, customs, protocols and traditions to encourage literacy and learning.

2013-2014 Financials

Total Revenue



PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
\$2,776,081
59%

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
\$455,257
10%

LIFT PHILANTHROPY PARTNERS' SOCIETY
\$1,131,369
24%

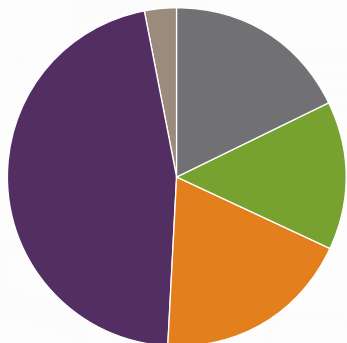
CONTRIBUTION FROM OTHER CHARITIES
\$175,103
3%

PROGRAM SERVICES
\$119,113
2%

INTERESTS AND OTHER REVENUE
\$40,283
1%

DONATIONS
\$28,212
1%

Total Expenses



COMMUNITY PROGRAM
\$2,163,655
46%

FAMILY PROGRAM
\$888,778
19%

ADULT PROGRAM
\$656,847
14%

PROGRAM SUPPORT
\$129,077
3%

GENERAL OFFICE AND FUNDRAISING
\$837,376
18%

The Impact of Donor, Partner, and Government Support on Literacy in B.C.

Decoda invested \$2.5 million in 2013-2014 into literacy coordination, and our community partners leveraged this into \$8.2 million to improve literacy and learning across the province.



1,928 community members worked on community-based literacy action plans



17,870 adults attended 478 adult literacy programs

***83,820 adults and children attended
475 family literacy programs in B.C. –
an increase of 25% over 2012-2013***



***136,153 items of literacy materials provided
to community members – an increase of
nearly 7.5% over last year***



***4,452 seniors attended
143 seniors programs***

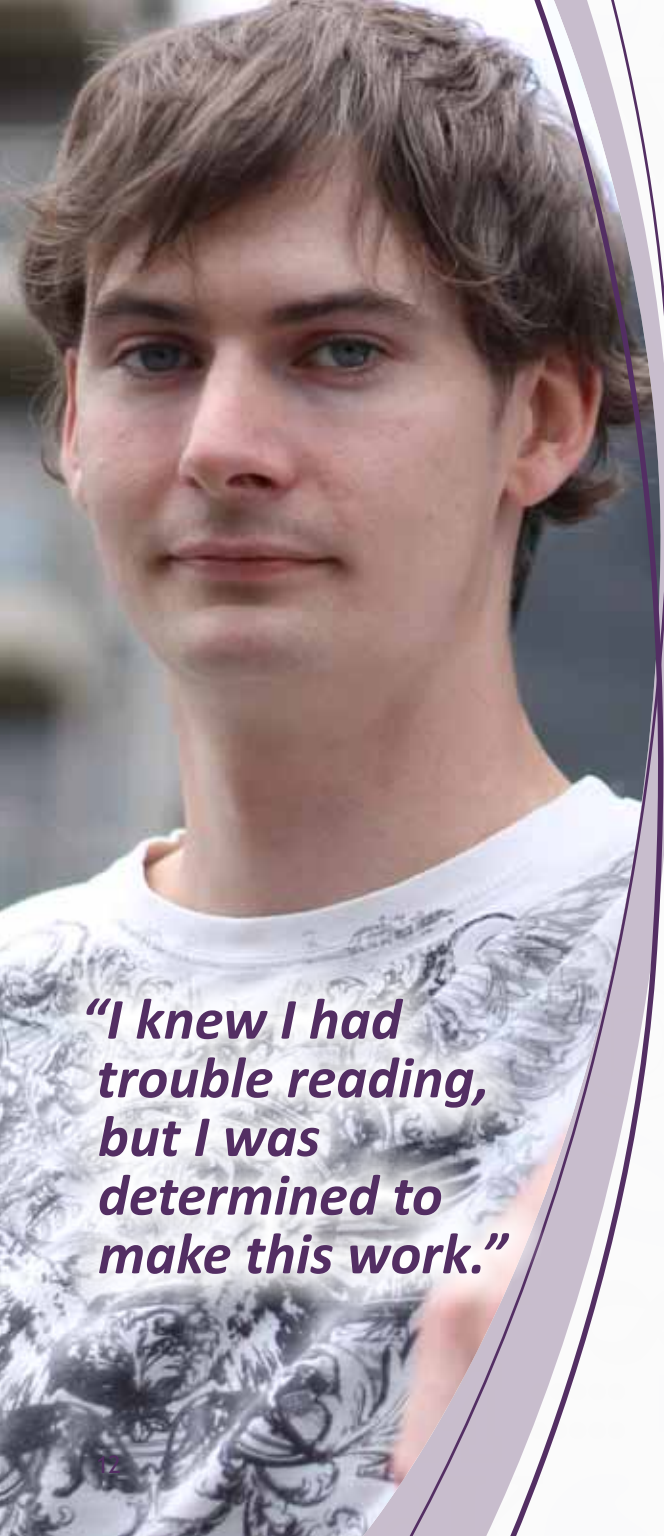


***20,514 school-aged children
attended community-based
literacy programs***



In 2013-2014:

- ✓ 102 Literacy Outreach Coordinators worked with 102 Community Task Groups across B.C.
- ✓ 1,645 organizations partnered to deliver programs
- ✓ 433 new literacy initiatives were launched in B.C.
- ✓ 8,095 people attended 481 workshops and seminars
- ✓ 4,520 youth participated in 144 community literacy programs



Adult and Youth Literacy

An Open Door Leads to Opportunities...

Growing up in Port Alberni, Steven Mulvey was like any other kid - he was active, easygoing, filled with dreams and aspirations and he had plans. Unfortunately, Steven faced challenges that would limit his choices...challenges that were invisible to most.

From an early age, Steven was not interested in reading of any kind. He continuously tested below average for reading and writing and he struggled to keep up in class, which caused him to get discouraged. Steven fell behind early and eventually he was moved into a special class, which had an impact on his confidence and his self-esteem.

Like others in his position, Steven found ways around his reading and writing challenges, which eventually got him through school. Although he received his high school diploma, Steven did not gain the literacy skills he needed to succeed in today's modern world. He actually graduated with a high school diploma that he could not read!

As he moved to the next chapter in his life, Steven found himself working, as he put it, "...in mind-numbing jobs." He hated what he was doing, but he also knew his options were limited. But instead of getting down on himself, as he did in high school, Steven turned his frustration into determination and he came up with a plan.

"I wanted to do something creative... I really like working with my hands," he says with a smile on his face. "I heard about Literacy Alberni Society so I walked through their door one day and said, 'I need your help.'"

As part of the intake process at the Literacy Alberni Society, Steven had an assessment done. Amazingly, after graduating with a diploma from high school, Steven was assessed at a Grade 3 reading level. "I wasn't surprised; I knew I had trouble reading, but it didn't faze me. I was determined to make this work." Steven was paired with a literacy volunteer and so began his journey.

After two years of working with the volunteer on a one-to-one basis, Steven had the confidence he needed to apply for his welding apprenticeship. He was accepted into the program and has since graduated. Not bad for a young man who was reading at a Grade 3 level!

"I knew I had trouble reading, but I was determined to make this work."

The Workforce and Literacy

The Challenge Has Been Answered...

The BC Government has predicted that there will be more than 1.1 million new job openings by 2020 and yet there are only about 600,000 young people in the B.C. education system.

Combined with other demographic trends and economic growth, there will soon be more jobs than qualified workers. In addition to recruiting workers from outside B.C., we must make better use of our existing labour force participants and those who are unemployed and wanting to work.

In response to this impending workforce shortfall, Decoda brought together senior public, private and non-profit leaders to learn about the impact of low adult literacy rates and contribute to solutions for addressing the current and looming labour and skill shortages in B.C.

Out of these meetings, the *BC Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills Plan* (WLES) was developed. The plan is designed to provide current and future generations of adults in our province with literacy and essential skills to thrive in the workforce.

Since literacy and essential skills are an important foundation for employment and further training, the development of the long-term sustainable *WLES* contributes to the achievement of the skills and training objectives of the current provincial government.

The potential impact of investing in workforce literacy is significant. For example, in British Columbia alone:

Direct annual savings resulting from an assumed one-time \$2.9 billion investment in increasing the literacy skills of British Columbian adults 16 and older would be \$310 million: \$35 million on Employment Insurance, \$223 million on Social Assistance, and \$52 million on Workers Compensation.

That same investment would increase earnings by \$9 billion or an average of \$2,607/worker annually.

The Workforce Literacy & Essential Skills Plan is being implemented, to ensure that current and future generations of adults thrive in the workforce, leading to a healthier long-term economy.

“The challenge has been answered...the BC Chamber of Commerce is both pleased and able to fully endorse the actions prescribed by Decoda in its Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills Plan.”

John Winter, President and CEO, BC Chamber of Commerce



Literacy is life



Reception: On September 10, we hosted a reception to introduce potential and existing donors, sponsors, and partners to the literacy work that is being done in communities across British Columbia. The turn-out exceeded expectations and a good time was had by all.

Raising Funds and Awareness for Literacy...

The *Literacy is Life* campaign was launched in September. Our month-long campaign raised awareness of the importance of literacy, showcased a new, modern understanding of literacy and raised funds to support community-based literacy programs across B.C.

The campaign was a huge success. Not only did we raise funds and awareness, we managed to secure several new partnerships, introduce the concept of community-based literacy to a provincial audience, and generated significant interest from current and potential partners for next year's campaign.

In total, more than \$26,000 was raised. All proceeds will stay in British Columbia to:

- Support literacy programs that help children and families, youth, adults, seniors, Aboriginal People and immigrants;
- Support literacy coordination in communities across British Columbia; and
- Support our library and professional development services.

Many thanks to our sponsors, partners, donors, volunteers and flash mob dancers, all of whom played an essential part in the success of our very first campaign! We can't wait until next year...





Literacy is Life Letters Contest: Decoda held its first *Literacy is Life* Letters contest. In August, five finalists were chosen from entries that were sent from across B.C. They were judged by a celebrity panel and the top prizes were announced at our VIP reception in September. Peter Bailey of Hope was the grand prize winner for his story about growing up amidst his father's struggles with literacy.



Flash mob: On September 3, Decoda kicked-off the *Literacy is Life* campaign with a flash mob. The event featured live entertainment and refreshments provided by Starbucks. Media stations were on hand to cover the event, including our partner CTV. It was a great way to kick-off the campaign.



Trivia Night: our *Team Trivia Challenge* fundraising event was held at the Butcher and Bullock on Sept 28th. Ten teams vied for Decoda's very first tournament trophy. More importantly, over \$26,000 was raised to support literacy and learning in B.C.



Literacy Manifesto: As a symbolic show-of-support for literacy in September, over 2,500 people signed our *Literacy Manifesto* online.



Raise-a-Reader: Decoda was once again a proud partner and beneficiary of the PostMedia Raise-a-Reader Campaign. Because of the support of PostMedia and the BC Government, we are able to distribute \$500,000 in grants to support family literacy programs in B.C.



“We rely on community partners to help us advance literacy and learning in B.C.”



Partner Profile

A Good Neighbour is There to Help...

At the heart of any successful campaign, you will find community partners.

Whether your goal is financial support, awareness building, community engagement or advocacy, having a community partner involved in your campaign dramatically increases your chances of being successful. At Decoda, we rely on a number of community partners to help us achieve our mission activities.

During our *Literacy is Life* campaign, we partnered with a number of organizations to help us achieve our fundraising and awareness objectives. One of our biggest supporters was Starbucks - a great corporate citizen with a long history of supporting community causes.

“From the neighbourhoods where our stores are located, to the ones where our coffee is grown – we believe in being involved in the communities we’re a part of,” says Starbucks Manager Nicole (Clemens) Schnarr. “Bringing people together, inspiring change and making a difference in people’s lives – it’s all part of being a good neighbour.”

Starbucks not only supplied us with enough products to serve 300 people at our *Literacy is Life* campaign launch, they helped promote the campaign in their stores across the Lower Mainland. Their support allowed us to raise awareness and funds, while keeping our costs down...ultimately more dollars went to support people who need literacy help.

On behalf of the thousands of people across B.C., who we helped support, we would like to thank Starbucks for their ongoing commitment to building strong individuals and strong communities.

If your organization is interested in supporting Decoda Literacy Solutions through a community partnership or corporate donation, please contact:

Gail Hanney, Director of Fund Development
ph. 604.681.4199 | ghanney@decoda.ca

Thank You

We would like to thank our donors, sponsors, and our corporate and government partners for their generous support of literacy in B.C. Because of their commitment, we are able to address the literacy and learning needs of all who live and work in communities across the province.

Financial Supporters:

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BC Ministry of Education
BC Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training
Citizenship and Immigration Canada
Essential Skills Ontario
Legal Services Society (LSS)
LIFT Philanthropy Partners' Society
Office of Literacy and Essential Skills of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
Postmedia Network Foundation
Vancouver Foundation
WorkSafe BC

Partnerships:

BC Chamber of Commerce
BC Federation of Labour, Health & Safety Dept.
BC Ministry of Justice
BC School Districts
Business Council of BC
Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters – BC
Edudata Canada
North Shore Multicultural Society
Vancouver Public Library

Literacy is Life Partners:

ARC Document Solutions
CTV Vancouver
Eton College
The Butcher & Bullock Pub
Century Plaza Hotel & Spa
Mink Chocolates
Chimp Foundation
River Rock Casino Resort
Orca Book Publishers
Starbucks
Vancouver Whitecaps
BC Lions
Manulife Real Estate

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