



"GO Book Club" Atlin, BC

Community Report: 2014 – 2015

Decoda
LITERACY SOLUTIONS



Decoda Literacy Solutions provides resources, training and funds to support community-based literacy and learning initiatives in over 400 communities across British Columbia. Working with a network of 102 Literacy Outreach Coordinators, we bring together community leaders from education, health, business and government to identify and address local literacy priorities. We work to increase the literacy and learning skills of children and families, youth, adults, and seniors to improve their quality of life at home, at work and in the community.

Our Vision:

A British Columbia where everyone has the literacy skills they need.

Our Mission:

To increase the literacy and learning skills of children and families, youth, adults, and seniors to improve their quality of life at home, at work and in the community.



In 2014 – 2015:

1,886 community members worked on community-based literacy action plans

12,380 adults gained literacy and essential skills in 444 adult literacy programs

77,914 adults and children engaged in learning together in 482 family literacy programs

363 new literacy initiatives took place in BC

3,291 seniors gained skills in technology in 187 programs specifically for them

Fundraised more than **\$3,846,000** for literacy work

CEO's Message

The year has been one of change and tremendous growth for Decoda and our partner organizations. The following pages describe to you how this growth manifests itself into the very reason why we exist – to help people reach their full potential through literacy.

As done in previous years, we continue to emphasize the development of relationships and explore further opportunities to advance literacy and learning in BC. However, in 2014-2015, the organization as a whole resolved to further increase outreach and support to partner organizations, appeal for sustainable funding and enlist corporate and community sponsors to ensure the advancement of community-based literacy programs and awareness.

The results of these efforts have been impressive. Accomplishments that we have achieved during 2014-2015 include:

- **Establishing and strengthening connections with sponsors, corporate and community partners such as CBC, Postmedia/The Vancouver Sun, Science World at TELUS World of Science, Starbucks and many more**
- **Raising nearly \$130,000 in fundraising initiatives in 2014-2015 alone**
- **Launching a province-wide awareness and fundraising campaign, Literacy is Life and enlisting the support of individuals and partner organizations across the province**

As you'll see throughout the pages of this report, financial support of programs across the province does make an impact on learners, practitioners and the province as a whole.

We've changed our report format this year to include powerful quotes from learners and practitioners from programming across the province. The quotes have been excerpted from reports submitted for provincial District Literacy Plans during 2015. As well, we've included visuals describing the activities and some of the many faces that characterize literacy in our province. The full text, more visuals and further success stories can be found on our site, decoda.ca.

As we look forward to another productive year, we hope that you will find further inspiration to support literacy programs in your community. Together, through literacy, we can build healthier communities, regions, and a stronger British Columbia for the future.

Brenda Le Clair
CEO



Message from the Chair, Board of Directors

The Board of Directors feels privileged to serve British Columbia's only province-wide community-based literacy organization.

Decoda funds programs that served approximately 12,380 adults, 17,702 school-aged children and 17,914 families in dedicated sessions and 3,291 seniors in the past financial year. Funding for literacy programs has produced thousands of successful learners from within the province. Many are now productive members of our communities and continue to be significant contributors and engaged citizens.

At Decoda, our mission is to inspire lifelong learning, transform lives through education and training, and serve our communities. Currently, we are refining our mission, vision, and values to best reflect the objectives of our organization. We welcome your feedback on the transitional versions that you have read on the previous page of this report.

Throughout 2014-2015, the Board of Directors has been actively ensuring the future stability of the organization by finding new efficiencies, assisting in finding new funding sources, and providing guidance to our staff team. Most importantly, the Board has increased its role in raising awareness of our organization and of literacy programs in BC in many different fields, industries and social networks.

Through the generosity of our donors, partner organizations and funders, we are happy to report that we were able to help nearly 250,000 British Columbians this past year. The contributions of our literacy practitioners have been phenomenal, and we're creating more awareness of the literacy needs in our province each year. And, yes, there is much more work to be done!

We want to thank all of our generous donors, partners, funders and our dedicated staff. Our shared goal to inspire hope and change in the lives of the most deserving people in our community is a partnership we value each day.

Jacqueline Taylor
Chair, Board of Directors





Adult Literacy and Literacy Practitioners

Together, we have increased literacy levels in BC – one learner at a time.

“A woman came in because she had lost an email that had all of these pictures of her mother. I was able to retrieve them and she teared up, she was so happy. I find it really rewarding when I get to help people like that.

—Andy Lantz, tutor, Literacy Now South Okanagan-Similkameen

“Clients are [now] able to create their own emails and attach a resume, and they can find and apply for work online. Best of all, clients are finding jobs.”

— Global Vocational Services Partnership Program, Cowichan

Adult literacy programs help people improve their reading, writing, math, oral communication, digital technology and learning skills. Instruction is learner centred and integrated into the life requirements of each individual. Decoda supports adult literacy programs by providing professional development, measurement tools, and resources.

Here’s how partner organizations have made a difference in 2014 – 2015:



Books for Breakfast Family Literacy Program volunteers



“Each session is so well attended; in fact, people are often turned away due to limited space.”

— Literacy is for Lunch and Books for Breakfast participant, Westshore



Senior Computer Class, Haida Gwaii

“I couldn’t even open my computer when I first came here. Now I can check my email and stay in better contact with relatives around the world.”

— Shenaz Parmar, learner, Okanagan-Similkameen

Workforce Literacy

Literacy is an investment in BC's economic future

BC is facing an increasing skills gap. As government and industry are both interested in ensuring local labour force participation – and more people trained for trades and technology jobs – attention to the development of literacy and essential skills is imperative, particularly for more vulnerable populations. Adult literacy programs help people to become employed, to get better employment, or to enter training.

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

— John Winter, Past President and CEO, BC Chamber of Commerce



One 16-year-old male student who attends the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) in Saanich struggled with literacy and the relevancy of school. In an effort to re-engage this young man, who is passionate about cars and trucks, we proposed working toward attaining his Learners License. This student worked diligently, attending school for the first time in several years, and consistently practicing with the manual and prepared support materials. When the ILC team felt he was ready for the exam, we supported this student by taking him to the motor vehicle site. The joy of accomplishment and pride that this student shared with students and staff was evident as he exclaimed: ‘I got it! Yep, I can practice – now it’s official!’

What we did not know was that this young man had tried taking this exam many times before and been unsuccessful with it. This one success gave him the confidence to continue with his learning – he has already decided what his next certificate goal will be for the fall season.

— Saanich Peninsula Literacy Plan Report

“Since coming to the Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society 6 months ago, I have acquired and renewed by FAC Security License, Flagging Officer Certification and seven other tickets including First Aid and Bear Aware. Thank you so much for your help.”

— Tim, Fort Nelson

Literacy Outreach Coordinators

Literacy Outreach Coordinators continue to innovate and solve 21st century literacy challenges.

British Columbia is made up of hundreds of diverse communities. The community approach to literacy is based on an understanding that each community has distinct assets and challenges. It also understands that literacy is everyone's responsibility. No one person or organization can or should handle the responsibility alone. Literacy Outreach Coordinators bring together community literacy task groups that are made up of literacy organizations, community service providers, businesses, schools, post-secondary institutions, libraries, and other community leaders. They work together to address literacy priorities.

"Without the Literacy Outreach Coordinator in place, the challenge of operating our Words on Wheels Bus Project would be impossible...stable long-term funding would be fantastic."

—Jennifer Peterson, Burns Lake

102 Literacy Outreach Coordinators assisted over **121,800** adults and children in **400** BC communities • **363** new literacy initiatives and **432** sustained or expanded • Raised over **\$3,846,000** in grants and fundraised dollars for literacy work



"The LOC is a nexus person who can connect the right people at the right time...being a constant voice for the central importance of literacy."

— Lillooet District Literacy Plan



Clear Language and Design

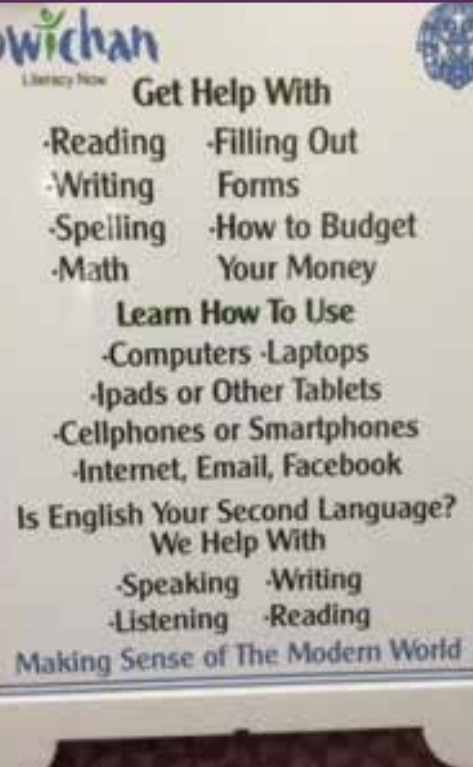
Decoda works with agencies and businesses to ensure that communications and processes are understandable to both employees and to customers.

When writing is not clear people may misunderstand, lose interest, get frustrated, or give up. They may also make mistakes. Clear Language and Design ensures better access to information and saves time and money for everyone. It means that the audience gets the message easily and acts on it appropriately.



Original Sentence:
“Firearm relinquishment is a mandatory condition.”

Clear language revision:
“You must hand over your guns.”



“One surprisingly simple activity that garnered many more requests for support from learners was the creation of a new tent sign for outside the Literacy Now Cowichan office door. The sign simply outlines services offered in very plain language.”

— Cowichan Literacy Now



“[Decoda] did a masterful job of expressing appreciation for the work that the [Labour Relations Board] has done, and then later noting where it needed to be re-written and restructured.”

— Lisa Nakamura, Ministry of Justice



Family Learning Tour Story Walk



During Family Literacy Week in January, 2015, Decoda held a special weekend event dedicated to family learning activities in partnership with Science World in Vancouver. There were plenty of activities, displays and performances to promote informal family learning.



Family Literacy

Family literacy programs help parents to support their children's learning and literacy developments. Some programs also directly help parents to improve their own literacy or parenting skills.

Decoda provides professional development and resource support to family literacy providers. It also provides training for the Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) program.



Bright Red Bus Program, Kamloops

An older boy, about 13, came on the rainy week. He thought it was such a great idea and left with a couple of comic books. The next week, he brought some children from his neighbourhood because he thought they would enjoy it. Word of mouth is really helping this program get to all areas of Kamloops.

One of the most interesting and unexpected outcomes was parent socialization. We saw a lot of parents meeting each other, socializing and setting up playdates for their kids. The bus seems to really create a sense of community.

Wendy's House Program, Cowichan

Wendy's House provides an Early Childhood Educator who is on site Monday to Thursday to facilitate learning.

Since its opening in October, 2014, Wendy's House has seen huge attendance during the drop-in hours with up to 40 children plus their parents or caregivers attending in a morning. The facilitator is beginning to see dramatic changes in the growth and behaviour of the children attending. The setting is perfect in that it allows for strong interaction between parent and child and also builds the skills of parents.

“People have started to feel safe...they are stepping up to volunteer and reaching out for the help they need.”

— Coal Harbour Community Club



Norma, McBride, BC

“The changes I’ve seen with Makaela are amazing... [she] now reads basic stories by herself and shows immense interest in being asked to spell”

— Westshore Literacy



“GO (Girls Only) Book Club” continues to meet every Monday from 5:00-7:00pm. The purpose of this club was to introduce the “classics.” Now that we have read numerous classics, we have branched out into other books. Last September, the school had made us aware of some bullying situations and suggested some books we may want to read. We have also branched off into new vocabulary words and their definitions. When the books are read, the girls add them to their own personal libraries. — Trudy Ewing, Literacy Outreach Coordinator, Atlin, BC

Youth Literacy

Many community literacy task groups have developed ways to support those youth who have left school early or require more support. Unique innovative programs are bringing these young people back to learning and helping them to be more successful at school.

“With funding support...we paid Northwest Community College to bring an instructor here to run an ECE course, and subsidized the tuition fee for eight adult students. The course enabled students to work in childcare facilities as responsible adults”.

— Literacy Haida Gwaii

“With the introduction of the Trades Program, students [who were formerly latecomers not wanting to attend school] have been showing up to school early and demonstrate a strong drive... putting in extra time to understand math and carpentry skills.”

— Literacy Haida Gwaii

ESL Learners

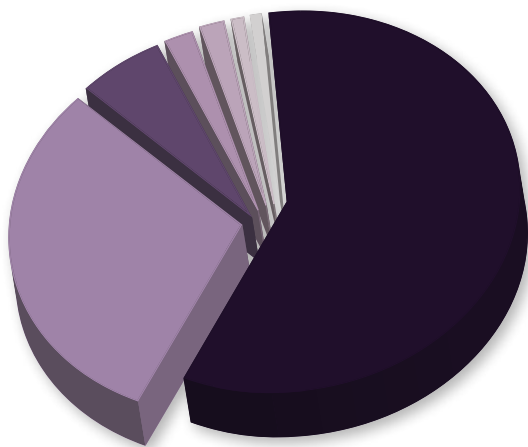
Immigrants have always been and continue to be a vital part of the population in BC. Research shows that there is a need to support the language and literacy of immigrants living in our province. Low language and literacy skills exacerbate the many difficulties that immigrants and refugees face such as racism, inadequate housing, barriers to health care services and unemployment.

“The ESL program and FNCLS has helped me a lot. I got to know many people through FNCLS and my tutor has taught me English for two years so far. I’ve had so many opportunities to meet people, communicate with foreign friends, and also local people in Fort Nelson. It helps me to settle in this town. I appreciate all the chances I’ve had so far, and I’d love to help others too.”

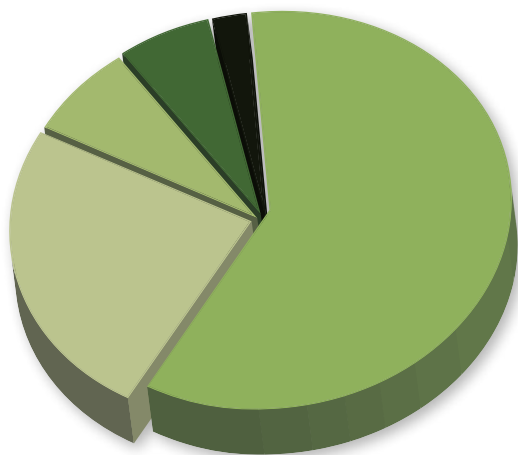
— Seunghye, learner, Fort Nelson Community Literacy Society



2014 – 2015 Financials



Total Revenue



Total Expenses





Literacy is Life 2015

The Literacy is Life campaign, coordinated by Decoda Literacy Solutions, ran throughout September, 2015.

Thank you to all the sponsors, fundraising participants and donors who took part in the Literacy is Life Team Trivia Challenge held in eight communities across B.C. Special thanks to CBC, our Official Broadcast Sponsor, who supported the month-long campaign through television, radio and online Public Service Announcements.

Decoda also held a province-wide literacy contest, asking all British Columbians to tell us what literacy meant to them in creative ways.

During the campaign, The Rotary Club of Vancouver generously donated \$10,000 to support the Decoda Literacy Library.



Thank you to our sponsors and partners for their support of literacy programs in BC!

Literacy is Life Champions:



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

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BC Ministry of Advanced Education

BC Ministry of Justice

Citizenship and Immigration Canada

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Essential Skills Ontario

LIFT Philanthropy Partners' Society

Office of Literacy and Essential Skills

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has the literacy skills they need.

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Decoda

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