



*Making Sense of
the Modern World*

Decoda

LITERACY SOLUTIONS

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Misson

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

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Message from the Chair

As Chair of the Board for Decoda Literacy Solutions, I want to take this opportunity to tell you about some of the exciting advances we've made over the past year.

Considering that we're only two years old, we've come a long way in a short amount of time. With a solid business plan in place, we set a clear path, with defined objectives and realistic goals that we feel have moved the organization forward.

One of our key objectives is financial sustainability. To that end, I am pleased to announce that we recently achieved charitable status and formed the Decoda Literacy Foundation.

Establishing the Foundation allows us to pursue funding avenues that were not previously available to Decoda. It also allows us to engage individuals and corporations in our mission activities in a more meaningful way.

Another important part of our strategy is to make inroads with business and industry. Over 150,000 British Columbians aged 25 to 54 have not graduated from high school and over 600,000 adults do not have the literacy and essential skills they need to thrive in today's modern workforce? As a leading literacy organization, we decided to take action and convene the *Workplace and Essential Skills Forum*.

Our goal was to engage both employers and providers to explore how we fill the skilled labour gap in our province. The Forum was attended by leaders in business, education and government. The outcome has been the development of some initial strategies to keep B.C. competitive in our global economy.

At the heart of our business plan is the desire to build capacity within the literacy field. And because we have access to one of the largest literacy networks in Canada, we mobilized and hosted *Connecting Communities through Innovative Practice*.

The two-day conference was attended by the best and brightest in the literacy field. Over 200 people came together to brainstorm ideas, begin discussions, find solutions to challenges, share innovative practices and take a collective approach to building a culture of community-based literacy and learning in British Columbia.

I am proud to be part of this organization as I believe we are living up to the legacies that created us. We have taken some giant steps to continue to advance literacy in this province and we are making a difference! This is due to our courage to act, along with the tireless work, commitment and leadership of my colleagues on the Board; the staff at Decoda; and the larger literacy community. To everyone, I would like to say a big thank you!

Now I invite you to read about our mission activities; take-in people's personal triumphs; and discover the network of support woven into all parts of your community. Enjoy the report.

Donna Wilson
Chair, Decoda Literacy Solutions

Decoda Literacy Solutions

Decoda Literacy Solutions is the leading non-profit literacy organization in British Columbia.

Working with a coordinated literacy network, Decoda funds 102 literacy outreach coordinators and supports the work of community task groups in more than 400 communities across British Columbia.

Decoda provides professional development, resources, research and funding to improve literacy and learning for everyone: children and families, youth, adults, Aboriginal Peoples and immigrants. Decoda's programs and resources provide individuals with the tools they need to fully participate in today's knowledge-based economy.

With the support of the literacy task groups, Decoda also mobilizes leaders in government, business, and education to identify and address local literacy challenges through community-based action plans. Decoda and its partners lay the foundation for successful individuals, strong families, sustainable businesses and strong communities.

As a non-profit organization, Decoda relies on the generosity of individuals, corporations and government funding to address literacy needs in British Columbia.

The Power of the Network

Across the province, Decoda is engaged with an active network of individuals, community groups and organizations that are committed to advancing literacy and learning in their communities.

Last year, Decoda invested \$2.5 million donor, partner and government funds into literacy. Through the network of community-based outreach groups, that money was leveraged into \$6.9 million to support local literacy initiatives.

The power of the network increases awareness around literacy and learning. By engaging local politicians, business leaders and community organizations, the network brings attention to the most pressing issues faced by communities allowing them to work towards community-based solutions.

These solutions are documented annually in District Literacy Plans, which are submitted to the Ministry of Education through boards of education. The planning process creates strong collaborations and partnerships within communities and has strengthened relationships between schools and community groups.

These are but a few examples of how collaboration within the literacy network is building a culture of community based literacy and learning in British Columbia.



Message from the CEO

Just two short years ago Decoda Literacy Solutions was formed by bringing together Literacy BC and the literacy department of 2010 Legacies Now. As the CEO of Decoda, I could not be more proud of how far we have come, the direction our organization is heading and the impact we are having on communities across British Columbia.

Like any new organization, we experienced some growing pains. The funding shortages in 2012 challenged our organization on many levels. We had to make some unpopular decisions; respond to some tough questions; and ultimately try to achieve our mission activities with minimal funding. But we pulled together as a team, we learned some lessons and we came through the ordeal more focussed and determined to make literacy a priority in British Columbia.

As we look towards the future, we see opportunity. Literacy programs are growing in numbers, as is the number of people attending them. We are reaching into 400 communities across the province and we are mobilizing entire networks to help us build a culture of community based literacy and learning in British Columbia. Momentum around literacy is growing and we are poised to take advantage of it.

Over the past two years we have cultivated a network focussed on literacy and learning. Our work with partner organizations in business and industry, community, education and government continues to lay the foundation for strong individuals, strong families and strong communities.

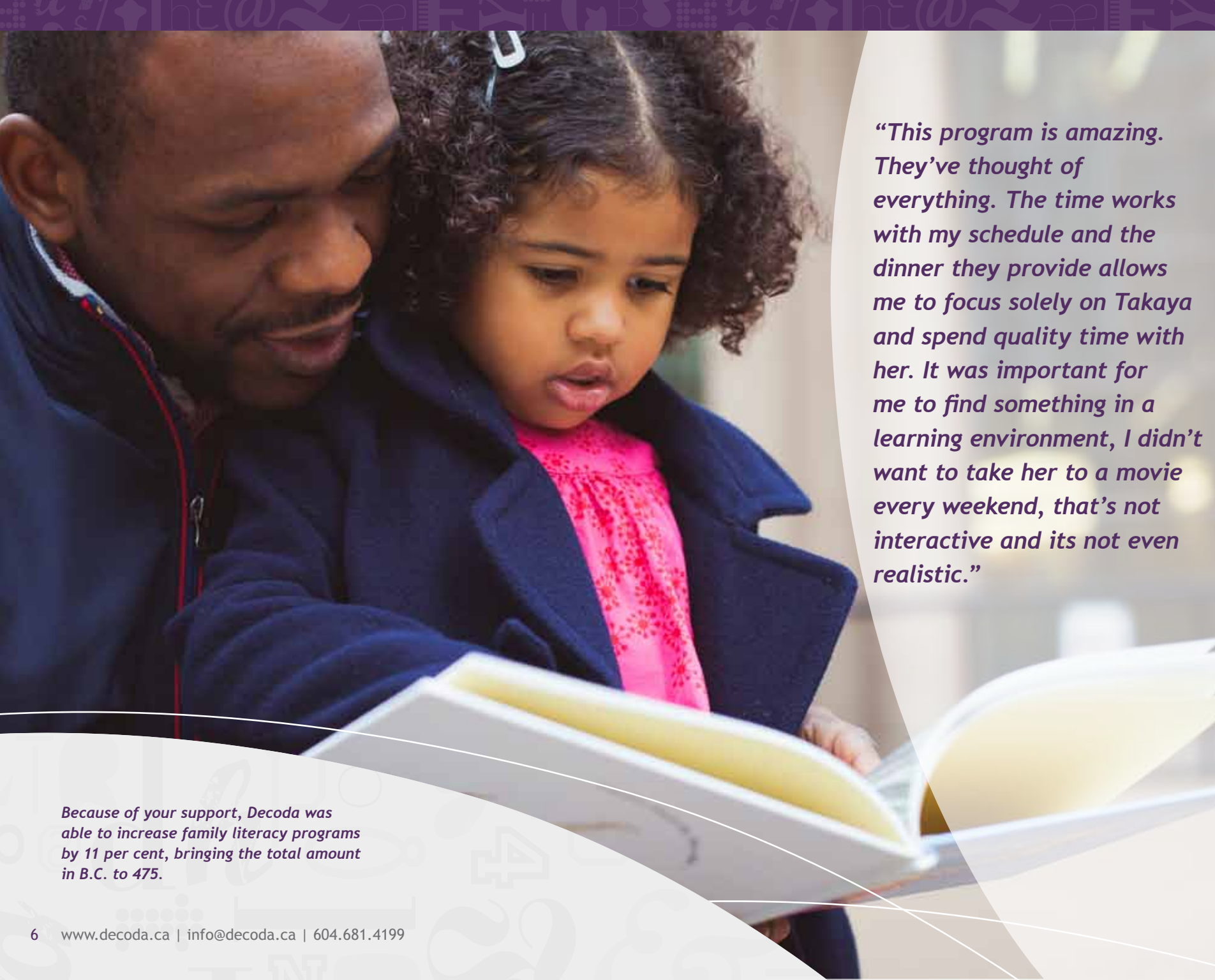
The driving force behind this network is the 102 Literacy Outreach Coordinators and the numerous adult and family literacy providers who are at the heart of our literacy work. This incredible group of individuals brings together leaders in the community to form task groups, identify literacy issues and implement community-based action plans. Because of their dogged determination, commitment and ability to mobilize individuals and groups, we are making great strides in the world of literacy. A heartfelt thank you goes out to this amazing group of literacy leaders and champions.

Even though we see opportunity ahead, we do realize the road will have its twists and turns. Adequate funding for literacy will continue to be an issue, as will peoples' understanding of the issues that surround individuals with low literacy levels. However, we have the right people in place, a solid business plan and the support of the literacy community to draw from; we are in a good spot to build on the momentum surrounding literacy.

I invite you to read some of the success stories in our report. These people were either directly impacted by the work being done in communities or they had an impact on literacy in their community. Either way, they are living proof that literacy programs can and do work.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Brenda Le Clair".

Brenda Le Clair
CEO, Decoda Literacy Solutions



“This program is amazing. They’ve thought of everything. The time works with my schedule and the dinner they provide allows me to focus solely on Takaya and spend quality time with her. It was important for me to find something in a learning environment, I didn’t want to take her to a movie every weekend, that’s not interactive and its not even realistic.”

Because of your support, Decoda was able to increase family literacy programs by 11 per cent, bringing the total amount in B.C. to 475.

Building Their Relationship through Literacy

When Theron and Takaya travel to the *Daddy & Me Drop In* program, they don’t take his car, they take the bus and make a journey of it. His goal is to spend as much quality time with his beautiful little girl as he can. In fact, the reason he joined the drop-in reading program was to build a special bond with his daughter.

As a lifelong learner himself, a part-time coach, and all-around busy dad, Theron can’t find enough time in the day to be with the love of his life. “The only time I really get to be with my daughter is when I put her to bed or when we make breakfast together - we don’t have that quality time together.” As a committed and loving father this was hard on him.

Theron turned to his community paper to find a program in the neighbourhood that he and Takaya could enjoy together...something that would work with his busy schedule and be of value to his daughter. He came across the *Daddy & Me Drop In* program.

The program is partially funded through Decoda Literacy Solutions and it is tailored for fathers and their children (six years and under). It’s a welcoming place where father and child can play, listen to stories, explore books and even sing songs.

Every father has a different story. There are single fathers, fathers looking to give mom a break, and fathers who bring both sons and daughters. But at the heart of the program is a shared feeling that success in learning starts from infancy and that spending time with their little ones in an

interactive environment will bring them together in a way that few other activities could.

“This program is amazing. They’ve thought of everything. The time works with my schedule and the dinner they provide allows me to focus solely on Takaya and spend quality time with her. It was important for me to find something in a learning environment, I didn’t want to take her to a movie every weekend, that’s not interactive and its not even realistic.”

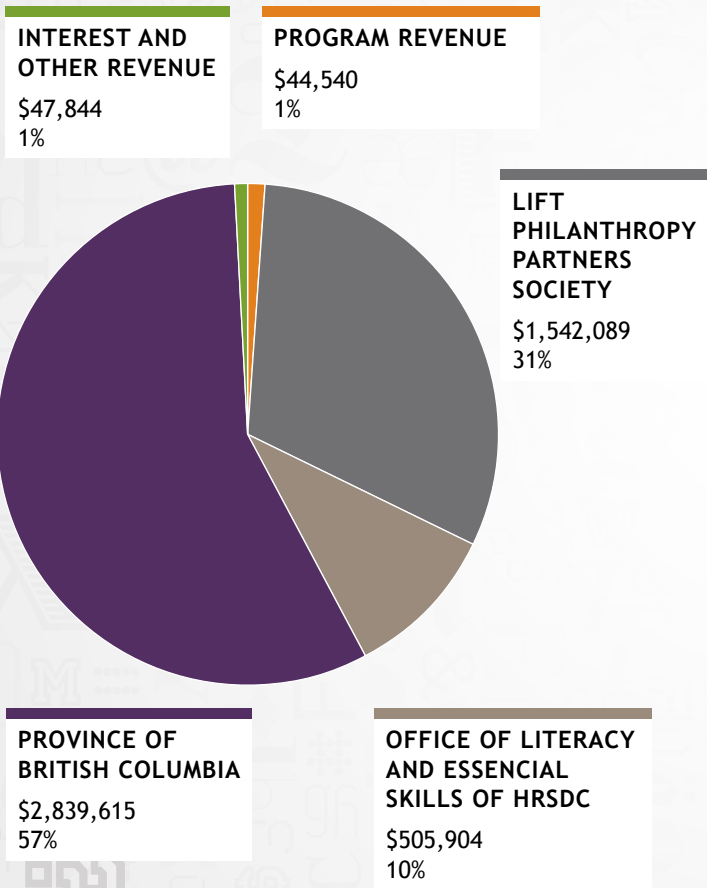
Theron also talks about the other benefits of the program such as the social learning with other children, the bonding between fathers and the amount of interactive activities that allow him and Takaya to connect and learn together. “She loves it. She starts asking about it three days in advance. It’s become ‘our thing’ and I don’t know what I would do without the program at this point.”

The *Daddy & Me Drop In* is just one example of the importance of literacy programs in communities; programs that help build strong individuals and strong families. For Theron and Takaya the program has made a difference in their lives, bringing them closer and as he puts it, “giving us something we can build together.”

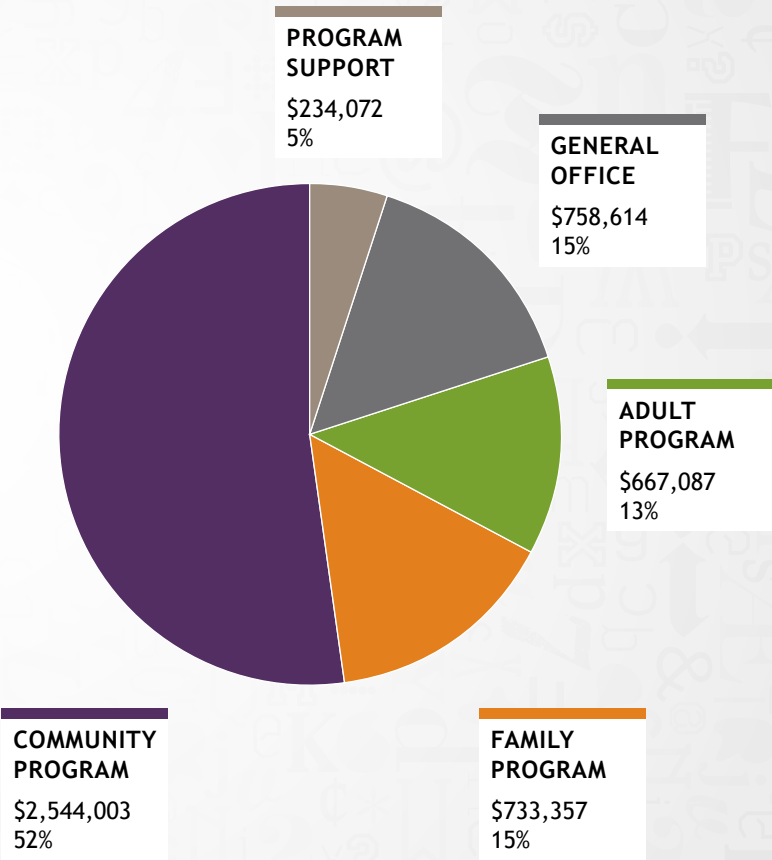


2012-2013 Financials

Total Revenue



Total Expenses



Building a Culture of Community Based Literacy and Learning

The members of the program team at Decoda are integral to delivering our core mission activities. They provide support to literacy programs and initiatives and work directly with the people and organizations on the ground in communities across the province.

One of Decoda’s strategic objectives is to build capacity in the literacy field. To that end, the program team delivers a range of professional development services and opportunities to increase literacy expertise. In the last year, nine two-day regional meetings, 33 webinars, and 18 face-to-face workshops were held.

The program team is currently developing a professional credential for adult literacy providers working in community programs. The credential recognizes the competencies of adult literacy practitioners to deliver programs that help adults reach their full potential so they can fully participate in today’s knowledge economy.

Even with all of the innovation going on in the field and the pace of technology, one of Decoda’s most valuable and effective resources continues to be the library; connecting literacy practitioners with useful literacy resources including print, online, and audiovisual. Last year alone, the library loaned out 2,910 resources and added 455 new items to its collection.

When it comes to the economy and the labour market, the program team has been actively engaged with leaders in business, education and government to talk about how literacy programs can participate to ensure people in B.C. are prepared to meet the demands of our knowledge economy.

In March, Decoda held a successful forum Addressing the Skills Gap. Discussions at the forum provided input into the development of a BC Workforce Literacy and Essential Skills Strategy, which is set to be completed in the spring of 2014.

A core value of Decoda is accountability - using our funding responsibly and effectively is a key priority. One project that demonstrates this value is the Adult Literacy Database; a management tool for adult literacy programs to collect and compile data that can inform literacy practice. Currently there are 106 programs using the database with more than 1,800 learner profiles uploaded.

Guided by a solid operations plan and our mission, the program team, like all Decoda staff, are committed to achieving a culture of community based literacy and learning in the province. They do this by actively engaging individuals and organizations, building relationships, thinking outside of the box and working closely with literacy providers in communities.

Leona Gadsby
Lead Director, Programs & Services
Decoda Literacy Solutions

The Impact of Donor, Partner and Government Support on Literacy in British Columbia



Decoda invested
\$2.5 MILLION
into literacy & our community
partners leveraged that into
\$6.9 MILLION
to improve literacy and
learning across the
province.



1,920 community members working
on community-based action plans



Partnering with **1,784** organizations
to provide literacy services



Funded **102** Literacy Outreach Coordinators



Over **400** communities served



683 workshops & seminars delivered,
impacting more than **10,000** people



436 NEW literacy initiatives supported,
in addition to the existing **806** initiatives



441 adult literacy programs,
impacting **18,300** adults



475 family literacy programs impacting
66,900 children and adults



126,755 pieces of literacy material
provided to community members



245 programs, impacting
14,390 school-aged children



131 seniors programs delivered
impacting **4,500** seniors



“We’re here to support people who want to achieve their literacy goals...and I will do whatever I can to make that happen.”

Literacy Outreach Coordinators and task groups across B.C. met over 1,140 times last year to identify and address literacy priorities in their communities

Born to Teach, Inspired to Act

As a school teacher for 34 years, Barb Mancell understands the importance of literacy. She also knows a lot about dedication and commitment. She gave her life to the public school system and she was rewarded time and again as she prepared young minds to go into the world and find themselves. But Barb had no idea that others in her community were just as passionate about literacy.

It happened at a chance lunch meeting one afternoon. Barb ran into a friend who works in adult literacy in her community. She told Barb about her work, the need for informal learning and the people who are impacted. Barb was still interested in literacy, and given that she had some time and wanted to give back to the community, she was a natural fit for a maternity leave position.

Two years later, Barb is still working as a Literacy Outreach Coordinator and is driven to make a difference in her community. “I love my job and I cannot say enough about the people I am working with. I am inspired every day when I see what is going on in our community and the level of commitment and caring really drives me to do more.”

As an outreach coordinator, Barb wears many hats. She spends her day checking e-mails, responding to dozens of requests, attending meeting after meeting, writing newsletters and family literacy program plans and even delivering supplies.

But what Barb and other outreach coordinators really do is build relationships; they bring people together and mobilize communities; they identify and address local literacy priorities and develop and implement action plans to address those priorities; and they prepare people for the modern world. This is the true value of this amazing group of committed and caring individuals.

“I really had no idea of the scope of work that was going on in my community until I took this job. There is a need out there and I am working with a group of people who are qualified and committed to filling that need. We’re here to support people in their efforts to achieve their literacy goals and I will do whatever I can to make that happen.”

Currently Barb is working on several projects that are close to her heart, including preparations for a summer reading program called *Stories Galore & More*. The family literacy program is run in six parks and in three different communities, by two facilitators and numerous volunteers! Last summer, the program had an average of 270 people a week attending.

Barb and her colleagues are making a difference and with the support of Decoda, she finds it easier to address some of the literacy and learning challenges in her community. “Decoda is very supportive - I go to them all the time. They have great resources, a great knowledge base in literacy, and they are open to discussion at any level. Their support means a lot to me.”

Barb is one of 102 literacy outreach coordinators making a difference in people’s lives. They build strong people, strong families and strong communities and Decoda is grateful for the work they do and the commitment they demonstrate.





Community Partners

“Decoda’s strength is in the network of people and organizations they bring together to champion literacy.”

Decoda is a proud partner and beneficiary of the PostMedia Raise-A-Reader campaign. Because of their support, Decoda was able to distribute over \$500,000 in grants to support literacy programs across B.C.

Thank You

to our generous supporters and partners

Decoda Literacy Solutions would like to thank its donors, sponsors, and corporate and government partners for their generous support. Because of their commitment, Decoda is able to address the literacy and learning needs of all who live and work in communities across British Columbia.

Financial Supporters

Ministry of Education
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Office of Literacy and Essential Skills of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
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Colour Time
ABC Life Literacy Canada
Naramata Friends
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Partnerships

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Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters - BC
B.C. Health and Safety Centre
B.C. School Districts
North Shore Multicultural Society
Edudata Canada
Ministry of Justice
Legal Services Society
Canadian Literacy & Learning Network



“They liked the play time and meeting new kids. I was happy because I knew IPALS could help me, too.”

More than 850 families have benefitted from PALS and IPALS programs in B.C. Without your generous support, this would not be possible.

Literacy - One Family's Journey

Imagine living thousands of miles from your family and friends, with only a handful of people in your life to support and comfort you. Imagine the feeling of having your independence taken away because you couldn't do daily tasks like shopping or taking transportation, without fear of getting lost or confused. That is exactly what Ha Nguyen felt when she came to Canada 14 years ago.

Despite living in a community with her relatives, Ha experienced many of the trials that immigrants face when settling in a new country. However, she was determined not to let communication be a barrier in her new life...and she was certain it was not going to be a barrier for her children.

Ha was determined that her children would have the best start in life and she knew that meant a high level of education. “I wanted my babies to be smart and to do well in school,” she explained. “I wanted them to learn computers and do well in Canada.”

As a new immigrant, she didn't know where to start. She asked around the community about educational programs that could help her children get ahead. And while they were her number one motivation, Ha had another motive; she was determined to learn as much as she could so she could be successful in her new country.

Fortunately for Ha, a close friend introduced her to PALS in Immigrant Communities (IPALS). The program is derived from Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS), which was created to support preschool and kindergarten-aged children's early literacy development, through interactions in English and their first language.

Ha was excited about the opportunity and she was one of the first people to sign up. Since then, both of Ha's children have been through the program... and she was there every step of the way. “They liked the play time and meeting new kids. I was happy because I knew IPALS could help me, too.”

For Ha, it was more than she could have imagined and the benefits were obvious from the start. “It helped me understand many things; my new country; the culture and the language; it helped me understand computers; and it made me closer with my babies.”

If you were to talk to the lively and outspoken mother of two today, you would never know she experienced any of the obstacles new immigrants encounter. And you would certainly never know it if you met her children Sivutha and Thach. They are well spoken, polite, well-adjusted and according to mom, “doing very well in school.”

Ha and her family have come a long way since her brother sponsored her to come here 14 years ago. She attributes their success to family, friends and the support she received through IPALS. She does have one regret, though. “I feel bad for those people who come here and don't know about this program.” She goes on to say, “...it is so helpful, I want everyone to know about it.”



The Team at Decoda Literacy Solutions



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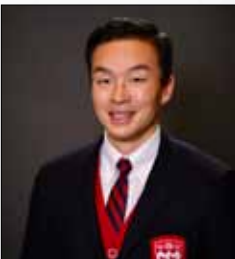
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Vision

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

Acknowledgments

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