



LiteracyBC

Annual Report 2000 - 2001

[Presidents Message](#) | [Highlights 2000-2001](#) | [Contributors](#) | [Board of Directors](#) | [BC Staff](#)

Presidents Message



It has been an honour and a privilege to serve in the role of president of Literacy BC in this critical year in which we looked back on the last 10 years and made plans for the future.

The direction provided by the provincial consultation and conference in the fall of 2000 will ensure that Literacy BC continues to be sensitive to the needs of the province's adult learners. I am most impressed by the fact that the organization did not lose sight of its regular activities while it was immersed in such a mammoth undertaking.

I am pleased by the growing recognition of the connection between literacy and community development. Opportunities for adults to learn basic skills happen more easily when communities fully understand the power of interdependence. I am also encouraged by the active role of the Minister of Human Resources Development Canada in promoting the federal

Skills and Learning Agenda. It would appear that we are striking while the iron is hot!

I acknowledge and appreciate the work of the staff and the Board in promoting literacy. I also am inspired by the commitment and capacities of the learners on the board. They are role models for other learners and an inspiration to staff and Board members alike.

Thank you all for an interesting and inspiring year. Together we can create a long term, effective plan for literacy and learning in BC.

Vicki Austad
President

[top of page](#)

Highlights 2000-2001

For Literacy BC, 2001 marked the first bold step into a new decade of action.

As the events of this year have shown, from global challenges through to local ones, literacy and learning continue to be highly relevant and, in an interconnected world, essential.

Literacy and learning are important keys that open the doors to broader understandings and community involvement. They play lead roles in the extension of civil rights and the protection against both injustices and injury. Literacy and lifelong learning are catalysts that encourage the coming together of individuals with shared interests.

Literacy BC is effective because we have been able to build communities of learners, practitioners and like-minded organizations to share our interest in learning and literacy. As a result, these groups carry forward, enhance and multiply our mission and program aims.

Consequently, our work over the past 12 months as featured in this annual report focussed on the development of strong, vibrant 'learning' communities at the local level, provincial and national levels, in family settings and workplaces, and among program deliverers.

Supporting Learners

Supporting adult learners lies at the core of Literacy BC. One way we remain sensitive to adult learners' needs at an internal policy level is to maintain at least four learners on the Board of Directors. The Learners Caucus Committee also provided members to serve on the External Review Committee of the BC Adult Literacy Cost-shared Program, the Learners

Advisory Network of the Movement for Canadian Literacy, and the Learners Talking to Learners provincial advisory committee.

This past year the Learners Caucus Committee became an even more active and vibrant committee of the Board. The Caucus planned and organized the participation of 41 learners from all regions of the province at Literacy BC's provincial conference, Setting an Agenda for Tomorrow. At the conference learners made connections with one another and participated in discussion and reflection with the larger group.



Literacy BC continued to provide an important service for the thousands of adults in the province who want to attend a program to improve their skills. Our toll-free Help Line offers a confidential and sensitive information and referral service for over 800 adults annually. Last year, research by ABC CANADA in partnership with Literacy BC on Patterns of Participation in Canadian Literacy and Upgrading Programs was published and widely disseminated. This research demonstrated the barriers adults experience in accessing programs and the work that needs to be done to make lifelong learning a reality for all Canadians.

In the spring, Literacy BC took over the administration of the PACE Bursary Fund. Established in 1984 by the Pacific Association for Continuing Education, the Fund assists adult learners taking part-time continuing education courses a role that will continue in its new home at Literacy BC.

Providing Information, Consultation, and Referral Services

Again this year, Literacy BC acted as a crucial information pipeline for information about programs and services available to the community.

We fielded more than 2500 telephone and email inquiries for family literacy programs alone. With the addition of other calls for information, Literacy BC received more than 6500 telephone inquiries in 2000-2001 from educators, literacy practitioners, volunteer tutors, libraries, government, community agencies, employment centres, employers, unions, and the general public.

This year, we collected extensive information from approximately 200 literacy and ABE programs in the province through Literacy BC's Survey of Literacy and Adult Basic Education Programs in BC. This information has been entered into a database which provides a solid basis for our information and referral services. The information will also be used to produce reports of benefit to the field on the state of literacy and ABE programming in BC

Literacy BC Resource Centre

Literacy BC maintains one of the largest literacy resource lending libraries in the country. This past year, our library grew to over 1900 specialized collections of catalogued materials for practitioners, researchers, policy makers, learners and the general public.

As a recognized library by Canada Post, our collection circulates at no mailing cost to patrons. We have also made connections with other literacy Resource Centres in the country. And Literacy BC is now a member of the Canadian Literacy Thesaurus Working Group.

The Literacy Materials Bulletin

This past year, Literacy BC entered into a new partnership with the Literacy Materials Bulletin Committee, producers of an exemplary provincial publication containing reviews of fundamental level adult literacy materials. Under the arrangement, Literacy BC now provides project management and administrative support, allowing the Committee to spend more time evaluating adult literacy resources. This collaboration has already produced new ideas to promote the LMB collection.

Imprints

Literacy BC's bi-monthly newsletter provides over 500 members with information on the latest activities and research by the literacy movement in BC and Canada. As always, the content reflects the remarkable diversity of groups, interests, and perspectives that are touched by and participate in literacy.

In 2000-2001, we also published a newsletter called Making Connections for learners.

Building Community Partnerships and Networks

Building vibrant 'learning communities' has led Literacy BC to develop strong provincial and regional relationships and initiatives that facilitate access to training and professional development, and share information and expertise.

Literacy BC Online

For several years, Literacy BC, in partnership with Capilano College, has been a leading

player in facilitating a provincial online community called The Hub. In 2000-2001, 132 people participated on The Hub. During this period we also did important developmental work in building a web interface that will increase access to this online community.

We have continued to work in partnership with the western provinces and the territories to build connectivity within the e-northwest region. Through e-northwest we have taken a leading role in offering professional development opportunities through several new online conferences:

Noted literacy researcher Allan Quigley (St. Francis Xavier University) hosted a 6-week on-line conference on how formally under-educated adults learn. Learning from Learners challenged participants to reconsider learner stereotypes and myths so as to engage more adults in opportunities for learning.

Nancy Sledd from the National Center for Family Literacy in Kentucky hosted an online conference, Celebrating Families & Literacy.

Literacy BC Board member Kate Nonesuch. hosted a 6-week on-line conference on sharing power with students, Getting Out of the Way.

e-northwest has also put together the terms of reference for a research and strategic planning process to look at building a Canada-wide literacy electronic network. We will be seeking funding for this initiative in the coming year.

Workforce Literacy Initiative

Literacy BC's Workforce Literacy Initiative is designed to establish active partnerships to upgrade the literacy skills of BC's workforce. It has done this by helping employers, unions, and educators to recognize their direct role in workforce literacy.

Learning Curves, the twice yearly bulletin of the BC Workforce Literacy Initiative continues to keep partners across the province informed of the various workforce literacy activities and introduce the topic to others with a stake in workforce literacy. This is in addition to the recently launched web presence that further enhances the ability of the Workforce Literacy Initiative to inform and assist.



Consultation on Literacy

This year, the Workforce Literacy Initiative and Literacy BC undertook an ambitious, first-of-its-kind province-wide consultation to measure awareness and capture perspectives about literacy in today's society, families, and workplaces.

Telephone surveys have been conducted with 300 decision makers in business, labour, government, education and community development, 100 business and labour representatives, and 25 literacy practitioners.

40 communities in the province were visited for face-to-face group meetings with business, labour, government, education and community development representatives.

The consultation included a provincial literacy visioning conference, *Setting the Agenda for Tomorrow*. Approximately 140 people from different sectors of the literacy field and other stakeholders attended the three-day conference. Among these were 41 learners from every region of the province.

In total, nearly 700 people were consulted. The data will be released this fall in a report called *Literacy and Learning in BC: The Big Picture Up Close*. It will be a reflection of the pulse of literacy in BC and establish important benchmarks against which to measure the future effects of programs and initiatives.

Family Literacy

Literacy BC is the lead provincial organization responsible for family literacy development and coordination in British Columbia. Since 1997, it has taken a strong leadership role. In this time we have witnessed growing and wide-spread interest in family literacy both at the provincial and regional levels with government, business, schools, colleges, universities, libraries, health boards, community organizations, service clubs and the private sector.

As a direct result of our work to raise awareness of the issues and the needs of family literacy programs and services across BC, we have been able to secure three new funding sources for this year with a promise of more to come. New funds totalled more than \$100,000 which has been distributed to family literacy programs and services in BC.

Our provincial and regional family literacy public awareness campaigns have heightened recognition of the issues. Along the way, the campaigns have provided a forum for discussion, created opportunities for needed contributions of resources and in-kind services, and built solid partnerships. As a result, the BC Council for Families and the BC Association of Family Resource Programs have become formal partners in family literacy development with Literacy BC.

Highlights over the past 3 years include:

- Increased provincial and corporate partnerships from 3 to 30.
- Provided more than 70 provincial children, youth and family organizations and coalitions with ongoing information, support and consultation.
- Trained more than 400 people with an interest in family literacy.
- Developed a best practice guide for family literacy BC Framework of Statements and Standards of Best Practices in Family Literacy, which is also being used in other parts of Canada.
- Fostered a good working relationship with leaders in early childhood development, early brain development and population health research at the University of British Columbia
- Participated in setting up an inter-provincial/territorial Family Literacy Working Group to look at the issues and challenges in family literacy in the areas of training and standards, best practices, models, and policy development.



Providing Professional Development For Literacy Practitioners

Literacy BC's role in professional development is to build capacity for responsive, capable, community-based delivery of literacy services. This includes assisting in the development of a trained, informed, and connected community of literacy practitioners. Literacy BC is helped to do this in the following concrete ways:

A two week Summer Literacy Institute attended by 102 practitioners from across BC and Canada

Semi-annual Regional Coordinators meetings

Regional seminars and workshops around practitioner training

The provision of professional development opportunities on The Hub, the BC electronic network and conferencing service

Over 130 participants from around the province gathered from November 30 - December 2 for Literacy BC's 10th Anniversary Celebration and Conference in Vancouver. The conference was an opportunity to review the accomplishments of the last decade, celebrate commitments and build agreements on the future direction for literacy in BC



Raising Public Awareness

Literacy BC continued to focus attention on literacy issues through initiatives such as:

Media-sponsored symposiums and workshops for business, labour, government, and educator representatives

Distribution of thousands of posters and information packages

The high-profile PGI Golf Tournament for Literacy, Family Literacy Day/Week Campaign and Word on the Street.

Influencing Public Policy

By monitoring and consulting with governments, Literacy BC kept literacy on the radar screen of public policy initiatives. Some of these activities included:

Meetings with government representatives from advanced education, social services, health, criminal justice and human resource development

Regular dissemination of information kits and releases to key decision makers including MLAs and MPs

Participation in provincial and national policy consultations.

Our members, funders and donors have made our work possible. Thank you for helping to create and build a strong network as we foster the notion and the practice of lifelong learning in BC

[top of page](#)

Contributors

Literacy BC relies on the generous support of many organizations, groups and individuals who contribute their time, energy and money to further the cause of literacy.

We would like to say a special thank you to the following who made generous contributions to Literacy BC during the April 2000 March 2001 period. -*

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[top of page](#)

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[top of page](#)

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[top of page](#)

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