

Annual Report

2002 - 2002



Message from the President

For me, the connection between literacy, community, social and economic development has been self-evident. When some community members are unable to be full participants in the economic and social life of any community, the very fabric of that community is under huge and persistent threat. Any efforts to equalize learning and earning opportunities for particularly challenged citizens will translate into a stronger “double bottom line” for all of us. Over the past five years, it has been my distinct honour and privilege to have had the opportunity to support those efforts that have been made by the spectacular women who make up the staff of Literacy BC. I salute you.

In these economically challenging times, particularly in the not-for profit sector, organizations of all shapes and sizes would do well to learn from the public/private partnerships that Literacy BC has skillfully crafted in recent years. Far more important than the financial support provided, public/ private partnerships remind all of us that the single bottom line (as economic growth has been referred to) has now evolved to a more meaningful bottom line – healthy vibrant communities can do more together than any one of us could ever achieve on our own, and we need to get better at doing that. Literacy BC has provided leadership and inspiration to other community organizations as we all move away from only government sponsorship to a more diverse, and therefore more sustainable, base of support.

I will take pleasure in the coming years as I stand at the sidelines and watch this organization continue to grow in its vision and its scope. I thank the staff and the Board for the opportunities given to me to learn and to grow. Even though we come from different places, we will continue to work from the same philosophical base. The healthiest communities are those where all citizens have an equal share of social rights and responsibilities. The best investment any community can make is in its citizens, and a literate community is a healthy one.

Keep up the good work!

Vicki Austad
President



Highlights of 2001—2002

For Literacy BC, 2002 marked the next bold step into a new decade of action.

Literacy BC has continued to strive to provide leadership and innovation that will have significant impact on literacy and learning in BC.

Our work over the past twelve months, as outlined in this annual report has continued to focus on creating awareness, developing partnerships, building capacity and sustainability for our field.

It has been a year of exciting developments and increasingly dynamic and complex challenges. The outcomes from the Provincial Consultation will form the foundation for the coming year's work on a new and energetic agenda for change for the next three years and beyond.

Supporting Learners

Literacy BC continues to support adult learners as one of our key activities and guiding principles.

As it has for thirteen years now, the Literacy BC provincial toll-free helpline offered a confidential and sensitive information and referral service to over 600 adults in the province who want to improve their literacy skills. The helpline has also increasingly fielded calls from parents, providing them with support and consultation in their desire to assist in their children's schooling and participate in their children's learning.

Literacy BC has also supported adult learners in the area of learner leadership through the work of the Literacy BC Learners' Committee. In the past three years, the Learners' Committee has become an increasingly active and dynamic committee of the Board through its participation in an action research study, and its role in planning and hosting a learners' conference. In 2001-2002, the Committee has continued to take on new challenges by reflecting on, developing, and recommending to the Board, new ways to facilitate the development of learner leadership within the organization. For example, the Committee has developed new procedures and guidelines for the selection of learner representatives from the Literacy BC Board to the Learners Advisory Network of the Movement for Canadian Literacy and to the External Review Committee of the BC adult literacy cost-shared program. In addition, the Committee has identified the need for, and begun to work on, the development of an orientation plan for new board members who are learners and innovative ways to recruit learners to the Literacy BC Board.

Research

Since 1996, when we undertook our first research study, research has played an increasingly important role in our organization. This has been paralleled by the growth, development, and increasing visibility of research-in-practice as a key endeavour within the literacy field.

Literacy BC has fostered and supported literacy research in a number of ways. Highlights include:

- The production of three Literacy BC authored research studies related to our mandate as an organization: *It Guided Me Back to Learning: A Longitudinal Study of Calls to the Literacy BC Helpline*; *The Big Picture Up Close: Literacy and Learning in BC, Outcomes of a Province-Wide Consultation*; *Learners and Leaders, Literacy and Learning, An Action Research Study*.

- Partnerships with other literacy organizations and the academy in research studies, including: *Patterns of Participation in Canadian Literacy and Upgrading Programs: Results of a National Follow-up Study*, ABC CANADA in partnership with Literacy BC; the Literacy Research Circles project, Simon Fraser University in partnership with Literacy BC.

- Provision of professional development opportunities in research through the Literacy BC Summer Literacy Institute and The Hub, the BC literacy electronic network and conferencing service.

- Active support for the development of a research-in-practice network in BC and a national literacy research journal.

- Attending and presenting at research conferences and workshops in BC and other provinces.

Technology-Related Initiatives

Literacy BC continues to use technology to facilitate the delivery of our provincial services in increasingly innovative and useful ways.

In 2001-2002 we were able to adopt the domain name, ***literacy.bc.ca***. This new domain provides Literacy BC with a unique

on-line identity, one that also connects us to the Movement for Canadian Literacy (***literacy.ca***) and other literacy coalitions across the country.

In 2001-2002 we also continued to fine tune our internal database which currently contains over 9663 records and we initiated two new important technology-related projects:

- In order to provide greater access to resources we have been working with the National Adult Literacy Database to build a searchable on-line catalogue of the Literacy BC Resource Collection.

- In order to make the provincial *Directory of Literacy and ABE Programs in BC* accessible via the web, we have been working with Capilano College to create a searchable on-line directory.

On The Hub, a longstanding partnership with Capilano College, we continued to provide an important and beneficial service to the field through the BC literacy electronic network and conferencing service. We also maintained our links with similar services on the prairies – eLit – and the Northwest Territories – North of 60. Highlights this year include:

- Hosting **Learning to Read**, an on-line conference on phonological awareness, moderated by Joyce Cameron of Douglas College.

- Facilitating links with the francophone literacy community in the western provinces and the territories by bringing the Coalition Regionale Ouest et du Nord pour l'Alphabetisme en Francais (CRONAF) on-line.

Finally, in 2001-2002, Literacy BC, in partnership with the Alberta Association for Adult Literacy, the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, Literacy Partners of Manitoba, the NWT Literacy Council, the National Adult Literacy Database, and Centre AlphaPlus Centre, received funding from the National Literacy Secretariat to take the first steps towards building a national electronic network and conferencing service.

The Literacy BC Resource Centre

Literacy BC maintains one of the largest literacy resource lending libraries in the country. Our library houses a specialized collection of literacy materials for practitioners, researchers, policy makers, learners and the general public. This year, the collection has grown to a total of 2100 titles. In addition, a collection of Vertical Files has been systematized and made accessible to our patrons.

The Literacy Materials Bulletin

After 13 fruitful years, the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* was published for the last time with issue #26 in September 2002. The hard-working commitment of the many volunteer committee members over the years created a valued and much used publication, leaving a documented legacy of exemplary adult literacy resources.

In 2001-2002, Literacy BC continued its partnership with the *LMB* Committee by providing project management and administrative support. Literacy BC will continue to maintain the *Literacy Materials Bulletin* collection which has more than 700 items, including books, videos, and

software. All these materials are available on loan from Literacy BC.

Workforce Literacy Initiative

Literacy BC's *Workforce Literacy Initiative* is designed to establish active partnerships to upgrade the literacy skills of our workforce. Through its participation on numerous committees, it helps employers, unions, and educators to recognize their direct role in workforce literacy. Through its referral, consultation, and program steering committee activities, it provides support to new and existing workforce literacy initiatives.

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 to introduce others to the importance of the issue. Its website also provides information on workforce literacy resources, providers, and programs.

Consultation on Literacy

During 2000 and 2001, Literacy BC sought to explore critical literacy issues – including awareness, program activities, delivery strategies, policy directions, leadership, and sustainability – and how best to address them. It engaged some 675 people from more than 40 communities throughout BC in an in-depth consultation that involved a series of telephone surveys, focus groups, conference workshops, and in-person interviews. Business, labour, community development, government and education representatives at all levels were involved in the process.

In May of 2002, a report on the outcomes of this province-wide consultation – entitled *The Big Picture Up Close: Literacy and Learning in BC* – was released and distributed. In addition to summarizing the many recurring themes that arose from this consultation, the report tabled twenty recommendations intended to contribute to the development of a long term strategic plan for literacy and learning in BC. At their briefest, these recommendations can be summarized as follows:

- Continue benchmarking awareness about literacy...
- Be diligent in our approach to collecting, promoting, and using IALS data...
- Reconcile the “disconnects” in our own definitions of literacy...
- Position the issue as “literacy and lifelong learning”...

Develop and implement a comprehensive and integrated communication strategy...

- Fully embrace and accommodate the complexity of literacy issues in our messaging...
- Support the traditional education system in undertaking necessary reforms...
- Provide traditional education institutions the necessary resources to do their job...
- Acknowledge the contribution of non-traditional learning models...
- Acknowledge the need for and merit of multiple programming strategies...
- Create stronger linkages between different providers and strategies...

- Increase activity in literacy for First Nations, “at risk” teens, and those in the workforce...
- Continue to promote and implement a learner-centered approach...
- Foster inter-ministerial collaboration on literacy and related issues...
- Promote inter-agency cooperation on literacy and related issues at the community level...
- Acknowledge and respect the diversity of our communities...
- Initiate and support strategies that foster “learning communities” in BC...
- Develop integrated and realistic funding strategies – both federally and provincially...
- Collaborate on meaningful accountability models...
- Create incentives for private sector investment in literacy and lifelong learning...

Family Literacy

Literacy BC continues to be the lead provincial organization responsible for family literacy development and coordination in British Columbia. A solid foundation has been laid, and awareness and support from corporate and public sectors, and all levels of government has greatly increased. Family literacy in BC is on the map.

In the past two years, Literacy BC's **Family Literacy Fund** provided much needed revenue to **78** family literacy programs and services, totaling more than **\$90,000**; with additional assistance in the form of books, resources, and in-kind support, which over the past four years well exceeds **\$400,000**.

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. In this past year alone we responded to more than **4,489** calls and emails requesting information/services and support. And during the **2002 Family Literacy Week** more than **956** individuals attended the week's events.

Highlights over the past 4 years include:

- Increased provincial and corporate partnerships from **3 in 1999 to 32 in 2002**
- Provided more than **70** provincial organizations and coalitions with ongoing information, support and consultation regarding family literacy and life-long learning
- Increased our participation on key provincial advisory committees from **1 in 1997 to 7 in 2002** – total number of key representatives impacted, well exceeds **225**
- New this year is our participation on the BC Minister of State for Early Childhood Development's provincial advisory committee
- Provided training and workshops in family literacy to more than **450** people
- 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

- Honoured with the BC Council for Families - **2002 Distinguished Services for Families Award**
- Assisted in the development and implementation of the **Canucks Family Education Centre (CFEC)**
- Assisted in the development of the **BC Lions Read, Write and Roar Summer Literacy Program**
- Assisted in the distribution of more than **1000** Spinoza Bear gift packs to family literacy programs and services, schools, early childhood education and infant development programs.
- In **2001** launched the **Panago Learn with Spinoza** program – **100** bears and workshops on the **Power of Family Literacy** (a four component comprehensive approach) were presented to BC elementary schools throughout the province
- Fostered a good working relationship with leaders in early childhood development, early brain development and population health research at the **University of British Columbia** (Human Early Development Partnership – HELP), and **Simon Fraser University** (Home Instruction for Parents with Preschool Youngsters – HIPPY)



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 helped to do this in the following concrete ways:

- Coordinated the delivery of **Screening for Success** – Train the Trainer (a two-day workshop) – **nine** individuals are currently available to deliver this training in BC
- Coordinated the delivery of **Literacy and Parenting Skills** (LAPS) training (a two-day workshop) – **six** individuals are currently available to deliver this training in BC
- Coordinated the delivery of the **Wilson Reading Program** (a two-day workshop) which took place during our 2002 Family Literacy Week – **50** individuals were trained in this program
- Annual Regional Literacy Coordinators meeting
- Regional seminars and workshops around practitioner training
- The provision of professional development opportunities on The Hub, the BC electronic network and conferencing service

Raising Public Awareness

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

- Symposia 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*, *International Literacy Day*, *The Word on the Street Festival*, *Vancouver Sun Raise a Reader Campaign* and *Family Literacy Day/Week Campaign*.



Influencing Public Policy

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

- Meetings with government representatives from advanced education, social services, health, criminal justice, human resource development and children and family development
- Regular dissemination of information kits and releases to key decision makers including MLAs and MPs
- Participation in provincial and national policy consultations.

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Many thanks from Literacy BC

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 2001 – March 2002 period.

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We are so appreciative of the following organizations who have given such strong support to Family Literacy programs and initiatives this past year.

Scholastic Book Fairs	Honda Canada	The Vancouver Canucks
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A very warm and special thank you to all the PGI Tournament participants, volunteers and celebrities who are too numerous to mention. We would also like to thank the wonderful committed group of people on our PGI committee who make sure this event is such a success. They are: Trevor Evancic, John Hammond, Robb Lucy, Colin Macrae, Stuart Monteith, Bill More, and Peggie Terry. Special thank you to our PGI host, Peter Mansbridge.

Many thanks from Literacy BC

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- Supporting Learners
- Providing Consultation, Referral and Resources
 - Raising Public Awareness
 - Coordinating Regional Literacy Networks
- Providing Training and Professional Development
 - Influencing Public Policy
 - Building Partnerships



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