



ANNUAL REPORT
1997 – 1998

LITERACY B.C. MISSION

We promote literacy, support adult learners, develop partnerships and aim to present a united voice on literacy issues.

We strive for an environment in B.C. where adults who want to learn can access programs that respond to learners' needs and provide services based on good practice.

Literacy B.C. will build and support a diverse membership in order to strengthen and increase regional and local literacy efforts in the province.

Literacy B.C. will work to make sure it has the resources to do the job.



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

October 1997 to September 1998 was an extraordinarily good time for literacy in British Columbia. People who have worked hard over more than twenty years to help improve the literacy skills and life chances of many British Columbians saw their efforts tangibly rewarded in the year just completed.

Literacy B.C. played a major leadership role in some very positive developments of the past year. We were a key force for change within our own province, an influential player on the national scene, and a model that impressed the international literacy community.

In fact, the year began with British Columbia hosting an international policy conference on literacy for the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Literacy B.C. played the key local role in planning and organizing this event, in collaboration with the National Literacy Secretariat.

The government of British Columbia caught the attention and respect of almost all British Columbians with the announcement in May 1998 of a tuition free policy for adults pursuing their education to the end of secondary school. Premier Glen Clark and Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, Andrew Petter, showed tremendous foresight by doing what literacy practitioners have been requesting for many years. Literacy B.C. proudly played a vital background role in the development and implementation of this major step forward.

The Movement for Canadian Literacy (MCL) is the national umbrella group for organizations like Literacy B.C. in Canada. MCL has focussed its energies in the past year on ensuring that literacy issues remain high on the priority list of the government of Canada – in no small measure due to the creative and dynamic work of our Executive Director.

Literacy B.C. continues to support and assist the many practitioners and community groups providing direct adult basic education service throughout the province. Our efforts to provide direction and support for workplace learning and family literacy have been especially well received. Our Summer Institute flourished. Our electronic network promises to play an even more effective communication role for practitioners and learners throughout and beyond our province.

Our Leadership in Literacy Program, launched this year, aims to provide information and policy advice on literacy-related issues. In the past year, we have paid special attention to advising our government on such issues – and there was an almost immediate payoff. We have also tried to be helpful to corporations, unions, institutions, and community agencies wishing to determine how they might best contribute to the literacy cause. It seems likely that this program will take on even greater prominence in the coming year.

Literacy B.C. is proud to champion the interest of literacy learners throughout British Columbia. We express our gratitude to our dedicated financial supporters in both private and public sectors. We particularly

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appreciate the support of so many people in public office who have identified themselves with the adult literacy cause.

Literacy B.C. was truly gratified to receive the *Canada Post Literacy Leadership Award* for British Columbia in 1998 for achievement, community impact, organizational excellence, innovation and leadership. We are pleased to share this award with all members of the British Columbia literacy community.

Our Board of Directors is delighted to have played a supporting role. We are enormously impressed by the passion with which our Executive Director and staff address the cause that we all see as so important to our province, to Canada, and to the international community.

--Paul Gallagher
President

HIGHLIGHTS OF 1997-98

Literacy B.C.'s leadership and innovation has continued to have a significant impact on the literacy field in B.C. As the province's "one stop" literacy resource, our organization has helped hundreds of adult learners and provided information, consultation, and referral services to thousands of individuals and organizations who would not otherwise have access to this support. Through our regional coordination and practitioner development initiatives, Literacy B.C. has built the capacity throughout the province to both stimulate and meet the demand for responsive literacy programming of the highest calibre. And our work around policy issues, public awareness, and inclusive partnership-building has furthered the notion and the practice of lifelong learning in B.C.

Supporting Learners

Supporting adult learners is key to all Literacy B.C. activities. To make sure we remain sensitive to adult learners' needs and issues, our organization maintains at least four learners on its Board of Directors at all times. Literacy B.C. Learners' Caucus Committee provides a member to serve on the cost-shared projects External Review Committee and on the Board of the Movement for Canadian Literacy.

Literacy B.C. operates B.C.'s first and only province-wide, toll-free literacy "help line." This year, Literacy B.C. staff have helped over 700 adults find a literacy program in their community. Based on our experience, we have advised other provinces on how to provide a confidential, sensitive, and accurate referral service for potential learners. Recently, Literacy B.C. initiated a longitudinal research study of the "help line" calls we receive to better understand the issues of learner motivation, access, participation, and

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dropout. The conclusions of this study, the first of its kind in Canada – will be published and distributed this winter.

The Literacy B.C. “First Class” electronic network provided a unique opportunity to bring technology to learners in ways that further contribute to their learning. Learners in B.C. participate in the network by talking to each other and sharing their experiences on-line, while at the same time improving their literacy and computer skills. In one particular network project, a group of learners and instructors is learning and teaching the art and craft of writing on-line.

Providing Information, Consultation, And Referral Services

Literacy B.C. is the province’s central source of information, referral services, and consultation on literacy issues. In addition to its toll free “help line”, Literacy B.C. operates a resource centre with one of the country’s largest lending libraries of literacy resources. It also maintains a comprehensive directory of literacy and adult basic education, volunteer, family and workplace programs throughout B.C. A bi-monthly newsletter keeps over 500 Literacy B.C. members informed of literacy issues, events, and new resources. And, through its participation on numerous steering committees, Literacy B.C. provides consultation on community, family, and workforce literacy programs.

This past year over 6000 inquiries were handled from educators, literacy practitioners, volunteer tutors, libraries, government, community agencies, and employment centres, employers, unions, and the general public.

Building Community Partnerships And Networks

Literacy B.C. has developed a strong regional literacy network throughout the province. Working at the “grass roots” level, it has helped community based literacy programs and groups with board development, long term planning, program development, fund raising, and tutor training.

We have actively promoted, supported and coordinated local literacy initiatives. The work of the 11 Regional Literacy Coordinators has resulted in strong partnerships with colleges, libraries and community based organizations. Regional coordination has stimulated demand for family and

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workforce literacy programs and has served to build the local capacity needed to meet this demand.

The Literacy B.C. "First Class" electronic network has enabled regular and ongoing communication and information sharing for more than 100 literacy practitioners. The development of electronic gateways to the literacy community in other provinces and territories is currently underway.

To stimulate activity around family literacy, Literacy B.C. has developed strong partnerships with colleges, libraries and community based organizations throughout the province and provided an electronic conferencing service for family literacy programs.

Strong partnerships with several stakeholder groups have been developed to ensure the success of the Literacy B.C. workforce initiatives.

Literacy B.C.'s partnership philosophy is reflected in the success of its fund raising activities. In 1997, 20% of Literacy B.C.'s annual budget was raised from memberships, corporate sponsorships, donations, and fund raising events.

Providing Professional Development For Literacy Practitioners

Building capacity is key to the responsive, capable, community based delivery of literacy services.

Literacy B.C. has long recognized the importance of attracting new people to this field and of providing literacy practitioners with a variety of professional development opportunities. This past year's activities included:

- a two week Summer Institute for literacy practitioners attended by more than 93 practitioners
- a two day field networking session for workforce literacy practitioners
- semi-annual Regional Coordinators meetings
- regional seminars and workshops around practitioner training
- the creation and distribution of manuals for tutor training, regional coordination and practitioner training.

Raising Public Awareness

Literacy B.C. raises awareness about literacy issues among the public, the media, and targeted stakeholder groups in a variety of ways:

- media sponsored symposiums for business, labour, government and educator representatives
- literacy workshops for community, business, labour, government or educator groups

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- distribution of thousands of posters, information packages and International Literacy Day kits
- displays at several regional and national conferences
- high profile fund raising events such as the PGI Golf Tournament and Ski for Literacy.

Influencing Public Policy

Literacy B.C. undertakes a variety of strategies for regularly monitoring and influencing federal and provincial government policy as it relates to literacy, including:

- developing and circulating a Leadership on Literacy policy paper
- regularly liaising with government representatives from various ministries, including those concerned with education, social services, health, criminal justice and human resource development
- providing the Minister of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (MAETT) with policy consultation
- regularly distributing information kits and press releases to all B.C. MLAs and MPs
- participating in national policy consultations.

None of these activities would be possible without the support of our members, funders and donors. Thank you for helping to create and build a strong network for literacy in B.C.

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MANY THANKS FROM LITERACY B.C.

Literacy B.C. 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 B.C. during the April 1997 – March 1998 period.

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A very warm and special thank you to all the PGI Tournament and Ski Day participants, volunteers and celebrities who are too numerous to mention. We would also like to thank the wonderful committed group of people on our special events committees who make sure these events are such a success. They are: Roslyn Boniface, Mary Kaban, Mike Labou, Robb Lucy, Lori McIntosh, Stuart Monteith, Bill More, John O'Connor, Jamie Pitblado, Neil Schatz

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**We gratefully acknowledge the support and encouragement of the
National Literacy Secretariat of Human Resources
Development Canada and the B.C. Ministry
of Advanced Education, Training and Technology.**