



THE BUZZ ON LITERACY

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Identifying People Who Have Low Literacy

Police are required by law to "accommodate" people who have low literacy. This means that they must do everything they reasonably can to make sure people understand the verbal and written information that is given to them. Their materials and literature can be found online at <http://policeabc.ca/literacy-facts.htmls>

Here are some excerpts that have wide application for many services and organisations when dealing with the public:

"People who have trouble reading, writing, and understanding verbal information often try to cover up their problem or aren't even aware of it. They use a variety of strategies to do this, including avoidance and denial.

Here are some of the signs that may indicate a person has a low level of literacy.

In a verbal interview, a person with low literacy may:

- have difficulty telling a clear story; for example, they may get the order of events confused
- seem to talk in circles - this thinking pattern is common among people with low literacy
- have stiff body language; for example, they may not nod or shake their head to indicate agreement or disagreement
- seem nervous or embarrassed
- seem to lack confidence and be easily intimidated

When asked to read or write something, a person with low literacy may:

- make excuses to avoid the task; for example,
"I can't read this because I forgot my glasses,"
"I don't have time to read this now. Can I take it home?"
"I hurt my hand, so I can't fill out this form."
- read very slowly
- stare at the page they're supposed to read, but not move their eyes back and forth
- ask questions about things that are clearly stated in the document
- make a lot of spelling or grammar mistakes in their writing, or fill out a form with incorrect information
- bring a friend or relative with them who helps with reading and writing

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People who have difficulty understanding verbal and written information have other tell-tale behaviours. Many people with low literacy:

- give what seem to be indirect, confused, or irrelevant answers
- act confused or ask questions that do not seem to relate to the problem or situation
- not ask any questions at all (rather than reveal they don't understand what's going on)
- nod to indicate they agree or understand something, but then not do what you expect

They may also:

- not show up for meetings or hearings (because they did not understand the instructions on a written notice)
- sign statements or legal documents that they do not understand (rather than admit they have a reading problem)
- look dazed or uncomfortable when someone gives them something to read

They may show their confusion when they:

- give the impression that they don't understand the seriousness of their situation
- become frustrated and angry easily

When you question if a person has low literacy, remember that:

- Low literacy is more than a reading problem. People with low literacy also have difficulties understanding oral and written information. Many tend to have different thinking strategies and problem-solving approaches.
- People with low literacy skills are likely to understand verbal and written information more slowly than others

What seems to be a bad attitude may be a literacy problem."

Literacy Now Task Group Meeting Dates:

Task Group Meeting for Jan 29th is cancelled
Next Task Group Meeting: Feb 26th, 12.30 - 2
at the Penticton Chamber of Commerce



FAMILY LITERACY DAY:

COME HELP US CELEBRATE!

Centre Stage events
all day

Author readings

Draw Prizes

Stories for kids of all
ages

Raise a Reader

And more.....

Saturday
JAN 24TH
10 - 5
At
Cherry Lane
Centre,
Penticton

Bring the Whole Family for a fun-filled day of activity and entertainment!

Lieutenant Governor's Literacy Program

One of the stated goals of the current Lieutenant Governor is "equal access to literacy for all British Columbians." The Honourable Stephen Point has launched a new project, inviting people of all ages to write a story around a series of pictures, which are available on-line. All stories that are received will be acknowledged and read by the Lieutenant Governor himself. Let's overwhelm him with contributions from the sunny Okanagan!

To see the current series of pictures go to:

http://www.ltgov.bc.ca/events/media-releases/literacy_program.htm

Write Out Loud

You know something is good, when people just don't want it to end!

This Fall-term program, offered by Mary Kiviste from Okanagan College, has been enormously successful. The group of budding writers has agreed to continue meeting for the coming months, under the guidance of Carollyne Sinclair, with space continuing to be offered, at Oliver Elementary School. Not only that, members of the group are regularly writing articles, stories, poems and musings in the Oliver Chronicle. Way to go!

Questions? Email csinclair@telus.net

Mwakwa Talks to the Loon:

A Cree Story for Children

By Dale Auger

Winner of the 2006 Aboriginal Children's Book Award.

This book's hero, Kayas, offers a pointed lesson to children and adult readers alike. He loses his gift of easily providing for his people with his hunting skills, when he lets kudos turn his head and fails to nurture his gift. Pride leads him to where he "loved the attention more than he loved hunting." The story-telling pace is carefully measured for reading aloud, and the text is interspersed with Cree nouns. Dr. Auger's artwork is also stunningly beautiful. This book was recommended as part of an obituary of Dale Auger, who died at the age of 50 in early December. "The message in Mwakwa is sublime and universal," says the writer. This is a must-have book for your family collection, or school library.



An Update from the Community Literacy Outreach Coordinator

Wishing each and every one of you a Happy and Healthy New Year. As we head in to 2009, I thought I should give folks an update on some of the region-wide, literacy happenings in the South Okanagan-Similkameen.

First up, we have our big Family Literacy Day Celebration on Saturday January 24th, supported by many of our local services and organisations, including libraries, Communities for Kids, Penticton Museum, Interior Health and the Oonkane Friendship Centre.

Penticton's Spirit of BC Week celebrations, from February 9 - 20, will include a literacy component, spear-headed by Peter Ord at the Penticton Museum: check out their website for more information, or drop in and 'Write Your Wild Side'!

We are in the process of hiring a short-term coordinator, sponsored by Service Canada, to work on producing a Community Literacy Assets Directory for the region. If all goes according to plan, we should have this available to communities by mid-July, to coincide with the launch of a web-site, hosted by School District #53.

All Community Coordinators have been called to a conference in mid February in Vancouver, to work with the Legacies 2010 and ReadBC teams on developing and coordinating projects and programs. Let's trust that lots of support continues to come our way.

Our subcommittees are continuing to meet on a regular basis. The Family Literacy Committee has been enthusiastically preparing for January 24th at Cherry Lane. The Health Literacy Committee is working on materials for dissemination through a variety of forums, including the South Okanagan Health Fair, which we will be attending on February 20th and 21st. Full updates from each of the committees will be shared at our next Task Group meeting on Thursday, Feb 26th.

Meanwhile, I am pulling together stories and information for our first annual report for Legacies 2010, due in mid-March. If you have any ideas to share, to enrich our reporting, and build on the theme of our original Community Literacy Plan, *A Tapestry of Stories*, please drop me a line or call me. You only need to share the ideas. I'll do the writing! And any time you have ideas for the newsletter, send those along too.

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