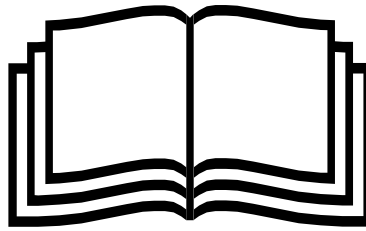


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**School District #22**  
**District Literacy Plan Update**  
July, 2009

**Vernon, Coldstream, Lumby, Lavington,  
Cherryville**



**“We honour and respect the diversity of our communities.  
Our vision is to meet the literacy needs of all.”**

**Facilitated by the Vernon Literacy Outreach Coordinator  
and the Literacy Plan Task Force for SD 22**

**We gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Province of British Columbia  
through the Ministry of Education**

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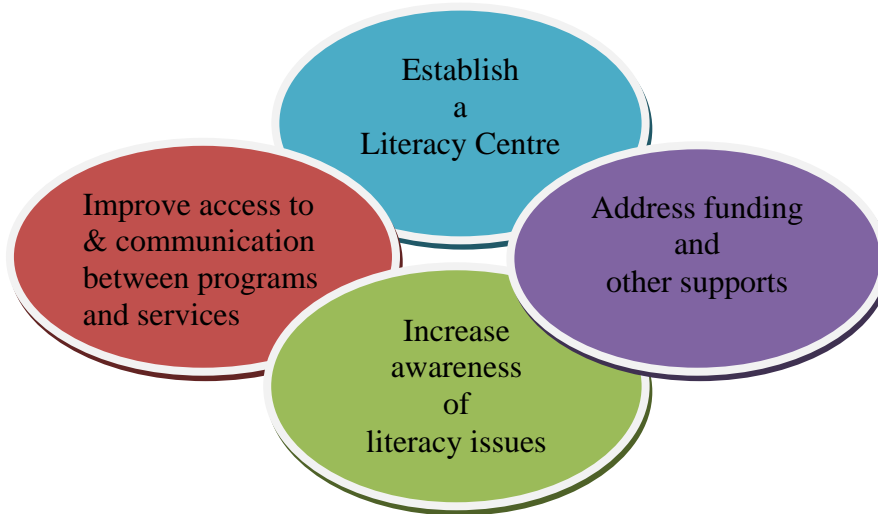
## Overview

In 2005, the communities within School District #22 (SD 22) participated in a 2010 Legacies, Literacy Now pilot project to:

- create a literacy vision,
- set goals, and
- write actions to improve literacy and learning skills for every person in the region.

We have just completed the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the plan's implementation and the final year for 2010 Legacies funding. Development of the District Literacy Plan (DLP) in 2007/08 complimented the previous community engagements and provided opportunities to deepen literacy discussions with a broader group of community partners.

Vernon and Cherryville/Lumby Literacy Outreach Coordinators (LOCs) have been at the centre of most community and several SD 22 literacy initiatives since implementation funds were first provided in September, 2006. They help to carry out the goals and objectives in the DLP and adhere to the main goals of the original Regional Literacy Plan.



The Junction Literacy Centre was established in April 2007 and functions as the “hub” for information about literacy programs and services in the region. The LOCs work for the not-for-profit society that manages the centre.

A diverse Literacy Plan Task Force, representing the four pillar groups, has met 5 times since the DLP was written. Their most recent meeting was to edit this document. When asked to reflect on the role of the LOCs they had the following to say.

Literacy Outreach Coordinators:

- have created a better understanding/relationship between the early childhood development community and the school district which has resulted in more consistency, better alignment of goals and sharing of information
- provide a centralized resource for service providers, saving time and energy
  - help with funding
  - make connections in the community
  - provide special skills
  - build relationships and meaningful partnerships
- provide a critical leadership role

“The LOCs are housed in a “neutral zone” (the Literacy Centre) which is critical. It’s not slanted, not ministry directed, not district directed.”

“LOCs provide a neutral, diplomatic role which builds trust and opens doors.”

“Without the LOCs, everything would crumble.”

- have helped to meet the 4 original goals and gone beyond – great success
- are ambassadors – someone who will carry the torch forward
- must continue in this role – especially in times of economic down turns

“There would be no conversation about community literacy without this role – no one has the time.”

Much of the work of the Literacy Outreach Coordinators is focused on addressing gaps in services identified at community round table meetings. We have learned that collaborations ensure actions are carried out in a planned and cooperative way. Partnerships remove barriers to actions. Organizations with the best knowledge and skill levels will share their resources without taking on the entire project and smaller partners can have a significant impact. Collaboration (especially face to face, but also letters, email, texting, telephone...) builds commitment.

Community development work helps to:

- build bridges and mend fences
- engage new groups and new faces, make connections, focus on shared visions
- increase the effective use of existing funding
- focus the community to work towards a common goal
- create changes that make a difference and impact the whole community

“Community development builds enthusiasm around working “tighter”; it builds a level of trust within the community and sets a foundation for future programs.”

### **Changes in the Region since Submitting the 2008 DLP**

Our communities have been devastated by mill closures, downsizing in the forestry sector, massive lay-offs and closure of the Lavington Glass Plant (300 employees).

This has led to:

- 40% increase in people accessing the Vernon Food Bank
- 75% increase in families requesting food hampers from the First Nations Friendship Centre (Vernon) and White Valley Community Resource Centre (Lumby)
- huge increases in people requesting:
  - social assistance
  - employment counselling (case-managed clients have tripled in the past 3 years)
  - access to adult basic education and high school graduation programs

Older workers who are newly unemployed are struggling to find new jobs because they lack the literacy skills they need for upgrading. In Lumby, job losses are creating financial stress, bankruptcies, family breakdowns and requests for counselling.

**Collaborations and Partnerships that resulted in  
New and Expanded Services for Vulnerable Learners**

<b>Literacy Services for Vulnerable Learners</b>	<b>Lead Partner</b>	<b>Other Partners/collaborations</b>
<p><b>Upper Room Mission Literacy Centre</b> for the homeless and those living in poverty. Newest program – <b>Basic Computer Skills</b> course. Graduates each received a refurbished computer.</p>	Upper Room Mission	Junction Literacy Centre, Okanagan College, Monahan’s Distribution, Sprott-Shaw College
<p><b>Skills Boost!</b> After school tutoring program for disadvantaged children and youth with significant gaps in their learning. Agencies have provided funding to support this service. <b>In September</b>, if new funding applications are successful, tutor support will increase for children living in Mara House (a residential service).</p>	Junction Literacy Centre (LOC)	N. Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society Open Door, First Nations Friendship Centre, SD #22 Aboriginal Programs, Individual donations
<p><b>Focus On Skills</b> – training for adult service providers (especially Employment Counsellors) to understand the issues surrounding adult low literacy, how to assess literacy skills then refer clients for further assessment, job coaching and tutoring.</p>	Junction Literacy Centre, Learning Disabilities Assn., Okanagan College (LOC)	Community Futures, N. Okanagan Employment Enhancement Society and other Employment Agencies.
<p><b>Fill the Honda Fit</b> – Family Literacy Week community challenge. Completed January 29/09. Thousands of gently used and new children’s books were donated, then provided to agencies that serve vulnerable families. 15 agencies selected books to share with families.</p>	Junction Literacy Centre, Sunshine Honda, Vernon Public Library, Boys & Girls Club of Vernon (LOC)	W. Vernon Children’s Centre Boys & Girls Club  15 Vernon area agencies
<p><b>Come Read with Me and You Can Count on Me</b> – workshops for parents with children in grade 1. If funding applications succeed, the program will be offered in 5 “high needs” schools.</p>	Junction Literacy Centre, PALS facilitators, SD 22 Literacy Coordinator, (LOC)	Grade 1 teachers, funding applications to RBC foundation and Literacy BC.
<p><b>Way to Grow program</b> (like Strong Start) expanded at Okanagan Landing School. Many low literacy families who live in poverty attend.</p>	Boys & Girls Club – N. Okanagan Early Literacy (NOEL) project	Silver Star and OKL

## Services Still in the Planning Phase

Service for Vulnerable Learners	Lead Partner	Other Partners/collaborations
<p><b>Early Learning Bus</b> – outreach Strong Start Centre for “hard to reach families”. The BUS will travel to a different location 5 mornings a week.</p> <p>Timing: September, 2009</p>	<p>Boys and Girls Club of Vernon School District 22</p> <p>(LOC)</p>	<p>Junction Literacy Centre, Vernon Public Library, Interior Health, Child Care Resource &amp; Referral, NONA, Whitevalley Community Centre, Okanagan Indian Band Kalamalka Rotary Club (\$10,000 donation to help re-fit the bus)</p>
<p>The <b>Poetry Project</b> will address the need for artistic expression and literacy development for adults who live at Howard House and disenfranchised youth who drop in to the Junction Youth Centre. The goal is to publish a collection of illustrated poems that reflect the lives of the participants.</p> <p>Timing: September, 2009</p>	<p>Vernon Howard House</p> <p>(LOC)</p>	<p>Junction Literacy Centre, Junction Youth Centre, Okanagan College Volunteer Tutor Coordinator, volunteer art and poetry instructors and businesses that can publish the final product.</p>

### Major Impacts

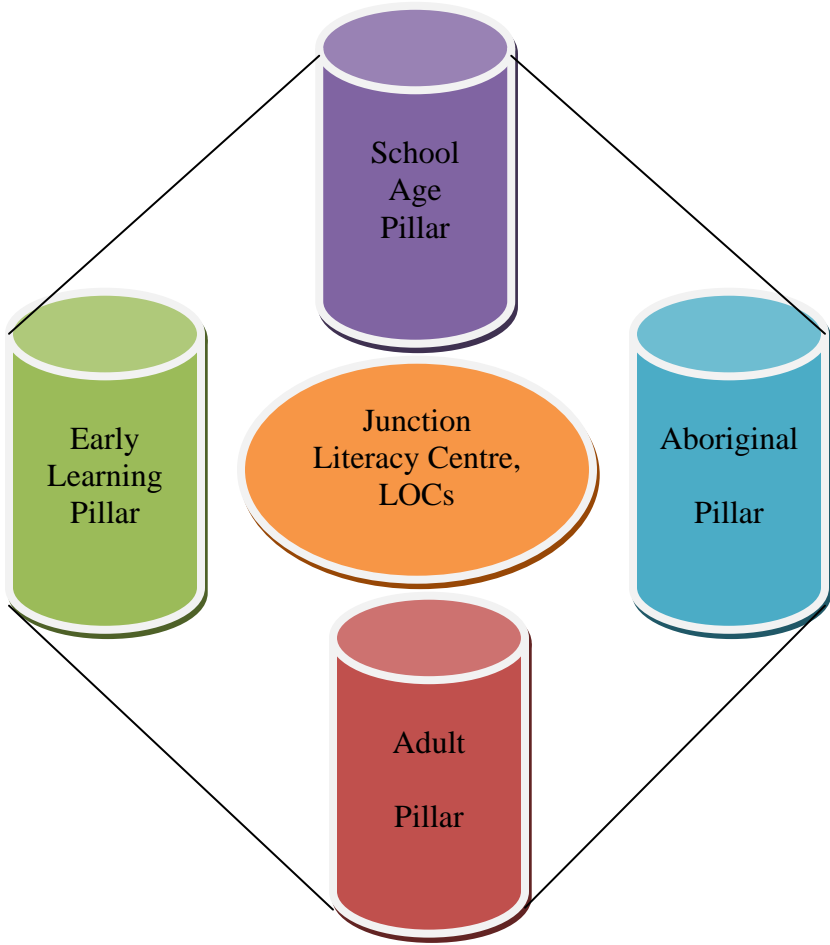
We have successfully addressed the majority of our objectives. This was partly achieved by members of the Task Force who took a leadership role within their “pillars”. SD 22 Administrative staff attended most community round table meetings and the Director for Student Learning chaired the Early Childhood Development sub-committee. LOCs also have active roles at monthly community meetings. The Vernon LOC attends the following meetings:

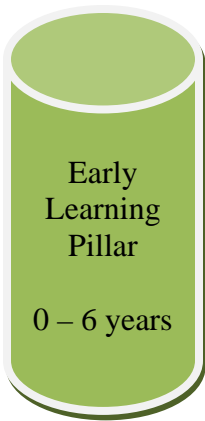
- Early Childhood Development
- Family Services
- Youth Services
- Poverty and Homelessness
- Seniors Action Team
- Adult and Aboriginal meetings

The Lumby/Cherryville LOC attends:

- Lumby Early Childhood Development
- Lumby Youth Services
- Cherryville Task Group (newly formed)

# The Four Pillars





## Expansion of Early Learning Services/Successful Initiatives

New Strong Start Centres will open at Okanagan Landing and Alexis Park elementary schools this September. The Early Learning Bus will host a Strong Start program in 5 “outreach” locations each week.

The Boys and Girls Club – North Okanagan Early Literacy (NOEL) Project, in response to wait lists for programs, added a Mother Goose program to the Harwood Strong Start, a second “Way to Grow” program (similar to Strong Start) at Okanagan Landing school and started a new Way to Grow program at Silver Star elementary.

In Cherryville, the LOC has established herself as the “go-to person” for new programs and services. In response to community input she has:

- initiated a weekly pre-school **story time** in the Cherryville school library (the Principal is the story teller)
- established school **library cards** for Cherryville families
- created two **family literacy day events** – a book exchange and PJ story time at the Cherryville library
- written a monthly newspaper column that promotes family literacy activities

Development and expansion of **HUBS in elementary schools** where families can access:

- early learning programs
- parenting programs
- before and after school care, and
- summer reading camps

Hubs have been developed at: JW Inglis (in Lumby), Cherryville, Lavington, Kidston and Harwood schools as well as at the West Vernon Children’s Centre. Partnerships with community service providers have been vital.

“**Early learning**” in-services (3) were provided to Kindergarten teachers, Early Learning Educators (ECEs) and others who work with families and pre-schoolers. Trainer Fiona Morrison provided 2 sessions on developing oral language through play and one-day training for the Parents as Literacy Supporters (PALS) program. This was organized by the SD 22 Early Literacy and NOEL Project Coordinators and the Vernon LOC.

## Early Learning Funding

### Literacy BC

Rotary Clubs and other community service organizations

### Ministry of Child and Family Development

- Child First
- Building Blocks
- \* Success by 6

(\*in partnership with United Way and BC Credit Unions)

### Ministry of Education

- Strong Start
- Early Learning Funds
- Ready, Set, Learn

### Challenges for the Early Learning Pillar

On-going, core funding is the greatest challenge.

- \$25,000 is needed by the NOEL project to continue offering PALS programs
- \$7,500 is needed to continue offering the very popular Parenting isn't Easy (PIE) program.

### Gaps in Services

- programs for grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren
- child care at programs where parents attend without their children

### Opportunities

- 88 two year-olds live in the Lumby area. To engage their parents, a partnership of service providers, lead by the NOEL Project will offer a “**Terrific Toddlers Party**” in September. The purpose is to connect parents to local early learning programs and services (similar to Ready, Set, Learn).
- adopt the **Cherryville model** and provide a library story time for pre-schoolers at more elementary schools
- unemployed Dads are attending programs, a **Dad's only** program is being considered

### Evaluation

Each community partner evaluates their programs based on their organization's criteria.

A new measure is being developed by SD 22 Early Learning and NOEL project Coordinators to find out which early learning programs/activities children entering Kindergarten have attended. The goal is to evaluate their impact on school readiness.



## Expansion of School Age Services/Successful Initiatives

### Teacher Knowledge/understanding

- On-going review of school literacy plans
  - sharing of literacy planning is happening between schools
  - very positive, school literacy representatives are enthusiastic

District Literacy Coordinators meet 5 times per year with school literacy representatives

- meetings are well attended and considered very successful
- helps track each school's progress and culture

School Resource Teachers – assessment and literacy development knowledge

- Resource Teachers attend most in-services to learn about how to link students to all available supports

### All Teachers are Teachers of Reading

- Collaborative marking of reading assessments has helped start some excellent conversations.
- District interviews with new teachers (elementary and secondary) include questions about their experiences and training re: teaching literacy skills.

### Share Literacy Strategies and Celebrate Success

- happens at “literacy league” meetings, during Pro D days and staff meetings
- showcase nights happening at many schools,
- “assessment for learning” initiatives (students takes ownership of their learning) are common

### Parent Supports – expanded and new programs

- Parenting programs that support adults who may have low literacy skills, while helping them to understand their children's early literacy development.

Parenting Isn't Easy (PIE)

Family Resource Centre  
First Nations Friendship  
Centre  
Whitevalley Community  
Centre (Lumby/Cherryville)  
NEW - Sikh Temple

Aboriginal Literacy &  
Parenting Skills (A-LAPS)

First Nations Friendship  
Centre

## Other Parent Supports

- **Parents As Literacy Supporters (PALS)** 5 to 10 workshops offered to parents of children in Kindergarten in 12 of 14 elementary schools. Attendance is very high at most schools. PALS was offered for the first time this year at the Vernon Christian School.
- **Come Read with Me and You Can Count on Me** see page 6

## Other Programs

- **Roots of Empathy** – teaches “emotional literacy”, offered in 6 grade 1 classes and at the Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB) school
- **Seeds of Empathy** – similar program for pre-school children at West Vernon Children’s Centre

## Literacy Remediation in Schools and After School

### School District #22

- more schools have **literature circles** and most offer “**guided reading**”
- 2009 **Summer Reading Camps** are planned for 5 mornings per week throughout July at: OKIB, Alexis Park, Harwood and Mission Hill schools. Focus is on grades 1 to 3.
- **NEW:** shared resources (lists and books) between schools – meetings with representatives from each secondary school to discuss new books, what works, how to order, how to share - very successful
- **NEW:** levelled texts are available through the District Resource Centre and in school libraries

### The Junction Literacy Centre

- after school **tutoring** has been provided to 35 funded students referred by schools or social service agencies (new name: **Skills Boost!**)
- **NEW:** laptop computers, software, reading and math resources are available as a “mobile resource library” for tutors working in off-site locations
- **NEW:** babysitting course in Cherryville provided by the LOC and expanded to include early literacy activities and insights for 11 to 13 year old participants
  - has intergenerational literacy implications
- **NEW: Grand Buddies** – volunteers provide fun, interactive “early literacy” activities to identified Kindergarten children (2 Vernon schools)
- **NEW: Summer Reading** Camp at the Junction Literacy Centre for 8 children during the month of August. One-on-one reading support will also be provided to 4 other children.

## Address the Literacy Needs of Students in Alternate Settings

School District #22 will acquire sets of **“levelled resources”** for use at the Alternate Learning Program (ALP). The resources support course content (not just novels) at a variety of reading levels. Implementation will begin in September/09.

Shifts are being made in the secondary schools to keep youth in their home school and not in alternate locations. **“Differentiated Instruction”** is slowly being implemented. It involves instruction with levelled texts as well as individualized programs to support students with weak literacy skills.

V-Learn, My School BC, more apprenticeship programs and other options are now available to students who wish to accelerate their learning, or focus on “hands-on” learning.

High schools are developing ways to help youth **“find their passion”**. One example is a set of “sampler courses” – 2 weeks of plumbing, welding and electrical experiences. Another is the Global Education program.

The Junction Literacy Centre in partnership with N. Okanagan Youth and Family Services Society (NOYFSS) and ALP, provides a **tutor** to work one-on-one with up to 6 youth at ALP each week. Junction tutors also work with students from Open Door.

An **“Education Advocate”** was identified by the Literacy Centre to help youth who had “dropped out” to return to school and access other support services. Four youth returned to school with the Advocate’s help this year.

## Funding Sources

Coordination and Program Delivery

2010 Legacies, Literacy Now and the Ministry of Education

- Literacy plan 3 year implementation funds (2006 to 2009) now complete
- 2010 Legacies Literacy Now (MEIA) – 2 year pilot now complete
- Ministry of Education, Innovation Grant - one time only

Union of BC Municipalities – resources for Parent Workshops, Tutor Resource Library, Early Learning Bus

Direct Access (Gaming) – one year funding

Tutoring Funds:

- NOYFSS – “stay in school” funds provided through a national bank
- Open Door – student fund
- MCFD – probation and social workers
- Private donations through the “Now I Get It!” fundraising campaign

### **Challenges for the School Age Pillar**

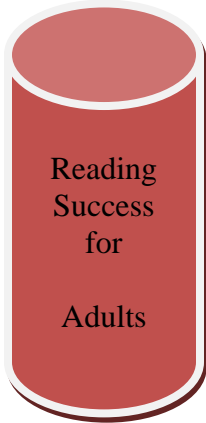
- lack of funds for one-on-one tutoring to support disadvantaged students with significant gaps in their learning
- Kindergarten readiness is an issue in Lumby and some Vernon schools
- youth in every community are dealing with drugs/alcohol/couch surfing (homelessness) and poor home environments
- Lumby youth need:
  - a youth centre with a good environment and focus, recreation and social outlets
  - more job opportunities and transportation to Vernon services

### **Opportunities**

SD 22 is partnering with NOYFSS and Interior Health to address drug and alcohol issues. The Junction Youth Centre developed a drug awareness program called **Say “Know” to Drugs**. The program had a positive impact for disenfranchised youth and may be offered at the A.L.P. next year.

The Vernon LOC is applying for funding to a variety of Charitable Foundations to support:

- “Come Read with Me/You Can Count on Me” parent workshops
- a Skills Boost! tutor for children who live at Mara House (a residential program for children 8 to 14 years), 4 hours a week during the school year



## Expansion of Adult Services

**Develop a “one-stop shopping” literacy website which will become the point of access for all service providers.**

The Junction Literacy Centre hosts the website: [www.junctionliteracy.ca](http://www.junctionliteracy.ca).  
Information about all programs is listed under “Regional Literacy Services” and linked to the Literacy BC website.

**Provide service providers with the knowledge and tools to support clients with literacy issues.**

- **NEW:** Focus on Skills project, see p. 6

### **Improve Adult Literacy Skills**

- The Upper Room Mission Literacy Centre, the Poetry Project, Focus on Skills, see page 6

## New Initiatives for Adults

### **Okanagan College**

**Students in trades programs can access help with math.**

**Result: more students qualify**

### **John Howard Society “Work First Equi-pass”**

**Web-based, motivating courses – grade 6 reading level.**

### **“Health Literacy”**

**Plain Language Workshops by the Vernon LOC for Interior Health**

### **Seniors Action Network**

**Committees meet to work on: housing, transportation, communication and health**

### **More Trained tutors needed – more aboriginal tutors needed**

- Immigrant Services Society has 30 tutors working with ESL clients
- Okanagan College volunteer tutoring program has a strong list of tutors
- The Junction Literacy Centre contracts with 20 retired teachers and 2 aboriginal tutors

### **Challenges for the Adult Pillar**

A full time program coordinator/job coach is needed to direct an Essential Skills/Workplace Literacy project.

#### **Lumby**

- many adults and seniors face computer literacy challenges
- computer skills courses and more consistent access to computers is needed
- low literacy adults and youth are not attending Crossroads because of fear and more pressing issues in their lives.

Statistics show that 50 to 80% of Lumby Employment Centre's middle-aged clients have not graduated from high school. Many have lost their jobs after being employed for several decades. They lack basic literacy skills and have little computer knowledge.

#### **Cherryville**

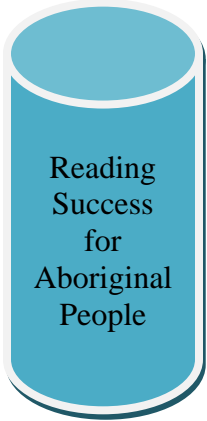
- need for access to computers, high speed internet, computer training and on-line training programs

### **Opportunities**

Vernon and Lumby **service providers** will meet in September to see how the communities can work together to address Lumby's literacy needs.

Cherryville is forming a **Task Force** that will meet regularly to address literacy and other community concerns. A Cherryville not-for-profit organization will apply for "Computer Access Program" funding.

LOCs will share a "**Literacy Audit**" with interested service providers and businesses. The purpose is to ensure they provide an environment that is non-threatening to low literacy adults.



## Expansion of Aboriginal Services/New Initiatives

### Early Learning

**First Nations Friendship Centre (FNFC)** offers a wide range of programs and services to urban aboriginal families and many non-aboriginal families. About 1000 parents and children access their programs and services on a regular basis.

- This year they have new **“literacy books”** written in the Shuswap and Okanagan language. CDs accompany the books so parents can hear the language and learn along with their children.

**The Metis Society** is setting up an office across the street from the FNFC. There are 1,000 Metis families in the region. Programs they will offer include:

- “Infant Development Program” for Metis families (home visits)
- a parenting program called “Growing Great Kids”
- a “Way to Grow” parent/child program (similar to Strong Start)
- “Aboriginal PALS” training and program planned for this September.

A Metis “ROOTS” worker will be available for children in care to keep them connected to their Metis culture.

They will work cooperatively with the FNFC to avoid duplication of services.

**Okanagan Indian Band (OKIB):** provides a pre-school, daycare and Kindergarten on the Reserve with many literacy and Okanagan language-focused activities.

- The Boys & Girls Club will work with the OKIB education department to plan activities for the early learning bus visits in the fall

### School Age

#### FNFC

- Referred 4 children to the Junction’s Skills Boost! tutoring program. A tutor with Metis heritage worked with 2 of the children.

#### The Junction Literacy Centre

30% of all students referred to the Skills Boost! program identify themselves as Aboriginal. This year, the Junction has purchased culturally relevant books and other materials to add to their resource library.

## OKIB

- Immersion school focuses on language and culture during the morning and academic subjects in the afternoon
- 2 tutors are available after school to help with homework - a very popular service

## School District #22 – Aboriginal Programs

- goal is “... to increase Aboriginal Voice, Perspective and Presence not only in classrooms district-wide but community wide. A vast number of programs and services have been initiated this year with more plans for next year.
- Principal of Aboriginal Programs attends the Youth and Family Services community meetings each month.
- regular meetings with Aboriginal partners and parents have been established

## Adults

**FNFC Employment Centre** has adopted the “**Structure of Intellect**” training – a program that has had amazing results in Chilliwack.

## Okanagan College

**NEW:** Aboriginal Student Coordinator and many support services now available. Students can check the college web page for a list of services and a power point that gives an extensive review of services.

## Challenges for the Aboriginal Pillar

The FNFC has concerns about **Strong Start Centres** forcing out well established programs that meet the needs of disadvantaged families. They strongly believe that the Healthy Families program needs to stay at Alexis Park school and the Way to Grow program is needed at Okanagan Landing school.

Urban Aboriginal people have been affected by the current economic difficulties. They struggle to find affordable housing and food supplies. The Friendship Centre reports that many families are in crisis. They see more children going into care and more grandparents parenting their grandchildren. Jobs that are available do not pay well.

The OKIB language school needs more teaching materials, books and Okanagan language teachers. Other gaps include:

- a proper school or community library
- funding for Mother Goose programs (staff are already trained)
- professional tutoring services
- transportation between OKIB and the College

### Opportunities

Early Learning Funds from SD 22 will be used for:



### Summary

Since 2006 the landscape of literacy services in this region has changed dramatically. Literacy Outreach Coordinators are needed to continue to build and maintain relationships and partnerships so new programs and services can be developed. However, the positions are in jeopardy because past funding options are no longer available. A “sustainability plan” is in the works and the Board of the Junction Literacy Centre will make every effort to attract core, sustainable funding.

“Without LOCs, Everything Will Crumble”