

A person who can read has a leg up on life;; [Final Edition]

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Full Text (595 words)

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Literacy affects almost everything we do, from finding a job to accessing health care

Only a week before The Vancouver Sun's annual Raise-a-Reader Day, the province received good news about literacy in British Columbia.

According to the Foundation Skills Assessment -- an annual test of basic skills of students in Grades 4 and 7 -- 80 per cent of students meet or exceed literacy expectations. That's an increase of three percentage points over last year's results.

The impressive results bode well for B.C. since literacy (and illiteracy) affect just about every aspect of people's lives, including the ability to find and hold a job, to access health care and to stay out of trouble with the law.

As far as employment is concerned, the numbers are sobering: Twenty-six per cent of Canadians with the lowest literacy skills are unemployed, compared to only four per cent of those with high skills.

Even when those with literacy problems find a job, it tends to pay poorly: More than 80 per cent of those with the lowest skills make less than \$27,000 a year. According to a recent study, people earn an additional 8.3 per cent annually for each extra year of education they receive.

Studies also reveal that people with literacy problems have much more difficulty accessing and making use of health care and other social services.

According to Correctional Services Canada, people serving time for serious offences are more than three times as likely as other Canadians to have reading problems.

Further, it's not only those with literacy problems who are affected: Everyone pays a heavy price when our fellow citizens are unemployed or incarcerated.

So the news that B.C. students are performing well on literacy tests is welcome indeed. But things could certainly be better: The Foundation Skills Assessment reveals that the performance of students in English public schools still lags behind the performance of those in private and French schools.

Similarly, students in urban schools are still doing better than those in rural schools. Aboriginal students, while improving significantly in the last year, are still behind their non- aboriginal counterparts.

The education system needs to look for creative ways to address these disparities, and to improve all students' performances since, ideally, 100 per cent of students should meet or exceed expectations.

But this isn't just a matter for teachers and educational administrators. There are many ways to develop and improve literacy skills outside of school, and that's where The Sun's Raise-a-Reader program comes in.

Created in 1997, the program raises awareness of literacy and raises money to fund children's literacy programs. Beneficiaries of the program include public and elementary school libraries, Literacy BC, the Canucks for Kids Fund, Big Sisters of the BC Lower Mainland and **Aboriginal HIPPY Canada (Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters)**.

Over the last seven years, the campaign has raised more than \$850,000, including more than \$240,000 last year alone. This year, the goal is set at \$275,000, and Premier Gordon Campbell recently announced that the province will match dollar-for-dollar all funds raised.

Individuals and businesses can both contribute to the campaign. One of the easiest ways to do so is by buying a copy of The Sun this Thursday, Sept. 30. One hundred per cent of proceeds from the sales of that day's paper will go toward supporting literacy programs.

Hundreds of local celebrities, sports stars, politicians, entertainers and community leaders will be on Vancouver street corners selling the paper. This is your chance to meet them, and to improve every British Columbian's life, including your own.

Chief Dan George Centre Celebrates Official Opening

Canada NewsWire. Ottawa: Sep 22, 2004. pg. 1

Full Text (381 words)

(Copyright Canada Newswire)

Chief Dan George Centre for Advanced Education to be Officially Opened by

Mayor Larry Campbell as City provides Prominent Downtown Location to Advance Post-Secondary Education and Training Facility for First Nations

VANCOUVER, Sept. 22 /CNW/ - The official opening of the Chief Dan George Centre for Advanced Education will be marked with a special community ceremony at 9:30 am, Thursday, September 23 at the centre's new home at Cathedral Place (639 Hornby Street, at Georgia St.). Vancouver mayor Larry Campbell will proclaim September 23, 2004 as Chief Dan George Day in the City. This proclamation re'owMizes the late First Nations actor, writer and Chief of the T'sleil Waututh Nation (Burrard Nation), Dan George and his life long dedication to learning and advancement for all indigenous peoples.

The City of Vancouver has made the property (originally the Canadian Craft Museum) available for Aboriginal educational and cultural activities. Building on its strong relationship with the George Family, SFU has partnered with the Chief Dan George Centre to support access to advanced education and personal educational goals within a culturally sensitive learning centre. Programs offered this Fall include an Aboriginal Leadership, Management and Communications program, Computer Training, and Customer Service Training. The Centre is also a proud partner of **Aboriginal HIPPY**, an internationally renowned program for home instruction for parents of preschool youngsters, currently being delivered in five local First Nations communities.

Leonard George, the youngest son of the late Chief Dan George and the Centre's President and founder, said "We are very proud of the progress we are making in giving First Nations learners a path and a chance at improving their futures. At long last, things are moving in the right direction for my people as we return to our traditional roots of lifelong learning. I am very happy to announce that the Centre will soon enter into an agreement with my friend, environmental advocate and naturalist Jane Goodall, in support of her Roots and Shoots program that encourages youth of all ages to get involved in their communities." Jane Goodall will address the public at the Chief Dan George Centre on October 22, 2004.

The opening ceremony will be followed by First Nations entertainment in the afternoon beginning at 2 pm.

Backgrounder available at Centre

(604) 268-7871/ ST: British ColumbiaSU: MAV

Katzie centre aims to help health issues; [Final Edition]

Michael Matsumaru. Maple Ridge, Pitt Meadows Times. Maple Ridge, B.C.: Sep 17, 2004. pg. 16

Full Text (632 words)

(Copyright Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows Times 2004)

Staff at the Katzie First Nation Health Services Centre are doing their best to coax local residents through their doors and into adopting a healthier lifestyle, but it hasn't been easy.

"It's a slow process, but there's small victories every day," says Nicole Kiniski, a community health and counseling representative, who has been working at the Katzie health centre since Sept. 2003.

A Fraser Health Authority (FHA) report which came out two years ago outlines the main concern for Kiniski and others at the health centre : the life expectancy of the aboriginal population in the Fraser-North region of the FHA is 10 years less than the FHA average.

When Kiniski first started at the centre, a lot of the programs that are now being offered at the centre didn't even exist. It was only last year that the centre started offering mental health programs.

This June, with the help of a generous contribution from the Maple Ridge Foundation, the Katzie health centre (a project of the FHA) has now moved out of the band office and into a closed-off more private building a few blocks down.

"What's important to the Katzie is confidentiality and safety and having the centre outside the band office seems to really help with safety and confidentiality," says Kiniski.

Kiniski felt like the comfort level for a lot of the Katzie band members increased when they didn't have to walk through the band office to consult someone on a private health issue.

While the new centre has been in place since June, there are still some within the community who don't know about all the programs being offered. The updated list of programs now includes an addictions outreach program, an emotional wellness program, a contact therapy program, a play therapy program (for children 12 and under), a diabetes education program, prenatal classes, aerobics classes, a walking club , a home and community care program and various youth services.

The hope is that problems with diabetes, heart health and osteoporosis - some of the chronic health problems common among aboriginals - will be alleviated as more Katzie members enroll in the program.

A large percentage of Katzie members are diabetic, according to Kiniski.

"I don't have the exact statistics, but it's far above the general average," explains Kiniski. "There's probably at least one person in every house on the reserve that has diabetes."

The good news is that most people on the reserve are diagnosed with type two diabetes, which can be controlled through a proper diet, regular exercise and an overall healthy lifestyle.

"It's all about helping people to become advocates in their own health," says FHA health services administrator Valerie Spurrell.

In the FHA's profile of aboriginal people within the FHA, the percentage of babies born to teenage mothers (age 15-19) for FHA status Indians is about six times higher than the FHA average. Rates of premature births, low birth-weight babies and infant mortality are also higher among status Indians in the FHA, which makes the need for pre-natal programs a necessity at the Katzie centre.

The Katzie health centre has received support from many other groups who offer their programs at the centre. The list includes the Ridge Meadows Fall Prevention Society (RMFPS), the Aboriginal Team of the Ridge Meadows Ministry of Children and Family Development, Aboriginal **HIPPY (Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool-Aged Youth)** and Mental Health Canada.

Ronnie Brusatore and Keri Willis of the RMFPS were instrumental in helping the non-aboriginal community make in-roads into the Katzie community. They approached the Katzie two years ago and were able to introduce regular meetings in one of the band-member's homes, where Katzie seniors could learn about different strategies to keep from falling.

Dr. Ruth gets her mind off sex to promote kids' program:[Final Edition]

Daphne Bramham. The Vancouver Sun. Vancouver, B.C.: May 20, 2004. pg. B.1.Front

Copyright Vancouver Sun 2004)

As a child, she had 13 dolls, roller skates and all the chocolate she could eat.

She was doted on by her parents and grandparents, all of whom lived in the family's home in Frankfurt.

This is what Dr. Ruth Westheimer chooses to remember of her childhood.

The reality was quite different.

When Karola Ruth Siegel was 10, her father was sent by the Nazis to a labour camp. Little Ruth was then sent by train to Switzerland, alone, to go to school. After she waved good-bye at the station, Ruth never saw any of her family again.

For the remainder of her childhood, she was in an orphanage.

"Those very early childhood experiences of mine, that early childhood socialization, made it possible for me to survive and make the best of the situation that came later," she said Wednesday.

And Dr. Ruth has certainly made the best of things. Along the way from Israel to Paris to the United States, she taught kindergarten, earned a master's degree, a doctorate and became one of the world's most famous sex therapists.

She was the first to talk about sex on radio and, at nearly 76, she continues to dole out advice in that distinctive voice with its rumble of rolled Rs and little bursts of giggles.

In fact, Dr. Ruth seems incapable of talking without doling out sex advice on everything from what to tell a five-year-old about condoms to advising women to improve their sex lives with daily exercise of the vaginal muscles, alternately tightening and relaxing them.

("All of you can do it in the car or while walking or even in the playground Of course, not while you're driving your car. Only at red lights, and I want you to look into the car next to you and wink.")

Her unshakable optimism and joie de vivre are what she cites as proof that, with a good start, even something as horrible as the Holocaust can't extinguish a

child's spirit. And her conviction about the importance of early-childhood education is unchallenged by any research done anywhere in the world.

But Dr. Ruth doesn't just talk about it. For 10 years in New York City, she was on the board of the HIPPY program -- Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters -- where her daughter, Dr. Miriam Westheimer, continues to be active.

And it's because of HIPPY that Dr. Ruth arrived at Britannia Community Centre on Vancouver's east side Wednesday morning, along with Simon Fraser University president Dr. Michael Stevenson.

Britannia was the site of Canada's first HIPPY program -- a joint effort begun by the community itself, SFU and the National Council of Jewish Women, and one that's been expanded to include five First Nations' communities.

The program costs about \$1,800 a year per family to deliver, but is free to the participants, thanks to a patchwork of grants from the government, Crystal Decisions and the Vancouver Foundation.

Each week throughout the school year, a home helper -- who speaks the family's home language as well as English -- takes a new teaching kit to each family and stays long enough to explain how best to get through the week's lessons.

The kit includes a storybook, workbook, pencils, crayons and paper that parents work at with their children during 15-minute sessions every day.

Dr. Lucy LeMare, an SFU education professor, was initially a skeptic, but is now an enthusiastic supporter.

Using children of similar socio-economic, ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, she found that HIPPY children do far better in kindergarten than kids who have no access to pre-school and as well as, or better than, those who attended pre-school.

But despite the research and testimonials from people like Dr. Ruth, Britannia's HIPPY program -- like many other valuable programs for kids -- is struggling because of short-sighted cuts to government spending.

It would be nice if, before the federal election is called, some politicians might heed the experience of Dr. Ruth or read the research by Dr. Lucy.

Then, instead of just talking during the campaign about how they wish they could short-circuit the welfare cycle, reduce poverty, create healthier communities, reduce crime and drug addiction, maybe some could propose a simple, proven solution.

They could promise -- and deliver -- more money for early- childhood education.

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Program gives kids educational foothold::[Final Edition]

Katherine Dedyne. Times - Colonist. Victoria, B.C.: Mar 23, 2004. pg. D.1.FRO

Abstract (Article Summary)

The \$150,000 local program is one of only five funded in Canada, four by the B.C. government, to assist children at a disadvantage culturally, socially, or economically. There are 72 children aged three to five in 58 households enrolled in HIPPY -- the Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters.

When Harris is due for a visit, Bob tells Taylor "his teacher is coming." In reality, Harris is an easygoing mother of five who's been trained to help parents take charge of educational exercises that are fun and stimulating. All children receive a kit containing everything from scissors to storybooks, crayons and plastic shapes to familiarize them with the kinds of tasks assigned in Kindergarten.

HIPPY helps parents feel more confident in helping their kids to learn and giving them a voice they can believe in with the educational system, adds Nella Nelson, district co-ordinator of First Nations education for School District 61. Nelson hopes the province will continue to fund HIPPY.

Full Text (1027 words)

Copyright Times Colonist (Victoria) 2004)

Ran with fact box "The Verdict" which has been appended to the story.

Getting children prepared for kindergarten not only makes learning easier for kids -- it pays dividends for the parents too

Taylor Whonnock-Bob is a total charmer with his mop of shiny black hair, mischievous eyes, chubby cheeks, and gurgling laugh. The three-year-old Langford tot is a quick study, too, clambering into his mother's lap to intently arrange geometric shapes on the kitchen table, softly chanting "tri-angle" as he works.

"He's probably one of the smiley-est kids I've ever seen in my life," says educational home visitor Dorothea Harris. She arrives at Taylor's home every Thursday with a new package of school-readiness exercises for mother and son to go over.

Harris, Taylor and Taylor's mother, Florence Bob, are enthusiastic participants in an innovative pre-kindergarten program that boosts the learning potential of kids in families needing extra support and reinforces parents' roles as their children's first and best teachers.

The \$150,000 local program is one of only five funded in Canada, four by the B.C. government, to assist children at a disadvantage culturally, socially, or economically. There are 72 children aged three to five in 58 households enrolled in HIPPY -- the Home Instruction Program for Parents of Preschool Youngsters.

Bob, a proud and placid mother of two, notices considerable progress in her son.

"He learns a lot from it. I really notice how much he talks."

When Harris is due for a visit, Bob tells Taylor "his teacher is coming." In reality, Harris is an easygoing mother of five who's been trained to help parents take charge of educational exercises that are fun and stimulating. All children receive a kit containing everything from scissors to storybooks, crayons and plastic shapes to familiarize them with the kinds of tasks assigned in Kindergarten.

Harris wishes she could have turned to the same kind of program when her older kids were preschoolers.

"I know what it's like to be isolated and undervalued."

The program is free to families, and Bob is very pleased with it: "I wouldn't have been able to pay for it," she says, adding she plans to go back to work as a housekeeper now that Taylor is three.

The majority of HIPPY families are aboriginal, joined by newcomers to Canada and those in which frazzled parents hold down three jobs to make ends meet.

"Parents have become apprehensive about their role as teachers because they're bombarded with messages that they're doing things wrong," says program co-ordinator Sue Bourque. "They want the best for their children and they're reaching out for that. And for some of them, who may not have had that support as children themselves, it takes a lot of courage."

The program meets a definite need, given that the rate of high school graduation among native kids attending high school in School District 61 is only 36 per cent compared to the provincial average for First Nations students of 46 per cent. (The rate for School District 61 without aboriginals is 79 per cent).

So the more school readiness, the better.

"There's this expectation (in schools) they're all going to come at age five with the same set of skills," Bourque adds. Even when a teacher realizes a child does not know the alphabet, for instance, the child quickly feels they can't compete. "Their self-esteem plummets because the kids around them come with more skills than what they do and that sets up the slippery slope down," says the family educator based at Hulitan Social Services in Fernwood, which serves the native community and administers HIPPY.

HIPPY helps parents feel more confident in helping their kids to learn and giving them a voice they can believe in with the educational system, adds Nella Nelson, district co-ordinator of First Nations education for School District 61. Nelson hopes the province will continue to fund HIPPY.

"I think it's been awesome. One of the things that we strive for in First Nations Education is to create a sense of place and belonging for aboriginal families. What HIPPY does is provide that bridge."

Others parents have literacy challenges or might not be able to get to the library without a car and no bus fare. Others are too stressed about providing food, shelter and clothing to even think about the lack of books in the household or Kindergarten readiness.

Many parents are depressed as a result of a lack of money, socialization or cultural disconnect.

Parents are asked to spend 10 to 45 minutes every weekday for 30 weeks helping their child with educational tasks, exercises and games.

Games promote language development, introduce math concepts, and enhance problem solving and eye-hand co-ordination.

The program focuses on intellectual stimulation, play, social engagement, building self-esteem, cultural awareness and ways to incorporate everyday activities into learning.

Begun in Israel in 1969, and now serving 22,000 families in nine countries, HIPPY was brought to Canada four years ago by Debbie Bell, an educational employee of Simon Fraser University who is now executive director of the organization.

"We're incredibly grateful to the Ministry (of Children and Family Development) for supporting the program -- it's highly successful," says Bourque, noting there is a 74 per cent completion rate.

For more information, call HIPPY at 384-9466.

THE VERDICT

What participating Greater Victoria parents said in the 2003 annual report of HIPPY -- Home Instruction Program For Parents of Preschool Youngsters, supported by \$150,000 from the province:

"I like having books for my son, I never had books when I was little and I couldn't afford to buy them for him."

"I didn't know I was supposed to help my kids with school because nobody helped me."

"I can't read but the home visitor works with me and my son together so I am helping him learn.

"People treat me like trash but you don't."

[Illustration]

Color Photo: John McKay, Times Colonist / Taylor Whonnock-Bob, 3, plays with plastic shapes while his mom Florence Bob, at right, looks on with home visitor Dorothea Harris, at left. The youngster is participating in an innovative program designed to give him a kickstart when he enters Kindergarten. ;