

Literacy society moving

FORT ST. JOHN - The Fort St. John Literacy Society is moving in mid-February into Execuplace across from the Post Office.

"It will be such a great move for us," says Jean McFadden, Community Literacy Coordinator.

"We will have more space for our clients, including a large meeting room, childcare space and study rooms. The extra space will enable us to increase the number of computers available for learners who are taking courses on-line, and provide better facilities for tutor training. Execuplace also offers a hub or 'one stop shop' for people."

In preparation for the move, the society will be having a garage sale at its current location, 9635-100th Avenue (next to Royal LePage), on Saturday Feb. 23 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"Our annual book sale is coming early this year", says McFadden.

"We have boxes of popular novels and children's stories, as well as non-fiction and how-to books. We will be selling some office furniture, a couch and side tables, children's clothing and toys, too."

The society is also looking for off-site storage for books and a few pieces of furniture.

"A 100 square foot space in the corner of a business garage or basement would be great!" says McFadden.

If you would like more information about the garage sale, Literacy Society programs, or can offer storage space, call 785-2110 or email literacy@pris.ca

- *Contributed*

Spelling Bee to highlight Literacy Day celebrations

FORT ST. JOHN — Attention spelling aficionados and writing enthusiasts of Fort St. John, it's time to put those skills to the test with the Spirit of B.C. Literacy Day on Feb. 12.

The Fort St. John Literacy Society is hosting an old-fashioned spelling bee at the Lido Theatre, along with a writing contest, as their contribution to the awareness week.

Annette Jones, treasurer of the Literacy board, said that literacy isn't just limited to reading, "it's writing, spelling, and just being able to understand the world around you."

The spelling bee will feature teams of community celebrities tackling the nuances of the English language. The top spellers from local schools will also be facing off to

win prizes and spelling bee glory.

"The only competition for adults will be the celebrity one, and we've put out invitations to all the schools, but depending on the level of interest we may have more than two students if the celebrity teams don't come through," Jones said.

For the writing contest portion of Literacy Day, people can submit an essay, poem or limerick.

Topics for the essay category are What Does Literacy Mean to You; How is Literacy Important in Your Life; and How Can Volunteerism, Literacy, Sports and the Arts Help Achieve Balance in Life?

Essays by students in Grades 4 to 7 should be 300-500 words, and essays by students in Grades 8-12 and adults should

be 500-800 words.

If an essay seems too long, a poem about the "Power of Words" or "The Spirit of B.C." in 100 words or less can be submitted.

Categories include Grade 3 and under, Grades 4-7, Grades 8-12 and Adult.

Lastly, entrants can complete the following limerick, "A youth who was learning to read..."

Categories are Grades 4-7, Grades 8-12 and Adult.

Entries can be dropped off at the Fort St. John Library, Employment Connections or the Fort St. John Literacy Society by Feb. 1

Winners will be announced on Feb. 12 and the top three entrants will be invited to the Lido to read their composition.

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Melanie Robinson photo

The Fort St. John Literacy Society are training some new tutors and they were on hand last week to take in a session. These six tutors will go through 18 hours of training and will then be matched with English as a Second Language (ESL) students or adult literacy learners. The society offers a variety of 'Become a Tutor Seminars' throughout the year and can be reached at 785-2110.



Ken Gousseau/AHN

READING WEEK

Fort St. John Literacy Society members Leslie LaHaye, Andy Ackerman and Orland Wilkerson join Coun. Bruce Christensen (second from left) in proclaiming Jan. 27 to Feb. 2 Family Literacy Week in the city.

REGION

Literacy Day promotes Aboriginal culture

ALEISHA HENDRY
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Passing down First Nations knowledge to younger generations was the goal of a workshop held Friday in Fort St. John.

The Sas Natsadle Aboriginal Head Start program at the North East Native Advancing Society (NENAS) held Family Literacy Day in hopes of promoting literacy among children.

Christine Auger, a Cree elder, was storytelling at the event.

"I like to keep the history alive and passing through generations... It's really important now with these young people to start doing things with their hands," said Auger, who at 82 years old is a fountain of traditional wisdom and skills for youth to tap into.

At the Head Start program, children are taught to be life-long learners by teachers who foster their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical growth.

They also learn the Cree and Beaver languages.

Chantal Holmstrom, who



Aleisha Hendry/AHN

Cree Elder Christine Auger tell a story about growing up in the Peace at Sas Natsadle Aboriginal Head Start's Family Literacy Day Friday.

is of French and Haida descent, got to the point where she had to take learning the Haida culture into her own hands.

"I was never brought up with the culture until I moved away from home, and now that I'm closer to the islands I feel like it's

calling to teach me...I've always been interested in it – even as a child my parents would take me to pow-wows once in awhile, but I really wanted to learn more."

Holmstrom is teaching her children the Haida language through computer software that sounds out the words for them to repeat.

At the workshop, she shared her Haida wedding robe and spoke of buttons that will be added to it as the years go on.

Karen Blatz shared her story about a white buffalo calf that was born on her ranch back in 2005, which to the First Nations culture is a prophetic omen and a sacred symbol of hope, peace, rebirth and unity.

"He was a miracle, the odds of a white buffalo being born is one in ten million," said Blatz.

The calf died six weeks later, but was given an honoring and cross over ceremony with respect from all First Nations people.

For more information about the Sas Natsadle Aboriginal Head Start program, call 785-0887.

BYE BYE, LITTLE BLUE HOUSE

Literacy society to expand services in new, larger home

ALEISHA HENDRY
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

The Fort St. John Literacy Society has been bursting at the seams since it moved into the little blue house on 100 Avenue five years ago, but it's about to loosen up with a new, larger space on Feb. 19.

The society will be moving into the ExecuPlace, which will give it twice the current space, as well as access to boardrooms and childcare facilities.

"We'll be able to take more people in our family literacy program, they're be able to spread out though the building more," said community literacy coordinator Jean McFadden.

The lease on the current space will be up this summer, but rather than renew the lease they decided that more working space was needed.

"We have needed more space since the day we moved in here,

and we just can't accommodate everyone at the same time, so that was really a priority for us," McFadden said.

The new home will allow the society to set up four computer terminals for the learners and tutors to use, as opposed to the one computer they have right now, and provide better facilities for tutor training.

McFadden said the rent is higher in the ExecuPlace, but a grant from Direct Access allowed the Literacy Society to pursue the larger space.

"Without that grant, this would have been impossible, but we applied for that last year and we were successful," she said.

The ExecuPlace will now be a hub of resources – it's also home to Family Place, Baby's Best Chance, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and North Peace Counseling Services.

In preparation for the move, the Literacy Society will be holding a garage sale at its current location, 9636 100 Avenue on Feb. 23 between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m.



Aleisha Hendry/AHN

Christine Bourgeois and Jean McFadden peek out from the Fort St. John Literacy Society's current location for what will be one of the last times as they prepare to move to their new home in the ExecuPlace.



Tessa Holloway/AHN

READING SPIRIT *FEB, 2008*

Early learning coordinators Laurie Shuster and Pam Essensa showed off the Words on Wheels Bus as part of Spirit of B.C.'s Spirit of Literacy Day Tuesday. During the month of February, the bus will be travelling to Prespatou, Taylor, Halfway River First Nations, Blueberry River First Nations, Doig River First Nations and various locations around Fort St. John. Volunteer drivers are needed to keep up with the demand for the bus, and as Shuster put it, "If you can drive a motor home, you can drive this bus."

Literacy society holds open house in new home

By Bruce Lantz

FORT ST. JOHN – The services the Fort St. John Literacy Society will provide in their

new Execuplace home go much beyond tutoring immigrants.

Much of their work in with the 20 per cent

of Canadians who are functionally illiterate, says community literacy coordinator Jean McFadden. At their open house April 7, she said 25 per cent of local students never graduate high school, preferring instead to follow the lure of the oilpatch and other jobs. Even those still in school often have other jobs that keep them from schoolwork.

“Then 10-15 years later they hit the wall,” she said, when they realize that deficiencies in reading, writing and math keep them from advancing.

“That’s when they’re coming back to us.”

And she agreed that even those who stay in school often lack the ability to comprehend what they read – another employment hindrance.

The society handles about 50 ‘learners’ coming for instruction for up to six hours a week each. That’s why space that’s much larger than their former home in ‘the little blue house’ across from the hospital was welcomed when the lease on those premises expired.

“It was much too small for our expanded services and programs,” she said.

Execuplace, located across from the main Post Office on 101 Avenue, offers space for tutoring sessions, offices and a playroom for the children who often accompany their parents. And with other related agencies under the same roof, “it’s a hub of services”, said McFadden.

The society functions with four part-time staff and now has a budget of about \$100,000, thanks to contributions from community sponsors like United Way and Success by 6, bingo, the Literacy Association of BC and the provincial government.



Bruce Lantz photo

With an assist from Fort St John Literacy Society chair Orland Wilkerson and community literacy coordinator Jean McFadden, Sarah Sabur, left, and her charges Rayyan Zaman, 4, and Simrah Zaman, 2, try out some of the activities in the children’s room at the new society facility in Execuplace in Fort St. John.



*The Fort St. John Literacy Society is offering the following **FREE** programs beginning in September:*

- tutoring for adults in reading, writing, and math (includes GED and work-related upgrading).
- English as a Second Language classes, one-to-one tutoring, and settlement support.
- Childcare and tutorial support for parents working on educational goals.

We are also looking for volunteer tutors who would like to work with adults. Free training will be offered in the fall. Contact our office at 250-785-2110 or email info@fsjliteracy.ca.

Early Childhood Educator

To prepare and deliver the preschool component of our family literacy program Monday **and** Thurs mornings, 8 hours / week, Sept - June
ECE certificate preferred but not required.
\$15/hour

Benefit: Your own child may attend for free.

Send you resume to info@fsjliteracy.ca or P.O. Box 6196, Fort St. John, B.C. V1J 4H7 by Sept. 8. For more info: 250-785-2110

Spirit of BC Week highlight literacy events

By **Melanie Robinson**

FORT ST. JOHN – The literacy society in Fort St. John will be participating in the Spirit of BC week in February and they have lots of activities to keep the community busy.

The whole idea, said treasurer of the society, Annette Jones, is to do something fun with words.

“Literacy is one of the pillars of that Spirit of BC program that the provincial government is doing and so we thought it was important for us to try to participate,” she said.

The event will include a ‘celebrity’ spelling bee and a chance for the community to try their hand at a variety of things, including essays, poems and limericks – all

with a variety of topics.

That way, said Jones, there will be lots for people to choose from and something for all ages.

“A limerick can be really fun and it’s something that a number of people can participate in,” she said.

“Essays are a little bit tougher for sure but I know there are lots of good poets out in the community, so, we’re hoping that the poetry contest can kind of generate some excitement.”

The problem so far, she added, is the lack of people signing up to participate.

“When we were submitting out to the schools to invite participation from the students for the spelling bee and that, they were just coming back from holidays and

Christmas break,” she said.

“The actual day is on Feb. 12, which is coming up pretty quick but hopefully we’ll get a better response in the next couple weeks now that everybody’s back and settled.” Literacy day will be taking place on Feb. 12 at the Lido Theatre from 6:30-9:00 p.m.

Entries for the writing contests can be dropped off at the Fort St. John Library, Employment Connections or the Fort St. John Literacy Society.

Winners will be announced on Feb. 12 at which time the top three entrants will be invited to read their piece at the Lido.

For more information, contact Jean McFadden at the literacy society at 785-2110.



Melanie Robinson photo

Forty-two per cent of British Columbians are below the acceptable literacy rate. This is a concern for members of the Fort St. John Literacy Society and that’s why acting Mayor Bruce Christenson officially declared the week of Jan. 27-Feb. 2 Family Literacy Week in Fort St. John. From left: Lesley Lahaye, SD60, Bruce Christenson, Andy Ackerman, literacy task force member and Orland Wilkerson, chair of the Fort St. John Literacy Society.