

# CLUB AMICK ANNUAL REPORT

## 2008/09

### Overview

Club Amick is a book club for children in Ontario's remote First Nation communities. Each club member receives a children's book and an activities-oriented newsletter four times per year. The goal is for young Native children to create their own home libraries, to receive packages addressed in their names featuring a newsletter together with a special book selected just for them, and to keep the literacy light burning.

Club Amick is the fourth phase of former Lieutenant Governor Bartleman's Aboriginal Literacy initiatives. It complements the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Book Drive, the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal School Twinning Program and the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camps that targeted the needs and interests of First Nation youth in remote northern communities.

### Objectives

The Club Amick book club:

- Promotes literacy and the love of books among native children;
- Provides continuity, through ongoing support, to participants in the Lieutenant Governor's Summer Literacy Camp program and to other children in the target communities;
- Creates awareness of and takes steps to address the need for childhood literacy support in remote First Nation communities;
- Promotes awareness across Ontario about the importance of childhood literacy.

### Description

Currently, Club Amick participants are approximately 4,265 children in kindergarten to Grade 6 who live in 35 of the 49 fly-in and remote communities located in the James Bay Treaty 9 territory and Ontario's portion of Treaty 5. The communities are represented by Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) a political territorial organization whose area covers about two thirds of the province of Ontario 28 of the participating communities are part of the Lieutenant Governor's Summer Literacy Camps.

Each Club Amick reader receives a new book and an activities-oriented newsletter four times per year. The books are selected by a team of librarians using selection criteria developed for the program and based on a unique theme for each distribution. The newsletter uses the same theme to promote family, community and school literacy activities. The children are also encouraged to write to Amick (the friendly beaver who corresponds with his club members through the newsletter) and E.T. the Librarian (Amick's helper who writes back to club members who send in postcards). Their contributions then form part of the next newsletter. The books also include name plates for the kids to write their names and make the books truly their own.

## Communities

Communities participating in the Club Amick book club are:

<b>Number of Children and Books 2008/09 (Year 3)</b>		
<b>Communities (35)</b>	<b>Children K to 6</b>	<b>Books Sent</b>
Aroland	51	60
Attawapiskat	300	320
Bearskin Lake	81	100
Big Trout Lake	145	160
Cat Lake	88	100
Constance Lake	109	140
Deer Lake	133	140
Eabametoong	261	280
Fort Albany	103	120
Fort Severn	68	80
Ginoogaming & Long Lac	123	140
Kasabonika Lake	146	160
Kashechewan	308	320
Keewaywin	67	100
Kingfisher Lake	91	100
Marten Falls	54	80
Mattagami	28	40
Mishkeegoganmang	158	180
Moose Cree	273	300
Muskrat Dam	44	60
Neskantaga	36	40
Nibinamik	63	80
North Caribou	100	120
North Spirit Lake	41	60
Pikangikum	390	400
Poplar Hill	85	100
Sachigo Lake	97	120
Sandy Lake	353	380
Slate Falls	30	40
Wabaseemoong	154	160
Wapekeka	65	100
Webequie	79	80
Weenusk (Peawanuck)	39	40
Wunnumin Lake	100	120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4265</b>	<b>4860</b>

## **Funding**

The program is budgeted at approximately \$240,000 per year. The largest expenditure is for books which average about \$40 per child per year. In total, the program costs about \$55-\$60 per child. The Government of Ontario is the lead funder. Club Amick has also received a multi-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and over 270 individuals and organizations have stepped forward with financial donations. We also have the support of several organizations that have made in-kind contributions. The Library Services Center has donated space for receiving and sorting the books and newsletters for each distribution. Several transportation companies have donated or provided reduced shipping cost.

## **Management**

Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and Ontario Library Service – North (OLSN) coordinate all aspects of Club Amick. SOLS and OLSN are transfer payment recipients of the Ontario Ministry of Culture providing a wide range of support services to public libraries throughout Ontario.

## **2008/09 REPORT**

### **Introduction**

Over the past year, many exciting changes have occurred with the Club Amick book club. These changes are aimed at enhancing the interaction between the club and its readers. In addition to engaging in the books and newsletter, Club Amick readers are now able to participate in contests and other activities related to encouraging participation and increasing literacy skills.

Educators, community members and Club Amick readers are responding favourably to the changes in the book club. Support for the club and communication between supporters and readers is steadily increasing. This is an important step in the club's history because having educators and other community members on board is essential to the continued interest and participation of Club Amick readers themselves.

### **Programming**

#### **Contests**

Contests have been an overwhelming success among both Club Amick readers and their community supporters. As a result of their participation, winners were sent prizes and certificates of acknowledgement. Winning entries were also posted on the Club Amick website and in the newsletter. Several submissions were sent in for the following contests:

#### **Win-An-Artist Contest**

Readers selected one Club Amick book and wrote a review about the book including a summary of the content, what the students liked about the book and what they learned. Accompanying the review was a visual (a collage, poster or picture) created by the students to show their interest and understanding of the book. Three winners were selected: Abe Scatch Memorial Hill School in Poplar Hill; Matahamao School in Weenusk (Peawanuck); and Rev. Eleazar Winter Memorial School in Wapekeka. Winners received a visit and art workshop from Anishinaabe Graphic Novel artist, Chad Solomon, creator of the *Rabbit and Bearpaws* series, and E.T. the Librarian.

## **Read-a-Thon**

This was a competition between schools participating in the Club Amick book club to see who could read the most books to the most people. Students were encouraged to read to as many people as possible including one teacher, one family member and one story-teller or other community member. Students received Read-a-thon tracking books and were encouraged to use them to keep track of the number of books read. Winners of the contest were readers at Matahamao School in Peawanuck. Many of the other Club Amick communities reported that they used the contest as a programming tool within their schools. While Club Amick's goal is developing a love of recreational reading, we are happy to see enthusiastic educators using our materials and ideas to best fit their students' learning needs in the classroom.

## **Post Card Contest**

Readers were challenged to see which school could send the greatest number of post cards over the school year. Students were encouraged to be creative in their submissions by using photographs, drawings or poetry highlighting one of the Club Amick book themes. The contest was an overwhelming success with countless creative submissions from the Club Amick readers. Grand prize winners included readers from Abe Scatch Memorial in Poplar Hill and Missabay Community School in Mishkeegogamang.

## **Create a Comic Strip Contest**

Readers were invited to create a comic strip that focused on a topic of their interest. Suggestions for topics included: humor, family, community, or traditions. The grand prize went to readers from Missabay Community School in Mishkeegogamang who focused on traditional hunting in their community.

## **Poetry Contest**

Readers were invited to submit mystery themed poems up to 21 lines long. Submissions were to include both written and visual components. This contest was a resounding success! Club Amick received many wonderful submissions and the top four were chosen to receive prizes.

- Grand Prize winners were students of St. Andrew's School in Kashechewan, for their submission "The Spirits are Coming".
- Second Prize was also awarded to St. Andrew's School in Kashechewan for their submission "Love's Secret".
- Third Prize was awarded to Eenchokay Birchstick School in Pikangikum for their submission "My Own Poem".
- Fourth Prize was awarded to Washaho School in Fort Severn for their submission "Creak, Creak, Creak".

## **Initiatives**

To increase participation in the Club Amick book club by its readers, two initiatives were introduced: the Club Amick school calendar, and the Club Amick twinning program. Both initiatives have proven to be successful additions to the book club.

### **Club Amick School Calendar**

At Club Amick we know how important it is to be able to show your pride and support for your community readers/storytellers. All Club Amick readers were invited to submit photos or drawings that capture their community readers in action! The submissions will be used to create a school calendar which will be distributed to the 35 community schools that participate in Club Amick. This will be a great way for all of the Club Amick readers to share their reading/storytelling experiences. This is an ongoing contest with winning submissions to be included in the 2010/11 calendar school years. To date, we have received several entries including a traditional teaching along with pictures on drum making.

## **The Club Amick Twinning Program**

In the spring of 2008, the Club Amick advisor and two teachers; one from Rev. Eleazar Winter Memorial School in Wapekeka First Nation and the other from Smithfield Middle School in Etobicoke, coordinated a pen pal program for Club Amick readers. In June of 2008, Club Amick readers from Wapekeka came to Toronto for a school trip with plans to meet their pen pals at Smithfield. In attendance with the children from both schools, parents and teachers from Wapekeka, and teachers from Smithfield Middle School, were members from the Club Amick team, representatives from the Southern Ontario Library Service, representatives for RoseAnne Archibald, Deputy Grand Chief for Nishnawbe Aski Nation, Anishinaabe Graphic Novel artist, Chad Solomon, and E.T. the Librarian.

Club Amick readers from Wapekeka were given a tour of the school and treated to a barbecue where a variety of homemade Indian food along with falafel, hotdogs and drinks were served. Entertainment included the Smithfield African drumming group, the school's dancing group, and an art workshop by Chad Solomon. The event was a huge success and marked the beginning of the Club Amick twinning program. There has been a request from another school in Toronto interested in setting up a pen pal program with Club Amick readers.

## **Newsletter**

The newsletter shares the same theme(s) as the book selection and supports literacy activities in the home, community and school. The newsletter regularly includes word puzzles, activities, jokes, science facts, poems, a care-givers section and submissions from the children in the communities. The children are encouraged to submit a variety of creative works, such as book reviews, jokes, drawings and poems. In this way, they will not only benefit from, but will contribute to, the development of a community of readers.

This past year, a new page was added to the already successful Club Amick newsletter, used to communicate with the communities. The new page, called *Quill and Paw!* keeps readers updated about upcoming contests and winners. Included is a small interactive game based on the most current book theme.

## **Book Themes**

The selection of books for each of the four annual distributions is based on a theme. Themes are broadly interpreted to allow as much variety as possible when selecting books. Themes for 2008/09 included:

### **Laugh-Out-Loud (Fall 2008)**

The laugh-out-loud theme is about stories that are funny because the characters or situations are absurd, ridiculous, free spirited or perhaps just way out there.

### **Mysteries (Winter 2008)**

This selection includes books about both tales of mystery and stories about the mysteries of nature. Of course, there are the traditional "who done it?" stories and those where the hero or heroine solves the case.

### **Food (Early Spring 2009)**

Books about food range from the always funny *Green Eggs and Ham* to the little known story told in the *Long March* about how the Choctaws provided help during the famine in Ireland.

## **Water (Late Spring 2009)**

From sea monsters, to fish, to ocean adventures, these books are all wet! Included are several First Nations books.

## **Book Selection**

Librarians get together to come up with a series of themes and a list of supporting books. Priorities include:

- Age and culturally appropriate material
- First Nation authors where possible
- Canadian authors where possible
- Canadian publishers where possible

School staff has provided positive feedback to the book selection committee. In support of ensuring that selections of books for readers complement their reading skills levels and interests, the Kwayaciiwin Education Resource Center in Sioux Lookout has offered to work with the selection committee.

## **Website**

The informative Club Amick website features a variety of useful information. Last year, new links were added to the website. Club Amick readers and Club Amick supporters can now find information on contest postings, recent winners, and upcoming initiatives or events.

## **Evaluation Methods**

Two evaluation methods were implemented: 1. community survey; 2. monitoring system.

### **Community Survey**

In order to ensure continued success of Club Amick, a survey was conducted in Spring/Summer of 2008 among Club Amick communities to gather input about the effectiveness of the club in promoting reading. Fifteen communities returned a total of 31 completed surveys. Respondents included teachers, principals and education directors. Overall, the data gathered from the surveys were positive providing practical suggestions on how to enhance the club.

The results of the data were broken down into 4 distinct themes:

- 67% recommended an increase in the distribution of books to include pre-school and Grades 7 & 8
- 61% recommended that Club Amick work with communities on encouraging greater participation in the book club by the children and in enhancing certain aspects of the program such as the newsletter and book selection
- 51% recommended an increase in the number of books written by Aboriginal authors and to include books with First Nations languages (Ojibway, Cree, and Oji-Cree)
- 45% recommended an increase by Club Amick in partnering with external services involved with community literacy initiatives

To begin addressing the survey responses, and to keep aligned with the former Lieutenant Governor's vision for Club Amick, the following changes and enhancements were incorporated into the Club Amick book club.

1. Several contests were created for the 2008/09 school year to encourage greater participation by the children and educators in the Club Amick program. The newsletter, Club Amick website, and Club Amick listserv were used to announce upcoming contests and winners, and initiatives.
2. Two initiatives which involve family/community participation were developed and implemented in the fall and winter.
3. Changes to the Club Amick website have been made. A "What's New" section was added where contests and winners, initiatives, and events involving Club Amick readers are announced and where Club Amick readers and educators, Aboriginal resources working with Club Amick and donors can be informed. This will increase awareness within the communities as to the growing participation of each school in Club Amick contests and initiatives, and the program itself, and a result, encourage each other to become more involved with the program.
4. A character has been created, E.T. the librarian, to help Amick respond to each postcard with a personal letter. It is hoped that Club Amick readers will respond by sending in more postcards thus increasing the level of interest in Club Amick.
5. A slogan "I Can Read" with a small graphic was created to encourage children to read at home.
6. Increased contact with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation office and other literacy-focused resources was initiated in order to work more closely with those who support recreational reading among children in the communities.
7. To establish a greater awareness and presence of Club Amick in the schools/communities travel to participating communities was initiated.

A survey among Club Amick communities will be conducted in March 2010 to measure the impact of these changes/enhancements on Club Amick readers.

### **Monitoring System (April 2008 – March 2009)**

In order to establish a baseline for further analysis and comparison with future data, a system was put into place to monitor the Club Amick focused responses/activities of club readers in 35 communities and their education/community supporters. Three data collection indicators were employed and reflect the following:

1. Contests: numbers of submissions;
  - **21** communities responded sending in a total of **474** submissions.
2. Inquiries: ranges of inquiries, i.e., programming details, book delivery, book selection;
  - **35** communities responding for a total of **235** inquiries.
3. Postcards: interest in Club Amick books (readers use postcards to discuss books).
  - **16** communities responded sending in a total of **708** postcards submitted.

This information will be used to monitor any changes in the following for 2009/10:

1. Interest/interaction in the book club;
2. Communication with book club participants and their community supporters;
3. Interest in Club Amick books.

Future monitoring of the book club for 2009/10 will include an evaluation of travelling art workshops and number of website hits.

\*All information will provide a baseline for further analysis and comparison with future data.

Current data shows that there is an ongoing interest by Club Amick readers and their supporters in the book club. Readers are engaging in the club through submissions to contests. The submission of postcards reveal readers' continued enthusiasm and interest in reading the books supplied through the Club Amick book club. It is anticipated that the introduction of new contests and initiatives for 2009/10 will increase readers' participation.

Data also reveals ongoing communication between Club Amick community/school supporters and Club Amick. Contact indicates an interest in promoting the book club in the communities among its school age readers. This ongoing communication and participation is a key component to the success of Club Amick. To ensure that readers remain engaged, programming efforts will be increased and monitoring of the club itself will continue.

Data also helps to identify communities in which Club Amick readers' participation is low. Outreach efforts will be employed to increase this participation.

## **Conclusion**

The inclusion of a programming component has increased communication between Club Amick community/school supporters and Club Amick. Readers are more engaged with the club through submissions to contests and participating in initiatives. This ongoing communication and participation is a key component to the success of Club Amick. To ensure that readers remain engaged, programming efforts will be increased and monitoring of the club itself will continue. Below is an overview of upcoming plans for the 2009/10 school years.

## **Future Programming**

### **Contests**

As Club Amick has had some great success with contests run over the past year, we are bringing back some of the favourites as well as adding exciting new contests for this upcoming school year!

#### **Create Your Own Adventure Map**

Club Amick is inviting all members to create their very own adventure maps. Readers are asked to choose something they are trying to find, and draw maps detailing where to begin and where to end.

#### **Magazine Cover Contest**

Readers are invited to design their very own magazine covers. Readers are encouraged to be creative and use lots of colour. Magazine ideas suggested include; music, ceremonies, outdoors, hunting, fishing, language, and even crafts or art.

#### **Poetry Contest**

In response to overwhelming success of last year's poetry contest, Club Amick is inviting readers to submit poetry about music. Some ideas for students include: writing a poem about listening to music, how music makes them feel, what kind of music they like the best, or to write about an instrument that they play.

### **Comic Strip Contest**

Once again, readers are invited to create comic strips, this time about friendship.

### **Post Card Contest**

Back by popular demand, Club Amick is inviting all members to see which school can send the greatest number of post cards over the school year.

### **Initiatives**

#### **Club Amick School Calendar**

Once again, readers will be asked to submit a photo or drawing that captures their community readers in action. Submissions will be used to create a school calendar for 2010/11.

#### **Traveling Art Workshops**

Last year, Club Amick ran a Win-An-Artist contest. Readers were asked to choose a Club Amick book and produce a written and visual review of the selected book. The three winning schools received a visit and art workshop from Anishinaabe Graphic Novel artist, Chad Solomon.

Since running the contest, several Club Amick readers have contacted E.T. the Librarian asking if Chad can visit their communities. In response to our readers, we have decided to incorporate the art workshop for the 2009/10 school years. Because of the high volume of interest, communities will be selected on a first-come-first served basis. The number of communities to be selected is yet to be determined.

#### **Club Amick Twinning Program**

As a result of the huge success of the Club Amick Twinning Program in 2008/09, we have decided to run the program again. We are currently working on the details.

### **Newsletter**

Because Club Amick readers have expressed such a high interest in the newsletter, the newsletter committee is considering expanding one edition per school year.

### **Book Themes**

Adventure (Fall 2009)  
Magazines (Winter 2010)  
Music (Early Spring 2010)  
Friendship (Late Spring 2010)

### **Book Selection**

The book selection committee will continue to engage Club Amick readers and their community/school supporters in the selection process when possible.

### **Website**

The Club Amick website will undergo some changes for fall 2010. Modifications will continue based on use of the website and changes to the Club Amick book club itself.