

CLUB AMICK ANNUAL REPORT – 2010-2011

Overview

In 2006, the former Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable Mr. James Bartleman, made a five-year commitment to support literacy among young First Nation children in Ontario's remote First Nations communities. The Aboriginal Literacy Initiatives consisted of four components; the Lieutenant Governor's Aboriginal Book Drive, the Aboriginal School Twinning Program, the Aboriginal Summer Literacy Camps, and the Club Amick Book Club. The club served to bridge the gap between camps so that First Nation youth would continue to receive literacy support throughout the year. The current Lieutenant-Governor, the Honourable David C. Onley, continued to support the goal of keeping the literacy light burning among First Nation youth by carrying forward the summer literacy camps, and Club Amick.

Objectives

The Club Amick Book Club aims to:

- Promote literacy and the love of books among First Nation children;
- Provide continuity, through ongoing support, to participants in the Lieutenant Governor's Summer Literacy Camps program and to other children in the target communities;
- Create awareness of and take steps to address the need for childhood literacy support in remote First Nation communities;
- Promote awareness across Ontario about the importance of childhood literacy.

Description

Currently, Club Amick participants are approximately 4,900 children who live in, and attend kindergarten to Grade 6 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 initiatives. Each Club Amick reader receives a new book and an activities-oriented newsletter four times per year. 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 themes to promote family, community, and school literacy activities. The children are encouraged to write to Amick (the friendly beaver who corresponds with club readers through the newsletter). Space is made available in the newsletter to display some of the postcards sent in by readers. The books also include name plates so readers can personalize their books. Extra books are sent to accommodate unexpected increases in student numbers.

Approximate number of Children and Books (2010/11)

Communities (35)	Children K to 6	Books Sent
Aroland	52	246
Attawapiskat	350	1549
Bearskin Lake	73	411
Big Trout Lake	183	816
Cat Lake	107	492
Constance Lake	88	370
Deer Lake	200	901
Eabametoong	395	1296
Fort Albany	89	411
Fort Severn	61	291
Ginoogaming & Long Lac 58	94	411
Kasabonika Lake	182	820
Kashechewan	417	1673
Keewaywin	67	371
Kingfisher Lake	89	450
Marten Falls	96	304
Mattagami	28	170
Mishkeegoganmang	105	494
Moose Cree	253	1156
Muskrat Dam	50	253
Neskantaga	42	246
Nibinamik	95	494
North Caribou	118	614
North Spirit Lake	58	251
Pikangikum	390	2038
Poplar Hill	110	494
Red Lake	20	151
Sachigo Lake	77	411
Sandy Lake	387	1676
Slate Falls	58	328
Wabaseemoong	176	745
Wapekeka	96	492
Webequie	135	656
Weenusk	65	248
Wunnumin Lake	83	411
TOTAL	4,889	22,140

Success Factors

Club Amick has been well received in the communities it serves. The success of the club can be attributed to the following:

1. The high interest of Club Amick readers in engaging with the materials and programming;
2. The support of community members and school educators within Club Amick communities;
3. The support of Grand Chief Stan Beardy of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, the territory in which the majority of Club Amick communities are located;
4. The generosity of funders and donors;
5. The commitment of the Club Amick team and the Lieutenant-Governor's office.

Funding

The program is budgeted at approximately \$250,000 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. With the increase of the number of children in each community, annual expenditures increase. To date, Club Amick has received a total of \$1.5 million in grants and donations: \$325,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, \$328,000 from the Government of Ontario, and \$750,000 in donations from over 300 individuals and organizations.

We also received the support of several organizations that have made in-kind contributions. The Library Services Center donates space for receiving and sorting the books and newsletters for each distribution. Several transportation companies donate shipping or reduces the cost. These include Gardewine Group Inc., The Erb Group of Companies, Bamaji Airways, Air Creebec, Nakina Air Service and Wasaya Airways.

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 Tourism and Culture providing a wide range of support services to public libraries throughout Ontario.

2010/11 REPORT

Introduction

The Club Amick team has received a number of thank-you cards, poster collages, and pictures of readers with their books. Readers expressed their interest and love of reading Club Amick books through entering contests and sending in postcards covered with colourful pictures showing the different places they go to read and what they imagine the books are telling them.

Communication through visits, phone calls and e-mail from educators shows that community support for the club remains favourable. Community educators are committed to working with the Club Amick committee to support keeping the literacy light burning among First Nation Club Amick readers. We look forward to continue working with them on this mutual goal.

Programming

1. Contests

Contests continue to be a success among both Club Amick readers and their community supporters. As a result of their participation, winners are sent certificates of acknowledgement and prizes. Winning entries are also posted on the Club Amick website and in the newsletter. Submissions were sent in by Club Amick readers for the following contests:

Book Review

Club Amick invited all readers to review Club Amick books to let us know what readers think about the books and what they learned from the stories. Readers were asked to work as teams to produce both written and visual reviews of their favourite Club Amick books. The winner this year is readers from the Eenchokay Birchstick School in Pikangikum First Nation.

How to Build a Home Library

Club Amick readers were asked to use their imaginations to create dream libraries in their homes. Readers became 'librarians' and sent in drawings and descriptions of different kinds of libraries they would build. The grand prize winners were readers from Washaho School in Fort Severn.

Postcards

Once again, readers were challenged to see which school could send the greatest number of postcards over the school year. Colourful story-filled postcards came from readers in Club Amick communities all over northern Ontario. The grand prize went to readers at Migizi Wazisin Elementary in Ginoogaming First Nation who sent over 100 postcards!

2. Initiatives

Ongoing initiatives included the Travelling Workshop, Club Amick School Calendar and the Club Amick Twinning Program.

Travelling Workshop

Visits from Anishinaabe graphic novel artist, Chad Solomon, continue to be a success among Club Amick readers. Chad's new addition this past year of life-size puppets and the integration of Club Amick books and puppets as a way to engage readers in literacy is a direct result of readers' responses to his previous workshops. This year, we were able to bring Chad's interactive workshop to readers in Red Lake and Wabaseemoong.

Club Amick School Calendar

At Club Amick we know how important it is to be able to show pride and support for community readers/storytellers. All Club Amick readers continue to be invited to submit photos or drawings that capture their community readers in action! The submissions will be used to create a 2012-2013 school calendar which will be distributed to the 36 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.

The Club Amick Twinning Program

The Club Amick twinning program follows the spirit of another of the Honourable James Bartleman's literacy initiatives. Links are made between schools in Club Amick communities and schools in Southern Ontario urban settings. Club Amick is very excited about new commitments to our twinning program which connects Club Amick readers with students in other schools. The focus this year is on teaming up Club Amick readers with students living in urban areas who have similar connections to First Nation cultures and languages. This new approach is motivated by requests from Club Amick readers and teaching staff to find new ways to help their readers connect to a wider audience of readers with common interests.

This year, a number of school groups contacted Club Amick expressing their interest in participating in the program. For the 2011/2012 Club Amick year, we will have three new additions to the program.

Newsletter

The newsletter shares the same theme(s) as the books selected and supports literacy activities in the home, community and school. First Nation content is included whenever possible along with 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.

Book Themes

Themes are broadly interpreted to allow as much variety as possible when selecting books.

Brothers and Sisters (Late Spring 2011)

Readers get a glimpse of siblings' stories about their brothers and sisters. In *Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws* by Chad Solomon, readers follow the antics of brotherly love between Rabbit and Bearpaws. Marlene Carvell's *Sweetgrass Basket* is based on the true story of two Mohawk sisters.

Wind (Early Spring 2011)

Books on the theme of Wind were about adventure, flying, storms and science. Books for young readers ranged from *Moose* by Robert Munsch, to *Thunder Boomer!* by Shutta Crum and *Bag in the Wind* by Ted Kooser. For older readers, we offer *Wolf Rider* by Sharon Stewart, *Gunner: Hurricane Horse* by Judy Andrekson, and *Storm Boy* by Paul Owen Lewis.

Big and Small (Winter 2010)

Size doesn't always matter! Books like *Ernest, the Moose Who Doesn't Fit* by Catherine Rayner, *Redwoods* by Jason Chin and *Flight of the Hummingbird* by Michael Yahgulanaas, celebrate heroes of all sizes.

People and Places (Fall 2010)

The books tell stories about interesting people, both real and imagined, from around the world. Readers can read about *Nokum is my Teacher* by David Bouchard, *Listen to the Wind* by Greg Mortenson, and *The Porcupine Year* by Louise Erdrich.

Book Selection

Priorities include:

- Age and culturally appropriate material
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit authors where possible
- Canadian authors where possible
- Canadian publishers where possible

School staff continues to provide positive feedback and the occasional recommendation to the book selection committee. To ensure the selections are consistent with reading skills levels and interests, the Kwayaciiwin Education Resource Center in Sioux Lookout is available for consultation.

Website

The informative Club Amick website features a variety of useful information. Club Amick readers and Club Amick supporters can find information on contest postings, recent winners, and upcoming initiatives or events. In the past year, the number of visitors to the site has increased from 1,080 to 2,281. That means 1,201 more visitors checked out the website to see what Club Amick is all about!

Evaluation Methods

Monitoring System (April 2010 – March 2011)

1. In order to establish a baseline for further analysis and comparison with future data, a system was put into place last year to monitor the responses/activities of club readers and their education/community supporters. This past year, four data collection indicators were employed: 1. Contests; 2. Inquiries; 3. Postcards; 4. Questionnaire.

Measurements included:

- a) Level of interaction by readers with the book club.
- b) Level of interest in Club Amick books.
- c) Communication between club participants and their community supporters, and members of the Club Amick team.

Contests

There has been an increase in the number of Club Amick readers responding to the club. This increase reflects the continued interest by readers and their supporters in participating and/or engaging more comprehensively with the club. The following chart shows the increase in numbers of contest submissions between 2009/10 and 2010/11. Numbers indicate that the contests continue to be popular among Club Amick readers.

	2009/10		2010/11		Difference	
	Communities	Submissions	Communities	Submissions	Communities	Submissions
Contests	17	624	21	733	+4	+109

Inquiries

This past year, the Club Amick committee worked at enhancing the status of the book club in communities through programming initiatives and an awareness campaign that included the distribution of posters and information packages. This focused campaigning resulted in an increase of inquiries from Club Amick communities. However, the number of communities responding decreased. Since there may be a number of variables in the communities that we are not aware of, it is beyond the capacity of the program to accurately assess the reasons for the decrease in inquiries. However, communication with the nine communities whose inquiries are low will be increased to encourage more interaction with the Club from readers.

	2009/10		2010/11		Difference	
	Communities	Submissions	Communities	Submissions	Communities	Submissions
Inquiries	35	286	27	302	-9	+16

Questionnaire

Questionnaires were sent out to the Club Amick communities to find out from the educators if readers are fully engaging with the intent of the club. Three questions were asked and a section was included for additional comments from participants. Following is a summary of the responses.

Summary

Participants: The questionnaire was sent to Club Amick educators in the schools. Educators include the teachers, teachers' assistants, special programs/resources teachers, principal and vice-principal. Out of **36** communities, **21** responded with one or more completed questionnaires for a total submission of **32**.

Objectives of Questionnaire: The questionnaire focused on three areas: 1. Whether or not readers were creating a home library; 2. How a home library was supported by the educators; 3. If engaging in the club in this way has enhanced literacy among readers.

Responses:

- a) Club Amick readers are beginning to create miniature libraries in their homes. Examples of home libraries given were a small bookcase, bookshelf, cabinet, box, closet, or a drawer.
- b) Educators support the home library concept. In school, educators reinforce the importance of sharing reading skills with others, and through reading buddies.
- c) Educators say that having a home library supports literacy among readers. Readers with books at home are more likely to share their reading with other family members and with friends.
- d) Educators agree that the Club Amick book club enhances reading among children in their communities. They would like to see more support put towards encouraging reading in the home.

Club Amick will continue to support and encourage readers to use the books they receive to create home libraries so they may share their reading with others and help keep the literacy light burning.

Conclusion

Participation in Club Amick remains consistent among the majority of communities. Readers continue to engage in the programming and educators remain supportive of the Club's efforts to help enhance literacy among Club Amick readers. There will be increased communication and follow-up with communities in which readers have not actively and consistently engaged with the programming component of Club Amick. More books are going home with readers to create their own personal libraries.

Future Programming (2011-12)

Evaluation Methods

The regular evaluation methods will be employed.

Communication Enhancements

The Club Amick Advisor will work more closely with Nishnawbe Aski Nation in supporting the club.

Programming

1. Contests

As Club Amick has had some great success with contests over the past year, we are bringing back three of the top favourites for this upcoming school year!

Postcard Contest

Amick and E.T. the Librarian love receiving mail. In fact, Amick checks his mail box every day hoping there are postcards waiting for him! Club Amick is once again running a postcard contest to see which school of readers sends the most postcards over the school year.

Poetry Contest

Back by popular demand among Club Amick readers! Yes, once again readers can participate in our third poetry contest. This year we are asking Club Amick readers to write poetry using two of this school year's themes; 'voyages' or 'celebrations'.

Win-An-Artist Contest

Yes! Club Amick's travelling artist, Chad Solomon, is having such a good time with Club Amick readers in their communities that he wants go for another visit up North. To have the artist come to their community Club Amick readers must select one Club Amick book to review. The lucky winners will receive a visit and workshop from the artist.

2. Initiatives

Travelling Art Workshops

Anishinaabe Graphic Novel Artist, Chad Solomon, and his puppets will be going to some Club Amick communities to engage readers in hands-on art workshops.

Club Amick School Calendar

Readers will be asked to continue submitting photos or drawings that capture their community readers in action. Submissions will be used to create a school calendar.

Club Amick Twinning Program

In response to the growing requests from schools in the south to twin with Club Amick communities, the following school groups will be participating in the twinning program this fall.

1. SAM Me to We Human Rights Group

The SAM Me to We Human Rights group was founded in 2007 by a dedicated group of over 30 students in grades 7 and 8 at Sir Alexander Mackenzie Senior Public School in Toronto. The group is committed to raising awareness and taking action on a variety of human rights issues, both globally and locally. Recently, the group has raised awareness and funds to fight hunger and to support human rights.

The human rights group is focused on raising awareness about issues in Aboriginal education through a school-based and on-line advertising campaign. As part of their campaign, members of the human rights group will join the Club Amick twinning program through an exchange of postcards with Club Amick readers. The human rights group is also dedicated to raising funds through bake sales, movie lunches, a raffle, and selling bracelets made by the members of the group. These funds are to be donated to Club Amick.

2. RC Me to We Human Rights Group

The RC Me to We Human Rights Group was founded in 2010. The group consists of ambitious grades 2 & 3 students at Roseneath Centennial Public School in Roseneath. The members are dedicated to increasing awareness of social justice issues such as literacy, Aboriginal education and environmental issues.

3. Homework Assistance Program

H.A.P. was founded in 2009. The group is made up of ten school-age children, grades 4, 5, and 6, attending Our Lady of Sorrows in Sturgeon Falls. The group works on literacy awareness through sharing circles focused on oral storytelling and reading.

4. Our Lady of Sorrows Ojibway Language Club

The Ojibway Language Club is a group of grades 5 & 6 students who attend Our Lady of Sorrows in Sturgeon Falls. The OLS Ojibway Language Club will share literacy-focused conversations and activities with a group of Club Amick readers.

5. Club Literacy!

The club consists of a group of students attending Lakefield High School in Lakefield. The members are interested in becoming reading buddies for younger ages. Members of the club will be guided and supported by the school's librarian.

Newsletter

Because Club Amick readers have expressed such a high interest in the newsletter, the newsletter committee will be expanding one edition per school year to include a teacher's supplement.

Book Themes

Fall – Voyages
Winter – Rhymes & Poems
Early Spring – Magazines
Late Spring - Celebrations

Book Selection

Books chosen will reflect the best literature available to achieve the goals of Club Amick. The committee also continue to engage Club Amick readers and their community/school supporters in the selection process when possible.

Web site

Modifications will continue based on use of the website and changes to the Club Amick program.

Future plans for Club Amick

While Club Amick was originally a five-year commitment, the literacy needs of First Nation youth continue with the generosity and continued interest of both previous and new donors, the Lieutenant-Governor is committed to raising funds for an additional five years.

The Club Amick team and the Lieutenant-Governor's office would like to extend a chi-miigwech to all of those who have being involved in helping to improve readings skills among Club Amick readers! We would especially like to thank members of the Club Amick communities for maintaining the club in the schools. This affirmation of support sends an important message to the children that others care about their well-being.