

CLUB AMICK ANNUAL REPORT - 2009/10

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 target the needs and interests of First Nations 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 4,900 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 are included in the following newsletter. The books also include name plates so readers can personalize their books.

Total number of Children and Books and Magazines 2009/10 (Year 4)

Communities (35)	Children K to 6	Books Sent	Magazines
Aroland	61	292	244
Attawapiskat	326	1071	671
Bearskin Lake	104	378	221
Big Trout Lake	145	504	294
Cat Lake	88	315	194
Constance Lake	111	441	259
Deer Lake	165	557	342
Eabametoong	395	1323	820
Fort Albany	117	378	242
Fort Severn	61	252	130
Ginoogaming & Long Lac	94	315	198
Kasabonika Lake	170	567	341
Kashechewan	417	1386	848
Keewaywin	67	315	150
Kingfisher Lake	88	315	192
Marten Falls	54	252	130
Mattagami	28	126	65
Mishkeegoganmang	122	441	258
Moose Cree	276	945	585
Musktrat Dam	53	242	112
Neskantaga	36	126	90
Nibinamik	63	252	132
North Caribou	130	441	261
North Spirit Lake	49	242	110
Pikangikum	390	1240	728
Poplar Hill	102	358	217
Sachigo Lake	103	431	217
Sandy Lake	401	1240	726
Slate Falls	58	242	125
Wabaseemoong	176	567	369
Wapekeka	112	394	250
Webequie	135	504	297
Weenusk (Peawanuck)	65	252	152
Wunnumin Lake	100	378	217
TOTAL	4,862	17082	10187

Funding

The program has been budgeted at approximately \$250,000 THIS 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. 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.

2009/10 REPORT

Introduction

Over the past year, Club Amick readers have continued to enjoy the books they receive from the club. Readers expressed their interest and love of reading Club Amick books through entering contests and sending in postcards covered with colourful pictures about the places they go to read and what they imagine the book are telling them. Club Amick has also received a number of hand-crafted thank you cards and posters, and pictures of readers holding their books.

Support for the club and communication between supporters and readers are steadily increasing. Educators, community members and Club Amick readers continue to respond favourably to the book club. Their support is important because having educators and other community members on board is essential to the continued interest and participation of Club Amick readers themselves.

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 prizes and certificates of acknowledgement. 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:

Create Your Own Adventure Map

Club Amick invited all readers to create their very own adventure maps. Readers sent in maps that took them to different landmarks in their own communities. The winner this year is readers from Migizi Wazisin Elementary in Ginoogaming and Long Lac.

Create a Comic Strip

Club Amick invited readers to create a comic strip using one of this year's book club themes. The grand prize went to readers from Michikan Lake School in Bearskin Lake who focused on Friendship.

Postcards

Once again, readers were challenged to see which school could send the greatest number of post cards over the school year. Post cards came in by the dozen! The submissions were colourful and full of stories about communities. The grand prize went to readers at J.R. Nakogee Elementary School in Attawapiskat.

Poetry

This year, Club Amick readers were invited to submit a poem that celebrated music. Chimes, drums and guitars played a big role this year! The Grand prize winner was readers at Washaho School in Fort Severn.

Magazine Cover

Club Amick invited all readers to design their very own magazine covers. Readers sent in covers that reflected a whole range of topics including music, ceremonies, outdoor activities, hunting, fishing, language and art. The winning cover goes to readers from Migizi Wazisin Elementary in Ginoogaming and Long Lac.

2. Initiatives

To increase participation in the Club Amick book club by its readers, a new initiative was introduced: the Traveling Workshops. Ongoing initiatives included the Club Amick school calendar and the Club Amick Twinning Program.

Travelling Workshop

In 2008, Club Amick ran a Win-An-Artist contest. The three winning schools received a visit and art workshop from Anishinaabe Graphic Novel artist, Chad Solomon, the creator of *Adventures of Rabbit and Bear Paws*. Since running the contest, several Club Amick readers have asked if Chad could visit some more communities. In response to our readers, we created the traveling art workshops to be delivered to four Club Amick communities. Communities were selected on a first-come-first served basis. Chad and the E.T. the Librarian visited Neskantaga, Deer Lake, Mishkeegomang, and Moose Factory.

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 continue to be 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 selected submissions to be included in the 2011/12 school year calendar. To date, we have received several entries from readers including a traditional teaching along with pictures on drum making and readers participating in storytelling circles.

The Club Amick Twinning Program

Given the success of the 2008 'twinning' between Club Amick readers at Rev. Eleazar Winter Memorial School in Wapekeka First Nation and students from the Smithfield Middle School in Etobicoke, the possibility of a second 'twinning' was explored including interest expressed by a school in Toronto. Although the school chose a different initiative for their students, Club Amick continues to look for opportunities to run the twinning program at a later time.

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.

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. The activities-oriented newsletter shares the same themes as the book selection and supports literacy activities in the home, community and school.

Adventure (Fall 2009)

This selection of adventure stories included classics like *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Frog and Toad Together* as well as new adventures with characters such as Scaredy Squirrel, Olivia and Eliot Jones Midnight Super Hero. For older readers, the selection includes the "adventure" of Sam McGee, Despereaux, Karana from the *Island of the Blue Dolphins* and Brian Robeson from *Hatchet*. Dogs, bears, mice, pigeons, penguins, koalas, boys and girls all find adventure.

Magazines (Winter 2009)

The magazine format with its short articles and lots of photographs is very appealing to children. Magazines published in both Canada and the US were selected. Some titles included short stories, activities and information and other focused on specific topics including sports, geography, animals and history.

Music (Early Spring 2010)

This selection of books included stories about dancing farm animals, a dinosaur, and bands with pigs, cats and frogs playing instruments. The selection for older children included a number of Aboriginal books such as *Secret of the Dance*, *The Drum Calls Softly* and the *Ghost Dance*.

Friendship (Late Spring 2010)

The Friendship theme included books about unusual friendships, friends behaving badly, friends on adventures together, and the value of a good friend. We included a few classics like the *Lion and the Mouse* and new popular characters like Franklin and Scaredy Squirrel.

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 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. A counter was added to track the numbers of visitors that come to the site. In just seven months we have had 1080 visitors check out the website to see what Club Amick is all about!

EVALUATION METHODS

Monitoring System (April 2009 – March 2010)

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 in 35 communities and their education/community supporters. Three data collection indicators were employed: 1. Contests; 2. Inquiries; 3. Postcards.

Measurements included:

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

The following chart reflects the numbers for 2009/10 and 2008/09 and the differences between the numbers.

	2008/09		2009/10		Difference	
	Communities	Submissions	Communities	Submissions	Communities	Submissions
Contests	21	474	17	624	-3	+150
Inquiries	35	235	35	286	0	+51
Postcards	16	708	20	294	+4	-465

Contests

While there has been a decrease in the numbers of communities participating in the contests, there has been an increase in numbers of submissions. Due to variables in the communities that may exist and that are beyond the capacity of the program to evaluate, the decrease in communities participating cannot be properly assessed.

However, the increase of **150** contest participants does show that readers are still engaging in the programming. Given the support needed by the children from community educators in order to actively engage in the program, this indicates that the readers, as well as the schools remain interested and committed to the club.

Inquiries

The number of communities inquiring about the program remains the same. Inquiries have increased by **51**. Most of these are requests by education staff to send more Club Amick supported visitors to the communities.

Postcards

While the numbers of communities that are sending in postcards have increased, the numbers of postcards sent has decreased by **465**.

Conclusion

While current data shows that interest in Club Amick remains high, there are two areas of concern that need to be addressed.

1. There is slight decrease in participation and a lack of engagement in activities by some Club Amick communities. Over a two year period, out of 35 Club Amick communities:
 - 31 communities have engaged in programming at least once
 - 8 communities have consistently participated in programming
 - 4 communities have never participated in programming
2. The main focus of Club Amick was to encourage and support young Native children to create their own home libraries. Through inquiries to communities and discussions with Club Amick community supporters, there are still very few books going home for the purpose of creating home libraries.

It is essential to address these two concerns to ensure that Club Amick is meeting its original goals and that readers remain engaged and participate in all components of the club. Continued communication between Club Amick, and the readers and their community supporters is an important component and necessary in order to keep the literacy light burning.

FUTURE PROGRAMMING (2010-11)

Evaluation Methods

In addition to current evaluation methods, a questionnaire will be sent out in September 2010. This questionnaire is a follow-up to the previous survey sent out in 2008. Information collected will be used to evaluate the current status of the club in communities.

Communication Enhancements

Based on the decrease and/or lack of participation in programming by some Club Amick communities the following will be implemented:

1. Club Amick information packages will be sent to Club Amick Tribal Councils, Chiefs of Ontario and to external school support systems involved with the communities.
2. We will increase efforts to encourage communities that have had little or no participation in the Club Amick programming to get involved.
3. Request for increased funding to bring the 'face' of Club Amick directly to the readers.

Programming

1. Contests

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

How to Build a Home Library

Club Amick readers will be invited to imagine they are librarians by building their own dream libraries in their homes.

Book Report

Readers will be invited to select their favourite Club Amick books and create written/visual reports.

Post Card

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. Readers will be asked to use the 2010/11 themes to create poetry.

2. Initiatives

Storytelling

At the request of Club Amick readers, an Ojibway Traditional Storyteller will be travelling with E.T. the librarian to five Club Amick communities. The storyteller will use Club Amick books and themes to talk about the importance of sharing reading with family and friends.

Club Amick School Calendar

Once again, readers will be asked to submit photos or drawings that capture their community readers in action. Submissions will be used to create a school calendar for 2011/12.

Club Amick Twinning Program

Club Amick will continue to look for schools interested in participating.

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 new features.

Book Themes

Peoples and Places (Fall 2010)

Big and Small (Winter 2010)

Wind (Early Spring 2011)

Brothers and Sisters (Late Spring 2011)

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

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

Future plans for Club Amick

The Government of Ontario is the lead funder having provided grants through the Ministries of Citizenship (\$277,987), Children and Youth Services, and Training, Colleges and Universities (\$50,000). Club Amick also receives a multi-year grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (\$325,000 committed over five years). While the main interest from a fundraising perspective has peaked, donations continue to arrive. We have received donations totalling approximately \$675,000 from several hundred individuals and organizations since the program was announced, with over \$78,000 coming in 2009/2010.

Based on confirmed grants, donations and pledges to date, the program is fully funded for the planned five years (with estimated expenses of \$1.1 to \$1.2 million). Depending on surplus and potential additional fund-raising efforts the program may be continued up to two more years with a reduced program serving kids in K to 3. We are currently in discussion with the former lieutenant governor, whose legacy project this is, and key donors, about future fund raising.