

storytellers' 2014



In this report

- Program Updates
- Awards
- Social Enterprise
- Housing affordability
- Resilient Communities
- Challenging assumptions about poverty

The word that comes to my mind as I read through this annual report is the word “exceptional”. We live in an area of exceptional natural beauty. The mountains and rivers and forests form a natural setting, and a place to live that is truly wonderful.

There are human creations in our area that are exceptional too, and one of these is the Storytellers’ organization, made up of exceptional people doing exceptional things.

Anne Docherty and an exceptional staff, have blessed our community with exceptionally creative community building, working with people in our community who live exceptional lives.

The programs that Storytellers’ has established in support of women and youth, food security, and literacy, are quietly providing national level leadership. We know this because Storytellers’ was recognized this year by the foundation, Tides Canada, as one of the top 10 agents for

creative change in Canada. And Anne Docherty herself received a top national literacy award.

As you read through this report I know that you will be struck not only by the imaginative, creative work being done by Storytellers’, but I am sure that you will agree that Storytellers’ is one exceptional group of dedicated people, bringing outstanding programs and offering remarkable opportunities to the people of our community. All of us who serve on the Storytellers’ Foundation board feel greatly privileged to be able to contribute in a small way to this exceptional organization.

We hope that you will enjoy, and be fired up by the accounting of the many programs, and ideas that are part of this year's annual report.

Peter Newbery
Chair, Storytellers’ Board

PROGRAM UPDATES: PRACTICAL INTERVENTION

Community Learning Programs

Youth Works Youth are employed part-time and, at the same time, supported in achieving personal wellbeing and literacy goals. Youth Works sells sandwiches to the Gitanmaax Gas Bar; baked goods to Mercedes Beans; soup/chili to the Skeena Bakery. Every second week, Youth Works sells from our storefront. Youth Works grows garlic, tomatoes, fresh produce and other garden vegetables to use in their kitchen.

Community Kitchen is our weekly kitchen where learners cook and eat together. Each week learners decide what topics are of importance to them and they develop literacy skills while exploring this topic. This is one of our most popular Community Learning programs with over 30 people participating.

Community Development Service Learning allows learners from local institutions and community development projects to give service to a community organization. While giving service, the learners develop citizenship skills, work skills, school credit and an understanding of what it means to contribute to community.



PROGRAM UPDATES: COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Community Development**Housing Affordability**

Two forums brought community decision-makers and interested people together to explore a coordinated approach to housing affordability in the Upper Skeena. We also gave support to several groups as they moved forward on ideas especially around a woman's shelter and stage one transitional housing.

Ganoonaxum

This Gitxsan word means, "mothers and grandmothers". During the summer of 2014 we organized women (Gitxsan and non-Gitxsan) to talk about the wellbeing of our community. Central to these conversations was the topic of LNG and the rate and scale of high impact industrial development. The conversations

focused on how to disagree and still live as neighbours and how to manage the complexity and urgency of demands being placed on our community by governments, corporations and other far-removed decision makers. Ganoonaxum hosted a large community dinner and presentation by Liz Logan of Treaty 8. A video was produced about this process.



Ganoonaxum mapping

Cultural Dialogue

We hosted knowledge exchanges with Gitxsan knowledge holders and western front-line service providers and health professionals. The conversation focused on Western service agencies and health institutions and the ways in which they can better understand, and tap in to, the holistic wrap-around Wilp-based system of care that keeps people healthy.

Literacy + Learning

Yet again, we coordinated a Literacy brown bag lunch series. 3 lunches were held in Storytellers', Wrinch Hospital and the YEP program in New Hazelton. The play on homelessness, No Fixed Address, was also hosted by Storytellers'.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE (CONTINUED)

Food Security***Iron Chef***

We hosted our annual Iron Chef competition at Pioneer Day. This fun competition is one way to promote the critical importance of local and wild foods in our lives. The Iron Chef competition uses only locally produced or harvested food and all supplies are donated by local producers + gatherers.

Backyard Gardeners

We continued our very popular Backyard Gardeners. In this program we support new and seasoned gardeners to meet, share ideas and resources and learn or teach each other how to grow food in their own backyards. The classroom is a different backyard each week. This group of gardeners self organize and support each other year round.

Farmers Market Coupon Program

We entered our third year of being the Hazelton Farmers Market community partner in this provincial project. Each week low-income households and seniors can access vouchers to spend at the Market stalls. In 2014 we had the third highest exchange rate in the province, circulating similar number of coupons as larger markets in the Lower Mainland.

Resilient Communities Project

We kicked off a two-year project with USDC to learn more about best practices for promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for youth and their families. One of the products of this project will be a revised youth development program on the Senden site. Primary partners in this project include Gitxsan Government Commission, Gitsegukla Health Station, Northern Society for Domestic Peace and Northern Health. We have two advisory groups: The Violence in Relationship committee and a youth participant advisory.

Kids Get Food

And of course we hosted another great series of kids get food programming!

The Learning Shop

The Learning Shop continues to be used to build awareness and connection between people. In 2014 the Learning Shop housed Elders drop-in's; solar panel education; compost workshops; mentorship and preparation for International's Women's day and many other projects that promotes how diverse our community interests are.

PROGRAM UPDATES: STRATEGIC INTERVENTION

Awards

- Tides Canada Top 10

This national award was presented to our Executive Director in Toronto and brought national interest in our integrated approaches to tackling poverty.

- Council of the Federation Literacy Award

This award is given to an individual and/or organization that demonstrates outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

Rural Roots Learning Consortium

Storytellers' changed a successful fee-for-service program in to a business where the profits are invested back in to the organization. The business will be known as the Rural Roots Learning Consortium. It has a blended value of expanding our mandate and mission as well as generating income. In November 2014 we applied for a small grant from Enterprising Non Profits to create a business plan and marketing launch for the Social Enterprise.

Building our Assets

This year we purchased a van, which helps tremendously with transportation challenges. We are looking forward to many road trips on to the territories for berry picking and wild food harvesting.



Challenging Assumptions

Our mission is to challenge assumptions about poverty. One way we do this is in how we organize our literacy and learning activities. In Storytellers' we understand the "why" of literacy as helping people engage, helping people gain skills, knowledge and confidence to live and act together and, ultimately, to influence a just society. To engage in life requires us to be an agent in our life. The fuller our literacy tool kit the more we have to draw on to manage life, navigate the bumps, dream a future and take the steps to move in to this future. Literacy is intricately connected to citizenship.

How we deliver literacy programming demands as much attention as the time we give to deliver programming.

How we organize ourselves in community directly impacts whether or not we have fostered confidence and instilled a person's understanding of their "right" to engage as a citizen. John McKnight (community development educator) writes, "Many organizations are forced into service delivery models that "clientize" the community. A client is "one who is controlled".

Joan Kuyek, a long time Canadian social justice and community activist, reminds us that when we organize around a client-service provider relationship we have divided people into "helpers and helpes". This relationship creates a disempowering distinction between the deliverer of a

service and a recipient of a service. And this disempowering distinction is reproduced in the style, structure, and practice of our organizations. Through this way of structuring ourselves, we not only fail in our goal to build confidence of people to act, we actually create structures to prevent people from acting.

As Kuyek says, "People who could become agents in changing their reality instead become passive recipients of a service."

When this is compounded by similar treatment from every community organization or government institution such as social assistance, food banks, employment services, literacy programs, adult education services and every other service with which a person interacts, the result is devastating. Kuyek challenges us that it takes "real consciousness and effort to avoid this organizational culture and create a different one."

Our job at Storytellers' is to avoid this disempowering relationship by making sure that our relationships are reciprocal and mindful of an individual's dignity.

In Storytellers' we give weekly attention to reflective conversations. We ask difficult questions of ourselves. We recognize the power relations that exist. And we try to avoid a damaging organizational culture by reminding each other we are all citizens with roles and responsibilities to uphold.

As community-based organizers it's our role to support others to take charge around what issues they wish to address and how they will address them. It means there is always a context for what individuals are learning. It means we are agents of change rather than deliverers of a service.

Storytellers' Foundation



2014 Board of Directors

Chair: Peter Newbery

Vice Chair: Lu Ann Dietrich

Treasurer: Ursula Heuberger

Directors: Linda Locke, Joe Francis, Art Lew, Laura Eustace, Shylah Reviakin, Diane McRae

2014 Staff

Executive Directors: Beth DeMaio, Anne Docherty

Community Organizer: Sarah Panofsky

Informal Educators: Janet Melanson, Hannah Huston

Janitorial: Lora Tolmie

And thanks to Meg Illman-White who shared her time and skills with us while on secondment from Ottawa Southminster United Church.

Each year we present a bursary to a Hazelton Secondary School graduate. The 2014 **Alice Maitland Citizenship Bursary** was awarded to Sarah Lazzarato. Congratulations Sarah!

Contact Us:

T. 250-842-6500

F. 250-842-6502

E. beth@upperskeena.ca

www.upperskeena.ca

When we're Open

Monday - Thursday 9:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

And on evenings when programming is scheduled - call us to find out more.