

Yamaska Literacy Council Activities: 2008-2009

The core mission of the Yamaska Literacy Council (YLC) is to deliver individualized one-on-one tutoring for adults and older youth in reading, writing, and math through trained volunteer tutors. Prevention, publicity/public awareness and training are critical activities, designed to further the council's core mission.

Governance

Directors Meetings

YLC's Board of Directors met six (6) times throughout the year:

The plan was adopted and an annual work plan established.

Tutoring and Training

Student-Tutor Matches

Twelve new students joined the Council this year. A total of 33 students were matched and received tutoring during the year.

1872 tutoring hours

Small group training

YLC piloted a small group literacy class which was held weekly for 5 months. Enrollment was low but the council has discussed ways to promote this service and will try again in September 2009 to hold literacy classes.

Tutor Training

YLC trains volunteers to deliver one-on-one tutoring during a 12-hour training session that covers: literacy statistics and issues (global, national and regional), sensitivity to the adult non-reader, tutoring techniques, use of a variety of materials, goal setting and assessment, lesson planning, etc.

In 2008-2009 YLC did not train new tutors. The reason for that was that a workshop was given in April 2008 and there were tutors trained that were matched in 2008-2009. Some volunteer tutors have more than one student. A workshop will be planned for September 2009.

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Workshops and Professional Development

This year, YLC staff, volunteers and students participated in the following workshops and training activities:

Date:	Workshop or Activity:	Attended By:
Oct 2008	One-day Brain Gym training session	20 YLC Coordinator
Oct 2008	LVQ Annual General Meeting and conference (6 hr), workshops on health literacy, science for student	Coordinator, volunteer tutors, students (6)
Fev 2009	Using the StatCan website	1 YLC volunteer 2 staff
Mar 2009	Board Responsibilities	2 YLC Directors
Mar 2009	Developing a community profile	Coordinator
Juin 2009	QELA AGM and workshops	Coordinator

192 hours of training and professional development for staff and volunteers.

Volunteer Support and Recognition

Tutor Chat

A 2-hour Tutor Chat was held in April. Ten members participated. It was an opportunity for tutors to exchange tutoring challenges and solutions with each other. It was held in conjunction with Volunteer Week. Volunteers were recognized.

Volunteer Week

In recognition of Volunteer Week, YLC presented its volunteers with a thank you card and an ecoo-sac with a literacy graphic on it (created by Ramon Vitesse).

Freda Hudson Memorial Award

One of YLC's long-time volunteers, Martha Shufelt, was honored with a provincially designated award in memory of literacy pioneer, Freda Hudson.

Programs

Each One Teach One

Tutoring adults using the Each One Teach One (EOTO) method is the central mandate of YLC. Volunteers are trained and matched with students. Tutoring takes place one or two times per week, for approximately one to two hours. Tutoring is individualized and offered at no cost to the student.

33 students received tutoring (this is an increase of 11 from 2007-08)

Prison Program

Eight new one-on-one matches were established this year in the Cowansville Institution (federal penitentiary).

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Prevention

i) Family Literacy Day

In recognition of Family Literacy Day on January 27th, YLC partnered with a local elementary school to participate in the attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the number of children being read to simultaneously (the record was not broken, as those who set the original effort also set out to break it in the United States). The students were happy to be a part of the attempt, and it was an opportunity for YLC to underline the importance of reading with children.

ii) In May, YLC was approached to provide training for a Reading Program at an elementary school in Knowlton. The program will be recruiting volunteers in the community to provide reading and writing activities with children who have problems with reading.

iii) YLC participated in a community project, along with representatives from other community groups and health and social services providers. The project is funded by *Quebec Enfants* and aims to reach vulnerable families with young children to stimulate communications skills and prepare children for success at school.

New Scribe Service

As a way of addressing the needs of adults struggling with low literacy, the Yamaska Literacy Council launched a new Scribe service. YLC performs activities such as reading official documents, filling out forms and writing or proof-reading documents. As a public scribe mandate the focus is on literacy and not professional expertise in the field of the document. The free service is open to the public by appointment only.

Fundraising

As a fundraiser, YLC sold bracelets that promote literacy, and note cards produced as part of YLC's "LitPix" contest. Donations were received from church and service groups.

Publicity, Public Awareness, and Networking

Public awareness continues to be a challenge.

More than 50 volunteers participated in many different capacities at the following events:

- four-day Brome Fair
- one-day Mansonville Multicultural Festival
- Townshippers Open House and Cabaret evening, and Townshippers' Day (all organized by the Townshippers' Association)
- Townshippers' Picnic 50+
- Knowlton Christmas parade
- Some YLC members participated on a literacy float at the St. Patrick's Day parade in Montreal

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YLC made presentations about literacy and YLC services to the following groups:

- Avante Women's Centre
- Lions Club, Knowlton
- Stanbridge East Women's Institute
- Fordyce Women's Institute

52 people received materials and information about YLC.

YLC participated in networking activities organized by Townshippers' Association. Groups serving the English population met to exchange information about projects and activities in the area, and find common ground to combine services and resources (April and May 2008). Approximately 15 organizations were represented.

Townshippers' Association created and presented in eight communities a social theatre piece about access to health and social services. As a result of YLC partnering with Townshippers', there was a storyline about a man with low literacy skills, who contacted a literacy organization for help. Community groups were invited to have kiosques after the show. YLC handed out to the public materials on health literacy and YLC services at all eight shows.

YLC participated in a community table to address the high drop-out rate (Massey-Vanier Partners for Educational Success (***MVPes***)). The group includes representatives from the school board, the Chamber of Commerce, Townshippers' Association, Le Sac à Mots, Centre Jeunesse. The goal is to combine efforts to produce a plan of action to keep youth in school. Coordinator participated on the hiring committee to hire a Coordinator for the project. The official launch was held in the community on May 12th, and was widely publicized.

Networking and partnerships are critical to increasing awareness of literacy issues and the services offered by the council, and continue to be a priority.

YLC offers book prizes to the eight elementary schools in our area, and scholarships to two graduating high school students and one adult education student who have struggled with literacy.

Collaboration with Francophone Literacy Organization

YLC continues to build its relationship with *Le Sac à Mots*, the French literacy organization in our region.

In 2008, YLC and *Le Sac à Mots* collaborated with Cowansville Cultural Agent, Ramon Vitesse, to create a wordless piece of graphic art, illustrating the importance of knowing how to read. This design was launched in November 2008 at the Cowansville Band Dessine festival, and has been printed on eco-sacs, added to our website, and was printed on posters, to promote the literacy services of YLC and *Le Sac à Mots*.

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Promotional Activity

An emphasis was placed on raising awareness and recruiting students and tutors.

Newsletter

The Council produced four issues of Roadways, our newsletter that is distributed to our members and many community groups and partners, and is posted on our website:

www.yamaskaliteracy.ca

Memberships

YLC is a member of the following organizations:

- Literacy Volunteers of Quebec (LVQ)
- Quebec English Literacy Alliance (QELA)
- The Literacy Foundation/La Fondation Alpha
- The Townshippers Association
- *CDC Brome-Missisquoi

*New in 2008

General

Annual General Meeting, October 2008

Fifteen members attended the Annual General Meeting. Light refreshments were served and it was an occasion for our members to socialize and share their experiences, both the challenges and success, of the past year.

Christmas Parade and Party, December 2008

In December 2007, more than 20 YLC volunteers marched in the Knowlton Christmas Parade, with the YLC banner, and distributed information to bystanders about our services. Following the parade, volunteers enjoyed a Christmas luncheon at a local restaurant.

End of Year social, June 2009

A year-end celebration was held at the home of YLC President. 25 members attended.

Special Projects

YLC had an IFPCA project 08-09:

Incorporating Technology Project (06-07)

The Yamaska Literacy Council received IFPCA funding to incorporate aspects of technology into three key areas of YLC's operations: outreach/promotion, recruitment, tutor training.

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Promotion in Action

➤ Objective 1

Develop, produce and distribute print materials to:

- ✓ Recruit volunteers
- ✓ Recruit students
- ✓ Publicize and promote awareness of literacy issues and YLC

Result: 3 of the students recruited this year were as a direct result of this promotional work; YLC has a waiting list of 15 volunteer tutors.

➤ Objective 2

Explore, develop, produce and distribute non-print based publicity materials aimed at recruiting the young adult population as students.

- ✓ Recruitment and promotional information on CD/DVD
- ✓ Investigate use of MP3 technology, YouTube and text messaging

Result: YLC has created new publicity materials, a graphic comic that has been printed on posters and eco-sacs. Based on research YLC created a Facebook page specifically to reach youth. We invited groups like Maison des Jeunes and former YLC Peer Youth Tutors to join. As we pilot this we will use our page as a recruitment tool for youth.

➤ Objective 3

Develop a YLC traveling “spokesperson” team that will promote YLC’s services.

Recruit, train, provide materials and support to a core group of “spokesperson”, who will, along with the Coordinator, make presentations about the YLC and its services to community groups, agencies and industry in the communities it serves. The team will include students, tutors, and public personalities.

Result: Presentations were made to the Lions, Avante Women’s Centre and 2 Women’s Institutes; 2 agents were hired to make contacts with organization in 2 targeted communities : Cowansville and Bedford. These contacts have resulted in donations and referrals to YLC.

Successes and Challenges

Some of the successes that YLC is proud of this year are:

- ✓ ongoing collaborative relationship with the French literacy program, *Le Sac à Mots*
- ✓ As a result of our promotional work, we are seeing an increase in referrals to YLC, most notable from Emploi à la Carte, who referred 3 students, and the group home who referred a youth student.
- ✓ One of YLC's students, Eric Savard, won the Canada Post Individual Achievement Award in October 2008 for his efforts, and the Cooperator's Award (September 2008). He has spoken publicly about his experiences struggling with literacy, including talking to new tutors at the basic training workshop, and appearing in local papers.
- ✓ Participation in community tables and initiatives, most notably the Cowansville Local Action Committee, which developed a bilingual project to reach vulnerable families with young children, and empower them to stimulate communication skills in their children to prepare them for success in school, and the Massey-Vanier Partners for Educational Success (MVPes) which aims to reduce the high school drop-out rate. YLC's strategic plan identified older youth who have dropped out of school as a target clientele.

Recruiting and retaining students remains a challenge. The Council continues to work on developing creative ways to reach and recruit students.

It remains difficult to maintain a visible presence in all of the areas of our 5000 sq mile territory, given our current financial resources. Our 2008-2011 strategic plan focuses on the development of an ongoing recruitment committee to develop and maintain regular contact with all of our target communities to increase recruitment of students and volunteers.

YLC continues to look for more affordable space in the community that better meets our needs.

The current difficult climate has resulted in more people losing their jobs and needing to retrain. In 2008-09 YLC experienced a shift in terms of the literacy level and goals of students enrolling in our programs. Several new students entered our program to upgrade their literacy skills to be able to go on to obtain their diploma. The challenge for YLC was to find materials and strategies that were pertinent to a literacy level higher than our traditional clientele.