

September 18, 2008 news

Two New Grants put Wheels on the Community Resource Bus

As a result of a successful application to Success by 6 under their Strategic Implementation Fund, the Cowichan Valley received \$27,000 in seed money in January 2008 to create a mobile Community Resource Bus. The two tiered project aims to attract a multi-sectoral team of key community stakeholders whose task it is to create a mobile community resource bus. The renovated bus will deliver early learning and literacy resources to pre-school aged children and their families throughout the Cowichan Valley.

The child centered initiative is modeled after Parksville/Qualicum's hugely successful literacy project called the Words on Wheels Bus. Parksville transformed a used school bus into a mobile resource centre that delivers parent-child programs and resources to families throughout their community. Organizations in Cowichan also recognize a need to reach outlying areas that lack access to resources for young children and families. The Success By 6 grant provides an opportunity for the Cowichan Valley to unite behind an exciting and unique community project. The effort will strengthen partnerships and increase our capacity to come together to create other tangible projects for young children and families in the Cowichan Valley.

Progress has been slow, but steady for Cowichan initiative. A Pit Crew has been assigned the task of gathering key stakeholders who will operate collaboratively to direct the planning and implementation of the project. A delegation from Cowichan recently joined other groups from Campbell River and Saltspring Island to meet with WOW Bus organizers in Parksville to hear first hand how to create this exciting project in our own communities. Parksville's huge success has already inspired similar projects for the Sunshine Coast, North Island, and Peace River districts where busses are fully equipped and on the road.

The Cowichan community resource bus has recently received significant financial support from two co-funders. Ada Mawson, Coordinator of Aboriginal Success By 6, announced a \$20,000 grant from her organization, which will allow organizers to plan for sustainability and her leadership will ensure culturally significant programs are delivered to our Aboriginal communities. Ada's timely financial commitment has contributed to the success of a third grant from BC Family Resource Programs in Vancouver. This grant provides human resources, admin support, and initial operating overhead for the bus. BC Family Resource Program is a family centered organization that assists members in delivering universal parent-child programs and resources to families throughout BC.

A total of \$67,000 in funding will literally put wheels on Cowichan's community resource bus and will drive this early learning and literacy initiative closer to becoming a reality. A toy lending library, Literacy Back Packs, and culturally rich parent-child programs are expected to in place once a bus is secured and renovated.

There is still room on the bus for anyone interested in calling this project their own. Together we're better and anyone wishing to be a part of this exciting new initiative should contact Cowichan Family Life at maureen.cfla@shawcable.com.

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