



At the 40<sup>th</sup> celebration

**Project Literacy Central Okanagan Society**

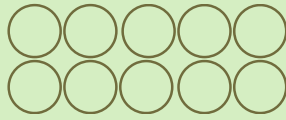


# ANNUAL REPORT '25-'26

**Empowering People Through Literacy**



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At the 40<sup>th</sup> celebration



# PRESIDENT'S REPORT



This has been a year of exciting growth and significant change for Project Literacy. The highlight of the year was our move to our new premises on Leckie Road. This milestone was made possible through the generosity and support of our donors and community partners, both new and longstanding.

Our volunteers, staff, and board members all played an important role in making the move happen. Many people generously gave their time to clean, paint, renovate, and decorate our new space. We now have four offices for our team, a large open space for group classes and meetings, and six beautiful lesson rooms for our learners and tutors. Our new premises are brighter, more affordable, and larger, allowing us to better accommodate our growing programs and services.

Our one-to-one adult tutoring program continues to thrive, currently supporting learners from 27 different language groups. We also continue to foster reading skills and reading enthusiasm for children in 13 schools throughout the Central Okanagan. In addition, our digital literacy program for seniors continues to expand.

We remain committed to offering a wide range of free programs and services, including our Low Literacy Support Program, Summer Reading Program for children, and our annual Unplug and Play Week initiative --for children and for those who still consider themselves children at heart.



This year's fund-raising efforts were especially successful. Our Raise-A-Reader campaign was a tremendous success, as was our fun and inspiring Spelling Bee fundraiser. Rick Maddison's ongoing fundraising efforts continue to provide valuable support, along with proceeds from our online auction. Our fundraising events continue to grow and engage the community. These include the Beyond Words book signing and fundraiser, and the Trivia Night fundraiser organized by the Okanagan Mission Rotary Club.

Most importantly, I would also like to recognize our Executive Director, Paul Zuurbier, whose leadership has been both a catalyst and a mainstay for our growth and financial success. Paul has been invaluable in shepherding us through the complexities of identifying suitable new premises, navigating lease negotiations, and overseeing the many details associated with the move. Paul is a skilled fundraiser who serves Project Literacy with diplomacy, enthusiasm, integrity, and creativity. His dedication and innovative approach have played a significant role in advancing our mission and ensuring our continued growth and stability.

Earlier in 2025, we hosted our Volunteer Appreciation Event and our Donor Appreciation Event. We were able to open our doors in September in time for the "Sneak Peek" of our new premises for supporters and donors. And as we move into 2026, we are proud to celebrate Project Literacy's 40th Anniversary. We marked both our anniversary and our new location by hosting a community open house and barbecue.





We are incredibly proud to have received the 2025 Non-Profit Organization of the Year award at the Pushor Mitchell- Thompson Okanagan Business Excellence Awards. We were honoured to be recognized alongside many well-established and highly respected organizations. This award reflects the hard work, commitment, and collective efforts of everyone involved with Project Literacy, and it is wonderful to see those efforts acknowledged by the community.

We were fortunate to welcome Bart Lambrecht to our team as our third Educational Coordinator. Bart brings a wealth of experience--and fluency in several languages--to his role and has already proven to be a tremendous asset to both our learners and our team.

Our board remains proactive, passionate, and dedicated. We were pleased to welcome three new board members this year: lawyer Bev Churchill, school principal Kim Grimwood, and accountant Caitlyn Scheures.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our departing board members, Shandi Schwartz, Adrienne Skinner, Carolyn Labun, and Becca Dickson for their commitment, insight, and service which have helped shape and strengthen Project Literacy

On behalf of the board, thank you to our staff, volunteers, donors, partners, and supporters for helping make this such a remarkable year for Project Literacy.

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



Project Literacy continues to be the most vibrant and active literacy charity in the Central Okanagan. Supported by a dedicated Staff, Board Members and a large contingent of Volunteers, Project Literacy's mandate to provide volunteer-based literacy support services to improve the quality of life in our community, is even more impactful today than it was when the organization was founded 40 years ago.

## Unique events over the past year:

In June 2025, Project Literacy was presented the Non-profit Organization of the Year Award by Thompson Okanagan Business Excellence Awards. Board President and Chair Jane Cartwright and Board Vice President and Treasurer, Joanne Grindly, accepted the award.



L to R  
Jane,  
Joanne



After 13 years at our Bertram Street location, Project Literacy moved to a newer and larger location at 107 – 2293 Leckie Road. The move was made possible by the generous support of Wasa Developments Inc. and through the support of Source Office Furniture, along with support from our donors and community funders. After some painting and renovations, Project Literacy moved into our new location in October 2026.

Our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Grand Opening Gala were held on Tuesday, April 14. Over 100 people attended. Signature cocktails were provided by Luckhurst Farm and Distillery, BBQ supplies were provided by Save-On Foods, Wine was provided at cost by Sandhill Winery, Salads were provided by Board Members, Jane and Charlene, and the folding chairs were made available by Source Office Furniture.



‘Word of the Week’ radio ads are being aired on 1150am from Monday to Friday throughout the entire year. These ads provide an interesting and entertaining definition of a unique word. Board Members Adrienne Skinner and Rick Maddison voice the ads, with Paul narrating. Rick writes the entertaining scrips, which makes listening to the ads both fun and informative.





The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Unplug & Play and Family Literacy Week, was organized by Project Literacy with the support of the Partners for Literacy Organizing Committee. The 'Kick-Off' event was held at the Parkison Rec. Centre, and the 'Wrap-Up' event was held at the West Kelowna Community Centre. Over 14 community partners participated in providing free family activities throughout the week. Over 600 families attended the free week of activities and events.



# 40TH AND A NEW LOCATION!

In recognition of Project Literacy's 40<sup>th</sup> year in operation a committee consisting of Executive Director, Paul Zuurbier and Board Directors Bev Churchill and Charlene Covington was formed.

The committee was tasked with developing initiatives to highlight the legacy of Project Literacy. To date we have done the following:

Here's to the next 40 years!

Respectively submitted,  
Charlene Covington



1

Designed a specific 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pop-up banner. This banner is being displayed at our events throughout 2026.

2

Weekly "Word of the Week" radio spots written and by Board Director Rick Maddison with announcer segments written by Paul Zuurbier. These are produced by Visa Radio and are aired on 1150 AM radio weekly from Monday to Friday Paul Zuurbier, Rick Maddison and Board Director Adrienne Skinner share information about Project Literacy's programs and events and present a "word of the week" in a fun and informative manner.

3

On April 14<sup>th</sup>, held a Grand Opening event for donors, supporters and volunteers at our new office location. We were able to personally thank many of the individuals and organizations who help make our work possible and highlight our current programs as well as how we have adapted to the changing community needs over the years. Many thanks to the staff and Board for planning and executing such a great event. The turnout was amazing, with over 100 people in attendance.



Tutor Alex and his Learner



# ADULT TUTORING

**164**

Adult learners supported this fiscal

**27**

Language groups supported

**8528** hrs or **350** days

Of English learning

*\*based on 1hr weekly meetings*

**52**

Learners gained new or improved employment after our program

As well as meeting at our Learning Centre, many tutors and learners choose to meet at ORL libraries, expanding our relationship with the library.

At the Learning Centre, Our Wednesday nights are particularly busy, with many learners taking advantage of our extended hours.



# SUMMER READING PROGRAM

**36** Children      **6** weeks

The Summer Reading Program is designed to support struggling readers in grades 1-4. There is no cost to parents for their child to participate in the program.

# ONE-TO-ONE READING PROGRAM

**145** Children      **13** Elementary Schools

This program continues to expand as we move into more elementary schools.



That's 3 new schools!

# WHERE DO OUR LOW LITERACY LEARNERS COME FROM?



## LOW LITERACY

**30+** Adult Learners

Supports adult learners who are illiterate in their own language. Class instructor, Bart Lambrecht, brings decades of teaching experience, language skills and cultural insights into supporting his student's language development. Over the past year he has helped over 30 adults improve their understanding and use of English.

7th Annual Adult Spelling Bee



# FUNDRAISING

This year, Project Literacy received grant funding from the following organizations



Funded by the Government of Canada

Financé par le gouvernement du Canada



The Colin & Lois Pritchard Foundation



- Belmont Foundation
- Dr. Ann Worth Foundation



Traquair Family FOUNDATION

# STAFF CHANGES

In May, Nishtha Chadha started as our temporary Office Administrator, taking over from April King. In September, Marjorie Jaruda was hired as our Office Administrator. Unfortunately, due to changes in government work visa qualification, Marjorie had to leave her position in January 2026.

In March, Elodie Dorsel started as our Office Administrator. Elodie is fluent in French and has a gift for music. She can frequently be seen singing at local venues. Besides her many Office Admin duties, Elodie helped to organize our Grand Opening and Team Spelling Bee.

After being with us for almost three years, Pat Pobuda will be leaving Project Literacy at the end of July. During her time here, Pat has done an amazing job of expanding the One-to-One Reading Program and was instrumental in expanding the Summer Reading Program. We hope Pat will continue to be involved with Project Literacy, but on a more casual basis.

Elo



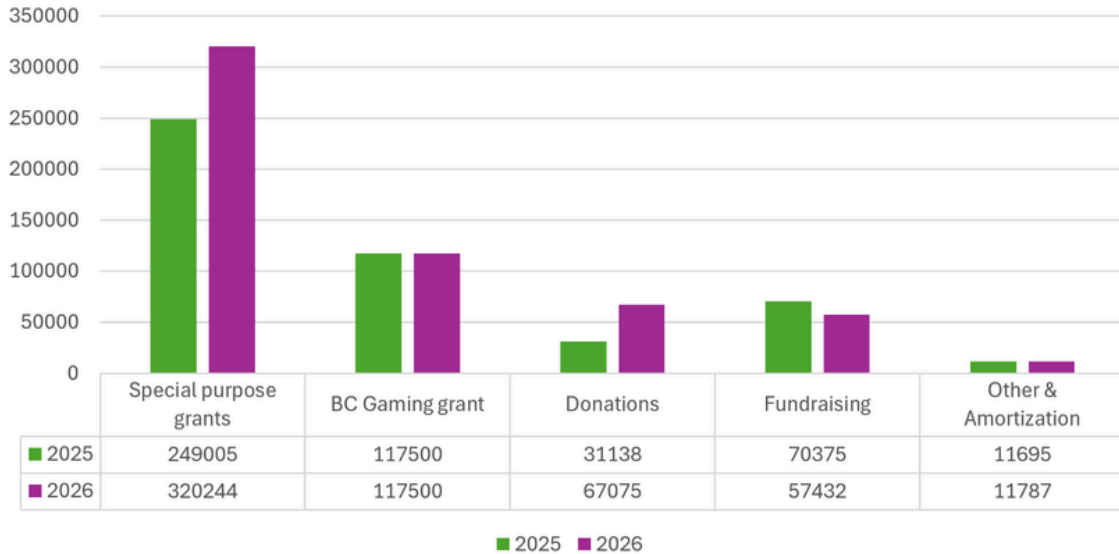
Pat

# COMMUNITY COMMITTEES

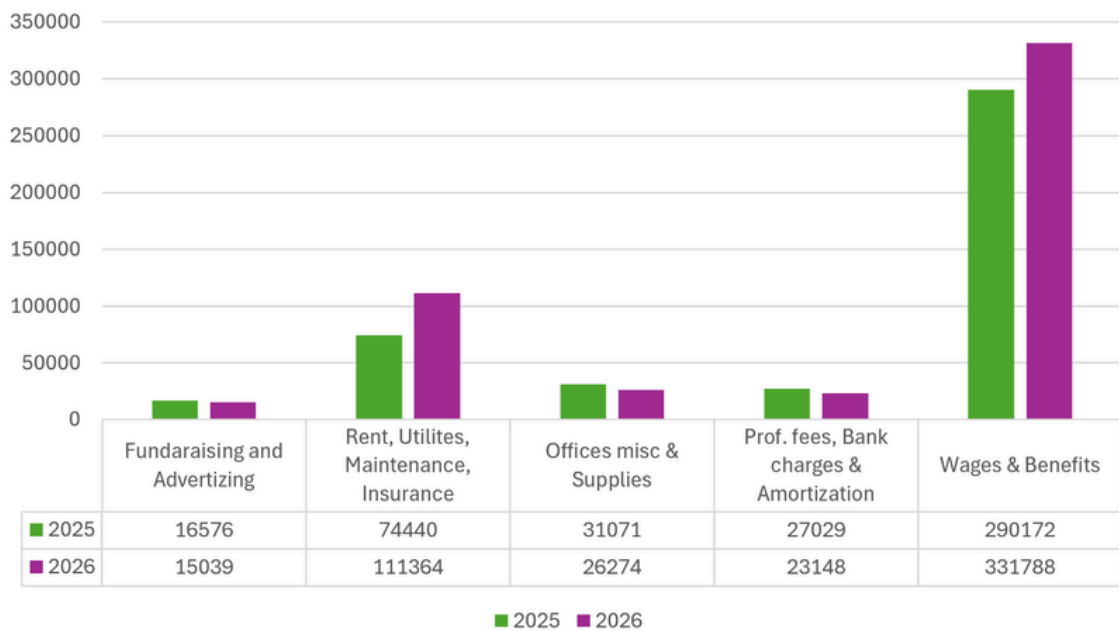
- Central Okanagan Local Immigrant Partnership Committee (Regional)
- Central Okanagan Early Years Partnership (Regional)
- BC Literacy Outreach – Decoda (Provincial)
- One to One Reading Society (Provincial)
- Community Adult Literacy Program (Provincial)
- Partners For Literacy Committee (Regional)
- Unplug and Play Week Planning Committee (Regional)
- Permanent Story Walk Planning Committee (Regional)
- Central Okanagan Hub – Leadership Committee (Community)

# FINANCIALS

### Revenue 2025 vs 2026



### Expenses 2025 vs 2026



# FINALE

## 174

The number of active volunteers supporting our programs over the past year! Without their kind support we would not be able to provide the high quality of service and support Project Literacy is known to provide. Thank you for a great year!



7th Annual Spelling Bee 2026



Summer Reading Program



Morningside Rotary Donation 2025



7th Annual Spelling Bee 2026





**Project Literacy Central Okanagan Society**



**THANK YOU!**

**Empowering People Through Literacy**

