

**ANNUAL REPORT
CLUB AMICK
2015/2016 SCHOOL YEAR**

Now in its tenth year, Club Amick continues the important work originally conceived by former Lieutenant Governor James Bartleman. His goal was to make books available to young First Nation children in the remote northwest of Ontario in Nishnabe Aski Nation (NAN) territory in order to engender a love of reading for children and to keep the literacy light burning.

Originally conceived as a five-year project, Club Amick continues on, thanks to the generosity of many funders and private donors. The Government of Ontario has been the lead funder with the Ministry of Education providing substantial funding for the program. In addition, hundreds of individuals and organizations have participated with generous donations, both big and small throughout the years.

In 2015/2016 over 5,400 children from 36 First Nations communities in northwestern Ontario received three brand-new books selected for them by a team of librarians and educators. Books are chosen based on interests and reading levels. In addition, each child receives a full colour activities-oriented newsletter. Every book includes a name plate so readers can personalize their books. Blank postcards are also included in the shipment and children are encouraged to decorate them and send them back to Amick, the club's beaver mascot. The word "amick" means "beaver" in anishnaabemowin. Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and Ontario Library Service-North (OLS-North) coordinate all aspects of Club Amick. Both SOLS and OLS-North are transfer payment recipients of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, providing a wide range of support services to public libraries throughout Ontario.

Books

Editions 34, 35, and 36 were distributed during the 2015-2016 school year. Each book delivery is selected by a team of librarians and educators using criteria developed for the program. Books chosen reflect the interests and reading levels of the children and help to achieve the goals of the program. Priorities include:

- Age and culturally appropriate material
- Reading levels appropriate for children
- First Nations, Métis, and Inuit authors/illustrators whenever possible
- Canadian authors whenever possible
- Canadian publishers whenever possible

Selected books are secured through Library Services Centre (whose buying power results in huge discounts) or from First Book, a charity which provides a limited number of titles for free. Books and newsletters are sorted and packed by Library Services Centre.

Staff Activities

A part-time staff person continues to administer the program, conduct outreach to communities, handle all enquiries from interested funders and donors, implement an ongoing

program evaluation process to ensure optimal program efficacy, and respond to requests for help with reading initiatives from participating schools and communities.

Newsletters

The full-colour newsletter supports literacy activities in the home, school and wider community. First Nation content is prioritized and can be found in the articles, poems, art, craft activities and facts. A family literacy article is found in every newsletter with practical facts and tips for families to engage in reading together. Children are encouraged to write to Amick and submit a variety of creative works, from jokes to book reviews and art. Over the years, children have sent hundreds of wonderfully decorated postcards to Amick. Many of these postcards are featured in the newsletter. This year we received over 100 postcards from all over the NAN territory.

Evaluation

Club Amick distributed an email survey in the spring of 2015. We received a 28% response rate, which is more than average for survey responses.

Respondents overwhelmingly stated that the Club Amick program has succeeded in increasing children's interest in leisure reading and books in general. The following are two responses from the survey:

"Interest in reading has definitely increased; students are taking out books from our library to read at home. Our reading data showed great improvements in reading abilities and levels." (Johnny Theriault School)

"Some students have really enjoyed receiving and reading the Amick books. I would say that the Club has been a positive influence on reading." (Ministik School)

Contests

Contests have been an important part of programming for Club Amick. They stimulate engagement for students and whole schools benefit in the form of workshops or author visits. Last year, a bookmark contest was initiated and two winners were announced. In late spring of 2016, the winning school in Kashechewan participated in a school-wide art and media workshop led by an Ontario College of Art and Design Master's student Fallon Simard, from Couchiching First Nation. The workshops were a resounding success with over 150 children, from Grade 1 to Grade 6, perfecting their drawing and computer animation skills over the course of 2 days.

Other

Grief Resources

Early in the new year of 2015 there were several tragic deaths in one of the Club Amick participating communities (population approximately 450). The school principal felt that she was unable to adequately help the students as the whole community dealt with the aftermath of the deaths. She contacted the Club Amick program advisor for help with books for children who have experienced loss. Club Amick was able to provide the school with several resources.

Club Amick is proud to be able to aid in this way and honoured that the principal would think of Club Amick when casting around for help at such a tragic time.

*Note. Since this original book purchase, two additional communities facing similar tragedies have received the set of resources from Club Amick.

School for Evacuees

Kashechewan is one of the Club Amick participating schools. As a result of chronic flooding problems and subsequent mold growth in homes, several families have been evacuated to the small town of Kapuskasing. As a result, there are approximately 100 children from JK to Grade 11 who are attending school in Kapuskasing. This is the Kash-Kap School for Evacuees. Considered a satellite of the main school, the Kash-Kap School was and is in desperate need of resources. After some problem solving with the principal, staff with Club Amick were able to secure good quality book donations from a number of organizations. After a successful fundraising campaign, the staff at SOLS was able to raise enough money so that each child at the school was gifted with a new hat, scarf and mitts for Christmas. Staff at SOLS was also able to work with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment to secure the donation of a signed Toronto Maple Leafs hockey stick to the school for their enjoyment.

Book Donations

From time to time, Club Amick is provided with donated brand new resources. Sources include the Ontario Library Association (OLA Superconference and Forest of Reading), First Book Canada, and the Canadian Children's Book Centre. We are also working with the Medical Library Association, the Canadian Health Libraries Association, and the International Clinical Librarian Conference to get books about medical careers to First Nation kids. We gladly distribute these resources to participating communities for their school libraries.

Performance Measures

To ensure that Club Amick continues to be an effective initiative and that children continue to be satisfied with and challenged by their reading materials, there are several ways we measure effectiveness.

Evaluation Process

A formal evaluation was developed to capture feedback and ideas from teachers and staff participating in Club Amick in order to measure the efficacy of the overall program. This evaluation was sent to the participating schools for principals and teachers in the winter/spring of 2015.

The Club Amick Program Advisor provides various options for staff at participating schools to offer ongoing feedback. This feedback helps the Program Advisor during material selection to ensure that proper reading levels are being reflected in the selected resources, to ensure that they are interesting for the students, and that there is sufficient and appropriate cultural content.

On-Site Visits

Two or three on-site visits take place during the school year for the Program Advisor to meet with staff and students and collect any feedback. This ensures ongoing relationship development with the schools and communities being served. The Program Advisor continues to maintain contact with teachers and principals via phone and email in order to ensure program efficacy and gather informal feedback.

Listserv

The Program Advisor maintains a listserv that is delivered to each principal and contact at participating schools. The listserv provides an opportunity to gather informal feedback and to disseminate important Club Amick information such as announcements of contests, delivery dates, program visits and other specific information that may be of interest to participants.

Funding

Club Amick has received almost \$2.10 million in grants and donations since its inception:

- \$325,000 from the Ontario Trillium Foundation
- \$803,000 from the Government of Ontario
- \$967,000 from donations from hundreds of individuals and organizations

We also receive many in-kind donations that help to make Club Amick such a successful program. The Library Services Centre donates space for receiving and sorting the books and newsletters for each shipment. Several shipping companies and airlines provide their services free of charge or at a heavily discounted rate. They include: Wasaya, Air Creebec, Bamaji Airways, The Erb Group of Companies, Gardewine Group Inc., Nakina Air Service.

Club Amick is budgeted at \$190,000 per year. Books represent the largest expenditure at just over 70% of the cost of the program. At this time we have sufficient resources to fund the program up to the end of 2016. We continue to work with existing funders and investigate new funding opportunities in order to ensure that this worthwhile program continues to thrive.

Thank you

We would like to extend a chi-meegwetch to all those who have been involved in helping to improve reading skills among the Club Amick readers. We would especially like to thank members of the Club Amick communities for maintaining the club in the schools. This affirmation of support sends an important message to the children that they are important and that many people, some of whom they never meet, care deeply about their happiness and their education.

Club Amick Donors

\$5,000-\$20,000

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Hydro One Networks Inc.

Power Workers Union - Local 1000

\$500-\$5,000

Anonymous

Institute of Public Administration (Toronto Regional Group)

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Up to \$500

Anonymous

Happy Bookers Book Club

Miss Elizabeth Mason

Laurie Pallett