

Communications Strategy Final Report

I was contacted by the ONLC on September 26, 2000, to complete the Communications Strategy project which another consultant had begun 11 months earlier. The deadline for the Project was Oct 31, 2000, so that left very little time for research, etc. My main objective was to develop a brochure which would target learners and encourage them to get involved in a Native literacy program. As well, I wanted to provide the ONLC with a sample of a newspaper ad, radio ad, or flyer along with some suggestions of where these advertisement could be strategically placed in order to be most effective.

After some lengthy discussions with Literacy Coordinators, the learner representative on the ONLC Board, and learners themselves, it was clear that a booklet was a better design than a pamphlet, as a pamphlet would be difficult to open and close for some learners with disabilities. What was needed was large font, bright and colorful graphics, clear language principals and a logical, concise lay out, familiar to everyone.

Researching materials through the Internet, arranging the lay-out, and locating appropriate graphics, were all taken into consideration when designing the booklet.

Native graphics were used on every page, brightened and full size. A large font in bold, black lettering to focus on information and questions inside the booklet. The booklet in it's entirety, is eye-catching. The question on the front cover entices an individual to look inside for the answer. The idea is to ask potential learners... Did you know that you can get help from a Native Literacy program with, computer based learning, resume writing, reading, writing and math, etc.? It sends the message that self improvement is empowerment and that knowledge is power which will make life better for the whole family

As mentioned earlier, radio, TV, and newspaper ads were developed which can be used to solicit volunteers, financial aid and learners for the Native Literacy programs throughout Ontario. Some suggestions for placing these ads and flyers might be to take advantage of local radio stations and television stations where public service announcements are made.

A newspaper ad comprised of all the information regarding the literacy programs, and help available, dispersed through a number of free printed materials everywhere in the province, is essential and financially practical. As the Literacy programs span over the Province, the message reaches the learner no matter where he/she lives.

As some learners are handicapped in many ways, the booklet must also be visible and easily accessible to everyone. Finally, a list of locations have been compiled suggesting where the booklet would be most effective, which include bulletin boards, Doctor's offices, Ontario Works, Laundromats, HRDC office's.

Wanda Stricker

The following can be submitted to local newspapers, and free community newsletters. As well, some communities offer free advertising in weekly city paper supplements such as "The Shoppers Market". This ad could also be utilized as a flyer for distribution to local grocery store bulletin boards, and laundromats.

Newspaper Ad

Did you know...

There are 29 Native Literacy Programs across Ontario? A Native literacy Program can help you to get your Grade 12, learn to use a computer, learn about your culture or get a better job by helping you to become more skilled. We can help you to improve your reading, writing and math skills. The goal of all Native literacy programs is to empower Native people to make healthier life choices. The program takes a holistic approach to learning With readily available Native literature and tutoring. Assistance in resume writing and counseling is also available.

The Ontario Native literacy Coalition invites you to call our toll free number **1-800-971- 22.55** for further information on the program nearest you.

"Empower your Spirit, Ensure Survival"

The following can be announced on a radio station, community events segment on your local TV station, and on Community College or University radio stations.

Radio Ad:

Did you Know that many people cannot read or write a resume? Did YOU know that many people cannot manage their money without assistance? The Ontario Native literacy Coalition is here to help. We have 28 community-based member programs across Ontario to assist Native people to improve their lives by upgrading reading, writing and math skills. Most programs offer 1-1 or small group tutoring, workshops and traditional craft classes, moms and tots groups, community kitchens and gardens, access to computers, assistance with resume writing and job search techniques and correspondence courses. Some centers offer transportation and child care too. All program can provide Native specific curriculum learning materials.

The Ontario Native literacy Coalition supports programs in taking a holistic approach to Native literacy. Talking circles with Elder involvement can make the difference. learning more about your own culture so that it may be passed on to your children, will enrich your whole family. Make healthier life choices for you and your loved ones.

For more information on the program nearest you, please call the Ontario Native literacy Coalition at **1-800-971-2255**. We'd be glad to direct you to the Native Literacy program in your area. *'''Empower your spiiit, Ensure survival'*

A Communications Strategy includes many different vehicles for disseminating information. Having audio and video sequences, and the printing of T-shirts are a valuable mode of relaying information. However, time restraints have limited the ability to successfully go in that direction. Since this booklet and radio ad should be circulated where it will be most effective, I have listed a few locations where I believe it will be highly visible.

Locations where booklets can be distributed..

Community Food Banks

Friendship and Resource Centers

Social Assistance Offices

HRDC

Doctor's Office

University and College Radio stations

Medical Clinics

Counselling Offices

Churches

Community Events Calendars

Grocery Stores

Community Notes Segments

Did you know
The rewards are for life

If you would like more information on the Native Literacy Programs nearest you, please call the ONLC listed below.

ONTARIO NATIVE LITERACY COALITION
**"Empowering the Spirit,
Ensuring Survival"**

111-1101 2nd Avenue East
Owen Sound, Ontario
N4K 2J1

Tel: (519) 371-5594

1-800-971-2255

Fax: (519) 371-5598

email: onlc@on.aibn.com

We'll be happy to assist in directing you to the program in your area.

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ONTARIO NATIVE LITERACY
COALITION

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

INTERIM REPORT

Prepared by:

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Communication Specialist
April 1st, 2000**

Preamble:

Over the last year the Ontario Native Literacy Coalition has undertaken an exhaustive study of the issue of communications within the Native Literacy field. Rather than to define "illiteracy", the focus was placed on the functional application of "literacy" as viewed from an Aboriginal perspective. This task was accomplished by undertaking a survey of the twenty-nine literacy delivery sites and ascertaining what these professionals in the literacy field believe would be of most benefit to them. From this research a communications strategy and plan was developed. This plan was not limited or hindered by factors such as finance or human resources. The strategy was done in this fashion as to be as broad as possible so that it's life expectancy would be as long as possible and as inclusive as possible. In fact what culminated from this exercise was a document that reflects the views and vision of the native literacy practitioners in regards to reaching out to as many literacy service users as possible. It is important to note that there was a ninety five Percent participation rate in this survey.

Outcomes:

As a broad consideration the goal is to create more interest in the twenty-nine literacy service sites and increase usage of these sites. This consideration has been broken down to a number of specific goals within the specific targets. They are listed below in order of importance as defined by the literacy practitioners surveyed.

1. To increase participation in LBS programs and activities.
2. To improve communications between literacy delivery agencies.
3. To increase awareness of literacy issues in the Aboriginal community.
4. To improve communications with funders in order to foster a shared understanding of literacy concerns in Aboriginal communities.

Methodology:

Through the survey conducted a number of tools were identified by the practitioners as being effective in achieving the above-mentioned goals. The field further prioritized these goals. challenge of interpreting these tools into a functional work plan has been the responsibility of the Communication Specialist and the Executive Director. Many factors were Considered in this process and in some cases a reprioritization process was undertaken. Factors such as financial resources, human resources, and time frames were all considered. The work plan was built on the premise that we had a one-year commitment therefore we condensed matters into this twelve-month period. Specifically, tasks or series of tasks that could be completed within the twelve months were considered. We have however, considered tasks that could not be completed within a one-year timeline. It is our belief that the projects that are undertaken this year will build a foundation for the future. From this process we have identified the following activities.

Marketing the 13 Moons calendar.

This Project has been identified as important because it allows the ONLC to raise the issue of "Native Literacy" across a broad spectrum. Further it is elective over a considerable length of time. It has in fact garnered support for literacy in an extremely important sector of our society, our elders. The highest portion of literacy challenged people are in the over forty years of age group. This calendar has recognized their gifts and brought them in contact with the Native literacy delivery mechanisms.

Produce ONLC bookmarks.

Over the Years the ONLC as well as the now twenty-nine service delivery agencies have come to realize that referrals have contributed significantly to the participation of learners in the various programs offered by the LBS delivery agencies. In the past, most of the referrals have come through word of mouth from those individuals and agencies that were aware of the ONLC and the member agencies. It stands to reason that if we increase the awareness of our existence the volume of referrals will increase. The bookmark is elective because it is kept over an extended period, thus increasing the amount of time that the user is exposed to our message. We have currently completed a rough draft of this bookmark that is being critiqued prior to its final editing. The theme of "Through our doors ... freedom" has been developed. This theme will be shared with our pamphlet that is also being developed. The concept that literacy skills create "freedom" has been shared with us by many learners over the years. This concept also allows the individual to define for her/himself what the process will look like. The bookmark incorporates our new logo as well as a list of all twenty nine-member agencies. The primary objective is to promote the service delivery agencies. We felt that using a tangible concept such as "door" would tie into these twenty-nine agencies in a concrete fashion. This bookmark will be in circulation within the next thirty days. Each delivery agency will be provided with copies of these bookmarks. Further the ONLC will assist the LBS sites in strategically targeting agencies where the bookmarks will be given out in order to maximize the benefits in their respective communities.

Produce ONLC pamphlets

The concept of professional referrals is at the center of the rationale for producing a pamphlet. As mentioned above referrals are a very successful means of reaching potential learners. In many cases our learners have issues other than just literacy challenges. The effects of low literacy skills are far reaching. As an addiction counselor and literacy coordinator I have seen these low literacy skills manifest themselves in low self-esteem, low self-worth, chronic unemployment, addiction, frustration, and high anxiety among other negative coping mechanisms. As a professional in the helping field, it was only in the last few years that I became aware of LBS sites. Many times I shared in a client's frustration in not being able to forge ahead. I am not suggesting that a pamphlet or literacy training as a whole will cure all the woes of the world. I do believe however, that if more professionals in the helping field were aware of the twenty-nine service delivery agencies funded by the Ministry of Colleges Training and Universities and the National Literacy Secretariat the amount of referrals would increase substantially. Such a pamphlet could assist in bridging the gaps between agencies which would be a direct benefit to the learners. The pamphlet is now in a draft stage awaiting the final review and layout. For this pamphlet to be successful it was important that we used color and made it as eye catching and professional as possible. We use the common theme "Through our doors ... freedom. For this

message to be successful it is important that it be widely and frequently used. I also believe that this process must be ongoing and a follow up practice developed. The ONLC will support and assist the service delivery agencies in strategically identifying professional agencies to place the pamphlets for distribution.

Establish three LBS sites in Native language

This is not to be confused with language classes or aboriginal language as a second language. The survey that was undertaken clearly identified the need for LBS programs in mother tongue languages. This would be primarily in the Algonquin and Iroquoian languages. Many dialects would fall within these two language families. Much as the Francophone population is serviced in their mother tongue it is vitally important to our people to have this option available to us. If we revisit the issue of self worth and self- esteem we must consider the part that one's identity plays in these two matters. As Aboriginal People we have a need and an inherent right to express ourselves in the language that the Creator gave us our Original Teachings. We have undertaken the process for selecting the three sites. The basic criteria for a site to be selected is that they must have a demonstrated need for an LBS program in their mother tongue, they must have the resources to deliver the program and they must have sufficient enrollment to warrant the program. The ONLC will be providing technical support as well as recruiting the assistance of Ningwakwe Learning Press. These pilot programs will be in place by September 2000. The fall timeline will allow the selected sites as well as the ONLC to take advantage of the typically slow summer months to develop their program. We will also be assisting in the development of monitoring tools as well as success markers. The outcome of these three pilots will be used as a template for other LBS sites that are interested in a mother tongue delivery system for LBS material.

Native literacy awareness days

The use of native literacy awareness days has been identified by the coordinators of LBS sites as being the most used tool in attracting potential service users. It is ironic however that current budgets and allocations do not support this process. There are currently no budget lines that could be used to fund such gatherings. This may have to do with the fact that the submissions for funding were prepared before the results of the survey were tabulated and the communication strategy was completed. We have however, included these gatherings in our work plan in the hope that funding for such literacy gatherings could be secured. Ideally each LBS site would create an agenda for their respective community that would focus on the common themes of "Life long learning" and through our doors ... freedom These gatherings would be informal and following cultural tradition a feast/luncheon would be helpful Many of our community gatherings are centered around such "meals". For us the feast is a time of family and community. This concept allows our people a sense of comfort and equality that is conducive to open dialogue. If however we could not hold such gatherings in each community we could hold gatherings in selected communities. Prior to the selection we would create criteria for such selections.

Ontario Native Literacy Coalition web

site The ONLC currently has a web site. This site is usually outdated and lacks the spirit of who we are as an organization. For a web site to be effective it must be current, exciting and accurate. As the world turns more and more to an electronic market it has become increasingly important for us to make a powerful statement via this medium. We have found that many people who have literacy issues are frequent users of the Internet. We believe that the web site could be a source of direct referrals. In many cases people may be too embarrassed to admit to another person that they cannot read or write or have some other literacy issue. Further even if they were prepared to make this confession they may not know where to go. With this new web site they will be able to click onto our home page and "surf" through a number of related topics and sites. This may be done from the comfort of their home, from another site and always confidentially. This last matter is of paramount importance. The web site would also be effective for professional referrals. Professionals could view our web site, look into upcoming events, read our most recent newsletter or click onto one of the twenty-nine LBS sites. The preliminary groundwork has been completed on this web site. The site as it is proposed today would have approximately thirty-five web pages. Twenty-nine would be dedicated to the LBS sites, one would be for Ningwakwe Learning press and the balance would be for such things as the newsletter and other community literacy communications. This web site is Projected to be operational by September 2000.

Native literacy Practitioner gathering(s)

This Process is Particularly valuable as feedback process. It is projected to be an Opportunity for the literacy coordinators to evaluate and offer feedback to the ONLC regarding the communication strategy as a whole and the individual components specifically. Such gathering(s) much like the literacy awareness does not have a dedicated budget line. It is felt however that it is very important that the coordinators be brought together to discuss the effectiveness of the communication strategy/plan and the next steps necessary. As we search for funding to carry out such gatherings, I am targeting the annual general meeting as a venue for at least one of these gatherings. I believe that the AGM would be a successful venue, as it would afford us an opportunity to build on the huge success of last years AGM. There was much constructive feedback at this gathering and we could build on this momentum as well as send a clear message that we are open to suggestions.

Conclusion

We believe, that through the series of activities planned for this fiscal year we will be successful in increasing; the usage of LBS sites, recognition of the twenty nine service delivery agencies, awareness of the issue of Native literacy. The communication strategy and Plan adopted by the ONLC is purposeful as well as focused. Further, it considers not only the current year but also future years. Ongoing funding for this project would allow us the opportunity to effectively and efficiently utilize limited financial resources by building on the successes of the current year in order to complete tasks that cannot be completed in one year. I feel it is important and appropriate to acknowledge our funders, the National Literacy Secretariat and the Ontario Ministry of Colleges Training and Universities for their support in this vital undertaking.