

# **Summer Reading Club**

**Outreach library service through a neighbourhood storytent program**

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**Prepared for the Saint John Free Public Library**

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**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

**Brown, Cheryl, 1966-**

**Summer reading club : outreach library service through a neighbourhood storytent program : prepared for the Saint John Free Public Library / by Cheryl Brown and Wendell Dryden.**

**Includes bibliographical references.**

**ISBN 0-9690941-2-4**

**1. Children's libraries--Activity programs. 2. Library outreach programs. 3. Children--Books and reading. 4. Library outreach programs--New Brunswick--Saint John. 5. Saint John Free Public Library. I. Dryden, Wendell, 1962-II. Saint John Free Public Library. III. Title.**

**Z718.2.C3B76 2005**

**027.62'5**

**C2005-902957-9**

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## Acknowledgements

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The Saint John Free Public Library Board of Commissioners would like to acknowledge the foresight of Boards and Staff of all partners involved in the Storytent programme and their belief in this programme and the benefits that it would bring to the community. The Partners include: Children's Foundation of the New Brunswick Protestant Orphans' Home; Crescent Valley Community Tenant's Association; Greater Saint John Community Foundation; New Brunswick Public Library Service; and, the Province of New Brunswick. Their assistance allowed this project to proceed smoothly and effectively. The results have been promising and we look forward to the continued success of this programme.

The Board would also like to recognize the significant contribution of the Storytent Programme staff members who developed and led the programme to become such a success. This literacy support programme has not only shown significant improvements in reading skills but has also developed positive attitudes around reading. Thank you to the staff for showing their commitment, support and enthusiasm for this most beneficial programme!

The authors would like to thank the Saint John Free Public Library, especially Ian Wilson and Joann Hamilton Barry, for believing in the project and making it possible. We would like to thank the many individuals in the community who donated books and other resources and who offered us encouragement. Thanks to Leslie Allan, Executive Director of Early Intervention Inc. for training in Early Childhood Development. As well, we would like to thank Trevor Holder, MLA Saint John Portland, for his constant support. Special thanks to Nate Guimond for bringing to the project his talents and love of children; and especially Kate Wright for her insight during the developmental phase, for her commitment as a volunteer and worker, and for sharing her numerous gifts with everyone.

## Preface

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The staff of the Saint John Free Public are committed to helping every child become a reader. When children come to our library programs, we show them the fun of reading. However, not all children come to the library.

In 2003, the idea for a fulltime Storytent was presented to this library as a way to extend our Summer Reading Club to those children who did not come to the library. The initial idea was so simple that we first doubted it could work. Library staff worried that no one would come. Wouldn't you need more to get children to take part?

The past two summers have demonstrated that, if you offer it, they will come. The research done with the Storytent project has shown that, once they are at the Storytent, children are going to read, listen to others read, talk about books and reading, engage in literacy activities, learn and have lots of fun. It also shows something we in public libraries have always believed: children taking part in SRC will maintain or even increase their reading skills. The Storytent project has also shown that children who are exposed to caring adults in a book-filled environment come to see themselves as "readers", even when they have had negative experiences with reading in the past.

Any one of these things is reason enough to consider offering a Storytent project. But there are even more positive outcomes. SRC statistics are given a big boost because Storytent participants quickly become keen readers and many achieve their summer reading goals. With a Storytent, the library is able to offer a program to an isolated area or community, library staff become more aware of the specific needs of the some of the people in the community that they are serving. When library staff learn what the community needs and wants, they can develop more accessible programs and can help make connections between libraries and literacy programming.

This document will explain how simple it can be. I can confirm that it was lots of fun for the children, appreciated by the community and a positive way for the public library to help nurture a love of books and reading. And isn't it a goal of all public library programming to help develop a community that supports their public library?

Joann Hamilton-Barry  
City Librarian, Saint John Free Public Library

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## Introduction

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This document contains some information to guide libraries in alternative ways to engage hard to reach children in their programs. It describes the Storytent Summer Reading Club Outreach program (2003 – 2004) and it's researched successes, and documents information on how to implement this type of program in your community.

The Storytent program itself is explained in greater detail in the companion piece, *Quality Storytents: A resource for family, early childhood and community literacy workers*, available at <http://www.nald.ca/clr/storytent/storytent.pdf> . Other information about the Storytent program can be found in:

Brown, C. & Dryden, W (2004). Quality Storytents: Using Choice Theory to support reading through a community literacy project. *International journal of Reality Therapy*, Vol. 24(1), pp. 3 – 12.

*Storytents: Children's Outreach Programs Prove Successful* can be found in the Fall 2004 edition of the IBBY Newsletter. As well, unpublished research reports prepared for the Saint John Free Public Library can be obtained by contacting:

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## Part I: A Program That Works

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### 1. The Storytent Program

In the summer of 2003, a Storytent program ran in Crescent Valley, Saint John, a residential neighbourhood made up of multi-unit buildings, grouped about common green spaces. It is New Brunswick's largest Anglophone public housing complex, hosting nearly 400 families of various socio-economic and cultural descriptions.

The Storytent Program is a literacy support program for children and families. In this instance, the Storytent also provided a venue for the Summer Reading Club (SRC) as part of a library outreach to the community. The SRC is a province-wide program which encourages reading by allowing children to set a reading goal for the summer, track their progress with log books and stickers, and celebrate their accomplishments. The 2003 Storytent program and SRC outreach were offered twice weekly for two hours in each of five locations in this community.



A storytent consists of:

- ◆ One or more canopies (10' x 10' recommended)
- ◆ Blankets (4 per tent) and ground sheets (extending beyond the tent space)
- ◆ A variety of popular books for children and/or adults:
  - picture books
  - story books
  - comic books
  - chapter books
- ◆ Two to three adults

What happens at a Storytent depends in part on the intentions and interests of the participants, and in part on how long or how often people make use of it. The primary activity is reading:

- ◆ Adults read to children;
- ◆ Adults read to themselves;
- ◆ Children read to children;
- ◆ Children read to adults;
- ◆ Children read to themselves.



Other Storytent and Storytent-related activities include:

- Borrowing and returning books
- Storytelling
- Letter and/or story writing
- Drawing and colouring
- Clapping and singing games
- Skipping to songs and rhymes
- Playing cards, tic tac toe, or guessing games
- Using sidewalk chalk
- Conversation between adults
- Conversation between children
- Conversation between adults and children
- Relationship building



Many ingredients go into producing a *quality* Storytent, including

- ✓ competent and committed storytent workers
- ✓ a wide variety of very good books
- ✓ as few rules as possible
- ✓ an easy to access location
- ✓ community participation at multiple levels
- ✓ persistence in the face of challenges

In Crescent Valley, the Storytent Program also contained a research component. The role of the researcher was to address the question of the impact of the program on the frequency of reading in children's lives, on their own reading levels, and on their perceptions about reading and themselves as readers. To answer these questions, the researcher used multiple methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, including informal assessments of a group of children early and, again, late in the summer using a series of guided reading books. Other data came from:

- ◆ quantitative data from the Summer Reading Club;
- ◆ daily tent attendance figures;
- ◆ a daily weather log;
- ◆ staff's written daily observations;
- ◆ parent, community partner and children's interviews
- ◆ researcher's field notes.

Unplanned sources of information came from written and picture artifacts received from children and their parents, and from photographs taken during the summer.

The evaluative research demonstrated clearly that the program helps children

- improve their reading skills
- increase the frequency of reading in their lives
- develop positive self-attitudes around reading
- build positive social relationships in a healthy, learning environment.

As well, based on library statistics, many more children from this community participated in the Summer Reading Club than had in the previous year.

The program was so popular with children, it was continued throughout the fall. Every Saturday morning, workers offered "Twenty-Minute Storytents" in each of the five locations.



As fall turned to winter, and weather conditions made storytents less practical, workers consulted with the families involved and developed a door-to-door program. This Storytent Bookwagon program continued to provide weekly access to children's literature. It also offered adult books. As the number of adults borrowing grew, so did the selection.

The Storytent Bookwagon program continued through the winter and spring (2003-2004). In the summer of 2004, the Storytent Program and SRC Outreach were again offered. The Bookwagon continued to make its rounds one morning per week. The research component was also reintroduced, examining the same questions of the impact of the program on

- ◆ the frequency of reading in children's lives
- ◆ their reading levels
- ◆ their self-attitudes about reading and themselves as readers.

As well, research looked at the new question of the impact of the program's method of delivery on social interaction including, but not limited to:

- ◆ levels of social conflict
- ◆ family relationships
- ◆ positive self-esteem
- ◆ negotiating skills.

Once again, we used multiple methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative, including:

- ◆ quantitative data from the Summer Reading Club
- ◆ daily tent attendance figures
- ◆ a daily weather log
- ◆ informal reading assessments using guided reading books
- ◆ workers' written observations
- ◆ parent and children's interviews.

The 2004 research again demonstrated a positive impact on reading frequency in so far as children's frequency of reading or being read to was reported by all parents as having increased or stayed at a high level throughout the summer. The Summer Reading Club was shown to be more accessible to these children, and all of the children who were assessed maintained or showed a gain in reading level. Worker and parent comments indicated that most children who participated in the project socialized more positively with their siblings and peers.

An unexpected theme that came out of the notes and other data was an increase in adult participation. This year, more adults participated in the Storytent, reading to their children and reading adult books. Adults borrowed more, either through their children or on their own. As well, more parents reported reading to their children at home, and more children commented on what their parents were reading.

Another interesting theme was the degree to which boys incorporated books and literacy into their play and lives. During the summer, there were a number of media stories on a growing gap between boys and girls' reading skills, and the difficulties encountered by educators in supporting boys' literacy development. The message we were hearing in the popular media was that "boys don't like to read." When we looked at our own experience with boys, we found that the number of boys participating was roughly equal to that of girls. As well, boys showed as much inclination to borrow, read, or ask for support with books that caught their eye.

## **2. Storytent Methods as Sound Library Principles: the *Start with the Child* Study**

The methods and outcomes of the Storytent program are consistent with guidelines published in Great Britain, in 2002, by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. *Start With The Child: Report of the CILIP Working Group on library provision for children and young people* (CILIP, 2002) describes

*...the changing library needs of children and young people,...the relationship between libraries, reading, literacy and learning, ...and how to bring [about improvements] in library services for children and young people.*

(p.10)

Much of this study drew from a “major research project” also titled *Start with the Child* and commissioned specifically for this report (p.10). One of the general conclusions the authors made about children and youth was the “need to have access to a wide range of appropriate books, to be read to, to be given help and guidance in choosing books, opportunities to talk to peers about reading experiences and the support of an interested adult and reading role models” (p.11).

This study went on to suggest a list of things any “successful library service for children and young people” would require (p.11). Some of these were:

- *safe and welcoming environments with spaces which support diverse activities and provide a haven for users of different ages*
- *libraries that are more like shops, where they want to visit, and 'hang out'*
- *libraries that are open when they need them and can access them (evenings, weekends) opportunities to take responsibility, and exercise freedom of choice*
- *recognition of their pop culture and materials which are relevant to their interests and self image*
- *recognition of their varied learning needs and materials, services and space to meet these needs*
- *opportunities to participate and be involved in the planning and delivery of services, to provide feedback and have their ideas listened to and acted upon*
- *staff who have the time and skills to assist and support them in making best use of the service*
- *staff who are interested in their literature and reading, and can share ideas and encourage them to read new things and in new ways*
- *resources targeted to meet particular needs, and changes in the nature of mainstream services where necessary to foster and achieve inclusiveness*



On the other hand, the report provided a description of obstacles to successful children's and youth programming (p.14-20), many of which could be summarized as:

- lack of adequate funding for child and youth-friendly spaces and a range of interesting books and other engaging materials
- limited or inappropriate opening hours, complex joining procedures, late fees, and fines or other charges for damaged books
- lack of partnering, whether within the public sector or with private organizations, to deliver fuller services
- lack of research projects or vehicles for disseminating recent learnings.

In respect to disseminating learning, the study suggested that too little attention had been paid to “the way in which the Summer Reading Challenge and other holiday activities sustain children's literacy and reading development” (p.18).

*The time has come to acknowledge these successes which have been particularly important in addressing socially excluded families, and provide the necessary investment nationally to ensure that they are part of the core services which children and young people can expect from their library service.*

(p.18)

The study added that a “more liberal and enlightened approach” to policies and procedures, fines and charges is an essential part of accessibility (p. 69). It suggested that there should be co-construction, “a real involvement of children and young people in planning the future of their own services” (p.70). Collaboration with colleagues such as

youth workers was suggested as a means of overcoming “image and attitudinal problems presented by libraries” (p.70)

The study also noted that projects “focused on a known area of need are sometimes managed by staff who do not have a librarianship background” (p. 18). This was viewed as an asset, and the study went on to say that these workers “should be supported with training and networking opportunities” (p.23), and that the “learning outcomes of their work must be captured and disseminated” (p.18). The study urged that partnerships are “a vital part of the future”: “Locating barriers to [use] of services and seeking a partner with whom a solution can be found is the key to success, especially with hard to reach groups” (p.18).

The CILIP report is relevant because its recommendations are consistent with many of the same ideas and methods felt to be beneficial in the Crescent Valley program.

To ensure families felt safe and involved, the Storytent Program and SRC outreach were delivered within the framework of the established principles of a humanistic, participant-centered philosophy of delivery and management (Glasser, 1994; Knowles, 1988). Principles of early childhood education set out by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1987), and of Quality Education as characterized by William Glasser (Glasser, 2000; Glasser, 1998) were also incorporated in order to ensure the program met the children’s needs.

Workers were chosen for the project who had extensive experience and training in basic and family literacy, in early childhood education, and in community development. As well, the coordinator and the two community literacy workers had offered a variety of other programs and services in the community for two years or more.

For the children and families, the Storytent was a familiar, safe space with a minimum of interpersonal conflict or external pressure to perform. The workers' roles were oriented to provide scaffolding; allowing children to reach further than they might alone, but stopping short of pushing children toward predetermined goals. If children misplaced or accidentally damaged books, they were not fined or otherwise punished. When children experienced literacy-related difficulties and asked for help, workers drew on their considerable background to support further learning using only connecting behaviours.

Children helped create the physical space (setting up tents, spreading blankets) and were encouraged to recommend or request books for the program. In some instances, a smaller tent allowed children to create their own personal learning space. The location of the tents, as well as their distribution throughout the week (including Saturday), was designed to facilitate ease of access. There was also an effort made to provide a consistent service - rain or shine - so that it was the child or family who determined the degree of access a child would have to the program.

Finally, we set out very deliberately to collect and disseminate our learning from the project and our research.

### **3. The Primacy of Relationships**

In the Storytent program, the quality of the relationships between workers and children is key to the success of the program. Relationship building is the most important part of the Storytent program. Everything we do, from set-up onwards, is done in a way that builds relationships. Building relationships begins with workers avoiding what Glasser (2002) calls disconnecting behaviours. He lists seven in particular: criticizing, blaming, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing, bribing or rewarding to control (Glasser, 2002). Disconnecting behaviours are replaced with connecting behaviours:

- listening,
- supporting,
- encouraging,
- respecting,
- trusting,
- accepting,
- always negotiating disagreements (Glasser, 2002).

We make an effort to provide a consistently friendly atmosphere, and a wide variety of consistently popular books. There is no pre-determined curriculum, no judging of people's needs or correcting of their choices, and certainly no "one size fits all" approach to learning.

## **Part II: Summer Reading Club**

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### **1. Summer Reading Club in the Storytent**

The successful delivery of the SRC in the Storytent came about through trial and error. We used the same SRC materials as used by all libraries in the province. However, running this program outdoors provided challenges to paperwork and procedures that were not present within the library. In all aspects of delivering this program, we worked in response to the children and community until we felt what we were doing worked for everyone.

We determined the least chaotic way to register children in the SRC was to have one worker (not necessarily always the same one) stationed at one end of the Storytent with a registration binder and a waterproof box of materials (SRC log book, bookmarks, stickers, pens and pencils, etc). This worker would spend the first part of the Storytent registering children. This activity is most pronounced in the first few weeks of the Storytent program. Although, whenever a new child entered the tent, workers would invite them to register for the SRC, even if it was the last week of the program.



Children did not have to register in SRC to participate in the Storytent. If they did register, they had the opportunity to immediately begin reading books in order to reach their stated goal.

## 2. Reading and Reaching Goals

The ways we helped children reach their reading goal included:

- reading aloud to children
- listening to children read
- shared reading
- independent reading

When reading to children, the children chose which book they wanted to hear.

Sometimes, due to a book's length, this involved some negotiation: "I'll read you one chapter of that today, okay? Then you can borrow it, or we can save it and read another chapter next time." However, we also drew upon a list of titles we ourselves found easy or enjoyable to read.

When reading or looking through books independently, children were free to read any titles they wished. Workers avoided the disconnecting behaviour of making negative comments about the children's selection. Nonetheless, workers made an effort to alert children to books that most closely matched their interest and reading level.

In the Storytent, children's reading was not criticized. Workers waited to be asked before supplying a word or correcting an error in decoding. Workers did not require children to sit still or silently while they read (though they would stop reading if it became obvious that no one was interested in the text). These would all be disconnecting behaviours and would have a negative impact on our relationship with the children.

Children could record their own books read, or could ask a worker to record it for them. Many children made their own list of books on larger sheets of paper, or got their own notebooks. There was a great deal of numbering and writing activity related to recording books read, and writing in the log books was an embedded literacy and numeracy task in which the children took great interest.



The logbooks were witnesses to personal accomplishment. In the SRC logbook, you record five books and then there was a place for a stamp or sticker. We used stickers in the Storytent. Workers made sure there were enough stickers for the children and that they had free access to them. Children were encouraged to decide for themselves if they had read a book, and if they were ready for another sticker. In this sense there was no failure, no falling behind the crowd. We believe that this self-monitoring played an important part in the positive shift in many children's perceptions of themselves as readers.



The SRC is designed so that children receive a small incentive (stickers, door hangers, etc.) when they have read half the number of books they predicted. At the end of the summer, children attend an SRC party at the library where they celebrate and receive their program certificate. In the more transitory, chaotic atmosphere of the Storytent we needed to modify this procedure. Children received their small incentive when they reached their goal. Workers made every effort to have a certificate ready the next time they saw the child. This allowed the children to participate for as long as, and to the degree that, they chose without missing out on receiving their certificate. Giving children their certificates immediately also avoided missing children who moved out of the neighbourhood before Summer's end.

### **3. Book Borrowing**

Learning how to have children (and adults) borrow books from the tent was another extensive trial and error process. When there was too much structure to the borrowing, the children ended up not borrowing, and we felt the disconnection in our relationships. When there was too little structure, we were left with too few good read alouds for the tent and there was no way to track how many children borrowed, or how many books went out.

Books were purchased specifically for the Storytent program, and marked with coloured stickers. At first, they were all available for borrowing. Eventually, workers used red stickers to reserve a small collection of books for Storytent use only. These books had to stay in the tent, while books with any other colour sticker could be borrowed. This helped maintain a core selection of good read alouds for the tent, and it was simple enough that the children quickly learned the system.

Children who wanted to borrow books from the tent were asked to take a maximum of three books. Children's names and the books they borrowed were recorded to the best of worker's ability (as time and weather allowed). Books that came back were recorded in a general "books back" list. Having one worker do this worked well for some tents, but in others all workers made these records and they were later compiled into one file.

When talking with children about their borrowing, workers chose language that reinforced a 'book borrowing culture'. We said often: "You can borrow up to three books and then when you're done reading them you can bring them back and then you can borrow some more." When children wanted to borrow we often asked if they had brought their other books back. If they hadn't we told them that they could bring them back next time and they were still OK to borrow a book this time. Children who wanted to borrow were never refused. For some children who were unable, for whatever reason, to get into the habit of bringing books back, we would negotiate a new borrowing limit. It was more important, within the framework of this project, that they bring a book home to read, than that we retain the book. At the end of summer 2004, we estimated that we had lost no more than 12% of the book collection.

The Bookwagon Program, which began in the fall of 2003, gave us time to refine our lending practices and we continued to nurture a book borrowing culture year round



## **Part III: Getting Started**

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### **1. Building Partnerships**

A successful Storytent Program/SRC Outreach is one that has many partners, plus the participation of the community the program will be located in. Libraries, community-based literacy organizations, family organizations, local community groups, foundations, family literacy or literacy committees, service clubs, and government are all possible partners.

In our situation, the library and the community literacy facilitators had already taken opportunities to work together and form a partnership. As well, the community literacy facilitators had worked in the host community for two years before this project started. In addition to our work in a local Family Literacy Program, we brought Storytent to several community events, volunteered for others, became associate members of the local tenants' association, and spent time listening to people who live in the community. After the program began, we continued building relationships with the children, their parents and neighbours who happened by (Brown & Dryden, 2004).

In other circumstances, coalitions might be formed specifically around a Storytent program. In either case, going slow, ensuring everyone agrees on the goals and methods, and communicating regularly is important to the success of the program.

## 2. Personnel

Hiring the right people is also important to a successful Storytent. Positive, solution-based staff can salvage a poor location, ineffective books or a leaky tent. However, even if everything is perfect, staff lacking the necessary experience, way of thinking, and skills will have difficulty ensuring a quality program.

Obviously, a love of reading and children is important. Equally important to building and maintaining relationships are patience, attention to detail and the ability to capitalize on a moment or, conversely, to know when to leave something alone.

Storytent workers will also need the ability to:

- ◆ tell stories
- ◆ read aloud at length
- ◆ listen effectively
- ◆ engage shy or reluctant children
- ◆ manage large groups of children
- ◆ scaffold children's play and learning
- ◆ match books with readers using interests and reading level
- ◆ support families
- ◆ set up and tear down the tents
- ◆ document effectively
- ◆ think critically about their own practice

As well, Storytents call for one or more individuals able to:

- ◆ write proposals
- ◆ deal with paperwork
- ◆ write reports
- ◆ manage a budget
- ◆ manage staff and volunteers
- ◆ work with media, sponsors and partners

Perhaps the most important quality is commitment. Commitment means being present and effective every day. Everyone who has worked with us on this project has remarked on the challenges. Workers need to be prepared to deliver the program in all kinds of weather and with all kinds of children and families. Commitment also means adhering to the philosophy and using connecting behaviours, even when it's difficult. Critical self-reflection and a desire to constantly improve is another aspect of commitment. Having the same workers come back each summer is ideal. This allows the workers to integrate the previous year's knowledge base. It also provides another important aspect of consistency.

Ongoing training and coaching are part of the storytent program. We have had success apprenticing Storytent staff. Some professional development that may be useful includes: Parent – Child Mother Goose training; Foundational Family Literacy training; Choice Theory / Reality Therapy training; Library Services training; Storytelling training; Community Development training.

### **3. Responding to the community: the Bookwagon program**

The storytent program was created in direct response to what we were hearing neighbourhood children and their parents ask for. Parents wanted their children to have access to help with their reading. Children wanted to read and be read to. We talked to others in the larger community, including the library, and after much discussion a partnership was born.

Within the program there continued to be opportunity to respond to the local community. In large part, locations and other activities that happen in the storytent were responses to requests from children and their parents. In particular, the year-round Bookwagon program is a great example of what can happen when responding to the community remains an important principle.



After the summer of 2003, children said they didn't want the Storytent program to end, and parents expressed concern that they would no longer have access to books to borrow. We arranged to have '20 minute Storytents' happen every Saturday in each of the five locations. This gave children an opportunity to come out, read a bit and borrow books.

By November, it was getting too cold to sit outside under a canopy and read books to and with children. We talked to parents and came up with a door-to-door book-borrowing program we called The Bookwagon Program. Interested families were put on a list, and each Saturday we would fill our wagon full of books. Then we traveled through the neighbourhood so that children could borrow and return books.

Through the Bookwagon program, we continued to be visible and accessible in the community. Sometimes we met new children on the street, and they asked to borrow. Sometimes we encountered parents who had learned about the program through word of mouth, and they invited us to stop by their door.

Over the next six months, the number of families served by this program grew from 14 families in December 2003 to 31 families in June 2004. By September of 2004, we were serving 45 families.

Early on in the program, an adult asked if we had any adult books they could borrow. We started carrying adult books as well, and this aspect of the program grew from one adult borrowing in January 2004 to 15 adults borrowing in September 2004.



As our relationships with parents grew, some expressed concerns to us about their children's reading difficulties and asked if we had any suggestions. We offered information to parents about particular strategies and pro-literacy things they could do in the home. Later, we began leaving extra books – guided reading books - with these families. These books were at the child's reading level and allowed the parent to support their child's reading development. Within six months, we were supporting six families in this manner.

Other ways the program has grown to support families in response to specific requests include:

- reading once a week with an English as a Second Language (ESL) family
- providing books on special issues (Religion, sex, drugs, strangers, etc)
- providing resource material for homework projects
- providing craft pattern books

#### **4. Challenges**

The first challenge Summer Reading Club Outreach faced was the weather. Books, blankets, SRC materials, tents and workers all had to be able to bear the elements and keep going. However, there are things workers did that lessened the strain.

Most importantly, workers were personally prepared. This meant having adequate clothing and head and footwear for hot, cold or wet weather. It also meant being in a proper state of health and frame of mind.

Negotiating conflict was another challenge. As in the adult world, bossiness, jealousy, hoarding and boasting often created sharp disconnections. Physical boisterousness also posed a challenge, especially on rainy days. Workers responded by negotiating Storytent limits with children. On those occasions when negotiations broke down, children were asked to leave the tent and ‘try again tomorrow’. Staff then discussed incidents after each tent, and made plans for preventing or dealing more effectively with the challenge at the next tent. The strength of the relationships built in the tent brought the children back the next day. The general perception of the Storytent in the community was that it was a warm, safe place to be.

A third challenge involved discovering the program’s workable limits. On some occasions, there were too many children on hand to record books borrowed, or returned without interfering with the delivery of the program. In one instance, nearby street construction necessitated a change in location in order to keep children safe. Card

playing is an example of an activity that sometimes worked inside the tent, but under other conditions had to be moved to allow space for reading. In all these instances, workers needed to be flexible enough and knowledgeable enough to exercise good judgment and keep the goals of the program in the forefront.



A Storytent Program is a program without walls. This heightens access, but creates other challenges. In our program, neighbourhood pets appeared or were brought into the tent. The tent became entangled in local ball playing. Well-wishers, the curious and would-be volunteers happened by, sometimes creating significant disruption. As guests in the community, workers needed to be diplomatic but firm in preserving the atmosphere and integrity of the program.

Dealing with the media is another challenge that deserves a lot of thought and discussion. On the one hand, funders deserve media attention to highlight their contribution. However, staff must be aware of the possibility of exploiting children and families, or that the experience dealing with the media will have a negative impact on children and families. Storytent workers and/or administrators may need to remind the media of the sensitivities involved, or may even want to limit access, depending on the circumstances. With any planned media event, informing parents of children and obtaining permission for photos, video recordings or interviews with children is necessary.

## **Conclusion**

We believe the Storytent is an excellent venue for Summer Reading Club outreach.

We're not sure what else will come out of the Storytent. As our relationships with families strengthen, we may be asked to do other things. We are comfortable referring or finding resources that we are not able to deliver ourselves. In the meantime, we will continue to adapt and refine to deliver the best, most relevant service to the community, heeding Glasser's (1998) adage that quality is the state of constant improvement.

Following the same principles and philosophy outlined in this document and in the Quality Storytents Resource Document (2005), other communities implementing Storytents could find themselves with programs that look different from this one. However, they should find themselves with outcomes that are similar, including the intangible ones: friendships with children and parents; being on hand when children discover that they are readers; the pleasure of sharing a good book; various thank you cards, letter, smiles, hugs and other expressions of affection.

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