

# *Building Bridges Between Cultures*

## *Final Report*

### **Forum**

On March 10, 2005, a forum was held to bring together leaders of the Lower Kootenay Band, Yaqan Nukiy School, the non-aboriginal community and the local Creston Public Library. The purpose of the forum was to open dialogue on how the non-aboriginal community, and the library in particular, could provide better support the Lower Kootenay Band in attaining their goals of literacy and life-long learning.

The facilitator for the evening was Gina Rawson, Chief Librarian of Creston Public Library with assistance from Mark Kerwin, Principal of Yaqan Nukiy School.

The forum was held at the Lower Kootenay Band's offices in the auditorium and began with a dinner to provide some fellowship and opportunity for informal discussion. It had been decided in the planning phases that this would be the most appropriate place for the dialogue to take place. We felt it important that the community came to the Band.

The band was represented by some of their community leaders, including the Chair of the Educational Committee, administration and teachers at the school and some families. The non-aboriginal community had representation from the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Town of Creston, the local Board of Education, Campus Manager for the College of the Rockies, the Family Literacy Coordinator and representatives from several other agencies that work with the members of the Band in delivery of service.

### **Participants**

Joanna Wilson, District 8 School Board  
Annette Hambler, District 8 School Board  
Linda Steward, Family Literacy Coordinator  
Len Folkman, Town of Creston Council  
Lawrence Lavender, Town of Creston Council and Creston Public Library Board  
Tom Mann, Director, Regional District of Central Kootenay  
Rand Archibald, Campus Manager, College of the Rockies  
Nancy Cobra, Principal of Home Schooling Support  
Doris Corbiel, First Nations Support Worker (High School)  
Josie Fullerton, First Nations Support Worker (Elementary School)  
Carole Materi, Restorative Justice Coordinator  
Theresa Elford, Family and Children's Services  
Meeka Kiersgaard, Family and Children's Services  
Denice Louie, Lower Kootenay Band Council  
Dina Bambrick, Kootenai Community Centre Society (Safe Home)  
Alison Masters, Public Health  
Sergeant Mark Fisher, RCMP  
Faye Cobbe, Creston Public Library, Children's Services  
Janet Zarchukoff, Teacher's Assistant, Yaqan Nukiy School  
Mark Kerwin, Principal, Yaqan Nukiy School  
Robert Louie, Chair, Lower Kootenay Band Education Committee  
Michelle James, Teacher, Yaqan Nukiy School  
Several Families from the Lower Kootenay Band

### **Preparatory Work**

In preparation for the actual evening, Mark Kerwin, Principal of Yaqan Nukiy School met with families of the students and discussed their career goals and their perceptions and experience

with the local library. This data was submitted to the library and used in the compilation of a power-point presentation for the forum. Also presented were statistics on education that were obtained through Statistics Canada by the library.

#### Findings

- Use patterns indicated that some families never use the library while others visit it on a very regular basis.
- That the majority of families are reading books at least on a monthly basis.
- That the preferred genre was non-fiction, especially biography while bestsellers were not in heavy demand.
- That over 28% of the First Nations young people on the reserve were not completing high school and that this figure for all aboriginal students in the local high school is over 40%.

#### The Role of the Library

A presentation of available services and materials available at the library was made and several questions received about how the electronic resources could be better utilized. Several members of the audience indicated that some of the services and resources were previously not known to them while others such as the story time were quite well known.

Input was sought from other agencies as to areas of the collection that may not be supporting their services in working with the aboriginal population.

#### Outcomes of the Forum

There were many suggestions and follow-up actions that resulted from the evening's dialogue and the goal of helping the aboriginal community be more comfortable with the services the library provides as well as some that will benefit other agencies in their service delivery.

- The Lower Kootenay Band will provide a story teller for a program at the library on June 21 in celebration of National Aboriginal Day. Students from the local public school will be invited to attend to hear traditional stories.
- The CPL librarian will attend the upcoming May meeting of the Lower Kootenay Band's Education Committee to further discuss initiatives that can be taken to assist the Band.
- The library will offer some courses at the LKB offices on the use of electronic resources available through the libraries website.
- A DVD on the history and culture of the Lower Kootenay Band that has been compiled will be made available in the library for public use.
- A member of the District School Board is looking into appropriate titles of aboriginal magazines for inclusion in the library collection as this is currently limited to one title.
- The Teacher's Assistant at Yaqaan Nukiy School will accompany the Family Literacy Coordinator to the Native Family Centre and introduce her to the Director in hopes that some joint programming can be done.
- The local health authority advised the Band about a toy library that exists.
- The feasibility of having some First Nations stories from the LKB recorded on tape to be added to the library collection.

#### Budget

We are pleased that we were able to keep the costs down but as a result we have not expended the all the funds. Financial summary follows:

<b>Budget Expenses</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>
Refreshments	571.00	100.00
Promotion (invitations & mailing)	90.00	100.00
Facility Rental	100.00	
Equipment Rental	30.00	50.00
Printing (surveys & handouts)	<u>55.00</u>	\$1200.00
	\$846.00	

<b>Revenue</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>Budget</b>
RDCK Grant	141.00	200.00
Creston Public Library	141.00	200.00
Lower Kootenay Band	141.00	200.00
UBCM grant	<u>423.00</u>	<u>600.00</u>
	\$846.00	\$1200.00

### Summation

The forum and the preparatory work for it were successful. Fresh dialogue was initiated and many ideas and some firm plans resulted. The Lower Kootenay Band is now better informed as to the role other agencies can play in helping them increase literacy and the desire to pursue life long learning amongst their band members. As the evening was intentionally planned to coincide with the School's Open House, members of the non-native community also had an opportunity to see the resources available to the Band. Overall, the evening was well received and worthwhile.

Submitted:



Gina Rawson  
Chief Librarian  
Creston Public Library



Lawrence Lavender  
Councillor  
Town of Creston