

# Funding opens doors for literacy

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The province is continuing its commitment to improving literacy in B.C. with a \$1.6 million increase in funding for regional literacy co-ordinators at 16 post-secondary institutions in the province.

"We've had a regional literacy co-ordinator in the Okanagan-Shuswap for many years," said Nancy Noble-Hearle, an adult literacy instructor at Okanagan College and member of Penticton's Literacy Now task force. "The position has been funded for anywhere from eight to 12 hours a week for the whole Okanagan."

Over time, Noble-Hearle said, having a regional literacy

co-ordinator has been a benefit, as they become well-versed in the overall provincial situation. "However, with the minimal hours they have traditionally had, it's pretty hard to really get a sense of what's going on in all the communities," she added.

Part-time literacy co-ordinators are the norm across the province. They're charged with organizing and supporting the Ministry of Advanced Education's Community Adult Literacy Program, which allows community-based organizations to partner with public post-secondary institutions to deliver literacy programming at the community level.

They're also responsible for providing professional development, building partnerships to create capacity for

literacy delivery, supporting literacy programs, and developing public awareness about literacy.

It's a lot of work for someone to do on a part-time basis, and Noble-Hearle hopes that the increased funding means the position will become full-time, allowing the current co-ordinator, Leslie Kehlbauch, who works out of Salmon Arm, to be more effective.

In the Okanagan adult literacy has primarily been delivered through the colleges, and most of the people who work within the colleges are also involved in their communities, according to Noble-Hearle.

"I don't think there's always that connection between the providers as there is in the Okanagan," she said. "I think that we've been able to get a sense of what's going on in all the communities because of that connection."

The province hopes the new and expanded positions will enhance the degree of co-ordination within each region and support curriculum development, learner assessment and performance monitoring.

"Colleges play an important role linking the world of work with the world of learning," said Cindy Oliver, president of the Federation of Post Secondary Educators of B.C. "Their connections with school districts, communities and workplaces make them the logical place to co-ordinate adult literacy initiatives."

Since 2001, the government has been pushing to increase literacy levels in B.C. investing millions of dollars to make B.C. the most literate province in Canada by 2015.

"There are a wide range of services and programs to improve literacy from childhood through to adulthood, but regions are often faced with challenges matching up people with the programs and services they need and making all the various literacy programs work together efficiently," said Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell.