

Community Coordinator's Report – January 2013

Happy new year to all of you!

Yesterday morning, before leaving for school, my cousin's elementary school aged children left her a note...

“Dear Mom. We hop you hav a grat day! You are the beast.”

I hope after a time of celebration and rest all of you are at your best and not feeling beastly.

Due to the holidays December was a slower month in comparison. At the beginning of December, I participated with Charlotte DeBruyne, the School District's EDI Trainer, as the Community EDI Trainer. We spent an afternoon session, training teachers on how to fill out the Early Diagnostic Instrument, which Kindergarten teachers in our district will be completing in February of this year. This particular grouping of teachers, were from throughout the Chilliwack school district. It was a fantastic opportunity for me to share the value of the EDI and how the data collected is used. I was also able to talk about the CYC and the resources available to them. I had the opportunity to listen to their concerns. According to these teachers, more and more children are entering Kindergarten with noticeable vulnerabilities. Results from previous EDI mapping shows that a large portion of Chilliwack has a vulnerability rate of 35% or greater; even in areas that we might consider affluent, the vulnerability rate is still between 17-23%. According to the Human Early Year's Partnership, communities should be striving for a vulnerability rate of 10%. One of the frustrations expressed by these teachers, is that children with visible disabilities are

entering Kindergarten without any previous intervention, and because there has been no diagnosis, these teachers are left without adequate classroom assistance. I was told that Fraser Health had started an initiative for getting young children screened prior to Kindergarten, which was supposed to be in place by 2013. I will look into this further. As an Early Year's sub-committee we have had some discussion on how we might provide more visible opportunities for screening, so that children with vulnerabilities will have a diagnosis and hopefully some form of intervention or therapy before entering Kindergarten. The Early Year's Committee has applied for a grant which will hopefully provide some funds to go toward screening.

In December I also participated in the "Let's Talk About Youth Forum". The purpose of the forum was to increase networking, to discover what was learned by the Aboriginal Youth Services Project, led by Theresa Point and to identify gaps and challenges. It was very informative and once again I saw how important the networking component is when agencies gather together. There are many people working within agencies who are not aware of the services provided by other agencies. I use every opportunity I can to promote the CYC website. There was discussion that this forum should be a yearly event. I was hoping to read through "First Nations 101" over the Christmas holidays, but that is still on my "to do" list.

In December I had a training session with Annette Williams, on administrating the CYC website. I've managed to do a couple things on my own, but it's going to take another session or two before I feel confident.

In December I still received a number of emails requesting information about the CYC as a result of the newspaper articles regarding National Child Day in November; students wanting information, people asking how they can volunteer and I was even asked advice regarding a possible career path.

We have talked a lot about collaboration and we have seen the value in forming community partnerships. As I gain confidence in my position I hope to make connections to community groups and business groups that are not part of the CYC, to see if there are ways these groups see themselves, partnering with our agencies. Next week I will do my first Success By 6 presentation for the staff at VanCity Credit Union. Once I have updated the Success By 6 power point, I plan to work on updating the CYC Power Point. I have been asked if I would speak to the PAC's at Yarrow Elementary, Vedder Middle and Sardis Secondary.

After 4 months, I must say it is nice coming to a place where I can attend a meeting and I'm actually able to comprehend most of what everyone is talking about! I look forward to working alongside all of you this coming year.

Karen Steegstra