



Little Qualicum River (RDN Photo)

THE RIVER OF COMMUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16– OCEANSIDE BUILDING LEARNING TOGETHER
SOCIETY

Judi Malcolm | Manager | June 30, 2016

July 2015-June 2016 The River of Community

Here in Oceanside, we are graced with a number of stunning, beautiful and abundant rivers. I have hiked beside, swam and fly fished in them. This last year has moved like the flow of a river at Oceanside Building Learning Together. Sometimes meandering, occasionally smattered with turbulence, never stagnant. I heard someone say recently, "[in a river] If the water becomes still, it is no longer a river." At OBLT, we are never still, there is no stopping the movement that is the "River of Community".

"Said the river: Imagine everything you can imagine, then keep going." ~ Mary Oliver

ANCIENT WATERS.....

Oceanside Building Learning Together has been flowing through this community for many years. Years ago, it carved out new tributaries into Parksville and Qualicum for young children and their families. Those paths have been the desire of other communities and many have created similar ways. When a river is as age-old as ours is, the banks hold true, the trees and forest along it grow steadily up. As a community, we are all in the water and we support each other as we float along in this flow of being present for our current and future society.

*"I would love to live like a river flows, carried by the surprise of its own unfolding."
~ John O'Donohue*

NEW WATERS

This past year we have certainly been in new waters. The fresh and exciting side streams have included the Outdoor Nature program, the Saturday Breakfast Club, the Welcome to Kindergarten Kits, the Pete the Cat event, the Hobbyist group and more!

We have tested the waters with a change of bookkeepers and adding streamlined processes to payroll and data collection.

We have also been joined by a few new friends: Qualicum Beach Rotary – Sunrise Club have shared their generous spirit and energy with us by helping with

Storybook Village maintenance. They have buoyed our faith in good neighbors. Qualicum Beach First Nation reached out to us and included us in a grant that would take the WOW bus further than we could have taken it on our own. This has been a long time dream of mine – to bring culture and indigenous wisdoms on to the bus. It could be that they become our sister river.

FAST CURRENTS

“A river does not turn around discouraged upon reaching an obstacle, it instead finds a new path to keep moving in the same direction.” ~ Author unknown.

We always keep our mission, our direction in front of us. Sometimes, something can block or impede our movement. This year we found out that the Words On Wheels bus had issues too expensive or impossible to fix. Time to step into the swift running water that is fundraising. It is going to be a big task, but one that the “River of Community” can overcome. Time will be taken to make sure that this water doesn’t climb too high on our banks of stable ground. Again, we are in the water together, moving with the current, the flow ever-changing with twists and turns, but always in the same direction.

The other impact on our direction is the vulnerable children in our area. We have been looking at the “Early Development Index” to help steer our river of knowledge. How do we strategize ways to support families and guide the healthy flow of learning to their children? How do we create a community that has all children flourishing? We do this by working together, talking together and floating in the water together through the more unstable times: in the rapids and over the waterfalls. Can we navigate upstream without more information?

ESTUARY – WHERE THE RIVER MEETS THE OCEAN

The ocean refuses no river.” ~ Sufi Chant

The river journey can never return to its source. Instead it moves towards its destination and finds itself melding and mixing with the salt water of the ocean. That is the basic goal of the river. We are also looking at the goals of our river.

The Early Years Table (BLT Coalition) has determined three goals:

1. Creating an Early Years Strategic Plan

2. Connecting ECE's and Kindergarten Teachers
3. Heart Mind Actions – addressing EDI (UBC & HELP)

The Literacy Table has been looking at goals related to intergenerational connections by:

1. Supporting and encouraging intergenerational participation in our literacy programs and activities.
2. To use the language of literacy to explore technology and human connection.

The source of our river is our funders. We are funded by a number of organizations to keep our programs going. The Ministry of Education (via SD69) funds our StrongStart BC programs, our Ready, Set Learn program and helps fund our Community Literacy efforts. Decoda Literacy funds our Technology Learning Centre and our BLT2Go Bus, as does Community Gaming Funds. Success by Six helps us fund the Words on Wheels Bus. These funders allow free access to our river of programs.



Big Qualicum River Estuary - Photo credit: Lady.D.

This picture of the estuary brings to mind the metaphor of BLT and its community partners as the river and the parents and users of our programs as the ocean. Although affected by the ebb and flow of the tides, we continue to join together to learn from each other. A confluence, a synergy of human spirit. All of this is done with tempered fervor, non-judgement (how can you judge an ocean or a river?), compassion and great learning. This year, we lost a special and valued volunteer who had been involved with us for at least a decade. Her gentle kindness touched many parents and children. Before she was gone, she asked that others donate to us in her name. She has left a wonderful and caring legacy.

THE RIVER OF COMMUNITY

This River of Community is always in motion. We have our purpose firmly in mind; in the water, together, moving towards helping others with life-long learning – young and not so young. The OBLT staff, our wonderful volunteers, the OBLT Board of Directors, School District 69, our Coalition of Partners, and so on: we are all the River of Community. This next year we will pay attention to our movement, see clearly ahead and flow gently past the honourable banks that hold the water and steer the way of our river.

“We have to look deeply at things in order to see. When a swimmer enjoys the clear water of the river, he or she should also be able to be the river.” ~ Thich Naht Hanh

Respectfully submitted,

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