

2009-2010 Annual Report

Message from the Chair

Sometimes it takes a period of looking outward before you can look inward with a refreshed vision, and this was the READ Society's focus in 2009-2010.

The Board of Directors looked carefully and critically at what this organization has achieved since 1976. We found the work has consistently benefited the community and helped children, youth and adults gain the literacy skills needed to achieve their full potential.

Yet we also acknowledged that while READ leads the region in providing remedial instruction in reading, writing and mathematics, much has changed in Victoria and in society generally. We questioned whether we too have changed sufficiently to meet the new environment. 'Literacy' today is growing in breadth and complexity and job markets demand higher standards. The means of reaching those in need of our services have evolved, and we, like many other organizations, face difficult economic and funding challenges.

Thus READ faces three major tasks: to change in order to meet the needs of the new economy; to find improved means to communicate with those in need of our services; and, to learn how to do more with less funds.

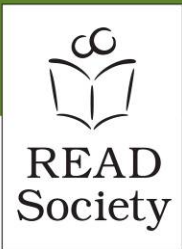
We are employing communications staff for the first time, and as a result, have used [video](#) to tell READ's story through the voices of its volunteers, learners and parents. We're on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube – using social media to connect. We are also reaching out to the schools to determine how we can work more closely with public education.

In 2009-2010, we worked with local aboriginal communities to create programs to meet their expressed needs; we brought teachers to a recreation centre to test summer programming; and we created new partnerships while strengthening existing ones.

We saw the need to invite more people in the community into the organization and to make it easier for families to join us through membership.

At a Board of Directors' retreat in June of this year we decided to increase our focus on tuition assistance for children in need and to set a target, over time, that will increase the number of students receiving tuition assistance by more than a factor of six.

We know that this will take time and we will have to change our approach to youth literacy training if we are to succeed. There will be a need for a front-end investment to develop the course material and a need to employ different techniques such as using trained volunteers.



Thus the Board authorized the use of up to \$300,000 from our Building Reserve over the course of the next three years, with defined annual milestones, to ensure we stay on track.

We intend to accomplish all this, while still doing what we have always done well: teaching students of all ages, both full fee-payers and those needing financial assistance. From 2009-2010, we have emerged stronger and more focused.

We wouldn't be or have been able to do any of this without the amazing efforts of our staff under the leadership of Claire Rettie. On behalf of the Board, all our students, past and present, thank you.

Graeme Kirby