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Lena Shaw wins book grant

By Kevin Diakiw - Surrey North Delta Leader - May 16, 2008

Surrey's Lena Shaw Elementary School will be getting more books thanks to funding provided by a national literacy fund run by Indigo.

On Wednesday, Indigo Chapters announced the winners of \$6-million in funding to Canadian high-needs elementary schools.

Lena Shaw, at 14250 100A Ave., will receive \$160,000 over three years for books and visiting speakers. Lena Shaw principal Dr. Elisa Carlson was thrilled with the boost in book funds.

"About 95 per cent of the money is spent on books," Carlson said Friday, adding some targets of the new resources include books for boys and for First Nations students.

Carlson found out about the program later in the process and scrambled to put something together.

"I thought our school met the the criteria, so I put in an application," Carlson said.

Lena Shaw is third on the school district's list of inner-city schools; is 45 per cent English-as-a-Second Language; and 32 per cent of the students come from a household with an annual income of less than \$35,000.

The first priority, Carlson said, is getting some books for preschool, adding that all studies suggest literacy starts in the early years.

Representatives from Indigo said they were pleased to be part of the program.

"The Indigo Love of Reading Foundation focuses attention on Canada's most valuable resource – our children," said Heather Reisman, CEO of Indigo Books & Music Inc.

"By providing schools with funding for books we are, in a small way, helping to brighten the future of young children and mitigate the literacy crisis in Canada. In addition to our direct work with schools, we remain committed to encouraging provincial governments across Canada to follow the Ontario government's lead to invest more boldly in school libraries and librarians."

Early Love of Reading Results:

Indigo lists some dramatic statistics regarding literacy:

- * A 1 per cent increase in literacy adds \$18.4 billion to the economy.
- * In 1970, public schools received the equivalent of three new books per child per year. Today it is less than one third of a book.
- * 87 per cent of Canadian public schools lack a working library with a full-time librarian.
- * 42 per cent of Canadian adults lack basic literacy skills.
- * 80 per cent of people who end up in jail are functionally illiterate.

To be considered for an Indigo Love of Reading Foundation grant, elementary schools must demonstrate that they are a high-needs institution and show a commitment to an environment where literacy is a main focus. Schools can apply for grants from the Indigo Love of Reading Foundation by downloading an application at www.loveofreading.org. A new application will be available for download in September.

Surrey School District spokesman Doug Strachan said it's likely more Surrey schools will be applying for funding next year.

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