

SALT Can Be Good for Everyone!



Written by Don Lynch: Chair Six Nations Public Library Board as published in OLBA newsletter, reprinted with permission.

In the Spring 2013 edition (No. 31) of InsideOLBA there was an article titled: *Policy as A Commitment to First Nations Collection*. I urge you to re-read that article because it puts everything in sharp focus and establishes the background for this article. Aboriginal peoples are the fastest growing population in Ontario and their library needs are badly underserved. Since all municipalities have Aboriginal residents and all Ontarians can benefit from Aboriginal content, all public libraries should be establishing collections to recognize and serve this population. Whether the aboriginal population is located on a reserve or in an urban metropolis, it's important that collections of appropriate materials be established to meet the growing needs and demands of this population. The board's role is to establish policy and to budget funds to ensure that collections are developed along with informed staff.

How do boards ensure that proper collections are established?

As it was stated in the article: *"The First Nation Communities Read short lists are a great way to build content which is both authored / illustrated by Aboriginal people and supported by or authorized by communities. In the selection criteria or as a separate section you may also want to include a statement on Vendor of Record. Many Libraries have established Vendors of Record for collections, but these may not have strong Aboriginal content, and rarely have experts to assist in purchasing decisions. As such GoodMinds.com, the Vendor of Record for Aboriginal materials during the Ministry' \$15 Million Grant, and the official vendor for First Nation Communities Read program. This vendor has professional staff that can assist with collection development needs and can discuss authority and quality of materials."*



Your library probably has an expanding list of Aboriginal patrons, especially if it is located near one or more reserves or in an urban setting. However, there are isolated reserve populations that may or may not have the resources to acquire proper collections and that assumes that they even have a library. There are over 133 First Nations communities in Ontario, yet only 51 First Nations Public Libraries. (The number varies because some of these under-funded libraries come and go.) There are over 600 First Nations communities in Canada, yet the same number of

First Nations Public Libraries exists — just 51. Think about it. Less than ten per cent of aboriginal communities have a library. Those few First Nations communities fortunate to have libraries are usually under-funded, one or two person facilities with limited hours of operation. Only Six Nations of the Grand River, which serves the largest First Nations population in Canada, has an OPLG Accredited public library with a fully independent library board as defined by the Public Library Act.. What can be done to help the under-served and the vast number of un-served communities; and what can other libraries do to help address the inequity? Perhaps a little SALT is the answer.

SALT is an acronym for Supporting Aboriginal Libraries Today. It's a fund recently established by GoodMinds.com, an Aboriginal owned book seller located on Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in southern Ontario. Ten per cent of net book sales will be contributed to the fund which will assist aboriginal communities to improve their libraries or create libraries where none currently exist. Since individuals, educators, service clubs, organizations, and all public libraries potentially will be purchasing books with aboriginal content; this is a painless way of assisting neglected communities to enjoy all the benefits of a public library, including improved literacy. Just five percent of public libraries' book buying budgets has the potential of making a significant contribution to SALT.

Six Nations which is also the home of GoodMinds.com is the first community to benefit from the SALT fund, as it strives to build a new library and archival repository. The present home of the Library is an 1885 former doctor's residence that is far too small and lacking in accessibility. Many historic books and documents are being kept in less than ideal conditions that will have to suffice until a proper facility is created. With the assistance of SALT, along with other contributions, that facility will be realized.

Further information and even a short video are available on the GoodMinds.com website. Simply look for SALT and click on the links. Should you have any questions, contact information is provided. SALT is a great idea that will provide real contributions to aboriginal communities. It is a win-win-win idea. It's a win for GoodMind's SALT fund: the more books purchased, the greater the fund. It's a win for aboriginal communities: funds allocated specifically for libraries will be coming their way. And it's an unexpected win for all public libraries who participate by selecting GoodMinds.com as a vendor. This choice does triple duty: access to the expertise of the largest Aboriginal book vendor in Canada, acquiring books for their special collections, and directing funds to communities in real need of assistance.



Forget the negative thoughts about salt being bad for you. Now SALT can be a good thing for all concerned.