

Doaktown is named "Reading Capital of New Brunswick"

FREDERICTON (CNB) - The sixth annual Read Across New Brunswick Challenge proved to be a tremendous success, with more than 60,000 New Brunswickers registering their 20 minutes of reading on Sept. 9, Education Minister Dennis Furlong said today.

Furlong said that represents a 25 per cent increase compared to 2001 and he congratulated the thousands of individuals across the province who came together in a spirited team effort.

"It is wonderful to see the people of our province rise to the challenge and show their dedication to literacy," Furlong said. "The Read Across New Brunswick Challenge is a great awareness activity. A 25 per-cent increase in the participation numbers this year tells us New Brunswickers value literacy now more than ever."

A total of 60,665 New Brunswickers registered their 20 minutes of reading. Out of the 135 communities that participated, Doaktown won the title of 2002 Reading Capital of New Brunswick.

Belva Brown, manager of the Doaktown public library, attributes their success to the total community effort.

"We announced the Reading Challenge in our newsletter, spread the word, called businesses the day of the challenge, and we had anyone who came into the library on Monday sit down, read and register," Brown said.

Previous title-holders have included Harvey Station, Nackawic, St. George and Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska. Teachers and students from 182 schools showed their enthusiasm by calling to record entries.

Brian Stewart, principal of Alexander Gibson Memorial School in Fredericton, said schools always look for other ways to promote reading and the Read Across New Brunswick Challenge was "a perfect fit."

"This was another opportunity for us to focus on the most important skill of all, literacy," Stewart said.

Government departments showed equal excitement for the challenge, with the Department of Education winning Departmental Reading Champion.

The Read Across New Brunswick Challenge is held each year in conjunction with International Literacy Day. Again this year, a number of partners were involved in making the challenge a success. Literacy New Brunswick Inc. provided overall coordination of the event. Aliant Telecom donated toll-free lines answered by volunteer telephone operators from the Aliant Pioneers, and Baseline Market Research of Fredericton provided office space for the day.