

## Saskatchewan Literacy Award of Merit Affinity Credit Union

READ Saskatoon is honoured nominate Affinity for the business category as having demonstrated leadership in the advancement of literacy. Affinity is a shining example of a business working hard to make our city be the best it can be by ensuring access to learning opportunities are available to all citizens.

Their mission is to *enter into partnerships with community organizations that can benefit from the core competencies of Affinity Credit Union* and this means providing financial support to many charitable organizations. Annually they contribute a minimum of 3% of its pre-tax profits to support partnerships and sponsorships activities annually. READ Saskatoon has been a recipient of their financial support for the past three years, but more importantly, we have been recipients of their generosity, team support and camaraderie.



At a time when operational support remain a “dirty words” Affinity is one of two READ Saskatoon primary supporters. It is their money that keeps the rent paid during the summer, the coffee warm for the tutors and learners who drop-in. Their staff and financial support has been critical to our recent growth.

Affinity Credit Union is committed to making a difference, not just with money but with the involvement of Affinity employees in READ Saskatoon. At this time we need to recognize Carm Michalenko and Carol Cisecki for their support. Their staff has:

- attended READ Saskatoon conferences;
- presented at conferences;
- become board members of READ Saskatoon
- chaired committees;
- ensured gift donations are available for conference attendees, as well as tutors and learners;

- supported and attended fundraising events;
- taken the time to understand the value of literacy;
- ensured READ Saskatoon staff and Board Members have had an opportunity to meet Affinity Credit Union Board Members

READ Saskatoon applauds Affinity and celebrates their success especially because in this tight economic time, they maintain their commitment to community and literacy.

The relationship between Affinity Credit Union and READ “highlights a key difference between a true partnership and a conventional project alliance”. A shallow alliance can be little different to conventional philanthropy, with a company providing money to back an NGO project. But it is perhaps glorifying the relationship to call it a partnership. It’s not exactly a one-night stand, but it’s not marriage either. This deeper partnership implies a medium-term relationship, with both parties contributing skills, resources and expertise, and sharing the risks.”

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Most importantly they base their work on some unsaid partnership philosophies:

- READ Saskatoon must be able to maintain clear accountability to its own key stakeholders, and must maintain its independence from Affinity Credit Union
- READ Saskatoon and Affinity benefit directly, and understand the other’s benefits.
- Staff are sufficiently senior to have their organization’s mandate and able to take difficult decisions without constantly having to refer back.
- The staff from both agencies implicitly trusts each other.

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