



## Lakes Animal Friendship Society

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### **“Nobody’s Cats”**

Community cat book written with the assistance of local children inspires and educates students around the world about helping animals in need.

BURNS LAKE – Two girls, Vivienne and Catrina saw some hungry cats shivering in the snow near their home one winter. Instead of ignoring the situation, they took action. They contacted the Lakes Animal Friendship Society (LAFS) to find out ways they could help.

The girls shared what they learned about community cats with their fellow students. They worked with Mrs. Benoit and Ms. Russell and the rest of Grassy Plains School to raise the first \$100 toward the spaying and neutering of the community cats. They volunteered to help with feeding the cats and to watch over them.

The colony was typical of many situations. Two stray cats showed up in the neighborhood, and soon there were dozens of cats – far too many for anyone to take care of without help. Over the years many cats died or were killed. The caregivers of this colony loved cats but the problem was out of control.

One hundred dollars was a good start but nowhere near enough to take care of spaying and neutering dozens of cats. Thankfully, a large-scale spay/neuter program was started by the BC SPCA with funding from PetSmartCharities® of Canada and they approved a project for our area. Dr. Lois Martin and her Burns Lake Veterinary Clinic team helped tremendously, Cheslatta Carrier Nation offered their support and LAFS volunteers would help tackle colonies in the Burns Lake area. Lakes District Maintenance provided Nikki, a summer student to work with LAFS during part of the project.

LAFS volunteers carried on trap, neuter and return activities through the summer. When possible the younger / friendlier cats and kittens were kept for socializing and adoption through Simonds’ Sanctuary and Prince George Petland. The rest were returned to their colony. After many visits to the site, we succeeded in spaying and neutering all of the cats in Vivienne and Catrina’s neighbourhood. At long last, the crisis had ended.

In two years, the project helped just over 400 cats in colonies around our small community – bringing the population under control in colonies where the situation seemed hopeless. Now the caregivers and the cats are much happier. The cats that remain are healthier and there is no more worry about hundreds of kittens being born each year to live short, tough lives. The colonies will be monitored to make sure they stay healthy, happy and under control.

Local students were part of the solution from day one – learning about community cats and what they could do to help. They even helped write a book based on this project! The students chose the ending to the story

and contributed fantastic community cat art that graces the outer pages of the book. The book, “Nobody’s Cats” has just been published and copies are being distributed to every elementary student in the Lakes District. Every school library and public library in Northwest BC will get a copy. Copies were distributed to humane educators from around the world when LAFS was invited to present at the Association of Professional Humane Educators conference in Phoenix this April.

Quotes:

*We wanted to create a book where local children had a hand in telling their story about helping community cats. There are very few humane education books that feature community cats, and almost none that feature northern and rural communities with diverse cultures. We hope that “Nobody’s Cats” is an inspiration to students across the north and around the world to help community cats and other animals in need.* Valerie Ingram, co-author and Volunteer Humane Educator

*How I enjoyed “Nobody’s Cats”! What a wonderful book—it so well done and has an important, educational message for children, as well as adults. I love how empowered the little boy is to care for the cats and make the black kitty his forever friend. In other words, the child is the hero, and that’s key for children’s books.* Maribeth Boelts, author “Before You Were Mine”.

*For the past 2 years we’ve followed the exploits of the Lakes Animal Friendship Society in central BC, and what fun that has been! Their most recent project is one that truly touches our hearts – Valerie and Alistair have written a children’s book, “Nobody’s Cats”, basing it on a the true story of a project to help community cats in the small town of Burns Lake in rural northern British Columbia. Two children saw a problem – they reached out for guidance, gained community support, and changed their community for the better. The entire community, children and adults alike, can see daily the positive benefits of their compassionate actions.* Nancy Wahl, Executive Director, Community Cat Coalition of Washington

