

2022 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

Smithers Public Library

INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Provide a brief description of the community and library, focusing on what has changed in the past year. If provincial funding is primarily used to support your library's core operations, please include a general describe where it is applied (staffing, utilities, collections, etc.).

The Smithers Public Library is located on the unceded traditional territory of the Gidimt'en Bear Wolf Clan, home of the Witsuwit'en First Nation. The Town of Smithers (population approximately 5,400) lies approximately halfway between Prince George and Prince Rupert in northern British Columbia's Bulkley Valley. Smithers acts as a hub to a large surrounding rural population, bringing the library's service area up to 13,200 and supporting an exceptional array of services, leisure opportunities and entertainment for a town of its size. Mining, forestry, and tourism are the main economic drivers for the region. The Witsuwit'en community of Witset lies 30 minutes to the north of Smithers, with many residents commuting to Smithers for services and schooling. A substantial percentage of the library's service area population is Indigenous, including people from the Witsuwit'en, Gitksan and Lake Babine Nations, with Dutch and Swiss heritage also widely represented among our patrons.

The library resumed in-person programs and events in spring 2022, with a focus on healing the rifts in our community that appeared or deepened during the pandemic over health, resource extraction, race, homelessness and addictions. We developed a new strategic plan which emphasises creating common ground, Truth and Reconciliation, inclusivity, climate change and a new building to meet the need of our community. Prices for materials and supplies rose during the pandemic and long-time contractors departed, with their replacements charging realistic but much higher rates. 2022 laid bare the discrepancy between the current provincial funding for public libraries, frozen in 2011, and the actual cost of operating a library today. The one-time provincial Covid Relief and Recovery grant was the only way we managed to make it through the year without going significantly over budget.

2. FEATURED PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Project/Program Name
September 30 North Boys Event
Provide a brief description. Please include details such as any partnerships or resources leveraged to accomplish this project/program.
In partnership with the Bulkley Valley Museum and the LawMatters program of Courthouse Libraries BC, the library screened the short documentary <i>North Boys: The Story of Jimmy and Charlie</i> on September 30, Orange Shirt Day and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The film recounts these two Indigenous men's experience of being taken away from their families as children and sent to Lejac Indian Residential School. Many local Witsuwit'en children were sent to this school and survivors and their descendants are still in our community today. After the documentary, Indigenous audience members were invited to share their comments, then everyone stayed for informal

discussion over refreshments. The Museum donated their venue for the screening and LawMatters funded a giveaway of books for all ages about residential school at the event.

How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals?

This event helped advance Truth and Reconciliation in our community by describing traumatic experiences some of our neighbours and family members have gone through. Everyone in the audience was deeply affected by the film, and the message was conveyed by the library and Indigenous speakers that the tragedies suffered by the two boys were also suffered by many still in our community. The book giveaway extended the learning beyond the event.

How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service from the strategic plan, which include:

1. Improving Access
2. Building Capacity
3. Advancing Citizen Engagement
4. Enhancing Governance

1. Improving Access -- This free event was open to all and held space for historically marginalized people to speak.
2. 3. Advancing Citizen Engagement -- Information necessary for lifelong learning was provided in a range of formats (film, speakers and print).

What are the key outcomes of this project/program?

- Survivors and their families had the opportunity to share their stories with the wider community
- Increased awareness of the experiences of local children in Indian Residential Schools (IRS)
- Increased awareness that the trauma of IRS is not in the past or distant history, but still here in our community today
- Greater empathy for survivors and their families
- Ongoing learning

Did provincial grants enable this project/program? If so, how?

Yes. Provincial grants funded the promotional materials and supplies, screening licence and refreshments which encouraged participants to linger in conversation about what they had learned that evening.

3. CHALLENGES

The following topics have been identified as recurring themes in previous years' PLGRs. The intent of this section is to collect detailed information in a structured, consistent format.

Please select the most significant challenges that the library has faced in the past year that you wish to comment on. Leave any other listed topics blank. Use the ‘Other’ row to include any ongoing or past challenges that not included in this list. If you have more than one ‘Other’ item to add, please insert additional rows into the table.

Challenge	Briefly describe how this challenge has impacted the library/community, and what steps the library took to address it in 2022. Please specify if any provincial funding was used, e.g., annual library funding, the technology grant, other non-PLB provincial grants (up to 250 words per topic).
COVID-19 (e.g., safety protocols, proof of vaccination)	
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	Yes (see introduction)
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health, and wellness)	
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	
Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	Still in need of a new, adequate facility.
Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	

Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	The Town of Smithers has located a homeless encampment beside the library. This presented our most significant challenge while also providing opportunities for relationship-building, learning and advocacy. Provincial funding has been used for books and DVDs of interest to the encampment residents. Many of the residents have addictions and use the library's washrooms for bathing and illness or treating injuries. Provincial funding has supported the additional janitorial and health and safety supplies necessary to protect patrons and staff from fluids and substances.
Other (please specify)	

4. COVID-19 RELIEF & RECOVERY GRANT – 2022 PROGRESS REPORT

Summary and Overview

Please provide an executive summary (overview summary) on the library's use of the COVID-19 Relief and Recovery Grants. The purpose of this section is not to duplicate the individual projects details, instead provide a short analysis and summary of your overall approach and progress. Please limit to 2 paragraphs and feel free to use bullet points.

Summary and Overview
<p>The following projects were completed in 2022 with the funding, which is now entirely spent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and Safety -- New furniture, Plexiglas modification • Operations – Training, procedures update, networking and programs <p>As mentioned in the introduction, the portion of our grant previously reserved for 2023 projects was used to pay for 2022 items and services (janitorial, bookkeeping) priced beyond our budget due to inflation.</p>

	Grant budget	Reallocated budget
COVID-19 Relief & Recovery Grant Amount	\$25,397.01	\$23,260.76
Emergency Planning & Preparedness Grant Amount	\$8,465.67	10,601.92
Total Grant Amount	\$33,862.68	\$33,862.68

Project Progress Report

Please use this section for:

1. Report progress on projects included interim report **and/ or**
2. New projects developed since interim report (copy and paste tables as needed)

Project/Program/Activity	New furniture, Plexiglas modification
Rationale	Maximise seating options while supporting social distancing during times of increased disease transmission.
Area of Need	Health and Safety
Action/Output/Deliverable	Purchased new, wipeable furniture and modified Plexiglas at front desk.
Outcome/Impact	More patrons can safely access seating, increasing the library's capacity and access to services. Wipeable furniture is more sanitary than previous fabric chairs.
Metrics	More individual seats provided, replacing loveseats and large shared tables.
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	\$9,924.50
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	Complete
Comments (optional)	Lots of positive feedback from patrons about not having to share a table. Armchairs (4) purchased to replace loveseats (2) are well-used.

Project/Program/Activity	Training, procedures update, networking, programs, materials and supplies
Rationale	Recovery from pandemic-related staff and volunteer turnover, loss of adult program funding, relationships broken during isolation and increased costs due to inflation
Area of Need	Operations
Action/Output/Deliverable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trained new employees and retrained returning volunteers. • Reorganization of library and procedures manual to incorporate changes made during the pandemic. • Outreach to other community organizations with staff turnover during the pandemic. • Adult and general audience programs and events.
Outcome/Impact	All staff and volunteers are trained in new procedures and the physical space has been reorganised to improve workflow. Organizational relationships have been renewed and programs for adults and general audiences resumed, including Emergency Preparedness presentations.
Metrics	
Collaborative Links (if applicable)	
Expenditure	\$23,938.18
Detailed status update since the interim report (e.g., complete, in progress, pending, deferred, etc.).	Complete
Comments (optional)	Thank you for this one-time grant; we couldn't have got by without it. Please increase the annual provincial funding to public libraries and tie it to inflation. Operational costs have risen significantly since funding was frozen.

5. BOARD APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: Wendy Wright (electronic)

Date: March 5, 2023

Board Chair Signature: Christine Tessier (electronic)

Date: March 5, 2023