

## CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC GOALS

The City of Penticton is a community of approximately 34,000 situated in the Okanagan Valley between Okanagan Lake and Skaha Lake. Tourism is the community's largest industry, with local wineries and beautiful weather being major draws. Over the past few years BC's forest fires have adversely impacted this industry. Other major employers in the region are the local Regional Hospital which serves the entire South Okanagan, School District 67, and the federal government's local Canada Revenue Agency office.

The Penticton Public Library has served the city in one form or another since 1909 and is a well-established service in the community. Our last strategic plan ran from 2014 to 2018 and was extended through 2019 to allow us to reach out to the community for feedback and to finalize some of the details from the plan. The strategic planning process involved a detailed community consultation using our city's online platform (Shape Your City) and garnered more than 700 responses from users and non-users of the Library. The survey highlighted the need for improved communication of services, customer service enhancements, and upgrading of the physical space. Additionally, patrons expressed a high degree of interest in various non-traditional collections, the desire for varying programming times and multi-generational programs, plus (unsurprisingly) more books.

Our Library is one of a very few truly free public places in Penticton where all are welcome. Our central location is on the edge of the downtown core, and on one of Penticton's main roads.

Challenges for our library in the community include: a relatively stagnant tax base, limited capacity in staff members to expand on current workload, an aging facility too small for our population and needs, and social pressures due to homelessness and addictions.

## ALIGNMENT TO PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES – IMPROVING ACCESS

Our Library maintains a constant focus on improving access to all our services (both physical and digital). As 2019 was a year between strategic plans and a year of assessment and reflection we examined some of our core services. Over the course of the year we:

- Assessed and refocused our institutional/educational cards
- Improved and expanded our system for Homebound Delivery services

Our institutional/educational card is a long-established card type for our library. The goal of focusing on this card was to open up and simplify access for community groups. In examining the parameters of access and the marketing around the cards we decided to expand eligibility of this card from educational institutions only to most non-profit types of organizations as they, in particular, have the greatest limits on the affordability of resources.

We found that by renaming the card and promoting it to specific individuals we have had a 9% increase in use of this card, and that awareness of institutional/educational cards has spread by word of mouth throughout our community.

A second activity we undertook in 2019 was to assess and improve our Homebound Delivery service. Homebound Delivery is the bringing library materials to individuals whose health or physical ability prevents them from coming into the library. This is a service that has a long history with our library but

our goal was to increase patron satisfaction with the service, community awareness of the service, and use of the service. Existing patrons were contacted for a satisfaction survey and asked about possible improvements. Additionally, we contacted care homes and set up opportunities to discuss potential improvements to the service with care providers. Finally, the service was streamlined and simplified to meet operational needs and increase service capacity.

The outcomes of our efforts have been an improved and efficient service within the library that is meeting (and in some cases exceeding) patron access needs to library services. The outputs are a demonstrable increase in use of the service (17 new patrons in 2019, of the total of 53 individuals) and a greater satisfaction level by our existing patrons. The latter is demonstrated by the increase in positive comments overall as well as direct patron statements.

#### **ALIGNMENT TO PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES – DEVELOPING SKILLS**

The Penticton Public Library's goals for 2019 that best align with this priority are to support Library patrons in exploring technology and online educational tools.

To work towards this goal, the library:

- Focused on the growth of our 3D printing and STEAM programs

Over the last several years the library has introduced programing in information technology - specifically, 3D printing and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, and math) programs. The outcomes of STEAM programs are to enhance what children are learning as part of their formal education and to encourage the enjoyment and exploration of these ideas in an informal and interest-driven setting.

STEAM programing has been a major focus for our Youth Services department since 2017. For these programs our target age group is tweens (young people aged 8 to 12). They were the chosen focus because when we surveyed the community there was less offered to them, and most existing activities are sports-related. Further, this age group is still largely fearless, willing to make mistakes and explore. To this end we have two core programs with this as a specific focus – one in partnership with the Museum, and a coding club for after school. These are a good fit for the community and for our goal of providing access and opportunity for young people. This allows tweens to experiment and discover something beyond the opportunities offered in school. Also, looking to the future, coding has become one of the most desired skills for many employers and the technology sector is one of the areas forecasted for highest growth in the Okanagan.

The Afterschool Coding Club was launched in the fall of 2017; our Youth Services Technician developed a pilot program which enabled the tweens to build on skills they'd learned in previous sessions and connect ideas ranging from computational thinking to block coding. The assessment of this pilot highlighted the continued need for this and similar programs. Young people along with their parents and caregivers told us that the value of the program went beyond introducing technology to young people, giving tweens the opportunity to work together and explore technology in a safe and fun environment.

Caregivers frequently reported their child's enjoyment of the program, and that their tweens had been inspired to continue learning coding on their own.

We have also focused on 3D printing for adults – though teens and supervised younger users are also welcome. In 2018, we received a grant for the 3D printer and our information technology and adult services departments collaborated to deliver a “basics of” 3D design and printing series of public programs. In 2019, we opened this up to provide drop-in sessions and more advanced sessions for the public. These sessions have had a mixed level of success, in part because any public showcase of the 3D printer or other technology is limited by our physical space. Although programs did not reach as much of the public as we had hoped, those individuals who did attend expressed a great deal of satisfaction with what they learned and have gone on to create designs of their own – meeting our intended outcome in running the program.

#### **ALIGNMENT TO PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES – COLLABORATING ON SHARED SKILLS**

The Penticton Public Library has a number of long-term partnerships which support our work, the partners and the community. As a rule, due to the limitations on staff capacity, we do not seek out new partners every year but seek to enhance our current relationships and develop new ones as community needs and opportunities dictate.

The second STEAM based program series for tweens mentioned above provided the opportunity to further develop our partnership with the Penticton Museum and Archives. STEAM Powered takes a broader approach to STEAM programming and promises to deliver programs in all five of the different areas – science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. Again, the focus is on tweens between the ages of 8 and 12, with the Library and Museum sharing responsibility for planning, promoting, and presenting the program. The partnership with the Penticton Museum and Archives is a natural one as we share the building and are both interested in developing programs for tweens that target this area of interest.

Our goals for any collaboration between the library and another organization has been to ensure that we are providing the best possible service to our patrons.

#### **ALIGNMENT TO PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES – ENHANCING GOVERNANCE**

Redevelopment of outcome based assessment tools to assist the Library in focusing its efforts was a major goal of 2019. To this end, we assessed many library services. These assessments were run through conversations with patrons along with a formal community survey of library users and non-users as part of our strategic planning process. We also evaluated our circulation, programming, and database use statistics.

This process was ongoing throughout 2019, the resulting changes are:

The creation of a new position to increase the level of public programming that is responsive to the needs and wants of our community. We have also been able to increase staff capacity through additional hours, enhancing service delivery.

To improve online services through topical and relevant resources that meet the needs and interests of our community, we have introduced new databases (Lynda.com, PressReader and Gale Courses, for example).

In response to patron interest (and thanks to the donation of 150 board games by a community member) we have created the beginning of our Library of Things. The Penticton Public Library has been comparatively late to introduce non-traditional library collections due to our lack of space. However, in 2019, we were able to purchase some paperback spinners and reorganize our space to take advantage of this generous donation. The outcome of this collection has been an overwhelmingly positive response from our community about the material, bringing new individuals into the library to borrow the games. The output has been an impressively high circulation – the “seed” collection of 42 games circulated 101 times between its launch on November 15<sup>th</sup> and the end of the year.

### SUMMARY

In 2019, the staff and Library Board focused on assessment of the services developed during our 2014 to 2018 strategic plan along with introducing (and adjusting) an outcome-based assessment model for specific programs and services. We launched our 2020 to 2024 strategic plan in January and are in the process of planning our goals for actioning that plan.

Capacity for staff, Board and the aging infrastructure of our building remains a major challenge for our library. We will be focused on ensuring we are reasonable in what we hope to achieve over the course of this strategic plan and as always will be putting our community first in reaching these goals.