

*Special guests this year include*

## Provincial Ministry Grants Report for 2019



*Eden Robinson*



*Leif David*



*Ivan Coyote*

### Introduction

Viewed as the cultural hub of the community, the Library offers members and guests a robust and eclectic reading collection, a variety of fun and educational programs, a roster of impressive guest authors and fast Internet service, all provided in a welcoming, strikingly beautiful and cost-free environment.

Just off the arm of the Douglas Channel, the District of Kitimat has been a mecca of activity this year as support work for the LNG Project continues - the largest private sector investment in Canadian history. Houses sell quickly and expensively, apartments have surged in rental prices and small businesses are finding it difficult to retain staff. Those working in entry level and minimum wage paying jobs jump to project contract work for bigger wages and benefits. It is not uncommon to see restaurants close mid-week, shops lock up early, and line ups for taxi service because of a shortage of workers at the lower paying jobs.

Staff retention has not been an issue at the Library but we are keenly aware that should staff need to be replaced we could face serious challenges. Not only has the employment pool shrunk but there is simply no longer any affordable housing.

We are truly fortunate that we have the continued and strong support of Mayor and Council. This allows us to serve our residents (approximately 8,400 in Kitimat and 700 in Kitimaat Village, our First Nations Haisla neighbors) and guests who come to visit, to fish and to work.

*Our Library aligns itself with the Library Branch strategic plans in four areas.*

## Developing Skills

Our goal is to develop language and comprehension skills in order to promote better oral and written communication and to improve reading abilities thereby increasing self-confidence.

Three ways in which we were able to meet our goals were:

Through offering supplemental ESL assistance

Through expanding our summer reading program to include reading tutorials for children and adults

Through hosting a Writer-in-Residence program

Kitimat continuously welcomes newcomers to the community who often travel from afar and whose first language is not English in many instances. While there is language support through The Community Corner (TCC) who offers immigration settlement assistance and ESL tutoring to adults 19 years of age or older, the Library takes over when they recess for summer months. We also led ESL conversation groups throughout the year. We have been told that ESL students thoroughly enjoy the extended opportunities to learn in a supportive environment and that it has helped with boosting their confidence when they need to speak. The Library held 11 ESL conversation group sessions throughout the year. Of interest, a Colombian student has offered to facilitate Spanish conversation groups next year, a popular second language in Kitimat because so many travel to Spanish speaking warm climates for vacation and wintering.

Reading tutorials were held mid-July to August end from Tuesdays to Fridays last year. 64 tutorials were conducted for 16 individuals over 23 days. We heard from parents that their children were excited to return to read, and the extra helped maintain and build on their reading skills. Adult feedback was equally very positive.

The Library offered a Writer-in-Residence program as a first in 2019 featuring Haisla award winning author Eden Robinson. Eden visited each school in Kitimat and Kitimaat Village and shared her writing experiences, tips and advice and answered questions from young audiences about the life of professional writing. She also assisted 12 local writers, setting up private appointments to critique and offer feedback on their manuscripts. As well, she led a Writer's Club meeting and was on hand for an Author Reading and Signing event. Two workshops rounded out the program, "The Creative & Editorial Process" and "The Etiquette of Manuscript Submission". This generated a lot of enthusiasm in the community and plans for a second similar program is underway. Eden also voiced great appreciation for the opportunity to work on her next novel while mentoring others.

By offering ESL assistance, reading support and a Writer-in-Residence program, the Library helped to develop a community of readers and writers while at the same time showcasing the Library as a means of mentorship. These are three examples of the many programs we offer free to the public for skills development and it is essential that we receive adequate funding by all levels of government.

## Enhancing Governance

Our goal is to ensure responsible governance in order to establish and maintain accountability, control and leadership.

Some of the many means in which we accomplished this are as follows:

Through Strategic Planning sessions.

Our Library's Federation Representative and Director travelled to Smithers in 2019 to meet with other representatives to update the Northwest Library Federation Strategic Plan. While the meeting may have only lasted five hours, the drive to and from in one day topped that at six. (It is obvious that our Federation may indeed be quite unique simply from a geographic point of view.) The Kitimat Public Library also has a strategic plan in place which is on target and this will be reviewed in 2020 with facilitation by the Federation North Central Federation manager.

Through community surveys.

A 2019 survey was initiated towards year-end and will continue into 2020. It was developed to poll the community on whether they wanted the Library to open on Sundays. With more people travelling to Kitimat for pipeline projects and spin off work, it came into question whether we should expand our hours for those who only have Sundays off from work. We did find out quickly that one shift ended at 8 pm so we moved forward our closing hours to accommodate these shift workers. We will continue to monitor attendance, requests and survey results as a first step in the decision-making process of whether to expand to include Sunday openings.

Through hiring of reputable and professional tax accountants for annual financial reviews.

Library trustees are ultimately accountable for taxpayers' money. The Board monitors spending and budgets responsibly. Qualified organizations to conduct official financial reviews are hired annually as an additional layers of accountability.

Through creation and revision of Library policies.

Library trustees, directors and assistants come and go. What stays is a solid guide. Our Policy Manual is routinely reviewed and updated by the Board to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, to offer direction for decision-making, and to act as a road map for internal processes.

By strong engagement with the community and Federation, by being accountable for Library spending and by keeping policies fresh and up-to-date, the Board has proven a strong commitment to good governance.

## Collaborating on Shared Goals

Our goal is to partner with early learning organizations and professionals to promote a love of reading, from babies to pre-schoolers, to elementary school children and homeschoolers.

The ways in which we helped promote a love of reading and early literacy were:

Through invitations to elementary schools, homeschoolers, day cares, Strong Start BC, Girl Guides all tailored to developmental ages.



*Our children's programmer  
with a young patron.*

Our Children's Programmer delivered a variety of programs throughout the year, both in and away from the Library, in Kitimat and our First Nations neighbors in Kitimaat Village. The Library hosted four school visits with attendance of 73 children where activities included story times, tours and 3D printer tutorials. Homeschoolers visited three times for craft fun, Ozobots coding instructions and story times. Total attendees were 19 children. Daycare outreach programs totalled 12, serving 197 children and 57 adults. 44 children from the Kitimaat Village attended outreach story times, Strong Start BC (early childhood learning programs) enjoyed story times three times in the year and were attended by 30 children. Girl Guides rounded out the programming fun and instruction with a total attendance of 11.

Time and again, we receive wonderful compliments about our programming. The children thrive in the social interactions and creative learning; by returning time and again we feel we have made a great impression.

Through hosting a Summer Reading Club for children.

Summer months saw 288 children attend this annual program. Parents often mention that they are thankful that there are no associated costs, and that the activities are filled with engaging activities, both educational and physical play.

Through hosting special events which focus on early literacy.

H.R. MacMillan Space Center, Leif David, Magician and a bilingual AFFNO festivity all took place at the Library to promote early literacy. We have been told that many are very impressed that we offer bilingual performances and staff and that all of our programs are free of charge.

We feel that our work supports current research that states a strong reading start in life fosters focus and concentration and builds language skills which helps children be kindergarten-ready.

## Improving Access

Our goal is to aid public access to our services and resources.

The ways in which we maintained or increased access in 2019 were:

Through increased hours of evening operation.

When we realized that temporary project workers were working past our closing hours we lengthened our evening hours. It is still too early to tell whether workers are taking advantage of this change as this went into effect in December. It has certainly shown the community that we are prepared for changing community dynamics.

Through delivery of used books to camp library facilities.

For easier access to reading material, we stocked shelves at one camp and readied ourselves for two more. The one camp manager said that the books were 'flying off the shelves' and were absolutely delighted that we would do this for them. Management also let us know this initiative was included in a Newsletter to all their personnel.

Through interlibrary loans lending and borrowing.

A total of 4,380 transactions in 2019 was evidence that ILL is a worthy initiative. While it meant increased postage spending and more dedicated staff hours we felt that the outcomes were well worth it. The service allows for borrowing almost seamlessly and without obstacles throughout the entire province of British Columbia.



## Conclusion

When I started working at the Kitimat Public Library in 2001 the population was close to 11,000 people. This number slightly declined with the closing of Methanex in 2005 and more so in 2010 with the closing of the West Fraser pulp and paper mill which saw 535 employees out of work. The last remaining industry, Rio Tinto, completed its modernization program in 2015 and because of a more efficient process, manpower was further reduced and more people left the community and the Library. 2011 Census population figures were 8,335 and 8,131 at the 2016 Census. Between the drop-in population and easy access of on-line information and reading material the Library's physical attendance rates decreased. While percentage decline of population stands 20 years later at about 23%, attendance rates hover at 15% over that figure.

We strive to meet the wants and needs of patrons. This means shelves stocked with an impressive collection as well availability of e-book/e-audio/e-magazine and e-video access, a strong roster of programs, a building which has been hailed as an architectural marvel, access to current technology, a warm and safe-haven staffed with the loyal, the friendly and the bilingual; but still the numbers resist. Going forward we will investigate more non-traditional library services in order to reach our goal of increasing memberships, attendance and circulation rates.