

SPARWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

2020 PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

Located in the southeast corner of the province, Sparwood is on the traditional lands of the Ktunaxa people and located some 20 kms from the Alberta border. Sparwood is a coal mining community. Sparwood is not a new community but in fact replaced the communities of Natal and Michel, which were deemed to be uninhabitable due to the proximity of the coal mines in the 1960s. Many people relocated to Sparwood and others left for neighboring communities. Sparwood is a centre of outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and snow sports, to name a few.

With a population of almost 5,000, the town of Sparwood is the economic centre of the Elk Valley region with workers coming from the neighbouring communities of Fernie, Elkford and the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta. Sparwood is the working headquarters for mining giant TECK.

The Sparwood Public Library is a community hub for many activities, from early childhood literacy to a resource for job searches, and education transformation. In collaboration with other community partners, we strive to help the citizens of Sparwood weather the economic uncertainties of the time.

LIBRARY SERVICE DURING COVID-19. Library Service worldwide was disrupted with the onset of the Covid-19 in early 2020. The Library Board and Staff of the Sparwood Public Library were determined to continue library service. At first the ability to browse in person was put on hold people were encouraged to browse our online catalogue and we would pull material and deliver the material curbside with recommended safety protocols. The Sparwood Public Library was closed to in person visits from March 18 to June 23 2020. We reopened to public visits with shortened hours and safety protocols in place, following the directives of the Provincial Health Officer. We are very pleased that the Sparwood Public Library maintained service to the community. The public understands the inconvenience and takes it in stride.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES, GOALS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PARTNERSHIPS

Improving Access: With the Technology Grant from BC Libraries Branch, we had the opportunity to provide access to an under-served community: the blind, visually impaired or print disabled. We have purchased two Victor Readers, specially designed with simple controls for patrons who may have difficulty manipulating buttons, etc on regular CD players. This will open up the Daisy format CDs from NNELS and CNIB. The technology is progressing that patrons can download audio books via WiFi to the Victor reader. We are happy to improve access to library service to those who may have felt they would not be able to access books and information anymore due to their vision issues. The Victor readers will be available to patrons starting in the spring of 2021.

Building Capacity & Advancing Citizen Engagement

Due to the pandemic building capacity has been somewhat of a challenge, but the with a crisis comes opportunity, and staff has focused more on the services that we can offer virtually: we have weekly online Facebook storytime, as well as holding Lego Club online and asking children to post photos of their creations online. We set up a small shelf of books in our local Mall that we replenish on a regular basis, of weeded books and donated paperbacks for people to help themselves. It has been very well used and we are considering keeping it after the pandemic ends. We have encouraged patrons to interact with us using Facebook and we have promoted our services to other Facebook groups, more notably the Elk Valley Homeschool group.

A number of our programs for adults, such as the weekly computer/tablet training session have been suspended during the continuing pandemic, but we do still provide in person troubleshooting and basic skills as needed.

There has been an increase in patrons requiring assistance with online government programs, such as the federally funding CERB initiative, the provincial Covid-19 relief forms, and other services they only can access online.

Our relationship with the Sparwood Early Years group has taken a virtual turn. They provide funding for our Books for Babies program.

East Kootenay Behavioral Intervention Society, BC Family Services are still given access to the library for their service they provide for clients.

Despite the pandemic we have been able to forge a new relationship with the Youth Action Sparwood. They have provided us with funds to purchase books specific to teen/parent relationships and we have set up a separate shelf called “The Teen Wellness” Library. The “shelf” will continue to grow over time. Once the pandemic is over we hope that as a group they will access the library.

In 2018/19 the Columbia Basin Trust awarded area libraries with a technology grant as well. The focus of that grant was to improve our meeting room’s resources such as a digital projector, new screen, improved sound system. The pandemic forced us to limit access to the meeting room, and unfortunately our new equipment has not been used as much as we had hoped. Once the pandemic is over we believe the usage of our equipment will increase.

We are pleased to report that we are one of the few organizations that have stayed open to the proctoring of exams. We have had individual exams and group exams. We felt that with proper safety and sanitizing our proctoring service could continue.

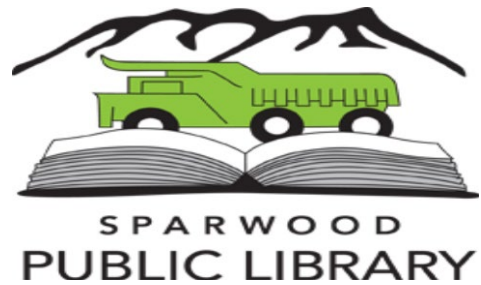
Our Community Volunteer Tax Clinic continues, which seniors and other eligible people dropping off their tax information and we deliver the material to the retired accountant who has been volunteering for at least 5 years.

Work BC continues to use the library for their resume help and employment job bank. They have reduced their visits to twice monthly for the duration of the pandemic and we provide our laptops and printer for their use.

Enhancing Governance:

Due to physical distancing, the Sparwood Public Library Board has only met virtually and the work on enhanced governance has slowed down for the time being. One Board member has taken on the task of reworking the vision and mission statements.

Work is still being done on a new strategic plan and the revision of policies is ongoing, albeit at a slower pace.



2020 Library Technology Grant

Interim Planning Report

Thank you for the opportunity to enhance the Sparwood Public Library's digital and technological services to our patrons.

Attached is a worksheet of proposed items we would like to purchase with the funds to improve access for the citizens of Sparwood and British Columbia. The estimated costs have been rounded upward to cover any unforeseen costs.

The majority of purchases are to improve our public internet access service: a wireless printing service, new computers to bring give patrons quick access in a clean, inviting ergonomic space. The grant gives us the opportunity branch out to those print and visually impaired to offer them the services provided by CELA and NNELS. Making the library accessible to all patrons. With the smart television we want to offer local organizations a tool for instruction and training and increase our community engagement.

Please contact me should you have any questions, or require us to adjust our plans to better align with provincial priorities.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

James Bertoia
Head Librarian

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