

PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT 2019

SQUAMISH PUBLIC LIBRARY



INTRODUCTION

The Squamish Public Library serves a community of approximately 22,000 residents in our municipality and surrounding district. Squamish is a vibrant, young community; almost 60% of its residents are under the age of 40. We are on the traditional territory of the Squamish Nation, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, and many of our residents have chosen to move here from outside of the province and country to make Squamish their home.

Squamish is a dynamic community undergoing rapid socio-economic transformation and growth. In our highly active, multicultural, and family oriented community, opportunities are emerging in tourism, knowledge-based industries, education services, manufacturing, and forestry and wood products. We are fast becoming one of British Columbia's most talked about tourist destinations.

In addition to our seven public elementary schools (including French immersion and Francophone options, as well as a Cultural Journeys elementary school program with an emphasis on outdoor education), three public secondary schools (including Learning Expeditions, a fully project-based, technology infused middle and secondary program), a Montessori school, a Waldorf school, and Coast Mountain Academy high school, Squamish is also home to Quest University Canada.

Our library is an important community hub to the residents of Squamish. It is a gathering place for many community groups and partners, and it is central to a variety of local initiatives, including promoting early literacy and welcoming new families to our community. We aspire to provide the collection, services and programs best suited to the needs and interests of our community. In 2019 our board undertook an extensive future needs study to provide our municipal council with the rationale and parameters for expanding our library service as our community population grows at a rapid pace over the next 20+ years. This study has been integrated into the District of Squamish's Real Estate and Facilities Master Plan. In our current facility, we engaged with a local artist to create a beautiful mural in the teen area of the library, to better designate and animate the space.

As with any community, Squamish and our library face challenges. Our neighbourhoods are spread out and public transit is limited, making our library's downtown location a barrier to access for some. Housing is expensive, and the vacancy rate in the rental market is close to zero. We are a diverse community with a range of needs and expectations; it can be a challenge to maintain a welcoming environment for all while being faced with safety and security concerns, including mental health and addiction issues. We now have library staff representation on a Community Advisory Committee for Under One Roof, a new facility that will provide centralized access to food, shelter and support services, set to open in fall 2020 across the street from the library.

2019 marked the first year of our new 2019-2023 strategic plan. The plan contains four strategic priorities: inspire inquiry, learning and literacy; engage and welcome everyone; deliver outstanding service; and build a strong team and healthy workplace. We have established measurable goals for each priority and can point to many 2019 accomplishments that directly support our strategic priorities. The priorities drive our planning, assessment and reporting structure.

DISCUSSION AND EXAMPLES OF SQUAMISH PUBLIC LIBRARY'S SERVICES AND PROGRAMS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO PROVINCIAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

PROVINCIAL PRIORITY #1

IMPROVING ACCESS

Squamish Public Library Goal that supports the priority:

As the provincial strategic plan describes within the priority of Fostering Connected Communities, “libraries bridge the physical and digital worlds, connecting people with each other, and with the knowledge, ideas and resources they need to be successful.” The Squamish Public Library’s strategic plan touches on this provincial priority in more than one place in our plan, including our goal to “Engage and welcome everyone.” An expected outcome is to be a venue for inspiring and welcoming ideas, conversations and innovative projects.

Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

To achieve our goal of “Engage and Welcome Everyone,” we endeavour to facilitate community connections, and provide the space and programming to meet our diverse community’s needs. We are proud of our responsiveness to community suggestions, and added several new services to improve and expand access in 2019.

We expanded our suite of databases by adding “Road to IELTS,” a resource for patrons preparing to take the IELTS English language test. We were aware of the large number of community members vying for our limited supply of print resources on this subject, and responded by adding this database, which is accessible for concurrent users both in the library or remotely. This service was accessed 110 times from September to December 2019.

As a community with a large number of students in distance learning courses and limited exam invigilation services, we have been challenged to accommodate the large number of requests for invigilation timeslots here in our library. We streamlined our processes to offer set times and dates, coordinating with other centres (including Whistler Public Library) to provide a variety of different scheduling options. We hosted 14 sessions and invigilated over 20 exams last year, and were able to refer numerous students to alternative invigilation centres which could accommodate them on different dates.

We expanded our collection to include video games and video game console lending in 2019, in response to community demand and popularity. This service enables people without their own equipment to try out video gaming. We were also able to expand our board game and jigsaw puzzle collections, in part thanks to donations from manufacturers and community members.

We were approached by a Qwest University student who was undertaking a research project on diversity in children’s picture books. Our children’s librarian supported her to conduct an audit of our collection. Her findings were shared in the British Columbia Library Association’s Young Adult and Children’s Section (YAACS) newsletter. The project inspired our librarian to take a course on diversity audits, and she shared her learning with other staff. This experience has shaped the way we approach acquisitions, equipping us with a more informed ability to consider diversity and inclusion when making selection choices.

PROVINCIAL PRIORITY #2

DEVELOPING SKILLS

Squamish Public Library Goal that supports the priority:

The provincial plan states that the actions within this priority will “support libraries as they focus on helping their communities by inspiring creativity, innovation and knowledge creation. It will also help libraries service their communities better through professional development and information sharing.” The Squamish Public Library’s plan has a goal to “Inspire inquiry, learning and literacy: The Squamish Public Library is a place of inspiration and a defender of imagination. We offer innovative, inspiring programming and services that strengthen our role as a community hub and as a place of creative learning for increased literacy.” Within this goal, one of our key strategies is to develop learning-focused programming, including new formats for lifelong learning, that responds to community needs.

Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

Several of our 2019 initiatives aligned with developing skills. We ran an Indigenous Canada Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for eight weeks with approximately ten participants. The group met weekly to view online curriculum (videos), followed by a discussion on that week’s topic. We were fortunate to have the support and participation of a member of the Squamish Nation staff, as well as two Squamish Nation elders, who attended each week and provided first-hand perspective and experience. The results of our feedback survey at the end of the course showed that all participants agreed or strongly agreed that they learned something that was helpful, they felt more confident about what they had learned, they intended to apply what they had learned, and they were more aware of resources and services provided. When asked what they liked most about the program, one participant said “Building relationships with community members and learning about the history of Canada from a First Nations perspective. It feels like I have the complete story now,” and another said, “The opportunity to engage in in depth learning in a group. The participation of our local elders was inspiring as they were able to translate their first hand experiences.”

In collaboration with staff from Courthouse Libraries BC as part of the LawMatters program, we hosted a legal information workshop for staff from the library and other community organizations in the Sea to Sky Corridor. It was an opportunity for participants to learn how to provide legal resources to our patrons, identify gaps and connect with each other. Feedback from participants indicated that they felt more confident after the workshop, they have a much better idea of where to refer patrons, and better awareness of the many resources available.

We expanded our staff team in 2019 and hired our first technology librarian. This staff person’s skill set is expanding our capacity to provide technological support to our community, including additional “Book a Librarian” sessions than we were able to provide previously. Feedback from such sessions has all been very positive, with patrons indicating they feel more knowledgeable and confident with digital resources, they intend to apply what they learned, and are more aware of library resources and services as a result of the experience.

Our public services librarian planned and presented a workshop on thinking critically about the information we consume, giving participants the skills to recognize “fake news” and help stop the spread of misinformation. This workshop was presented to a local Rotary Club, to the Chamber of Commerce as part of their speaker series, and to our library staff during Media Literacy Week. The engaging delivery style and the take-home mini reference guide were both very well received, and the local Rotary club feedback was that the presentation was one of their most fun yet!

PROVINCIAL PRIORITY #3

COLLABORATING ON SHARED GOALS

Library Goal that supports the priority:

Within our goal of “Engage and Welcome Everyone,” one of our key strategies is to strengthen relationships and develop meaningful partnerships with local agencies to reach out to vulnerable people.

Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

Through regular participation at community events and meetings, we are able to develop and foster partnerships with various organizations in order to collaborate on shared goals. One such example is our participation on the Community Advisory Committee of Under One Roof, a new facility that will provide centralized access to food, shelter and support services, set to open in fall 2020 near the library. Regular attendance at these committee meetings provided us with an opportunity to explore how we could work together on shared goals, and our “Community Conversations” initiative arose from this. We hosted our first community conversation in the fall, by screening a documentary on homelessness called “Us and Them,” followed by a facilitated community discussion about the movie, about homelessness in Squamish, and about local services that exist or will exist soon. We also provided a space to showcase “This Place Called Homeless,” an exhibit of photographs taken by photographers who are homeless or who have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. The event was attended by approximately 85 people, and created a safe space for meaningful conversation between attendees. We will be hosting more community conversations on a variety of locally-relevant topics through 2020.

Similarly, the connections we have fostered with other local agencies have resulted in collaborative programming to benefit our community. Sea to Sky Community Services hired a poverty law advocate in 2019, and we provide space for drop-in support in our library each month. This program provides support with tenancy law issues, employment law matters, human rights matters, appealing Assistance Benefits denials, and provides support at tribunal hearings and at mediations. The level of expertise offered by the advocate is at a much higher level than what we as library staff members are equipped to provide, and hosting the service in our library provides much greater exposure in order to raise awareness in the community and reach as many eligible recipients as possible. The library also provides space for a multicultural outreach support worker from the Howe Sound Women’s Centre, a program that provides services and support to immigrant and refugee women who have experienced, or are at risk of, abuse, threats, or violence in a relationship. By providing space for drop-in support in our library, a facility that is visited by such a diverse range of community members, it extends the reach of this service to individuals who might not otherwise be aware of the women’s centre or the services available.

PROVINCIAL PRIORITY #4

ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

Library Goal that supports the priority:

One of the four main goals of our strategic plan is to “Build a strong team and healthy workplace.” This goal includes a focus on governance with key strategies of “Engage the board in annual succession planning” and “Ensure the board continues to be strengthened and engaged in the community.”

Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

Our board of trustees developed and undertook a new self-evaluation survey process last year in order to assess the board's effectiveness and identify any gaps in skillsets they had determined as being important to the overall composition of the board. This process was repeated at the end of 2019, and discussing the results has provided the board with an opportunity to look more closely at how they are operating and how they might wish to change their approach. In addition, the board has committed to establishing and following an annual calendar to establish a board work plan, focus their work at each board meeting and ensure that important processes are not overlooked or given inadequate time and attention.

A priority of our library board for the past several years has been to address the constraints we anticipate in the coming years as the population of our community increases at a very fast rate; our Official Community Plan estimates that Squamish could double in population by 2040. Our current facility is nearing capacity with our current population, so it is time to plan for expansion. Leading up to 2019, we had undertaken an extensive community input survey in late 2017, which fed directly into our strategic planning process in 2018. Our current strategic plan prioritizes the task of proactively identifying future needs in terms of programming, services and space, and prompted us to undertake a future needs study as a main focus of our 2019 activities. This study began with an extensive research component, resulting in a report on future trends in libraries. This report helped us establish the main themes to look at in the second stage of our process, which involved having our consultant facilitate sessions with our board and staff, and later with the community via a survey, focus groups and outreach at community events. Our research, current knowledge and community consultation resulted in a final future needs study report, which was presented to our municipal council and incorporated into the District of Squamish's Real Estate and Facilities Master Plan. This information will directly inform the municipality about the library's requirements as decisions are made about municipal facilities in the coming years.

The board has supported operational changes we have implemented for staff in 2019 to further our goal of building a strong team. These included new training opportunities such as homelessness training, testing out a library staff book club, implementing a new daily huddle to touch base as a team before we open each morning, and introducing a work schedule that provides more flexibility to full-time staff who work a weekend day as part of their regular schedule.

SUMMARY

2019 was a year to undertake a future needs study in order to determine our future programming and space needs and to create a vision of the role the library can serve for our community in the coming decades. We continued to forge new partnerships, offer new and exciting programming, and extend our reach to new members.

We look forward to new opportunities in the year ahead, including adding a marketing and communications staff member to our team, updating our public computing services with new hardware and software, and undertaking some internal space improvements to make the most of our current facility.

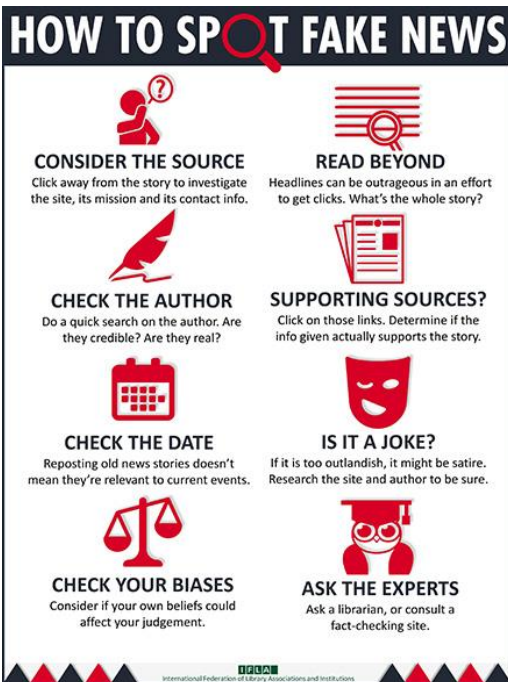
SOME HIGHLIGHTS OF 2019



Honouring volunteers for 25+ years with the library!



Staff members trying out their first daily huddle



Fake news resource (Source: IFLA)



Photo sent by a library patron of their sleeping child, clutching their brand new library card