

INTRODUCTION



The Fort St. John Public Library Association is a vibrant and busy library serving a community of approximately 34,000. The library is housed in the North Peace Cultural Centre which includes a café, theatre, art gallery and a variety of arts program rooms. The City of Fort St John is a unique place where residents celebrate the abundant natural wildlife, aurora borealis, and friendly community members. Fort St John attracts young families and continues to have one of the highest birthrates per capita in Canada.



The FSJPLA is a public library association, as identified in Part 4 of the **Library Act**, and relies on grants, fundraising and donations. In 2019, the FSJPLA continued to face the challenge of being the third lowest local-government funded library, per capita, out of all 71 public library systems in the province of BC. Other challenges include its location within a rented facility, which can only provide approximately 1/3 of the square footage for our population, operating on restricted hours of operation, and operating with half of the number of full-time employees other public libraries have with comparable service area populations in the province.



Despite the challenges listed above, efforts to continue serving our community with quality programming, professional staff and a carefully managed collection, allow us to meet the diverse needs of our community. In 2019 we continued to use our Strategic Plan as a guiding document for addressing the goals and providing direction for our future.

PRIORITIES IN 2019

FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

One of FSJPLA's ongoing goals for 2019 was to continue to reduce barriers and increase programs to underserved demographics, as outlined in the 2019-2021 Strategic Plan. We were successful in meeting this goal and the work in this area is ongoing.

No one
leaves
without a
card.

Priority Aligned Programming | Bridge Membership

FSJPLA changed its Bridge Membership program back in 2018, which eliminates the barrier of having to produce identification or an address to obtain library membership. This program was originally developed to serve those in our community who are transient, staying in local shelters, or homeless.

Program Partnerships

FSJPLA has maintained a partnership with the local **Salvation Army Centre for Hope** in support of our Bridge Membership Program. The Centre continues to assist us in identifying the ongoing needs of our homeless and transient populations.

Outputs and Outcomes

One hundred and twenty five new Bridge Memberships were created in 2019, this is an increase from 2018 where we saw 97 memberships created and demonstrates the need for this membership in our community.

While the purpose of the Bridge Membership was originally designed for homeless individuals, FSJPLA continues to see a wider audience scope than was anticipated at the start: the new family who just moved into town but cannot yet provide documentation to verify their address; the student who is temporarily staying with a friend with no membership to any other BC library; the patron enrolled in the Salvation Army's addiction recovery program and is staying at the local shelter; the 15 year old who can't get their parents to come to the library to sign up for a card.... they all qualify for a Bridge Membership.

This program has positively impacted patrons as well as staff; no one gets turned away. We found that participants of this program share their experience with others which results in people coming in to inquire about it, which leads to them signing up and then using the library. When we explain this option to people who otherwise would not qualify for a regular membership, we are met with relief and smiles and the patron is usually grateful for the good news in their day.



I rely on my DVDs to keep me entertained
when I'm out of work.

Bridge Member

FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youths.

Priority Aligned Programming | QSA@FSJPL

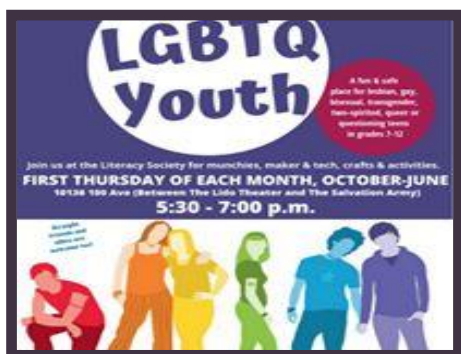
Launched in 2016, the QSA@FSJPL program continued through 2019. This program was developed specifically for LGBTQ+ teens and their supporters after our research found this demographic to be vastly underserved in our community. QSA@FSJPLA is an activities-based program, allowing youths of the LGBTQ+ community to gather in a safe space with others who may share similar life experiences.

Program Partnerships

Partnering with School District #60 has allowed FSJPLA to raise awareness of the program throughout the LGBTQ+ community and those who work to support it. With this partnership we are able to share best practices and share current vocabulary and trends to ensure our youths are experiencing the highest quality of programming.

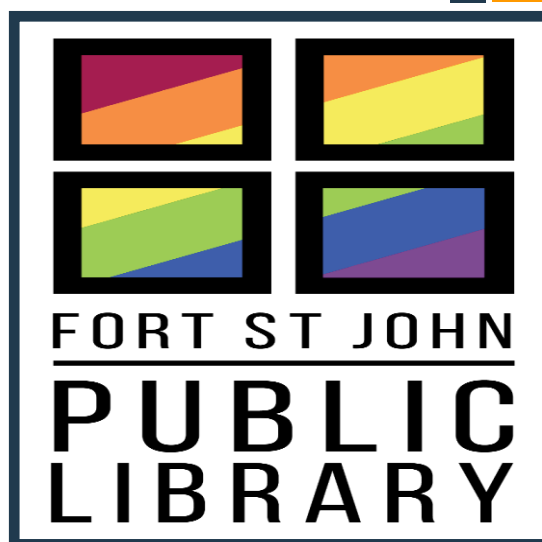
Outputs and Outcomes

FSJPLA's aim in creating the QSA program was to ensure the LGBTQ+ youths within our community are aware that there is a safe space for them to gather. As the program continued through 2019, youths who attended spread knowledge of the program to their friends and LGBTQ+ peers. We are seeing evidence that this word-of-mouth method is proving successful in spreading awareness to youths who can benefit from this library program. Many youths indicated they heard about the QSA program from a friend and attended because someone they knew had spoken of their experience. We hope to see this impact continue in 2020 and reach further into the community. QSA@FSJPLA saw 53 attendees in 2019 an increase of 1% from 2018. Once again, most of the attendees participated in Fort St John's Third Annual Pride Walk, where FSJPLA's outreach team was on site to hand out information on the program as well as showcase our LGBTQ+ collection.



"I like the fun stuff we do here and getting to see my new friends."

QSA@FSJPL Attendee



BUILDING CAPACITY

Priority Aligned Programming | Creative Kids Suite

Developed in 2016, our **Creative Kids: Thursdays at the Library** is a bundle of STEAM related programs which provide children and families the opportunity to engage in fun, creative and educational play. Included in the suite of programs are the **Afterschool Lego Club**, **Saturday “Crafternoon”** and **Maker and Breaker Spaces** and **DASH Family Coding**

The DASH Family Coding program offers robotics challenges designed to stimulate programming, coding and circuitry skills as well as targeted projects to encourage problem-solving and three-dimensional thinking. **HOMESCHOOL Mash-up** provides home school students and their families the opportunity to learn and interact in a safe, engaging, social setting; **Stitch Camp** allows for young artists to learn the principles of art, patterns and sewing; **Dungeons & Dragons** provides multi-age game nights for individuals and families alike.



Program Partnerships

This suite is supported through FSJPL’s partnership with the **United Way of Northern BC** and was designed to provide more after-school programming within the community, in addition to offering day programs to pre-school children or those enrolled in alternative schooling programs.

Outputs and Outcomes

In creating this program suite, our aim is to develop opportunities that encourage children of all ages to explore their creativity through targeted activities focused on science, technology, engineering, art and math. 1225 children, young adults, and adult caregivers participated in the programs within the Creative Kids suite in 2019 – a 15% increase in participation from the previous year.

FSJPL has received many requests from parents, caregivers and children for even more science programs. With every program, we hear children remarking at discovering something new, or aspiring to make something that doesn’t yet exist. Programs like these continue to impact our community by providing an additional forum for children to learn STEAM skills for real-world application and to stimulate entrepreneurial passions.



“I’ve always wanted to learn how to run a robot. Now I can code!”

WORKING TOGETHER

Priority Aligned Partnerships | School District 60 & SWIS & St. John Ambulance

In 2019, FSJPLA continued its partnership with **School District 60** and its **Settlement Workers in Schools** division to offer the Library and Beyond program (LAB) for the ninth consecutive year. The LAB program consists of two seasonal day-camp experiences which provide meaningful opportunities for immigrant students to engage in a variety of extracurricular, recreational, educational and cultural activities within our community, alongside Canadian children. During Spring Break, 3 sessions of LAB programs are offered, while eight sessions are offered during July and August. Recently we have introduced a “PAWS 4 Stories” program where children can read to a trained therapy dog.

Creating
community,
welcoming
newcomers.

Outputs and Outcomes

One of the main goals of this program and partnership is to ensure newcomer children and their families have the opportunity to be introduced to our local culture and all that our city has to offer. As a benefit, pairing non-English speaking children with those fluent in English assists with the settlement process. Since its inception in 2012, this popular program has generated an increase in newcomer families’ awareness and use of our library. Many of the families of the participating children have gone on to become active participants in FSJPLA’s other programs and events. Arising from this partnership, FSJPLA has gained several young adult volunteers who were part of the SWIS program as children themselves – one of whom was hired as part of our LAB/Summer Reading Club team. In this capacity, this student provided greater communication between library staff and participating children whose first language is Filipino.



SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS

Priority Aligned Initiatives | Stakeholder Involvement

In late 2018, the FSJPL Association Board of Trustees rolled out their new Strategic Plan. This plan aligns the needs of our community as guided by a stakeholder survey which was launched in 2017.

Outputs and Outcomes

The 3 year plan is already guiding best practices for the FSJPLA Team. It is reflective of the strategies developed by both our municipality and provincial Libraries Branch. The Board anticipates reviewing this plan monthly to ensure that the Outcomes, Responsibilities and deadlines are serving the community in the best possible way.

Our strategic plan allows us to define our priorities.

CONCLUSION

The inspiration, support and funding FSJPLA receives from the Ministry of Education's Libraries Branch provides us the means to continue serving the needs of our community. By supporting FSJPLA in our endeavors to offer innovative programs and services including resource sharing across BC, it has also provided us the opportunity to continually impact the daily lives of those we serve.



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