

SPARWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

2019 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 neighbouring 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.

One of the great challenges for Sparwood is what is known as “four and four”. TECK employees normally work for 4 days and have 4 days off. Many families take the extra days off by leaving the community. Many workers work shifts which means their schedules change weekly. This is a great challenge for the library and other organizations and businesses, as it is hard to plan events and programs around such variable work schedules.

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.

The Library Board began work on a strategic plan in 2019 and plans to have it completed before summer. Policies are being reviewed as well.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES, GOALS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PARTNERSHIPS

Improving Access:

The Sparwood Public Library is improving access by expanding programming to include nontraditional hours: In 2019 we implemented a family storytime on Saturday morning, which was a need expressed by the community. The local Early Childhood Committee held a survey and the main recommendation by the public was to have more activities for children on the weekends. We held pilot sessions in June 2019 and the attendance was very good, and based on this, we permanently implemented an hour-long session on Saturday mornings.

Developing Skills:

The Sparwood Public Library hosts an informal weekly adult computer class for those adults who wish to learn and expand on their technological skills with laptops, tablets, and smart-phones.

Staff of the Library are trained to assist patrons on basic computer/tablet skills, at times troubleshooting for patrons.

Staff assist patrons accessing and filling out governmental forms. Providing access to faxing and scanning service.

The East Kootenay Employment/Work BC service rents space at the library for employment searches, advice, resume help, on a bi-weekly basis.

In 2019 the Sparwood Public Library was successful in obtaining a grant from the Columbia Basin Trust Technology Program to purchase equipment to help train people with technology: laptops, tablets, a sound system, portable screen, a new digital projector. This equipment will be used in-house, and also will be made available to local organizations for their training needs.

Collaborating on Shared Goals:

The Sparwood Public Library has a close relationship with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), being a part of the group to facilitate all forms of literacy in the Elk Valley.

Our relationship with the Sparwood Early Years organization is very close. Their meetings are held at the library on a monthly basis. We support their objectives of programs for newborns and toddlers. They in turn, have helped fund over the years a number of the Library's children's programs, including storytime and Books for Babies program which sees newborns receive a board book and a musical CD. The program also includes the Sparwood Wellness Centre, which distributes the kits to families.

We provide the East Kootenay Behavioral Intervention Society with space to meet with parents and children to assist in literacy for children who may be struggling in school: intervening in learning issues before they develop into problems.

We provide space and programming for the Elk Valley Homeschool group: the parents are welcome to use our collection for their lessons and we have a small collection of material specifically for homeschooling. Twice a month, library staff provides a short, hour-long lesson on specific topics that homeschool parents request. For example, Students doing lessons on human anatomy were given a lesson on the workings of the heart. The homeschool group has also assisted in recommendations for purchases of library material.

Enhancing Governance:

The Sparwood Public Library began in 2019 a new strategic plan: this is from “scratch” with a vision statement, purpose and priorities. The strategic plan should be completed for summer.

We are also updating our policies as they have been updated only piecemeal from the 1990s.

We have had board members attend governance sessions hosted by the Kootenay Library Federation and have been in touch with other Kootenay libraries to work on best practices regarding policies.