

2021 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

Hazelton District Public Library

1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

The Hazelton District Public Library (HDPL) is located on the bank of the Skeena River in the Village of Hazelton. Although the population of Hazelton is only 300 people, the library provides services to a great number of communities scattered across our region, from residents of the Kispiox Valley living up to 40 kilometres north of the library, to those in Witset, 40 km to the east, all the way west to Gitwangak and Gitanyow, 75 km away. The region's population is made up mainly of indigenous people of the Gitksan and Wit'suwit'en nations, with the remainder being made up largely of the descendants of European settlers.

As in most northern communities, stable and fulfilling employment continues to be scarce for many people here. There is very high unemployment across the region, as well as low high school graduation and adult literacy rates. These issues, combined with the impacts of colonization, are important factors in other social difficulties that many families in our area face.

Hazelton has limited recreational opportunities and few community gathering places. The library, a welcoming place for all where entry and services are free of charge, plays a crucial role in the community. We are a source of education, entertainment, and of stimulation for children and adults alike. HDPL is also a much-needed access point to information and Internet service in a rural area where connectivity is often unavailable and where many cannot afford a computer at home.

As we all experienced, 2021 was a roller-coaster ride of changes in all areas. Library planning and operation had to be flexible and needed to change quickly. During closures of public venues and events, our library collection took on added importance as we continued to provide education and entertainment materials without danger to patrons.

Our main children's event, the 2021 Summer Reading Club, was redesigned to ensure that patrons and their children were safe. We ran 5 clubs in our communities this year and were pleased to see an increase in children and parents participating.

We recognize the value of reconciliation and are committed to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

This year we added many items to our local history reference collection pertaining to the First Nations and Settlers in our area. Some of our unique and fragile documents needed to be digitized to preserve and protect them while allowing wider community use. Our Local History Collection Enhancement project allowed us to purchase new materials and equipment to allow these precious items to be retained in a useful form. After consultation with the community, patrons and organizations are coming to us for information to assist in claims regarding residential school and residential hospital stays, to research First Nations education and knowledge practices, and other research areas.

2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Project/Program Name
Local History Collection Enhancement Project
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.
<p>Hazelton District Public Library's <i>Local History Collection Enhancement Project</i> increased historical acquisitions and made more documents available to all our users. It also allowed us to purchase hard to acquire documents and audio recordings from and about our local area to improve the breadth of our local history collection. We also started to digitize our fragile, unique documents and recordings to make them available for public use.</p> <p>Our local history reference collection is well regarded by local patrons and people coming to research in our area. Professors, students and filmmakers from University of Northern BC, University of Victoria, Coast Mountain College, and the Gitksan-Wetsuwet'en First Nations Education Center have all used our collection.</p> <p>This is the start of a longer decolonization project. We will be continuing with acquisitions and digitization for the foreseeable future. This project funding will provide the most important initial boost to allow us to move forward on our own as our local funding permits.</p>
How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?
<p>Strategic Planning Priority 1 - Develop and support literacy.</p> <p>Goal 2: Partnerships with other organizations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue with existing partnerships, expand those partnerships.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Partnering with community organizations to ensure that patrons are included in this project. Many patrons did not know about our collections and have now started using our services.○ Partnering with grant organizations to facilitate new projects and expand our services and add value to our communities. <p>Strategic Planning Priority 2 - Develop diversity within the HDPL.</p> <p>Goal 4: Resources and collections.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase collection of works by indigenous writers, both fiction and nonfiction.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Increased availability of local First Nations authors and their documents to our patrons was a primary goal with this project. <p>Goal 6: Community knowledge base.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increasing the knowledge of our community members, especially in the area of reconciliation exceeded our expectations.

Strategic Planning Priority 3 - Connectivity to our communities.

Goal 8: HDPL presence and involvement.

- Staff and board members networking.
 - Connection to our community and our patrons has increased more than we had hoped.
 - Continuing conversations and connections will only strengthen our presence.

How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service? Please provide information for as many goals as applicable.

1. Improving Access for British Columbians	This project allowed HDPL to provide research services in more areas, using more portable and less fragile media with increased access in remote areas of B.C. to historical documentation.
2. Building Capacity for library staff and directors	The new equipment and procedures added to the knowledge and abilities of our library staff.
3. Advancing Citizen Engagement	Community consultation and discussion on reconciliation and historical knowledge has increased significantly in our local area.

What are the key outcomes of this project/program?

Immediate Outcomes:

- More local history material available for academic research and general use
- Patrons know about our local history collection and use it for reconciliation and historical research
- Fragile and unique local historical content is preserved for future patron use without damaging original documents

Intermediate Outcomes:

- Enhanced ability to provide local historical material to a broader research audience including patrons in our remote communities using digital copies of unique local documents

Ultimate Outcomes / Impact:

- Patrons and academic researchers trust HDPL as a source of valid and extensive local historical information

Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery)?

A funding grant for this project was received from the *Pat Morris Communities Matter Initiative*. This grant allowed us to kick-start our larger decolonization and reconciliation projects.

Our patrons supported this project by using the Local History collection more and provided us with some previously unknown (to us) documentation for us to catalogue and retain.

3. KEY CHALLENGES

Please select the most significant challenges that the library has faced in the past year that you wish to comment on. Leave any other listed topics blank.

Challenge	Briefly describe how this challenge has impacted the library/community, and what steps the library took to address it in 2021. Please specify if any provincial funding was used, e.g., annual library funding, the technology grant, other non-PLB provincial grants (up to 250 words per topic).
COVID-19	COVID-19 presented us all with a changing landscape of restrictions. As we have few staff, normal events continued to be cancelled and replaced with take-home projects for children. Extra costs for this programming meant reduced project offerings.
Emergency response	
Financial pressure	The rising cost of materials and labour continue to restrict what we can do and the hours that we are open. Provincial funding has been static for over a decade while costs have risen dramatically over that same time.
Staffing	Due to increased costs and the inability to attract part-time staff, HDPL is currently missing one casual position. This affects our open hours and our ability to provide some services (ILL / ILC) in a more timely manner.
Disappearing services in the community	
Connectivity	Lack of home Internet, affordability of Internet when available, affordability of home computer equipment and lack of technology knowledge continue to affect all Northern B.C. communities including our area. Library staff can assist with some technology education but staffing levels are not sufficient to allow this to happen often enough.
Aging/damaged facilities	
Community access to the library	Our service area is the size of greater Vancouver. Lack of public transportation is a huge problem as many of our patrons cannot afford an automobile. Busses run occasionally and only during weekdays. They do not visit all communities every day. A trip to the library is reserved for special occasions or cannot occur at all for some.
Vulnerable communities	
Other (please specify)	

4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: _____

Date: March 29, 2022

Board Chair Signature: _____

Date: March 29/22

