



## IslandLink Library Federation Provincial Operating Grant Report for 2021

The IslandLink Library Federation was founded in 2008 under the provincial Library Act and includes four member libraries: Alert Bay, Greater Victoria, Powell River and Salt Spring Island.

This report summarizes the IslandLink Library Federation's goals and achievements in 2021, in response to the expectations outlined in:

- the Federation's provincial funding letter dated June 11, 2021
- 2021 Provincial Library Federation Grant Report Instructions
- *IslandLink Library Federation Strategic Plan, 2020 to 2024* (attached).

### 1: Introduction: Overview of IslandLink Federation

The IslandLink Library Federation is based in the south-west coastal area of the province.

#### Communities:

This IslandLink Library Federation has four member libraries:

- Alert Bay Public Library (ABPL)
- Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL)
- Powell River Public Library (PRPL)
- Salt Spring Island Public Library (SSIPL)

These communities differ from each other in many ways such as population size, industry, accessibility, and population composition. But they are united by their common aim to provide excellent library service to their communities and to collaborate with each other to accomplish this goal.

The combined population of the IslandLink communities is approximately 363,333.

Greater Victoria Public Library is a large multi-branch system. GVPL serves a mostly urban area that includes the Provincial capital. This library serves the largest population within the IslandLink Library Federation.

Salt Spring Island Public Library is located on the largest and most populous of the southern gulf islands. The Salt Spring Island community is greatly influenced by the arts. The library has a strong volunteer tradition.

Powell River Public Library is the one IslandLink library that is actually on the 'mainland'. Located on the upper Sunshine Coast it is accessible by ferry from Vancouver Island and has close ties to the Island communities.

Alert Bay is the most remote IslandLink community. The Alert Bay Public Library serves the residents of Cormorant Island. There is a large First Nations population as well as the residents of the Village of Alert Bay. Alert Bay is accessible by ferry from the North Island community of Port McNeill.

### **Challenges:**

One of the main challenges for the IslandLink Library Federation is the distances between communities and the difficulty of having to rely on ferry travel. Ferry fares add an extra cost, and the Ferry schedules dictate travel times. The sailing schedules are not always convenient and can require travel delays or even extra overnight stays. These extra costs arise when planning shared programming for the IslandLink communities, and when arranging for the annual in-person IslandLink Board meeting.

## **2: Strategic Plan:**

The *IslandLink Library Federation Strategic Plan, 2020 - 2024* document was completed in the Fall of 2019 and was approved by the IslandLink Board on January 22, 2020.

Our Strategic Plan concentrates on three strategic priority areas:

- Capacity Building
- Professional Development
- Program expansion through partnerships

Actions developed at the strategic planning session in October 2019 are listed for each priority area.

Several actions from IslandLink's previous strategic plan are ongoing and have been incorporated into the new Strategic Plan:

- Allocate funding for professional development to libraries annually
- Facilitate a staff sharing and/or exchange program
- Develop a shared programming plan annually
- Allocate funding for digital resources annually

IslandLink supports the ministry's strategic vision for BC Public Libraries by incorporating goals into our own plan that reflect the strategies and vision of the

Libraries Branch. Some examples of these strategic goals from the IslandLink Library Federation Strategic Plan are:

- Promote the value of Library Federations to all levels of Government
- Develop a funding application process to support collaboration with community partners, other libraries and educational institutions
- Allocate funding for professional development to libraries
- Allocate funding for digital resources
- Research, identify, and/or develop a repository for shared program materials
- Develop a shared programming plan
- Facilitate a staff sharing and/or exchange program

## **2021 Initiatives**

Due to the continuing pandemic a reduced and mostly virtual slate of shared programming was planned for 2021. However more professional development was made available to member libraries using a virtual platform.

IslandLink Library Federation has developed areas of funding support for member libraries. Support is available to member libraries for:

- Collaborative Initiatives,
- Professional Development
- Digital Resources Support
- Staff Sharing

However, also due to COVID-19, activity in these areas was greatly reduced, except for Digital Resources support. All IslandLink libraries received budgeted funds to support their digital resources.

## **3: Priorities as outlined in the Operating Grant Award Letter**

### ***a) Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery***

#### IslandLink Strategic Action: Allocate Funding for Digital Resources Annually

IslandLink assigned \$20,000.00 from the annual budget to be distributed, according to a formula, to each member library. Member libraries must submit copies of invoices for digital resources they have purchased to claim this funding.

#### **Outputs:**

In 2021 all member libraries applied for and received their allotted Digital Resources funding to support the purchase of online resources.

#### **Outcomes:**

This program has allowed member libraries to license and offer a wider range of electronic resources to their communities.

Support of digital resources in member libraries is an ongoing initiative for the Federation.

#### Provincial Strategies:

This Strategic Action supports Provincial Strategy #1: Improving Access for British Columbians by supporting the ability for member libraries to improve and increase the digital resources/services they can provide to their communities.

#### IslandLink Strategic Action: Develop a shared programming plan annually

Each year IslandLink develops a slate of programming shared by all the member libraries.

#### Outputs:

In 2021 three programs were organized and funded by IslandLink. All these programs were made available to all IslandLink member libraries. Due to Covid-19 all the programs were virtual.

The programs were:

- Comic Camp – A week long virtual program to instruct and encourage pre-teens and teens to design and create their own comic books. The instructor was First Nations professional graphic novelist, Cole Pauls. Cole offered two sessions per day for 5 days. One session for each age group. The program was offered by GVPL, SSIPL and PRPL. The PRPL session was also open to registrations from Alert Bay area.
- Author Jen Sookfong Lee tour – This Vancouver based journalist & novelist did 3 virtual readings for GVPL, PRPL & SSIPL.
- Magician Leif David – Leif performed live zoom shows for PRPL and gave access to his pre-recorded shows to both SSIPL and GVPL.

#### Outcomes:

Programming during the pandemic has been difficult and libraries have had to be inventive and use technology to reach their audiences. IslandLink was able to help the member libraries engage children, teens and adults. Literacy skills & knowledge were supported, artistic skill & creativity were developed and the interest Summer Reading Club was promoted.

Unfortunately, one outcome was to emphasize the difficulty that the community served by ABPL has with access to technology. None of these programs were successful in the community of Alert Bay mainly due to lack of appropriate equipment and access to the Internet.

#### Provincial Strategies:

This Strategic Action supports Provincial Strategy #3 Advancing Citizen Engagement by helping member libraries offer programs that engage people in conversations issues and activities that are available to them in their communities. The Comic Camp exposed pre-teens and teens to an indigenous artist, Jen Sookfong Lee discussed BC literary fiction, and Leif David promoted a BC wide literacy program.

IslandLink Strategic Action: Allocate funding to support collaboration with community partners, other libraries, and educational institutions annually.

The IslandLink Library Federation is always mindful of the need to watch for, and take advantage of, resource sharing opportunities. IslandLink accomplishes this by communicating with our member libraries, other federations, other libraries, and the ministry.

Outputs:

Funds were granted to Federation members to assist them with programs for their communities that have been planned and presented in cooperation with other partners. These programs were:

- Story Walk: ABPL partnered with the Namgis First Nations and the Village of Alert Bay to offer an outdoor story walk program. This program to promote literacy, was available to the entire community of Cormorant Island throughout the summer of 2021.
- Story Walk: SSIPL partnered with local authors, local bookstores, Capital Regional District and Mayne Island Public Library to increase their Story Walk materials to update and refresh this ongoing program.
- Multilingual Juvenile Collection Expansion: PRPL partnered with LIFT Community Services and New-to-BC to expand the collection started in 2020
- Read and Draw with Author/Illustrator Debbie Ridpath Ohi: SSIPL partnered with Canadian Children's Book Centre & Salt Spring Early Learning for Families to offer a live Zoom event with author Debbie Ridpath Ohi.
- Reconciliation Reading Circle Fall Program: SSIPL partnered with Gulf Islands School District #64 Indigenous Education Dept. to study the book What was said to me: the life of Sti'tum'atul'wo a Cowichan Woman. The discussion was lead by Indigenous teacher, Shannon Johnston.
- Greening of the BC Summer Reading Club: SSIPL partnered with Harlan's Fine Chocolates to offer a gift certificate as a SRC instead of the usual plastic toys that they have offered in past year.

Outcomes:

The libraries gain relationships with other organizations. A successful collaboration will lead to other opportunities to work together to share ideas and resources to the benefit of each organization and the communities they serve.

Member libraries can offer programming and services in their communities that they might otherwise not be able to make available.

The literature focused programs promote literacy, increase public appreciation and awareness of local authors and educate.

Provincial Strategies:

This Strategic Action supports Provincial Strategy #3 Advancing Citizen Engagement. All these programs engage citizens with the services of their libraries. Multilingual Juvenile Collection Expansion project expands library services and promotes inclusiveness for all ethnic groups. The Reconciliation Reading Circle allowed for collaboration with local Indigenous peoples and builds towards reconciliation.

***b) Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community***

IslandLink Strategic Action: Identify a roster of “go-to experts” that members can contact for support and expertise on an informal basis.

Outputs:

GVPL annually shares their Librarian Portfolio Information document with all IslandLink member libraries. This document describes the areas of responsibility for each portfolio; and names the staff currently assigned to these positions. IslandLink Library staff are encouraged to reach out to these GVPL contacts if they need to consult with a colleague in these areas of library service.

Outcomes:

Expected outcomes are increased consultation between IslandLink Member Libraries, leading to improved services and procedures.

IslandLink Strategic Action: Deliver new distance learning sessions.

Outputs:

IslandLink was able to make available the following professional development opportunities to all member libraries. All these professional development courses were offered virtually.

- Connect and Engage on Zoom – a two-part workshop presented by Brett MacDonald of Be Improv, focusing on developing skills and techniques to make library Zoom programs more engaging and fun.
- Technology Basics – this multi session course covered topics such; What is a network, what is a server, bandwidth, IP addresses & software
- Safe Harbour: Respect for All – offered by the Affiliation of Multicultural Societies and Service Agencies of BC. This workshop develops a common understanding

of diversity and some of the issues that lead to exclusion and discrimination. This workshop was a coordinated effort of the BC Library Federations and was sponsored by the Public Libraries Branch.

Outcomes:

Several staff registered and completed these courses. Libraries will benefit from staff's increased knowledge and improved customer service skills.

IslandLink Strategic Action: Allocate funding for professional development to libraries annually.

Outputs:

Funding for Professional Development was provided for the following:

- SSIPL: J. Elizabeth Mills on Knowledge, Artistry & Reflection – designing thoughtful programming for children
- SSIPL: BCLA Conference
- SSIPL: Hostile Interactions Webinar

\$1000.00 was granted to help support the Vancouver Island Library Staff Conference in 2020. This conference was cancelled due to COVID-19. IslandLink allowed the VILSC planners to keep this funding to be used for the 2021 virtual conference.

Outcomes:

Despite the ongoing pandemic, virtual professional development opportunities allowed Library staff to connect, communicate and share ideas with librarians and other professionals from across BC. Attendance at virtual conferences allow staff to remain connected with developments in other libraries, meet vendors and view the newest library products and technologies, and attend workshops with knowledgeable speakers featuring current initiatives in libraries today.

IslandLink has identified the annual Vancouver Island Library Staff Conference as an opportunity for knowledge sharing and as an event that is available for all staff of IslandLink member libraries to attend without any registration fee. IslandLink support for this conference helps to ensure it continued operation.

All these opportunities build capacity amongst library staff and allow them to offer superior library service to their communities.

The IslandLink Strategic Actions: Facilitate a staff sharing and/or exchange program.

Outputs:

Staff from SSIPL again offered training and support for ABPL staff on the operation of the Sitka ILS.

Outcomes:

Staff from Alert Bay Public Library have improved understanding and abilities to use the Sitka ILS due to their relationship with SSIPL staff. ABPL and SSIPL are the only member libraries that both use the Sitka ILS.

Provincial Strategies:

All IslandLink's Strategic Actions listed for *b) Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community*, support Provincial Strategy #2 Building Capacity. These actions promote consultation, learning and sharing of knowledge that work towards the goal of well trained, knowledgeable and responsive library staff.

***c) Service Expansion Beyond Community Borders***

IslandLink supports this provincial priority by working with the other Library Federations to benefit all BC libraries. By taking an active role the IslandLink Manager is able to assist and make possible several joint projects made available to IslandLink member libraries, the member libraries of the other BC Library Federations, and to BC public libraries who are not part of a Federation.

The Federations have worked together to explore and offer professional development opportunities, organize an annual province wide Books for Babies program and negotiating preferred pricing contracts for library supplies.

Outputs:

- IslandLink and the other Library Federations have established preferred pricing agreements for library supplies with LibraryPrint and Barmy Tech. Pricing agreements are made available to BC libraries for items such as: barcode labels, label protectors, EM security strips and overlays, and borrow cards, interlibrary loan mailbags. The IslandLink Manager is the liaison for this project.
- The Federations organize the bulk purchase of Books for Babies materials. The IslandLink Manager is the coordinator of this project.
- The Federations also work together to offer the Safe Harbour workshop. See section: *b) Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community*. The IslandLink Manager handled the registrations for this workshop.

Outcomes:

Federation member libraries, and libraries beyond the Federation borders, all benefit consortium negotiated prices. These savings allow all BC libraries to stretch their budgets to use with other service priorities.



Federation member libraries, and libraries beyond the Federation borders, can offer the Books for Babies service to their communities. Families can expose their young children to books and music; and develop an appreciation for reading, the arts, and their local libraries.

Federation member libraries, and libraries beyond the Federation borders, are able to access professional development for their staff to build knowledge and improve service to their communities.

#### ***d) Furthering the strategies of the BC's Strategic Plan for public Library Service***

Examples are given above for how IslandLink strategic goals & actions further strategies 1, 2 & 3 of the B.C.'s Strategic Plan for public Library Service. Below is how IslandLink's strategic goals & actions further Provincial Strategy #4.

#### **Provincial Strategy 4: Enhancing Governance**

The IslandLink Library Federation recognizes that clear and open communication between Board Directors, Library staff and the IslandLink Manager is key to good governance.

##### **Outputs:**

- February 18, 2021 IslandLink Board meeting by Zoom
- October 29, 2021 IslandLink Board meeting, by Zoom
- Performance Review of IslandLink Manager

##### **Outcomes:**

The Board meetings satisfy the requirement for 2 meetings a year as specified in the IslandLink Library Federation agreement. The Board reviews the ongoing work of the Federation and plans for the future to ensure that IslandLink continues to be a successful, well managed Federation. The Board meetings also provide an opportunity for Board members and Library Directors to network, exchange ideas and build relationships.

Performance reviews of employees is key to good governance and results in many benefits to the organization. This process promotes and enhances the relationship between the Federation Manager and the Board, which ensures a productive collaboration.

## 4: Summary

2021 has seen the continuation of library operation during a pandemic.

Again, this past year we were forced to re-think many of our plans for shared programming, professional development, and collaboration. We have all learned to be proficient with online platforms and virtual presentations.

In some ways the growing need for virtual meetings, conference, workshops and programs has opened these opportunities to many who in the past might not have been able to travel or attend in-person events.

However, the pandemic has also exposed the need for improved technology in many of our communities; specifically Alert Bay for the IslandLink Library Federation.

We are looking forward to cautiously returning to something like our pre-COVID plans. Hopefully we will be able to take advantage of our ability to offer virtual events when needed and proves to be the best alternative. But still have the benefits of in-person collaboration and connection when safe to do.

2022 is expected to be a year of flexible planning and adapting to suit situations as they develop. But we are confident that it will also be exciting as we explore new opportunities and new methods of service delivery.

The IslandLink Library Federation is grateful to the Libraries Branch for our continued funding.

Please contact the IslandLink Library Federation for additional information.

Respectfully submitted,  
Laura Beswick, Manager  
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