



2019 Annual Operating Grant Report

Introduction:

The Northern Rockies Regional Municipality (NRRM) was incorporated in 2009. The first regional municipality in the province of British Columbia, the NRRM includes the communities of Fort Nelson, Fort Nelson First Nation, Prophet River First Nation, Toad River, Testa River and several smaller communities. The NRRM covers approximately 10% of British Columbia's landmass located in the northeast corner of the province. The town of Fort Nelson is the largest community within the NRRM as well as a mini service sector for the northeast regions, as well as the southern Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

The NRRM's economy is strongly based on oil & gas, forestry, and tourism. In the last few years NRRM has seen a significant slow down in oil & gas and forestry which has led to high unemployment and a significant decrease in population.

Fort Nelson is a warm and vibrant community. We are the gateway of the Northern Rockies and embrace our unique northern lifestyle. Fort Nelson Public Library (FNPL) is an active member and supporter of our community and continues to offer services, programs and build community partnerships that help support our community during this time.

FNPL spent most of 2019 working on our new strategic plan, which was approved by the board at the end of the year. FNPL's 2019-2022 Strategic plan identifies the following priority areas:

- Programs and Services: which aligns with the provincial strategies of improving access, collaborating on shared goals
- Facility: which aligns with the provincial strategy of improving access
- Technology: which aligns with the provincial strategies of improving access, developing skills, enhancing governance
- Sustainability: which aligns with the provincial strategy of enhancing governance

Priority 1: Improving Access

At the start of 2019, FNPL undertook a six-week renovation of the main floor of our library. The renovation included the circulation desk, children and teen areas, programming room, and areas for adult seating and collection spaces. During the renovation FNPL carefully considered the accessibility of the library, as well as ensuring that the new spaces we created would be welcoming for our community.

When designing our new spaces, we were conscious about who would be using the space, and how library staff envisioned the space would be used. Our old teen area was small and dark and included one table with a couple of old chairs surrounded by shelving. We often have teens in our library, but they wouldn't use this area as it was unappealing to them. In designing our new teen area, we have chosen bright colours, age appropriate furniture. We have given them a place to socialize, and a

"It is nice to see and hear teens in the library enjoying themselves." - Jennie (library patron)

place to do homework. This space is now used by our teens, many of whom have thanked library staff for providing them with their own space.



Teen Area before renovation



Teen Area after renovation

We have taken accessibility in mind when thinking about our collection space. Our shelves are now at an appropriate space and height to be considered accessible. We have also created child friendly shelving to hold our children's collection.

FNPL has introduced new programming this year aimed at attracting community members who have not traditionally made use of the library. One of the programs that has been very successful, is our Escape Room. The Escape Room was created with older teens and adults in mind but is also appropriate for a family to do together. We have run this program twice and have had to offer additional sessions and days due to the popularity of the program. Not only does the Escape Room attract regular library users, but it attracts members of our community who do not use the library. FNPL views this type of programming, as a way of improving access to the library. Programs such as the Escape Room, or Adult Craft nights encourage people to view the library in a different manner and feel comfortable in our space.

Priority 2: Developing Skills

FNPL staff have been encouraged to move outside of their comfort zones and to develop different skills. We have one staff member who is a great artist and recently painted a mural for our children's area. The recreation centre was holding an art camp and wanted to come to the library to look at the mural. Typically, the staff member who painted the mural would not be comfortable running a program, but with assistance from other staff she put together an art program based on her mural. The staff member enjoyed running her art program and has agreed to run art programs in the summer for children, teens and adults.

FNPL offers free exam invigilation to our community, which is used by high school students to people doing professional exams. During 2019, library staff worked closely with one student who was completing their high school education through online courses. At the end of the year, the student came to the library to thank us for our help, and to proudly let us know that he had been accepted into university.

We also provide a space for people who need to do online training required for employment. Giving people the opportunity to complete their online training at the library, helps with the overall economic situation in our community. Library staff will often provide assistance, with accessing emails which provide training information, as well as assistance with logging into and navigating courses.

This year we worked closely with the new Library Technician at Chalo School. We have spent time working on cataloguing, policy development, sharing information about library resources and space management.

"I am thankful of the support from FNPL. In my new role as a Library Technician at Chalo School. Not only have they helped me in terms of resources, but also have been great mentors as I navigate my way through this new role." – Danika

Priority 3: Collaborating on Shared Goals

FNPL collaborates with many community groups, as we work together to support our community. Our community is small, and it is important to work with other community organizations. We find that working with other community organizations gives FNPL greater opportunity to support our community.



One of our favourite collaborations this year was our Sidewalk Chalk and Freezies program. This program involved working the NRRM Mayor and Council, Fort Nelson First Nation (FNFN) Chief and Council, and the Phoenix Theatre. During this program representatives from NRRM Council and FNFN Council, came and interacted with the families who were doing chalk drawings in front of the library and municipal buildings. This was a great opportunity for Council members to interact with local families, for children to meet Mayor Foster and Chief Gale, and members of both Councils. We are also grateful to the Phoenix Theatre for donating the Freezies for this event. This program met the goals of FNFN in becoming a community hub, Councils goals to be present in the community, and the Phoenix Theatres goals of supporting non-profit events within the community.

At the end of 2019, we started a new project to update our signage with local Indigenous languages. We anticipate that this project will be completed by the end of 2020. We have reached out to Fort Nelson First Nation, Prophet River First Nation, and Acho Dene Koe First Nations, to assist us with this project. This project recognizes the Canadian Federation of Library Associations statement on Truth and Reconciliation, as well as acknowledges language programs such as Fort Nelson First Nation's Silent Speakers program.

Priority 4: Enhancing Governance

During 2019 the FNPL board worked on creating a new strategic plan. FNPL's new strategic plan builds on the previous strategic plan, while still working to move FNPL forward. In creating our strategic plan, we examined FNPL's vision and values, and how that compares to the needs of our community as well as the training needs of library staff and board members.

The FNPL board, have taken on the goal of creating a policy revision schedule. This will ensure that our policies are reviewed on a regular basis and will be kept up to date. The FNPL board, created a couple of new policies this year, including a Room Rental Policy, Exam Invigilation Policy, and an Advertising Policy.