

# PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT 2019

## BOWEN ISLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY

### INTRODUCTION

Bowen Island is located in Howe Sound, a 20-minute ferry ride from West Vancouver. Our population is approximately 3800 full time residents with an additional one to two thousand summer residents.

Bowen Library is a member of the Public Library InterLINK federation and serves the residents of Bowen Island, visitors, temporary workers, and students on the island, as well as Public Library InterLINK patrons visiting, staying or requesting materials from Bowen Library.

The island has a public K-7 community school under School District 45, a private middle school accommodating 50 students in grades 6 – 9, a Distributed Education Program under School District 40 and several private preschools. The majority of secondary school students travel daily, by bus and ferry, to high schools in West Vancouver.

The community and the library are challenged by a small tax base, no industry, a large percentage of the working population commuting off-island each day, and yet high expectations from community members for island facilities and services that are on par with those found in much larger neighbouring communities.

Bowen Library is located in an historic building, recently expanded by 50%, in the heart of our commercial district, just 100 metres from the ferry terminal. With no community centre on island, the library is a hub for community gathering and a source of information and leisure materials, public computers, Wi-Fi access, lendable medical equipment, as well as a place for study, work and resource sharing.

### Our Strategic Plan

Our current strategic plan was developed shortly after the opening of the Library Annex in the Cove Commons. This new addition to the library provides program, study and gathering space for the library and the Bowen Island Community. The plan covers 18 – 24 months from mid 2018 to 2020 and is aimed at developing effective use of the new space.

The goals are short term and most have been accomplished in 2019. The Library Board will meet in April of 2020 to create a new strategic plan for the next one to three years.

Objectives accomplished in 2019 include:

#### Financial

- Define financial needs for coming 5 years in concert with local government.
- Fundraise and complete the plaza and landscaping around the new Cove Commons.

#### Patrons and Services

- Develop policies and procedures to support library use as priority for Annex.
- Design and furnish the Annex to best serve the needs of library patrons.
- Improve parking for library patrons.

## Operations

- Engage in increased dialogue with local government through the board and staff.
- Library board and municipal approval of revised operating guidelines.
- Establish a communication committee of the Board.
- Assess community needs.
- Market our services, value and achievements.
- Conclude Cove Commons project (Fundraising, governance agreement and payment structure).

## Our Team

- Assess best mix of staff and volunteers.
- Conduct a Salary survey.
- Provide opportunities for staff development, board development and volunteer training.

# GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES, GOALS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PARTNERSHIPS

## GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

Improving Access (Fostering equitable access to information and services)

### Alignment with Bowen Library's strategic goals and priorities

- Sharing skills and resources
- Equitable access and inclusivity

### Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

#### Free Drop-in Tax Clinics

In 2019 Bowen Library provided two free tax help clinics in partnership with Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, (CVITP). The program requires community volunteers to prepare, or help prepare, basic tax returns for citizens. The program was offered as a way to assist our community members, particularly those who are low income or marginalized, to keep their tax reporting up to date. We recruited 4 community volunteers who all had experience with a variety of tax returns. The volunteers were trained and the clinics were marketed, planned, scheduled and overseen by library staff.

#### Outcomes that were identified:

The goal of the program was to provide our citizens with a means of having their tax reporting up to date. For low income and marginalized citizens, it can be difficult to complete tax returns in a timely manner. The free clinic aided people to understand the full implications of various tax scenarios and to be compliant with government requirements. Our volunteers shared their skills with the participants so that everyone would have equitable access to information about submitting tax returns and assistance understanding what they were required to submit to CRA. The clinics gave people confidence in their ability to manage tax requirements. Participants left with a better understanding of tax filing, of their own legal requirements, and in some cases with a tax refund that they had not known was owing to them.

## GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

Developing Skills and knowledge

### Alignment with Bowen Library's strategic goals and priorities

- Lifelong Learning and Literacy
- Sharing Skills and Resources

### Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

#### Nature of Home series

In developing increased programming in our new space we set goals to present seminars, classes, webinars or workshops that will enable our community to learn, be inspired and understand the world around them.

Two community members and experts in their fields, approached us to partner with them on a learning and discovery series of talks. The 4 sessions of "The Nature of Home" brought local experts to the library to share their knowledge of Bowen Island's physical and cultural geography.

The Library provided the venue, the marketing, registration, technical equipment and staff to host each session, while our citizen partners provided the content and expertise.

#### Outcomes that were identified:

A total of 167 people attended the 4 sessions. Participants appreciated being able to ask questions, to learn from local experts, and to find out how to get involved in environmental stewardship. Participants were more informed about their own natural community, were eager to learn more and were inspired to take action in several areas of physical and cultural geography.

Examples of feedback from evaluation forms:

"Absolutely inspiring and wonderful talk"

"My friend told me about the value of this program... I am keen to learn more about the natural history of Bowen"

"I was touched and inspired"

"These are very important presentations...looking forward to exploring issues again"

"I will benefit from 'action' groups that follow up from this presentation"

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### GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

Collaborating on shared goals (Working together)

### Alignment with Bowen Library's strategic goals and priorities

- Community Connections

### Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

Bowen Library has established ongoing partnerships with Bowen Island Arts Council, the Early Childhood Development Table, the Bowen Literacy Task Group and several others. In 2019 we began a new partnership with our local Museum and Archives which we expect to grow in the coming years.

#### Outcomes that were identified:

Partnerships are highly valued by Bowen Library, as a means of connecting with other community groups, economizing on financial and staff resources, and reviewing where gaps in community services exist. Partnering with non-profits and other community organizations allows us to share resources, spread costs amongst partners and develop new joint programs together. In a small community we all struggle with limited funding sources, low staff resources and restrictions on program venues. The Library's new space is a wonderful partner opportunity. In 2019 we partnered with the Bowen Children's Centre to bring Angela Low, a well-known parenting speaker, to Bowen. By partnering the library could provide the venue for free, the Children's Centre could provide concession and ticketing, and together we worked on publicity and marketing. This kind of partnership kept each of our organization's costs low, our staff resources less stretched and ensured that the event could take place.

Other partnerships with Bowen In Transition and Bowen Island Arts Council enabled programming that Bowen Library would have been unable to present on our own. In partnerships we could present the following: Author talk by esteemed Canadian poet Lorna Crozier, *Where I Stand* free public workshop with Indigenous Relations Consultant Pulxaneeks, showing and filmmaker talk about the documentary "The Reluctant Radical", *Understanding the Village* public workshop presented by Kathy Camilleri, and the *Knowing our Place* Indigenous literature book club.

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## GOVERNMENT PRIORITY

### Enhancing governance

#### Alignment with Bowen Library's strategic goals and priorities

- Develop enhanced external communications
- Strengthen our recruitment and training of diverse and highly effective board members by providing opportunities for board development

#### Partnership and Program that aligns with the priority:

### Moving Towards Reconciliation

The *Moving Towards Reconciliation* workshop invited board members and senior staff from local non-profit groups and from our local municipality, to participate in an all day workshop to learn how to develop relationships with First Nations by first understanding the true history of settler and First Nations peoples.

#### Outcomes that were identified:

The goal of this partnered program was to expand the knowledge and understanding of Canada's true history with First Nations people for non-profit board members, senior staff and local government councillors. This teaching and growth will enable community groups to plan for incorporation of First Nation history and culture into their services and programs and to explore individual and organizational strategies for developing relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

On Bowen Island many non-profit boards and key staff are the drivers of change in our community. They bring new ideas and learning from their organization to the community, and also to the local government, inspiring and reminding our legislators what the community values. Boards are the

unofficial “government” of much of Bowen Island determining direction and mandate for organizations that impact health care, education, culture, faith and social service. It is from board members that commitments to new ideas and philosophical change arises, imbedded in strategic plans, goals and policies. Without this strategic direction from boards, the staff of organizations will struggle to include reconciliation in their programs and actions.

In our work to support the Truth and Reconciliation findings, Bowen Library and Bowen Island Arts Council have partnered on a number of programs. We heard from other non-profit organizations that they too would like to expand their knowledge and understanding of First Nations history and respond to the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. But they were not sure how to proceed or even where to begin. *Moving Towards Reconciliation* was a one-day workshop facilitated by Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. and hosted by Bowen Island Public Library and Bowen Island Arts Council, designed to help non-profit boards grow their knowledge and develop a starting point for reconciliation activities.

This one-day workshop provided learning, tools and action steps for non-profit boards and members of our local municipal council, to incorporate into their thinking and planning. It allowed our community’s change instigators to move forward – as institutions – and to bring reconciliation initiatives to the whole community through their individual organizational outcomes. Participants were invited to return to their Boards/committees/organizations to share their experience. They were challenged to implement some aspect of their learning into their organization’s programming.

We will follow up with participants by reconvening to share the experiences of participants with their organizations. We are encouraging participants to report back to us on what they have learned and what they have been able to implement in their plans, programs and services.

## SUMMARY

With the addition of programming and study space, Bowen Library was able to offer much expanded programming to our community, as well as a beautiful space for study, tutoring, and community meetings. We capitalized on our citizen experts to help us plan and present programs that were inspiring and enlightening for our community members. From a natural history series to a tax clinic Bowen Library has been working to connect islanders to each other and to the world.

Calls to Action from the Truth and Reconciliation Report continue to be front of mind in our program and service planning. We were able to offer 3 separate workshops to our community to explore the difficult but essential work of looking at our history with Indigenous peoples and committing to make change moving forward.

During programs we ask our participants to provide us with feedback so that we can make changes or grow programs as desired by our community. In 2019 we also asked our community for their feedback on library services and programs through an online survey and focus groups with specific demographic groups. The results of that work will inform our strategic planning in 2020, directing us how best to serve our community.

As a very small library, we value the support of Libraries Branch, not only for the funding offered, but also for the staff expertise, and the coordination of services between libraries through the federation structure. The support by Libraries Branch to Public Library InterLINK, other federations and the BC

Libraries Cooperative allows small libraries to benefit from economies of scale, shared expertise and opportunities for staff development that would not be feasible for us on our own.

Bowen Island Public Library appreciates the continued support of the Province to all of the public libraries in BC. Libraries Branch overarching support ensures that every citizen of BC is afforded free public library service and the opportunity for lifelong learning.