



Stewart Public Library 2019 Provincial Grant Report

The Stewart Public Library is one of the smaller, isolated libraries in British Columbia serving approximately 400 people in the immediate community including the people of Hyder, Alaska and is BC's most northerly ice free port. Located in the heart of the Golden Triangle, Stewart is supported by a number of different industries that include mining, mining exploration, logging, transportation and tourism. Leisure activities consist mostly of outdoor recreation which is a major draw for tourists every year. Citizens choose to live in Stewart for its quiet lifestyle, low crime and pristine beauty; tourists come for these same reasons. The library serves as a central hub for both members of the community and tourists. A considerable challenge the community faces is the limited services and resources. As such, the library has become the primary place for people to access technology, learn new skills, socialize and access information.

As 2018 was the last year of our 5 year Strategic Plan, 2019 was used to re-focus and review our objectives moving forward. This in itself was a learning curve for everyone involved as we navigated how to best build a plan that would serve our community. Through public surveys, community conversations and monthly board meetings, we have now finalized our 2020-2023 Strategic Plan.

For the purpose of this report, the focus will be on how we have utilized the provincial grant funds in accordance to the province's priorities: Improving Access, Developing Skills, Collaborating on Shared Goals, and Enhancing Governance.

Priority 1- Improving Access:

We strongly believe that living remotely does not need to equate with lack of services. During 2019, we put a focus on teaching our patrons how to use various technologies free with their library card as well as continued free access to Wi-Fi for our patrons and visitors. A challenge we faced was *slow internet speeds despite paying high monthly prices*. We were unable to have more than 5 people at once using the Wi-Fi without conflicting with other users. With a limited technology budget, we were grateful to negotiate a deal with Sienna Networks to receive a higher internet speed for a low price. This has allowed us to move forward in our program and technology offerings. We currently have one hardwired public computer and 11 laptops available for public use. The provincial grant is used to fund our free public wifi as well as the teaching hours put into technology programs. With this funding and our higher internet speeds, more opportunities became available to improve our access to the digital world.

We continue to subscribe to digital library materials which improve ease of access for our members. By offering technology help and introducing digital resources, we are able to reach those who would otherwise be hesitant to try the technology.

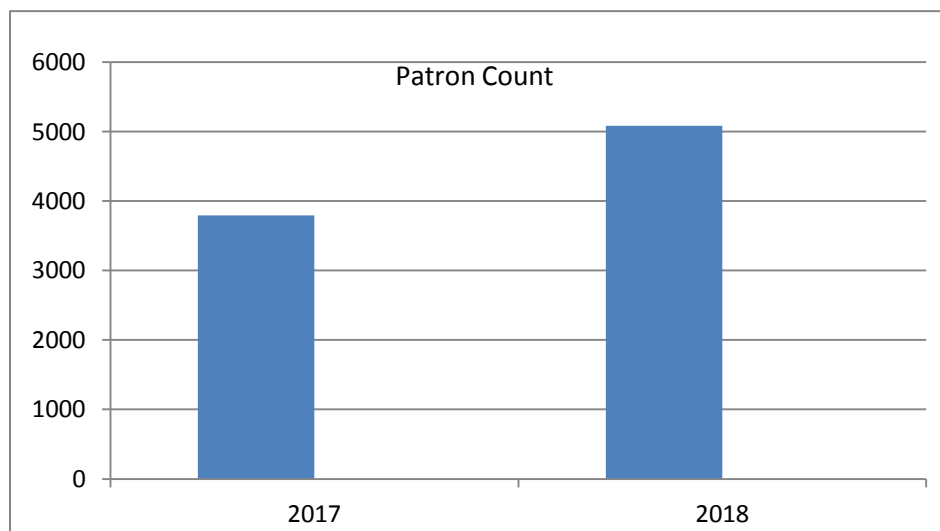
“I am so grateful to the library for helping me learn the technology to have face to face conversations with my loved ones through Facebook. It has helped me feel closer to them.”

~Senior patron~

The provincial grant is used to fund our important interlibrary loan service. This service keeps material relevant for our patrons and is greatly appreciated by our community. In 2019, we processed 432 inbound interlibrary loans and 412 outbound interlibrary loans. This service allows us to ensure that the small size of our library does not hinder our community from accessing resources we may not have.

By focusing on improving access for our community, the Stewart Public Library has been publicly acknowledged as the place to go in the community for digital literacy, technology help, information seeking and connectivity. The outcomes of these initiatives have been invaluable as it has increased our patron’s digital literacy skills and access to technology wherever they are.

In 2019, we welcomed 5082 patrons into the library. This is an increase of 33% since 2018. We also added 64 new library members, which is about the same amount added in 2018. These statistics allow us to see that we continue to reduce barriers and increase access to our library and is quite exciting given the small population of our community.



Priority 2- Developing Skills:

Building Capacity for Children and Youth

In 2019, we continued to offer our children's early literacy program for those 4 and under. Songs, art, stories and games are all incorporated into this 1 hour program to help build upon children's developing language and reading skills. Feed back for this program has been positive despite seeing a drop in attendance. 2018 we saw an average of 5 children attend weekly whereas 2019 we saw an average of 3. This drop in attendance can be attributed to children aging out of the program as well as families moving out of town. With a population of



approximately 400 people, a shift in these factors is easily noticed. We continued to offer our weekly home school program this year. A similar decline in attendance occurred because of the same factors as our early literacy program. We had an attendance of 92 children over 23 weeks where as in 2018, we had an attendance of 214. Despite our low attendance, our quality of programming remained unchanged.

In 2019, we began offering a Coding class for young adults where we saw 60 total attendees in 16 weeks. This is the first of its kind to ever be offered in Stewart and we hope to grow the program by offering more classes in 2020.

Summer Reading Club was another great success thanks to the generous support of the Province of British Columbia. Reading is encouraged and rewarded through our weekly drop-in art program which coincides with the summer theme. Different art techniques were practiced as well as weekly STEM challenges.

Developing skills for our children and youth has had very positive outcomes. It has aided in creating a love of learning and using the library. By making the activities fun, the library is seen as a "cool" place to be. Children and youth are frequenting the library while programs are not in progress, because they have found a sense of belonging and love for independent learning.

Building Capacity for Adults:

It's been a great year for our monthly adult book club. We have read 10 books together as a group with a total attendance of 56 over the year. This program reaches adults as both a social gathering as well as an intellectual challenge. Many of our attendees express how they are reading books that they would normally not pick up, but end up enjoying.

We offered a Spanish class for the first time this year. Over a 6 week period, 7 participants gathered together to learn conversational Spanish taught by a volunteer in our community. On the 6th week, a Mexican themed cooking class was held to celebrate their learning and practice their new skills.

We continue to be the only place in our community that will invigilate an exam or test for free. This reduces the barrier of needing to drive far and increases the likely hood of people increasing their skills and taking online course opportunities. This is a service that is heavily utilized and appreciated in our community.

We encourage adults to attend 1:1 private digital literacy tutoring sessions. We leave the topic open to their choosing and tailor the sessions to their needs. By keeping it private, the fear of being judged by others is taken away. Some of the topics our members have requested are resume writing, Facebook, using apps, booking vacations and email. The challenge we face is the scheduling of appointments need to be done during closed hours. This is due to staffing as well as our physical space in the library.

By increasing our programming for adults and creating new learning opportunities, we are seeing new faces come through our doors. Our patrons are developing skills and receiving the support they need in order to be successful.

Building Capacity for Staff

Our staff is encouraged to attend training sessions, online webinars and conferences whenever possible. All expenses related to the training are reimbursed by the library. This year, the Library Director attended the Beyond Hope Conference and the Library Director Boot Camp in Prince George. The networking, sessions and workshops were excellent and skills were developed that could be used immediately. Some of the challenges we face in staff skill development is our small staff size and proximity to the nearest training centers. Due to only having one full time staff and one part time staff, group-cost-effective travel cannot be utilized as one person needs to work the library. Also, due to budget constraints, it typically is not possible for both staff members to attend conferences. We are hoping to find a solution to this in 2020. By building our knowledge as staff, we can be the best leaders we can be in our community. Knowledge was taken from the conference that was transferred directly to our

board of trustees and other staff. Although this relay of information is not the ideal situation, it still had a great impact on our daily library operations as well as inspiration for future programming. Funding from the Province of British Columbia, Libraries Branch is used to fund our staff's attendance at conferences.

Collaborating on Shared Goals

In 2019, the Stewart Public Library had many opportunities to create many meaningful partnerships. Some of these included:

- Attending a council meeting with the District of Stewart to discuss collaborating to meet mutual goals. The outcome of this initiative led to the fundraising of a recreational library which will be ran by the Stewart Public Library as well as the District of Stewart. This program is set to launch in 2020 and will allow patrons to borrow recreation equipment free of charge. A large part of our funding comes from the District of Stewart, which we are extremely grateful for.
- Partnering with Community Connections in their initiative to create more recreational opportunities in Stewart and work towards a healthier community; As a result of this meeting, Stewart Public Library will be offering borrowing privileges of recreational equipment free with a library card. This program will be implemented in 2020.
- Continued partnership with the Stewart Historical Society for our children's programs. Outcome of this partnership is that child and youth who attend programs at the library learn from professionals about the local history and ways of life.
- Partnering with our local school, Bear Valley, to deliver programs in their space. Being a small library, we are limited in the amount of people that can attend events. By using the school to host tours and performances, we are able to reach every child in our town. This raises awareness of the library to both children and adults.
- The Northwest Library Federation is an integral part of our operations. Partnering with other libraries has helped make it feasible to bring presentations and resources to Stewart that may otherwise be too costly.
- Almost all the events in our town are organized by volunteers. As a library, we have made an effort to commit to outreach at these events. Creating awareness about our services and programs and making connections with families in the community is the outcome of these events.



Art class at the Bear Arts Festival. Community Outreach in the Summer of 2019 which had 32 children attend.

Enhancing Governance

The Mission of the Stewart Public Library is to enrich the life of every person in our community by providing access to the world's ideas and information. In order to ensure that we continue to stay on track with our mission we measure our success in various ways:

- Monthly data is submitted at every board for review and discussion. The public is always encouraged to attend to maintain transparency.
- A quarterly newsletter is mailed to every mailbox to inform the public of the happenings at the library as well as our successes.
- Data is taken daily to keep track of our patron counts, computer usage and new patrons.
- Attendance at a District of Stewart council meeting to report our successes/challenges.
- Survey the community about how well the library is meeting their needs.
- Yearly review of all staff members.

In Summary

The year 2019 has been a fantastic one for the Stewart Public Library. The grant received from the Provincial government is integral in our success. Other areas not previously mentioned that used monies from the provincial grant are our operating costs and purchasing of new books and materials for the library. The community of Stewart heavily relies on the services of this public library and we gratefully acknowledge the role the Province of British Columbia has in our ability to operate effectively.

