



## INTRODUCTION

Creston Valley Public Library serves a population of just over 13,000 people within the Town of Creston and Regional District of Central Kootenay Areas A, B, and C. A few defining characteristics:

- Approximately 92% of the population identifies as Caucasian, 6% as Indigenous, and less than 2% as other visible minorities.
- Creston has an older population, with a median age of 57.6, compared to the provincial median of 43.
- The median total income of households in 2015 was \$46,643, compared to the provincial median of \$69,995.

The biggest challenge facing Creston Valley Public Library is the continued increase of operational costs without a similar increase in provincial funding. The Regional District of Central Kootenay continues to increase our annual operating grant as per the relevant CPI (Consumer Price Index) despite collecting lower-than-average tax rates. However, the provincial grants have remained relatively the same over the past 10 years. It can be a challenge to advocate for the importance of public libraries in our community when the province is signaling the opposite. Nevertheless, our outcomes are comparable to larger and much better funded libraries, thanks in part to a talented staff, large volunteer workforce, and the tremendous goodwill of our patrons.

This year our library:

- Hosted 71,923 in-person visits
- Provided service during 2,033 open hours
- Circulated 126,311 items, both digital and physical
- Registered 540 new patrons
- Facilitated programs for 5,263 participants
- Provided access to 10,900 public internet sessions through our computer workstations.

We have entered the final year of our current Strategic Plan that was developed for the years 2016-2020 (accessible here: <http://crestonlibrary.com/about-us/library-board/#open-data>). Much of this final year of strategic plan operations has supported the “Access” and “Community Engagement” pillars of the plan. This year has also been the first complete year of operations under the tenure of our new Chief Librarian and we successfully maintained high programming and service rates throughout the year.



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## PRIORITY 1: IMPROVING ACCESS

*Our goals:*

*Provide and facilitate access to information and knowledge in a variety of formats*

*Invest in information technology, including physical and digital resources and programs to facilitate universal access*

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- Secured over \$24,000 in funding from the Columbia Basin Trust Community Technology program and Friends of the Library to purchase digital tools for the library. The tools included 10 laptops, 10 iPads, storage, software and a 2 year subscription to Lynda.com.
- Piloted Computer Basics workshops with library patrons.
- Replaced all our public computer stations with new computers as the old ones were slowing down.
- Continued to provide one-to-one computer drop-in assistance on Friday mornings despite departure of staff member.
- Experienced an 12% increase in digital materials access.
- Subscribed to Lynda.com and continue to promote it in our community. So far over 100 regular users have started learning through the online course database.
- Incorporated iPads, robots and digital learning in our Summer Reading Club, spring STEAM programs, and teen programs.

The outcome of these activities is that the Creston community recognizes the library as a place not just for books but for digital resources and technology assistance as well. Our Friday morning “User Friendly” program is the only place in Creston where community members can continue to get free computer skills instruction and IT support. And our digital materials use is increasing, thanks in large part to the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT) funding and staff-led training for the community.

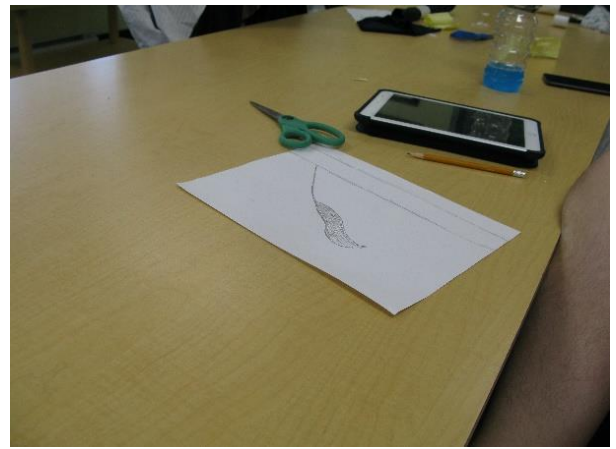
Addressing the digital divide is a top priority for the Creston Valley Public Library. As mentioned in the introduction, Creston has both an older and a lower-income population compared to the provincial average. The resources funded by the CBT and the operating grants provided by the Province and the

Regional District are crucial for the library to continue to support the digital needs of its patrons, especially as more and more services move online.

We will continue to utilize our new resources in the upcoming year by offering opportunities, along with community partners, for our patrons to learn new and essential digital skills.



*User Friendly drop-in tech help.*



*Using the iPads during Teen programming.*

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## PRIORITY 2: DEVELOPING SKILLS

*Our goals:*

*Invest in tools and resources to facilitate the creation and sharing of knowledge and discoveries*

*Develop programs to enable community access to creative tools and resources*

*Prioritize staff competency in creative tools and resources for training and hiring purposes*

The library undertook the following activities to support these goals:

- Purchased a button-maker as a creative tool for library programs and a point-of-interest for community engagement. It is a low-prep, high-impact creative resource that allows the library to re-purpose discarded books and engage the public in conversation about library services.
- Developed and facilitated creative workshops for teens and children including graphic design, animation, cosplay, LEGO-building, button-making and crafting.
- Continued to offer STEAM-based programs through staffing subsidy provided by the College of the Rockies SchoolWorks grant. Programs included 4 STEAM programs facilitated over Spring Break, including kaleidoscope & lantern building and coding on our new laptops.
- Continued to provide excellent adult programming including workshops with local artists, documentary film screenings, book launches and author talks, and discussions and speaker's events addressing Climate Change and sustainability initiatives.

- Hosted the Summer Reading Club, offering weekly programming for pre-school and school-age children, subsidized by Canada Summer Jobs and the Friends of the Library. Over 200 children registered for the Club this year and attended the weekly programs and events.
- Participated in NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) by providing a space to host a local author who wrote an entire novel during the month of November.

The outcome of these activities is that the community recognizes the library as a hub for creativity and learning and that library patrons are expanding their creative and digital skills through attending our programs. By providing free public access to creative resources and qualified instruction, children, youth, adults and seniors in the Creston community are able to experience and learn skills they might not otherwise have access to. In addition, our STEAM facilitators, subsidized through the SchoolWorks program, are also provided with enriching work experience that helps prepare them for their post-secondary plans.

In 2020 we have continued the Teen Cosplay Club, STEAM programming for kids, and have embarked on a “Living the Change” speaker and workshop series for patrons concerned about the effects of Climate Change.



*Teen Cosplay Club*



*Teen Cosplay Club*



*Summer Reading Club Coordinator & Assistant*



*STEAM  
Programs  
Facilitator*



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### PRIORITY 3: COLLABORATING ON SHARED GOALS

*Our goal: Commit staff time and resources to developing community relationships and supporting shared initiatives*

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- Collaborated with the Early Years Table on numerous community initiatives and events including the Annual Parent's Conference, Magic School Bus (variation of Ready, Set, Learn program), and Winter Celebration. The Magic School Bus reached over 300 children and families this year, connecting them with Early Years resource providers in our community.
- Together with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL) and Family Place, the library purchased 100 copies of Deborah Diesen's *The Pout-Pout Fish* to gift to preschool age children during the Magic School Bus event in April. This comical tale told in rhyme, encourages early literacy and the joy of reading amongst our Creston families.
- Provided regular library space for the Wildflower School, currently housed in the local high school, so children could access age-appropriate material.
- Partnered with CBAL to offer Family Rhyme Time at Mormon Hills, a weekly early literacy program in Bountiful that serves approximately 30 children and their families.
- Visited a variety of learning groups at Kootenay Employment Services (KES) and CBAL, as well as hosting tours in the library, to talk about our services, sign adult-learners up for library cards, and introduce them to Lynda.com.
- The Chief Librarian also connected with the following individuals and groups throughout the year, to offer the library's support and explore collaborative opportunities. These visits were of high priority given that this was her first year on the job: KES, CBAL, Family Place, Teddy Bear Daycare, Public Health, Creston Valley Museum, Lower Kootenay Band and Chief Jason Louie, Crestview Care Centre, Morris Greenhouses, Creston Kids Outside, Kinbasket Child and Family Services, Homelinks Home School, Focus on Youth Festival, Blossom Festival, Farmers' Markets, Kootenay Lake "Legends of the Lake" tour with Elder, Robert Louis, Arts Council, Valley Community Services, local elementary schools, and the Creston Valley Youth Network.

The outcome of these activities is that both community members and community service providers see the library as an important partner and resource in the Creston community. This year the library reached out to a variety of community partners to explore shared initiatives. Our ongoing partnership with Kootenay Employment Services, resulted in service visits in the library and at their location throughout the year, with many learners signing up for library cards for the first time. In addition, our partnership with the Creston Valley Youth Network resulted in increased teen-input in program offerings and an invite to their grand opening event, where the library contributed our button-maker activity to the day's entertainment.

As a public service, community partnerships continue to be a top priority at the library and we look forward to collaboration with our fellow service providers and soliciting their feedback as we develop a new strategic plan in 2020.

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#### PRIORITY 4: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

*Our goal: Plan for sustainable and adequate funding*

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- Amended statistical reports to the Regional District to better illustrate our operations, including adding wi-fi and website traffic information to better illustrate the digital nature of some of our services.
- Switched to direct deposit online payroll services, reducing our payroll costs by 41%.
- Collected and shared both qualitative and quantitative data with our staff, volunteers and board, funders, and members of the public, in the form of bi-monthly Librarian Reports and Statistics Reports.
- Established a positive relationship with the Regional District Community Services Committee including securing a Letter of Support from the Town's Mayor for the 20 Million in 2020 campaign organized by the BC Library Partners.
- Raised 26% more donation funds and 16% more in grant funds (apart from regional and provincial grants) than the previous year.

The outcome of these activities is that the library has a strong collection of data that tells a compelling story about our library operations. Our statistics, along with strong administrative reporting practices, are effective tools which we can use to advocate for funding with our stakeholders. This year our new Chief Librarian established a solid working relationship with the Regional District by increasing our library's financial and operating transparency to work towards more informed decision-making when it comes to funding decisions.

With 2020 being our Centennial year, the library plans on continuing to raise our profile in the community, increasing fundraising efforts, and continuing the dialogue with our stakeholders to stress the need for sustainable funding.



*The Friends of Creston Library*



*Friends of the Library bi-annual book sale*

## SUMMARY

Despite the challenge of changing leadership and underfunding, the Creston Valley Public Library maintained an exceptional level of service and programming for its patrons in 2019. We have established multiple community connections and have continued to successfully collaborate with our community partners. We have provided a variety of opportunities for creative and digital programming and have established positive working relationships with our stakeholders.

The greatest challenge still facing Creston Valley Public Library is ongoing operational funding. We simply don't have the operating resources available to fund the staffing needed for the programming and services our community would like to see, especially when it comes to digital skills. However, the library continues to focus its efforts on advocacy and, with the library entering its Centennial year, we look forward to leveraging our higher profile to plan for sustainable future funding.

Creston Valley Public Library supports the Libraries Branch's efforts to promote and facilitate collaboration among BC public libraries. We understand the need to work together to ensure equitable access to library service across the province and we hope that we can contribute to building a more equitable and sustainable provincial infrastructure through which all libraries can prosper.