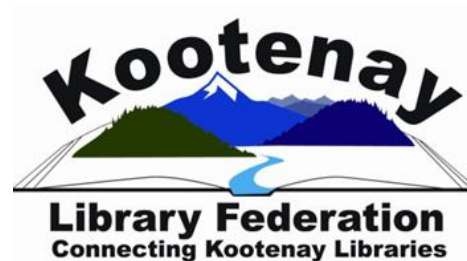


***Inspire together
& expand horizons***



2021 Provincial Grant Report

Introduction

In 2004, the Kootenay Library Federation began operations and by 2006 had received formal, governmental recognition.

Three predecessor organizations existed before 2006 and the KLF as we now know it. In 1974 the Kootenay Library System Society was formed representing citizens from Castlegar, Creston, Cranbrook, Elkford, Fernie, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Invermere, Kimberley, Midway, Nelson, Rossland, Salmo and Trail. Their purpose was to promote integrated and equal access to library services throughout their communities. The Society operated a bookmobile during this time and hosted a number of conferences for members. The Society lacked financial support to continue and resulted in the end of the KLSS.

Between 1978 and 1979, two smaller organizations were formed; the East Kootenay Library Association (EKLA) and the West Kootenay Library Association (WKLA). EKLA served the communities east of, and including, Cranbrook. WKLA served the communities west of, and including, Creston. The new associations were comprised of local librarians and usually a board member from each library. The two associations met separately and regularly, cooperating to save money and resources whenever possible.

When the Library Act was revised in 1996 it included a provision for regional library districts and federations. The members of WKLA and EKLA recognized that the concept of a library federation was their future and began working towards merging the two associations.

In service to the twenty member libraries in the east, central and boundary regions of the Kootenays, the KLF is often described as an umbrella organization that exists to offer support and connection for Trustees, Library Directors, staff and library services. The majority of the member libraries are rural and somewhat isolated from one another, particularly during the snowy winter months. The KLF service area encompasses a mountainous area of 49,647 square kms with approximately 189,364 people and a population density of just below 4 people per km.

Grouped according to their size, the KLF member libraries include:

- populations above 10,000: Castlegar, Cranbrook, Creston, Nelson and Penticton

- populations between 3,000-10,000: Beaver Valley, Fernie, Grand Forks, Invermere, Kimberley, Rossland, Sparwood, and Trail
- populations below 3,000: Elkford, Greenwood, Kaslo, Midway, Nakusp, Radium Hot Springs, and Salmo

Governance

In addition to the 20 person Board, the KLF has a seven member Executive Committee that meets five times a year. To ensure balanced representation from the twenty member libraries, the Executive Committee includes at least one Board member from each size library (small, medium, large), and each geographic region (East, West, Boundary).

The pandemic continued in 2021 and KLF Committees were not active as had been projected in the 2020 report. Despite this, the KLF Executive Committee met their requirements throughout 2021, ensuring the governance manual and policies were reviewed and updated. Our Treasurer brings experience from the recreation services sector and contributed recommendations for improving our internal financial processes. The Library Director Advisory Group is represented when the Executive Committee undertakes governance, advocacy and financial work for the KLF.

KLF Strategic Plan

Our four objectives are:

1. We will seek opportunities to increase funding for the KLF, which will benefit member libraries.
2. We will work to enhance advocacy for the KLF and member libraries.
3. The KLF will enhance communication to increase engagement and commitment.
4. The KLF will work to enhance opportunities for collaboration.

We are approaching the close of our 2019-2023 strategic plan and due to pandemic weariness, the KLF has found new methods to achieve our strategic goals and operational outcomes. COVID has resulted in KLF Board members needing to stay focussed on their own libraries, community and personal needs.

The KLF has received support from the Columbia Basin Trust, through their Non-Profit Advisors program. During 2021 we worked with two different consultants. The first worked with us to develop a marketing and promotion plan that is equally useful to the member libraries and the KLF. This plan outlines how member libraries can promote library services to their current patron and how to reach new patrons. It can also be used as a springboard for member library Boards to begin local advocacy efforts.

Our second project is ongoing at the time of writing this grant report. The consultant is advising the KLF in methods and routines to enhance communication, connection and engagement through skills utilization across Boards, Committees and Directors (ED and Library Directors). The expected outcomes of this project are:

- Board members who understand the KLF, and are engaged in providing the needed skills/interests

- Stronger relationships across KLF Executive and Board, individual library directors, and Boards, and
- Increased clarity of understanding for the roles, responsibilities and priorities of the various groups.

KLF Grant Letter Outcomes:

The KLF grant award letter dated June 11, 2021 communicated that operating grant funds were to be used towards the following four outcomes:

1. Improved regional and local shared services delivery
2. Improved access to professional learning opportunities for the library community
3. Service expansion beyond community borders
4. Furthering provincial strategic initiatives for public library service

Improved regional and local shared services delivery

The two Kootenay-wide online book clubs that launched in 2020 continued reaching library patrons throughout the Kootenays in 2021. The library staff from the member libraries have formed committees to share the work of choosing authors, hosting monthly book club events, and planning for future events. The KLF continues to sponsor both book clubs by funding author visit fees and the purchase of book club sets.

Kootenay Teen Book Club

Paradoxically, Zoom participation for the Kootenay Teen Book Club has been lower in 2021, while the monthly circulation of each title continues to increase. Sub-committee organizers are finding that families appreciate a curated book selection each month, but the teens themselves are too busy or too camera shy to participate in the meetings.

To respond to this change of participation, the organizers have chosen to pivot the program to include a recorded video element with the author, which will be shared with teen patrons. This ensures they can still connect with the author even if they are not attending the meetings. The recorded author interviews will debut in early 2022.

The KTBC sub-committee is proud of the author line-up this year. Much thought went into choosing diverse authors that cover a wide selection of themes such as the internment of Japanese people during WWII, precarious housing, Indigenous experience of foster care, and the Holocaust. A mix of fantasy, mystery, realistic fiction and graphic novels were chosen. To appeal to as many teens as possible, the subcommittee deliberately selected books that had both a male and female protagonist.

Snapshot stats:

- 30-35 checkouts of the title each month amongst the libraries. Between 20-25 books are purchased, and the rest are ordered through interlibrary connect, so each month about 35 books are being checked out.
- Since September, there have been six meetings, attended by 36 teens, representing Nelson, Trail, Kaslo, Castlegar, Midway, Cranbrook, Invermere, and Radium.
- Four libraries are represented on the sub-committee: Trail, Castlegar, Kaslo and Nelson.

The KLF would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm of Melodie Rae Storey of the Nelson Public Library for her leadership with the Teen Book Club.

Read Local book club

The Read Local Book Club was conceived as a way to help libraries provide programming during the pandemic, connect readers from across the Kootenays, as well as promote local authors (whose ability to do book tours and promotions were curtailed by the pandemic). Read Local meets monthly, with library staff from member libraries taking turns to locate and host a local author from their community.

Snapshot stats:

- To support the books club, the KLF purchases 20 copies for book clubbers to borrow. The hosting library then adds another set of 10 books to their collection to make it available for future book clubs to borrow. Additional books were then re-homed to Kootenay libraries that didn't already own the book, making even more local books accessible throughout the region.
- Between February and November, there have been 8 meetings, attended by 298 patrons, representing Castlegar, Invermere, Fernie, Nelson, Fairmont, Rock Creek, West Kelowna, Rossland, Trail, Grand Forks and Whistler.
- Hosting libraries include Nelson, Castlegar, Grand Forks, Invermere, Fernie, Trail and Rossland.

The KLF would like to acknowledge the care and attention Heather Goldik of the Nelson Public Library, as well as her leadership of the Read Local Book Club.

Kootenay Teen Newspaper

Kootenay Teen News is a library-published teen newspaper, aiming to be a community engagement tool and to provide a platform for fostering local youth voices. The purpose of this initiative is to connect a community of inquisitive and expressive teens, support media literacy, and increase the relevancy of library services among the teen population.

Since September 2020, a group of teens have been meeting regularly for training and to brainstorm article ideas. In January, they published our first issue of the newspaper. Although it has taken longer than hoped for the first issue (there was just so much to learn first!), the process of making the newspaper has been a special experience for the teens. Some participated to put the experience on their college applications or work resume, while others were passionate about a topic and wanted a place to express it. Others were contemplating future job prospects and wanted to try it on for size.

The response from the local journalism world was enthusiastic. Reporters from the Nelson Star, Cranbrook Townsman, the Valley Voice, the Tyee, and VPL's INK, have all reached out to express their congratulations and encouragement.

Snapshot stats:

- 48 teens have been involved. Ten teens submitted work for the first issue, representing Nelson, Cranbrook, Invermere, Queen's Bay, and Kaslo.
- Respected journalists currently working in journalism in the region have offered the teens 6 workshops.

- 200 copies of issue #1 was printed and distributed to the KLF member libraries.
- The digital copy has 282 views (though this represents a low number as this just tracks the webpage that hosts the PDF. In reality, the PDF has most likely been shared much more, but there is no way to track it.)

The Kootenay Teen News program is the brain child of Melodie Rae Storey of the Nelson Public Library. Additionally, Claire Paradis, Library Director at the Nakusp Public Library contributes her past work experience as a writer as well as invaluable support for the project.

Improved access to professional learning opportunities for the library community

For the 3rd year, the KLF has purchased online access to the Homeless Training Institute for all member libraries. In addition to the core training, the Homeless Training Institute offers monthly webinars on various topics, including Backup: How to backup a co-worker during a crisis; Burnout and Stress: Burnout, Vicarious Trauma, & Compassion Fatigue; Dementia and Alzheimer's: Compassionately and effectively working with people with Dementia; Getting Hit on by Customers: Women (and men) share their tools for stopping unwanted attention; Prejudice: How to respond to prejudicial comments from customers; and Traumatic Brain Injury: Invisible Cause of Homelessness.

As libraries gradually re-opened library services over the Fall of 2021, Directors reported their staff wanting to retake the core Homeless Training to refresh their skills in communicating and responding to library patrons.

Response to online learning was enormous in year one of the pandemic (2020). 2021 was the second year and Board members, Library Directors and library staff were exhausted by their sustained increase of screen time for working and learning. They all asked for less learning.

The following table highlights the scaled down learning opportunities that were offered in 2021.

	Library staff	Library Directors	KLF Board	# of Attendees
All year	Safe Harbour: Anti-Racism training	Safe Harbour: Anti-Racism training	Safe Harbour: Anti-Racism training	101
January	Zoom Presentation Skills workshop part 1	Zoom Presentation Skills workshop part 1		16
February	Zoom Presentation Skills workshop part 2	Zoom Presentation Skills workshop part 2		13
April		Grounding Techniques		17
September	Social Media Mastery – introduction	Social Media Mastery – introduction Courageous Conversations part 1		11 14
October	Legal Reference with LawMatters	Legal Reference with LawMatters		7

		Courageous Conversations parts 2&3		12
November	Social Media Mastery – intermediate	Social Media Mastery – intermediate		10
	Legal Reference with LawMatters	Legal Reference with LawMatters		8
		Courageous Conversations parts 4 & 5		12

Surveys to collect feedback from each session are sent to participants and through this, new topics are requested for future sessions.

Service expansion beyond community borders

As a group, the BC Library Federation Managers have a shared interest in exploring, developing and implementing library services, programs and learning opportunities, particularly if they address the needs of isolated and rural libraries.

This shared interest resulted in the successful delivery of the Safe Harbour anti-racism training project throughout 2021 and brought a second provincial training initiative which launched in November 2022. Through the Steps to Reconciliation grant award, we selected Indigenous Corporate Training and their online training module, Indigenous Awareness. Each library in BC has 4 free training spots for staff, and additional training can be purchased at a greatly reduced rate.

With one successful provincial training program complete and another underway, the current group of Federation Managers is committed to continuing our work together where collectively, we can expand our services beyond the borders of our member library communities and across federations.

In 2020, the KLF become a volunteer coordinator for the Canadian Children’s Book Centre, leading up to the May 2021 Book Week celebration. It had been over ten years since the Kootenay region was offered touring authors through the CCBC. As member libraries were not offering in-library programming, schools were contacted as host locations for the authors, illustrators and storytellers. Over one week in May, 9 schools hosted 11 different authors. This resulted in an increase of literacy opportunities for children. The KLF has plans to support the CCBC again in 2022.

Furthering provincial strategic initiatives for public library service

Priority 1 – Improving Access for British Columbians

The KLF re-allocated 2021 unspent meeting funds to member libraries for expansions of their e-book and audio book collections.

Priority 2 – Building Capacity

The professional development organized by the KLF for Library Directors and staff supports their capacity to gain new skills, improve their impact, and participate in a shared learning experience. Please refer to the table on page 5 for a detailed breakdown.

Mindful of the professional learning offered by ABCPLD, BCLTA, and BCLA, the KLF works to complement what is already being offered and fill gaps with learning opportunities for front line staff. It is also important to recognize that small, rural and isolated libraries have different learning needs compared to large municipal and regional libraries, who are funded differently and more connected. Receiving input for the type of learning and professional development from Library Directors and their staff ensures the learning opportunities offered truly enhance library staff's work of delivering library services. Learning opportunities that include a micro-credential is a considered factor.

Priority 3 – Enhancing Citizen Engagement

Online programming under the Kootenay Libraries Programming brand encourages patron engagement with their local library, and has the added benefit of connecting library patrons (albeit virtually) with similarly minded people from other communities in their region. The Kootenay Teen book club, Read Local book club, and Kootenay Teen newspaper all facilitate citizen engagement, as do the Indigenous author and poet events planned for 2022 and beyond.

Priority 4 – Enhancing Governance

The KLF Executive Committee met 5 times in 2021, in addition to the 3 meetings of the 20 member board. Trustees within the KLF member libraries were active participants in the various sessions and meet ups offered by BCLTA.

The continuing pandemic

In 2020, the pandemic created an opportunity for the KLF to find new ways of demonstrating its' value to member libraries. These efforts continued in 2021 and looked different than the previous year.

Under the brand 'Kootenay Libraries Programming', the KLF has begun to organize online library programs open to patrons at all member libraries. Promotional materials are created and shared for inclusion in monthly newsletters, Facebook ads, and websites. Each program is hosted by a different member library staff person, based on the interest of the volunteer host. Suggestions are received and the primary focus is Indigenous authors, poets, and speakers, as well as nature-themed talks.

Monthly LDAG meetings continue as a support for the challenges of operating library services during a pandemic. The opportunity to meet regularly to connect, share and group problem solve is appreciated by Library Directors. KLF LDAG meetings follow the ABPLD meeting cycle, allowing Library Directors the chance to find Kootenay perspectives and solutions.

The KLF's AGM, Spring and Fall meetings were held online using Zoom, demonstrating we could continue meeting our organizational requirements. Library Board members have expressed they miss the networking and feeling of being connected to other library supporters, and look forward to the return of in-person meetings.

The KLF continues to fund Zoom licenses for all member libraries. This ensures member library Board meetings continue, and if libraries have staffing capacity, they may offer online programming for their patrons.

Access to a fully-funded employment lawyer is a continued support the KLF offers to member libraries. Boards and Library Directors consulted the lawyer about many topics over 2021. Common questions included vaccine mandate policies, changes to job descriptions, and paid sick leave legislation.

Conclusion:

The KLF thanks the Public Libraries Branch and Ministry of Municipal Affairs for their continued financial support. The priorities of the Public Library Branch are shared by the KLF.

Respectfully submitted by

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Melanie Reaveley".

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