

PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT 2019

GRAND FORKS & DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

INTRODUCTION

The Library - The Grand Forks & District Public Library is located in the heart of the Kootenay Boundary region. Serving the communities of the City of Grand Forks, Christina Lake (Area C), and Area D, our library is an important community hub for a population of approximately 9000 people. Our population is a bit older than in other British Columbia communities, with many choosing Grand Forks and the surrounding area as a place to retire. Although it can be a quiet place during the winter, warmer months find our area bustling with tourists coming to enjoy the unparalleled beauty of the sunshine and our stunning lakes, rivers, and mountains. Industry in our area includes logging, agriculture, and some manufacturing. There is something for everyone in Grand Forks and the surrounding area, and at the Grand Forks & District Public Library we strive to provide excellent service to all demographics of our community.

Access - The Grand Forks & District Public Library is open five days a week all year for an average of 46 hours per week.

Circulation – 88,172 items

Resource sharing – 1,724 sent, 3,334 received

Programming - 491 programs to 5,916 participants

Strategic Plan – in March 2016 we adopted a new Strategic Plan. We are working towards meeting the goals in this plan. Some of our most notable strategic plan based successes in 2019 include:

- Completing a total renovation project for our public washrooms to improve safety and accessibility. We met our \$84,000 fundraising goal in February 2019, and completed construction in July 2019.
- We installed a public drinking fountain during the washroom renovation project. By the end of the year, the fountain reported a savings of approximately 800 plastic water bottles.
- We created an e-newsletter system to provide patrons with information about our programs and services, as well as a series of newsletters to inform patrons about areas of the collection according to their personal interests.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES, GOALS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PARTNERSHIPS

FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

Library Goal that supports the priority:

- Points from our strategic plan that support this priority:
 - We will support 21st Century learning by promoting technological skills and digital literacy for learners of all ages.
 - We will strive to ensure access to our services for all segments of the community.
 - We will seek funding to maintain an appropriate level of technological facilities and expertise.
 - We will ensure that the library remains an open and comfortable space for all, preserving it as a free community space.

Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:

Public Computers and Wi-fi: We have six computers for public use which are connected to high-speed internet and are loaded with the Microsoft Office suite. We also have free public wi-fi which is also available from outside even when the library is closed. Certain areas of rural Grand Forks do not currently have any internet access, and so for citizens of those areas, the library is their main internet source. You can often see them parked in cars beside the library at all hours of the night using their laptops or other devices.

Community Learning Place - Every Tuesday afternoon, we hold a drop-in program called the Community Learning Place. Although the public is encouraged to bring in anything they would like to learn about, the bulk of participants are seeking help with technology. Many of the program's attendees are community members who need in-depth help with even basic computer use. The person manning the program, along with volunteers, is able to provide one-on-one assistance to help patrons improve their computing skills.

Tech Café – On Tuesday evenings, members of the public are encouraged to drop in for one-on-one electronics help with a staff member.

Partnerships that support the priority:

The Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy provides a staff member and volunteers to facilitate the Community Learning Place program.

Outcomes that were identified:

In 2019, patrons used our public computers over 4800 times. Patrons use our computers for seeking jobs, doing research, doing schoolwork, leisure activities, and more. Our public wi-fi was used over 45,000 times by patrons on their own devices.

Regular participants in the Community Learning Place and Tech Cafe programs have developed new, tangible skills that they did not previously have, such as using email efficiently, and downloading eBooks and eAudiobooks from OverDrive without assistance from staff. All participants in both programs felt that they learned something helpful, will apply what they learned, feel more confident about what they learned, and are more aware of library resources.

BUILDING CAPACITY

Library Goal that supports the priority:

From our Strategic Plan:

- We will maintain open communications to ensure a community-led service approach.
- We will reach out into our communities to further develop our partnerships and to seek to establish new ones.
- We will support 21st Century learning by promoting technological skills and digital literacy for learners of all ages.
- We will undertake outreach and programming to integrate our younger citizens into the cultural, social, and knowledge-based learning opportunities of the library.
- We will encourage and aid the development of the literacy, communication, and critical thinking skills of all our patrons.
- We will endeavour to become a resource and action centre for social justice in our local communities, our nation and the world.

- We will develop our collections to best serve the needs and desires of the community.
- We will strive to ensure that all segments of our communities receive opportunities to access our services.
- We will strive to ensure access to our services for all segments of the community.
- We will become a central source of reference for community services, resources and organizations.
- We will undertake programming and services that will encourage an informed and engaged citizenry in local, national and global issues.
- We will seek funding to maintain an appropriate level of technological facilities and expertise.
- We will provide leadership in sustainability best practices by example in our programming and community partnerships.
- We will be a centre for ideas and conversations that seek to grow our communities in a progressive and sustainable manner.

Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:

“Let’s Talk About...” Programs

Throughout the year, we hold programs in partnerships with local individuals and organizations on specific topics that people of any skill or knowledge level can attend and learn from. This year, we offered six “Let’s Talk About...” programs on the topics of peace, wildlife, food presentation, travel, agriculture, and legal services accessible through the library.

‘Cook the Books’ Book Club – A few times a year, we host a ‘book club’ where all participants will cook a recipe from a specific cookbook and share the results (or report on its failure!) with the group. This program encourages participants to use local ingredients and to make their own food from scratch, which are important sustainability measures as we try to curb climate change.

STEAM Fridays –STEAM Fridays are a bi-weekly program where children and their families are welcomed to drop in and play with various STEAM-encouraging items such as Keva Planks, Lego, trains, and Tinkertoys, among others.

Public Computers, Tech Cafe, and the Community Learning Place: these previously mentioned programs also work towards building capacity within our community.

Youth in Philanthropy - Every Tuesday during the school year, we host a dedicated group of local Teens who discuss and make plans for how they can make the world a better place. The group shares volunteer opportunities, advocacy ideas, and general good citizenship practices.

Partnerships that support the priority:

The Library Director is a member of the Community Literacy Planning Committee, which works together to identify programming needs and gaps in the Boundary area regarding literacy in the broadest sense, and includes members from the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, Selkirk College, Interior Health, School District 51, and Greenwood Public Library.

The “Let’s Talk About...” programs required the partnership of several organisations, such as the Boundary Peace Initiative, local experts, and the Boundary Hospice Society.

Outcomes that were identified:

Participants of the ‘Cook the Books’ Book Club have all learned new cooking techniques and cuisines that they have then shared with their families, encouraging healthy and sustainable eating in the community.

Let’s Talk About... food preservation participants reported increased understanding of local food availability and how to best make these sustainable food options last.

Let's Talk About... legal resources participants reported an increased confidence in finding legal information and assistance for divorce, family law, and estate law.

WORKING TOGETHER

Library Goal that supports the priority:

From our Strategic Plan:

- We will maintain contact and communications with our funding bodies and local governments to strengthen and enhance our existing relationships by encouraging the appointment of a member of the Grand Forks City Council or the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary to sit on our Board.
- We will reach out into our communities to further develop our partnerships and to seek to establish new ones.
- We will undertake outreach and programming to integrate our younger citizens into the cultural, social, and knowledge-based learning opportunities of the library.
- We will seek to blur the borders of the library by offering more services beyond our physical walls.

Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:

Reading Link Challenge

Working together with the Greenwood Public Library, Midway Public Library, and School District 51, we held the Reading Link Challenge program in the spring, which is a competition for grade 4 and 5 students to demonstrate their reading comprehension skills on a team. Each librarian engaged with local elementary teachers to hold classroom and school level challenges, and then the winners from these challenges travelled to Greenwood Elementary for a final district-level challenge.

Library Directors' Advisory Group

As a member of the Kootenay Library Federation, the Library Director chairs the Kootenay Library Directors Advisory Group, which meets semi-annually to discuss best practices, program ideas, and partnership opportunities.

Community Literacy Planning Committee

As mentioned above, the Director is a part of a committee with many community groups represented that works collaboratively towards providing literacy services to the community.

"Let's Talk About..." Programs, STEAM Fridays, and the Community Learning Place, Youth in Philanthropy

These previously mentioned programs require collaboration to be possible.

Outcomes that were identified:

Participating in the Reading Link Challenge has improved the relationship between Boundary area libraries, doing much to open the lines of communication between us. The children who participated in the program enjoyed it a lot, and improved their reading skills as a result.

The Community Literacy Planning Committee is a fantastic resource for all members to cross-promote programs and services. Because such a diverse group makes up the committee, many more people get the chance to hear about our programs than normally would, and as such we have higher attendance at the programs promoted in this group. We also share their programs and services when we feel it is relevant, to the same effect.

The Youth in Philanthropy group regularly invites and accepts requests for representatives from local groups to join their conversations. This provides both parties with a larger social network to call upon to increase the effectiveness of their campaigns.

SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS

Library Goal that supports the priority:

From our Strategic Plan:

- We will maintain open communications to ensure a community-led service approach.
- We will seek to diversify our board to closely represent our community.
- We will maintain contact and communications with our funding bodies and local governments to strengthen and enhance our existing relationships by encouraging the appointment of a member of the Grand Forks City Council or the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary to sit on our Board.

Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:

Policy Committee

The Board has a designated Policy Committee, which meets throughout the year as needed to evaluate our Policy Manual, and this committee makes Policy recommendations to the Board as a whole, which then discusses and votes on these suggestions.

Kootenay Library Federation

Grand Forks & District Public Library is a member of the Kootenay Library Federation, which, among other things, provides us with resources and networks to discuss and discover best practices and new ideas for governance.

BCLTA

Our Board is also a member of the BC Library Trustee's Association, which provides guidance to the Board on proper library governance and advocacy.

Library Directors' Advisory Group

The previously mentioned Library Directors' Advisory Group also fits into this priority.

Partnerships that support the priority:

Our membership in the Kootenay Library Federation and Library Directors' Advisory Group provides us with 19 automatic partners in the other member libraries to work together to sustain our successes.

Outcomes that were identified:

Feedback from the Internal Board Orientation was excellent. Board members felt more equipped to handle their positions and had a better understanding of what libraries are all about.

SUMMARY

In 2019, Grand Forks was still very much in recovery from the major flood of 2018. Many people are still displaced and facing an uncertain future. In addition to this, Grand Forks has been disproportionately affected by the opioid and homelessness crises in BC. All of these catastrophes have required the library and its staff to fill roles that are not within the usual scope, which has been difficult on both the staff and the general public. We do not have the resources available in our library or surrounding area to deal with the social issues that we are confronted with on a daily basis. Further, stagnant funding from the province and increased reliance on local government to simply sustain our current service level is placing an unfair burden on our local government, already under incredible stress with recent events here.

The library is a hugely important resource in our town. In 2019, we saw about 275 people come through our doors every single day. For the first time in many years, we managed to increase circulation by making some adjustments to our space and improving advertisement of the collection. We also saw marked increases in program attendance, resource sharing, and visits to our website. These are all great indicators that the Grand Forks & District Public Library is a thriving local resource, and as such, requires sustainable funding.