

2019 Provincial Library Grants Report: Castlegar & District Public Library

Introduction

The Castlegar and District Public Library is located in the city of Castlegar in the West Kootenay region of British Columbia. From its humble beginnings in the 1940s in the basement of the United Church, to the current building that expanded in 2000, the Library is supported and appreciated by the community it serves. Our Library often receives compliments for being an open, welcoming place where friendly staff and volunteers are ready to assist patrons with their requests and where citizens and visitors can meet to socialize and learn. We boast busy meeting rooms that host a number of community organizations as well as our own programs. We are happy to offer extensive outreach in the community, and continuously work towards being a “special place in the community to explore, create, share ideas, information and have fun.”

The Library serves a wide geographic area including the City of Castlegar, Areas I, and J of the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), with a service area population of nearly 14,000. Through a service agreement with the Nelson Library, we also serve residents of Area H South of the RDCK.

The major employers in the area include Selkirk College, Zelstoff Celgar, and School District 20. The major regional employer, Teck Resources, is located 30 kilometers from Castlegar.

For this reporting period, the Library was engaged in a strategic planning process. We surveyed the community in the spring, staff discussions took place in the summer, and the board met with a consultant twice in the fall. Our new strategic plan will guide us through to 2023.

In 2019, the Library was the successful recipient of a Columbia Basin Trust Community Technology Grant. Our new mobile computer lab and digitization space promises to be an asset to our residents and will create many learning opportunities for all ages in the years to come.

Priority 1: Improving Access

Our strategic priority: Innovation & Programming.

Our goal: Our revitalized space and high-quality collections meet the diverse needs of our users.

Our Strategy: We offer hands-on experience in accessing new technologies.

The Library used technology in a number of programs including:

- ✓ Code Club Canada
- ✓ Tinker Time

Describe one or two programs connected

Code Club Canada

With part of our Columbia Basin Trust Community Technology Grant, we purchased 10 new laptops for community programming. In September, we started a registered code club for youth aged 8 to 12 through Code Club Canada. Within a few weeks of advertising, we had a fall, winter and spring class filled with an additional waitlist. Youth come once per week for an hour to work on a specific programming challenge with Scratch. We use the desktop version of the Scratch program downloaded through MIT <https://scratch.mit.edu/> and provide lessons from the MIT Scratch webpage as well as the lessons offered through Code Club Canada.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

This program would not be possible without the financial support of the Columbia Basin Trust Community Technology Grant and money raised by the Friends of the Castlegar & District Public Library.

What was the outcome?

This program has been an incredible learning opportunity for both youth and staff. Two staff took an online “Prepare to Run a Code Club” course through FutureLearn to ensure a successful program launch. It was satisfying to watch youth build on their understanding each week, discover new aspects of the program, and begin to gain enough confidence to help each other with Scratch. We see an equal number of boys and girls, and a good range kids falling within the 8-12 year old age range. While teaching the program I noticed an excitement to attend each week with only a few exceptions to full attendance in each of the 11 sessions this past fall. Each participant was able to take all of the lessons and a thumb drive of their programs home at the conclusion of their session. Code Club continues in 2020.

Tinker Time

Tinker Time is an introductory STEAM program for 3-5 year olds. It introduces children to a wide variety of activities and builds an understanding of basic science concepts, art exploration, and technology. Children had a chance to program with robots Dash and Dot, make their own dinosaur fossils and dissolve them, play with qubits, paint with shaving cream mixed with watercolours, make slime, build things with boxes and Lego, learn about shadows and count just about everything.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

The Library purchased close to \$2,000 in STEAM items with money from the Kootenay Library Federation. Tinker Time is just one of the programs made possible with this funding. Full Steam Ahead, Lego & Craft Club, and Double Digits are other STEAM related programs for older children that the Library has experimented with to introduce children and youth to science, technology, engineering, art and math.

What was the outcome?

This program consistently has a waitlist due to its popularity. One participant says, “I love Laura because she has lots of fun things to do at Tinker Time. I enjoy my time doing things with you. Things like games and robots make me happy. I can’t wait until next time to see what we get to do.” Children clearly enjoy experimentation and the surprises that each session brings. We would love to be able to offer Full Steam Ahead, Lego & Craft Club, Double Digits, and Tinker Time as part of our fall and winter programming, but staff time is limited with other programming responsibilities, outreach activities, and core Library duties. Currently, our staff can only offer two such programs per season every other week.

Priority 2: Developing Skills

Our strategic priority: Community Engagement.

Our goal: We are known as a special place in our community where learning and fun thrive.

Our Strategy: We offer enhanced programming.

The Library offered the following programs to foster learning and skills development:

- ✓ Out in the Open art show
- ✓ Nidus Personal Planning Awareness

Describe one or two programs connected

In the fall, the Library hosted an *Out in the Open* art show developed by HOPE Creative Initiatives through Interior Health. An Interior Health staff member approached the Library as a partner because we offer wall and cabinet space for local artists to share their work with the community. The show started in the lead up to Mental Health Awareness week and featured art created by six members of our community who live with mental illness. There was many different mediums on display from acrylics and jewelry to mixed medium and mosaics. The show also included an afternoon event with local resources and a panel of speakers with lived experience. Each of the artists provided a brief biography that included their journey with mental health, and how art has helped them.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

The *Out in the Open* art show was a partnership between HOPE Creative Initiatives and individual artists with the Library offering space and assistance. The Library has a track system along our walls equipped with adjustable nylon hooks for hanging art. We also have a locked glass cabinet for art that best fits that space. Artists arrived to hang and display their art together with the assistance of Library staff. Library staff managed art sales and were responsible for disbursing funds at the end of the show. The Library also provided a letter of support to HOPE Creative Initiatives to help with a grant application for the exhibit.

What was the outcome?

The Library sold close to \$900 worth of art for the participants of the show. Usually the Library gets a 20% commission from art sales in the Library, but for this show, artists received 100% of their sales with the Library donating staff time. Over the course of the show, staff had the pleasure of getting to know all of the artists and organizers and Library patrons enjoyed viewing the art and learning about the individuals through their biographies. According to organizers, the goal of the show was to “raise mental health awareness, allow people to develop creatively, and broaden social interaction.” I think the show achieved all of these things. Two of the artists have continued to sell their items in the Library and one of them painted a special piece for our children’s section in appreciation of the Library’s support.

Describe one or two programs connected

The Nidus Personal Planning series continues to be a core program for the Library. For a third year, our Library was a host site for the NIDUS Personal Planning series to highlight October as Personal Planning Month. We continued to run the evening sessions to accommodate individuals who work. With the use of the Library’s Wi-Fi, laptop, projector, and screen, we were able to connect people with free live webinars from Vancouver to raise awareness around will and estate planning, representation agreements, joint ownership, consent to health care, and other planning for end of life matters. The live webinar format gave attendees the opportunity to ask the facilitator questions, which was very useful due to the complex nature of the material and discussions. Offering these events in the Library is important because not everyone has the technical ability to sign-up for webinars and view them, and it brings people who may feel isolated in their experience together.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

We partnered with the Senior Citizen’s Association of BC Branch #46 President Bev Kennedy for the Nidus Personal Planning month series. She advertised the sessions to her membership, and

the Library advertised in its newsletter. The Library did the set up and operated the technology, and Bev printed information handouts with session information.

What was the outcome?

The Library offered 4 sessions in total with 16 people attending. Those who participated commented on the quality of information provided by Nidus and liked that the webinars were live. Bev Kennedy is quite knowledgeable on the topic and was able to offer clarification when questions arose. People went away feeling they learned something valuable, and knew that they could find trusted information and forms for planning on the Nidus website.

Library Priority 3: Collaborating on shared goals

Our strategic priority: Innovation & Programming.

Our goal: Our revitalized space and high-quality collections meet the diverse needs of our users.

Our Strategy: Work collaboratively with partners.

Describe one or two programs connected

- ✓ Outreach Librarian services
- ✓ Parent Child Mother Goose
- ✓ Sharing space

Outreach Librarian Services

The Castlegar Library is dedicated to offering outreach services in our community. For a small Library, with a small staff, we make a big impact on those who enjoy the benefits of this important aspect of library services. In 2019, two of our staff built a schedule of outreach spanning small children to seniors. They visited two strong start centres, one family centre, one daycare, one preschool and three elementary schools. Individual homebound individuals and three seniors' homes also received regular outreach services.

Parent Child Mother Goose

In 2019 there was funding for three 8-week sessions. Parent Child Mother Goose is a literacy and relationship-building program for babies and their caregivers. The program also gives caregivers an important space to meet others and have conversations about their baby.

Sharing Space with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL)

Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC)

This CBAL program happens twice per week at the library. Newcomers to Canada come to improve their reading, writing and conversation skills. They also benefit from meeting each other and building connections. Participants also use library resources, which is an added benefit of having the program here.

CLP

The Community Learning Place (CLP) is another CBAL program that takes place in the Library. This is a weekly drop in technology assistance program. People can bring their own device or computer, or they can use one of the Library's laptops if they do not have one of their own.

Scrabble Club

Scrabble Club is a monthly meet up of scrabble enthusiasts combining language and spelling skills with lots of fun. The Scrabble Club has a big spring tournament at the Library before wrapping up for the season.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

Outreach Librarian Services

CBAL supports some of the Library's outreach programs with Raise-a-Reader and Forest Legacy grants. These funds go towards programing materials, travel costs, and Librarian wages to support early learning programs in our community. The Library provides the materials and an outreach librarian for 24 sessions per year.

Parent Child Mother Goose

The Library and CBAL each contribute one staff member to the Parent Child Mother Goose program. The Library provides the meeting space and we each advertise the program within the community.

Sharing Space

The Library provides the meeting space free of charge as well as tables and chairs for three of CBAL's programs. The Library and CBAL shared the cost of a wall-mounted whiteboard that we each use. The Library holds story time for preschoolers at the same time as the LINC classes so participants with small children can attend and not worry about childcare.

What was the outcome?

Last year the Library read to 3043 children in outreach programs and visited senior centres an average of three times per month. CBAL's programs and our shared Parent Child Mother Goose program brought 153 individual sessions into the Library assisting people with communication, literacy, and technology. These programs build human connections and improve the wellbeing of individuals. One person who resides in a care home tells our staff that a visit from the Library makes her day brighter. Children become excited in schools when our Librarian visits. They shout Miss Julie is here!

Library Priority 4: Enhancing Governance.

Our strategic priority: Organizational Vitality

Our goal: We have the people, funding and resources to sustain our success.

Our Strategy: Human resource development

The Library offered the following programs to Enhance Governance

- ✓ New 2020-2023 Strategic Plan
- ✓ Continued commitment towards trustee governance

New 2020-2023 Strategic Plan

2018 was the last year of our 2015-2018 strategic plan. In the latter half of 2018, we began the development of a new community survey with input from Library staff and the board. The survey was wide ranging and asked questions about the Library's online and physical space, as well as the value of the Library within the community. The information gained from the community survey as well as conversations with staff and board members gave us new areas of focus, a set of goals, and strategies for implementation going forward.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

The Library completed its new strategic plan with professional facilitation from Syringa Consulting. Our facilitator analyzed survey results, met with staff, and held two sessions with board to develop the plan.

What was the outcome?

We have a new 2020-2023 strategic plan. With 416 community responses and consultation with stakeholders, our new areas of focus are Organizational Vitality, Physical Space and Collections, Community Engagement, and Innovation and Programming. A new board meeting agenda will

incorporate our plan to help us remain on task, and staff meetings going forward will focus on how we are accomplishing our goals.

Describe one or two programs connected

Continued commitment towards trustee governance

In 2019, 6 trustees attended the newly revised Trustee Orientation Program. The session was a good introduction to being an effective board member, understanding the difference between the Director and Board roles, overall governance, and the big picture view of libraries in the province.

Name partnerships and support – who contributed what – who are they

The BCLTA was the delivery organization for the Trustee Orientation Program, and Babs Kelly from the BCLTA office taught the session at the Nelson Public Library. The Kootenay Library Federation offers a 60% subsidy for TOP training with our Library contributing the rest of the funds for the training.

What was the outcome?

Board members participated in the newly refreshed TOP program now called the BCLTA Governance Workshops going forward in 2020. When newly elected, our new board members receive numerous orientation documents. It takes time to digest this information. One new board member described it as “a handful [and] a headful.” These professionally taught workshops are essential to orientating a new board member to the provincial Library landscape, the legislation, and the roles of trustees and directors. After the session, our board changed the frequency of financial statement review, commented on the quality of the program and felt they had a better understanding of their role on the Library board.

Summary

The Library had a very busy 2019. Aside from the events listed above the Library hosted seven local authors offering a range of interesting subjects including:

- A fictionalized accounting of a local murder in the 1880's
- A metaphysician and reiki master
- A fantasy writer
- An author who shared her experience with post-traumatic stress disorder
- Poetry and prose on the experience of immigration
- A local “Ignite your Life for Women” contributor
- Tales of adventure on the high seas

In addition to the Out in the Open art show, the Library also hosted seven individual artists who displayed acrylics, paper craft, photography, poured art, and rock painting.

Our annual Food for Fines and Giving Tree events are an opportunity for the Library to contribute to our local Community Harvest Food Bank. Our patrons filled two Christmas trees with donated hand knit hats, scarves and mittens and we filled the back of a pick-up truck with donated food.

We were fortunate to receive both Young Canada Works and Canada Summer Jobs grants fully funding two Summer Reading Club Coordinators. The Summer Reading Club continues to be a popular program in our community with available spaces filling up quickly. In 2019, we offered two separate SRC programs, one in July, and one in August, which allowed us to accommodate all children who wanted to attend. We also provided reading records and incentive prizes to children who wanted to keep track of their reading, but not attend a program. We will continue with this successful formula in 2020.