

2021 PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT (PLGR)

LIBRARY NAME

Vancouver Island Regional Library

CHECKLIST

For the PLGR to be considered complete, please ensure you have provided information for each of the following sections. Suggested word counts have been included for each question, but feel free to include more or less text as needed – text boxes will expand as you type. Click on a title in the list below to jump to that section of the document.

- ☐ [1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE](#)
- ☐ [2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS](#)
- ☐ [3. KEY CHALLENGES](#)
- ☐ [4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL](#)

1. INTRODUCTION - LIBRARY AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

Provide a brief description of the community and library, focusing on what has changed in the past year (up to 500 words).

[Vancouver Island Regional Library \(VIRL\)](#), which opened its doors in 1936 as the Vancouver Island Union Library, now serves over 450,000 people on Vancouver Island over 42,000 square kilometers, through 39 branch libraries, our eLibrary, and a Books-by-Mail service. Our 39 locations are important gathering places in our communities. VIRL provides library services on the territories of over 55 Indigenous Nations.

Many of our branches are at the frontline of economic and social struggles in our communities. 2021 saw the continuing challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. VIRL is committed to being open and accessible, while still providing a safe and welcoming space for everyone. To that end, we have continued providing access to services and resources while adhering to stringent health & safety protocols in line with BC CDC and WorkSafe BC. Prior to COVID-19, we were aware of many in our communities increasingly facing issues such as poverty, substance use, homelessness, dementia, social isolation, and mobility restrictions. COVID-19 has compounded these existing issues.

We continue to strive to provide information, vital resources for families and newcomers, resources that support new business enterprises, and safe ways to stay connected both in-person and virtually.

2. MAJOR PROJECTS/PROGRAMS

Please describe any new or major ongoing projects/programs the library has delivered in the past year. To report on multiple projects/programs, “copy” the blank table below and insert additional tables as needed using the “paste” function. Use one table per project/program.

Project/Program Name	
Witness Blanket Exhibit	
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.	
<p>Inspired by a woven blanket, this large-scale art installation by Carey Newman is made from pieces of history – hundreds of items reclaimed from residential schools, churches, government buildings, and other cultural structures across Canada.</p> <p>More than 800 items from 77 communities were gathered for this artwork. They include letters, photos, stories, books, clothing, art, and fragments of buildings.</p> <p>The Canadian Museum for Human Rights was involved in the creation of the piece and hosted this exhibition between December 2015 and June 2016 at its Level 6 Expressions gallery.</p> <p>The Nanaimo Harbourfront branch hosted a replica of the blanket between June and September 2021. On September 3, 2021, VIRL hosted a screening of the film <i>Picking Up the Pieces: the Making of the Witness Blanket</i>. Afterwards, an online Q&A with artist, Carey Newman was held. We obtained permission from Carey Newman to record the question-and-answer period that took place after the film. You can find the video on YouTube.</p> <p>VIRL joined forces with the Laichwiltach Family Life Society, Campbell River Arts Council, Campbell River Museum and City of Campbell River – City Hall to bring the replica of the Witness Blanket to Campbell River September 20 – October 30, 2021.</p>	
How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?	
<p>This project and accompanying program supports VIRL's community focused goals to provide opportunities to connect and to listen and learn from one another.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a space in one of our libraries for this important art installation enabled people to come together to share an experience focused on learning. • Providing an opportunity to view the film about the art installation and hear directly from the artist created a meaningful space for connection and understanding in support of truth and reconciliation. 	
How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service? Please provide information for as many goals as applicable.	
<p>1. Improving Access for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project/program promoted resource-sharing in a digital environment through the online film screening and subsequent Q&A with the artist, increasing access to experiences and learnings.

2. Building Capacity for library staff and directors (e.g., training, and professional development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The documentary film screening and Q&A with the author program offered an opportunity for staff to learn more about the history of residential schools and the Indigenous experience in Canada. The program was recorded and shared after the live session.
3. Advancing Citizen Engagement (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project/program fostered community knowledge sharing that supported reconciliation. This project/program promoted library spaces to engage people in conversations about issues that affect their lives and the lives of those traditionally marginalized in their communities.
4. Enhancing Governance of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is growing awareness of the necessity for inclusive governance in context of DRIPA. This program, and the others featured below, help situate the importance of, and prepare board and staff to take more steps on, the journey of Truth and Reconciliation.
What are the key outcomes of this project/program? Please refer to the logic model in the appendix of the 2021 PLGR Guide for examples of how to write short, medium, and long-term outcomes.	

“The Witness Blanket stands as a national monument to recognize the atrocities of the Indian residential school era, honour the children, and symbolize ongoing reconciliation.” – [Canadian Museum for Human Rights](#)

The key outcomes of the Witness Blanket project:

Short Term:

- Visitors to the Witness Blanket art installation increase their knowledge of Indigenous history in Canada, in particular the atrocities of the residential school system, as well as current and ongoing challenges.
- Visitors to the Witness Blanket art installation have an opportunity to experience the stories of survivors in a visual medium as each object has a story to tell.
- Visitors to the Witness Blanket art installation connect with others in their community through art.
- Participants in the online Q&A with the artist connect with others in way they would not have otherwise been able to do in-person.

Medium Term:

- Viewers of the art installation, the film, and the Q&A increase their understanding of Indigenous experiences in Canada.
- People who visit the installation or watch the documentary film seek out further resources to continue their learning journey to truth and reconciliation.

Long Term:

- Participants gain a greater understanding of residential schools, churches, government and other traditional structures and systems across Canada.
- Participants gain a greater understanding of their role in reconciliation.

Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery)?

The art installation was achieved through partnership with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. They funded part of the installation costs.

The documentary film screening was in partnership with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights (provided link to online version of the film) and the artist, Carey Newman, who shared his time to answer questions after the film and allowed a recording to be shared online.

Shaw Media also produced a short video highlighting the Witness Blanket initiative as part of its ongoing Shaw Spotlight Series: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67sP4EvEhyU>

Project/Program Name	
Q&A with Bob Joseph	
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.	
<p>On Wednesday, January 13, 2021, Vancouver Island Regional Library hosted a free online event with Indigenous Relations expert and bestselling author of <i>21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act</i>, Bob Joseph. This virtual seminar, called a Q and A on the Indian Act with Bob Joseph, included a presentation from Bob and an opportunity for attendees to ask questions.</p> <p>Participants were invited to register online to participate on Zoom. Participants were encouraged to read <i>21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act</i> prior to the event and were encouraged to watch his interview with journalist Steve Paikin. A link was provided on our website. Over 500 people participated in the live program.</p> <p>The event was moderated by a VIRL Customer Services Librarian.</p>	
How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?	
<p>This program supports VIRL's community focused goals to provide opportunities for lifelong learning and inspiration. It supports our goal to engage and listen to our diverse populations and for our programs to contribute to a more knowledgeable society, in this case, specific to reconciliation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing a space and opportunity to engage with an Indigenous relations expert contributes to deepening the knowledge and understanding of participants, specific to the Indigenous experience in Canada. • Providing an online space for a presenter to speak on a topic that is relevant and educational reaching those who might not otherwise have an opportunity to engage on the topic or are not aware of the resources the library has available. 	
How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service ? Please provide information for as many goals as applicable.	
5. Improving Access for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This program promoted resource-sharing in a digital environment through the online Q&A, increasing access to experiences and learnings.
6. Building Capacity for library staff and directors (e.g., training, and professional development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This program offered an opportunity to staff to learn more about the <i>Indian Act</i> and Indigenous relations. The program was recorded and shared after the live session.

<p>7. Advancing Citizen Engagement (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This program fostered community knowledge sharing that supported reconciliation. • This program engaged people in conversations about issues that affect their lives and the lives of those traditionally marginalized in their communities.
<p>8. Enhancing Governance of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is growing awareness of the necessity for inclusive governance in context of DRIPA. This program, and the others featured below, help situate the importance of, and prepare board and staff to take more steps on, the journey of Truth and Reconciliation.
<p>What are the key outcomes of this project/program? Please refer to the logic model in the appendix of the 2021 PLGR Guide for examples of how to write short, medium, and long-term outcomes.</p>	
<p>Vancouver Island Regional Library hosted a free online event with Indigenous Relations expert and bestselling author of <i>21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act</i>, Bob Joseph. This virtual seminar, called a Q and A on the Indian Act with Bob Joseph, included a presentation from Bob and an opportunity for attendees to ask questions</p> <p>The key outcomes of the Bob Joseph Q&A program:</p> <p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants increase their knowledge of the Indian Act from an Indigenous perspective. • Participants read Bob Joseph's book to learn more about the issues. • Participants connect online with an Indigenous relations expert that they may not have been able to connect with if limited to in-person. <p>Medium Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants seek out further resources to continue their learning journey to truth and reconciliation. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants gain a greater understanding of their role in reconciliation. 	
<p>Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery)?</p>	
<p>This program did not involve any formal partnerships with respect to funding, outreach, or service delivery.</p>	

Project/Program Name	
National Indigenous History Month Challenge	
Provide a brief description of the activities involved in this project/program.	
<p>The National Indigenous History Month Challenge was a project that started in June of 2021 but has grown and endured throughout the year. Participants were challenged to take one action per day to further their understanding of local Indigenous communities, the ongoing effects of colonization, and to engage with Indigenous content makers, artists, and creators.</p> <p>A resource list was created to include reports, articles, podcasts, films, games and more. There was a challenge booklet provided for participants to keep track of their progress.</p> <p>Artist Jean-Paul Langlois created <i>Raven my Friend</i>, a painting exclusively for VIRL, to mark National Indigenous History Month. VIRL purchased copies of the artwork for our branches and made the print available for download on our website.</p>	
How does this project/program support the library's strategic goals and/or community?	
<p>This project supports the library's goals to seek new ways to reach those who are not aware of our resources. It creates new partnerships and provides a space for artists to create.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with a local artist for this project connects VIRL and library members to others who can share their knowledge and experiences. Providing an opportunity for others to create is a key role for libraries in communities. • Creating a place on our website dedicated to Indigenous resources creates awareness of our collections and access to important resources for our members and staff to explore and learn. 	
How does this project/program support the B.C.'s strategic goal(s) for public library service? Please provide information for as many goals as applicable.	
9. Improving Access for British Columbians (e.g., connectivity, digital collections, shared services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project promoted resource-sharing in a digital environment through online resources such as our digital collection, podcasts, and other online media.
10. Building Capacity for library staff and directors (e.g., training, and professional development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project posed a challenge to staff to further their understanding of local Indigenous communities and engage with Indigenous content makers, artists, and creators. • The project offered links to resources so staff could engage in self-directed learning about Indigenous history, culture, stories, and challenges.

<p>11. Advancing Citizen Engagement (e.g., helping people access government services/resources, fostering community knowledge-sharing, and supporting reconciliation)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project highlighted a plethora of resources related to Indigenous culture, history, and community. • Resources provided included links to Indigenous social media, online courses, arts and culture, and ways to support Indigenous-owned bookstores. • Links to discussions around activism and reconciliation were included to help those on their reconciliation journey.
<p>12. Enhancing Governance of the library system (e.g., board/trustee training, developing best practices, strategic planning)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project provided resources to VIRL trustees to further support their learning and reconciliation journey.
<p>What are the key outcomes of this project/program? Please refer to the logic model in the appendix of the 2021 PLGR Guide for examples of how to write short, medium, and long-term outcomes.</p>	
<p>The National Indigenous History Month Challenge was a project that started in June of 2021 but has grown and endured throughout the year. Participants were challenged to take one action per day to further their understanding of local Indigenous communities, the ongoing effects of colonization, and to engage with Indigenous content makers, artists, and creators.</p> <p>The key outcomes of the National Indigenous Peoples History Month Challenge:</p> <p>Short Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants increase their knowledge of Indigenous history, culture, arts, and stories. • Participants take part in meaningful action to learn and grow their awareness of Indigenous culture and issues. • Participants take part in meaningful action to support Indigenous artists and creators. <p>Medium Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants seek out further resources to continue their learning journey to truth and reconciliation. <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants gain a greater understanding of their role in reconciliation. 	
<p>Did the project/program involve any partnerships? If so, what was the partner's role (e.g., funding, outreach, service delivery)?</p>	
<p>This project did not involve any formal partnerships with respect to funding, outreach, or service delivery.</p>	

3. KEY CHALLENGES

The following topics have been identified as recurring themes in previous years' PLGRs. The intent of this section is to collect detailed information in a structured, consistent format.

Please select the most significant challenges that the library has faced in the past year that you wish to comment on. Leave any other listed topics blank.

Use the 'Other' row to include any ongoing or past challenges that are not included in this list. If you have more than one 'Other' item to add, please insert additional rows into the table.

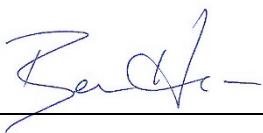
Challenge	Briefly describe how this challenge has impacted the library/community, and what steps the library took to address it in 2021. Please specify if any provincial funding was used, e.g., annual library funding, the technology grant, other non-PLB provincial grants (up to 250 words per topic).
COVID-19 (e.g., safety protocols, proof of vaccination)	<p>The ongoing pandemic and the changes to Public Health orders meant we needed to adapt services throughout the year to ensure staff and public safety.</p> <p>We continued to follow our internal Recovery Plan (created in 2020) and COVID safety plans.</p> <p>Some in-branch programs were suspended in early 2021 and again in late 2021 due to the increased Public Health orders regarding capacity and later, vaccine status.</p> <p>VIRL addressed these challenges by creating more online options for programs and services. We scaled back service in branches without closing by offering curbside service where needed.</p> <p>Outdoor programs were offered in better weather and capacity limits were maintained without issue. In some locations, in-person programs have resumed.</p>
Emergency response (e.g., fires, floods, extreme weather)	<p>The flooding and subsequent State of Emergency issued in November 2021 impacted services. Some branches were closed briefly due to staffing shortages where staff could not travel to branches. Deliveries of collections to branches were impacted for several days as well.</p> <p>VIRL addressed these challenges by adding extra deliveries where possible to areas less affected. We re-routed our deliveries to make use of ferry services to get around the Malahat closure.</p>
Financial pressure (e.g., rising costs, reduced revenues)	<p>94% of our funding is received through member levies. 5% is provided by the Provincial Grant, and 1% is funded through other means like one-time grants.</p> <p>As a Regional library system, we do not have access to many grant programs only available to Municipalities. This hinders our ability to access funding for things like local infrastructure, strengthening communities, connectivity, etc.</p>

	<p>Other pressures include the rising costs of fuel, books, digital resources, and other operating expenses.</p> <p>VIRL has addressed this by drawing awareness to the grant ineligibility challenges with the Minister and Ministry staff, and by seeking collaborative partnerships with local governments and aligned partners.</p>
Staffing (e.g., recruitment and retention, mental health and wellness)	<p>The last two years of the pandemic coupled with extreme weather, record high inflation, and increasing social turmoil means our staff are continuously serving communities in crisis. These compounding and ongoing crises have a negative impact on mental health and wellness. This is evident in what we hear from staff directly, attendance trends, and overall engagement.</p> <p>VIRL has addressed this by continuing to provide Employee and Family Assistance programs. VIRL has held info sessions, training, and discussions for staff on psychological safety and mental wellness.</p>
Disappearing services in the community (e.g., government, banking, health)	<p>We have seen the closure of warming centres in places like Nanaimo and Courtenay, as social services are impacted by lack of funding.</p> <p>Many of our rural communities had already been impacted by mill closures, grocery store and bank closures, before COVID.</p> <p>VIRL has addressed this by continuing to invest in rural communities through capital projects, providing consistent services, providing community spaces, and job creation through reliable employment in our rural branches.</p>
Connectivity (e.g., low bandwidth, lack of home internet in the community)	<p>Many of our rural and First Nation communities lack basic home internet and/or have low bandwidth.</p> <p>VIRL has address this by providing computers and WIFI at all locations. In many cases WIFI can be accessed 24 hours a day even when branches are closed. VIRL has also supported the Connected Coast initiative and looks forward to pairing digital literacy supports with newly connected communities as the project progresses.</p>
Aging/damaged facilities (e.g., need for repairs, renovations, upgrades/expansions)	<p>Of our 39 locations, we have been diligent to keep up with repairs and maintenance. We have replaced or rebuilt where possible. There is ongoing need to for repairs to outdated facilities.</p>


Community access to the library (e.g., geographic isolation, lack of local public transit, building accessibility)	<p>Many of our rural and First Nations communities are geographically isolated and not able to access a library branch near them without access to a boat or ferry service.</p> <p>VIRL has addressed this to date with a Books By Mail service and an extensive eLibrary; however, we need to do more to provide access to those in isolated locations.</p>
Vulnerable communities (e.g., people experiencing homelessness, addiction, mental health crisis)	<p>Many of our branches service communities of people experiencing multiple, simultaneous crises. From housing to mental health there are not enough resources and supports to help everyone in need. Libraries are the front line of free and trusted assistance from washrooms to computer access.</p> <p>VIRL has addressed this to date with safe and clean facilities, free access to computers and the internet, and access to community supports through partnered programs with local services.</p>
Other (please specify)	<p>Geography and distance are a continuous challenge to our rural and remote service delivery models. In the near future, we hope to reimagine our Books By Mail service and the potential for impactful, collaborative partnerships with aligned service agencies, including government. Funding and aligned mandates are a challenge in this context.</p>

4. SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL

Electronic signatures are acceptable where physical signatures are not feasible.

Library Director Signature: 

Date: March 18, 2021

Board Chair Signature: 

Date: March 18, 2021