

## Alert Bay Public Library

### Provincial Report 2019

The Alert Bay Public Library is situated on Cormorant Island, known to many in the First Nation local community as Yalis. The library was founded in 1959 and became part of the Provincial Library system. The Alert Bay Public Library may have the status of being the smallest or one of the smaller of all the libraries in the Province. As such it has unique benefits and challenges.

Cormorant Island is home to the Namgis First Nation and Whe-la-la-U Reserves and the Incorporated Village of Alert Bay. The total population is approximately one thousand in winter with a considerable increase during the summer months when many tourists come to visit the museums and take part in cultural events and marine excursions. The First Nation and Village governments have signed an accord that allows joint projects and a cooperative approach to common issues. The library is located on the main street in a building shared by the Tourist Information Office. Given its location and facilities it is often a hub for visitors.

Cormorant Island was once an important location of administrative offices and personnel for activities on North Vancouver Island and the surrounding islands and communities. There were four fuel docks to service the heavy marine traffic. The island suffered the economic downturn that has overtaken many small rural and remote communities following the decline in fishing, forestry and mining in the region. In 1978 the Island Highway joined the road between Sayward and Port McNeill and many services were decentralized. The loss of a fuel dock for boaters and the growth of Port McNeill as a centre also contributed to a decrease in the number of businesses and industries on Cormorant Island. There have been concerted efforts to replace those industries with tourism on Cormorant Island, and many visitors are drawn to the U'Mista Cultural Centre and the whale watching excursions.

### Value of Provincial Funding to the Library

The Provincial Grant has been the main source of funding over the years and has enabled us to keep giving a valuable service to the community. In this year of celebrating 60 years since the Library opened the doors to all residents of Cormorant Island, one of the major 1<sup>st</sup> Nations, the ' Namgis Band, came forward to offer us an annual grant of \$10,000.00, from the Kwagis Community Benefits Fund.

### Collaborating

Because of our membership in the Islandlink Library Federation. Last year we were able to present three programs children for children and one for adults:

March 12, 2019 – Karima Essa, a Bollywood Dancer, presented a program to students at the Alert Bay Elementary Secondary School and the T'Lisalagi'lakw School to a total of 127 children.

May 4, 2019 – author Eve Lazurus did a reading from her latest book to a gathering of 20 adults .

May 30, 2019 – Leif David, a magician, visited both schools where his audience consisted of 119 children.

During the summer holidays on July 24, 2019, the group “Story Theater” from Victoria came and gave a performance at the Cook Shack Hall.

There were 3,248 visits from patrons and tourists to our library and our computers were accessed 569 times.

Again, through our continuing work within the Islandlink Library Federation, we were able to have two of our new library staff travel to the Salt Spring Library to receive training in the Sitka Cataloguing system we both use. This was a tremendous help to us last year when we had new staff starting to work.

## Improving Access

With our new funding source from the ‘Namgis First Nation, we hope to expand our work on our collection and improve our internet service and computers. With the opening of our new Research Library, we hope to be able to offer access to the late Dr. Martin Weinstein’s library of books, reports and articles related to community- based marine resource stewardship. A majority of these titles are associated with Alert Bay, the ‘Namgis First Nation and the Kwakwaka’wakw Sea.

Our interlibrary loan system continues to be well used and constitutes a greater workload for our day when we share books from our collection with other libraries throughout the Province.

Participants in the Namgis Treatment Centre program continue to make use our public access computers during breaks of their sessions. These visitors come from all parts of the Province and we are able to help them keep in touch with their families during their stay in Alert Bay.

## Summary

2019 saw some changes in our staff and finances but we were able to work within our budget and even with reduced hours provide many services to our community and visitors to Alert Bay.

We hope this coming year to renew our Strategic Plan which is:

To provide and maintain an active centre promoting literacy and providing up-to-date information and internet access.

To be a reference and research resource for information about the unique history and cultural identity of our region in general and Cormorant Island in particular.

To maintain membership in the Islandlink Library Federation in order to share resources and provide greater opportunities to local residents through author visits and projects coordinated by the Federation.

