

Burns Lake Public Library

2019 Provincial Library Grants Report



INTRODUCTION

Burns Lake Public Library has been serving the Lakes District community since 1944. Burns Lake incorporated as a Village in 1923. Located in the Northern-Central Interior of British Columbia, on Highway 16 midway between Prince George and Smithers, the village population is 1,779 according to the 2016 Census (does not include residents of the two reserves within village limits). The library also serves Electoral Areas 'B' & 'E' within the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako and the six local First Nation communities: Lake Babine Nation, Wet'suwet'en First Nation, Ts'il Kaz Koh First Nation (Burns Lake Band), Skin Tyee Nation, Nee Tahi Buhn Band and Cheslatta Carrier Nation, bringing our population served to about 8,000. We are one of the few communities in the province that carry an almost equal population of both Indigenous and European decent, giving us a rich First Nations heritage.

Burns Lake is located in the midst of a large network of lakes called the Lakes District, with fishing and hunting year-round. Summer brings water, hiking and other trail activities and winter offers cross-country skiing (first cross-country ski club in Canada) and snowmobiling on wilderness trails. Burns Lake is a world class mountain biking destination and has a vibrant mountain biking community. Located 10 minutes north of downtown Burns Lake, Boar Mountain and the surrounding lakes network host some of Canada's most progressive, sanctioned, and sustainable trail networks anywhere on the planet.

The town serves as a hub for the local logging, saw-milling, mining and tourist industries. It also serves as the main commercial centre for the surrounding area including François Lake, Colleymount, Grassy Plains, Ootsa Lake, Rose Lake, and Topley.

As in other small communities in British Columbia, we continue to face a number of challenges typical for rural areas such as:

- Decline in the allowable timber cut and overall reduction in the natural resources traditionally used to fuel the local economy which results in a growing number of low-income families
- Increased housing pressures since the beginning of pipeline production. There are not enough single-family residences available to meet the demand
- Aging population and lack of senior's long-term care and affordable housing
- Difficulties attracting professionals such as doctors, nurses and teachers
- Digital access is still an issue for many residents in remote areas. A large number are still without cell service or affordable internet access

2019 was the second year of our 2018-2020 Strategic Plan

As we continued to work on our goals set out in our 2018-2020 strategic plan, we realized that we would not be able to achieve all we had planned. Many of the objectives were reached but there are still many projects waiting to be tackled. In the future we need to be more realistic with setting our bar of expectations.

1) Increase promotion of Burns Lake Public Library

Our social media promotion improved immensely over 2019. The library's Facebook page is active and the number of viewers is growing daily. One of our goals is to reach as many community members as we can with the information about the events, programs and gatherings in the library. We are hearing a very positive response from the public.

To better reach our patrons in remote areas, Burns Lake Library continues to deliver the Words on Wheels service to the Francois Lake area and the seven communities south of Francois Lake, collectively known as the Southside which requires ferry access. This service is possible thanks to our coordination with Lakes Literacy. The Words on Wheels Bus (WOW Bus) travels to the Southside one day a week, stopping at three designated locations. The patrons can order materials from the library over the phone or via email. The materials are then placed on the bus, ready for pick up/drop off at designated locations. Materials can be returned to the library by simply dropping them off at one of the designated bus stops or the permanent drop box located at the Southside Health and Wellness Center. Now, patrons from the Southside have a reliable and close connection to their library. After creating a flyer promoting the WOW bus and delivering it to all the mail boxes on the Southside, we experienced an increased interest in this service.



We rotate a small book collection at each of the four senior housing units monthly, bringing the library to those that may have transportation issues. Our partnership with the local food bank has led us to set aside surplus/donated books, DVDs, CDs and VCRs that the food bank picks up once a month along with any food items that patrons have donated. Reaching out in a safe and comfortable way is an important step in breaking down barriers.

2) Use programs and services to reach more citizens

The library strives to reach more of our population in a relevant and meaningful way. Delivering programs and services people need, want and enjoy is crucial. Village life can be quiet and, like folks everywhere, people are seeking affordable activities, events, and programs to spark joy, learn, grow and provide a social outing. We are very proud to continue delivering top notch programming to meet these needs. We are especially proud of our two annual fundraisers, the Annual Used Book Sale and Annual Christmas Craft Fair (over 35 years and counting). These events are anticipated as key events on the Burns Lake calendar each year drawing in large crowds and many happy returnees.

For the first time Burns Lake Public Library was present at Aboriginal Day.

3) Collaborate with other organizations to create a connected community

Our partnerships with many of the community organizations are growing. In the past year we have seen proof of how much easier it is to achieve the goals set in our strategic plan while working together. Many of us work towards the same objectives. In 2019 we have been fortunate to collaborate on different projects with groups including:

- Lakes Literacy
- The Link (Lakes District Family Enhancement Society and Community Kitchen Garden)
- Lakes Animal Friendship Society (LAFS)
- Lakes District Secondary School
- College of New Caledonia
- Lakes District Arts Council
- Lakes District Museum

4) Manage available resources and space for best use by patrons



In 2019 we saw an increased interest in the physical space available within the library building. We welcomed different groups who started to use our space as a weekly gathering place. Every Wednesday, the Teen Room is the location of choice for a group of young people coming together to play Dungeons and Dragons. It started with three participants who were looking for a safe place to meet. With time, the number has increased to nine and is growing. Monthly meetings of a local Keto group are becoming popular. The library's Multipurpose Room is where the patrons can share their experience about dietary changes and exchange recipes.

5) Ensure library staff have the knowledge, skills, and abilities to meet the evolving needs of our communities

Due to immense staff turnover in 2018, our focus in 2019 was improving our skills and abilities to better serve the public. All staff members continue their professional education by attending orientation sessions, webinars and accessing online training. This year, three staff members were fortunate to attend the Beyond Hope Conference in Prince George. Sessions were educational and very informative. There is never enough money in the budget to access top notch training for small libraries located in the north. Without the support from North Central Library Federation we would not be able to access this valuable and much needed training.

PRIORITY # 1 – IMPROVING ACCESS

Burns Lake Public Library serves the Village of Burns Lake as well as the Lakes District which includes remote areas where many residents are without cell service or internet access. Many depend on our free internet service. We have seven public stations plus two more in the teen room and quite often they are all being used. Patrons come to access their online banking, conduct research, write documents, access training, fill out government applications or connect with others. The library offers many online resources such as RBDigital, Library2Go, IndiFlix, Zenio, and Gale Courses. Even though we were connected to a high-speed fiber optic internet (a new and wonderful development), we were not able to take advantage of the speed due to outdated equipment and their constant need for repairs.

In the beginning of the year we submitted applications to local organizations for financial support to buy new equipment. Thanks to their generosity we were able to purchase brand new equipment for the public and staff. 11 new computers and three receipt printers were installed at the end of April.



Family Literacy Day

In honour of Canadian Family Literacy Day, our library hosted FamCon, a mini-convention about the importance of literacy. The event was held on January 28th instead of January 27th in order to coincide with a School District Pro-D-Day. During the seven-hour event we welcomed 186 visitors. Families with different aged children participated in a variety of activities:

- Button making
- LEGO imagination build station
- Bookmark making
- Superhero paper bag puppets
- Aqua man craft

- Little Gingerbread man craft
- Frog Prince craft
- Scooby Doo & Shaggy sandwich craft
- Creating Harry Potter wands
- Potion making – aka slime

All activities were based on a Superhero theme and designed to boost awareness of literacy and the role it plays in healthy families. There were numerous door prizes and swag bags available for every child as well as a book of their choice from the library's prize selection.

PRIORITY # 2 – DEVELOPING SKILLS

The daily focus for our staff is positive interaction with our patrons; help in finding resources, research, help with printing, writing, faxing and navigating the internet, to name a few. We listen closely to our patrons. What are their interests, what new things would they like to learn or explore? The priorities from our patrons are changing and evolving. The library attempts to keep pace with these changes. Digital photography workshops are in great demand. In November we offered a digital photography workshop conducted by one of our local artists. We had to limit the number of participants to 20 due to room capacity. In a very short time, we ended up with a waiting list for the next session. The two plus hour workshop was without cost to our patrons. We plan to continue photography workshops as these are very popular and to find other equally desirable workshops to offer the public.

Many of our patrons are gardeners, hobby gardeners and more serious ones. In the last few years, the interest in growing one's own food, self-sufficiency and healthy nutrition are a few of the most popular topics. As the real estate market in southern BC is exploding, young families are moving further north where the property prices are still affordable. A great number of these families are interested in small homesteading as they are asking for support materials when we sign up their family for library cards. Interlibrary loans have seen a big increase in skill development books such as homesteading, gardening, storing and preserving garden produce, cooking with the seasons, small farm animal husbandry, etc. In response to the demand for this knowledge, we partnered with The Link and Community Kitchen Garden to offer a number of relevant workshops. Attendance was very high. This tells us just how desirable this information and skill development is to our community. Participants were from a wide spread of different age groups, starting with Daycare age and ending with senior citizens.

Some of the topics:

- How to start your own garden, planning, seed choices
- Soil nutrition, why this is important
- Seed starting workshop
- Transplanting seedlings into the greenhouse and the garden
- How to choose your plants in the greenhouse before you buy
- How to care and harvest your produce

- How to prepare healthy and tasty meals from your own garden

Some of these workshops were attended by school children from Lake Babine Nation School, enabling the children to bring this knowledge back to their families, creating further healthy family interactions.



PRIORITY # 3 – COLLABORATING ON SHARED GOALS

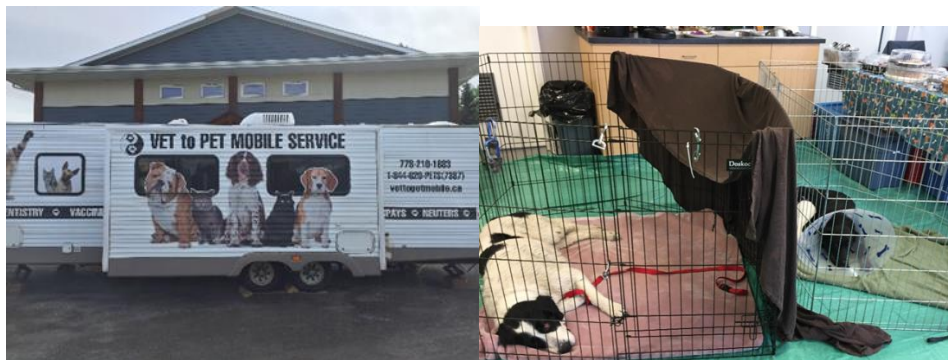
Many of the programs were possible thanks to the fantastic collaboration with other organizations and other libraries. North Central Library Federation made it possible to bring Magician Leif David, to perform in our library. The show was a huge success. The children and their parents/guardians were mesmerized with the performance. We had over 150 attendees for the show and our patron counter showed 221 visitors during that day.

All summer long, we offer the Summer Reading Club program, highly popular and very well attended (307 children over six weeks). As part of that no cost program, we offer various activities throughout the summer, hitting every age group.



The support from North Central Library Federation, makes the delivery of topnotch shows a possibility.

Another great source of education offered, is our library's proud partnership with Lakes Animal Friendship Society. LAFS is unique in that their focus is on education of humane animal treatment and their care, rather than shelter of abandoned strays. The library building being located in the heart of the village allows good access even to those who struggle with transportation. Together with LAFS we facilitated a couple of training sessions for future pet owners about pet care and nutrition. Most successful was the Mobile Animal Clinic which took place on library premises and drew a great number of lower-income families, who would not be able to access the vet services otherwise. During the three days, 47 dogs and cats were spayed or neutered, some others groomed and vaccinated. We couldn't believe how many loving and caring people came together to volunteer in the clinic during these three days. As this proved to be a very important service in our community, we are planning another Mobile Clinic for next year.



We continue to work closely with LAFS on new ideas to help our community and decide which programs would be valuable and worth facilitating.

PRIORITY # 4 – ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

2019 brought many opportunities for professional development and training. Once again, thanks to NCLF we were able to access indispensable training.

The Library Director, the Chair from the Board of Trustees and two of the senior staff attended a series of professional development sessions. The first day started with Library Directors Boot Camp in Prince George organized by North

Central Library Federation. It was an entire day of orientation for the new directors. A great opportunity to talk about the struggles in the job during the first few months and learning about their solutions. The chosen topics were very informative and helpful. The expertise from more experienced colleagues was invaluable.

The next day the Chair and the Library Director attended a Strategic Planning session followed by Beyond Hope Conference. The Library director and two staff members participated in a number of orientation sessions such as:

- CELA and Bookshare: Partnering to Serve British Columbia with Print Disabilities
- Looking Back, Moving Forward: BC Libraries Supporting Reconciliation in their Communities
- Renovation Refresh: Embracing the Change Challenges
- Dr. Tech: Ever Evolving Technical Support in the Libraries
- Resilient and Ready: Libraries Stepping Up to Support Access to Justice
- Board and Library Directors; Talking Public Library Governance and Public Library Values
- Library Branch Update
- Privacy Issues in Libraries
- Responding with Respect

After connecting with many employees from libraries across the province and exchanging experiences, we went home full of great ideas to be implemented in our daily work. Now we have all libraries working very closely together. Putting the face to the name often makes it easier to reach out with work related questions.

September 9, 2019 one of our own staff members conducted a mandatory Customer Service training session for the part time staff to improve patron service in the library.

On September 14, 2019, North Central Library Federation Manager, Edel Toner-Rogala conducted a strategic planning session. The library senior staff and all members from the Board of Trustees attended and were actively involved in the planning. To help frame the strategic planning process for the Board, Edel talked about the “turning outward” practice – using an analogy from the Harwood Institute. The Turning Outward practice is rooted in an orientation—a mindset, a stance—of using the community as your reference point for creating change, and not your meeting room. Turning Outward provides the framework and tools to make better, more precise choices and judgments to produce a greater impact and relevance in your community.

October 20, 2019 the Library Director and Vice Chair attended a Professional Development Session with Ken Haycock in Prince George. Once again, this session was organized by the North Central Library Federation and it was a fantastic opportunity for all of us in Northern BC. As most of the professional development sessions are held in southern BC, we are very grateful to be able to have access to any orientation or training sessions. Ken Haycock shared his experience and expertise on the subject of enhancing board governance. One of the topics covered during this development

session was a consent agenda. The Burns Lake Public Library Board of Trustees decided to adopt this procedure for future meetings.

Burns Lake Library Success Story

BLPL staff are proud to share our vibrant success story of 2019.

Starting in late 2018, we applied for funding from 3 of our local organizations, Nechako -Kitimat Development Fund Society, Burns Lake Community Forest and Burns Lake & District Community Foundation. Our library had been offering many online resources to the public, such as RB Digital, Library2Go, IndieFlix and Gale Courses to name a few. Several patrons were interested in taking these courses online, but due to our antiquated computers and printers that were breaking down on a daily basis, they simply were not able to do so. We were delighted to discover our first success for 2019 was obtaining funding from these local organizations, enabling us to purchase new computers and printers. With the new computers in place, we became aware how few of the general public were even aware these programs were available. To resolve this, we immediately created an advertising campaign, promoting the new ease of accessibility to these programs and were pleased with the instant response.

For the spring of 2019, we scheduled several renovations, creating a more comfortable library for both patrons and staff. The library was closed for three weeks to implement the renovations that included updating the public restrooms on both floors, new office space, painting and new carpeting throughout the main floor. We timed the renovations to coincide with the arrival of the new computers and printers. When we re-opened, in April, the public was treated to a fresh new look throughout the library.

In June, we were honoured to be the chosen recipients of RBC's 100 Year Anniversary Party – a cheque in the amount of \$10,000. Using a portion of those funds, we were able to add to our library's new look, with new tables and chairs for the Teen Room, new chairs for the computer station and more chairs throughout the main floor for patrons' comfort.

In October we were able to obtain outside storage, with much needed new sea cans. The Village of Burns Lake offered to put siding and roofing on them, so they now match the library's siding, creating a nice visual flow on the outside library grounds as well.

All in all in 2019, we were able to raise over \$30,000.00 in grants and donations. Portions of these donations were used toward upgrading equipment and much needed renovations, creating a warm and welcoming space for our patrons to enjoy.

We are thankful for the support we've received from Regional District Bulkley Nechako, the Province of British Columbia, the Village of Burns Lake, granting organizations and, of course, our wonderful patrons.

This report was reviewed and ratified by the members of Burns lake Public Library Board at their regular meeting held on Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Respectfully Submitted,
Monika Willner, Library Director