



## LILLOOET AREA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

### PROVINCIAL LIBRARIES BRANCH REPORT 2020

#### Introduction

The Lillooet Area Library Association provides library services to residents of the District of Lillooet, Squamish Lillooet Regional District (SLRD) Areas A and B, and the six Northern St'át'imc communities T'it'q'et, Ts'al'áh, Se'kelwas, Xwisten, Xaxli'p and Ts'k'way'laxw.

We operate three branches in Lillooet, Gold Bridge and Shalalth (Ts'al'áh) at the Bridge River Power Site. We provide outreach services to communities without a branch.

The Lillooet branch is part of a community hub in the Recreation, Education and Cultural (REC) Centre. The Gold Bridge branch is housed with the post office, next door to the school, and helps form the town centre. The Bridge River branch in Ts'al'áh is central to the newly developed BC Hydro housing complex, but much of the local population is spread out over a large area with multiple community sites.

The town of Lillooet is the service centre for a very rugged, remote, mountainous rural area. The population of the town itself was 2275 in 2016. There are 1757 people living in scattered communities and isolated homesteads throughout the 7,474 square kilometer region that surrounds Lillooet. Some medical and legal services are available in Lillooet, but many people must travel for medical treatment, court proceedings, and other services. There is no public transportation in and out of these communities, people without private vehicles rely on a twice weekly Health Bus to Kamloops or ride sharing and hitchhiking.

Local economies are changing. Forestry and mining continue to provide fluctuating employment. In late 2019 Talisker bought the Bralorne goldmine and is increasing production and employment. Agricultural and tourism sectors are growing. New businesses have opened. B.C. Hydro is working on a two decade up-grade to the Bridge River power complex, resulting in an influx of non-resident permanent workers, new residents and transient contractors. Like many small rural towns, the pandemic has intensified the housing crisis. The real estate market is booming and rental occupancy rates are extremely high.

This is unceded St'át'imc Territory. The St'át'imc people compose approximately 50% of the population. The Lillooet Tribal Council, St'át'imc Government Services and the Band Councils of the six communities are important local government bodies. LALA works with diverse St'át'imc organizations to offer relevant programming. LALA is dedicated to serving the self-identified needs of St'át'imc patrons.

The LALA Board intended to hold final meetings in the spring of 2020 to conclude the Strategic Planning process. The work was delayed until public health orders allowed a small, physically distanced gathering of staff, Board and community members in August of 2020. The plan was completed by the end of the year and adopted by the Board at the January 2021 meeting. Conducting this process amid extreme uncertainty affected the discussion and outcomes. The core mission and vision have remained the same. "Equality" has been changed to "equity" in our values statement, and "sustainability", "creativity" and "accessibility" have been added. A strategic framework has been built which will inform operational planning over the next five years. The four pillars of the framework are: Providing Community Space, Responsive Service, Action on Reconciliation and Learning and Sharing Good Governance. The document can be found on our website. This report on 2020 refers to our previous Strategic Plan.

## LALA STRATEGIC GOALS AND OUTCOMES IN RELATION TO PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

It is especially difficult this year to easily fit LALA's Strategic Goals and Operational Outcomes into alignment with the Provincial priorities. The fact that we were "in-between" strategic plans and responding to unprecedented challenges to basic operations meant that planning and execution was not based on these layers of strategic priorities. Instead we were guided by our core Vision, Mission and Values. It was an important learning gleaned from providing service during a global pandemic; being clear about core mission helps steer the course. We were able to continue getting resources into people's hands and homes because that is what we do; it has been inspiring to work with the local team and provincial partners to make this happen.

There are many points of intersection between the goals of LALA's 2015-19 plan and the provincial priorities. This report will provide examples of achievements of the past year that show LALA's work contributing to the provincial priorities.

**Provincial Priority 1. *Improving Access for British Columbians: Supporting a connected library network that leverages its strengths and structure to deliver user-centred programs and services through the province.***

LALA was one of the first Libraries to offer take out service on April 8<sup>th</sup>. All three branches saw a steady stream of regulars and occasional users. Staff wheeled out laptops protected by cling wrap for patrons to search the catalogue or send emails. Community members expressed a lot of admiration and gratitude for this dedication to "user centred service". We saw a steady increase in Interlibrary Connect and Illume use from its reinstatement in August 2020 to the end of December. The Community Adult Literacy Program (CALP) started a bi-weekly "Library on the Radio" show, it provides local stories, news and updates about library programs and a story-time. The CALP also sourced 10 used laptops for clients and patrons to borrow. The LALA Children's Programmer has worked in partnership with the Lillooet Infant Development Program to offer a range of engaging programs; a virtual playgroup, on-line parents book club,

and an outdoor active Storytime. Local families have expressed deep gratitude for these programs, saying it really helps to have fun things to do that they don't have to organize, are high quality, and safe.

**Provincial Priority 2. *Building Capacity:*** *Reducing barriers for library staff and board members to access training opportunities so that they can continue to provide quality and future-focused library services.*

Reducing barriers for both the team and patrons is always in the background of LALA service goals. In the first quarter of 2020 we were engaged in several initiatives that support ongoing training. The entire staff team was planning to attend the SAILS conference in Kamloops, we had never done anything quite like this before and everyone was excited. The Library Director was preparing a session for the B.C.L.A. conference on using Restorative Justice in Public Library settings. The Volunteer Connect project hosted At the Table 2 and was looking ahead to holding training series and community conversations.

Our last Maker Space before the shutdown was a robotics program. Using Sphero Bolts the participants learned about basic coding and had a lot of fun mastering mazes and dressing up their robots. Providing access to tools, toys and instruments that empower people to explore their world and approach learning in a playful way is central to breaking barriers to learning and engagement.

One pandemic operations response will be carried on into the future. Using software to meet virtually has made it much easier for Board members to attend all meetings. During the pandemic we began holding all staff meetings monthly, including the staff from the two outlying branches. This has been a positive development that we have decided to continue as it builds knowledge within our team, provides a space to troubleshoot and express and respond to concerns.

In the last quarter of the year it became clear that the fatigue and stress of working in public needed to be addressed. The Ryan Dowd "Homelessness for Librarians" web-based training was purchased. Staff response has been overwhelmingly positive. Building compassion and learning tools that help de-escalate or just maintain neutral conversations has helped staff build confidence. The training uses the digital environment in a very effective way, it has increased staff's interest in the potential of on-line training.

**Provincial Priority 3. *Advancing Citizen Engagement:*** *Increasing opportunities for people to access the information and resources they need to thrive as engaged individuals, workers and lifelong learners.*

The CALP program received funds through the United Way for Covid Response. Many families were very isolated during the lockdown, the funding enabled a program that supplied a Family Literacy Pack to disbursements at the Lillooet Friendship Centre Food Bank twice a month and to families in Seton and Ts'al'áh through the Bridge River Library. The packs contained stories, books, activities and the resources to do the

activities. One of the most engaging was the May pack that contained: bean seeds; soil and instructions on how to grow and save seed from them; a story from the local gardener whose family had brought the seeds from Europe and grown in Lillooet for several generations; dried bean recipes; children's books and colouring pages with bean themes. Feedback was very positive, Food Bank staff reporting children eagerly anticipating their books and one client saying 'it's good to feel like someone really cares'.

We tried new digital collections to help patrons access more information from home with varying degrees of success. Most people want entertainment (Libby, Hoopla) while training and education (Lynda and Solaro) have much less use. LALA has a very robust physical DVD collection because it is what our patrons require. With patchy or prohibitive internet service the format has advantages for many people. Unfortunately, less and less content is being offered in DVD which is fueling the popularity of Hoopla. The equity issues became immediately obvious with the Hoopla launch in Dec. 2020, we are exploring devices that patrons can use to download their Hoopla borrows on and take home to address this barrier in the short term.

The three main goals of the Strengthening St'át'imc Education partnership with Lillooet Tribal Council are to: strengthen education and employment training, promote St'át'imc language and culture, and foster community and personal development. The agreement with the funder, the Native Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund was signed just as the pandemic began. It has been very challenging to pivot the original vision of community dinners, gatherings, events and a conference, all celebrating and exploring St'át'imc ways of teaching and learning. LALA and LTC staff have worked with an advisory group of St'át'imc Elders. Physically distanced cultural programs were held during the autumn of 2020; Elders took participants on plant medicine gathering walks; two public drumming sessions were held at the Lillooet REC Centre to very favourable response. Pivot planning is on-going.

**Provincial Priority 4. *Enhancing governance: Leading at the provincial level and supporting governance education.***

The Community Coordinator position is a partnership with other local non-profits. The goals are to strengthen the sector and assist in resource sharing, building capacity and cooperation. In February 2020 the project hosted At the Table 2. Bringing together over 50 community members for a day of reflection on our shared challenges and discussion about taking meaningful actions together. The group reviewed the work that the Community Coordinator had completed to date, and gave direction for the next phase. Ironically we didn't discuss what we would do in a global pandemic. The Com. Coord. was instrumental in creating the Lillooet Community Covid Response which has provided shopping and other support for vulnerable citizens through a network of volunteers. The other work has continued with new formats and time-lines. One of the key findings from "At The Table 2" was that most participants want to have safe spaces to get together to talk about the big topics that are affecting us; racism, climate change, economic transition, among others. Discussions with participants indicates

that people would rather wait until we can begin to gather in person than try to innovate digital environments that are ultimately incapable of mimicking in person dialogue.

During 2020 the LALA Board finalized a new Strategic Plan, adopted a new finance policy and created a pandemic personnel policy and Covid safety plan. These foundational governance pieces were supported by other Library staff and Board members around the province, as well as the on-going work of the Library Partners.

## Conclusion

LALA receives financial support from a wide range of funders. The extraordinary features of LALA's service are largely enabled by grant writing for special projects. Provincial funding is essential because it is a reliable base, enabling LALA to provide core services and employ long term staff. The Technology Grant offered the opportunity to pilot new collections and offer new programming. The fact that we have maintained our core Mission, while protecting the health and safety of staff and patrons is to be applauded. It was the "connected library network" and coordinated efforts of the B.C. Public Library Partners to share knowledge and resources that made it possible for LALA to provide service through the pandemic.



**Lillooet Area Library Association**  
930 Main Street, Lillooet, British Columbia  
St'át'imc Territory

October 15, 2020

Re: 2020 Library Technology Grant Interim Report

Dear Libraries Branch Team,

Please find attached LALA's report on the use of our Technology Grant to date.

We have not yet decided how to spend all the funds. Our new Strategic Plan is in it's last draft and we are getting close to finalizing our intentions for use of the grant.

We are exploring options to increase our digital resources by using the remaining grant money to either purchase an Advantage collection with Overdrive, or fund a trial of Hoopla for our patrons.

Both purchases we have made were with the concept of: "single element, multiple function" in mind. These purchases will be used by different projects and programs; they address the Provincial Public Library strategic priorities at multiple intersections.

The first purchase we made was for sound and visual recording equipment that has enabled our staff to offer a variety of programs and reach out to diverse community members. At the onset of lockdown we initiated "Lillooet Library on the Radio", partnering with the local radio station to keep in touch with patrons who do not have internet access. The bi-monthly show provides updates about what is happening at the Library, and produces unique content about our area. The equipment is used to produce a weekly pre-school story-time, record sessions with St'át'imc Elders and knowledge keepers who are participating in our Strengthening St'át'imc Education project and will eventually be made available for community members to use in our Makerspace.

Our second purchase has been a one-year license for Ethelo. This innovative software gives us a platform to develop a variety of programming and engagements with our patrons. In response to the pandemic, staff who are working on our "Community Conversations" project have done extensive research to find a way to pivot the project to an on-line environment. We seek to create a safe, humane, engaging digital space to connect with patrons on a variety of topics. Ethelo is a decision making tool, we are experimenting with it's efficacy for dialogue

and engagement. We will use it to conduct community conversations about big picture topics, conduct a participatory budget process for collection development, and create a youth engagement program. Our agreement with Ethelo includes the use of the platform by other Lillooet non-profits, so this has the potential to have a much wider impact on our communities.

Thank-you for this opportunity to increase service to our communities. LALA is grateful for the work of the B.C. Public Library Partners and the Libraries Branch for making this possible.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Toby Mueller', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Toby Mueller  
Library Director

2020 LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY GRANT REPORTING FORM: LILLOOET AREA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Total Technology Grant Amount: \$9,986.00

Area of Need	Outcome	Metrics	Strategic Links	Actions	Collaborative Links	Timeframe	Project Budget	In-Kind/Leveraged funds	Comments
Staff software upgrades  Software to build community engagement and advance patron consultation.	Made difficult decision to pull out of agreement with Ethelo. LALA team lacked capacity to fulfill all tasks necessary to implement the program.				Ethelo allowed LALA staff to continue to use training content which has good ideas for digital engagement.	November 2020	920.00	Please see cover letter.	Please see cover letter.
Staff hardware upgrades  Network attached storage drive	Safer storage of administrative files with remote access.	n/a	n/a	Purchase, set up, train staff to use.	n/a	Completed April 2021	1,827.36		
Patron software upgrades  Hoopla Subscription	Give patrons access to larger, on-demand digital entertainment and education collection	Aim for high use (40%) of active card holders within 6months.	Improve access	Purchase, promote, monitor use.	n/a	Launched Dec 2020. Pilot 12 months. Review for 2022 budget	3000.00		
Patron hardware upgrades (public computers, printers, etc.)  Devices to allow digital content to be used by patrons with no or poor internet	Enable patrons with poor or no internet to access digital collections	Still in exploration phase to find out what will work best and how many units can be purchased with the remaining grant funds.	Improve access, Build capacity, Advance citizen engagement	Research, purchase, staff training, borrowing policy, packaging, promotion, monitor stats and patron satisfaction	Will access expertise at BCLC to plan and implement.		2275.00		
Digital programming  New equipment to enable delivery of virtual programming.	Delivery of on-line and radio programs	Varied outcomes.	Build capacity, advance citizen engagement	Ongoing program development, implementation and promotion.	Library tour recorded for Adult Literacy program.	Purchased May 2020, programming on-going.	1,962.58		



