



## **PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT (PLGR) 2019     DRAFT**

### **PENDER ISLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AND ASSOCIATED READING CENTERS**

#### *INTRODUCTION*

The Pender Island Public Library Association (PIPLA) and associated reading centers are situated in southwestern coastal BC, in the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) area. Located between BC's two major city centers, Vancouver and Victoria, the local population and activities in our region are greatly influenced by seasonal visitation from urban centers. The SGI electoral area has 4,732 residents (Census Canada 2016), with Pender Island having the largest population of ca. 2,300 full time residents. Our region is typical of resort areas, with a small residential population and a doubling of population numbers during summer months due to an influx of part-time residents and tourism-based visitors from urban centers. For a public library, fluctuating visitation levels present a challenge of meeting the needs of two types of patrons, "locals" and "visitors", and adjusting to seasonal periods of low and high library use. For example, locals expect regular library hours, an updated and popular collection, and community-based programming. Visitors might expect excellent Wi-Fi, many public computers, and to borrow materials with their home library card (BC One Card program).

The demographics of our region are skewed towards an older population of mainly retired and semi-retired people. The median age is 62.6 years (the most popular age), compared to the BC median age of 45.5 years. Most households (>85%) in our region are one or two-person in size, and this is reflected in a low number of families with young children: ca. 225 youth (0-18 yrs. old) live on Pender Island. As such, our library maintains a collection with 70% of materials for adults and 30% for youth. Our library programs, services, online resources, and facility design were generally selected to match the age range of the local population. Notably, working people in our region earn a lower median income, 25% less than the provincial average, primarily due to seasonal tourism and service-based employment. The primary language spoken in our region is English, with 10% of residents also speaking French. Only 2.5% of our residents indicate an Aboriginal identity, and 3% identify themselves as a visible minority. In 2019, seasonal visitation grew and our region is experiencing real estate growth and new construction. With continued population growth expected, our libraries are preparing for increasing and changing needs.

PIPLA adopted a new Strategic Plan 2019-2023, with the main strategic priorities focusing on personnel, financial management, library services, community connections, and the library facility. In the first year of the Plan, we focused mainly on developing partnerships with community groups, updating library policies, and developing strategies for Board, staff, and library volunteer development and succession.

PIPLA is the administrative lead library in our Southern Gulf Islands area, and shares staff and library resources with neighbouring reading centers located on of Mayne, Galiano, Saturna, and Piers islands.

### *PRIORITY 1 - IMPROVING ACCESS*

In 2019, provincial funding was used by PIPLA to improve access to library resources in our rural region. Our communities face intermittent internet service and lack of high speed connectivity. One barrier to improving connectivity in the Southern Gulf Islands is our designation as an “urban” area under the Capital Regional District, which disallows access to provincial funding to upgrade internet connectivity for rural areas. Our libraries remained focused on providing access to updated public computer workstations, and in 2019 the community libraries on Mayne, Saturna, and Piers islands upgraded public computer workstations, new wireless printers, and internet routers. The outcome was consistent use of our public computer workstations and patrons arriving at our libraries with personal devices. This allowed users to better access a wide range of internet-based information including government forms (i.e. employment, pension, taxation), fishing licenses, student exams, and to stay connected socially with current events. Patron use of digital collections has continued to grow over the past 5 years, with a 9% increase in borrowing over 2018 for eBooks, eAudiobooks, and eMagazines.

### *PRIORITY 2 - DEVELOPING SKILLS*

For developing skills in 2019, one area we focused on was staffing by creating new employment and offering professional development for current staff. Supported by our Electoral Area Director, funding was secured to create new job opportunities and to develop skills of young workers. A new position of Library Technician was created and filled with a local candidate who will embark on job training and certification in library studies. In return, our libraries gained technical support for staff and library volunteers in the delivery of digital library services to patrons. Plans are underway for the new position to support areas such as integrated library system training, cataloguing, inter-library loans, communication on social media platforms and tech tutoring for patrons. Funding was also provided for existing staff to develop skills by attending library conferences outside of our area. The outcome was forging professional networks and gaining experience in areas including library trends and innovation, staff supervision, Board development and working with Trustees, and developing community partnerships.

### *PRIORITY 3 - COLLABORATING ON SHARED GOALS*

In our new strategic plan 2019-2023, PIPLA identified that forging stronger partnerships with local organizations was one of the main strategic priorities. The aim is to have local groups include the library within their mandate and activities, and have the library better understand the needs of local groups. Creating stronger partnerships, and providing collections and programs relevant to local organizations, will result in library services that better reflect the varied interests of the community. In 2019m

collaborations with community partners focused on shared goals for engaging youth. The library partnered with a youth society and our community hall to better provide materials for camp activities. Partners let the library know of summer and school break camp themes (i.e. maker activities, French language learning, science, etc.) and we updated the library collection to meet these needs. Youth attending local camps either visited the library or used library materials during camps, and borrowed materials later as well. An additional 60+ French language books for various reading levels were purchased, as well as updated books on maker and science activities, coding, animals, theater, and more.

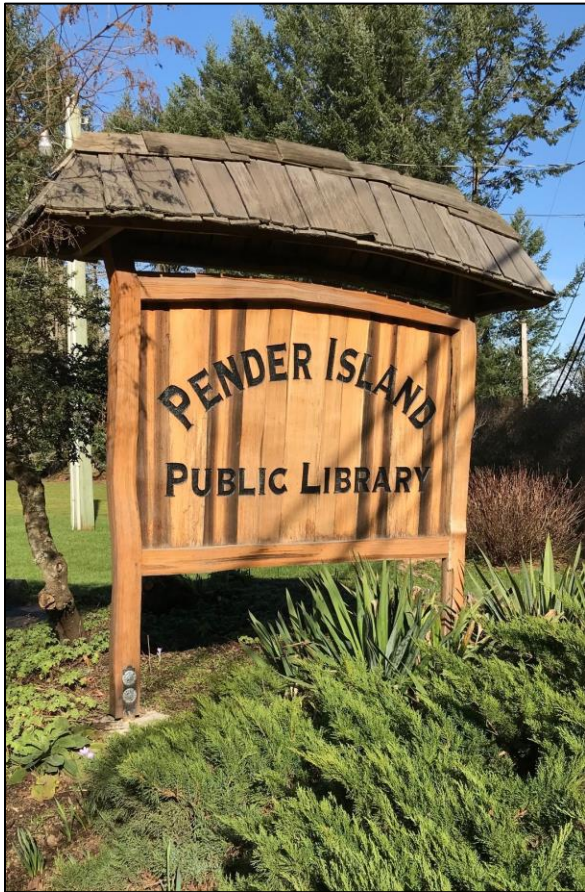
#### *PRIORITY 4 - ENHANCING GOVERNANCE*

Governance was a major theme for our library in 2019 with the PIPL Board of Trustees undergoing major revisions in Board culture pertaining to library management. We began the year with a completely revised process for Trustee recruitment, commitment, and orientation, to ensure Trustees with various skills were recruited and began their terms with a solid understanding of the organization. The Board, led by the Chairperson, focused on separating the responsibilities of governance and operations by undertaking a complete revision of policy manuals and procedures. Policy revision carefully reviewed current best practices used by BC public libraries, the roles of Trustees and the Library Director according to the BC Libraries Act, and the roles of staff and library volunteers. While much of the policy work is planned to be completed in early-2020, these major revisions will take time to be fully understood, tested, and implemented. The desired outcome is for a clearer division of responsibilities and tasks in the library, for Trustees to have a reduced workload, and for staff to have an increased opportunities for decision making pertaining to daily operations. Our common goal is to deliver the best library services possible to our community.

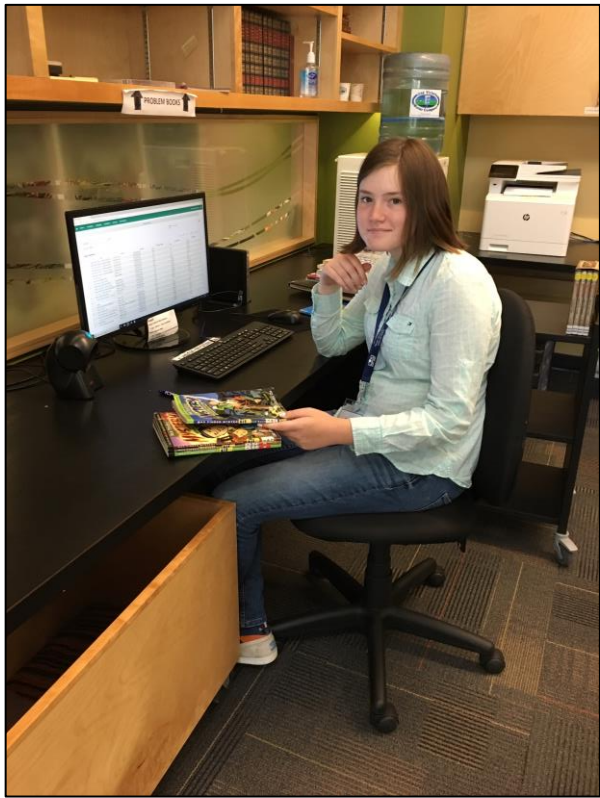
#### *SUMMARY*

Provincial funding received in 2019 made a significant difference in the daily operations of our small rural libraries in the Southern Gulf Islands. As our area draws from a small tax base for funding library services, provincial grants can have a big impact. Staffing remains a great challenge for PIPLA and associated reading centers, and while creative solutions in past years depended on generous donations of 2,000+ volunteer hours/year, a decline in volunteerism has been felt in our libraries. Finding new approaches is ongoing and we are researching and developing contingency plans to ensure the delivery of high quality library services in the future.

*Prepared by Carmen Oleskevich, Library Manager  
Pender Island Public Library & Southern Gulf Islands Library Commission*



*Patron using Wi-fi at laptop work area in the library.*



*High school students gaining work experience with our Library Assistant positions.*



*Families enjoy reading in the youth section of the library.*