



***OUR VISION***  
***Vibrant libraries; thriving communities***

**2019 ANNUAL OPERATING GRANT REPORT**

***INTRODUCTION:***

The North Central Library Federation (NCLF) was established in 2007 with the goal of helping the libraries in the North Central interior of BC to work together to share resources and provide high-quality programs and services. Its purpose, as originally conceived, was to encourage and enable more people living in the region to take advantage of their community libraries. That purpose holds true today.

The federation serves 10 public libraries providing services and programs for the approximately 180,000 residents across three regional districts – Bulkley-Nechako, Cariboo and Fraser-Fort George. These libraries are Burns Lake Public Library, Cariboo Regional District Library, Fort St. James Public Library, Fraser Lake Public Library, Granisle Public Library, Mackenzie Public Library, McBride and District Public Library, Prince George Public Library, Valemount Public Library and Vanderhoof Public Library.

In 2019, the NCLF Board and members of the Librarians Advisory Group met on three occasions to develop and adopt a new strategic plan for the federation. They identified the following as important changes in the regional environment that needed to be considered when developing a strategic plan for 2020 – 2022:

- There have been changes in government at the provincial, regional, and local levels and with that have come new/different priorities;
- Natural disasters are becoming more frequent and more intense and we are also seeing an increase in health-related emergencies – the opioid crisis is playing out in our communities as are the challenges associated with homelessness;
- The region’s economy is shifting –mill curtailments and closures and pipeline construction are all signs of the changes yet to come;
- Communities are dealing with aging infrastructure that cannot easily adapt to support new technologies such as charging stations for electric cars;

- Service BC and Service Canada don't exist in small centres, banks continue to close – these agencies are directing people to the local public library for online access;
- As our population ages and becomes more diverse we are seeing more new trustees and new library directors; and
- Our relationships with indigenous communities within our region are becoming much more important.

Member libraries identified four priority areas for the new Strategic Plan:

- Building Capacity
- Sharing Resources
- Strengthening Relationship
- Increasing the Awareness of the Value of Public Libraries to the Communities They Serve

They believe that these priorities match the areas of focus for the federation's key funder – the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education, Libraries Branch:

- Making life more affordable
- Delivering quality programs people count on
- Increasing opportunities for people to be involved and connected in their communities
- Fostering social inclusion, including a commitment to true and lasting reconciliation with First Nations in British Columbia, and reducing the impacts of poverty and inequality

The federation also believes that its priorities align with the strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter:

- Improving access
- Developing skills
- Collaborating on shared goals
- Enhancing governance

Federation member libraries feel confident that by placing more emphasis on building relationships and partnerships and by focusing on actions in the areas of the staff training and Board development, the development of shared library tools and resources, and expanded consortium purchasing, the Strategic Plan for 2020 – 2022 will result in meaningful steps forward for public libraries in the north central interior of British Columbia. Developing the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan influenced the work completed by the federation in 2019.

***Priority One: Building Capacity (aligning with the Improving Access and Developing Skills strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)***

Staff training and Board development are crucial to the success of our member libraries. In 2019, the federation provided \$10,000 to assist Prince George Public Library with hosting the biennial *Beyond Hope Conference* and an additional \$10,000 to federation members to help them send staff and board members to attend library conferences, such as *Beyond Hope* and BCLA annual conference. The federation also provided \$4,500 to assist member library boards with sending trustees to attend Trustee Orientation Training provided by the BCLTA.

In addition, the federation sets aside funds annually to assist each federation member in providing online training for its staff. In 2019, the federation provided \$2,500 to federation members so that their staffs could participate in online courses and webinars.

One example is the *Homelessness Training Institute's Librarians' Guide to Homelessness*. This is an online training tool designed to assist library staff in becoming more familiar and comfortable with dealing with issues related to homelessness. The NCLF and NELF purchased a licence to this product at the beginning of November 2019 (federations often work together to leverage better pricing and cost savings for member libraries) and nine NCLF member libraries and four NELF member libraries have enrolled their staff (just under 120 staff members in total) – since access was made available there have been over 3,379 views of the content, over 20 staff members have completed all the core training content and an additional 41 are over 50% completed. Here's an example of the feedback we've been getting from staff, "I wasn't sure what to expect with the homelessness training but was very impressed with the course content and the way the material was presented. The examples Ryan Dowd used were excellent, his language simple and straightforward. At the same time, he was able to give students insights to the challenges faced by homeless individuals and the way they might react to body language or comments made by staff. It has increased my awareness of the challenges faced by homeless individuals and I feel more comfortable and confident dealing with them."

Without support, many of the smaller libraries in the federation would be unable to afford to provide these kinds of in-person and online training opportunities for their staffs and boards. In total in 2019, the federation committed over 30% of its total dollars available for training and development for staff and trustees from member libraries.

Another example of the emphasis placed on staff development by the NCLF was the New Library Director Bootcamp held June 1, 2019. Eleven new library directors from across the province, including five from the NCLF and one from the NELF, gathered in Prince George along with five experienced and well-respected library directors who acted as mentors, the NCLF/NELF Manager and Libraries Branch staff to learn more about:

- ✓ The Board and Library Director relationship;
- ✓ Working with Local Government;
- ✓ The Library Act, Libraries Branch and Provincial Reporting requirement;
- ✓ Managing staff (including selection and hiring, performance management, discipline, working with a union and Occupational Health and Safety);
- ✓ Working with community partners; and
- ✓ Buildings, renovations and technology.

Feedback from participants regarding the day was very positive. One participant summed it up for all of them, "In small rural libraries, library directors like me can be relatively inexperienced when we start the job, we can be heavily influenced by past practices and by Trustees, and we have few staff. It can take some time to establish ourselves, define our responsibilities and set our own goals. I would certainly encourage federations to offer Director bootcamps annually or

biannually.” Another participant commented, “I have a better sense of the ‘big picture’ and how my library fits in with the Libraries Branch goals.”

We acknowledge the support of the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education, Libraries Branch as well as the support received from the Association of BC Public Library Directors. We also acknowledge the \$12,000 in additional funding from the Province of British Columbia through the Ministry of Education, Libraries Branch received at the end of 2019 to continue the work of developing new library directors into future focused library leaders. The Association of BC Public Library Directors is also collaborating with us on this initiative.

***Priority Two: Sharing Resources (Aligning with Improving Access and Collaborating on Shared Goals strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)***

NCLF member libraries are committed to providing exceptional library experiences no matter where people live. Collaborating on consortium purchasing is one way of providing these kinds of experiences. In 2019, the federation facilitated over \$30,000 in consortium purchasing. The federation re-negotiated a federation license for the e-product, Gale Courses, an online resource providing instructor led and highly interactive courses covering a variety of topics, many career-related. If individual libraries were to subscribe on their own the base price would be in excess of \$4,000 USD, regardless of population. Subscribing through the federation, the license cost is a fraction of that – under \$300 USD for the federation’s smallest library. The federation also negotiated public performance rights and managed licenses for Ancestry, Library Edition and Canadian Subsidy Directory for federation libraries wishing to participate and was able to achieve savings for member libraries here as well.

The federation annually funds a performer tour of federation member libraries in support of Summer Reading Club. In 2019, Magician Leif David toured NCLF and NELF libraries and his *Imagine the Possibilities* Show was a perfect fit for the 2019 SRC theme. This kind of quality programming would not be possible for the smaller libraries in the region to offer on their own. Attendance was exceptional and the response was amazing. Here are some of the things I heard from member libraries about the tour and the show.

- ✓ “Great show, very children friendly and library friendly. We had 136 children in attendance. We like the audience participation and educational themes. Great performance for early childhood education, libraries, camps, etc. It was a fantastic promotion for Summer Reading Club.”
- ✓ “Everyone loved the show!! The audience participation is so fun. The kids absolutely love being called upon. Leif David’s energy is intoxicating and irresistible, and everyone can’t help but be caught up in the performance. Our small multipurpose room was transformed into a world of imagination!”
- ✓ “What a delight Leif was to have in our library! We had a crowd of 109 people that laughed uproariously and shrieked with glee. Leif was charming, hilarious, and incredibly personable. He even stayed after his show to demonstrate more tricks to interested children. Our books on magic flew off the shelves.”

In addition to support for Summer Reading Club, the federation also makes funding available to help local public libraries encourage and support literacy in their communities. One public library used federation funds so that they could gift each of the children in their local school with two books specifically chosen for each student and presented to them at their year-end ceremonies.

The federation also continues to support the sharing of resources across federations. Those member libraries using the SITKA ILS continued to participate in the highly successful province wide InterLibrary Connect program. In addition, in 2019, libraries in the North Central Library Federation, the North East Library Federation, North West Library Federation, and the Kootenay Library Federation again collaborated on the purchase of book club sets of popular titles. Sets can be borrowed by libraries across federations on behalf of their patrons – providing more variety without the need for individual libraries to maintain and house huge collections.

In total in 2019, the federation dedicated nearly 30% of the total dollars it had available for initiatives focusing on shared resources and programs.

***Priority Three: Strengthening Relationships (Aligning with Increasing Opportunities for People to be Involved and Connect with their Communities Government of British Columbia are of focus)***

Federation member libraries were clear during the development of a new strategic plan that if we were going to achieve our vision of vibrant libraries; thriving communities then relationships among member libraries need to be a priority.

The federation remains committed to holding face-to-face Board and Librarians Advisory Group meetings twice per year and using video conferencing for additional meetings throughout the year. To that end, in 2019 the NCLF purchased a license for the video conferencing platform, Zoom.us. The NCLF has also extended use of its Zoom license to include the NELF and most recently, the NCLF hosted a well attended orientation to the BC Libraries Cooperative for new library directors and those who felt that they might benefit from a refresh.

It is in the Federation Manager's workplan to visit member libraries on a regular basis and in 2019, she visited member libraries in Valemount, McBride, Vanderhoof, and Burns Lake, and in addition, facilitated strategic planning for the boards at Vanderhoof Public Library and Burns Lake Public Library, the cost for that service being absorbed by the federation.

The federation is also building relationships with BCLTA, BCLA and ABCPLD by working together with these organizations on professional development activities that support both member boards and library staff – the New Library Director Boot Camp and Future Focused Library Leaders initiatives are two examples of that.

The federation has committed to facilitating communications among libraries by encouraging and financially supporting joint board meetings among neighbouring libraries – emphasizing the importance of “neighbour to neighbour”.

In total in 2019, the federation dedicated nearly 15% of the total dollars it had available for initiatives strengthening relationships.

***Priority Four: Increasing the Awareness of the Value of Public Libraries to the Communities They Serve (Aligning with Collaborating on Shared Goals and Enhancing Governance strategies identified in the 2019 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)***

The federation board believes that we build the awareness of the value of public libraries to the communities we serve by demonstrating sound governance at both the local and federation levels and by ensuring that public libraries within our region are seen to be working effectively together – leveraging our resources and our expertise for the good of all our communities.

In October 2019, the federation held a full day session on effective board governance with Ken Haycock, a well-respected and passionate advocate for libraries. NCLF Board members were joined by interested members of their local boards as well as their library directors – 25 people in total. This is being followed up this coming April with a session on Governance Teams facilitated by BCLTA’s Babs Kelly.

An orientation to the federation continues to be updated and is available to local boards. The orientation presentation is being used at member library board meetings, building understanding of the NCLF’s vision, mission and strategic priorities, the rationale for the federation and a better sense of NCLF’s services and how they benefit member libraries.

***CONCLUSION:***

An NCLF member library effectively summed up this federation are important to their public library. “The Federation is invaluable to member libraries, increasing the quality of services we provide, offering opportunities for collaboration, shared resources, educational opportunities, and group purchasing.”

The libraries of the North Central Library Federation continue to work together to strengthen libraries, improve literacy and build stronger communities in the north central region of British Columbia. The NCLF believes that vibrant libraries lead to thriving communities. We thank the Ministry of Education for its continuing support as we work to achieve our vision.

Respectfully Submitted,  
M. Edel Toner-Rogala, Manager