



“Encouraging a spirit of learning and discovery”

Provincial Library Grants Report 2019 Valemount Public Library

INTRODUCTION

The Valemount Public Library Association was established in 1964 and is housed in a 1600 square foot log building that was built in 1988 with Expo '86 funds. The building and grounds are owned and maintained by the Village of Valemount. The library serves a population of approximately 1,600 people.

Valemount is a small, rural, mountain community with a population of approximately 1,000 people. It is tucked into the valley between the stunning Rocky, Cariboo and Monashee Mountain Ranges, and located on Highway 5, 350 km north of Kamloops, 300 km east of Prince George, and 120 km west of Jasper, AB. We have an elementary and secondary school.

The withdrawal of the Greyhound Bus service has limited the ability for locals without vehicles to travel outside our community. There are limited transport services being provided by BC BusNorth to Prince George, and a Northern Health Connections Bus available for medical appointments going once a week to either Kamloops or Prince George.

The local economy has been impacted by the downturn in the forestry industry. The closure of BC mills has reduced the number of good paying local jobs needed to support local families. It is common for local men to have to leave the valley to find higher paying, resource-based jobs and to be home on a part time basis.

The pending arrival of the pipeline has generated anticipation of opportunities with a proposed work camp being located just outside town for a planned 3-year duration.

Our community has been designated a tourist destination with snowmobiling, heli-skiing and snow cat skiing being popular activities in the winter and mountain biking in our newly developed and expanding bike park along with horseback riding, four wheeling, boating, and river rafting being popular in the summer months. A local craft brewery and two new pizza restaurants are popular among locals and tourists after their outdoor activities. A newly built Comfort Inn was added to the other quality accommodations for visitors to our community. We have an active Chamber of Commerce, vibrant local arts and culture community, and a newly expanded and evolving Robson Valley Community Services.

A ski resort located about 10km west of town, Valemount Glacier Destinations, has received government approval but is still seeking funding. This prospective development has led to an increase of properties being sold and homes being built on speculation. It has also led to increased housing prices and resulting tax increases, which has created hardship for some owners and a challenge for first time home buyers. There is a lack of rental housing in the community which impacts residents and temporary workers and creates a shortage of staff for the local tourist related businesses.

New residents seeking a small-town lifestyle with ready access to outdoor recreation continue to relocate here, bringing new ideas and opening new businesses. People who grew up in Valemount and are starting their own families are returning to the community. This has created an atmosphere of growth and an influx of energy.

As in other rural communities there are limited resources available, so the library plays an important role in the community. We serve as a hub for educational and recreational materials, both physical and digital. The library offers computer workstations, Internet access, free Wi-Fi, computer training and assistance, exam invigilating, and copy/fax/scan services. Our meeting room and activity space is available, at no charge, to other non-profit organizations and groups. We provide space for the Valemount Historic Society archives and have a giant outdoor chess game for community use.

IMPROVING ACCESS

OUR GOAL – To strengthen library services: introduce new and innovative educational programs, offer opportunities for local presentations and input for evening programs, offer invigilation of tests and other internet-based support when possible.

The library undertook several activities to support this goal:

- Renovated and maintained the Free Little Library
- Upgraded the legal collection
- Hosted workshops and presentations; VEd talks, Legal skype, Armchair travel, writing workshops, philosophy course, Star Wars Day, Zendoodling, etc.
- Provided test invigilation services for patrons
- Participated in resource sharing - Inter-library loans, Inter-library Connect and BC OneCard programs

These activities resulted in patrons who are improving their job skills, accessing information for their personal needs, upgrading their education, and accessing literacy materials with no barriers. Patrons honed their creative writing skills, shared their experiences and knowledge with others, and enjoyed a sense of community with the

opportunity to socialize and connect. Resource sharing increased patron access to materials and resources, especially important in small communities like ours.

An Armchair Travel event on Scotland, presented by one of our board members who spent time with an archaeology field school on the Isle of Mull, was very popular with an attendance of 28 people. Flower felting 101 was a beginner's course on needle felting and was a partnership with Valemount Arts and Cultural Society with 12 participants.

Two BC Gaming Grant Workshops were presented by the Northern Interior Communities Association to provide guidance and information to local non-profit organizations when applying for funding.

Our goal is to continue to offer new opportunities to share and learn new skills. The challenge is finding funding and building partnerships that provide quality programs and avoid duplication of services in the community.

DEVELOPING SKILLS

OUR GOAL – TO ENHANCE TECHNOLOGY BASED SERVICES: upgrade public access stations and provide laptop friendly seating areas and WiFi access, offer legal skype and other webinars, and provide access to online database resources.

The library undertook several activities to support this goal:

- Secured funding to purchase new technology; virtual reality equipment, robotics, conference camera, filming and editing equipment and a digital scanner.
- Offered one-to-one computer training and assistance throughout the year.
- Continued to offer online resources – Gale, Overdrive, RB digital, Zinio, Indiflix, Ancestry, etc.
- Provided space for other organizations and non-profit associations for workshops and meetings.

The outcome of the new technology initiative will be improved patrons' digital skills. The new technologies will increase the value of the library by offering new opportunities and attracting new patrons. Funding was provided by the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT).

One-to-one training helped develop basic computer skills for patrons who gained confidence, went on to increase their skills and felt relevant and connected in today's computerized world. This is especially important for seniors and others in our rural community during the long winter months when people can feel isolated or without access to resources. Online resources offered unlimited access to patrons for educational and recreational activities.

We will be applying for CBT Community Initiatives funding to upgrade the library computers to offer a higher quality experience for users.

A free industry training info session was held at the library which brought new faces to the library. The session resulted in 7 people signing up for a program to access employment assistance services and improve their employability through the organization's 16-week training program for environmental monitoring.

The library's meeting room and activity space was used by 16 groups 179 times during the past year for activities, meetings and programs. Groups included Crafty Stitchers, Toastmasters, Chamber of Commerce, Valemount Gun Club, Northern Health, Valemount Arts and Cultural Society, Valemount Community College and Valemount Learning Centre, among others. Accessible space with Wi-Fi, a large screen TV, and a chair lift makes the lower level of the library an ideal spot for various activities and presentations.

The library will be offering workshops, in partnership with experienced locals, to provide an introduction and training on the use of the new tech equipment. This will provide the opportunity to experience new technologies without the need for individual expense. The scanner will enable patrons to digitize their photos and other documents.

COLLABORATING ON SHARED GOALS

OUR GOAL – TO IMPROVE PARTNERSHIPS: to continue to partner with local organizations and seek new opportunities to provide programs and activities, offer space at the library for other groups to host events, and continue to participate and co-ordinate with NCLF to support library services.

The library undertook the following activities to support this goal:

- Angel tree (Valemount Food bank) – pick a tag and buy a gift for a child.
- Investments workshop (CIBC) – presented by the local bank manager.
- Magic show (North Central Library Federation) – a summer program tour.
- Health fairs (Northern Health) – we provided library displays for kindergarten, 2-year-old and 3-year-old fairs.
- Legal skype (Robson Valley Community Services) – we hosted this event every other month.
- Legal collection (BC Courthouse Library Society) – expanded and upgraded our collection.
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library (Robson Valley Community Services) – we sponsored 10 children in this project.
- Creative writing workshop (Valemount Arts and Cultural Society) – we partnered with VACS to offer this six-week workshop.
- Flower felting 101 – (Valemount Arts and Cultural Society)

- VEd talks (Valemount Learning Centre) – local “experts” share their knowledge in a one-hour long presentation.
- Seniors fair (Northern Health) – displays of resources and information.

Collaborations with these organizations enabled us to offer a wider variety of programs and services which increase health, financial, legal and other literacy skills for participants. It also increased the ability of the library to attract new patrons and to showcase and share our resources. Partnerships strengthen the participating organizations by expanding their abilities to offer programming and extending their reach.

A very generous \$2500 donation from the BC legal Society enabled us to significantly expand and update our legal collection, which improved access to information for library users.

We partnered with Robson Valley Community Services to offer support for registration in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library, which mails out a book each month for one year to kids aged 0-5. Our contribution covered the registration for 10 children in Valemount. The arrival each month of a book, addressed to the child, promotes a love of books and reading, increases literacy skills, and removes financial barriers.

The Magic Show, organized by the NCLF, was a huge hit this past summer with 49 people of all ages attending. Despite a sudden rainstorm that occurred midway through the event, cheers and laughter were heard for blocks. It was the highlight of our Summer Program and resulted in the registration of new patrons with books on magic being circulated. Events like this draw non-library users to the library and allow us to showcase our resources, while providing social activities that eliminate financial barriers.

We will continue reaching out to make new connections and to enhance existing partnerships. We will also be seeking new ways to raise awareness of our events and services in order to avoid duplication in the community.

ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

OUR GOAL – TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF THE LIBRARY AND ITS VALUE: to seek out and promote training for staff and board members

- Expansion brochure – we have created an informational brochure for a future library expansion.
- Charitable status – we applied for charitable status to be able to provide tax deductible receipts for donations.
- Beyond Hope conference and NCLF meetings – board and staff attended meetings and workshops.
- Homelessness training – this online resource for staff education was purchased.
- Social media – we advertised our events and services.

- Community Literacy Planning Committee – we attended meetings and contributed information and collaboration.

The use of social media, posters, word of mouth and the creation of an expansion brochure created awareness of the library's goals and services and increased feedback and input from patrons.

The Community Literacy Committee's goal is to share knowledge of each organizations' services and resources and to find ways to collaborate and fill gaps in the literacy programs offered in our community. The library representative participated in meetings to share information and to seek opportunities to collaborate on joint initiatives.

Meetings and workshops held by the North Central Library Federation are invaluable to our staff and board. The opportunity to gain new knowledge, share successes and challenges, and socialize with fellow librarians results in better library services in many ways. Information and ideas are taken back to our library, shared with other staff and board members and implemented where possible. The NCLF board development workshop held in October resulted in our board's future implementation of a consent agenda, which will free up time at meetings to allow the library board time to explore resources with the goal of increased board knowledge and governance skills.

Challenges for board development include distance to meetings and the board's ability to travel to the workshops due to other personal commitments. Online resources are ideal for board and staff as they allow flexibility for accessing educational materials. We will be updating our strategic plan in 2020.

SUMMARY

We are excited to be offering new technologies and workshops with grant funding received from Columbia Basin Trust. We will also be looking at upgrading the library's computer stations to create a better experience with up-to-date software next year.

Our new snowshoe and jigsaw collections have been popular, bringing in new patrons and delighting existing ones. We continued to maintain and develop our collections. While our community does not have a significant First Nations' population, our focus has been on developing a current collection of literature to raise awareness of aboriginal issues and to showcase indigenous authors.

We registered 80 new patrons this year and have a total of 583 active, resident members (not including other libraries, BC OneCard, or temporary members) which is just over 1/3 of the population of our service area.

Library staff and board have benefited by collaborating with other organizations and learning about new initiatives at other libraries. We hope to have our charitable status

approved so we can offer tax deductible receipts for donations, which will be important when we start fundraising for an expansion.

Our partnerships with other libraries in the NCLF are very important to us, enabling us to offer programs and events, share ideas and collaborate, and increase our purchasing power through consortia purchasing agreements. The support we receive from NCLF and from Libraries Branch is vital to our success and the quality of services we provide.