



# North East Library Federation

## **OUR VISION**

***Strong Libraries, Strong Communities***

## **2022 LIBRARY FEDERATION OPERATING GRANT REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Based on historic relationships that go back as early as the 1950s, the North East Library Federation was established in 2007 with the goal of helping libraries in the north east region of the province work together to share resources and provide high quality programs and services. Its purpose, as originally conceived, was to promote and encourage the development, operation, and improvement of public library services in the North East of British Columbia. That purpose holds true today.

The federation serves seven public libraries providing services and programs for the approximately 53,000 residents across two regional districts - Northern Rockies and Peace River. Member libraries are Chetwynd Public Library, Fort Nelson Public Library, Fort St. John Public Library, Hudson's Hope Public Library, Pouce Coupe Public Library, Taylor Public Library and Tumbler Ridge Public Library.

In the context of emerging from the crisis phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, the region continued to experience economic challenges in the form of mill closures, labour shortages, and rising housing costs. These factors, coupled with the growing opioid crisis and homelessness, continued to exert additional demands on public libraries for both traditional and non-traditional services.

### **STRATEGIC GOALS: 2020-2022**

In 2019, the NELF Board and members of the Librarians Advisory Group identified the following five priority areas for the Strategic Plan 2020-2022:

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

The federation believes that its priorities align with the priorities identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter:

- Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery
- Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community
- Service Expansion Beyond Community Borders
- Furthering Provincial Strategic Initiatives for Public Library Service

In response to rising Covid rates and fuel prices in autumn 2022, the NELF board rescheduled its in-person strategic planning session from September 2022 to spring 2023. This process will include a review of the 2020-2022 Strategic Plan to identify and develop new priorities amid a time of local and global challenges.

## **2022: EMERGING FROM PANDEMIC**

The federation's workplan for 2022 was to focus on delivering specific actions tied to each of the federation's four strategic priorities in the context of moving out of the emergency phase of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NELF Board, the Library Directors' Advisory Group (LDAG), and the NELF Director remained committed to staying aligned with these priorities as member libraries worked to restore full in-person services.

In addition to the strategic priorities, the NELF gratefully received a Covid Relief & Recovery Grant from the Public Libraries Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, that led to collaboration with the other federation directors on several significant projects. These initiatives and activities are highlighted in the 2022 NELF Covid Grant Report.

### ***Priority One: Building Capacity (aligning with the Improved Access to Professional Learning Opportunities for the Library Community priority identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)***

By creating opportunities for those involved in member libraries (trustees, library directors and library staff) to get together and share ideas and expertise, we expand capacity, enhance collaboration, and build knowledge networks.

#### **Action: Expanded Roundtable Forums**

The NELF increased the number of roundtable discussions, expanding topics to including children's and teen services, summer reading club, interlibrary loans, technology, and safety/security. The federation also participated in pan-northern roundtables with the Northwest and North Central Library Federations on interlibrary loans and the cognitive care kits project.

In addition to strengthening information sharing and collective brainstorming, the roundtables supported Priority Three: Strengthening Relationships, by fostering the development of peer-to-peer support networks between member libraries.

#### **Action: Dementia Training**

The NELF, along with the NCLF, continued its partnership with Northern Health (NH) to coordinate preparation and distribution of cognitive care kits to all libraries in the federation. With kits in many libraries by the start of the year, the focus turned to training needs, resulting in a 5-week, 5-module series in August 2022 that addressed all aspects of dementia awareness including general information, the needs of caregivers, and ways to make libraries more dementia-friendly environments. The NELF worked with the NH coordinator to ensure the content met the needs of those working in public library settings, and to award micro-credentials to participants.

### **Action: Provide Legal Resources Training**

The NELF worked with BC Courthouse Libraries to deliver LawMatters, a three-session workshop including an overview of the court system, key online forms and resources, and the services available through provincial courthouse libraries. The federation worked with the facilitators to develop micro-credentials for participants, as these are an essential element in strengthening participation in professional development opportunities for all staff and trustees.

### **Action: Provide Online Learning Opportunities Paid for by the Federation**

The federation renewed its subscription to the *Homeless Training Institute's Librarian's Guide to Homelessness*. This online training tool is designed to help library staff become more familiar with and comfortable handling such social issues as homelessness, dementia, and violence in the workplace. The addition of new staff to the 2022 registration list underscores the ongoing value of the training resource for all levels of staff. The cost of the subscription was subsidized 100% by the federation.

Without such support, many of the smaller libraries in the federation would be unable to afford to provide these kinds of online training opportunities for their staffs and boards.

### ***Priority Two: Sharing Resources (Aligning with the Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery priority identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)***

NELF member libraries are committed to providing exceptional library experiences no matter where people live.

### **Action: Continue to Build the OverDrive Advantage Collection**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, NELF member libraries saw and continue to see a significant increase in demand for loanable, downloadable audiobooks and ebooks. NELF member libraries were depending on the provincial OverDrive Consortium collection, managed by the BC Libraries Cooperative and supported by public libraries in BC, to provide users with access to these types of resources. Pressure on this collection had been extreme and as a result, patrons could wait months to access a title.

The NELF OverDrive Advantage collection was established in 2020 to help shorten the wait times for e-books and audiobooks for member libraries' patrons. A 2021 evaluation recommended a follow-up evaluation to assess the value of the collection. This second evaluation was conducted in 2022, and underscored the continuation of this program. Almost \$3200 of federation funds were invested in the collection in 2022, for a total of 73 high demand titles.

### **Action: Coordinate a Summer Touring Performer**

The NELF coordinated a summer tour with Alberta-based singer/songwriter Mary Lambert. The federation liaised with the performer, handled all administrative tasks (including the Entandem licencing), and covered the cost of the tour to ensure all NELF libraries, regardless of size, were able to be on the tour itinerary. Libraries reported strong positive feedback from their communities, particularly since this was the first in-person program for many locations since the start of the pandemic.

### ***Priority Three: Strengthening Relationships ((Aligning with the Improved Regional and Local Shared Services Delivery and Service Expansion Beyond Community Borders priorities identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)***

**Action: Establish a NELF Accessibility Committee**

To honour the *Accessible BC Act* requirements, 5 of the NELF libraries formed an Accessibility Committee with the federation providing administrative support. The group held its first meeting in November to discuss finding community members to join the committee and begin developing an action plan.

**Action: Strengthen Partnerships with Other Federations, the Association of BC Public Library Directors, the BC Libraries Coop, and the BC Library Trustees Association**

The directors of the library federations met regularly throughout 2022 to discuss shared concerns and work on collaborative projects. Much of the work was specifically focused on the Covid Relief & Recovery Grant, and the development of three central initiatives: core skills training, a provincewide virtual program, and projects related to emergency planning and preparedness.

The federation directors also met with ABCPLD to review overall professional development for libraries in BC, and ways to streamline the process and opportunities.

The NELF director participated in the BC Libraries Coop member engagement session, and met with the BCLTA to explore options for trustee training.

**Action: Continued Partnership with Northern Health**

Following on 2021's introduction of cognitive care kits, more kits and resources were distributed to federation libraries in 2022, with ongoing support from Northern Health (NH) in the form of training and such added resources as free supplies of *Dementia Connections* magazines to distribute to the public. Through this project, libraries reached out to build relationships with local organizations serving those with cognitive disabilities to promote libraries services relevant to them.

**Priority Four: Increasing the Awareness of the Value of Public Libraries to the Communities They Serve (Supporting BC's Strategic Plan for Public Library Service priority identified in the 2022 Provincial Federation Grant Award letter)**

The federation board believes that it builds the awareness of the value of public libraries to the communities it serves 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.

**Action: Ongoing Orientation and Knowledge Support to the Federation's Members**

The NELF director continued to provide expertise to federation members in such ways as:

- Provided federation orientation to a new trustee
- Provide feedback and resources to a trustee related to the *Library Act* and governance
- Compiled resources for a library director on autism in the workplace
- Assisted library directors with information on grant programs and self-checkout machines

**Action: Conduct Library Staff Salary Survey**

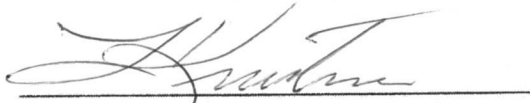
Building on the impact of the 2020 Library Director Salary Survey, and the 2021 Library Staff Salary Survey, a new survey was launched in late 2022 to capture both sets of data in one document, with the new goal of updating this information annually.

The survey is included under this priority as it communicates the value that modestly paid library staff continue to deliver high quality services, and during the COVID-19 pandemic have been at the vanguard of community organizations maintaining services even as communities and organizations have had to contend with significant service reductions or shut-downs. Library staff also continue to experience a rise in demand for non-traditional services related to climate change emergencies, homelessness, and the opioid public health emergency.

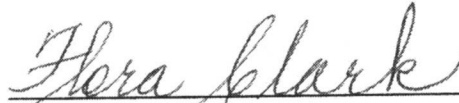
**CONCLUSION**

By staying true to our strategic priorities during a time of great uncertainty, the North East Library Federation has continued to work together with its members to strengthen libraries, improve literacy and build stronger communities in the North East region of British Columbia. We remain committed to our belief that vibrant libraries lead to thriving communities. The NELF expresses its ongoing gratitude to the Public Libraries Branch, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, for its support through funding and professional expertise and guidance. Thanks to this continued commitment, library staff, users and community members across Northern British Columbia have access to the wider range of services and resources to enrich their lives.

Respectfully Submitted,



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