

Alert Bay Public Library

Provincial Report 2018

The Alert Bay Public Library is situated on Cormorant Island, known to many in the First Nation local community as Yalis. The library was founded in 1959 and became part of the Provincial Library system. The Alert Bay Public Library may have the status of being the smallest or one of the smaller of all the libraries in the Province. As such it has unique benefits and challenges.

Cormorant Island is home to the Namgis First Nation and Whe-la-la-U Reserves and the Incorporated Village of Alert Bay. The total population is approximately one thousand in winter with a considerable increase during the summer months when many tourists come to visit the museums and take part in cultural events and marine excursions. The First Nation and Village governments have signed an accord that allows joint projects and a cooperative approach to common issues. The library is located on the main street in a building shared by the Tourist Information Office. Given its location and facilities it is often a hub for visitors.

Cormorant Island was once an important location of administrative offices and personnel for activities on North Vancouver Island and the surrounding islands and communities. There were four fuel docks to service the heavy marine traffic. The island suffered the economic downturn that has overtaken many small rural and remote communities following the decline in fishing, forestry and mining in the region. In 1978 the Island Highway joined the road between Sayward and Port McNeill and many services were decentralized. The loss of a fuel dock for boaters and the growth of Port McNeill as a centre also contributed to a decrease in the number of businesses and industries on Cormorant Island. There have been concerted efforts to replace those industries with tourism on Cormorant Island, and many visitors are drawn to the U'Mista Cultural Centre and the whale watching excursions.

Fostering Equitable Access to information and services:

During 2018 the library was open 195 days providing access to our two public computers for patrons and visitors. The library was open four times a week throughout the year. Due to fiscal restraints, we were unable to open more days during July and August. In previous years, the Library was open for six days a week during those months.

There were 3,522 visits from patrons and tourists and our computers were accessed 934 times. Our internet services continue to be slow but with our limited financial resources we have not been able to purchase a faster internet service.

Our interlibrary loan system continues to be well used and constitutes a greater workload for our day when we share books from our collection with other libraries throughout the Province.

Participants in the Namgis Treatment Centre program continue to make use our public access computers during breaks of their sessions. These visitors come from all parts of the Province and we are able to help them keep in touch with their families during their stay in Alert Bay.

Developing skills and knowledge

During the year through funding of \$1500 from Islandlink Library Federation, one of our community librarians was able to access two archival programs in order to gain knowledge to maintain the archival material on local history in the library's possession. Through our continued membership in the IslandLink Library Federation we have been able to share with and learn from our member libraries especially from the larger libraries who have been able to share their experiences with us. This coming year we hope to take advantage of the Library Federation's program of staff sharing to provide training for our two new staff members in our computer programs.

Working Together

This past summer we supported the Literacy Group from Port McNeill with their "Rocks for Books" program where one of their members placed decorated rocks throughout the community. When patrons found the rocks and returned them to our Library, they could exchange them for a book. The materials were provided by the Literacy Group and we administered the program by keeping records for them. It was a small but effective program as ten rocks were placed and eight found and returned to us. One was returned by one of the visiting participants of the Namgis Treatment Centre who exchanged his rock for a children's book to give to one of his friends.

With funding from the IslandLink Library Federation, during 2018 three programs were presented to children and one for adults:

On April 9, 2018, Veronika McKee presented a program "Poetry in Motion" to students at the Alert Bay Elementary Secondary School and the T'Lisalagi'lakw School for 46 children.

On May 26, 2018 author Peter Robinson did a reading from his latest book to a gathering of 20 adults.

Leif David, a magician, came on May 29, 2018 and visited both schools where his audience consisted of 112 children and 23 children.

During the summer holidays on July 2, 2018, the group "Story Theatre" from Victoria came and gave a performance at the Lawrence Ambers Recreation Centre for 30 children and 4 adults.

Since our library building lacks the space to hold these events, we have been working with the two schools on our Island and offering our programs to them and with the Namgis First Nation to hold the summer program in their Lawrence Ambers Recreation Centre on their Reserve.

Enhancing Governance

We are in the process of cataloguing our new Research Library with the plan of opening it to the public this Spring. During 2018 the collection was moved into the new space acquired for it as well and furniture. Since the collection consists of many research books as well as reports that Dr. Martin Weinstein created for the various First Nations Bands he worked for across Canada, it is taking some time to record and catalogue them to be in a more accessible order.

Although the Alert Bay Public Library has operated as an independent Public Library Association since its incorporation in 1959 and only in recent years has become part of the Islandlink Library Federation, the Incorporated Village of Alert Bay has supported us throughout the years. When our original site was no longer available to us, they provided us with another building rent free, financed the light and heating

costs as well as providing us with a yearly grant. A representative sits on our library Board of Directors as a liaison of the Municipality..

Summary

2018 saw some changes in our staff and finances but we were able to work within our budget and even with reduced hours provide many services to our community and visitors to Alert Bay.

As we go into our 61st year, we will continue to work with our Strategic Plan which is:

To provide and maintain an active centre promoting literacy and providing up-to-date information and internet access.

To be a reference and research resource for information about the unique history and cultural identity of our region in general and Cormorant Island in particular.

To maintain membership in the Islandlink Library Federation in order to share resources and provide greater opportunities to local residents through author visits and projects coordinated by the Federation.