INTRODUCTION

Bowen Island is located in Howe Sound and a 20-minute ferry ride from West Vancouver. The population of Bowen is approximately 3800 full time residents with an additional one to two thousand summer residents.

Bowen Library is a member of the Public Library InterLINK federation and serves the residents of Bowen Island, visitors, temporary workers, and students on the island, as well as Public Library InterLINK patrons visiting, staying or requesting materials from Bowen Library.

The island has a public K-7 community school under School District 45, a private middle school accommodating 50 students in grades 6 - 9, a Distributed Education Program under School District 40 and several private preschools. The majority of secondary school students travel daily, by bus and ferry, to high schools in West Vancouver.

The community and the library are challenged by a small tax base, no industry, a large percentage of the working population commuting off-island each day, and yet high expectations from community members for island facilities and services that are on par with those found in much larger neighbouring communities.

Bowen Library is located in an historic building, recently expanded by 50%, in the heart of our commercial district, just 100 metres from the ferry terminal. With no community centre on island, the library is a hub for community gathering and a source of information and leisure materials, public computers, Wi-Fi access, lendable medical equipment, as well as a place for study, work and resource sharing.

**Strategic Plan:** The Library board was proud to say that we had accomplished the majority of goals set out in our 2015-2018 Strategic Plan. That plan focused on expanding our facility and creating a space for increased community use, library programs and collaborations. A new strategic plan was developed mid-way through 2018 for the period of 2018-2020. The plan identifies the pillars of the Bowen Library mandate as: Community Connections; Lifelong Learning & Literacy; Sharing Ideas, Knowledge & Culture; Equitable Access & Inclusivity; Sharing Skills & Resources. It also sets out Financial, Service, Operational and Staffing goals.

Our newly expanded space led to strategic goals to develop the new space to meet the community’s needs as well as to expand opportunities for improved library services and programs. As part of our Operational goals we identified the need for improved communication and engagement from our patrons and community. We are also focusing on our team at the library, reviewing the best mix of staff and volunteers, and providing development opportunities for staff and board members.
GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES, GOALS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PARTNERSHIPS

GOVERNMENT PRIORITY
Fostering connected communities

Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:
The library continues to offer a series of programs under the banner “Knowing Our Place”. The goal of this collaborative series is to learn about the true history of Indigenous peoples in Canada and to foster mutually-enhancing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members.

The Library brought forward several events and programs to support this goal.
- We presented a bookclub that focused reading and discussion on First Nations authors and subject matter. 112 individuals participated in 8 separate book club sessions.
- We invited author Lynda Gray to present information from her book “First Nations 101” and had a 30-minute question and answer dialogue between audience and author. 29 people attended the author reading.
- We hosted (in collaboration with Bowen Island Arts Council) the first ever National Indigenous Peoples Day celebration on Bowen Island. Members of Squamish Nation were invited to share cultural celebrations involving storytelling and dance. The audience participated in dancing and everyone shared in a simple feast of bannock, jam and beverages over discussions and community sharing. 53 community members attended.

Outcomes that were identified:
Squamish Nation community members recognized that the library and the Arts Council are spearheading work to improve understanding and appreciation between indigenous and non-indigenous community members.
Non-indigenous community members acknowledged and thanked the Library and the Arts Council for acting to improve understanding between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals.
The Library set an example for action that has been carried forward to other community groups and to our own local municipality.
The positive community response and the overall success of these events has assured a continuation of further goals and activities in support of Truth and Reconciliation.

GOVERNMENT PRIORITY
Building Capacity

Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:
As part of our mandate to promote lifelong learning and to share ideas and knowledge, we set goals to present seminars, classes, webinars or workshops that will enable our community to learn, be inspired and make informed decisions about their own lives.
An event last year, co-sponsored by the library, about death and dying sparked so much interest that the library decided further education and sharing was needed. In order to assist community members with questions and information about end of life care and legal decisions, the library partnered with NIDUS Personal Planning Resource Centre to offer public webinar presentations.
We provided the venue, the marketing, the technology and a moderator to host four webinars over a one-month period. The webinars were offered once a week during Personal Planning month in October, and attendees were able to submit their own questions to the NIDUS host through our moderator. Each hour and a half session offered coffee and snacks, as well as time to share information and stories with other participants. A total of 70 individuals attended the 4 sessions.

Outcomes that were identified:

The library received positive feedback from many participants. The variety of topics was appreciated and several community members commented that though they came solely to bring an elderly relative, they were surprised to find that many of their assumptions about legal rights at end of life were incorrect. So, although they attended thinking they already knew the information they learned things that had not expected to.

A number of people asked if we could host the webinars at different times. This has led us to plan another session of webinars in 2019 with more than one time and day to attend. Although the webinars were available online after the public showing, meaning anyone could watch on their own, the majority of people attending said they felt they learned more by hearing other people’s questions and comments, and by sharing ideas with other participants.

This example of written feedback received represents typical verbal comments we heard:

“My library contact this week, not a single book!!! But...Saturday at the library I attended a group discussing “The Inconvenient Indian”. Today at the library a web-connect with Nidus where I learned about enduring power of attorney and the laws and documents associated with it. It is exciting to see our library so actively and skillfully enabling lifelong learning, and probing the community to ascertain those areas” - A Library patron

GOVERNMENT PRIORITY
Working Together

Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

As a member of the Bowen Island Early Childhood Development (ECD) Table, the library partnered with the Bowen Children’s Center to present a parent education session given by Dr. Vanessa LaPointe. The event was held in the library’s new Annex space which was donated by the library. Staff from the library and the ECD Table gave their time to host the event and funding from a number of Bowen and North Shore services provided the speaker’s fee and travel.

The event was designed to draw in parents of young children and to give them an opportunity to learn about techniques to make their parenting easier and to provide children with good emotional support in their homes.

Outcomes that were identified:

The Vanessa La Pointe event was sold out with 52 parents attending. Parents were inspired to come out on a Friday night to learn more about parenting their children. Planned as an enjoyable night out, paired with learning, the parent’s feedback was that getting out together on a Friday night to an education session that was entertaining and provided a “date night” was deeply satisfying.

The event helped parents to be more aware of the role of the ECD Table, and of the opportunities that the library provides for parents and families to learn and share.

The success of this program has led to plans for the ECD Table to host a series of parent education sessions in 2019 using a similar format. The library’s new Annex space provides an excellent no-cost venue for events like this.
GOVERNMENT PRIORITY
Sustaining Our Success: Enhancing governance and demonstrating impact

Partnerships, Programs and/or Services that align with the priority:

Library goal - Develop enhanced external communications, as well as improved communication with our municipality.

As part of our Strategic Plan the library developed a formal Communications committee made up of Library Board members and staff.

The Committee created a communication plan that will be rolled out in 2019 and 2020. The plan will be implemented by staff and includes focus groups and surveys to assess the public needs and possible gaps in our services. The plan also includes new ways for the Library Board to engage more directly with Council. We will provide more frequent reports to Council and work towards deeper engagement of the Chief Librarian with municipal staff.

Outcomes that were identified:

Communication between the CAO and Chief Librarian has opened a dialogue about the library’s role within municipal operations. The CAO and Chief Librarian now meet monthly to share information, to review any issues and to discuss upcoming planning. The Chief Librarian is also invited to the municipal Manager’s meetings where all managers share their goals, current workplans and ensure that other departments are informed and included as needed.

Work will continue throughout 2019 to revise the operating agreement between the municipality and the library, and to ask the community for their feedback and ideas for future services and programs through focus groups and surveys.

SUMMARY

Bowen Library was a hub of activity in 2018. After almost 5 years of planning and fundraising, an additional the addition to the library was completed and opened in March 2018. Preliminary statistics show that library visits were up significantly in 2018, as we increased our programming and invited the community to come in and enjoy the new space.

Community collaborations increased this year, as we had more opportunity to share our physical space. The Bowen Island Arts Council, who share our new space, are valued partners in joint programming, and links to the community grew through involvement with the Early Childhood Table, Literacy Task Group, and the local schools and pre-schools.

The Truth and Reconciliation Report, and the exciting, positive changes that are occurring in the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people will continue to be part of the library’s strategic plans and will be imbedded into our mandate and philosophy.

The support of Libraries Branch allows us to offer a selection of online services and electronic resources that would be impossible for a small library like Bowen Library to provide on our own. These resources provide the community with new digital learning opportunities, and bring new customers to the library.

In 2019 we will engage with our community to ask them what they want from their library and how they feel we can improve our services. The input of our community will steer our next strategic plan.
The strategic planning process will also have us look at our challenges. The importance of excellent customer service will be foremost in our minds as we plan our staff development and volunteer program. A challenging budget era will determine much of what we are able to accomplish, and how we will move forward.

The Libraries Branch’s support of province-wide library organizations such as BC Libraries Cooperative and federations throughout BC allows small libraries to leverage provincial and municipal funding to offer services and resources that would otherwise be cost prohibitive. Bowen Island Public Library appreciates the continued support of the Province to all of the public libraries in BC. This broad, overarching support ensures that no library is left behind in providing their community with free and open public library service. Support from the Libraries Branch staff and funding provides opportunities for us to offer our patrons a high standard of service regardless of the library size and location.