Introduction:

The Coquitlam Public Library (CPL) has served the citizens of Coquitlam since 1976. We serve our community from two large branches (Poirier Branch and City Centre Branch), from our Library Link, a mobile library that provides services in the community four days / week and through our website and mobile app.

Our City Centre Branch library is a HUB in our community. It is located in the centre of the municipality, next to a shopping centre, close to a large high school, Douglas College and several City facilities, including City Hall. The area is surrounded by high rise condo and apartment buildings and is situated across the street from an Evergreen line station- this makes us a go to place in the area. We offer an excellent space for people to interact, learn, study, read, book meeting spaces and study spaces. In 2018, we revamped the floor space in order to meet the needs of the community.

CPL serves an estimated population of 149,490 people (BC Stats), making Coquitlam the 6th largest municipality in BC. We also serve many of the people who live in the Tri-Cities area. Our community includes people from a wide variety of ethnic and language backgrounds, and age and family groupings.

The results from the City of Coquitlam’s 2018 Citizen Survey indicate the 98% of residents ranked their quality of life as good or very good. The biggest impact to quality of life is reported as the new Evergreen line and improved recreational facilities and parks. The majority of citizens believe they receive good value for their municipal tax dollars. Again this year, residents identified transportation, housing and growth and development as their major concerns.
Our community is steadily growing. The latest census figures show that our community is “aging” – Coquitlam now has 14% of its population over 65, which is 3% larger than 10 years ago. Our City has produced a Seniors’ Services Strategy 2018-2028 report – that plan will impact our Library.

From the 2016 census, we know that a large portion of our community speaks Chinese (both Mandarin and Cantonese), Korean and Persian. These 3 languages are spoken at home by 20.7% of the community. The number of French speakers has declined and is now at 350 in our community, which has been traditionally a French language hub. It is noted that 5% of the population does not speak one of Canada’s two official languages (6835 people).

Coquitlam has a large percentage of university and college graduates - approximately 30%. We are a very well educated community.

Our community is family oriented, with a large portion of traditional family household – the average family size is 3. Lone parent households account for over 6,000 families. Providing services for these families is something the library will be working on.

About 2.2% of our population is Aboriginal. The Kwikwetlem First Nation is located in the City of Coquitlam.

Industries in our area:

Industry and commerce continue to grow in Coquitlam; the diversified economy provides businesses with “excellent access to labour, transportation and markets”. The City is very business forward and provides excellent information and assistance for citizens and others wanting to start a business or relocate here.

The major sectors by employment are: retail trade, professional, scientific and technical services, health care and social assistance, construction, accommodation and food services, educational services and manufacturing.
Challenges facing the library:

CPL still faces challenges due to constantly changing technology. In 2018, we reorganized our WIFI system to keep up with users demand. We hired an additional staff member for our IT department to manage the workload of internal and public use systems. Our staff members are faced with devices and software that are ever changing and requires them to be on top of the problems faced by our users.

Staff development and training are always a challenge in an ever changing world. We have made changes in our service delivery models which required front line staff to be trained in technical areas; we are doing more work in the area of community development, which requires special training for professional staff; and anytime we add new equipment for the public’s use, such as children’s ipads, we need to train staff to troubleshoot. Our last Pro-D had us training in occupational health and safety, something that concerns us all. The Training and Development budget is always difficult to manage given our needs to have informed and trained staff.

In 2018, we added systems to publicize our events and programs to the community. We installed video screens and an information KIOSK in order to give our users instant access to information. All of this is a drain on our budget, but marketing was something that was indicated as important by our community in our last round of strategic planning. We continue to search for the optimum methods of communicating our services to the public.

Lastly, meeting the expectations of our public is challenging given the wide range of needs of our community. We have an increasing number of seniors who could use our services, but often this requires dedicated staff time. We try to meet the needs of our multicultural community by offering programs like Korean Mother Goose, but it is often difficult to find partnerships that are funded with which to partner. Our English Practice Groups are over-subscribed as are a number of our children’s programs. We run our Library Link mobile service.
in areas that are far from our standard branches, but we will need to replace our current vehicle in the not too distant future. Meeting the expectations and the needs of our community is no small task.

a) **Value for funding from Province**

The largest portion of our budget apart from staffing and benefits goes to the direct purchase of materials for our collection. The Provincial funding is integral to how we buy, what we buy, and how we use our resources in the most efficient and effective manner for our residents. It allows our staff to reallocate dollars to needed areas of the collection and to evaluate how we spend funds to ensure the focus is on the customer.

In 2018, our Collections and Technical Services staff continued its work in re-assessing the entire acquisitions process to ensure we were getting value for our purchasing dollars. Working with CollectionHQ software and making changes in what was automatically purchased through our vendors, we have made significant improvements in the usage of our collection and in the staff time it takes to acquire materials. We continue to improve our processes to ensure the highest value for dollar.

Our rate of circulation has increased and our rate of unused materials has declined significantly. We are purchasing the materials that people want and in the numbers required to ensure that our community gets quick access to very popular materials. We now have one Collections Librarian instead of two and are working with Technical Services staff to more effectively support that Librarian.

**Outcome:** our collections are improved and we are spending less of our funds in materials that the community does not need or want. Our staffing cost has decreased in this area and can be put towards other areas of our library services.

b) **Strat goals and how we met them**

2018 was the final year of our 2016-2018 strategic plan and in this last year we saw a number of our yearly Action Items completed. These included:

**Goal 1 – Literacy – teen, adult, family and community literacy**

a) We reviewed of our World languages collections in light of the latest census, to determine which languages we could offer as viable, strong collections. After having done a full review of the latest Census statistics and speaking to our partners in the community, we determined which languages to continue supporting, changed our
purchasing process and did a complete weeding of existing collections. We plan to take that data and apply to other areas of the library’s services.

**Goal 2 – Visit a comfortable place: physical spaces meeting residents’ needs**

In 2018, we completed a review of our City Centre Branch, and have moved collections to create a more welcoming library, with additional space for comfortable seating and study areas. We are in the last stages of furniture selection to ensure we have comfortable, long lasting furnishings that meet the needs of our users.

**Goal 3 – Strengthen Community: a partner for the community to engage and celebrate**

- CPL’s Citizenship classes are a series of 6 sessions delivered by local volunteers that cover the major aspects of the “Discover Canada” book, on which the Citizenship test is based. Volunteers go into great depth to explain the history, geography, economy, judicial system, government and elections, and arts and culture. This is difficult material for newcomers, many of whom do not speak English well. One class member stated: “before the class, I didn’t even open the book but this class has helped me and encouraged me to work on it”.

Outcome: We surveyed our students and all said they felt they:

- were more knowledgeable about the content
- believed the class would better help them pass the Citizenship test.

Additionally, in 2018, the Library held a Municipal Meet and Greet, in order that local residents could engage with candidates for local office, and a session on the Provincial government’s Voting System Referendum in order to better consider the options presented. Attendees commented that the SFU speaker helped them understand the options. At Coquitlam Public Library, we believe in **educating the electorate and work to promote this by providing information, in our libraries and via our website, and programming.**
Goal 4 – Local prosperity: fostering creativity and building skills

As part of our Community’s Kaleidoscope Arts Festival, we program a Tiny Stories contest for Teens and Adults. Working with our local newspaper, the Tri-City News, residents are asked to write a “tiny story”, made up of no more than 420 characters (this was the concept of author Lou Beach as represented in his book “420 Characters”). In order to assist budding authors, we offered a program led by a local writer. We had over 85 submissions and offered prizes to the top 3 in each category. Winning authors were then invited to read their stories at the Festival.

Outcome: This program gave residents the chance to use their creativity, learn new skills and be recognized for their accomplishments.

Goal 5 – Promoting the Library – communicating services to our residents

Coquitlam Public Library has been a member of the Tri-City Chamber of Commerce for many years. We were active with the Chamber in 2018 in promoting library services by attending local business events and promoting the library with local business owners. In 2018, we hosted a Kick Start event, with local business people coming to the City Centre Branch to learn about what the Library offers and to make connections with other business owners.

Outcome: The sold out event was very successful and we made further connections with people who typically are unaware of many of the services we offer.

Goal 6 – Governance Excellence – developing the organization

Ensuring that our Board has a solid background in the operations of the library and in issues that libraries face, our Executive Director began education sessions at our Board meetings in 2018. These sessions covered areas such as Conflict of Interest policies, Intellectual Freedom, and the BC economy vis a vis employment. The latter is a good example of our staff bringing back information from a local employment conference and passing that knowledge to our Board and other senior staff. Our Board better understands the issues facing libraries and our community.

As an outcome, the Board is more knowledgeable and we believe our decision making is better for it. They have asked us to continue these sessions.
c) Provincial strategies

1) Fostering connected communities – **Welcome to Coquitlam**

Every year, the City of Coquitlam and a number of service agencies, government agencies and community groups participate in the **Welcome to Coquitlam** day – targeted to newcomers to our municipality. It is an opportunity to showcase what we do and the services we offer to our residents. The event is held at City Hall and is highly promoted among the agencies, especially those geared towards new immigrants. In 2018, we assisted over 300 people by making staff available to talk to them about our services, and we did so in both Chinese and Farsi. We also made our Library Link available so that residents could familiarize themselves with our mobile service – and over 150 people did just that.

We are proud to be part of this event – it is a demonstration of how our community works together to ensure that newcomers get the information and services they need.

Outcome: The library is an integral part of this event and we **have strengthened our relationships with all the community groups and local government. We met with many new residents, many of whom are new to the country, who are now aware of the services we offer, and did so in their own language.**

2) Building capacity: enabling inspiration and innovation – **Sphero Training**

![CPL staff greet newcomers at the Welcome to Coquitlam event, 2018](image)
Last year, our programing staff undertook to train children and adults in the use of Sphero, a digital robotic toy which is designed to “inspire curiosity and invention through play and coding”. We purchased 12 and held sessions throughout the year. Children were surprised that a library would be doing programs like Sphero and many asked where they could buy one. Teachers and parents alike were very pleased that we introduced this. As a result of our programming and the popularity of it, we plan to purchase Sphero kits that people can borrow.

Outcome: **Children and adults were introduced to a new and fun way of programming, thereby adding to their learning experiences. The library is seen as being innovative in children’s programming.**

3) Working together creating lasting and sustainable partnerships – SUCCESS and ISS

Coquitlam Public Library has been working with SUCCESS and ISS for many years now. We continuously partner in ways to assist our newcomer and immigrant populations, adding to each other’s capacity.

We have had a number of staff changes late last year and had to re-establish communications and connections with staff at both agencies. We also found that current information had not been passed along. Meetings were held in order to determine how the Library could assist both SUCCESS and ISS in achieving their goals, instead of the other way around. In turn, we received valuable information as to what we needed to do to get more newcomers into the library, as many found it to be an intimidating place. This will be a win-win prospect. For example, the library has a plan to work with SUCCESS to do tours of the library using SUCCESS staff who speak a variety of languages, with training provided by the Library.

Outcome: **Newcomers to the community will have information in their own language to be better able to understand what the library can do for them and feel less intimidated. The Library received a Community Partner of the Year award from SUCCESS in 2018.**

4) Sustaining our success : enhancing governance and demonstrating impact – Strategic Planning

2018 was the last year of our strategic plan and the Board made the decision to hire a firm to manage our strategic planning process. A number of groups in the community were invited to participate in the process, as were local city counsellors and senior staff from the City. As a result, the Library learned from people who do not necessarily use the library and we now understand our community and its needs better. Specifically, we have to increase our efforts in marketing. That is reflected in our new Strategic Plan’s 3rd goal “creating awareness of relevant services, programs and partnerships”.


d) **Significant changes in the community and how we responded - Smiling Creek**

In the fall 2018, Smiling Creek Elementary School and Activity Centre opened in the Burke Mountain area of Coquitlam. This area has seen very large development over the last 5 years with thousands of people moving there. The Library has been concerned for quite some time as to how we can provide services to people who live a relatively long distance from the City Centre Branch. Once we learned that the City had named Tara Berdej a Recreation Coordinator for the Activity Centre in the school, our Community Engagement Director contacted her to offer our services at the Centre. The Coordinator was very eager to partner with the Library in programming. Our service now includes a weekly children’s program and sending our mobile Library Link on a weekly basis; the number of people attending continues to grow.

**Outcome:** We have worked with the City of Coquitlam, School District 43 and the Burke Mountain Collaboration Group in order to provide new services to an underserved area. We have proven our commitment to residents of Burke Mountain who now have programming and access to materials.

**Provincial Government Key Commitments:**

- **Make life more affordable:** Free Public Meeting Space

Almost everything we do at the Coquitlam Public Library makes life more affordable for our customers. From our collections to our free programs and our online services, our existence helps put money back in your pocket.

For many of the groups in our community who need public meeting space, we offer non-profit groups who hold public meetings one free room rental per month. The average room rental at the Library is approximately $25.00 per hour. For qualifying non-profit groups, who use a room for 2 hours every month, it is a savings of $600.00.

- **Delivering services people can count on – public computer systems**

In 2018, Coquitlam Public Library had over 76,500 computer sessions booked on our public computing stations. Stations provide access to the internet as well as standard Microsoft programs. We wanted to ensure that the public had access to much of the same systems one would find in a business environment and in order to do that, the library purchased 60 new ssd computers and MS Office Pro software licences and replaced virtually all our existing
computers. Having changed the way we budget for IT equipment and making cuts to some areas in the library, we are now able to upgrade our systems on a timetable that ensures we have the computing power required by our users.

- **Building a strong sustainable economy that works for everyone - Newcomer Employment Week**

In September, the Library partnered with Avia Employment Services, ISS, SUCCESS, MOSAIC, the City of Coquitlam and other organizations to host Newcomer Employment Week sessions. The Library was the venue for 13 of the programs including sessions on Resume Writing and Cover Letters – in Farsi, Speaking your value during an interview and Self Employment – how to Start a Business in Coquitlam. The Library provided staff which assisted newcomers in providing job search resources and demonstrated the databases we carry, like Lynda.com, which provides training resources.

**Outcome:** Newcomers in our community received training and information in order to gain employment, expand their professional network and connect with service providers and employers.

- **First Nations – Suwa’lkh School First Nations Day**

In the spring of 2018, two of our programming staff attended an aboriginal storytelling and drumming workshop, in order to learn how to incorporate First Nation’s culture and knowledge in the Library’s programming. At that workshop was School District 43’s Terri Galligos, a teacher in the aboriginal education program. She remembered that our staff introduced themselves as storytellers; obviously this had an impact because in early June, Ms. Galligos
asked them to deliver a storytelling program at National Indigenous People’s Day at the Suwa’lhk School, where the local indigenous education program is centered. Our staff were honoured to be asked to take on this responsibility, as over 200 children from 5 schools were invited to take part. Our staff worked with Terri, who provided us with materials and information that would honour the spirit of the event. Our staff presented a program of aboriginal stories, sang songs and drummed, and provided a restful place where students could relax given the very heavily scheduled day. Staff members were told they were authentic and impressive in their presentation.

Outcome: the Library partnered with School District 43, specifically the Aboriginal Education program, to deliver a program that was respectful and honoured the traditions and spirit of the First Nations.

Output: The Library provided over 200 grade 3 students with an entertaining and authentic program of First Nations’ stories and drumming.

SUCCESS STORIES – Poirier Digitization Lab

CPL opened our Digitization Lab in October of 2018 at our Poirier Branch. Through a grant from the Coquitlam Foundation Canada 150 program and internal funding, the Library was able to offer residents the equipment needed to digitize photos, slides (including a 40 mm custom slide holder), documents, and film on VHS, 8 mm and other formats, and cassette tapes. Residents can book time in the lab to preserve visual materials and get training on how to use the equipment. The local newspaper did a full page article about our efforts and it was used for more than 300 hours in less than 3 months. As was stated by one user, they are now able to share their memories with family members and friends across the country and the globe, and inspire others to learn about their family history.

Outcomes: Residents can come to the library and learn how to preserve their audio-visual materials and do so at no cost.

https://www.tricitynews.com/community/library-s-digitization-station-preserves-memories-1.23454130
Silvana Harwood, Deputy Director of the Coquitlam Public Library, and Dwight Yochim of the Coquitlam Foundation check out some old 8mm home movies the library's systems technician, Steve Nicklen, is converting to a digital format in the library's new digitization station at its Poirier Street branch.

Photograph By MARIO BARTEL/THE TRI-CITY NEWS