

# PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT 2018

## GRAND FORKS & DISTRICT PUBLIC LIBRARY

### INTRODUCTION

**The Library** - The Grand Forks & District Public Library is located in the heart of the Kootenay Boundary region. Serving the communities of the City of Grand Forks, Christina Lake (Area C), and Area D, our library is an important community hub for a population of approximately 9000 people. Our population is a bit older than in other British Columbia communities, with many choosing Grand Forks and the surrounding area as a place to retire. Although it can be a quiet place during the winter, warmer months find our area bustling with tourists coming to enjoy the unparalleled beauty of the sunshine and our stunning lakes, rivers, and mountains. Industry in our area includes logging, agriculture, and some manufacturing. There is something for everyone in Grand Forks and the surrounding area, and at the Grand Forks & District Public Library we strive to provide excellent service to all demographics of our community.

In the spring of 2018, Grand Forks suffered a historic flood that temporarily displaced thousands of people and brought the local economy to a grinding halt. Hundreds of people remain unsure if they will be able to stay in their homes long term, if they can expect similar flooding to occur in future years, and if they will be able to afford repairs and insurance on their homes moving forward. Many businesses closed their doors permanently, unable to afford required repairs. The library was not immune from the flood. We were evacuated initially as the flood waters rose, and were not allowed to return for three days. Several employees were also evacuated from their homes. When we were allowed to return to the building, there was 2 feet of water in the basement, which we used for storage along with several other community groups. When the 'second wave' of the flood hit only two days after reopening, the water in the basement had risen to nearly 3 feet high. As it had reached the electrical equipment at that point, the library was forced to close for a further three days while we waited for the water to recede and for the necessary electrical inspections. For more than a week after we returned, the basement sat fully saturated with water, which caused the proliferation of mold. When we were finally permitted by the City of Grand Forks to bring a disaster mitigation crew to stop the spread of mold, it was determined that all flooring, walls, and ceiling needed to be removed. This was completed over a few weeks, and now the basement sits fully stripped, but vacant, as the City decides how to move forward.

**Access** - The Grand Forks & District Public Library is open five days a week all year for an average of 46 hours per week.

**Circulation** – 84,189 items

**Resource sharing** – 1,575 sent, 2,891 received

**Programming** - 504 programs to 5,378 participants

**Strategic Plan** – in March 2016 we adopted a new Strategic Plan. We are working towards meeting the goals in this plan. Some of our most notable strategic plan based successes in 2018 include:

- Receiving an accessibility assessment from the Rick Hansen Foundation.
- Beginning a total renovation project for our public washrooms to improve safety and accessibility. By the end of 2018, we had so far had an architect create drawings for the new washrooms, gotten an estimate from a local contractor, and begun fundraising – reaching a total of \$57,000 towards the project by the

end of the year. The entire project is estimated to cost \$84,000, and so we will continue fundraising until we meet our goal.

- The library hosted an Arete Workplace Violence Prevention course for the staff and other community members as a small step towards helping us maintain our status as an open and comfortable space for all.
- Through a Kootenay Library Federation grant, we purchased some STEAM equipment to expand our current STEAM programming opportunities.

## GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES, GOALS, PROGRAMS AND SERVICES, PARTNERSHIPS

### FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

#### Library Goal that supports the priority:

- Points from our strategic plan that support this priority:
  - We will support 21st Century learning by promoting technological skills and digital literacy for learners of all ages.
  - We will strive to ensure access to our services for all segments of the community.
  - We will seek funding to maintain an appropriate level of technological facilities and expertise.
  - We will ensure that the library remains an open and comfortable space for all, preserving it as a free community space.

#### Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:

**Public Computers and Wi-fi:** We have six computers for public use which are connected to high-speed internet and are loaded with the Microsoft Office suite. We also have free public wi-fi which is also available from outside even when the library is closed. Certain areas of rural Grand Forks do not currently have any internet access, and so for citizens of those areas, the library is their main internet source. You can often see them parked in cars beside the library at all hours of the night using their laptops or other devices.

**Community Learning Place** - Every Tuesday afternoon, we hold a drop-in program called the Community Learning Place. Although the public is encouraged to bring in anything they would like to learn about, the bulk of participants are seeking help with technology. Many of the program's attendees are community members who need in-depth help with even basic computer use. The person manning the program, along with volunteers, is able to provide one-on-one assistance to help patrons improve their computing skills.

**Tech Café** – On Tuesday evenings, members of the public are encouraged to drop in for one-on-one electronics help with a staff member.

#### Partnerships that support the priority:

The Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy provides a staff member and volunteers to facilitate the Community Learning Place program.

#### Outcomes that were identified:

In 2018, patrons used our public computers over 5000 times. Patrons use our computers for seeking jobs, doing research, doing schoolwork, leisure activities, and more.

Regular participants in the Community Learning Place and Tech Cafe programs have developed new, tangible skills that they did not previously have, such as using email efficiently, and downloading eBooks and eAudiobooks from OverDrive without assistance from staff.

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## BUILDING CAPACITY

### Library Goal that supports the priority:

From our Strategic Plan:

- We will maintain open communications to ensure a community-led service approach.
- We will reach out into our communities to further develop our partnerships and to seek to establish new ones.
- We will support 21st Century learning by promoting technological skills and digital literacy for learners of all ages.
- We will undertake outreach and programming to integrate our younger citizens into the cultural, social, and knowledge-based learning opportunities of the library.
- We will encourage and aid the development of the literacy, communication, and critical thinking skills of all our patrons.
- We will endeavour to become a resource and action centre for social justice in our local communities, our nation and the world.
- We will develop our collections to best serve the needs and desires of the community.
- We will strive to ensure that all segments of our communities receive opportunities to access our services.
- We will strive to ensure access to our services for all segments of the community.
- We will become a central source of reference for community services, resources and organizations.
- We will undertake programming and services that will encourage an informed and engaged citizenry in local, national and global issues.
- We will seek funding to maintain an appropriate level of technological facilities and expertise.
- We will provide leadership in sustainability best practices by example in our programming and community partnerships.
- We will be a centre for ideas and conversations that seek to grow our communities in a progressive and sustainable manner.

### Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:

#### **“Let’s Talk About...” Programs**

Throughout the year, we hold programs in partnerships with local individuals and organizations on specific topics that people of any skill or knowledge level can attend and learn from. This year, we offered five “Let’s Talk About...” programs on the topics of proportional representation, peace, grief and trauma and yoga.

**Spanish Conversation Club** – We host a mostly weekly program facilitated by a community member where anyone can drop in and practice their conversational Spanish skills. In the summer, Grand Forks welcomes many Spanish-speaking workers, so this is a great way for locals to be able to welcome and engage with these workers in their own language.

**‘Cook the Books’ Book Club** – A few times a year, we host a ‘book club’ where all participants will cook a recipe from a specific cookbook and share the results (or report on its failure!) with the group. This program encourages participants to use local ingredients and to make their own food from scratch, which are important sustainability measures as we try to curb climate change.

**Free printing, copying, and scanning during flooding crisis** – During the flooding that we faced this spring, the Library Director and Board decided to waive all printing and copying charges for a 6 week period to allow flood victims to print Disaster Funding Assistance forms, copy building codes, print insurance paperwork, and all the

other paperwork that gets created during a crisis. We provided over \$300 in free printing during this time, and did not keep track of how much we 'gave away' in free scanning services.

**STEAM Fridays and Dot & Dash Robot Camp** – After receiving funding from the Kootenay Library Federation to create and develop a collection of STEAM equipment, we have begun in 2018 to offer two STEAM programs aimed at children. STEAM Fridays are a bi-weekly program where children and their families are welcomed to drop in and play with various STEAM-encouraging items such as Keva Planks, Lego, trains, and Tinkertoys, among others. At our Dot & Dash Robot camp, children attend four sessions where they work in teams and secretly develop their coding and computational thinking skills while they think they are playing with cute robots.

### **Collection Development**

In response to strategic plan goals, we have been making a concentrated effort on filling our collection out with books on do-it-yourself sustainability such as *Essential Composting Toilets*, *Diet for a Changing Climate*, *Zero Waste*, *Cooking with Scraps*, and more.

**Public Computers Tech Cafe, and the Community Learning Place:** these previously mentioned programs also work towards building capacity within our community.

### **Partnerships that support the priority:**

The Kootenay Library Federation's contribution for STEAM equipment was central to our ability to provide those programs.

The Library Director is a member of the Community Literacy Planning Committee, which works together to identify programming needs and gaps in the Boundary area regarding literacy in the broadest sense, and includes members from the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, Selkirk College, Interior Health, School District 51, Greenwood Public Library, and the Grand Forks Art Gallery Society (gallery2).

The "Let's Talk About..." programs required the partnership of several organisations, such as the Boundary Peace Initiative, the Boundary Hospice, and Fair Vote BC.

### **Outcomes that were identified:**

Participants in the Spanish Conversation Club have noticeably improved their conversational Spanish skills, as noted by participants and the facilitators.

Providing free printing to members of the public during the flood created significant stress relief as patrons were able to complete and send out paperwork on time to be able to receive the various insurance and disaster benefits available to them.

Participants of the 'Cook the Books' Book Club have all learned new cooking techniques and cuisines that they have then shared with their families, encouraging healthy and sustainable eating in the community.

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## **WORKING TOGETHER**

### **Library Goal that supports the priority:**

From our Strategic Plan:

- We will maintain contact and communications with our funding bodies and local governments to strengthen and enhance our existing relationships by encouraging the appointment of a member of the Grand Forks City Council or the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary to sit on our Board.

- We will reach out into our communities to further develop our partnerships and to seek to establish new ones.
- We will undertake outreach and programming to integrate our younger citizens into the cultural, social, and knowledge-based learning opportunities of the library.
- We will seek to blur the borders of the library by offering more services beyond our physical walls.

#### **Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:**

##### **Reading Link Challenge**

Working together with the Greenwood Public Library, Midway Public Library, and School District 51, we held the Reading Link Challenge program in the spring, which is a competition for grade 4 and 5 students to demonstrate their reading comprehension skills on a team. Each librarian engaged with local elementary teachers to hold classroom and school level challenges, and then the winners from these challenges travelled to Greenwood Elementary for a final district-level challenge.

##### **Library Directors' Advisory Group**

As a member of the Kootenay Library Federation, the Library Director sits on the Kootenay Library Directors Advisory Group, which meets semi-annually to discuss best practices, program ideas, and partnership opportunities.

##### **Community Literacy Planning Committee**

As mentioned above, the Director is a part of a committee with many community groups represented that works collaboratively towards providing literacy services to the community.

##### **“Let’s Talk About...” Programs, Spanish Conversation Club, STEAM Fridays, and the Community Learning Place**

These previously mentioned programs require collaboration to be possible.

#### **Outcomes that were identified:**

Participating in the Reading Link Challenge has improved the relationship between Boundary area libraries, doing much to open the lines of communication between us. The children who participated in the program enjoyed it a lot, and improved their reading skills as a result.

The Community Literacy Planning Committee is a fantastic resource for all members to cross-promote programs and services. Because such a diverse group makes up the committee, many more people get the chance to hear about our programs than normally would, and as such we have higher attendance at the programs promoted in this group. We also share their programs and services when we feel it is relevant, to the same effect.

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### *SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS*

#### **Library Goal that supports the priority:**

From our Strategic Plan:

- We will maintain open communications to ensure a community-led service approach.
- We will seek to diversify our board to closely represent our community.

- We will maintain contact and communications with our funding bodies and local governments to strengthen and enhance our existing relationships by encouraging the appointment of a member of the Grand Forks City Council or the Regional District of Kootenay Boundary to sit on our Board.

#### **Programs and/or Services that aligns with the priority:**

##### **Policy Committee**

The Board has a designated Policy Committee, which meets throughout the year as needed to evaluate our Policy Manual, and this committee makes Policy recommendations to the Board as a whole, which then discusses and votes on these suggestions.

##### **Kootenay Library Federation**

Grand Forks & District Public Library is a member of the Kootenay Library Federation, which, among other things, provides us with resources and networks to discuss and discover best practices and new ideas for governance.

##### **BCLTA**

Our Board is also a member of the BC Library Trustee's Association, which provides guidance to the Board on proper library governance and advocacy.

##### **Internal Board Orientation Day**

After a reevaluation of the TOPS program for our own board and its activities, we felt that an internal orientation for the board would be a better use of new members' time and provide a fuller education on the role and responsibilities of our board.

##### **Library Directors' Advisory Group**

The previously mentioned Library Directors' Advisory Group also fits into this priority.

#### **Partnerships that support the priority:**

Our membership in the Kootenay Library Federation and Library Directors' Advisory Group provides us with 19 automatic partners in the other member libraries to work together to sustain our successes.

#### **Outcomes that were identified:**

Feedback from the Internal Board Orientation was excellent. Board members felt more equipped to handle their positions and had a better understanding of what libraries are all about.

## **SUMMARY**

To call 2018 "eventful" for the Grand Forks & District Public Library would be a gross understatement. The spring flood turned the entire town upside down and we were not immune from the disruption. Tensions have been high ever since as competing voices discuss what can and should be done to prevent the town from being crippled by natural disasters like this in the future. At the library, we have been doing our best to offer continued support throughout this time. We continued to offer excellent service to our community through our locations, collections, and people. We maintained existing partnerships and forged new ones with community organisations and individuals. We also faced many challenges beyond the flood, such as questions about stagnant funding, ongoing capacity to grow our programs and hours, and concerns about the accessibility and integrity of the library building.

Although we do our best to serve all members of our community and to offer programming that is helpful and relevant to our patrons, the continued opioid and mental health crises are still having a disproportionate impact on our library, and we do not feel adequately equipped to handle as we are not medical professionals or social workers. Our washrooms are still not accessible, though we are getting closer to fixing that. Of course, having less-than-accessible washrooms has a huge impact on who and how we can serve our community members. We are also finding an increased demand for extended hours, but do not have the funding to provide them.

If provided with additional Provincial funding, we could look into more opportunities for professional development to help staff feel more safe and confident in dealing with the aforementioned opioid and mental health crises as they manifest in our library. We could also open for more hours each week, meeting the much-needed demand for a warm or cool place (depending on the season) to be during the day on Sunday or Monday, when virtually everything else in Grand Forks is closed.

There were also lots of good things this year. Our dedicated volunteers provided us with more hours worked than a FTE staff member. Our Friends of the Library group has really hit its stride, and hosted several fundraising events. Thanks to the hard work of our Friends group, we were able to add a dishwasher to our staff room and new blinds to our children's area. We improved our relationship with our local government, and as a result, the library has begun to be a matter of discussion at the City Council level for the first time in several years. We also offered plenty of just-for-fun programming that brought in hundreds of people, such as our annual Festive Family Storytime, complete with musical elves and Santa Claus; our many movie nights with fresh popcorn; and our Noon Year's Eve party for children, which featured pizza donated by our local Panago and a bubble wrap dance party.

So, as with anything else, there are ups and downs at the Grand Forks & District Public Library. We face adversity just as often as we achieve successes, and 2018 provided plenty of both. With the combination of our great staff, board, and volunteer base; our community esteem; and our continued hard work, we can look forward to a bright and productive future as public library service continues to expand and evolve.