Introduction

The Hazelton District Public Library is located on the bank of the Skeena River in historic downtown Old Hazelton. Although the population of the Village of Hazelton is a mere 300 people, in fact the HDPL provides library service to a great number of communities scattered across our region, from residents of the Kispiox Valley living up to 40 kilometres north of the library, to those in Witset, 40 km to the east, all the way west to Gitwangak and Gitanyow, 75 km away, and all points in between. The region’s population is made up mainly of indigenous people of the Gitxsan and Wet’suwet’en nations, with the remainder being made up largely of the descendants of European settlers.

As in most northern communities, stable and fulfilling employment continues to be scarce for many people here. The main sources of employment in the Hazeltons are the service industries (education, health care, some government offices) and resource extraction. Of those who have work, a large number of them work away from home for long stretches, generally in forestry and mining. There is very high unemployment across the region, as well as low high school graduation and adult literacy rates. These issues, combined with the impacts of colonization, are important factors in other difficulties that many families in our area face, such as addictions, food security, a scarcity of affordable and safe housing, lack of transportation and often stressful home lives.

As a small town in an economically depressed area, Hazelton has limited recreational opportunities and few community gathering places. The library, a welcoming place for those of all stripes and where entry and services are free of charge, plays a crucial role in the community. We are a source of education, entertainment, and of stimulation for children and adults alike. HDPL is also a much-needed access point to information and Internet service in a rural place where connectivity is often limited and where many cannot afford a computer at home at all.

In 2018 HDPL planned and presented a number of public events with focuses on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), reconciliation and family literacy. We also continued our internal strategic planning process in 2018. Our Board of Trustees now has an orientation manual, the policy manual has been updated to reflect the new planning focus and we have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Village of Hazelton and the co-located Hazelton Pioneer Museum.
Discussion and Examples

Provincial Strategy #1
Fostering Equitable Access to Information and Services

**Outreach Services:** Provide and promote library services throughout HDPL’s catchment area

HDPL’s 2018 outreach activities continued to bring library services and literacy training to as many people as possible in our very spread-out catchment area.

- Our Assistant Librarian traveled to Kitwanga, Gitwangak, Gitanyow, Gitsegukla, Anspayaxw, Sik-e-dakh, Hagwilget and Witset to participate in toddler fairs for new parents, for summer reading club training and for club sessions and partnership discussions. She led literacy activities, showcased library materials, signed kids and parents up for library cards, informed families and school staff alike of library services and programs, and generally strived to build a library presence and trust in all communities.
- Our acting Head Librarian brought a background in Information Technology to HDPL in 2018. The library now has a more modern network system and our public computer and wireless Internet use is rising. To assist community members who have limited or no computer access at home, HDPL donated our old computer and networking equipment to various patrons and organizations who had either very outdated equipment or no computer at home. We also supplied our newly arrived refugee family with computer equipment.
- HDPL and Storytellers Foundation partnered to offer another Fostering Literacy tutoring program in the elementary schools in 2018. Tutors are hired from the high school to support the elementary school students who are reading below their grade level.

- **Partnerships:** Using our community connections and partnerships (see Strategy #3), HDPL has continued to advocate and support literacy education, access to library materials both in the library building and online through our databases and online library services.
- **Aligned with HDPL objectives:** “To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves on a continual basis,” and “To seek to identify community needs and to provide programmes of service to meet such needs. To cooperate with other organizations, agencies, and institutions which can provide programmes or services to meet community needs.”
- **Outputs & Outcomes:** HDPL outreach provides communications and information awareness in each of our partners, connected community groups and other organizations on a regular basis.
**Provincial Strategy #2**

*Developing Skills and Knowledge: enabling inspiration and innovation.*

Many of the 2018 HDPL events encouraged participants to learn new skills and knowledge. Our Summer Reading Clubs in various communities allowed young readers to improve their literacy skills and participate in STEM activities. Science Day and Space Day with our partners at the HR MacMillan Planetarium (and more) added more STEM learning for our young patrons. Our writing workshops (poetry, music, memoirs) advanced our youth and elder education in the area of the arts.

**Poetry and music writing workshops:** Bringing out the poet in our local youth

HDPL partnered with members of the Misty Rivers Arts Council to host three related events in 2018:

- Two poetry writing workshops were hosted, one in the HDPL and one at Hazelton High School. Youth (and adults) discussed poetry forms and were encouraged to write their thoughts using verse or spoken word. Some even shared their compositions with the writing group.
- The music writing workshop was offered in two parts. The morning of the event fostered the writing and crafting of a personal song. The afternoon demonstrated the mechanics of recording and presenting the song written in the morning session. Most youth chose to use a rap or hip-hop genre, and everyone presented their creation to the group by the time the event was over.

- **Aligned with HDPL objectives,** “To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves on a continual basis,” and “To seek to identify community needs and to provide programmes of service to meet such needs. To cooperate with other organizations, agencies, and institutions which can provide programmes or services to meet community needs.”
- **Partnerships:** Continued partnership with the Misty Rivers Arts Council and other artists in the local communities benefits our local artists, young and old.
- **Outputs & Outcomes:** Attendance of 30 in the two poetry workshops and 16 in the music writing workshop (maximum space available) ensured that these events were successful, and the partnerships will thrive. Many of the participants were excited to continue their writing careers. A few them mentioned that the welcoming and safe experience encouraged them to participate.
**Provincial Strategy #3**  
*Working Together: creating lasting and sustainable partnerships.*

HDPL has had always had the opportunity to join with other organizations locally and province-wide. The amount of work that we do has prevented us from continuing all the connections that would benefit our community. In 2018 we renewed our connections in several areas with mutual benefit for all partners at the table.

Our renewed connections include the Gitxsan-Wet’suwet’en Early Majagalee table (GEM table), local Community Economic Development (CED) committee and the Community Health Awareness Committee (CHAC). We continue to partner with Storytellers Foundation, Upper Skeena Development Center, Coast Mountain College and many other individuals and organizations.

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<th>Community Connection Renewal: CED and CHAC connections and the benefits they foster</th>
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Reconnecting with the GEM table, CED and CHAC committees expanded HDPL’s reach to rural communities and other local organizations and businesses.

- CHAC connections allow HDPL to assist in the distribution of information from Early Childhood support organizations through outreach workers to their clients in many communities, from library bulletin boards through to the outreach trips we make. The outreach workers also introduce our library services to their clients.
- Teaming up with local businesses through the CED committee (Upper Skeena Development Center, Storytellers Foundation, etc.) allows all organizations to share and improve information distribution and program funding throughout our communities.
- Partnering with the Bulkley Valley Credit Union to sponsor tutor training materials for our Fostering Literacy program was enhanced by our connection through the CED committee.

- **Partnerships:** Bulkley Valley Child Development Center (BVCDC is a CHAC member) is taking the lead in finding funding to replace the Success by Six grants available through the GEM table that ended in 2018. This cancellation of funding jeopardizes this literacy outreach program. We are hopeful that this new partnership will allow us to continue our Summer Reading Club literacy outreach to our remote communities in 2019.
- **This work reflects HDPL’s goals:** “To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves on a continual basis;” and “To seek to identify community needs and to provide programmes of service to meet such needs. To cooperate with other organizations, agencies, and institutions which can provide programmes or services to meet community needs.”
- **Outcomes:** By working with funding available through the BVCDC, HDPL can continue to provide the Summer Reading Club outreach to the communities outside of Hazelton in our catchment area. HDPL also can provide literacy training in to the BVCDC clients at their locations as well.
**Provincial Strategy #4**

*Enhancing Governance: sustaining our success and demonstrating impact.*

**Up-to-Date for the Future:** completing policies and procedures overhaul in 2018

HDPL’s Board of Trustees continues to enhance governance in 2018. Activities included:
- HDPL Policy Manual was completely overhauled in 2017 and 2018 and approved.
- The MOU with the Village of Hazelton for operation of the library was negotiated and signed.
- Several trustees participating in various library webinars throughout the year, increasing their own knowledge around library management and building capacity for better governance.
- Creation of a trustee orientation and training procedure with additional updates continues to be a focus.
- HDPL budgets in the past few years have not left any room for expansion into new library areas (e.g.: the library of things, more media collection items, etc.). During budget discussions in late 2018, the board of trustees have determined that they will formulate a 5-year budget with the intention of requesting additional funds from the regional district and other funders.

* • Aligned with several **HDPL goals**: “To seek to identify community needs and to provide programmes of service to meet such needs. To cooperate with other organizations, agencies, and institutions which can provide programmes or services to meet community needs.” Also: “To serve the community as a centre of reliable information;” “To provide opportunity and encouragement for children, young people, men and women to educate themselves on a continual basis.”

* • **Partnerships**: Working with our Regional District, Provincial supporters and local villages continues regularly.

* • **Outputs & Outcomes**: Our new policy manual has been updated with new 2018 policies as the library trustees move toward a more modern vision for the library. The decision to go “overdue fine free” in January 2019 flows out of the knowledge contained in the policy manual and the desire to continue to reduce patron barriers.

**Summary**

2018 was an exciting and busy year for the Hazelton District Public Library. In addition to the many opportunities for learning and sharing that we offer our patrons, we focused on strengthening our partnerships. The work that we do at HDPL integrates all the provincial strategies and ties together all our partners as we promote community connections, learning for all ages in all areas of endeavour and the synergy of working together to improve everything about our communities.