Introduction
Initially founded in 2004, the Kootenay Library Federation operated for two years before it was formally recognized as a BC library federation in 2006. The Federation is an umbrella organization supporting the twenty independent member libraries in the east, central, and boundary regions of the Kootenays, as well as Penticton. The majority of the member libraries are rural and somewhat isolated from one another. The KLF service area encompasses a mountainous area of 49,647 square kms, with 176,053 people, and a population density of 3.55 people per km.

Grouped according to their size, the KLF member libraries include:

- Castlegar, Cranbrook, Creston, Penticton, and Nelson (populations above 10,000)
- Beaver Valley, Fernie, Grand Forks, Invermere, Kimberley, Rossland, Sparwood, and Trail (populations between 3,000-10,000)
- Elkford, Greenwood, Kaslo, Midway, Nakusp, Radium Hot Springs, and Salmo (populations below 3,000)

2018 was the final year with our Strategic Plan, and the goals we have continued to meet are our commitment to member collaboration, as well as working with our external partners in order to provide a responsive range of services and activities that enhance the delivery of library services. Our collaborative efforts are elaborated on under strategy #3, Working Together. The KLF explores and undertakes service relationships with the BC Libraries Cooperative to receive benefits in shared IT infrastructure and the application of emerging web-based opportunities as we strive to adapt and seek new avenues for improvement.

Inherent in the purpose of our Library Federation is our desire to build capacity and resilience within Board members and Library Directors. This purpose supports the Libraries Branch strategic plan strategy #2, Building Capacity, and is explained further within this report.
Beginning in the second half of 2018, the KLF began the process of strategic planning with the entire Board and Library Directors. A framework for our 2019-2021 plan was built at our Fall 2018 meeting and has continued through the work of the ad-hoc Strategic Planning Committee. Included in this process is a member library survey where each KLF representative leads discussions at their member library Board meeting to collect input for inclusion in the KLF strategic plan. At our April 2019 meeting, the Committees’ draft plan will be brought to the Board for discussion and approval.

In 2018, the Kootenay Library Federation received provincial grants totalling $113,000. The KLF sincerely supports the priorities articulated in the conveyance letter received from the Libraries Branch on June 22, 2018, and we gratefully acknowledge the ongoing financial support of the Libraries Branch, Ministry of Education, Province of British Columbia.

The KLF has benefited from Board Executive dedication and Executive Director stability throughout 2018. As in 2017, the advice and expertise offered by the Libraries Branch staff to the Board in 2018 has brought the KLF closer to a revised Federation Agreement and a governance model that better reflects the diversity of our member libraries and aims to increase Board member engagement. The presence and input of Libraries Branch and BC Libraries Cooperative staff at our Spring 2018 meeting was welcome and appreciated.

**Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities**

The Libraries Branch strategic plan, *Inspiring Libraries, Connecting Communities* continues to offer a strong framework and direction for the KLF to work with in support of its member libraries. In 2018, the KLF also began reaching out to other Federations, library systems, Kootenay area (and beyond) non-profits, and individuals to create relationships that in time will bear fruit. Primarily, the twenty member libraries and the KLF work together to create innovative, changing, and responsive services and programming events that meet the needs of the different communities in the service area.

**Strategy #1 - Fostering Connected Communities**

The KLF fully supports the provincial government’s priority of advancing access to information and resources. We hope recommendations from the Connectivity Report will be implemented to help improve broadband internet access to every public library in our province. Technological improvements such as these will assist both library staff and patrons access services that people count on, such as public education, medical information and attention, and options to ensure dignity in aging. These broad provincial policies can be actioned by citizens and library patrons as they enroll in distance education courses, gain new skills that translate into improved employment opportunities, and allow for rural and isolated communities within the KLF service area continue contributing to strong, sustainable, and innovative economies that address the long term implications of poverty and inequality.
Throughout the past 12 months, the KLF has worked towards enhancing the connection of Board representatives and strengthening our Executive. We have added the online meeting platform Zoom to our toolbox. Board members and Library Directors can use Zoom for free when meeting to discuss library matters. As the teleconference line in 2017 encouraged participation in discussions when KLF Board members or Library Directors wanted to collaborate on decisions or to share ideas with one another, so too does Zoom. The added benefit of video meetings provides a deeper inter-personal connection between the parties. Zoom has been used by the KLF Executive, Strategic Planning committee, and the Library Directors to facilitate conversations about governance, strategic planning, goal setting and grant applications, to name a few. The KLF Board Chair and Executive Director have begun using Zoom to be monthly guests at different member library Board meetings. This has been valuable as we seek to recruit new KLF representatives and support new Library Directors by explaining the purpose and value of the KLF to member library Boards.

When the Columbia Basin Trust launched the $1m+ Community Technology Program grants (https://ourtrust.org/grants-and-programs-directory/community-technology-program/), the KLF used technology to connect and facilitate an informational conversation between the CBT staff and interested KLF Library Directors.

The KLF continues to encourage and support member libraries to participate in the services and products offered by the BC Libraries Coop, whether it be discounted database subscriptions, website support, continuous improvement with broadband, or teleconference line services. In a non-technological example, the KLF organized and funded the 2018 Summer Reading Club entertainer, ensuring sixteen member libraries and their patron communities shared the same experiences, fostering connections between libraries despite the physical distance between them.

In summary, the KLF is committed to using technology to improve communications, share information and knowledge, with the goal of supporting the member libraries as they seek to improve library services.

**Strategy #2 - Building Capacity**

In 2018, staff from KLF member libraries volunteered to lead “Days of Learning” sessions. The topics were STEAM program development and collaboration, and were inspired by the STEAM equipment member libraries purchased in 2017 and 2018 through the financial support of the KLF. Two STEAM Days of Learning were offered, one in the East and one in the West Kootenays. In total, 43 staff members attended, learned from one another, collaborated, and returned to their home library inspired with new ideas for library programming.

As many of the KLF member libraries hire summer students to run the Summer Reading Club program, the KLF organizes training for the students in late June. Two sessions are offered, and each year facilitators volunteer from different member libraries. This type of training fosters connections amongst member library staff, and their collective brainstorming creates
innovative summer programming for children throughout the Kootenays. In 2018, 28 people participated in the training.

In addition to the KLF Professional Development committee, we now have an ad-hoc Database Review committee. These committees are populated from Library Director volunteers and assist the Executive Director to select training opportunities and evaluate KLF subsidized databases to ensure they meet patron needs and interests. The upcoming year will see two workshops offered for library staff: Indigenous Cultural Sensitivity Training and Teaching Tech Together.

By facilitating two in-person Board meetings per year for both the KLF Board and Library Directors, the KLF creates networking and collaboration opportunities between member libraries. The Board members and Library Directors take full advantage of connecting with like-minded people, while sharing best practices, comparing strategic plans, asking about challenges, cooperating on service delivery ventures, and exploring ideas that share a common purpose. Our most recent meeting, held in Radium was attended by 18 Board members and 15 Library Directors. Lead by KLF’s Vice Chair who has experience in facilitating strategic planning sessions, our strategic planning discussions united the participants and everyone left focussed on looking to the future for both the KLF and their member library Boards.

Continuing from 2017 and throughout 2018, the KLF and its member libraries supported the ongoing professional development of library staff with the Online Training Project. This project, lead by the North Central and North East Library Federation Manager and funded by Libraries Branch, is offered in partnership with Royal Roads University. These courses are described as inspiring by library staff, and serve to further develop their skills in offering innovative library programs and developing new services. The ability of staff at all levels (director, program coordinators, and auxiliary), particularly in isolated and rural libraries, to partake in subsidized professional development courses leading to a certificate is essential to the delivery of excellent and responsive library services.

The need to build capacity within libraries is an ongoing issue, particularly in rural and isolated areas of British Columbia. In 2018 four library staff in the KLF service area participated in the courses offered, with the KLF promoting the courses and the overall concept of continuing education. The future of the Online Training Project is unknown, however the KLF is committed to financially subsidizing other library continuing education courses or programs to benefit the overall health of member libraries and the quality delivery of services.

In 2018, the KLF worked with the BC Libraries Trustee Association to offer two Trustee Orientation Program (TOP) workshops, one in Trail and the other in Creston. These sessions were well attended, and Board members gained new knowledge to further their contributions to the KLF and their member library boards. Board member education will be offered in the Fall of 2019, after the strategic plan has been completed.
**Strategy #3 - Working Together**

In the first half of 2018, the KLF began to reach out to other Federations, library systems, Kootenay area (and beyond) non-profits, and individuals to create relationships that in time will bear fruit.

Margaret Sutherland, the Executive Director of Decoda Literacy Solutions was a guest speaker at the Fall 2018 Library Directors Advisory Group meeting. While speaking about community engagement and developing sustainable partnerships, her experience and knowledge of libraries added value to the group work and conversations held.

A relationship between the KLF and the Columbia Basin Trust was created in 2017 when a KLF governance review was conducted by their Non-Profit Advisor’s Program. A Columbia Basin Trust Program Director contacted the KLF Executive Director a number of times during 2018 to explore a library-focussed grant opportunity and measure the expected uptake of it across their service region. The result was the November 2018 launch of the $1m+ Community Technology Program grant. Three application intakes will occur over two years, and the Trust is committed to working closely with KLF member libraries to ensure their grant applications are successful.

The KLF had the opportunity to partner with Science World and received two Tech-Up Library Kits for the member libraries. These kits, full of STEAM equipment, books, and program outlines, are currently touring the KLF libraries via a courier delivery system. Library and outreach programs are planned, statistics are sent to Science World for their use, and at the end of the four month partnership, the kits will become property of the KLF.

Library Directors at the member libraries are dedicated to their communities and actively seek partnerships to enhance the scope of library services and programs. Additionally, the KLF Executive Director is highly motivated to create lasting and sustainable partnerships that reach across the KLF service area. Included in this are pending grant applications to pilot a Thingery tour throughout the Kootenays ([http://thethingery.com/](http://thethingery.com/)), to enhance environmental and climate change collections through a BC Hydro Broad Impact grant ([https://www.bchydro.com/community/community-giving/grants.html](https://www.bchydro.com/community/community-giving/grants.html)), and a partnership with UBC Okanagan for a Let’s Talk Science summer program tour.

**Strategy #4 - Sustaining our Success**

The KLF has fully implemented the recommendations made by a Columbia Basin Trust referred governance consultant in 2017. With unanimous approval from the Board, the KLF Agreement has been revised and submitted to Libraries Branch for approval by the Minister of Education. The KLF Board and Governance Committee are grateful to Libraries Branch staff for their involvement in the Agreement evolution and their expert advice in ensuring the Agreement is in harmony with the Library Act.

We have also created a Governance Manual that is separate from the Agreement. The Executive Director reviewed KLF Board minutes to identify and create a Policy Manual, which will be reviewed by the Governance Committee in 2019. Board self-evaluation will become an
annual activity aimed at improvements in communication. At our Fall 2019 meeting, a draft Board Orientation manual will be shared and feedback received.

The roles and responsibilities of the Executive Director, Board, Board Executive, Board Committees and the Library Directors Advisory Group have been discussed, defined and agreed upon, resulting in role clarity and understanding. This has had a positive impact on the Board’s governance and the Executive Director’s ability to work administratively and operationally. Through these exercises, 2018 has seen an increase in the positive impact the KLF has in support of its member libraries.

Thank you
The KLF Board, Executive Committee, Executive Director, and Library Directors appreciate the ongoing financial support and advice received throughout the year from the Libraries Branch staff. Your role as our principal funder cannot be underestimated. That said, 2018 has seen the KLF reach out and receive timely, knowledgeable, and encouraging guidance from the Libraries Branch. Ultimately, the quality of library services offered in the Kootenay region is enhanced by our relationship.