



PROVINCIAL PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT (PLGR) 2018

PENDER ISLAND PUBLIC LIBRARY ASSOCIATION AND ASSOCIATED READING CENTERS

The Pender Island Public Library Association (PIPLA) and associated reading centers are located in the Southern Gulf Islands (SGI) region in the southwest coastal area of BC. Located between two major city centers, Vancouver and Victoria, the local population and activities in our region are greatly influenced by seasonal visitation from urban centers. The SGI electoral area has 4,732 residents (Census Canada 2016), with Pender Island being the largest island of ca. 2,300 full time residents. Our region is typical of resort areas, with a steady full-time residential population and a doubling of population numbers during summer months due to an influx of part-time residents from urban centers and tourism-based visitors. For a public library, fluctuating visitation levels present a challenge of meeting the needs of two types of patrons, “locals” and “visitors”, and adjusting to seasonal periods of low and high library use. For example, locals expect regular library hours, an updated and popular collection, and community-based programming. Summer visitors might expect excellent Wi-Fi and many public computers, and to borrow plenty of materials with their home library card (BC One Card program).

The demographics of our region are skewed towards an older population of mainly retired and semi-retired people. The median age is 62.6 years (the most popular age), compared to the BC median age which is much lower at 45.5 years. Most households (>85%) in our region are one or two-person in size, and this is reflected in a low number of families with young children: ca. 225 youth (0-18 yrs. old) live on Pender Island. As such, our libraries maintain a collection with 70% of materials for adults and 30% for youth. Our library programs, services, online resources, and facility design were generally selected to match the age range of the local population. Notably, working people in our region earn a median income 25% below the provincial average, primarily due to seasonal tourism and service-based employment. The primary language spoken in our region is English, with 10% of residents also speaking French. Only 2.5% of our residents indicate an Aboriginal identity, and 3% identify themselves as a visible minority. Our region’s population decreased slightly from the Canada Census 2011, although population is projected to increase in BC, particularly in our neighbouring urban centers. With growth ahead, our libraries are preparing for increasing and changing needs. The PIPL is the administrative lead library in the Southern Gulf Islands region, and shares staff and library resources with neighbouring reading centers located on of Mayne, Galiano, Saturna, and Piers islands.

STRATEGY #1: FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES: ADVANCING ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

In 2018, provincial funding was used by PIPLA to provide training on the use of digital media to staff, library volunteers, and community members. Training was provided to individuals and groups, reaching over 100 people, and resulted in a greater knowledge of digital media, how to perform better internet searches, and how to access online databases. To meet the needs of our rural community, which includes factors such as intermittent internet service and patrons without home internet access, our libraries remained focused on providing updated public computer workstations and high-speed internet connectivity that could accommodate multiple users. Five public workstations at the PIPLA received upgraded computer hardware, low-cost printing services were maintained, and staff time was allocated to tech tutoring sessions. The outcome was consistent use of our public computers and patrons arriving with their own devices to use the improved internet connectivity. This allowed users to better access a wide range of internet-based information including government forms (i.e. employment, pension, taxation), fishing licenses, student exams, and current events.

STRATEGY#2: BUILDING CAPACITY: ENABLING INSPIRATION AND INNOVATION

For building capacity in 2018, one area we focused on was offering professional development opportunities for library staff. Funding was provided for our Library Manager to pursue library science courses towards obtaining a certificate in public library management from the U of Michigan. These high-quality, online courses were practitioner-oriented and provided a pathway for staff to expand their toolkit of management strategies. The outcome is that staff gained experience and tools in identifying community needs, managing personnel in a diverse workplace, budgeting and strategic planning, marketing, grant-writing and more, and can now better serve the library and the community. Other professional development activities included staff attending the annual Vancouver Island Library Staff Conference, where participation in seminars on First Nation truth & reconciliation topics inspired plans for new additions to the library collection and programs.

Several of our SGI libraries took initiative to implement an acknowledgement statement of First Nations land titles in our islands in 2018. The Galiano and Mayne reading centers undertook to explore, research, and discuss what Indigenous reconciliation means to their communities, and to adopt an acknowledgement statement of the Coast Salish people upon whose un-ceded, traditional territories we live and work. Work is being done in all our library facilities to update and identify First Nations literature (authors and stories) as well as host programming related Indigenous issues. Through these small steps, our libraries hope to inspire members in our community to become better informed on reconciliation initiatives that can be accomplished at the local level.

STRATEGY#3: WORKING TOGETHER: CREATING LASTING AND SUSTAINABLE PARTNERSHIPS

A partnership we would like to highlight for 2018 was the partnership between PIPLA and associated reading centers and families with children in our community. To reach local families, the libraries focused on three main areas: collections, programs, and job skills for young workers. The library youth collections are carefully tailored on a limited budget to reach the needs and interests of readers aged 0-18 years. Lending of youth materials has risen to 11,800 items/year for a population of ca. 400 youth, showing a circulation rate of 30 items/child. By organizing our collection by reading difficulty for young readers, the outcome is that families provided positive feedback on improved reading abilities of children. Our youth programs fulfilled the long-term goal of creating fun events for families that make literacy and their local library part of regular outings. The well-loved Summer Reading Club maintained a steady registration, while creative Lego Clubs at PIPLA and Galiano reading center allowed kids to develop skills in imaginative play while parents interacted with reference staff about appropriate book selection.

A focus on providing young workers with introductory level job skills has been a great success at PIPLA and the Galiano reading center, as students were trained and supervised at the library circulation desk, learning transferable skills including customer service, teamwork, computer databases, and responsibility for job performance. Our student work program has far reaching outcomes, as young workers learn important job skills and the local community benefits from a young workforce better prepared for future employment.

STRATEGY#4: SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS: ENHANCING GOVERNANCE AND DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

To sustain our success in providing high quality library services, PIPLA continued to build upon partnerships and joint-funding between library facilities in the Southern Gulf Islands. Ongoing since 2001, this partnership has allowed our library facilities to grow significantly in a rural environment with low funding. Much time is spent fostering this partnership throughout the year, with discussions including library governance, collection management, use of social media, bi-annual business meetings, and educational tours. We have maintained our success through shared staffing and joint training sessions, as well as sharing a common integrated library computer system, website, online databases, ILL service, and digital library collection. Our partnership has allowed our library patrons to seamlessly use a wide variety of library services. In 2018, an informal partnership began with neighbouring Salt Spring Island Public Library Association, and Library Directors have exchanged facility tours, attended Board Trustee meetings, and reviewed common areas such as programming, funding strategies, library policies, and strategic planning. The impact of fostering partnerships between neighbouring libraries can lead to a better understanding of the greater regional needs and evolving library services.

SUMMARY

The project which likely had the biggest impact on PIPLA library patrons in 2018 was the installation of new youth window seating and play structures. Updating youth seating was envisioned years ago and a concerted effort to obtain funding and a compatible design was needed to bring this project to completion. We couldn't be happier with the results, and our families tell us the same! The outcome is that families spend longer periods of time in the library, engaged in reading, playing, and socializing. Regular visits (sometimes daily) to the library have become a ritual for families with young children, and the library has become a welcoming meeting place for new families in the community. This multi-use seating area is also used for other events such as adult programming, guest speakers, and meetings.



Throughout 2018, the PIPLA Board of Trustees and staff worked on a 5-year strategic plan for 2019-2023, focusing on meeting community needs and planning how to implement goals with limited staff and funding. Feedback from surveys and planning sessions with community partners, library members, and a library consultant was reviewed, with the greatest challenge being to create a clear plan with achievable goals. PIPLA identified that forging stronger partnerships with local organizations was one of the main strategic priorities, to have local groups include the library within their mandate and activities, and have the library better understand the needs of local groups. Creating stronger partnerships, and providing collections and programs relevant to local organizations, will result in library services that better reflect the varied interests of the community.

Staffing remains a great challenge for PIPLA and associated reading centers due to our small population and regional district funding limitations. A creative solution in past years has been to engage volunteers to help provide many library services, and up to 2,000 volunteer hours/year have been generously provided. Decreases in volunteerism are occurring and retaining year-round commitments from trained volunteers has become challenging. Finding new approaches to securing funding for staffing is ongoing, and the addition of a part-time technical support staff position, jointly-funded and shared between five library facilities in the Southern Gulf Islands, is planned for 2019.

Pender Island Public Library & Southern Gulf Islands Library Commission