Radium Hot Springs Public Library Provincial Grant Report 2018

Introduction:

The Village of Radium Hot Springs was incorporated as a municipality on December 10, 1990. The Village is located in the gorgeous Columbia Valley, nestled between the Purcell Mountains to the West and the Rocky Mountains to the East. The Village is bordered by the Columbia River Wetlands - the largest continuous wetlands in North America.

Radium Hot Springs is home to about 800 permanent residents; the Village is a popular destination for tourists, and as such, it has become an ideal destination for second homeowners to reside part-time. Because of this large population of second homeowners, our patron base increases substantially during our peak seasons. The tourism industry continues to play a significant role in the local economy. The Village is fortunate to have a strong forestry sector; however, the community still faces the challenges of maintaining economic stability throughout the tourism industry’s ups and downs.

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library is fortunate to have a strong working relationship with the local Village Council. A member of the Library Board is a representative from the Village Council and aids the Library in many decisions. In addition, representatives from Electoral Area F and Electoral Area G also sit on the board through an agreement with the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) to provide library services throughout this region. Therefore, our service area reaches far beyond the Village, to the Electoral areas mentioned above. We continue to nurture these relationships every year to adhere to the goals set in our Strategic Plan.

Our Strategic Plan is a “living document” that provides a road map for where we want to be from an assessment of where we are now. We have made great progress on our Strategic Plan goals in 2018. Some of the other goals we have met this past year include: implementing a community consultation process, developing a vibrant volunteer base, identifying strategic, sustainable partnerships, fostering active library patronage, engaging in professional development opportunities, increasing and maintaining regular service hours, providing wider access to digital resources, and establishing strong and clear communication.

One of the biggest Strategic Plan accomplishments of 2018 was moving our Library to a brand-new location. In July, 2018, we moved into our new space in the brand-new Radium Hot Springs Centre. The centrality of this location shows how invaluable the Library is to the community. With this recent expansion, the Library has become a local and tourist hotspot. The new space allows us to comfortably service people of all demographics. According to a recent survey, the primary age demographic in our community — that responded to the survey — is over the age of 45. The vast majority of these patrons are female, and nearly all of our survey respondents had some level of post-secondary education. We also have many young families who reside in the area who take full advantage of our accessible resources and programs. Our new space has given the Radium Hot Springs Public Library the ability to continue to be responsive and rise up to meet the needs of our community.
Alignment with Strategies of the Provincial Strategic Plan:

1) **Library Priority #1: Fostering Connected Communities: Advancing access to information and services:**

Indicate what library goal, programs, and/or services, and partnerships you may have had that support the Provincial priority, and describe what outcomes were achieved.

**Library Goal that aligns with strategy:** Facilitated equitable access by enhancing public accessibility to information and services.

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library achieved this goal in 2018. Earlier this year we moved into a brand-new facility which gave us the ability to augment our accessibility tenfold. With this move, we increased our physical space, acquired a second patron computer, increased library hours—from 11 hrs per week to 28 hours—and we made ourselves more accessible digitally by reviewing our website and engaging in outreach activities. The new facility placed us at the heart of the community, and gave us a chance to showcase what we can offer to enhance the community in terms of services, information and programming.

Our two public computers are free to use, and patrons also have free Wifi access throughout the Library. The free computer access is appreciated by patrons who do not have the capacity to own a computer. Families in lower income brackets have used our computers to fill out government forms to advance their financial situations. Patrons also use the computers to create and submit resumes. This contributes to the local economy, and provides these patrons with an opportunity to compete in the modern job market. The free Wifi access is also a benefit to the community as many of our members reside in condo complexes that no longer offer free internet services. This brings people into the building, and introduces them to our other services. The Village of Radium Hot Springs financially supports the Library’s access to the Internet, and they advocated for the Library’s inclusion in the new building.

With the 17-hour weekly increase we are now able to open the Library five days a week; this made us more accessible to patrons who would have otherwise not have been able to come to the Library. Volunteers play a major role in library operation, especially with the increased hours. Our new space also gave us the opportunity to create a designated children’s area which has quickly become a popular spot for young families to socialize, read and play. Grants from local businesses also helped to fund our children’s initiatives and provided us with the material to furnish our children’s area to make it a warm and inviting space. The newer building is also more accessible to patrons in wheelchairs as the building is designed to accommodate wheelchair access.

We have established new programs to entice the community to frequent the Library. In the Fall, we started a speaker series every Tuesday night to invoke community engagement and bring people together. We partnered with prominent community members, and asked these individuals to hold information sessions about their respective fields with Q & As to follow.
Our new adult programs bring community members together and foster productive conversation about community issues and events. These informal information sessions resulted in a more informed populace and brought people into the Library on otherwise quieter evenings. For our children, we set up interactive programs, such as STEAM, to give children equitable access to fun and educational materials.

Our new building is very spacious, and provides a gathering spot for young families to interact and form lasting friendships. Our children’s programs further augment these relationships and provide free intellectual stimulation for children. For some of our children, this is a great way to gain access to the latest information and technology without compromising their parents’ bank accounts.

To advance our accessibility digitally, we brought our website up-to-date and removed outdated links and faulty access points. In addition to this, we implemented a monthly newsletter that is accessible via email, on our website and Facebook page, as well as physical copies available in the Library. Our newsletters provide our patrons with an important educational tool to remind them of all that we offer, and when our events occur. We also offer free in-library tutorials to guide patrons through our plethora of online resources and databases. By increasing our digital presence, we have been able to make ourselves more visible in the community.

We have also compiled statistical data to put all of this increased facility usage into perspective. In 2018, the annual number of visitors increased by 168%, and the annual number of patron visits increased by 52%. There was a 61% increase in material circulation, and there were more books borrowed in the second half of 2018 than the total number of books borrowed annually in 2017. And to top it off, our annual membership rates have increased by 247%. While these numbers reflect the impact of the new facility, it is also important to keep in mind that we did not make our move until halfway through 2018.

2) **Library Priority # 2: Building Capacity: Enabling Inspiration and Innovation:**

   Indicate what library goal, programs, and/or services, and partnerships you may have had that support the Provincial priority, and describe what outcomes were achieved.

   **Library Goal that aligns with strategy:** Support professional development initiatives to enhance the skills of library staff.

   Even though Radium Hot Springs Public Library achieved this goal in 2018, we plan to develop this initiative further in 2019. This year, the new Library Director enrolled in the *Building Futures – Strategic Skills for Library Management Certificate* at Royal Roads University. This professional development initiative was supported by the Kootenay Library Federation and the Province of BC through the Ministry of Education. The first course in this certificate focused on Program Planning and Evaluation. The skills learned from this course were then applied by the Director to the current programs at the Library. Many of the programs were re-evaluated, and components of the programs were revitalized to offer better services in a more efficient and engaging way. Our weekly Story Time program underwent a thorough evaluation, and in 2019, a new revitalized program was unveiled. All of the annual
programs have also undergone a similar evaluation, and changes will be made accordingly throughout the year. The Director completed this course in the latter half of 2018.

The Director also formed a relationship with a public service librarian to enhance the digital literacy of the staff, and gain a better understanding of the National Network for Equitable Library Services (NNELS). Because of this relationship, the Library gained a better understanding of the service, and what it can do for the public. Having improved our digital literacy and knowledge of NNELS, the library is now better equipped to service members with visual and print impairments.

In 2018, the Library Director also attended a conference for children’s and teen services (CATS). The conference consisted of a programming roundtable and hands-on activities. It gave the Director an opportunity to collaboratively develop, review and analyse youth programming ideas with staff from other libraries in the Kootenays. The CATS conference provided the Director with invaluable knowledge about successes and failures with youth programming. The collaborative nature of the roundtable discussions gave the Radium Library new ideas for programming and methods to apply to current programs. Our STEAM program underwent some recommended changes that were successfully applied at other libraries. Children are now required to register in advance, so that the volunteers who plan the program are better equipped with an understanding of how many children and what age groups will attend. In 2018, the Library also purchased ukuleles under the advice of a partner library. The funds for this purchase came from a grant from a local foundation. The instruments will be used in future programs to provide children and adults with the capacity to stimulate their brain in a fun and entertaining way.

The Library Director and volunteers also attended an information session on the LawMatters’ program to gain a better understanding of our current legal resources and how they can be improved. The Library staff and volunteers now have an understanding of what the Library can provide in terms of legal support and have a thorough understanding of the free online resources to which we subscribe.

3) Library Priority #3: Working Together:
Indicate what library goal, programs, and/or services, and partnerships you may have had that support the Provincial priority, and describe what outcomes were achieved.

Library Goal that aligns with strategy: Strengthen partnerships within the community and surrounding area

The Radium Hot Springs Public Library achieved this goal in 2018 by reaching out and connecting with organizations within the Columbia Valley such as Family Dynamix, Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, Edgewater Elementary School and the Columbia Valley Maker Space Society. By establishing new partnerships in the community, we were able to extend our reach while simultaneously using our position to help other organizations with promotion and collaboration.
Representatives from Family Dynamix have attended our programs to educate parents on child safety and development issues. Having child development specialists come to the library to speak with our patrons is extremely beneficial as it is a way for parents to obtain vital knowledge at no cost.

In the Fall of 2018, we partnered with both CBAL and the Edgewater Elementary School to implement a one-to-one reading program at the library. The school runs their program during school hours, and we provide the after-school support. Our partnership with the Edgewater Elementary School is mutually beneficial in that we are able to supplement their programs, while they promote ours. CBAL arranged for our one-to-one volunteers to have proper screening and formal training. We also did a book drive to support CBAL’s Book Under Every Tree initiative whereby we collected book donations for CBAL to distribute. Our partnership with CBAL is also integral in that we can work together to create literacy programs for the community. We are complimentary organizations to our partners and each relationship is mutually beneficial and ultimately creates more opportunities for the community to have equitable access to literary materials and services.

We formed a relationship with the Columbia Valley Maker Space society to gain insight on future STEAM program opportunities and discuss sharing resources. Our partnership with the Maker Space Society has given us a better understanding of STEAM and how the material can be presented to children. It also provides the Society with an opportunity to display their relevance, and utilize our facility.

In addition to this, we increased our presence within the Kootenay Library Federation. Being a member of the KLF is tremendously beneficial. We have lasting relationships with all member libraries and can collaborate on ideas and pool our resources together. This collaboration of resources brought talent to our area that might otherwise be missed. For example, this past summer we had a musical scientist perform for our young patrons. Children learned how to make music out of everyday objects which fostered their creativity.

4) Library Priority #4: Enhancing Governance:
This strategy focuses on enhancing governance and supporting the library community.

Library Goal that aligns with strategy: Practise open governance through strong planning and clear reporting.

This goal was also achieved in 2018. The Radium Library Board worked towards enhancing governance through clear and concise reporting. At the beginning of 2018, we conducted a community consultation survey during the updating of our Strategic Plan to get an understanding of the community’s wants and needs. The Community Consultation Survey resulted in an accumulation of data that has aided the Library in understanding community needs and expectations, and helps to focus our Strategic Plan.

The Board developed and posted the 2017 Annual Library Report for the Community on the Radium Hot Springs Public Library website. In addition to this, the report was shared at a Village Council meeting to profile our activities and results. The annual report addresses
accomplishments for the year, lists the Board of Trustees, gives budget highlights, and provides statistics at-a-glance (such as number of volunteers and volunteer hours). The report consists of data provided by the Province and the KLF. Posting the Community Annual Report is a way to clearly display library statistics, and show a financial summary of responsible fiduciary management. We also post our Board meeting minutes on our website as a way to provide transparency to the public.

This year our Board Chair also wrote a letter to the Minister of Education on behalf of the Library with suggestions for a review of provincial funding, supporting community connectivity and providing equitable support of libraries. Bringing challenges and opportunities to the attention of the Minister of Education was a way to raise our profile and voice our concerns. And finally, in late 2018 we revised our code of conduct and confidentiality contracts for our volunteers to ascertain clarity and to help establish a safe and inviting atmosphere.

**Summary:**
2018 has been an exciting time for the Radium Hot Springs Public Library, and the year has brought both opportunities and challenges. Our biggest opportunity this year was moving into a brand-new facility with more physical space and a central location. That being said, with this opportunity, we also faced the challenge of furnishing a much larger space. The Radium Hot Springs Public Library applied for grants to help accomplish this task. In particular, we received a grant through the Columbia Valley Community Association to help develop the children's area. We also received funding from the Panorama Foundation to establish an Interactive Children’s Centre. To develop the adult space and computer work area, we received funding from the Columbia Basin Trust (Community Initiatives Fund). Because of our new physical space, and increased staffing, we were able to increase our weekly hours, and we had the opportunity to become more visible to the public. The building is also physically accessible and designed for wheelchair access which allows us to be more inclusive. We also had the opportunity to partner with new organizations to extend our reach in the community and surrounding areas resulting in mutually beneficial relationships that ultimately benefit community members as a whole. Even though Radium Hot Springs is a small community, the Library’s service area encompasses over 9,000 people – not including the transient tourist population. Our Library works to meet the challenge of servicing such a large area to the best of its ability, but finding funding for operational purposes continues to be an obstacle. The changing role of libraries is also a road block that the Radium Library will continue to face year-to-year, as we grow and adapt to meet the changing needs of the modern world.