

# SPARWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY

## PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT 2018

### INTRODUCTION

Located in the far east corner of the province, some 20 kms from the Alberta border, Sparwood is a coal mining community. Sparwood is not a new community but in fact replaced the communities of Natal and Michel, which were deemed to be uninhabitable due to the proximity of the coal mines in the 1960s. Sparwood is also a centre of outdoor recreation such as hunting, fishing, hiking, and snow sports, to name a few.

The population of almost 5,000, the town of Sparwood is economic centre of the Elk Valley region with workers coming from the neighbouring communities of Fernie, Elkford and the Crowsnest Pass in Alberta. Sparwood is the working headquarters for mining giant TECK.

One of the great challenges for Sparwood is what is known as “Four and Four”. TECK employees normally work for 4 days and have 4 days off. Many families take the extra days off by leaving the community. Many workers work shift work which means their schedules change weekly. This is a great challenge for the library and other organizations and businesses, as it is hard to plan events and programs around such variable work schedules.

The Sparwood Public Library is a community hub for many activities, from early childhood literacy, to a resource for job searches, and education transformation. In collaboration with other community partners we strive to help the citizens of Sparwood weather the economic uncertainties of the time.

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

- 1. Fostering Equitable access to information and services:** It is important that as a community centre that we are able to provide all our citizens with access to information they need regardless of format and accessibility. Our main challenge at present is publicizing the resources to the general public.
  - With an aging population, the library has increased its funding to material in large print format and audiobooks. These items are available to all patrons.
  - The library is a part of the NNELS (National Network of Equitable Library Service) system which provides special format audiobooks for persons with print disabilities.
  - The library provides a weekly drop in computer troubleshooting afternoon for persons wanting to learn to better utilize the features on the laptops, and tablets.
  - The library is the community access point for a number of programs offered by the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy: ESL and Settlement Services.

- 2. Developing skills and knowledge:** The Sparwood Public Library has been active in the community in assisting parents and the general public in lifelong learning.
- In 2015 we starting an assistance to homeschooling program, as the number of people opting for homeschooling has increased. Every second week library staff hosts an hour long session with parents and their children on various topics that the parents have indicated they would like assistance with: for example, “the human skeleton”, “fossils”, “famous artists.” Staff choose books and materials on the topic and help parents find other resources from our own collection, other libraries and online.
  - The Library provides free space for any tutor helping local children with any subject they may need some one on one assistance. We also maintain a list of local individuals that do tutoring and provide the information to parents seeking help for their child.
  - The Library provides free proctoring for anyone doing distance education in a registered college or university.
  - The library in conjunction with TECK Resources offers computer access for contractors and suppliers to complete the mandatory “TECK Coal Contractor Safety Orientation.” Contractors and suppliers must annually complete a series of online safety courses before they can access any TECK property.
  - The purchase of “STEAM” products has been a great hit with children and teens. Funding from the Kootenay Library Federation has enabled the library to purchase a number of kits such as KEVA blocks, magnet building blocks, Dot & Dash robotics. A recent Homeschool session was specifically “STEAM” oriented and was very well received, so much so that a second session was held for the children who missed the original session.
- 3. Working Together:** The Sparwood Public Library has a number of partners with which we work in collaboration for the advancement of its mandate and the community.
- Homeschooling. Working with the Elk Valley Homeschool Group, the library has bi-weekly sessions on various topics. Homeschool parents bring their children from not only Sparwood, but Fernie, Elkford and the Crowsnest Pass (Alberta). We maintain a small selection of books and materials to support the homeschool group.
  - The Sparwood Early Years group meets monthly at the Library to discuss the needs of preschoolers. One of our staff sits on the group’s board. The Early Years group has been able to provide funds to the library for the Books for Babies program and recently held a car seat clinic and a recent ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) workshop.
  - The Library has had a long standing relationship with a local Alcoholics Anonymous group which meets weekly in our meeting room on Thursdays.

The collaboration with other local organizations enriches all of us, helps reduce duplication and makes the Library a centre for local information and a centre of learning outside the formal K-12 and post-secondary settings.

**4. Enhancing governance:** The Sparwood Public Library Association is at present beginning to revise its policies to reflect new technology and programs.

- All current board members have attended the BCLTA's TOPS (Trustee Orientation Program.)
- We have an active board member who participates on the Kootenay Library Federation Board.
- The Board hopes to begin a Strategic Plan this fall.