



## 2014 PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANTS REPORT

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Mackenzie Public Library is located in the heart of Mackenzie, in the Allan Sheppard Recreation Complex. This one-stop establishment is the social centre of Mackenzie. It houses the library, arena, curling rink, pool, gym, lunch stop, recreation programs and meeting rooms all under one roof. The library is a cornerstone of this establishment as it provides a safe and engaging space for children to read and attend programs, parents to use the internet, read and socialize while waiting for their children in recreation programs, and the community to gather, learn, collaborate and have fun.

Mackenzie is a planned community, built to support the forestry industry in 1966. This narrow economic focus was detrimental during the 2008 recession as the mills closed and families were forced to move away to find work. Mackenzie lost approximately one third of its population. On the upside, as the economy is recovering, Mackenzie is too. The District is now seeking to diversify and become a more resilient community. Young families are moving into the area and senior residents are returning to retire here. The library is an important asset for these new residents.

Another challenge presented at the end of 2014 was the reduction in foot traffic through the Recreation Centre as the building underwent some much-needed renovations and updates. This is usually a great time to advertise our services and programs to non-library users as they're in the building already for hockey, figure skating and swimming practices and competitions, all of which weren't able to happen from September to December of this year. On the other hand, this did leave an opportunity for the library to fill the recreation gap in the community during those months and we introduced several new, successful programs.

We made excellent progress on our Strategic Plan goals in 2014, as well. Progress on our objectives, broken down by goal, was as follows:

- 1) Offer a great experience for people who use the public library facility.
  - a. We replaced all of our shabby, uncomfortable, out-of-date furniture with new, modern, colourful, functional modular furniture in both the central lounge areas and the juvenile section.
  - b. We began a fundraising campaign with different sponsorship levels and raised over \$23,000 from local industry, businesses and service groups. This money was allocated to our refurbishment project and new programming to help us provide a better overall experience for our patrons.
- 2) Make the library collection accessible to more people.
  - a. Throughout the year, we moved several collections to more accessible locations, cleaned a lot of clutter out of public areas to open up the space, added subject labels in our non-fiction collection, added two new display areas and used marketing techniques to increase the browsability of our collections.
  - b. For one of these projects, we partnered with the United Way to access volunteers from our local College of Caledonia branch to move our non-fiction collection and make it easier to navigate.

- c. We joined NNELS (the National Network for Equitable Library Service) to provide service for print-impaired patrons.
- 3) Raise the library's profile in the community through increased community engagement.
  - a. We participated in the local Leisure Fair and the McLeod Lake Indian Band's Annual General Assembly to advertise our programs and services.
  - b. We launched our new website, hosted by the BC Libraries Coop and work to update it and our Facebook page on a regular basis.
  - c. We began writing a monthly news column in our local newspaper, highlighting library services, book recommendations, program details, library policies etc.
  - d. We brought a children's magician to perform in the local elementary school.
- 4) Provide a high level of service to the public through a well-trained staff and library board.
  - a. Both the librarian and the assistant librarian participated in several webinars and training days throughout the year. The librarian also attended the CLA conference.
  - b. All library staff and most board members participated in a training survey designed by NCLF in December. The information gathered from this survey will be used in 2015 to guide staff in their personal learning goals and seek out suitable opportunities for ongoing training.
  - c. We expanded our programming by adding five new regularly scheduled programs and running several special events throughout the year, including an author visit, a writer's workshop, a magician visit and adult and seniors' craft workshops.

2014 was a year for broadening our horizons in many ways. We added more (and different!) programming for all ages, we focussed our web presence towards building an online library community in Mackenzie and we updated the look and feel of our space in an effort to be more a more welcoming and social space. We're looking forward to continuing these trends in 2015 and getting even more out of the "traditional" library box to better serve our community.

## PRIORITY 1: A FOCUS ON EQUITABLE ACCESS

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### GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

One of the goals of our 2014-2016 Strategic Plan is to “Make the library collection accessible to more people.” This is an ongoing process, but we made some significant steps this year, including joining the National Network for Equitable Library Service (NNELS,) rearranging our physical collection to be easier to browse, refurbishing the teen and adult areas of the library and reaching out to the McLeod Lake Indian Band (MLIB) for special programming and promotion of remote library services.

We pride ourselves on being a democratic institution, with as few barriers to service as possible. By improving our accessibility, we hope to attract a broader spectrum of Mackenzie and area residents to the library. The ideal outcome of these initiatives will be that the library is frequented, both in the physical space and online, by community members of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.

### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

#### ABORIGINAL STORYTIME

McLeod Lake is an aboriginal community in our service area, approximately 45 minutes’ drive from Mackenzie. Because of this distance and weekday work schedules, many of the families in this community are unable to attend our regularly scheduled pre-school storytime programs. Furthermore, many of the children in this community have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and often have difficulty participating in our regular storytime. Parents are often uncomfortable bringing their children into the established, busy environment of our storytime programs, despite their desire to instill early literacy and social skills.

We chose to reframe these barriers as an opportunity, and consulted MLIB to work out a mutually-beneficial solution. Once per week, for two months in the spring, the children in MLIB’s Headstart (3 – 5 years old) and daycare (under 3) programs were bussed to the Mackenzie Public Library for a special First Nation’s storytime program. It was of utmost importance for us to create a safe space for the children to participate, learn and grow so this storytime was a closed program, specially designed to accommodate the children and their different abilities. It was also designed to encompass a wider age range than our usual pre-school storytime since the daycare children, having the same caretakers as Headstart, were required to come along.

### KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Our main partner for this program was the McLeod Lake Indian Band. The MLIB Headstart Instructor, Jodi Sharpe, organized the transportation for the MLIB Headstart and daycare programs.

Over the summer, while the program was on hiatus, we continued to maintain this relationship in other ways, including the provision of free books under the North Central Library Federation’s Reading Without Rules program and attendance at the MLIB Annual General Assembly (AGA.) 2014 was the first year we were able to attend the AGA and we shared a tent with the Prince George Public Library, promoting all of our programs and services. We put an emphasis on our online services, since the community is relatively remote, and received some very positive feedback from attendees who were not previously aware that we offered these services.

Other key partners who helped us grow our accessibility initiatives this year were the BC Libraries Cooperative (who organizes and maintains NNELS), United Way (who arranged Day of Caring volunteers to help us rearrange our non-fiction collection) and the Mackenzie Campus of the College of New Caledonia (who provided the Day of Caring volunteers.)

## OUTCOMES

When the children from McLeod Lake come into Mackenzie's Recreation Centre for swimming lessons, they are usually very shy and keep to themselves. However, after only two weeks of storytime programs with Miss Jenny, our children's librarian, they began to come out of their shells. They would approach her in the hallways and lunchroom to say hello and have a chat. We could see the excitement on their faces at getting to come to the library for storytime. If we had been able to continue the program through the fall, we are sure we would have seen some amazing improvements in the children's social and literacy skills.

Unfortunately, summer staff holidays, band elections and treacherous winter weather made managing the program schedule difficult and we were unable to continue past June. However, we are ready at any time to continue the program if they wish to start coming again. We also managed to open the door to future partnership opportunities and will strive to find new ways to support early childhood literacy in McLeod Lake in 2015.

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## PRIORITY 2: A FOCUS ON COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

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### GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Since the role of the library has evolved over the past decade from primarily circulation of materials to a whole host of new services and programs, we have found that our physical space, designed in the 1970's, is no longer adequate for everything we would like to be doing.

Our Strategic Plan calls for the expansion of "programming to include a wider variety of age groups and venues." One aspect of this action point is to "investigate areas outside of the Library that would be suitable for library programming" since we have no program room of our own. We have focussed on that goal in 2014 in order to overcome our limitations and provide better services to our community. This is an ongoing process. We have found a few opportunities to partner with other community organizations for programming space in 2014 and began to establish some relationships that will hopefully lead to more opportunities to develop joint programming and hosting space in the coming years.

Our hope is that we will not only be able to use space in other facilities, but also build connections with individuals and organizations in Mackenzie to ensure our program choices fit the needs of the community. We will know that we have been successful when other organizations begin to recognize our capacities when considering partnerships and the "reaching out" begins to happen on both sides. We are not there yet, but we believe that this process does not happen overnight and we have taken some important first steps.

## PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

### NORDEN THE MAGICIAN TOUR

In spring 2014, the North Central Library Federation (NCLF) organized a tour by Norden the Magician to promote the Summer Reading Club. Our space is not large enough to hold a magic show, so we approached Morfee Elementary to host Norden. The school agreed and took on the tasks of scheduling all of the primary classes to attend the performance, booking the space in the gymnasium and provided set up support for the show.

The NCLF funded the program, organized travel and accommodation recommendations and scheduled the performance date with Norden. The Mackenzie Public Library, in turn, provided advertising for the show to pre-school and homeschooled children, provided the go-between for NCLF and the school, and introduced Norden and the Summer Reading Program at the performance. The coordinated efforts of these three partners came together smoothly and allowed 207 children to enjoy the show in the school gym.

### STRONG START

In September 2013, the local Strong Start coordinator, Jessica McDonald, approached us to request a librarian storytime visit to her class every second week. She had seen a similar, very successful program at a conference in Prince George and wished to try it out here. We agreed and ran the program throughout 2014. Each visit, the librarian sings songs with the children and their parents, reads stories, holds a group discussion on the theme, and helps with a craft organized by the Strong Start coordinator. The librarian also has the chance to mingle with the parents before the program while the children have a snack. This is a great opportunity for both organizations. The children look forward to the librarian's visits and the library gets a chance to bring our services out to the community and raise awareness about our other programs. We intend to continue this program through 2015.

## KEY PARTNERSHIPS

In 2014, we worked to establish several key partnerships which we expect will lead to some collaborative programming in 2015 which will benefit the entire community. One of these partners is the Mackenzie Community Garden group. We are working together to create a Seed Library for use by all community members. The Mackenzie Public Library will provide the physical space and circulation services and apply for grants to fund the project. The Community Gardeners will solicit and organize donations of seeds, provide supporting documentation and expertise on seed saving, and host related workshops to help promote the Seed Library. We are looking forward to launching this program in spring 2015.

Another key partnership is our long-term ongoing relationship with District of Mackenzie Leisure Services, with whom we share a building. We have often used their space to host our more boisterous or larger programs and have allowed them to use library space for some of theirs. This year, the Mackenzie Public Library participated in the District's Leisure Fair to advertise our program and services. Our respective program coordinators also often share craft and program supplies. We also advertise for each other's programs. Moving forward, each organization is planning on participating more actively in events put on by the other and coordinating our summer program schedules to avoid excessive overlap and allow participants to attend both recreation and library programs.

## OUTCOMES

By partnering with NCLF and Morfee Elementary, we were able to reach a much larger audience than if we had hosted Norden the Magician alone. At this event, we were also able to reach more children with our Summer Reading Club advertising. Our registration for SRC was up this year by 11% and our weekly attendance held stronger throughout the summer than in previous years.

Strong Start provides two excellent opportunities for the library: the chance to help build the foundations for early childhood literacy in the community and the opportunity to interact with the parents who attend the program. Many new residents register for Strong Start upon first arriving in the community and learn about the library and our programs through the librarian storytime visits. Several of the parents have started coming to the library and have signed up for our weekly pre-school storytime and toddler time programs.

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## PRIORITY 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING

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### GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The third goal of our Strategic plan is to “raise the library’s profile in the community through increased community engagement.” This ties in well with one of the Community Goals outlined in the District of Mackenzie’s Strategic Priorities 2012-2015: to “build a strong community that supports one another.” We have been very successful in fulfilling this goal in 2014.

We have taken two broad approaches towards raising the profile of the library and better meeting community needs:

First, we improved our image in the community through upgrading and better maintaining our website, keeping our Facebook page up to date, informative and mutually supportive of other community groups and pages, and seeking out new avenues for advertising our programs and services.

Second, we have put a greater effort into reaching out to other community groups such as Morfee Elementary School and the Mackenzie Community Garden group to discuss partnership opportunities, making our first moves in what we hope will help support Mackenzie’s growing economic diversity and social safety net as the District recovers from the recession.

By using these tactics to inform and support our community, we hope to achieve increased foot traffic and program attendance at the library, more productive community partnerships, and better ongoing feedback about library services and opportunities. Our increased advertising and online presence is already working as our Facebook followers continue to grow and our program attendance is at the highest average participants per program in at least ten years. Forming trusting connections with community organizations is a long-term, ongoing process and we hope to see the fruits of our labours start to ripen in 2015.

### PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

In September 2014, we launched our new LibPress website, hosted by the BC Libraries Cooperative. Since this site is much easier to update and maintain - not to mention more attractive and informative - than the old PLOT site, Library staff are more motivated to post their program information on it and direct our library patrons to the site for all sorts of services. The reaction

from our patrons has been excellent as well, with many positive comments coming our way. We look forward to spreading the news about our fantastic new website through 2015. We also completed the first concrete goal of our 2014-2016 Strategic Plan in the winter of 2014. When we surveyed the community in late 2013, we received a very clear message that the lounge areas of our library were outdated, shabby and uninviting. If only we would update our look, people would love to spend more time relaxing, socializing and learning in the library. So that's exactly what we did. We created a new levelled sponsorship recognition program and raised enough money from local industry, businesses and service groups to replace all of our old lounge furniture with new, bright, comfy, modular commercial furniture in the teen and adult areas of the library. We also bought new colourful book and storytime supply carts, updated our children's computers and rearranged several areas of the library to create a more open, inviting atmosphere. The response from the community has been fantastic, especially towards the children's computers, whose use has increased by approximately 600%!

#### KEY PARTNERSHIPS

We have developed and/or maintained a rapport with several important partners in 2014.

We could not have had such excellent program attendance without our advertising partners. Our local radio station, CHMM, is very generous in donating free air time to advertise all of our programs. Our relationship with the Mackenzie Recreation Centre is truly one of give and take as they kindly leave space for our physical posters and share our Facebook posts and we do the same for their programs. Finally, several businesses around town post our advertisements in their windows and help spread the word about all of our great services. We truly appreciate all of this fantastic support.

As mentioned above, we were also able to achieve some huge hurdles this year with the financial support of our program and refurbishment sponsors:

#### PLATINUM (\$5001+):

- TransCanada Corporation
- Spectra Energy

#### SILVER (\$501 – 2000):

- Canfor Corporation
- Fortis BC
- Mackenzie Fibre
- Myatovic Brothers
- Northern Health
- The Rotary Club of Mackenzie
- United Way of Northern British Columbia

#### BRONZE (\$250 – 500):

- Alexander Mackenzie Hotel
- Conifex Timber
- Dual Enterprises
- Dunkley Lumber
- Duz Cho Logging
- BC Courthouse Libraries' LawMatters

- Mount Milligan

#### IN-KIND DONATIONS:

- People's Drug Mart
- Mackenzie Coop
- Pharmasave
- Mackenzie Home Hardware
- M. T. Bags
- Chrysalid Tech
- Fields
- CHMM
- Mackenzie Recreation Centre

## OUTCOMES

By improving our library space and reaching out to community organizations to show what we can offer, we hope to centre ourselves as a vital thread in Mackenzie's social fabric. Ideally, when other organizations are considering possible partnerships, they will think of us and the services we have to offer. In this way, we will build strong partnerships and a strong community.

Already, we have noticed increased positive reactions towards the library as a vibrant community space. More teens have begun to hang out on our new furniture after school and many adults have positively commented on the changes we've been making. Our foot traffic is up as well.

Of course, the real goals of this transition will take longer than a few months to reach. Many of the outcomes that we've been working towards to assist in Mackenzie's goal of "building a strong community that supports one another" will come into fruition in the next year. The Minerals North Conference will be held in Mackenzie in May 2015 and we have been approached as a location for the Business Support Centre, for which we will gladly provide space and support. We have also been busy developing a partnership with the Community Gardeners and expect to launch a Seed Library next spring. We are excited about the community engagement happening within and outside our walls.

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## SUMMARY

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This year the library was a wonderful mix of trying new programs, building our capacity for community partnerships and seeing some longer-term plans come to fruition.

Our circulation of physical materials continues to drop, but program attendance is increasing and foot traffic through the library is up as well. This is a signal for us that it's time to take a good look at what we're doing and what our community needs. With the help of our Strategic Plan, we've started shifting our focus outwards.

We've invested a lot of time this year talking to our stakeholders including individual library patrons, organizations and businesses. We have solicited ideas, raised funds and spent more time engaging with our community online. As a result, we added five new regular programs for a variety of ages and hosted several special events, including a writer's workshop, author visit and children's entertainer.

We listened to feedback from the community and worked hard to improve the attractiveness of our physical space as well as our online presence. The response has been overwhelming positive. We look forward to continuing this trend in 2015, seeking out more community partners, leveraging the various strengths of our community and trying out more new ideas.

Our greatest challenge this year was finding a new director after our previous director, Wanda Davis, resigned her position in November 2013. In the interim, our assistant librarian, Jenny LeBlanc, comported herself very well as acting director, not only holding the status quo but pushing ahead with new and seeking new funding opportunities. In April, Anna Babluck came aboard as our new director and has taken up this path of innovation. The learning curve for both the interim and new directors has been enormous, but we believe we've come through the gap hardly missing a beat.

As with many libraries across the province, our ongoing challenge has been finding enough funding to successfully fulfil our mission and support as many of the great ideas we're brought as possible. The Library would like to recognize that, despite the massive effect of the recession on Mackenzie, the District generously held our funding steady as the town lost over half of its population in 2009. However, the District is on the rebound and we are still at the same funding level we were at in 2002. We are proud of how we have managed to do more with less even as costs continue to rise. We successfully fundraised over \$20,000 this year to support our programs and refurbishment project. We expect to continue this effort in 2015, but without increases from our major governmental funders our capacity to serve the community is diminished.

We are thankful for the generous support we've received from businesses, industry and library patrons this year. Now that our staff is all firmly in place and Mackenzie has started to see what the Library are capable of accomplishing in the modern, digital world, we are very excited to really see what we can do in 2015.

## 2014 CHAIR'S REPORT

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2014 proved to be a dynamic year for the Mackenzie Public library (MPL). Changes to the staff and the Board of Directors, coupled with additions and changes to the Library's physical space and programming resulted in an invigorated library environment.

In late April, the Library hired Anna Babluck into the position of Head Librarian. Anna's hire came after a hiring process attempted in December 2013/January 2014 failed to present an appropriate candidate. The position was reposted in the New Year and was followed with a successful hiring process. The Board was very excited to welcome Anna given her Masters in Library Science and previous experience working in smaller libraries like Mackenzie. Her transition into our Library went smoothly and her many contributions in the past year have been significant.

The winter of 2014 also saw 4 new members join the Board of Directors (replacing vacating members) including Michelle Gunter, Megan Sinclair, Michèle Waite and Raye McMeeken as the appointed Mackenzie & District Council Representative.

Anna has proved to be a capable and innovative Librarian, who along with the committed and capable efforts of Assistant Librarian Jenny LeBlanc, has introduced new programs, fundraised additional program dollars, and been instrumental in moving the goals and targets of the MPL's Strategic Plan forward. This has included new furniture in the central lounge and juvenile areas, 3 new children's computers with software, enhanced programming for a variety of age groups and the hosting of several special events. Additional achievements include: a new and dynamic website, the moving and realigning of the non-fiction collection (with volunteers from CNC), additional display areas, new monthly news column in the Mackenzie Times Newspaper, new book carts, and enhanced community partnerships with the McLeod Lake Indian Band, NNELS (National Network for Equitable Library Service) to provide service for print-impaired patrons, Mackenzie Community Garden Society (Seed Library), District of Mackenzie Leisure Services, SD 57 – both Elementary and Secondary Schools, CHMM (local radio station) and the small business community.

2014 was an exciting year at MPL which saw many exciting additions and advancements. This could not have been achieved without the strong and capable leadership of the entire Staff, Board of Directors of the Mackenzie Public Library, our patrons who continue to drive improvements and changes, and our many public and private funders whose support and generosity have been invaluable and contributed greatly to the many services and programs that MPL delivers.

Respectfully submitted,

*Michèle Waite*

Michèle Waite  
Chair – Mackenzie Public Library