



PROVINCIAL LIBRARY GRANT REPORT 2017

Mackenzie Public Library is located in the heart of Mackenzie, in the Allan Sheppard Recreation Complex. The Centre houses the library, arena, pool, gym, lunch stop, recreation programs and meeting rooms all under one roof, with a new attached community hall coming in 2018. 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. As the economy has since recovered and Mackenzie has regained some, though not all, of its previous population, the District is now seeking to diversify and become a more resilient community. The housing is inexpensive and employment in forestry is easy to find for those qualified, attracting many young families and people early in their careers. Mackenzie also sees a small population boom in the summer as seasonal workers (tree planters, contractors, etc.) pass through. The library is an important asset for these transient populations.

As in the rest of the province, Mackenzie has an aging population. However, unlike other towns, Mackenzie is young enough that a significant seniors' population is a new challenge. As the proportion of seniors in Mackenzie grows, we will be seeking more ways to meet their needs.

2017 was the first year of our new four-year Strategic Plan and it was a year of big, exciting changes for our library and our community! A few of our biggest changes since our 2016 report include:

- 1) Opening on Mondays, increasing to 6 days per week
- 2) A self-checkout station running the Evergreen Self-Check module.
- 3) A new accessible circulation counter, completely renovated staff workroom, new entrance and work area flooring, and a new modern, bright and interactive children's area.
- 4) The elimination of all library fines on children's and teen books.
- 5) The addition of Technology Kits to our collections.
- 6) Significantly increased foot traffic, particularly from tweens and teens as they come in to use our laptops, board games, and versatile hangout space.



FOSTERING CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

TOUCH A TRUCK

In 2017, we fostered connected communities through “leverag[ing] community expertise to improve the quantity and quality of our services and programs for the public.” Out of the many ways we worked on this, the most successful by far was our 3rd Annual Touch a Truck fundraiser. At Touch a Truck, kids of all ages can interact with a variety of big vehicles, including a zoom boom, a logging truck, a fire truck and over a dozen more. The vehicles and the work time are all freely donated by local companies, as is the food for the BBQ, the facepainting, pulp painting station, bouncy house and more. This event is not only a successful fundraiser for us, it brings people together, highlighting different types of work done in Mackenzie and promoting increased knowledge of our community. Each year, this event continues to grow. In 2017, we had over 400 people attend and raised just over \$3000 for our children’s area. This large-scale event has done a lot to change the image of our library from a stuffy book warehouse into a fun place for interactive learning, as well as a capable organization with a huge capacity for creating change in our community.



ACCESS CARDS

We also improved access to resources and information by “identify[ing] and reduc[ing] barriers to library services.” Through participating in the District Accessibility Committee, we identified an opportunity to provide more accessible services to our most at-risk residents. In 2017, the District of Mackenzie implemented a system to give free recreation passes to low income residents. We have since worked together to allow the library to piggy-back on that system and develop fine-free Access Cards. Through our partnership with the District, we are able to provide these cards without having to verify any income information ourselves, saving staff time and eliminating any potential privacy issues. Since we began this program last September, we have issued seven Access Cards. Not only does this reduce barriers to service, it has increased the frequency and the tone of interactions with these patrons and their families. One man was so excited to learn about this program that he immediately ran out to get his free rec pass and bring it back to update his library card. He has always been a good library patron, bringing all of his materials back, but now his demeanor in the library has changed. He enjoys coming to the library and taking out lots of materials because he doesn’t have the worry of being blocked by overdue fines that he is unable to pay.

BUILDING CAPACITY

ONLINE COURSES

Another of our strategic plan goals is to “encourage an environment and attitude of lifelong learning.” This year, we did that by offering a free online suite of courses through Gale Courses, available due to the consortial purchasing price that was negotiated through the North Central Library Federation. The Chamber of Commerce and Love Mackenzie have helped to advertise these courses to their members, as well. So far, we have had 32 course enrollments and over 21,000 in-class minutes completed. Several of the courses taken have led to real-life impacts in our community. One student began working at the Chamber of Commerce last summer and has used these courses to upgrade her skills in Excel and Publisher so she can better serve the public. Another student has just earned her Certificate in End of Life Care and will be volunteering in this capacity.

LEARN IT AT THE LIBRARY: WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS

We are also offering more adult learning workshop in our “Learn it at the Library” series, including Beekeeping, Container Gardening, Ski Waxing, Bike Maintenance, Seed Saving and more this year. The topics for these sessions are identified by our community or in response to a timely community need, and they usually focus on healthy lifestyles and building local capacity. We partner with experts from Mackenzie or Prince George to run these sessions, with occasional financial and in-kind donations from the Alexander Mackenzie Hotel and the Mackenzie Community Garden Society. We



We also work with Mackenzie Recreation Services to market some of our programs. In 2017, we had 84 people attend these sessions. The response has been terrific, with people leaving encouraged to grow their own food locally (an important outcome for a near-food desert,) and maintain healthy outdoor lifestyles. These programs have also increased our circulation of topical books and help to maintain the perception of the library as a centre for lifelong learning.

WORKING TOGETHER

Our goal to “continue to actively cultivate the Library’s external relationships within our service area” has led to some strong reciprocal partnerships over the past few years.

BABY BOXES

One of these relationships is with the Community Health team. The Community Health nurses help to distribute our Books for Babies bags to new parents, we regularly share information and co-advertise, and we provided a venue for their first Breastfeeding Sit-In. One of our latest successes is through the Baby Box program. Modelled off of Finnish Baby Boxes, these packages include a box and mattress large enough for a newborn to sleep in (and proven to be the safest way to put them down,) along with all sorts of things new parents might need such as onesies, bottles, and lots of health information.



Through a grant from Success by 6, the nurses were providing baby boxes to all new parents. When Northern Health told them to discontinue the program for internal reasons, they asked us to take over and we happily agreed. Now, the nurses distribute a slip of paper along with our Books for Babies bags letting parents know that they can pick up a Baby Box here at the library for free. This is a win-win situation, as parents have continued access to this great program, and we get lots of new people coming into the library for the first time and finding out about all our great offerings. Our Babytime program attendance has grown this year as well.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT TABLE

Another strong partnership network is with the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Table. In late 2017,



our Assistant Librarian took on the position of coordinator of this table, which is comprised of several early childhood development organizations and partners throughout Mackenzie and area, including McLeod Lake Indian Band, Morfee Elementary School, Northern Health, Strong Start, the Mackenzie Arts Centre and more. This table has not only helped us co-advertise and plan programs with these organizations, it has also provided access to grants which we have successfully used to enhance our programs and services this year. We look forward to continuing to develop these partnerships in the next year with the intent to participate in more community events together.

SUSTAINING OUR SUCCESS

The best way to a strong and vibrant library with a big community impact is through a well-educated and trained staff and library board. This is why we have “prioritize[d] staff and board development to ensure the best possible service to the public.”

BOARD SELF-EVALUATION

In November, our Library Board did their first ever self-evaluation with a template that was slightly modified from one provided by Vancouver Public Library. This was a very productive exercise, both for educating new Board members about their role and for analysis of areas in which we excel and areas for improvement. We are lucky to have a very strong, educated, and dedicated board that works well as a team already, however there is always room for improvement. Upon discussion of the results, we identified nine action items to improve board knowledge, impact, and effectiveness. We look forward to getting started with these in 2018.

STAFF TRAINING

On the staff side, we dedicated significant resources towards staff training. Our director attended the Library Design Institute in Vancouver, Washington in October. She came back full of ideas, inspiration, and practical strategies to improve our limited library space. The staff used these strategies to identify priority areas for improvement and in 2018 we will be rearranging our collections and space to better serve our community needs and provide for a wider range of programming and services.

With financial aid from the North Central Library Federation, our entire staff was also able to attend the Beyond Hope Conference organized by Prince George Public Library. Beyond an excellent team building exercise that helped us develop our interpersonal skills, knowledge gained at this conference was used to start a circulating collection of Technology Kits to enhance local STEM education, begin doing in-house book repair thereby saving on collection costs, improve our print advertising by using new tools like Canva and so much more!



SUMMARY

This report highlights just a few of the many changes and new and enhanced services we worked on in 2017 with many more projects just begun and expected to come to fruition in 2018. It was an extremely productive year and our results in the Annual Statistical Report will reflect this as our circulation, computer use, and foot traffic continue to climb.

We were challenged this year by significant staff turnover and shortages, higher workloads, and tightening budgets. Interlibrary Connect loans continued to increase and our budget didn't increase to meet the increased financial and time pressures. However, this is a critical and much-loved service that we refuse to cut back, so we will continue to find other ways to streamline our services as much as possible.

As always, connectivity was a challenge as well. Over the past few years we have seen a huge upswing in the use of our wireless and public access computers. Our staff computers are so overburdened that we often cannot even perform basic circulation and cataloguing tasks, never mind running any internet-intensive programming with patrons like coding workshops. With further funding, we may be able to upgrade our connections with Telus, but as is we're not even meeting the baseline required to function for us or our patrons.

In more positive news, we're eagerly anticipating the completion of a new Community Hall in our complex in 2018. This new space will allow us to put on larger programs and will be a huge boon to our community. We're looking forward to continuing on with our Strategic Plan goals, including increased engagement with our Aboriginal and Seniors' communities, establishing a more functional layout for the library, and continuing to identify and reduce barriers to service, as well as keeping our minds open to new opportunities and partnerships in the new year.

