

MANAGEMENT REPORT

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Authors: Megan Langley, Manager, Neighbourhood Services

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Meeting Date: March 24, 2021

TO: Library Board

FROM: Julie Iannacone, Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services

SUBJECT: 2019-2020 Actions to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Recommendations

SUMMARY

This report provides a summary of VPL's 2019-2020 activities to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action. In the VPL 2017-2019 Strategic Plan, this work was aligned with operating plan initiative 5.4, Address the TRC Calls to Action within VPL, and it continues in the VPL 2020-2023 Strategic Plan which prioritizes Truth and Reconciliation throughout.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive this report for information.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

Trustees commented on the value of the report for sharing VPL's work on Reconciliation and thanked staff for the work and report. Trustee Pruden noted opportunities to provide a definition for decolonization, include references to the TRC Calls to Action, and to share VPL's work related to governance, including adding Indigenous consideration to policies and having two Indigenous people in leadership roles as trustees. These have been incorporated below. Trustees asked

about challenges in the work and ways of measuring. Trustee Jules noted the importance of establishing ongoing funding for this work in order to effectively address structural biases.

POLICY

VPL's 2020-2023 Strategic Plan prioritizes Truth and Reconciliation. During the strategic plan engagement, conversations with the public and key stakeholders highlighted the need to bring Indigenous history, languages and cultures into library spaces and to continue sharing Indigenous voices through our collections and programming. VPL is committed to being a place to learn about the history and cultures of Indigenous Peoples, referring to First Nations, Métis and Inuit. This includes learning about the truths of the historic and ongoing impact of colonization and the importance of movement toward Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

This work aligns with VPL's core values of respecting diversity and social inclusion as expressed in the Library's Values and the [Library's Diversity and Inclusion Statement](#), the latter last updated in 2010.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The VPL 2020-2023 Strategic Plan includes two specific goals related to Truth & Reconciliation: Reflect and celebrate Indigenous cultures and history (Shared Spaces & Experiences priority) and Enhance understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Belonging & Connection priority), in addition to seeking opportunities to act on the Calls to Action of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission across all goals.

Through ten years of learning from each Indigenous Storyteller in Residence at VPL, expanding our programs and collections, seeking out opportunities and addressing barriers, this work has become an integral part of what we do. We look forward to continuing to build on a foundation that has been established through a community-led approach, to find ways to enhance understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. VPL has a strong desire to engage with Indigenous communities, particularly the x̣ṃəθḳẉəỵəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and sə́lilwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, on whose ancestral and unceded lands our work takes place.

INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS

This report provides a summary of the Library's actions in response to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action during 2019 and 2020, and actions guided by our priorities established in the VPL Strategic Plan 2020-2023.

BACKGROUND

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in 2008 as part of the settlement agreement between the Federal Government, the churches, and survivor parties to the Indian

Residential Schools Class Action Settlement Agreement to determine the truth about Canada's residential schools and establish a Reconciliation process.

VPL staff's consideration of the TRC Calls to Action began almost immediately upon release of the Calls to Action in June of 2015. In January 2016, VPL staff presented a [report to the Board – Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action](#) – that described VPL's preliminary plans to respond to the TRC's Recommendations, recognizing that further relationship building with the community was required before the library could fully understand the scope of action required. The preliminary VPL actions flowed from Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action related to Language and Culture (17); Professional Development and Training for Public Servants (57); Museums and Archives (69) and National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (78).

In November 2016, the VPL Board received a [report](#) summarizing activities in 2016.

In 2016, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) established a Truth & Reconciliation Committee to advise libraries on how to respond to the Calls to Action. Manager Neighbourhood Services Megan Langley and Trustee Karen Hoffmann represented VPL on the committee and Megan Langley participated in the team analyzing the TRC calls to action. The committee recommended a set of actions on February 1, 2017 that the VPL Board [endorsed in July 2017](#). The full report of the CFLA Truth & Reconciliation Committee is available at http://cfla-fcab.ca/en/indigenous/trc_report/ (87 pages). The July 2017 report to the Board specified that staff would deliver an action plan for 2018-19 that considers the CFLA/FCAB committee's recommendations and expands our commitment to the Truth & Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. The action plan was [reported to the Board in December 2017](#).

In [December 2018 the VPL Board received a report](#) summarizing activities in 2018, each linked to a recommendation from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA). These 2018 activities included:

- Launched our email acknowledgement language “Vancouver Public Library acknowledges that our work takes place on the unceded homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.”
- Launched our acknowledgement on the “Truth and Reconciliation” page on vpl.ca. The page also informs patrons on our work to date and links to the Board reports on the TRC initiatives.
- Expanded Indigenous collections to all VPL branches and enlarged existing collections. Also, launched a collection of Indigenous eBooks.
- The VPL Truth and Reconciliation Working group worked with Marketing and Communications to create templates for posters for National Indigenous History Month. The working group also created a list of ideas of ways to celebrate the month in the branches and at Central. These resources were shared with Branch Heads and Assistant Managers.

- The Readers Advisory Team created a book list for National Indigenous Peoples Day that included titles that reflect the impact of residential schools as well as the theme of Reconciliation.
- 50 additional full time staff attended the “Fire Across the Land” workshop to understand the impact of residential schools and need for Reconciliation, building on the 250 staff trained in 2016 and 2017, and VPL established that training on Truth & Reconciliation would also be foundational for all part-time and auxiliary staff, delivered online for these groups.
- VPL engaged over 1500 community members at 69 programs for adults and seniors with a focus on Indigenous experience and reconciliation. These programs connected communities around Vancouver with Indigenous artists working in new digital media landscapes, opportunities to reflect on historic and present experiences to move forward with reconciliation, and celebrations of culture, arts, and achievements. Many programs also provided an intersectional connection between Indigenous and non-Indigenous storytellers, artists, writers and other creators.

In November 2019, the Province of BC passed legislation to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and in December 2020, Canada introduced legislation to implement UNDRIP. The City of Vancouver is undertaking research to consider the implications of this legislation at a municipal level. VPL’s priorities as part of the Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action have sought to support government obligations in UNDRIP since the outset, particularly in the areas of education, information, and culture.

DISCUSSION

In addition to continuing to build on our existing programs, services and relationships, in 2019 and 2020 we continued to build on the action plan first outlined in 2017, with each activity linked to a recommendation from the Truth and Reconciliation Committee of the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA).

In 2019 and 2020 we made progress in the following areas:

- 1. CFLA Recommendation #5 Decolonize¹ Access and Classification by addressing the structural biases in existing schemes of knowledge organization and information retrieval**

¹ CFLA did not define decolonization in their 2017 report. A definition that assists VPL in its work is the following: “Decolonization is the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of the superiority and privilege of Western thought and approaches. On the one hand, decolonization involves dismantling structures that perpetuate the status quo and addressing unbalanced power dynamics. On the other hand, decolonization involves valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and approaches and weeding out settler biases or assumptions that have impacted Indigenous ways of being. For non-Indigenous people, decolonization is the process of examining your beliefs about Indigenous Peoples and culture by learning about yourself in relationship to the communities where you live and the people with whom you interact.” From *Pulling Together: A Guide for Front-Line Staff, Student Services, and Advisors* by Ian Cull, Robert L. A. Hancock, Stephanie McKeown, Michelle Pidgeon, and Adrienne Vedan. Available at <https://opentextbc.ca/indigenizationfrontlineworkers/>

arising from colonialism by committing to integrating Indigenous epistemologies into cataloguing praxis and knowledge management (*Addresses TRC Calls to Action 13 & 69*)

VPL Activities 2019-2020:

- 1.1 In 2020, VPL's catalogue subject headings for Indigenous related materials, and much of their record content, were updated to reflect the shift away from historical, colonial views of Indigenous Peoples to language that is used by Indigenous people. This work was completed during the closure by Bibliographic Services Librarian Grace Rempel who edited just under 20,000 VPL catalogue records and made over 7,000 authority record changes. The VPL project was largely based on the work conducted by MAIN (Manitoba Archive Information Network), Greater Victoria Public Library, Xwi7xwa Library at UBC, Hamilton Public Library, and Red River College (Manitoba).
2. **CFLA Recommendation #6:** Decolonize Libraries and Space by recognizing and supporting Indigenous cultures, languages and knowledge through culturally appropriate space planning, interior design, signage, art installations, territorial acknowledgements of geographic-specific traditional territories and public programming in collaboration with local Indigenous stakeholders. (*Addresses TRC Calls to Action 12, 62, 69 & 83*)

VPL Activities 2019-2020:

- 2.1 In February 2020, VPL launched the Central Library Indigenous Collection. This Collection contains material for children, adults and teens, and features fiction and non-fiction in a variety of formats. An additional 724 titles were purchased for the Central Indigenous collection which now has 13,000 items. We also purchased another 25 titles to add to our Indigenous Book club sets.
- 2.2 Based on requests from the Urban Indigenous community, an Indigenous genealogy service, "Connection to Kith and Kin" was offered as an in-person program at the Britannia Branch, and supported 70 participants as they explored their Indigenous heritage using the library's genealogy resources. The impacts informally disclosed by participants suggest that some have found profound personal understanding and family healing, and others were able to take life-changing steps such as applying for Indian Status based on the documents they found. Connection to Kith and Kin is planned and delivered in partnership with the Indian Residential School Survivors Society (IRSSS); Britannia Community Services Centre's *Weaving Our Community Together* program and Seniors-Elders-Advocates Committee; Library and Archives Canada (LAC); and the Vancouver Public Library (VPL). This community-led program has blossomed on the foundation laid by local community organizations: Aboriginal Life in Vancouver Enhancement Society (ALIVE), Britannia Community Services Society, Our Place, and the Northwest Indigenous Council.

After a hiatus of several months due to COVID-19, library locations began to re-open in July 2020 and by August, a request from the community came to restart Connection to Kith and Kin as a virtual program. After consulting with Indigenous leaders and community partners, VPL transitioned this program to Zoom, and then piloted it in November and December 2020. The pilot served 12 participants, all of whom had participated in the in-person program at the beginning 2020. After reviewing the pilot, VPL began its first full season of Connection to Kith and Kin Online in January 2021; the program is fully subscribed with a growing waitlist.

2.3 In 2019, artwork by Indigenous artists was installed in Central Library:

- A mural entitled “Sisters, Daughters, Clan Mothers: Honouring Indigenous Women and Girls” was mounted above the public elevators on Level 2. The mural was created by Haisla Collins of the Tsimshian Nisga’a Gitxsan Nations and was funded by the City of Vancouver Public Art Indigenous Murals program.
- Seven banners, entitled “The Seven Fires Prophecies” by artist Joshua Mangeshlg Pawis-Steckley of the Wasauksing Nation, were installed in the atrium as part of the ongoing City of Vancouver Public Art Indigenous Murals program.
- Anishinaabe artist Rebecca Belmore and Cuban-born Osvaldo Yero, created the sculpture, “Adrift.” commissioned through the City of Vancouver’s Public Art program in partnership with VPL, with funding established during the early planning for Central Library. The sculpture was installed over the grand staircase between the 8th and 9th floors, with an opening event on November 14.
- A cross-Canada touring exhibit, pîkiskwe-speak: An Invitation to Conversations in Reconciliation, by artists Beth MacKenzie (Métis heritage) and Lana Whiskeyjack of the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, was displayed in the Samuel and Frances Belzberg Family Exhibition Space, Level 9 from October 16 to December 15.

2.4 In 2019, there were multiple programs at branches for Indigenous History Month, including:

- Film screenings at Carnegie, Joe Fortes, náčá?mat ct Strathcona, and Mount Pleasant branches;
- Indigenous author, poet, and residential school survivor Myra Pierre, Ka’zez’semaka7, sharing her poetry from *A Rising of Voices and Other Poems*, held at both Britannia and Joe Fortes branches;
- The Hard Road, a dialogue event featuring First Nations activist s̓x̓t̓em̓t̓əna:t, Audrey Siegl, held at Collingwood, náčá?mat ct Strathcona, and Terry Salman branches;
- Program by former Storyteller in Residence T’uy’t’tanat-Cease Wyss at Kensington and South Hill branches.

3. **CFLA Recommendation #7:** Enhance opportunities for Indigenous library, archival, and information professionals as well as the inclusion of Indigenous epistemologies in the Canadian library and archives profession through culturally appropriate pedagogy, recruitment practices, professional and continuing education, and cross-cultural training in collaboration with local Indigenous stakeholders and partners. (*Addresses TRC Calls to Action 7 & 57*)

VPL Activities 2019-2020:

- 3.1. In 2019, staff began work to develop guidelines for Indigenous Youth work experiences. In February 2020, VPL staff met with local Indigenous community groups and Indigenous youth to learn how work experience at the library could be successful for Indigenous youth. The following community organizations were represented: Indigenous Youth Employment Program (IYEP), Responsible Indigenous Strategies for Empowerment (RISE), Northwest Indigenous Council (NWIC), Vancouver Aboriginal Child and Family Services Society (VACFSS) and Youth Voices of East Van. It was a valuable discussion and we look forward to resuming this collaboration in 2021.
- 3.2. In 2019, 135 staff attended the session “Cultural Competency: Indigenous and Urban Indigenous Peoples – Impacts of Residential Schools and Colonization.” This brings the total number of staff who have received training related to Truth & Reconciliation to date to 560.

In 2019, members of VPL’s Truth and Reconciliation working group led a discussion on Reconciliation at the Staff Conference. It was well-attended and participants indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to learn more about the impacts of colonization and discuss strategies for moving towards Reconciliation.

In addition to those activities listed above under CFLA Recommendation #6 above, VPL offered 129 public programs for adults and seniors with an Indigenous focus in 2019 and 2020, reaching 2,363 patrons. Film screening of documentaries and feature films on Indigenous experiences provided a popular way to learn and connect, with 24 screenings held at branches for 466 attendees. Of these, regular screenings at Carnegie Branch were particularly popular, with their twelve screenings having been attended by a total of 386 community members. Among other types of programs, 77 were held at branches, 29 at Central Library, and one off-site. These adult programming highlights included:

- The Let's Talk about Reconciliation: The Road Forward film and dialogue event was one of the highest attended with 126 community members joining for this evening curated and led by Squamish Nation Elder Latash Maurice Nahanee;
- The Hapa-palooza film screening and dialogue event featuring the documentary *All Our Father's Relations* followed by discussion with the filmmakers and subject of the film, Musqueam Nation Elder Larry Grant;

- Research skills workshops for students at the Native Education College delivered by Information Services staff at Central Library;
- The ongoing Indigenous Reads Book Club at Britannia Branch, and;
- Our Spaces! Our Safety! – This dialogue session on approaches to assembling and managing safe spaces in the Downtown Eastside and the impact on lived experiences, including for Indigenous community members, was held at nácaʔmat ct Strathcona and had 45 attendees.

The programming of the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence is a highlight of VPL's programming every year, and in 2019, Joseph A. Dandurand of the Kwantlen First Nation brought multiple types of storytelling and experiences, including poetry, plays, crafting, games, and humour, to 380 attendees during his 13 programs. The Storyteller shared his poetry and stories during seven events at Central Library and six branches, and also shared and connected with individuals as one-to-one Storytelling Chats. Highlight events of this residency included:

- A residency launch event that was one of the highest attended ever with 175 community members taking part
- The unique off-site event, Cedar Weaving, Bone Games and Stories, held at the Kwantlen Cultural Centre and attended by 45 community members
- Finale event including poet, filmmaker, and former VPL Storyteller Jules Koostachin and award-winning author Nicola Campbell

Programs for adults and seniors with a focus on Indigenous experience and Reconciliation took on a new shape in 2020, shifting to online delivery during library closures. The 2020 Indigenous Storyteller in Residence, Nova Weipert, kicked off the first Indigenous programs of the year at the beginning of March with four in-person welcome events at branches, and, after library closures, re-conceptualized programming to be offered online instead. While pandemic closures and restrictions on in-person events limited our ability to offer as many programs as planned, Nova offered an additional seven programs online.

In addition to these, Nova Weipert joined four other past Storytellers for the Gathering of Storytellers, a VPL online event for Indigenous History Month in 2020 to share about their experiences as Indigenous artists and the need for decolonization. This event drew a significant and engaged crowd of 450 viewers, who asked questions and connected with one another via chat. This program was recorded and was posted on VPL's YouTube channel for continued viewing, with nearly 300 more views in 2020.

These programs connected communities around Vancouver and beyond with Indigenous artists working in new digital media landscapes, opportunities to reflect on historic and present experiences to move forward with Reconciliation, and celebrations of culture, arts, and achievements. Many of the 2020 Storyteller in Residence's programs also provided an intersectional connection between Indigenous and Two-Spirit experiences. Some specifics of the 2020 Storyteller in Residence online programming include:

- Community sharing circle to discuss the difficulties of the pandemic;
 - Decolonization: The Two-Spirit Journey – Panel discussion on gender, sexuality and decolonization;
 - TRANSCEND: An Evolving Continuum – Screening of a portion of the Storyteller’s five-year film project, a documentary consisting of five episodes which focus on different aspects of his identity. This program was also held for teens, and both programs included discussion of his transition to Two-Spirit
 - Finale: Everything is Connected – Featuring the Storyteller’s mother and highlighting the interconnections of his experience being adopted, Indigenous, and navigating becoming Two-Spirit.
4. **CFLA recommendation #8:** this includes recommending the implementation of Indigenous Knowledge Protection protocols, respecting the Indigenous concept of copyright, reforming the Canadian Copyright Act to include protection of Indigenous knowledges and languages, and advocating for changes to include protection of traditional knowledge as outlined and recommended by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) – Intergovernmental Committee on Intellectual Property and Genetic Resources, Traditional Knowledge and Folklore (<http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/igc/>). (Addresses TRC Calls to Action 43, 50 and UNDRIP Articles including 11, 13, 31)

VPL Activities 2019-2020:

Chief Librarian Christina de Castell continued to participate on the CFLA-FCAB Copyright Committee and with its activities in coordination with the CFLA Indigenous Matters Committee. This included supporting the development of a [position statement on Indigenous Knowledge and the Copyright Act](#), ensuring key principles from the position were included in the [CFLA brief submitted for the review of Canada’s Copyright Act](#) in August 2018, and providing [comment on the findings from the review in August 2019](#).

Governance Activities 2019-2020

While the CFLA Recommendations did not address the application of the Truth & Reconciliation Calls to Action to governance in public libraries, the VPL Board has undertaken efforts in this area in the spirit of the Calls to Action and the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The VPL Board prioritized an interest in inclusion of Indigenous peoples in its governance, and City Council appointed two Indigenous trustees to the VPL Board, for terms that began in 2018 and 2019.

In 2019, the VPL board approved the goals of the Strategic Plan for 2020-2023, including two specific goals: Reflect and celebrate Indigenous cultures and history (Shared Spaces and Experiences priority) and Enhance understanding and appreciation of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Belonging & Connection priority), as well as a prioritization on Truth and Reconciliation throughout VPL’s work.

In 2020, the VPL Board requested that Indigenous considerations be included in all new and amended policies, and this was implemented. In 2019 and 2020, the VPL Board identified a priority of investment to create a new, ongoing Indigenous relations planning role at VPL, and Vancouver City Council approved the funding for this ongoing position for the 2021 budget.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The activities undertaken in 2019 and 2020 were within the Library's operating budget.

FINAL REMARKS

As noted in our previous reports, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action represent one of the most important documents in Canada today. VPL's work since 2016 has begun to contribute to addressing the Calls to Action. Staff are committed to work in this area and are looking forward to continuing to learn, build relationships, and increase their understanding and knowledge while facilitating efforts towards Reconciliation in our communities.