



MANAGEMENT REPORT

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TO: Library Board of Trustees
FROM: Diana Guinn, Director, Neighbourhood & Youth Services
SUBJECT: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action

SUMMARY

This report provides a preliminary outline of initiatives VPL staff have identified as responsive to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive this report for information.

CHIEF LIBRARIAN'S COMMENTS

Vancouver Public Library staff have been seeking meaningful engagement with aboriginal community organizations for many years and have been using a community-led approach to help us better understand the needs of aboriginal community members and to develop responsive services. Activities have included community participation in collection building, including the development of the Aboriginal Collection Profile, and program development.

Vancouver Public Library has most recently been recognized by the City for the application of reconciliation principles to our work in two key areas: the naming of the new VPL branch the náčá?mat ct Strathcona Branch, which encompasses the idea of 'we are one' in the hən̓q̓əmiñəm (Musqueam) language. The náčá?mat ct Strathcona Branch will be the first major

civic building in Vancouver to have an official Indigenous name. As well, there is appreciation for the library's ongoing Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence program, which – as a flagship program – is a significant recognition of the importance of aboriginal culture and recognition of storytelling as a critical pathway for culture and knowledge exchange.

This report presents a preliminary review of actions achievable within the library's existing resources. Additional opportunities may arise as the library works to deepen its partnerships with aboriginal organizations and individuals.

POLICY

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 (http://www.vpl.ca/about/details/diversity_and_inclusion_statement).

As well, a number of priorities and goals in the most recent Strategic Plan either signal alignment with the importance of reconciliation or present an opportunity to leverage VPL's strategic focus to support reconciliation:

- Goal 1: Support a sense of belonging for Vancouver residents;
- Goal 2: Implement more flexible, patron centered service models;
- Goal 4: Offer a suite of resources, tools and services to support the creativity and imagination of Vancouver residents;
- Foundational element: Skilled and resilient staff who meet changing community needs with confidence; and
- Foundational element: Diverse and accessible collections and programs.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

VPL's ongoing efforts to connect and partner with local First Nations and urban aboriginal communities and organizations is critical to ensuring that VPL, as a public library, provides inclusive, accessible, and relevant services to our residents and that our services represent the full diversity of Vancouver residents, their culture, knowledge, and history. As well, and equally as important, these efforts contribute to the City's collective responsibility to support reconciliation.

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 Indian Residential Schools and establish a reconciliation process.

As the City of Vancouver's Council report notes and is now well documented, for over 100 years, more than 150,000 Aboriginal children were removed from their families and sent to Residential Schools. These government-funded, church-run schools were located across Canada and established with the purpose to eliminate parental involvement in the spiritual, cultural, and intellectual development of Aboriginal children. The last residential school closed in 1996.

In 2008, the Prime Minister of Canada issued an apology for Canada's role in imposing the residential school system on Aboriginal families. The federal government then supported the creation of the TRC, part of whose mandate was to collect stories of residential school survivors for the next five years. The work of drawing attention to the impacts of residential schools, and for public awareness on this part of Canada's history needs to continue on beyond the initial mandate of the TRC.

In 2014, after an important year of engaging Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in and through City's services and programs during the 'Year of Reconciliation,' Vancouver City Council passed the motion to reaffirm its commitment to designate Vancouver as a *City of Reconciliation*. The City of Reconciliation framework will initially guide the work of the City as to its engagement with local First Nations and urban Aboriginal communities in Vancouver.

In June 2015, after six years of work with over 6,000 witnesses and reviewing millions of documents, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada published *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future: Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*; the Executive Summary of the report is available on the web at http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Exec_Summary_2015_05_31_web_o.pdf and the full report is available at <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>. The final report includes 94 Calls to Action that represent concrete steps to redress the legacy of the residential school system (http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/File/2015/Findings/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf).

At its July 22, 2015 meeting, the VPL Board unanimously passed the following motion:

That the Board request a report from staff in the fall of 2015 containing recommendations on how to move forward on the actions recommended by the Truth and Reconciliation (TRC) that are within the Board's jurisdiction to act.

Although the majority of the TRC Calls to Action were not directed to libraries or municipalities, library staff reviewed 94 recommendations carefully and sought to identify responses which fall within VPL's jurisdiction as a public library through programming, collection development, and

providing public space. Library staff identified five Calls to Action that the Library can act upon immediately. Staff has identified seven unique action items in response to these five Calls, with two actions supporting multiple Calls.

City of Vancouver staff assessed each recommendation and determined that the City has jurisdiction to act on 26 TRC calls to action; the Library's responses are included in the City's assessment.

VPL staff were planning to bring a report to the VPL Board in the spring of 2016 after some further work was completed, including discussion with community partners. However, staff were notified in early January that City staff will present a 2016 work plan to Council for the January 19 meeting of City Council and that City staff wished to include the Library's items. Accordingly, VPL staff have prepared this report for the VPL Board which includes some identified preliminary actions.

DISCUSSION

The following TRC Calls to Action have been identified as falling within the Library's jurisdiction and outline our proposed responses:

1. Language and Culture

TRC Recommendation #17:

We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver's licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers.

VPL Action:

- Upon request, VPL will change patron records to reflect reclaimed names and issue a new membership card at no cost. There is no time limit on the waiving of these fees.

2. Professional Development and Training for Public Servants

TRC Recommendation #57:

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and

Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

VPL Action:

- VPL staff will participate in internal departmental training in cultural competencies designed by the city’s Equal Employment Opportunity office (EEO). *Please note: Several staff members attended the pilot workshop, held in November of 2015. Feedback from the participants was requested by EEO to assist them in designing a course that would be appropriate for all COV staff.*

3. Education for Reconciliation

TRC Recommendation #62:

We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to:

- *Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal people’s historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.*

VPL Actions:

- VPL will update the Library’s Aboriginal Collection Profile to reflect the impact of residential schools and the theme of reconciliation, including collections for K to Grade 12. *(The Aboriginal Collection Profile provides guidelines to assist Librarians to purchase materials that highlight, acknowledge and honor the unique cultures and experiences of Aboriginal communities and to encourage ongoing discussion and collaboration between the Library and Aboriginal communities.)*
- VPL will continue to offer the Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence Program. Call for applications for the 2016 residency is underway. The Storyteller in Residence program started in 2008 and the successful candidate will serve as VPL’s 7th Storyteller in Residence.
- VPL will create a resource guide for information on residential schools and themes of reconciliation.

4. Museums and Archives

TRC Recommendation #69:

We call upon Library and Archives Canada to:

- *Ensure that its record holdings related to residential schools are accessible to the public.*
- *Commit more resources to its public education materials and programming on residential schools.*

VPL Actions:

- VPL will update the existing Aboriginal Collection Profile to reflect the impact of residential schools and the theme of reconciliation. *(The Aboriginal Collection Profile provides guidelines to assist Librarians to purchase materials that highlight, acknowledge and honour the unique cultures and experiences of Aboriginal communities and to encourage ongoing discussion and collaboration between the Library and Aboriginal communities.)*
- VPL will continue to offer the Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence Program. Call for applications for the 2016 residency is underway. The Storyteller in Residence program started in 2008 and the successful candidate will serve as VPL's 7th Storyteller in Residence.
- VPL will provide a link from the VPL's website directing patrons to both the TRC report and the "National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation" which holds the archives of the TRC.

5. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation

TRC Recommendation #78:

We call upon the Government of Canada to commit to making a funding contribution of \$10 million over seven years to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, plus an additional amount to assist communities to research and to produce histories of their own residential school experience and their involvement in truth, healing, and reconciliation.

VPL Actions:

- VPL will encourage use of the Inspiration Lab at Central Branch and Digital Creation Lab at the forthcoming náća?mat ct Strathcona branch to produce histories of their experiences for their communities and possibly to share with others.

In addition to these initial commitments and as the library continues and deepens its engagement with aboriginal community organizations, VPL staff will continue to explore opportunities that fit within the spirit of the Calls to Action as well as support the City's broader commitment to reconciliation.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is anticipated that the action items can be carried out within the Library's operating budget.

TIMELINES

Some of the commitments are already underway, such as the 2016 Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence call for proposals. Staff attention to other initiatives can start immediately, with the recognition that community engagement is required for most commitments and this may result in longer completion timelines.

FINAL REMARKS

The TRC Calls to Action represent one of the most important documents in Canada today. They clearly present to all levels of government, local community organizations, and Canadians the necessary first steps toward redressing the legacy of residential schools and advancing the process of Canadian reconciliation. While the Calls to Action do not specifically mention public libraries, the first steps identified in this report will lay the groundwork for VPL's contribution to the broader City of Vancouver commitment to reconciliation.