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# Northwest Library Federation

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2016 Provincial Grant  
Report

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March 31, 2017

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## Introduction

British Columbia's Northwest region, which encompasses the Northwest, the Skeena River drainage and the Bulkley Valley, is a diverse environment with some of the most picturesque wilderness in British Columbia. For at least 10,000 years, the region has been the traditional territory of First Nations people, including the Haida, Haisla, Gitksan, Nisga'a, Tsimshian and Wet'suwet'en.

With rugged coastline and islands in the west to mountain peaks, valleys, glaciers and plateaus in the interior, its climate is as diverse as its geography. The vast area is known for its magnificent freshwater and saltwater fishing, paddling, hiking, skiing and snowmobiling, as well as habitat for many species of wildlife including grizzly bears, cougars, moose, wolves, and salmon.

BC's Northwest has a long history of forestry, mining and fishing, all of which are still critical to its economy. In 2013, the largest industries by employment in the Bulkley Valley and Northwest regions were wholesale and retail trade, public administration, education, manufacturing, and construction.

Just 2% of British Columbians (a little over 80,000 people) live in the Bulkley and Northwest regions. About half the population lives in urban centres, with the other half in rural areas. 10% of the population are immigrants, and an average of 28% are First Nations – 37% on the Northwest and 19% in the Bulkley Valley.

The Northwest Library Federation (NWLF) is comprised of seven public libraries: Houston, Smithers, Hazelton, Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert and Stewart, along with the campus libraries of associate member Northwest Community College (NWCC). NWLF Communities with public libraries range in size from 499 to 12,500 people; differences between them in size, capacity, and access have contributed to a disparity in patron access to both physical and digital resources as well as to programs and services. The Northwest Library Federation was created in 2006 to address these issues and improve the level of library service for all people of the area.

Statistics courtesy Province of British Columbia, [www.welcomebc.ca](http://www.welcomebc.ca)

# SECTION 1

## Libraries Branch Expectations

### **1. Support and engage with the ministry to build a new strategic vision for BC Public Libraries.**

The federation director attended the full-day ministry-led strategic planning workshop, participated in interviews, and provided ongoing feedback for the new strategic vision.

### **2. Work toward the development of a vision for future of resource sharing in BC with the other federations and the ministry.**

The Federation director requested, organized and participated in regular meetings with the ministry and other federations.

### **3. Update the federation training plan for 2016-2017.**

The 2015 training needs survey was updated through individual interviews with directors and board members and supported continuation of the recommendations of the original plan: a) continue yearly conference delivery, b) provide regular information on online training options to library directors and the NWLF board, and c) utilize existing expertise within the Federation to support staff training.

### **4. Report on the impacts your training programs have had on professional development of library staff and describe how you have been able to assess these impacts.**

The 2016 conference was held in Terrace and yielded a strong showing by both member library staff and board members. Dedicated travel funding was provided to the 45 attendees from every library in the region; two libraries (Hazelton and Terrace) chose to close their libraries so that staff and volunteers could attend the conference. 100% of those responding to the conference exit survey believed that the conference achieved its goals, while between 94% and 100% found the content and speaker of each individual session somewhat or very helpful.

With travel costs to and within in the region high, the training emphasis in 2016 was placed on online learning. To assist with communication of the myriad opportunities available in this format, a monthly training opportunities document was developed and continues with very

positive feedback from users both inside and outside the federation (*"Just want to say how much I and our staff appreciate these listings. There has been a lot of interest in the learning opportunities from our staff. It is a much needed and appreciated service. Thank you!*).

## **5. Develop a plan for sharing resources such as professional expertise to support your strategic initiatives to increase the access to resources in your region**

Existing staff expertise continued to be generously shared within the Federation in 2016, both at the conference and during the year by telephone, email and in-person visits, particularly in the technology area.

## **6. Focus on efforts to work across the library network, federations and the BC Libraries Cooperative on common programs and services.**

- a) The NWLF shared administration and organization with the NCLF and NELF for two 2016 tours (magician and Lego Robotics)
- b) NWLF library directors have been encouraged to make use of the library directors listserve to network on common problems
- c) Federation director acted as liaison between BCLC/Interlibrary Connect and NWLF libraries to resolve issues and improve service
- d) Recommendations for rationalization of federation operations has been discussed with other federations and the ministry
- e) Continued participation in two inter-federation programs, Books for Babies and Book Club Sets.

## **7. Focus on efforts to improve collaboration between libraries within the federation.**

These efforts are primarily communications based, and include:

- Regular meetings with LDAG and NWLF board
- Regular phone and email conversations with LDAG
- Development of a monthly e-newsletter sent to every staff and board member in the federation (open rate 70%, click rate 50%)
- Annual conference

## **8. Increase the use and support for Interlibrary Connect by member libraries.**

See item 6c above.

## SECTION 2

### 2016 Federation Goals

The 2015 – 2018 NWLF strategic plan was approved in November 2015, making 2016 the first year of full implementation. Efforts in 2016 included the following goals within the context of the plan's three overriding strategic priorities:

#### **1. Increase service equity between member libraries**

- Determine and implement training opportunities to build human capital
- Identify and share existing expertise between libraries

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- a) The 2016 conference was held in Terrace and yielded a strong showing by both member library staff and board members. Dedicated travel funding was provided to the 45 attendees from every library in the region; two libraries (Hazelton and Terrace) chose to close their libraries so that staff and volunteers could attend the conference. 100% of those responding to the conference exit survey believed that the conference achieved its goals, while between 94% and 100% found the content and speaker of each individual session somewhat or very helpful.
- b) With travel costs in the region high, the training emphasis in 2016 was placed on online learning. To assist with communication of the myriad opportunities available in this format, a monthly training opportunities document was developed and continues with very positive feedback from users. Funding for self-initiated course completion was also provided.
- c) Existing staff expertise was generously shared within the Federation in 2016, both at the conference and during the year by telephone, email and in-person visits, particularly in the technology area.

## **2. Enhance library services in the region**

- Increase the level of community engagement
- Increase opportunities to collaborate between NWLF libraries, other BC Federations, and community organizations

In 2016, the NWLF funded three tours: magician Leif David (for the Summer Reading Club), Roy Henry Vickers (First Nation's author), and Lego Robotics workshops (for pre-teens and teens). Attendance at these events were high, consistent with the 2015 decision to confine Federation tour funding to programs attracting the largest possible audience for the community, either in the library or in partnership with other organizations.

Organization for both the magician and Lego tours were administered jointly with the North Central and North East Library Federations, providing economies of scale for performers and lower cost for the Federations.

## **3. Create a community of member libraries**

- Devise methods to facilitate ongoing communications between libraries
- Provide opportunities for joint training and networking

As mentioned, because of travel costs the only opportunity for NWLF members to access joint training and networking is through the yearly conference. However, we continue to seek other ways to create a member community.

For example, a Federation newsletter was created in 2016 for monthly delivery to all staff and volunteers via e-mail. The purpose of the newsletter is to highlight activities of our member libraries as well as to present different ways of looking at what libraries do, worldwide. It has been well-received, with a healthy open rate compared to similar non-profit organizations.

The federation changed its name in 2016 from North Coast to Northwest, in order to better represent the geographic representation of its member libraries.

Finally, LDAG members have coalesced into an active and supportive group over the past year. Their free-flowing ideas, advice, and mutual respect make it a pleasure to work with them.

## **SECTION 3**

### **Outcomes**

Outcomes have been highlighted within Sections 1 and 2 of this report.