



# north west library federation

## INTRODUCTION

### NWLF AND OUR REGION

Northwestern British Columbia encompasses the North Coast, Kitimat-Stikine, and Bulkley-Nechako regions. We acknowledge that these regions exist on the traditional territory of Indigenous Peoples, including the Haida, Haisla, Gitksan, Nisga'a, Tsimshian, and Witsuwit'en Nations.

The Northwest Library Federation (NWLF) is comprised of seven public libraries, located in Houston, Smithers, Hazelton, Terrace, Kitimat, Prince Rupert, and Stewart. These libraries have service populations ranging from 400 to 20,300 people. As a result, NWLF member libraries have widely varying levels of capacity to deliver programs and services on their own.

NWLF addresses this disparity with a vision of equitable access to enriching library experiences across the region. Our mission, in service of this vision, is to facilitate the cooperation needed to deliver optimal library service equitably throughout the region.

Coast Mountain College (CMTN) is an Associate Member of the NWLF and has non-voting status in the organization. While CMTN was an integral partner in the early years of NWLF, lately we have struggled to find common ground and resources for shared projects. We have begun to explore a renewal of this relationship and although the pandemic has slowed this down, we hope to see more progress in 2021.

### WHAT'S NEW FOR 2020

In March, we said goodbye to our Director, Melissa Sawatsky, and welcomed our new Director, Anna Babluck on board. Two weeks after this, COVID-19 began affecting our libraries in a tangible way with shutdowns and significant service changes. In practice, this means that pretty much everything was new for 2020 and we will elaborate more on these changes throughout this report.

### OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

2020 was the first year of our new Strategic Plan and luckily, our goals were broad enough that we could still take action to meet them despite restrictions caused by COVID-19. A few required postponement or adjustment to meet the new normal and we discuss those actions throughout this report. We reviewed and revised our Strategic Plan on its one year anniversary, in November 2020, and adapted it for the realities of our new virtual-only world.



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Our 2020-2022 goals are:

- To make an impact and fill a need in our communities
- To feel a sense of accomplishment
- Build a strong, creative Federation full of dynamic ideas
- Focus on initiatives related to climate change, truth & reconciliation, and social inclusion
- More inter-federation sharing and collaboration
- Build on intra-federation resource sharing, when it makes sense
- Orient member library boards about the role of the NWLF

We plan to meet these goals through actioning the following four priorities. For a full account of the actions being taken to meet each of these priorities, please view our [2020-2022 Strategic Plan](#) on our website: [nwlf.ca](http://nwlf.ca).

Priority 1: Improving Access: Provide relevant, quality programming and resources to residents of the communities that member libraries serve.

Priority 2: Building Capacity: Provide ongoing opportunities for staff and board trustee training and professional development.

Priority 3: Collaboration: Create a support system of member libraries and foster a spirit of collaboration and interconnectedness.

Priority 4: Enhancing Governance: Keep fiscal management of the NWLF transparent and remain accountable to stakeholders.



## PROJECTS, PROGRAMS, AND SERVICES IN 2020

Despite challenges presented by COVID-19, the NWLF continued to provide most of our core services without interruption in 2020. These include the Books for Babies program, Book Club Sets, preferred pricing on library supplies, training and database subsidies, LDAG roundtables that facilitate information sharing among libraries, and our NWLF newsletter including a professional development opportunities roundup. These services remain valuable to our libraries and meet many of the priorities outlined by the Public Libraries Branch as well as our Strategic Plan. However, because so much changed this year, we will be focussing the remainder of this report on new and innovative services, service adaptations caused by COVID-19, and changes to our workflow.

"I usually end up registering for at least one webinar from this [NWLF] newsletter. This time I registered for three!"

## THE VIRTUAL SHIFT

*Priorities Met from the Public Libraries Branch:*

- *Improved regional and local shared services delivery*
- *Improved access to professional learning opportunities for the library community*
- *Service expansion beyond community borders*
- *Support for B.C.'s Strategic Plan for Public Library Service*
  - *Improving access for British Columbians*
  - *Building capacity*

*Priorities and Goals Met from Our Strategic Plan:*

- *Priority 1: Improving Access*
- *Priority 2: Building Capacity*
- *Priority 3: Collaboration*
- *Priority 4: Enhancing Governance*

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## VIDEOCONFERENCING

One of the biggest changes in 2020 was the shift to virtual meetings from face-to-face and teleconferences. The Federation had been planning to purchase Zoom before the pandemic, but travel restrictions accelerated the adoption rate both within the Federation and among our provincial partners.



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Beginning in April, we shifted all our Board and LDAG meetings to Zoom, which allowed for more robust conversations and relationship building than teleconferences. We also wrote up host instructions and opened access to our Federation Zoom account for our individual libraries to use internally. This allowed our libraries the chance to test-drive the software themselves and acclimate their staff and board before making their own purchases.

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### VIRTUAL PROGRAMMING

In the spring, Prince Rupert Public Library used the Zoom account provided by the Federation to host a presentation by Michelle Good, author of *Five Little Indians*. Since the presentation was virtual, we were able to open it to participants across the Northwest and the event was cross-advertised by multiple libraries. 25 people attended the talk.

Due to COVID-19, we had to postpone our planned spring tour by Andy the Musical Scientist. However, we still heard from some of our libraries that they were struggling to meet the needs of families with preschool-aged children, so we contracted Kathy Reid-Neiman to create a two-part online children's concert. This program was intended to alleviate some of the stress of online content creation for our programmers as well as providing an alternative for families who were missed storytime songs at the library.

Four libraries posted the concert using various platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, and Google Drive. Since it was such a quick shift and due to the asynchronous nature of this virtual program, we were unable to plan how to measure our success before implementing the program. Thus, we were unable to gain feedback from a post-watch survey, nor were we able to count views from all libraries. We were able to count 33 watches from two of the four participating libraries.

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### COLLABORATION

With such monumental changes happening in libraries and less opportunity to meet face-to-face, we decided to start hosting online roundtables targeted for particular staff niches. This gave library staff across the region the chance to feel connected to their colleagues, collaborate and share ideas, and help each other work through new challenges arising from COVID-19 (such as how to reach the most families for Summer Reading Club when some libraries were still closed.) We hosted two programmers' roundtables, one Interlibrary Loan roundtable, and one IT roundtable in 2020.



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"Thank you for organizing today's discussion. As a result, Brian came by this afternoon and taught Melissa and I how to print wirelessly from our phones to our Xerox photocopier which we will in turn teach to our patrons. NWLF collaboration and skill-sharing enhancing services to our communities – in action!"

We have also seen an increase in collaboration and communication internally, between Library Federations, and externally, with Federations forging stronger bonds with other key library organizations in BC. Through regular information sharing (and the fact that most things are virtual now), we have been able to extend the reach of projects being done by individual Federations across the province. For example, the Customer Service training that was organized by Public Library InterLINK was taken by staff in two libraries in the Northwest, and the registration fees were paid by NWLF.

These connections have also resulted in the shared development of new projects that will benefit libraries across BC, such as the Diversity & Inclusion training spearheaded by the Kootenay Library Federation. We expect to start seeing more fulsome results of this collaboration in 2021.

### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Provincial Met from the Public Libraries Branch:*

- Improved regional and local shared services delivery
- Improved access to professional learning opportunities for the library community
- Support for B.C.'s Strategic Plan for Public Library Service
  - Building capacity

*Priorities and Goals Met from Our Strategic Plan:*

- Priority 2: Building Capacity
- Priority 3: Collaboration

Finding a path for professional development in 2020 proved to be a challenge. Due to COVID-19 and training a new director, we decided to postpone our fall conference until 2021. Many libraries were simply too busy adjusting their services and meeting the needs of their communities safely to concentrate on extra training and the new director did not feel familiar enough with the area yet to make decisions without significant input from the LDAG.

Instead of draining everyone's energy and time by organizing communal online training, we decided to allocate money for one-time extra subsidies with no reporting requirements



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attached. This allowed the libraries to decide whether the funds were best spent subsidizing training that was being done locally, bolstering the funds available from the Technology Grant, or subsidizing databases as use increased. Two libraries added Advantage collections to Overdrive to meet local demand.

Near the end of the year, we purchased a one-year subscription to the Homeless Training Institute for all seven of our libraries. We expect to see this training taken in 2021.

### SHARED PROJECTS

*Priorities Met from the Public Libraries Branch:*

- *Improved regional and local shared services delivery*
- *Service expansion beyond community borders*
- *Support for B.C.'s Strategic Plan for Public Library Service*
  - *Building capacity*

*Priorities and Goals Met from Our Strategic Plan:*

- *Priority 1: Improving Access*
- *Priority 2: Building Capacity*
- *Priority 3: Collaboration*
- *Priority 4: Enhancing Governance*

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### INDIGENIZING THE CATALOGUE

In October 2020, we began undertaking a long-term project to Indigenize our catalogues and collections. The intent of this project is to further reconciliation and increase access to Indigenous materials by updating our cataloguing and classification practices to include Indigenous names as identified by Indigenous Peoples.

In November, we hosted two practicum students from Langara (one of whom is Métis) to kick off this project and begin the creation of a staff guide. They identified subject headings and Dewey Decimal Classification as the two most impactful areas for improvement. They identified current problems with the catalogue, compiled and annotated research on best practices, created a site to collect the information, and began the creation of an alternate subject headings database. In 2021, we will be moving forward with the project by doing local consultation with First Nations in the Northwest and continuing to compile research and recommendations before releasing our work publicly.



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### SUPPORT FOR SUMMER READING CLUB

As a result of a discussion in one of the programmers' roundtables, we also allocated some funds for Summer Reading Club subsidies in August. Each library determined where best to spend the funds, with the intended outcomes of increasing participation in SRC, delivering quality online and offline content, and helping families feel connected to their community despite the pandemic. Libraries spent these extra funds on:

- extra prizes, goodie bags, and books for kids to keep to encourage participation in SRC,
- supplies for takeaway activity kits and craft bags,
- ice cream coupons and gift cards from local shops (which helped to support the local economy),
- nutritious snacks for remote community reading clubs,
- postal costs for mailing medals to participants,
- and a headset for virtual programming.

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### COVID-RELATED

In the early days of COVID-19, the Federation worked to increase communication between our libraries so that they felt supported and connected while making difficult decisions about service and program changes. We hosted extra LDAG information-sharing meetings that supplemented the province-wide Directors' meetings hosted by ABCPLD. These extra meetings allowed a more granular local view of the situation and informed the decisions of some of our libraries on when and how to reopen to the public.

We also gathered information on new distance programs being offered by our libraries and posted them on the NWLF website's blog in order to facilitate sharing and inspiration for our libraries' staff.

Finally, later in the year, we funded and organized a consortial purchase of disposable masks for three of our libraries so that they wouldn't have to turn patrons away at the door. Our timing couldn't have been better; a week after we made this purchase, the province-wide mask order came into place.



## INTERNAL REVIEW

*Priorities and Goals Met from Our Strategic Plan:*

- *Priority 2: Building Capacity*
- *Priority 4: Enhancing Governance*

With a new director in place, and in-person programming and professional development on hold, we found the time in 2020 to examine the internal workings of our organization to find savings and increase efficiency and transparency.

We met our goals of enhancing governance and building capacity by reviewing, updating, and redistributing our policy manual (including a new records management and retention policy), creating a Robert's Rules cheat sheet for our meetings, and creating a Board Orientation package for new NWLF appointees.

We digitized our files and went fully paperless using SYNC, which enables easier file sharing and transparency among the Board and LDAG.

We performed a review of bookkeeping software and found a solution that not only saves us money, but also allows us to make all of our payments by direct deposit while maintaining our two-signer system. This reduces the time and resources necessary for a cheques-only system of payment and reduces the potential for errors.





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### WHAT'S NEXT IN 2021

We planted a lot of seeds in 2020 that we expect to begin bearing fruit in 2021, including signing up for First Book Canada to deliver free books to low-income families, the ongoing work on our Indigenization project, and subscription to the Homeless Training Institute and other training that is now in the development stages.

Some of the changes brought about by COVID-19 have actually been beneficial. We expect to continue our online staff roundtables and building out productive relationships with library organizations across the province. As more people have adjusted to working remotely and become comfortable using tools like Zoom as part of their everyday workflow, the frequency of and engagement in our online meetings has increased across the board.

We have also identified new areas for skills development, such as training to increase and enhance virtual programming, and training on how to build and maintain relationships with Indigenous communities.

We acknowledge that there are still many challenges to face in the coming year, but we remain focussed on the opportunities and look forward to supporting our libraries as they deliver enriching library experiences across the Northwest.