

## Fort St. James Public Library



Report prepared in February/March of 2014.  
Due March 12, 2014 (due date revised from March 1, 2014)

### **Introduction**

Fort St. James Public Library (FSJPL) serves the town of Fort St. James and surrounding area. The library is housed in a facility built in 2006 as part of the town's bicentennial and is adjacent to the town's main commercial area, sitting just behind the Royal Bank Building and the Post office.

The population of the town fluctuates but is currently about 1700. The population of the Fort St. James area is around 5000, of whom about one quarter identify as being of First Nations origin. The town is surrounded by numerous, small First Nations communities and Indian reserves, including Pinchie, Tachie, and Nak'azdli. Carrier is the aboriginal language in the area.

The local economy is well diversified, although resource-oriented. The forest industries constitute the leading sector followed by mining, agriculture and tourism.

The local economy has been affected negatively by events such as mill closures and general economic shifts taking place in the North in the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With new mines opening and other economic developments the economy is slowly recovering, though the impact of new mining operations has as yet had less impact than originally expected. As can be seen in Table 1 the town's population has followed the economic trends of the period:

#### **Table 1: Population of Fort St. James 2001-2011.**

**Population in 2001:** 1,927  
**Population in 2006:** 1,350  
**Population in 2011:** 1,691

The library has about 500 active members but there are some sectors of the population that have yet to become avid users.

Our current Strategic Plan identifies eight priorities. Table 2 lists the priorities as listed on page nine of *FSJ Library – Strategic Plan*.

**Table 2: Priorities.**

1. Updating technology
2. Staffing
3. First Nations presence and involvement
4. Services for children and youth
5. Enhancing and developing sustainable partnerships
6. Community outreach
7. Diversifying the collection
8. Library services

How these priorities fit with the BC Government Provincial Priorities for 2013 is discussed in the appropriate section of the *FSJPL Grant Report for 2013*.

The *FSJPL Grant Report for 2013* will cover the following three BC Government provincial Priorities:

- Priority 1: Equitable access
- Priority 3: Library collaboration and cooperation
- Priority 4: Accountability and transparency

**Priority 1: Equitable access**

The *FSJPL Strategic Plan*, as well as on-going consultation with community members, has made evident the need for library services, collections and programs that reflect the diversity of the community and which meet community needs across the spectrum of age, ethnicity, socio-economic level and gender.<sup>1</sup>

*Technology.* Our strategic plan identified technology issues as a high priority. The need for wireless access, instruction and service for eBooks & eReaders, and more public access internet terminals was identified and addressed through a range of initiatives. Citizens without computer and internet access are users of the library on an ever growing basis. Low in-come residents, native people from remote areas and seniors are among our most avid users. Many find access through the library.

Tasks completed:

- Upgrade of wireless service through Telus, more than tripling our speed and bandwidth
- Installation of floor ports allowing for an additional 8 LAN connected computers.

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<sup>1</sup> *FSJPL Strategic Plan* Priorities 1 (Updating technology), 3 (First Nations presence and involvement), 4 (Services for children and youth), 6 (Community outreach) and 7 (Diversifying the collection) are in support of this BC Government priority.

- Purchase of 4 laptops for public instruction and presentation
- Acquired an account with TechnoSoup Canada for acquisition of software for public devices

Initiatives in process:

- Instructional materials and sessions under development
- Selection of digital projectors for presentations, etc.

*Aboriginal.* 2013 saw the beginning of a major initiative to develop services and collections of use to aboriginal people. The board commissioned a study to initiate this work. There were also special collection development tasks that apply to this initiative as well as displays. Some collection areas that were improved through consultation with the local aboriginal community include:

- Native legal materials
- Aboriginal spirituality materials
- Ethnobotany and native health materials
- Native Communities Read 2013-2014 titles
- Cultural and historical works for adults, teens and children

Some other events in support of this priority are:

- Tours for native schools
- Meetings with native community groups and local elders
- Negotiations for native storytellers to perform in the library (cultural issues require that we proceed carefully here)

This initiative is perhaps the single most significant task the library has taken on. This initiative will require many years of work. Completing the initial study and assessing its contents is one of the most significant accomplishments of 2013, as it will no doubt be in years to come as well.

*Children and Youth.* The big success story in our Children and Youth initiative in 2013 was our Summer Reading Club. We had over 150 participants and an even larger number of people signing up for reading records. The library also cancelled a program which was no longer needed (going by the turn-out). That program was our Tiny Tots sessions.

*Community Outreach.* We have started consultations with local schools to bring each student in the local school system through the library on a tour at least twice during their school years: once in elementary school and once in high school. We also had special games nights in the library on Friday evenings in the Winter. These Community Games nights brought new families and individuals into the library and saw more than a dozen new library cards issued. More than 100 people attended these

events. We also started using Survey Monkey to get at opinions about the library's collections, services, etc.

*Diversifying the Collection.* Given the volume of activity in this area, we will highlight three areas of concern which played a key role in directing activities.

1. Visually challenged patrons, children and new users were served by the introduction of slatwall shelving for greater visual and physical access. We are also utilizing larger fonts on spine labels and shelving books on the two lowest shelves spine up making for easier reading by patrons. We are also testing new signage which is easier to read and stands above each collection. Titles for very young children are now in baskets on the floor. All these changes have brought positive comments from the public. We are shopping for new shelving for the children's area, something at the right level for little eyes and hands.
2. New formats were added or expanded in 2013. DVDs, graphic novels, low vocabulary readers, and eBook titles have all been introduced or expanded in 2013. Teens and juveniles in the community have requested graphic novels which are now also popular with adults. DVD are popular throughout the community but have been especially popular with the native community.
3. Currency and popularity of materials plays an ever more important part in our collection development work. When patrons make a request for new titles we order them within 48 hours when possible and place all on order items in the catalogue so patrons may easily place requests. We also had individuals and families take a look at vendor's catalogues and make suggestions. Some collections which received attention were:
  - Adult fiction (more authors and titles)
  - Medical information (with some titles purchased at request of local medical personnel)
  - Legal materials
  - Gardening
  - Ethnobotany and herbals
  - Natural history
  - Local and native history

## **Priority 3: Library collaboration and cooperation**

The Coop student program of SLAIS at UBC and North Central Library Federation (NCLF) were our major library collaborations in 2013.<sup>2</sup> I also want to mention Prince George Public Library and Law Matters.

Coop student SLAIS. During Beyond Hope 2013 we talked with folks at the SLAIS booth and later had an email and telephone exchange with Julie Walchli, the Director of the Arts Co-op Program at the University of British Columbia. A special initiative for rural libraries allowed FSJPL to apply for a Summer Coop Student for 2014. In 2013 we completed the application process and organized housing and other practical matters in support of the successful candidate. Our success in 2013 means we are currently (March 2014) short listing candidates and will have a Coop student coming in for the Summer in 2014. This a very significant event for FSJPL. We are grateful to the UBC Coop program for this opportunity.

NCLF. Our collaboration with NCLF is so significant that it is difficult to know what to highlight. Four items of special significance are:

1. Shared Blocks of Large Print books. Older patrons and visually challenged patrons comment often on how wonderful this service is, and how important to those who need it. The service is not new but it is certainly a vital aspect of our service to the community served by the library.
2. Summer Reading Club (SRC) act. Neil Bacon's ventriloquism act brought in more than 30 students and teachers to our SRC.
3. Author visits. Authors Grant Lawrence and Jerry Haigh each produced a significant turnout (20 and 15 respectively). We also picked up their titles which have proven to be popular items in house and for circulation.
4. Public Performance Rights. NCLF has been working with member libraries to negotiate PPR with a suitable vendor. This process is ongoing but will provide for a valuable public service once in place.

Other collaborations of note. Jeff Kozoris of Prince George Public Library agreed to send copies of his eReader instruction sheets for adaptation and use in our eBook and eReader program. His cooperation in this matter saved us much time and effort. I also had at least two occasions to talk face to face with Jeff about eBook matters and found him to be exceptionally knowledgeable and helpful. We are grateful to Prince George Public Library for allowing FSJPL to have access to Jeff's expertise.

Law Matters of the BC Courthouse Libraries also provided invaluable assistance to FSJPL by providing a list of legal materials suited to our aboriginal collection development process. Thanks to Law Matters our patrons now have access to more than half a dozen legal titles that were not available previously in our locality. Our thanks to Janet Freeman for her assistance in this matter.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> FSJPL Strategic Plan Priorities 2 (Staffing) and 5 (Enhancing and developing sustainable partnerships) are in support of this BC Government priority.

<sup>3</sup> Although it involves a collaboration outside the library community, mention should also be made of the service Fort St. James' Economic Development Officer, Emily Colombo, has rendered to the library by donating a wide range of business and marketing titles to the library for the benefit of local business people. This collaboration between the District and the library is a wonderful benefit to the community.

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## **Priority 4: Accountability and transparency**

That 20 policy and procedure documents were drafted, discussed, completed and ratified by the board in 2013 is a matter of great importance in the area of accountability and transparency. Countless hours of work on the part of consultants, board members and the Head Librarian made this possible. The main consultant on the project was Kandace Kerr. She along with Elizabeth Hoy and others drafted the text of each document. The task of drafting and editing these documents was enormous. All 20 documents are now posted to the FSJPL website, along with our Strategic Plan. The library board and staff have read through all documents and are familiar with their contents.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

All the initiatives and tasks detailed previously support the priorities of the provincial government. The three biggest accomplishments of FSJPL for 2013 were:

1. Initiation of aboriginal involvement process,
2. Application for SLAIS Coop student for 2014, and
3. Completion and ratification of 20 Policy / Procedures documents and their placement on the FSJPL website.

Each of these accomplishments directly supports one of three BC Government Provincial Priorities for 2013:

- Initiation of aboriginal involvement process supports Priority 1: Equitable access.
- Application for SLAIS Coop student for 2014 supports Priority 3: Library collaboration and cooperation.
- Completion and ratification of 20 Policy / Procedures documents supports Priority 4: Accountability and transparency.

Thank you for the opportunity to report these matters.

Fort St. James Public Library would like to once again express thanks for the support of the Libraries and Literacy Branch of the Ministry of Education.

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Fort St. James Public Library

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