

## Fort St. James Public Library



Report prepared in February/March of 2015.

### Introduction

Founded by Simon Fraser in 1806 on the shores of Stuart Lake, Fort St. James is the gateway to a chain of rivers and lakes that traverse 400 kilometres of central British Columbia. The population of the Fort St. James area, including the municipality itself, rural areas and First Nations, is approximately 4,500 people. There is an established forest industry, a burgeoning mining sector and a growing tourism industry. The downtown core, near the District Of Fort St. James office, hosts restaurants, retail shops, banks and a government service office. The library is located near the downtown core.

Year round outdoor and indoor recreational opportunities include hiking and biking trails, soccer and ball parks, golf, fishing, hunting, water-skiing, canoeing, swimming, sailing and boating, alpine and Nordic skiing, skating, hockey, curling, snowmobiling, dog sledding and camping.

Fort St. James and area have played a significant role in history. Visual reminders of this history are evident throughout the town. Among the more prominent are:

- Fort St. James National Historic Site
- Ancient burial site of Carrier Chief Kwah
- Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church
- Monument to legendary bush pilot Russ Baker

The town's important cultural, educational and community opportunities include:

- Public Library
- Community Arts Council
- Music Makers (an amateur theatre company)

- Volunteer Fort St. James (a volunteer coordination service)
- College of New Caledonia

Our *Strategic Plan* continues to address the original eight priorities identified in the planning process. The eight priorities therein identified are:

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

The five priorities set out by the Ministry of Education Library Branch (MELB) in 2014 are very much in line with the priorities identified by the Strategic Plan of Fort St. James Public Library (FSJPL).<sup>1</sup> The *FSJPL Grant Report for 2014* will cover the following three priorities set out by MELB in 2014:

- Priority 1: Equitable access
- Priority 3: Library collaboration and cooperation
- Priority 5: Community engagement and planning

These three priorities clearly have elements in common and intersect with each other in significant ways. Documenting any one priority will involve repeating data or information used in the discussion of other priorities but with a due change in perspective. Success in one area tends to feed success in the others. It also shows that there is a natural synergy between priorities.

## **Priority 1: Equitable access**

Equitable access as a priority encompasses many areas of concern identified by FSJPL and intersects with a range of initiatives and developments. Upgrading and reorganizing equipment, facilities and programs plays a significant role in making library services align with public needs. Improvements in staffing, facilities and services are key components of equitable service for the public.

### **Goals, Accomplishments**

While other initiatives in 2014 could be given there were three goals in 2014 which highlight how we made service more equitable for users. These were:

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<sup>1</sup> As set out in this report MELB priorities align with FSJPL priorities as follows: MELB priority 1 aligns with FSJPL priorities 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7 ; MELB priority 3 aligns with FSJPL priorities 1, 3 and 5 ; and MELB priority 5 aligns with FSJPL priorities 3, 4 and 6.

## 1. Improved access to technology, service, and information.

User feedback and an IT Health Assessment made available to libraries in the North Central Library Federation (NCLF) via the Libraries Coop indicated that our present computer set-up was adequate but that we needed to replace some outdated computers and provide updated software. It was also recommended that the library should either establish its own network or work with other organizations to establish a computer network in which the library would participate.

Other initiatives in this area include:

- Consolidation of all public computers and printers near the circulation desk to more efficiently facilitate staff aid to public internet users
- Redesign of circulation desk and work area for greater efficiency and public access.
- Moving from PLOT to LibPress for our website (via Libraries Coop)
- Assess the adequacy of printers available to staff and the public.
- Design of topical displays to help users find books and other materials more quickly and easily
- Looking at options for updating software on public and staff computers
- Participation in Sitka's Shelf Ready Purchasing Pilot Project<sup>2</sup>
- Acquisition of a movie license
- Participation in Sitka's Shelf Ready Purchasing Pilot program to assess the efficiency of acquiring shelf ready materials in hopes of freeing up staff time for public service and programming
- Working to make the Assistant Librarian position a full-time position allowing for the Head Librarian to devote more time to developing partnerships and programs



Placing all our public computers in one area makes for more efficient service (photograph taken prior to the day's opening).

<sup>2</sup> The success of the Shelf ready Pilot study should allow for better use of staff time and should allow them to provide more services and programs directly to the public.

## 2. Membership terms aligned with community needs and comfort levels.

The learning curve for many new card holders was a challenge and required attention. In 2014 we introduced a special library user category for new users. All new memberships are placed in this category for a period of three months, a time period that provides ample opportunities for new users to learn the ropes.

## 3. Program development serving a wide range of community needs

Three developments in library programming are worthy of special note here. The programs are:

### 1. Early morning program for parents and children

Surveys, focus groups and general feedback from the public indicated clearly that households with young children needed special programming from the library. By the end of 2014 FSJPL was able to provide early morning programs for parents with preschool children. Initially the program was offered on Wednesday mornings but was changed to Thursday mornings when it was found that the Wednesday slot was in conflict with another local children's program. It is anticipated that this program will continue into 2015 and beyond. Each session draws between 5 and twenty participants.

A local elementary school teacher, who also sits on our board, received a grant through the Fort St. James Early Childhood Education Committee (ECDC) in 2014 to establish a Family Literacy Night program in 2015.

Another board member, trained as a school librarian, applied on behalf of FSJPL for another grant via United Way and ECDC. This grant application, which was successful, allowed for the purchase of materials for a children's play time program. The toys acquired with these funds are used in the early morning children's program.

### 2. First Nations collection enhancement

FSJPL continues to acquire materials for the library's First Nations collection. In 2014 a Law Matters grant allowed FSJPL to add some valuable materials to the legal component of the First Nations collection. Due to the costs of these materials it was only the generosity of the Law Matters grants that made it possible to make these purchases.

### 3. Spanish classes

The Assistant Librarian, who is a native speaker of Spanish and an excellent teacher, restarted her Spanish classes at the request of an enthusiastic public. The College of New Caledonia (CNC) is no longer able to provide language instruction so the library was able to step in with the Assistant Librarians help. The class has about 30 students registered.

Some of the programs and services established in 2014 in response to the priorities identified by MELB and FSJPL include:

1. Establishment of a new users membership category
2. Establishment of an early morning children's program
3. Acquisition of toys for use in programming for children
4. Acquisition of specialized legal materials for the library's First Nations collection

## **Public Feedback.**

Feedback received from the public in any form is valuable. Here and there throughout this report I will intersperse letters or content from interviews I have undertaken as part of my annual report activities. The content of these letters and interviews ranges widely but underscores the contents of the report as well as providing additional information of interest to MELB and FSJPL. I will entitle these inserts as numbered Public Comments. I offered to keep the contents anonymous but none of the people involved requested that I do so. I am honoured by the trust they have shown.

### Public Comment 1:

Jennifer Turner (letter presented to the librarian on April 2, 2105).

*Hello, to whom it may concern,*

*My name is Jennifer Turner. I am the mother of 3, of a single income family. We relocated from our friends and family almost exactly 2 years ago.*

*Our family has been using the Ft. St. James library ever since. I take advantage of borrowing movies and books for entertainment purposes and promoting literacy in my family. We also take advantage of the social activities the library facilitates, such as Easter egg hunt, Family literacy night, and Ready Set Read in the summer months. My oldest daughter Aaron actually met her first friends in the Fort during that program and my daughters cherish their medals. The library also facilitates a program for young children Thursdays that me and my youngest will be attending. I also take advantage of the wifi and computers as I don't have internet at home for communication with our families and paying bills.*

*Overall the Fort St James library and staff enriches my family and my life and I thank them.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration.*

*Jennifer Turner PO Box 2211 Ft St James BC V0J 1P0*

## Key Partnerships

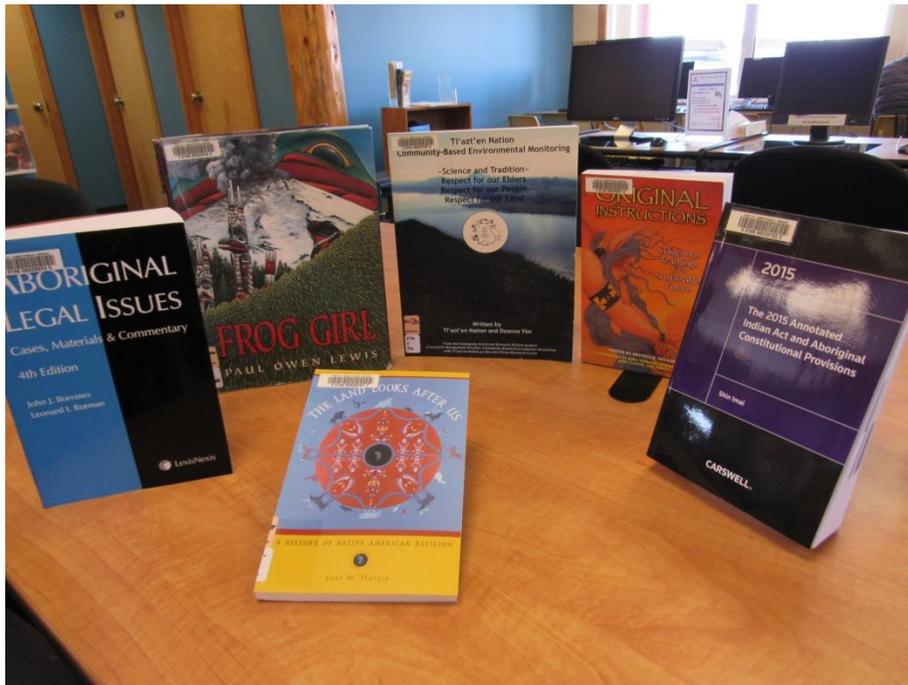
The library partnered with a wide range of organizations in 2014. The following organizations were especially important partners in 2014:

- North Central Library Federation (NCLF)
- BCLibraries Cooperative
- Fort St. James Early Childhood Development Committee (ECDC)
- Law Matters
- United Way of Northern British Columbia
- Healthier Communities
- District of Fort St. James

Further details of these collaborations will be highlighted in the next section of this report under Library collaboration and cooperation.

## Outcomes

- Better computer service for the public
- Greater service to families with young children
- Enhanced First Nations collection
- Fewer problems with overdue and unreturned materials
- Easier access to topical materials



Our First Nations Collection comes out of extensive collaboration with a range of organizations and individuals.

Public Comment 2:

Walter Patrick, native elder (interviewed on Tuesday March 31, 2015).

*I have done many things. I worked for the Salmon Enhancement Program for twelve and a half years just before I retired. I write letters to various parties in the government and elsewhere and meet with people too when called for. I am active in educating myself and others. I use the library for recreation and for research. There is much good information in the library. I am a descendant and heir of Chief Kwah.<sup>3</sup> Land issues, native rights and treaties are things I read about often. I also use the legal books, especially those dealing with native rights and land claims. I also read for fun and like to borrow DVDs, like the movie "Fury" that I'm taking home today. Self-education is something I value so I read on many subjects not just those of First Nations. The historical process is very important, of course, because so many issues are still outstanding. People need to have that knowledge. Part of knowing who we are is knowing our history. Our Carrier language is disappearing and needs to be preserved. More animal names and place names should be derived from Carrier than is the case now. Also we need the library to carry language materials in other languages like German and Spanish. Our area has a rich history much of it predating European contact. New Caledonia, which became Fort St. James<sup>4</sup>, was more or less the first capital of the province. Even before Europeans arrived native people from our area were trading with plains indians, trading items like oolichan grease for buffalo hides. The Oolichan Grease Trails<sup>5</sup> were what the explorers followed when they came. These trails were there for a long time before the Europeans used them. This knowledge needs to be available in the library.*

**Priority 3: Library collaboration and cooperation**

The library works with a range of organizations but for the purposes of this report there are four partnerships that played a significant role in 2014. The four organizations are:

- College of New Caledonia (CNC) with its Key drop-in centre.

<sup>3</sup> *Kwah* is the usual English form of the name of the famous Carrier leader *Kw'eh*. He was born around 1755 and died in 1840. Chief Kw'eh was the chief of what is now the Nak'azdli band in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In his time, few people lived at Nak'azdli (Fort Saint James), which attracted people due to the location of the North West Company (later Hudson's Bay Company) fort there, which was not established until 1806. The main village was located at Tsaochoe ("Sowchea"). (Wikipedia)

<sup>4</sup> Founded by the North West Company explorer and fur trader Simon Fraser in 1806, it came under the management of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 with the forced merger of the two battling fur companies. Also known historically as *Stuart Lake Post*, it is one of British Columbia's oldest permanent European settlements and was the administrative centre for the Hudson's Bay Company's New Caledonia fur district. The fort, rebuilt four times, continued as an important trading post well into the twentieth century. Now the fort is a National Historic Site of Canada with some buildings dating to the 1880s.

<sup>5</sup> Because these trails were commonly used to transport Oolichan grease, they are now referred to as "grease trails." (Wikipedia).

- Law Matters
- North Central Library Federation (NCLF)
- Sitka with the Shelf Ready Purchasing Pilot project

## Goals, Accomplishments

Goal 1: Service to First Nations. We worked with both CNC and Law Matters to enhance service to local First Nations. CNC's drop-in centre is close to the library and was a natural location to make contact with a portion of the population that don't necessarily use the library. Likewise Law Matters helped FSJPL to built up our First Nations collection by the addition of new legal titles, most of which are available only at great cost.

Goal 2: Improve service to the entire community. NCLF is perhaps our most important partner. Working with them allowed FSJPL to acquire a movie license, start preparations for a community needs assessment, and make arrangements to participate in the IT health Assessment Initiative. Sitka's Shelf Ready Purchasing Pilot project helped us test out the value of purchasing shelf ready materials to free up resources and staff time for other services to the community.

## Programs, Services

The library now has an arrangement that makes free books available for distribution through the Key. First Nations people are very comfortable using the Key and were happy to acquire literacy materials through that venue. Approximately 300 books were distributed through this method. Since many of the people visiting the Key are from remote areas this was a great service enhancement. We are also able to advertise other library services and programs through the Key.

The shelf ready initiative is proving a great help, freeing up staff time for other duties and service opportunities. For example staff are regularly putting up topical and author based displays that the public enjoy and utilize regularly. Also because other staff members are able to help the Assistant Librarian pull and process ILL materials, she has had time to conduct our very popular Spanish classes.

A few of the titles made available through our Law Matters grant were:

John J. Borrows and Leonard I. Rotman. *Aboriginal legal Issues : Cases, materials and commentary.*

Shin Imai. *Annotated Indian Act and Aboriginal Constitutional Provisions.*

Thomas Isaac and Kristyn Annis. *Treaty rights in the historic treaties of Canada.*

Olthius et al. *Aboriginal law handbook.* 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

## Outcomes

- More literacy materials distributed to First Nations and others.
- More staff time for public service

## Public Comment 3:

Judy Cormier (Academic Advisor at CNC who runs the Key Outreach)

*The importance of Literacy in our lives is beyond measure. It impacts every aspect of our lives; healthcare, employment, economic status, social education and culture. The KEY Resource Centre is named to define its purpose. KEY is an acronym for Knowledge Empowers You, and is a response to an emergent need within the community of Fort St. James.*

*At the Key Resource Centre, our programs are flexible and personalized to meet the specific needs of our participants. Patrons are supported through Life Skills, Employment, and Computer literacy workshops and access to information. Literacy today refers to far more than the accepted belief of simply reading and writing, requiring teaching in all areas of life.*

*The Fort St James Library has been and continues to be a valuable partner in our endeavors. Wayne is always a great support. The donation of books from the Libraries' Discard program has proven invaluable. We have been able to support much more Family literacy having these resources at our disposal. We have children and parents who come here regularly to read and to be read to. Part of our program is the regulated book giveaway and I have 3 little girls pre-school age that come every week to read our books and choose one to take home. They have developed a real interest in learning in general.*

*Having the books here creates an opportunity for parents or grandparents to read to their children since there are a wide variety of stories available. The adult books are just as popular.*

*Wayne and I have discussed further partnering which I feel will only benefit our community better. The Library is a valuable place for all of Fort St James community. Their services continue to contribute to the improvement of our Literacy levels here in FSJ and certainly within our Aboriginal community.*

*Judy Cormier  
Academic Advisor / Program Coordinator  
The Key Resource Centre*



CNC's Key Resource Centre is a "key" partnership for Fort St. James Public Library.

Public Comment 4:

Nellie Dionne (interviewed on Friday March 27, 2015)

*I am a First Nations elder, a Carrier language teacher at David Hoy Elementary School and a grandmother. I come into the library with my granddaughter every week so we can pick up some books to read together. She really enjoys that and she reads at least two books a week this way. It is an important part of her education. The library is a good environment for her. I am concerned that many native students do not read enough or know enough about their own language or culture. This is a big challenge. I want to see them using the library more. Reading is not a traditional part of our culture but it is very important for native families to work with their children to develop a healthy reading habit. Anyone can do this. I and many other First Nations people locally have acted to make this part of their lives. My family insisted on it when I was young. We were big readers. The historical and cultural materials are important, so I am glad those books are in the library. Much of our history is tragic, like the residential schools, but there is an opportunity for our communities to work together for the good of all. Life is too short to concentrate only on the tragedies. My mother used to meet people arriving at the Grand Rapids<sup>6</sup> docks as they came off the boat. She knew the history but welcomed them all and worked to make everyone really feel welcome. It is a part of the culture, that hospitality and caring. There are many paths, not just one. We can work together to make life better for everyone. The community is changing too, for everyone, not just First Nations. Over the last ten years, as the population changed, the number of students entering school here has dropped about 50%, from about 1000 to about 500. More of the population is made up of adults now, but the need for reading has not gone down at all. Reading opens up so much. I have agreed to sit on the library board to help with developing library service to First Nations.*

**Priority 5: Community Engagement and Planning**

In 2014 there were two primary initiatives that required engagement with the community to further the library's goals.

**Goals, Accomplishments**

Goal 1: To develop family and children's programs and facilities in accordance with community needs. Utilizing findings from focus groups, interviews and a small survey sample we identified a need for programming for families with preschool children. The focus groups were particularly important in the success of this process.

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<sup>6</sup> Grand Rapids is a Dakeh community northwest of Fort St. James, British Columbia, Canada, located at the confluence of the Tachie and Kuzkwa Rivers near Trembleur Lake. (Wikipedia)

Goal 2: To bring greater diversity to the board by recruiting from a broader spectrum of the local population. The Head Librarian and various board members had informal discussions with a range of people at meetings, in one-on-one encounters and at public events throughout the year. The focus groups turned out to be one of the most important places to send out the recruitment message.

## Programs, Services

Our new Thursday morning drop-in and playtimes for families with pre-schoolers, sometimes called Moms and Tots, was a direct result of this consultation process. Previous consultations with the community have consistently identified programs for young families as a priority. Conducting focus groups and allocating resources in line with the findings produced a successful outcome.

The recruitment of board members is an ongoing process but we have at least one new board member as a result of the 2014 focus groups. A valuable though unintended outcome of conducting them. Further consultation in 2015 has added a native elder to the board, illustrating that a properly conducted consultation process continues to produce dividends.

## Key Partnerships

Fort St. James Early Childhood Development Committee members worked with us on this consultation process. ECDC had previously completed a very similar needs assessment process. At least one ECDC member currently sits on the board because of the mutual interactions between our organizations.

## Outcomes

- A popular new program that serves the needs of the community.
- New board members who add to the diversity of the board. The process continues to bear fruit in 2015 as a native elder who was consulted in 2014 has agreed to sit on the board starting in 2015.



Slatwall displays have made browsing easier for patrons and attracted new users.

Community Comment 5:

Valerie Crowley  
PO Box 1709  
Fort St. James, BC V0J 1P0  
valacrow@gmail.com  
(778) 978-0560

2 April 2015

Dear Madame or Sir,

*Our family lives, works and homeschools at a research station one hour north of Fort St. James. The FSJ Public Library is a critical part of our lives, acting as a bridge between us, the community, and provincial resources.*

*My children and I each check out several new books for pleasure reading every week. We are all voracious readers, but the addition of a dvd collection this past year was appreciated too. We are on a tight budget and don't have access to television or streaming where we live. The kids really look forward to borrowing a dvd for 'movie night'! For me, the new, rotating wallboard collections highlighted books that I didn't know we had in the collection – this is where I stop first when short on time. We rely heavily on the BC One Card system, as well as inter-library loans for homeschooling our children. The FSJ Public Library has even more important to us than the province's public distributed learning school. The new non-fiction youth books were particularly helpful for my G5 learner this school year. In the future, it would be great to see a small collection of wordless picture books and audio books for my emerging reader.*

*For activities, both of my children participate in the summer reading club every year. This winter, my older child enjoyed the tween book club, and was sad when it ended due to low participation. My younger child has enjoyed getting together with buddies during the Mom & Tots sessions, reading stories and playing with the new toy collection.*

*We've also used the public space upstairs for community gatherings such as yoga, 4H and birding.*

*In short, the Fort St. James Public Library is an indispensable part of our lives. It is the single most important community resource that we use, and I can't express our appreciation enough. Thank you so very much!*

Kind Regards,  
Valerie Crowley



Moms and Tots early morning program



Family Literacy Night program

### **Conclusion**

Fort St. James Public Library is still very much in transition because the community served by the library is very much in transition. Outcomes in 2014 show that small but consistent gains add up to real successes that have a positive impact on the community. Equity of access, collaboration within the library community and community engagement are vital components of success for Fort St. James Public Library.

Wayne Briscoe  
Head Librarian  
Fort St. James Public Library  
March 2015