

Fort St James Public Library Association
Chair's Annual Report
2021 – 2022
Submitted by:
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The 2021 – 2022 year has been another interesting one for library staff, Board and patrons. We have continued to learn how to navigate challenging situations in the time of a global pandemic. The Board has gone from in-person meetings of all Board members in August of 2021 back to Zoom in September and currently a combination of in-person/Zoom participation in the Spring of 2022. We continue to be flexible and innovative working hard to meet the needs of trustees, the library and the community in our governance role.

This year, three new trustees joined the Board and one trustee resigned mid-term. It is through the efforts and commitment of both experienced and new trustees that we have accomplished much this year in our governance work.

The Board approved the education plan submitted by the Assistant Librarian and we support and appreciate her efforts to meet the educational requirements of the position.

The Board supported the Library Director's decision to lower the flag to half-mast and to post a public statement in recognition of the unmarked graves discovered at Tk'emlups te Secwepemc in May of 2022. Lowering the flag and making a public statement on behalf of the library was a small but important act of reconciliation during this very difficult time for First Nations communities across the country.

Board development has been an aspect of the current Strategic Plan and is anticipated to be part of the draft plan being presented at the next regular meeting. The entire Board attended a session in August with BCLTA's Director of Learning and Development dealing with governance roles and responsibilities and strategic planning. Several trustees attended various BCLTA workshops throughout the year, and three attended the annual BCLA virtual conference.

For a number of years, the Board has been discussing a salary raise for the Library Director. Research was completed by a trustee comparing salaries and benefits for LDs in the NCLF and NWLF libraries. The comparison supported the need for a salary increase and an ad hoc committee was struck to make some recommendations to the Board at large. The committee developed a salary matrix based on education and experience which was approved by the Board. As part of the annual presentation to Mayor and Council, the matrix was put forward with a request for an increase to the library's budget to allow for a salary increase. The presentation was very well received, and the increase was approved unanimously. This is an example of the important role the Board has in advocating for the library and its staff.

Another ad hoc committee was struck to work with District staff on a Service Agreement between the FSJaPLA and the Municipality of Fort St. James. After many hours of meetings, reviews, questions and negotiations the agreement was approved by the Board of Trustees and Mayor and Council, and a 5-year agreement was signed in May of 2022. Although this partnership has existed for many years, this is the first time a formal relationship has been documented, outlining clearly the roles and responsibilities of the two parties. This allows for consistency and continuity for both parties and solidifies the relationship between the library and local government. The successful outcome of this committee's work is greatly appreciated. We look forward to strengthening our relationship with the municipality and have a deep appreciation for the many ways they support the library, staff, and trustees.

A third ad hoc committee was struck to develop a new 5-year Strategic Plan. As of this AGM, the final draft has been written and will be presented for approval at the next regular meeting. This is the third SP for the FSJaPLA and much learning has taken place about the importance of ensuring the goals of a Strategic Plan are within our capacity as well as producing a document that is accessible and meaningful. The Strategic Plan, like the library, is organic and evolving as the community needs change in relation to a changing world.

The Policy Committee with the help of the other standing committees and a hired consultant have brought 17 new or revised policies for approval this year. All were approved. An 18th policy will be put forward at the next regular meeting. The committee has also developed a system for reviewing policies as outlined in the related policies. A new trustee joined the committee in 2021.

The Human Resources Committee completed the LD annual review and continue to create a process that is purposeful and beneficial helping to keep the library relevant and vibrant. This is an ongoing process. The HR committee welcomed a new member.

The Finance Committee has also been working hard. The committee is currently working on allotting funds for short, medium and long term funds for both operational and strategic needs. It is exploring different options for generating some ongoing income for unexpected and future needs. The FC was also fortunate in having a new trustee join.

In summary a number of significant successes were accomplished this year due to the hard work and commitment of the LD and trustees. As well there is the ongoing work that takes place before after and during regular monthly meetings which requires trustee involvement. It can not be overstated how important it is to have engaged and dedicated trustees willing to give their time and their energy to the library and the community. Thank you to each one of you for what you have contributed.

We continue to appreciate our funders and partners, the Municipality of Fort St. James, Libraries Branch of the Provincial Government and the Regional District of Buckley Nechako. This year we would also like to thank Integris Community Foundation, The Law Society of BC, and the Kimberly Foundation.

On behalf of the Board I want to express appreciation for the Library Director and the staff who have been on the frontline during these challenging times and have continued to adapt to the ever changing landscape supporting one another and the patrons. With patience, kindness, and professionalism.

Finally, we have met the challenges of unusual times and look forward to participating in a post covid world where the library can offer active services to the residents of Fort St. James, Nak'azdli Whut'en, the Regional District and all others who access our library.