



## PUBLIC LIBRARY GRANT REPORT FOR 2020

### INTRODUCTION

The Invermere Public Library is located at the edge of Lake Windermere in the Columbia Valley of the East Kootenays. The Purcell Mountains to the west and the Rocky Mountains to the east draw outdoor enthusiasts and tourists year-round.



The Invermere Public Library serves a large geographical area of the Regional District of the East Kootenays (RDEK). The area encompasses the residents of the District of Invermere (DOI), the Village of Radium Hot Springs, the Village of Canal Flats, and Areas F and G of the RDEK. The total population is approximately 9000. This number increases significantly in the summer months due to our proximity to Alberta and the number of recreational property owners who call the Columbia Valley home. This results in significant swells in the population that we serve at various times of the year, particularly in the summer and during holidays as well as over school breaks throughout the year. The library is located within the municipal boundaries of the District of Invermere which is the commercial centre for the Columbia Valley. It is where most of the residents throughout the area come to access medical and other health services as well as their groceries and retail needs. The children of the area attend elementary school in their own communities, but the regional high school is in Invermere and provides the only public schooling for students in Grades 8 through 12.

The library had an exceptionally unusual year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Closure of the library in March of 2020 impacted in-person programs and services and forced the library to pivot to online service delivery, virtual programming, and contactless curb side delivery of materials in order to continue serving patrons. To re-start in-person service, the library aligned itself with the provincial phases of re-opening as well as Work Safe BC's protocols for the library sector to ensure that staff and patrons were safe.

When the doors re-opened to the public in June of 2020, statistics were gathered to track patron foot traffic as well as the number of daily phone calls. The pandemic, without a doubt, had a major impact on the library, even with pre-pandemic opening hours, there were 50% fewer patrons through our doors. Though the library had to remove seating and postpone in-library programming, the IPL remained a hub for readers, students, patrons accessing online government services, small business owners, and citizens from every background who needed to access information and literacy skills to help them participate in community life as fully as possible.

The pandemic did have a positive impact on the library's virtual collection of e-books and e-audiobooks as more titles could be purchased and for those new resources, Invermere library patrons had priority access. In keeping with the strategic goals of improving accessibility and providing the most current technology possible, these new e-books and e-readers, became part of our collection.

The current strategic plan for the library expires in 2021 and will be revised and updated to reflect current overarching goals. Presently, the three goals of the Invermere Public Library are: Community Engagement, Regional Collaboration, and Services. These three goals continue to recognize that the geographic size of our library's service region remains a key consideration when making decisions for library programs and service delivery. As such, the IPL will continue to search for ways to deliver programming to more people in innovative and imaginative ways while continuing to expand the range of services at the library itself.

The goals that guide the work of the Invermere Public Library are as follows:

1. **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** The Invermere Public Library is a collaborative community resources in the delivery of library services to the communities of the Columbia Valley.
2. **REGIONAL COLLABORATION:** The Invermere Public Library is recognized as a community hub that provides programming and services to the communities of the Columbia Valley.
3. **SERVICES:** The services provided by the Invermere Public Library will meet the needs of the communities of the Columbia Valley.

## PROVINCIAL PRIORITIES

The province focused on the following priorities in 2020:

- Improving access for British Columbians
- Building Capacity
- Advancing citizen engagement
- Enhancing governance

## PRIORITY 1 - IMPROVING ACCESS FOR BRITISH COLUMBIANS

### LIBRARY GOAL THAT SUPPORTS THIS PRIORITY:

From our strategic plan, there are several different objectives where the plan aligns with this priority. The objectives listed under our second goal for regional collaboration state that IPL will work to have “the Library recognized as a community hub that provides programming and services to communities of the Columbia Valley” and “to raise the awareness of the regional scope of library service delivery that currently takes place and seek out ways to enhance it.”

### PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES THAT ARE CONNECTED WITH THIS PRIORITY

1. ***Delivering services people can count on:*** IPL offers a wide range of free programs and services. Most of these services are available to people even if they do not have an IPL or other BC public library card. During the COVID-19 pandemic, IPL services pivoted to online delivery, virtual programming, and curbside service. When the doors were closed to the public during the spring of 2020, story time, take home crafts, and family activities were created by staff and set outside for families and patrons to pick up at their convenience. The Library Assistant for Community Outreach was able to take programming online, reaching young readers through story time, older children with STEAM programs and coding activities, and adult readers with events such as online book clubs.
2. ***Collaboration with community groups and organizations:*** At the start of 2020, prior to the pandemic, IPL partnered with several other community groups and organizations to connect more people in our service area with information and resources. The library had planned to host another “How To” festival but that was postponed by COVID. The library staff had hoped to reconnect people in the community generate the enthusiasm that was born out the first run of this festival.

### PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT THE PRIORITY

Prior to the pandemic, the Invermere Public Library partnered with organizations such as the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, Windermere Valley to provide free community literacy programming to a variety of groups including young families for Baby Goose programming and seniors for iPad support sessions.

## OUTCOMES THAT WERE IDENTIFIED

1. ***Delivering services people can count on:*** With improvements to our technology services, members of the community have come to expect a wide range of services available to them six days a week. The printer on the library network gives people flexibility to print, copy, scan, or fax. When the pandemic was declared, the pay station and wireless capability were bypassed as part of COVID protocols. Once in-person services resume, users will be able to print from their own wireless devices and pay with cash or a credit card. These expanded services have been appreciated by patrons, the community, and visitors.

Partnering with the local literacy organization, Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), to run a vital program for parents with young babies supports the provincial goal of equitable access to literacy development. The IPL and CBAL co-facilitated this program until the pandemic when group activities were stopped under provincial health orders. Programs such as Baby Goose, which brought new parents and their children together, has been greatly missed by the community. Once restrictions ease, careful thought will be given to resuming children's early literacy programming.

The library's mezzanine space, designed for groups to gather, was impacted by COVID. In the early months of the pandemic, no public seating was available in the library and therefore, the mezzanine was not accessible. By late summer and early fall, complying with COVID restrictions in the province, some study and workspaces were made available. The library does not charge non-profit groups a fee to use this space. There are very few spaces like this one in the Columbia Valley that can be used at no cost.

2. ***Collaboration with community groups and organizations:*** Collaboration in 2020 looked quite different than it had before the pandemic. Partnering with the library to use the physical space was not possible, so groups connected through video conferencing software and apps. Readers in the Kootenay Library Federation, of which the Invermere Public Library is a member, came together for a book club featuring local authors. Teens have also had access to authors on platforms such as Zoom, an experience they might have had if the author visit was in person, and not in their community.

## BUILDING CAPACITY

### LIBRARY GOAL THAT SUPPORTS THIS PRIORITY

From the strategic plan, IPL will “encourage the public’s awareness, participation, and perception of the library as an important resource for the communities of the Columbia Valley” and will also “continue to provide the communities of the Columbia Valley with access to current technology.”

### PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES THAT ALIGN WITH THIS PRIORITY

Outreach services brought library programming and services outside of the library building and into the community until the COVID-19 restrictions temporarily prevented in-person programming from taking place. Library staff continue to provide a book exchange to Canal Flats in the southern part of the service area, and to Edgewater in the north.

The library has continued to build up its collection of STEAM (science, technology, engineering, and math) devices so as to be ready to resume youth programming involving mini robots and codable devices. Prior to COVID, outreach STEAM programming was delivered in smaller communities outside of Invermere as well in the senior’s residence in town. The residents were delighted by the children, their creativity and imagination. The sharing between the generations brought joy to everyone.

### PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT THE PRIORITY

For the outreach services, IPL’s partnerships included connections with local government to host pop-up events on their properties throughout the Columbia Valley. Due to COVID restrictions on in-person programs, the library partnered with the member libraries of the Kootenay Library Federation to deliver virtual programming that could be accessed by all Kootenay library patrons. The library also partnered with the Summit Youth Centre in Invermere and Wings Over the Rockies.

IPL is an active member of the Kootenay Library Federation (KLF). It is this partnership that allows our library to access consortium pricing when purchasing library materials, including books. In 2020, the KLF supported member libraries with funding for e-books, a format that grew in demand around the province as a result of the pandemic. The increase in e-resources for KLF member libraries meant patrons had reduced wait times for popular items and continued access to library collections at times when physical collections were not available.

## OUTCOMES THAT WERE IDENTIFIED

Throughout 2020, despite COVID closures and restrictions, IPL staff appreciated the positive feedback from patrons who mentioned how impressed they were with all that the library continued to offer adding that they did not realize the wide variety of library services that could be offered virtually and out of doors in warmer weather. The mezzanine space in the library was in demand by many community members prior to the pandemic and was greatly missed when the COVID restrictions prohibited the gathering of people in indoor spaces. With few free spaces for meeting and studying in Invermere, the mezzanine was and will be again, a space that makes life affordable for everyone.

## ADVANCING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

### LIBRARY GOAL THAT SUPPORTS THIS PRIORITY

From the library's strategic plan: "To continue to develop a network of partnerships with other community organizations in order to enhance the delivery of services to the communities of the Columbia Valley" as well as continuing to "connect with our major funding partners on a regular basis to keep them informed of our performance and plans."

### PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES THAT ALIGN WITH THIS PRIORITY

Invermere Public Library makes it a priority to stay connected with a variety of community organizations to ensure that the library is informed of the plans and goals of other groups as well as communicating those of the library. In 2020, these connections were maintained through video conferencing and the occasional in person meeting when permitted by the health orders. Understanding the challenges of each organization helped build compassion and empathy among the community partners. From the local literacy agency to the local government representatives and staff, to schools and day cares, the library values its relationship with each group.

### PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY

The Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy (CBAL), Windermere Valley has been a partner with the library on several projects and programs, though they were abruptly halted to due to COVID -19 in early 2020. The staff of the library look forward to partnering with CBAL as soon as the province directs in-person programming to resume.

The District of Invermere supported library programs operating in the community hall such as story time for young children and their parents and the Indoor Walking

program. The “How To” festival, which had to be postponed due to the pandemic, was scheduled to take place in the large community hall.

The Columbia Basin Trust and the Columbia Valley Community Foundation have been instrumental in supporting the vision of a technology hub for the library. Funding for this initiative was secured in 2019 and due to the pandemic, will be completed in 2021/22.

The Friends of the Library group continues to be a very supportive network of volunteers who host fundraisers annually with proceeds donated to the library. During COVID, this dynamic and innovative group found ways to safely stage their fundraisers out of doors. These funds are used to enhance programs and services that are offered by the Invermere Public Library.

### OUTCOMES THAT WERE IDENTIFIED

Being actively involved with each of these partners throughout 2020 increased the visibility and awareness of the Invermere Public Library throughout the community. As an organization like ours becomes involved with other community groups, our reach increases as well because we created additional avenues to share information about the services and programs at IPL. In each of the partnerships listed above and many others that are not listed, the beneficiary of the partnerships are the residents of the Columbia Valley because each connection is an example of another program and/or service we have been able to provide for them free of charge. These efforts combine to improve the overall well-being of the people of our service area.

## ENHANCING GOVERNANCE

### LIBRARY GOAL THAT SUPPORTS THIS PRIORITY

From the library’s strategic plan, this priority is best supported by the library’s intent to “maintain and enrich a range of relevant library services.”

### PROGRAMS AND/OR SERVICES THAT ALIGN WITH THIS PRIORITY

The Library Director and the board of volunteer trustees meet regularly to review the programs and services of the library as well as explore various ways in which the board can promote and support the library. Governance is a priority for the BC Library Trustees Association, and they are working with boards across BC to improve trustee orientation so that board members may be as effective as possible. New board members have voiced their enthusiasm for the library and are eager to endorse the library’s programs and services.

## PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT THIS PRIORITY

The partnership for this priority comes from the board of volunteer trustees working collaboratively with the library director and library staff to achieve the goals of the library in a coordinated way. This priority is also supported by the relationships that have been developed with local government for the continuity of annual operating funds as well as with local organizations that provide a variety of granting streams which the library accesses to enhance programs and services.

## OUTCOMES THAT WERE IDENTIFIED

The library board and director performed a scan of the goals and objectives through the lens of COVID and the impact of the pandemic on library programs and services. It was important to evaluate the internal and external environments impacting the library and update the current strategic plan to meet current challenges and changes. With the revisions made to the goals and objectives, staff reimagined programs and service delivery with the strategic plan goals and objectives as their focus.

## ALIGNMENT WITH PROVINCIAL STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

The Invermere Public Library **improves access for British Columbians** by providing WIFI free of charge to all members of our community 24/7, public access computers, and an extensive range of databases and digital resources. The growing range of databases and online services ensures that members of the Columbia Valley have access to the information and tools they need to learn, work, and create in our rapidly changing world.

The IPL is committed to **building capacity** by delivering a wide range of services that people depend on. In addition to traditional book lending, residents of the Columbia Valley also have access to a large collection of eBooks and community programming. Barrier free access to technology is also available through the IPL, both within the library and beyond. We are committed to communicating with our patrons and residents through print and social media so that all are aware of services, upcoming special events, and opportunities for connecting with others through library programming.

The IPL is committed to **advancing citizen engagement and social inclusion**. As soon as we are through the pandemic, the IPL will once again offer free in-person programming and services, as well as free use of the mezzanine space for meetings, studying, and gathering with others, ensures that members of our community have the information and tools they need to develop skills and engage in knowledge creation to further develop themselves and their community. With the upheaval caused by the pandemic, there is a demand for learning and skill development in

order to return to communities and public life in the productive ways that it was before COVID. The library supports the interests of life-long learners as well as youth needing to acquire new competencies and skills.

The IPL is committed to **true, lasting reconciliation with First Nations in British Columbia through the adoption and implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission**. We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa and Shuswap Peoples. We recognize the importance of developing a collection of resources that reflects our community and many languages spoken here. The IPL fosters knowledge sharing and inclusion by creating and promoting activities and resources in the Ktunaxa, Shuswap and Michif languages.

The Invermere Public Library strives for service excellence through leadership development and **enhancing governance**. Both the library director and board of trustees actively participate in training and development opportunities offered by the British Columbia Library Trustees Association as well as by the library federations in the province.

### TECHNOLOGY GRANT FINAL REPORT

In March 2020, the Invermere Public Library received a one-time grant to support technology in the library. The following table shows the areas of service that were chosen to benefit from this grant, the outputs, immediate outcomes, intermediate outcomes, and ultimate outcomes/impact.

Area of Need	Outputs	Immediate Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes	Ultimate Outcomes/Impacts
Growing the electronic collection of IPL	E-books for IPL patrons using Overdrive Advantage	Increasing access to for IPL patrons by reducing wait times for e-resources	In this time of COVID, patrons who may not be able or choose not to visit IPL in person continue to have access to books	Improving access for British Columbians. IPL patrons have better access to a broad range of materials in the library's virtual collection
Patron computer software upgrade	Purchase software to provide remote	Increase patron satisfaction with service	Continued safety precautions	Making people's lives better

	assistance to patrons while on the public computers	delivered in a safe manner	during the pandemic	
Patron hardware upgrades	Purchase of loanable technology/e-readers	Remove barriers to access of e-resources by having loanable e-readers	Increase access to e-books and use of e-readers	Improving access for British Columbians
Improve internet connectivity	Increase WIFI speed and capacity	Improve the stability and dependability of high-speed and broadband internet service	Increased use of library WIFI	Improve the stability and dependability of high-speed and broadband internet service
Digital Programming	Interactive reading app	Challenge patrons who sign up for reading challenges to log their reading time and win prizes	Increase reading engagement for all age groups	Advance citizen engagement

**COVID-19 AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES**

Invermere Public Library was impacted by COVID-19 in unprecedented ways, like all libraries in British Columbia. We faced service disruptions from the earliest days of the pandemic in March of 2020 ranging from full closure of the library through to the modified re-opening we have today. IPL followed the guidance of the federal and provincial governments as the situation evolved and we learned more about the coronavirus that upended life as we knew it.

## HOW INVERMERE PUBLIC LIBRARY WAS IMPACTED BY COVID-19

With our doors closed to the public for several weeks, IPL staff pivoted to deliver services and programming in new and innovative ways, reminding patrons of the extensive digital collection as well as databases, magazines, and movies available to them at any hour of the day. IPL met patron requests by phone, email, and social media. No matter which way people reached out, an IPL staff member was there to respond.

The pandemic interrupted in-person programming in the library. Early literacy programs such as story-time was suddenly stopped but quickly pivoted to a video platform to reach young readers who loved the stories and songs. Take home crafts were also developed since in-person activities for children were also suspended.

Seniors programs and adult book clubs were also disrupted or canceled. Book clubs remerged online through video sharing platforms, bringing together not only local readers but also those from other parts of the Columbia Valley. The Kootenay Library Federation was instrumental in bringing member libraries together to share ideas and programming for patrons of all ages. This network kept directors connected and inspired to collaborate through the sharing of ideas and experiences.

## HOW DID INVERMERE PUBLIC LIBRARY RESPOND?

Invermere Public Library responded to the pandemic by following PHO guidelines, the provincial phases of re-opening, and implemented the COVID protocols prepared by Work Safe BC. Through a combination of old-fashioned head scratching and grant funding to purchase physical barriers, signage, and hand sanitization equipment, the Invermere Public Library staff and board of trustees redesigned the layout of the library to comply with the new COVID protocols for safe operations. While preparations were underway to prepare the library, curb side service was available for book lending as well as printing, faxing, and copying services.



## SUMMARY

The year 2020 was like no other, offering challenges and silver linings as we learned to live in a pandemic with a virus for which people had no immunity. Libraries, like most services, learned to operate in new and innovative ways, relying increasingly on technology and social media to offer programming and communicate with patrons.

January and February were still familiar, with in-person programming, community outreach activities, workshops, and author presentations, both in town and in the valley. Board meetings were held in person in the library mezzanine. By March, Canadians were directed to stay home and consequently, we closed our doors to the public.

As a staff, we continued to serve the public from home, by phone and email, and supported patrons so that they could access the online catalogue e-books, e-audiobooks, e-magazines, movies, and databases.

Our staff and board became proficient with Zoom, a virtual meeting space that allowed us to continue our work. We met more frequently to understand the evolving situation and how to adapt as a municipal service in our community, which we did.

Slowly but surely, we implemented increasing levels of customer service starting with curbside delivery in May, re-opening our doors to the public in June, and making public access computers available in August. Since that time, we have pivoted to curbside service only once and are optimistic that we will be able to remain open to the public going forward.

As we look ahead to 2021, the Invermere Public Library is hoping to further open the library space, reconnect with our community in person, and expand public library programming and technology services. The successes that have been achieved over the year will certainly provide us with the motivation and enthusiasm to continue achieving our vision of being a welcoming community hub that meets the diverse literacy needs of our valley's population.