



# Coquitlam Public Library: Response to Truth & Reconciliation

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Proposal

**Anthea Goffe, Director – Community Engagement**

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## 1 OVERVIEW

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In 2006, the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement was announced between the Government of Canada and approximately 86,000 Indigenous peoples who were part of the Canadian Indian residential school system, a system that was in place between 1879 and 1996. This agreement recognized the damage inflicted by this system and components of the agreement included payments to

the victims, victims' services, and additional considerations.<sup>1</sup> One of these considerations was the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC), active between 2008 and 2015. In 2015, the TRC released a report of its findings along with 94 Calls to Action regarding reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples.<sup>2</sup> In 2016, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA) formed its own Truth & Reconciliation Committee to advance reconciliation and support the Calls to Action. In 2017 the committee issued the CFLA *Truth and Reconciliation Report and Recommendations*<sup>3</sup> (CFLA Report), which outlines the particular ways that libraries are uniquely positioned to participate.

## 2 CALLS TO ACTION SPECIFIC TO LIBRARIES

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As part of the CFLA Report, the committee identified 46 of the 94 Calls to Action as having particular relevance to libraries. Of these 46, five were identified as Priority 1, 15 as Priority 2, and 26 as Priority 3. The committee then identified current or potential good practice to create activities for the Priority 1 & 2 Calls to Action. Some key examples are below (CFLA Report, pp 19-27):

- Work with local Aboriginal community groups in homework help
- Ensure culturally, and age-appropriate collections are made available
- Provide culturally appropriate programming, involving parents and elders
- Use the principles and approaches of Community-led librarianship to ensure that community needs are identified, prioritised and met
- Provide culturally appropriate/relevant information literacy workshops
- Ensure that storytimes support early childhood education programs for Aboriginal families
- Work with local associations, community groups, and city partners to provide culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families
- Provide access to relevant government reports
- Provide space, resources and facilities to enable public dialogue, public/private partnerships and public initiatives for reconciliation
- Introduce core training for all staff to ensure awareness of the intergenerational impact of residential schools and colonization
- Form staff working group to focus on furthering reconciliation within the Library
- Adopt a formal statement acknowledging the Treaty, unceded and traditional territory on which the library sits (p. 41)

“Reconciliation begins with each and every one of us.”

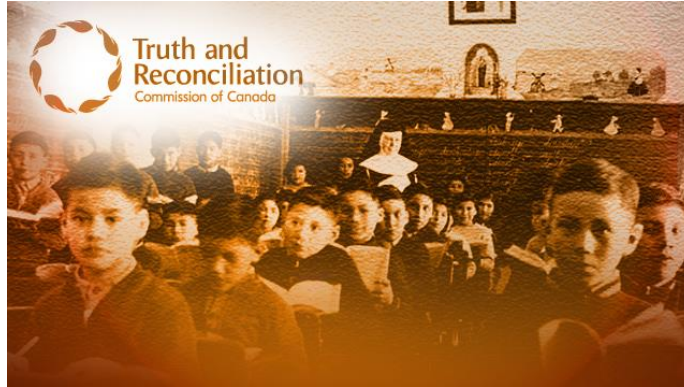
*Final Report, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*

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<sup>1</sup> From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_Residential\\_Schools\\_Settlement\\_Ag](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Residential_Schools_Settlement_Ag) 2019.

<sup>2</sup> From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth\\_and\\_Reconciliation\\_Commission\\_of](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_of) 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Federation of Library Associations. *Truth and Reconciliation Report an* 2017. <http://cfla-fcab.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Recommendations-ISBN1.pdf>



### 3 EXAMPLES FROM OTHER LIBRARIES

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Focusing on the lower mainland, our staff did a scan of how other public libraries are responding to Truth and Reconciliation. Responses range from small, grass roots efforts to full-blown campaigns.

Examples:

#### **Vancouver Public Library (VPL)**

VPL has fully developed initiatives targeting collections, programs, and library spaces. Much of this work was begun well before the TRC released the Calls to Action, for instance the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence program, which has been in place since 2008. This program has allowed VPL to firmly imbed Indigenous programming into their services. VPL also has developed and maintains Resource Guides on various Indigenous topics and themes of reconciliation, such as Indigenous Peoples of Canada and Indigenous Community Resources. These in-depth guides may not be feasible for smaller libraries to create and maintain, but are easy for other libraries to share and adapt to the local context. In 2017, VPL opened the first major civic building in Vancouver with a First Nations name. The náćaʔmat ct Strathcona branch encompasses the idea of 'we are one' in the hə́ŋqəmiñə́m (Musqueam) language. This name recognizes and honours the Coast Salish peoples and their traditional unceded territories, while also reflecting the neighbourhood's historic city name, Strathcona. Land acknowledgement is done at meetings, programs and events, as well as in branch signage, on their website, and in staff email signatures. And finally, key to VPL's efforts has been ongoing training of library staff. Full information is on a dedicated webpage: <http://www.vpl.ca/truth-reconciliation>.

## West Vancouver Memorial Library (WVML)

Earlier this year, WVML was awarded the Building Better Communities award by the British Columbia Library Association to recognize their Honouring Reconciliation: Hearing the Truth Initiative. The initiative was partially funded by the West Vancouver Community Foundation, and included hosting community reading circles, developing a reading list, and learning circles on a variety of topics like language revitalization and First Nations weaving practices. Programming is ongoing and is done in partnership and consultation with their local Squamish Nation.<sup>4</sup>



West Vancouver Memorial Library director of library services Jenny Benedict, Reconciliation Canada director of program development Charlene Seward, and Squamish Nation Chief Janice George hold up the library's recently received Building Better Communities Award. photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

## North Vancouver City Library (NVCL)

NVCL's *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*<sup>5</sup> has identified Honouring Indigenous Perspectives as one of their 4 key strategic priorities. This leverages the library as a natural place for dialogue and learning. Objectives include consulting with Elders and other Indigenous community leaders and training staff and trustees about Indigenous history and the principles of reconciliation. Activities include creating community programming and having a library presence at local First Nations events.

# 4 COQUITLAM PUBLIC LIBRARY'S RESPONSE TO DATE

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## 4.1 STAFF RESPONSE

Up until now, CPL's staff response has been ad hoc. When opportunities arise, CPL has been able to capitalize in several instances. However, this has mainly been when outside groups have invited us, and the library has not been the initiator. Some examples from the past several years include:

- All Nations Festival (2017). A day-long series of programs featuring Aboriginal authors and artists. Presented in partnership with School District 43's Aboriginal Education. Well-attended by a diverse audience of community members, including many First Nations people.
- Kwikwetlem Health Fair (2017). Library Link attended along with programming staff to share information with Kwikwetlem First Nation residents.



<sup>4</sup> Bengtson, Ben. "West Van library receives award for its Honouring Reconciliation programming." North Shore News, June 16, 2019. <https://www.nsnews.com/community/west-van-library-receives-award-for-its-honouring-reconciliation-programming-1.23856812>.

<sup>5</sup> North Vancouver City Library. *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*. <https://www.nvcl.ca/-/media/city-library-north-vancouver/documents/about/mission-and-vision/nvcl-strategicplan-2018-2021.ashx>.

- National Indigenous Peoples’ Day (2018). Suwa’lkh School in Coquitlam. Staff led eight storytelling sessions and hosted a bannock station. Grade 3 students from a variety of local schools attended from throughout SD43.
- Culture Days (2018). Had interactive First Nations performer Dawn Marks who taught drumming to children.
- One eRead Canada (2019). CPL participated in a nation-wide promotion of *Glass Beads*, a novel by First Nations author Gayle DuMont. Staff created two podcasts, and invited Terri Galligos, an Aboriginal Resource Teacher and member of the Tla'amin Nation to speak.
- Reading List. Staff created and maintain a Truth and Reconciliation Reading List on our website: <https://coqlibrary.ca/what-to-read/truth-and-reconciliation-reading-list>.

## 4.2 CPL BOARD RESPONSE

In May 2017, Deputy Director Harwood approached the CPL Board with a proposal to have a formal land acknowledgement at Library programs and events.<sup>6</sup> The issue was referred to the Policy Committee of the Board, where it currently sits.

## 5 MOVING FORWARD

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Over the past several years, CPL has made huge changes to our organizational structure and our service models. One of the main goals of these changes was to have a more outward-focused and community-led approach to services. As such, we now have a new Community Development Liaison position, a new Librarian, and additional support staff (Library Technician and Program Assistant) who are specifically tasked with increasing our reach in the community. Our staff members are very engaged with various community groups, where they are inspired by what other agencies are doing towards the concepts of reconciliation. In particular, the Tri Cities Early Childhood Development Committee, the Tri Cities Middle Childhood Matters Committee, Tri Cities Together: Organization Against Racism and Hate, and the Tri-Cities Homelessness and Housing Task Group have all taken steps in this area. In short, we now have the staff capacity and the community support to move forward.

Recently, some of our staff members formed an ad hoc working group to come up with some simple ideas for what CPL could be doing in response to the Calls to Action. The results of their brainstorming session are in Appendix A. Most of these ideas are cost-neutral and allow us to leverage the resources we already have. Additionally, staff members have recommended forming a Truth and Reconciliation Team to carry this momentum forward.

Finally, the work our staff team has suggested fully supports CPL’s Strategic Plan, particularly Strategic Goal #3: Strengthening Community Connections.

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<sup>6</sup> Coquitlam Public Library Board. Minutes of the Regular meeting held on May 24, 2017, item #20.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. Form a staff team, led by the Community Development Liaison, tasked with supporting the Calls to Action. This team will:
  - a. Include three Programming staff as well as ad hoc staff members from other departments on an as-needed basis.
  - b. Create and deliver relevant programs.
  - c. Seek out authentic partnerships with Indigenous communities and other community groups.
  - d. Recommend staff training.
  - e. Bring recommendations to management as appropriate.
2. Supported by a Board resolution, formally acknowledge Indigenous lands. This will include:
  - a. An announcement at the beginning of major events.
  - b. Signs posted in both of our branches as well as Library Link (see Appendix B for an example).
  - c. A statement added to the signature file of staff members' emails.



## Appendix A: Staff Suggestions (October 2019)

# Truth & Reconciliation

Staff suggestions:

1. Have signs up at each of our locations, acknowledging the territorial land we are on. Then we don't need to make the acknowledgement before each meeting.
2. A display on the way that the Indigenous population used to be depicted in books vs the way they are now and to do so in a collaboration with a community partner who would point us in the direction of vetted books. We could speak to Aboriginal Ed or Spirit of the Children and see if we can make this happen.
3. Call to Action #5: We call upon the federal, provincial, territorial, and Aboriginal governments to develop culturally appropriate parenting programs for Aboriginal families.

Activities include: Libraries could offer space for these programs and train library staff in co-facilitating these programs; 2. Libraries should work with local associations, community groups, and city partners in partnering in parenting programs; 3. Libraries have spaces and collections to support such initiatives.

- We could provide a story time at Spirit of the Children's Family drop in at Meadowbrook Elementary
  - We can reach out to Spirit of the children to find out if they would want to run a program at the library.
  - We currently have a number of books that are culturally appropriate. Perhaps, we can group them all together as they are currently all intermingled with the rest of the collection, for all the age groups. It would be a great way to highlight and showcase the books we carry. It could incorporate fiction, non-fiction, and various ages – from board books to picture books to young adult.
4. The goal is to ensure that the Indigenous population is welcome in the community – we could put up the spirit animal posters and the calls to action poster as part of that.
  5. We continue to feature Indigenous artists in our displays – but maybe tag Indigenous artists/ab ed/spirit of the children to increase awareness?
  6. We could put this on our website. Similar to how VPL has done this – see <http://www.vpl.ca/truth-reconciliation>



## Appendix B: Territory Acknowledgement Sign

Provided by Terri Galligos, Aboriginal Education Resource Teacher, School District 43 (Coquitlam)



We acknowledge we are on the unceded traditional territory of the Kwkwetlem First Nation, which lies within the shared territories of the Tsleil-Waututh, Katzie, Musqueam, Qayqayt, Squamish, and Sto':lo Nations.