



# Coquitlam Public Library: Response to Truth & Reconciliation

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Update

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# Coquitlam Public Library: Response to Truth & Reconciliation - Update

## 1 INTRODUCTION

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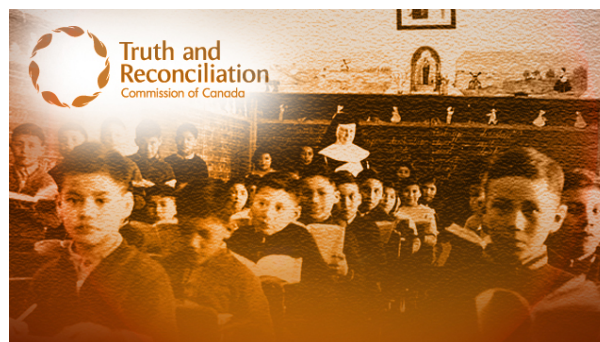
In June 2020, the Coquitlam Public Library (CPL) Board approved the *CPL Truth and Reconciliation Report 2019* (“the 2019 Report”) and endorsed the recommendations therein. This report provides an update on our implementation of the recommendations as well as related activities.

## 2 BACKGROUND

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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.

The 2019 Report examined the Calls to Action specific to libraries, surveyed the activities of other Lower Mainland public libraries, and reviewed CPL’s own activities at that time. Finding that CPL’s response to the Calls to Action had been ad hoc at best, the Report made several recommendations to formalize and increase our work in this area. In June 2020, the CPL Board received and endorsed the recommendations.



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<sup>1</sup> From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_Residential\\_Schools\\_Settlement\\_Agreement](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Residential_Schools_Settlement_Agreement). Accessed October 24, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> From [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth\\_and\\_Reconciliation\\_Commission\\_of\\_Canada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Truth_and_Reconciliation_Commission_of_Canada). Accessed October 24, 2019.

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

### 3 UPDATES TO RECOMMENDATIONS

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The recommendations from the 2019 Report are as follows, indicated in italics, along with the related activities accomplished to date:

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.*

**ACTIVITIES:** The Calls to Action Working Group was formed in August 2020. It is a cross-functional team made up of members from the Programming, Customer Experiences, and eBranch departments, chaired by our Community Development Liaison. The group meets approximately every 2 months. Additionally, the ELT recognized the sensitive nature of the work of the group and formed the Calls to Action Steering Committee in April 2021 to receive regular updates, team recommendations, and provide guidance to the Chair.

- b. ***Create and deliver relevant programs.***

**ACTIVITIES:** The Working Group along with the entire Programming team have planned and implemented the following programs over the past year:

- Virtual Book Talks with an Indigenous theme
  - September 2020 – 230 views – Orange Shirt Day theme, presented the book *21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph.
  - December 2020 – 121 views.
  - March 2021 – included guest speaker from a local bookstore – 114 views.
  - June 2021 – 203 views.
- Story Times with an Indigenous theme
  - The team chose to permanently embed this at least once per quarter in each of the main story time categories that we have (baby, toddler, family).
  - Additional books and visual props purchased to enhance these.
  - Upcoming: Currently in discussion with a partner agency to include Indigenous themes in our Mother Goose story times in additional languages.
- Create Indigenous Art with Rob Cowie
  - Hosted online program with Rob Cowie from SD43 Indigenous Education in August 2020. Received about 50 views:  
<https://www.facebook.com/CoqLibrary/videos/651403499066141>



- Spirit of the Children Crafts
  - Partnered with Indigenous agency Spirit of the Children for a story time and crafts program in June 2021.
  - Incorporated the craft concepts in other subsequent story times.
  - Upcoming: Future program collaborations with SOTC in discussion.

c. ***Seek out authentic partnerships with Indigenous communities and other community groups.***

**ACTIVITIES:** This activity was recognized as a long-term and multi-faceted goal for CPL that went beyond the scope of just the Working Group. It was pulled into a separate Action Item on our 2021 Action Plan and will be reported on separately through that structure. Some recent highlights that were contributed by the Calls to Action Working Group:

- Continued relationship with SD43 Indigenous Education. Incorporated their suggested resources to respond to the uncovering of burial sites at former residential schools – see 3.2 under “website”. Received guidance and contacts to build relationship with Kwikwetlem First Nation.
- Built relationship with Spirit of the Children Society with joint programming (see b. above)
- Took first steps to build relationship with Kwikwetlem First Nation (KFN). Met several times with Nancy Joe, KFN Cultural Advisor. Arranged to feature Kwikwetlem speakers at our upcoming speaker series: “Past and Present: A Conversation about Race in B.C.” (the first session of the 5-part series will be wholly devoted to KFN). Brought the Pop-Up Library to a children’s day camp on the reserve, engaged with families and lent out several ozobots.

d. ***Recommend staff training.***

**ACTIVITIES:**

- The Working Group recognized there may be some overlap in terms of planning with the work being done on the Race and Social Equity Initiative for the 2021 Action Plan – for instance, scheduling, needs assessment of staff, measuring existing staff attitudes, seeking out possible presenters, etc. The two staff members who are on both teams are working to ensure that awareness of the inter-generational impact of residential schools and

colonization is a significant part of the overall training plan. Again, this will be reported on through the Action Plan process.

- Working Group members attended various Indigenous Cultural Sharing programs offered by the Ministry of Child and Family Development: Ceremonies & Connection; Medicines, Food & Trade – A Brief Introduction; Orange Shirt Day. One member attended the Tri Cities Local Immigration Partnership’s Fundamentals of Anti-Oppression workshop, including the keynote with Jesse Thistle: The impact of intergenerational trauma & the use of trauma-informed lens in policy and service improvements. Materials from these programs will be made available to other staff as a resource in conjunction with the overall staff training.

e. ***Bring recommendations to management as appropriate.***

**ACTIVITIES:** This is ongoing, via regular meetings between the Chair and the Steering Committee. All recommendations to date have been implemented.

2. *Supported by a Board resolution, formally acknowledge Indigenous lands. This will include:*

a. ***An announcement at the beginning of major events.***

**ACTIVITIES:** During COVID, there have been no major events, however staff do an oral acknowledgement at the beginning of virtual programs – either at the first of a series, or every time for one-offs.

b. ***Signs posted in both of our branches as well as Library Link.***

**ACTIVITIES:** Signs have been installed in all branches since August 2020.

c. ***A statement added to the signature file of staff members’ emails.***

**ACTIVITIES:** Since August 2020, the signature of all staff members’ emails has included the acknowledgement.

Additionally, the statement appears in the footer of all our webpages.



## 4 OTHER ACTIVITIES

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Though not specified in the original proposal or recommendations, many new ideas have come from the Calls to Action Working Group and other teams that are related to Truth and Reconciliation. The following have been recently implemented.



## 4.1 MARKETING

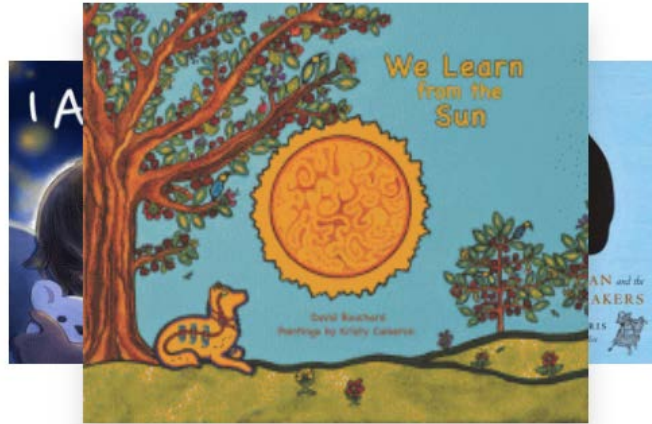
- **Orange Shirt Day**, September 2020 – Book displays (PO & CC) and social media post
- **Remembrance Day**, November 2020 – Created and featured beaded poppy pins to commemorate the Indigenous peoples who served in the wars, worn by various frontline staff members
- **Residential Schools**, June 2021 – Book displays (PO & CC), posters to promote eBook collection, and social media posts
- **Teiakwanahstahsontéhrha' | We Extend the Rafters with Kanien'kéha (Mohawk) artist Skawennati**, June/July 2021 – book display at CC in support of art show at Evergreen Cultural Centre. 21 items circulated 22 times.
- **Media:** The Executive Director was quoted in a Tri-Cities Dispatch article on the Kamloops residential school tragedy with references to our physical and online resources.



## 4.2 EBRANCH/COLLECTIONS

- **Catalogue:**
  - Created a unique record set for all our Indigenous print books so that they can be more easily identified by staff and customers. So far 169 titles have been added with work ongoing.

- **New books:** Purchased over 160 new book recommendations from the Calls to Action Working Group to substantially beef up our Indigenous collection, with over half being children's titles.



- **Donation:** Alf Dumont, an Indigenous-writer who serves as an Elder at the Indigenous Services Centre of BCIT, moved to Coquitlam about 10 years ago. Finding significant gaps in our Indigenous-written collection, he donated over 200 titles. Collections staff are in the process of adding to the collection.
- **Movies:** A new streaming Indigenous collection was created on Hoopla - <https://www.hoopladigital.com/collection/5817>.
- **Website:**
  - Created a separate Truth and Reconciliation page: <https://www.coqlibrary.ca/about/values/truth-and-reconciliation/>
  - Added Emotional Support Resources from a list provided by our partner Terri Mae Galligos, Tla'amin Nation, from SD43 Indigenous Education.
  - Updated and expanded Indigenous Collection page: <https://www.coqlibrary.ca/borrow/whattoread/indigenous-collection>

## Indigenous Collection



### Reading Lists

The Library is happy to highlight works written or produced by Indigenous authors, as well as works that promote understanding of Indigenous lives and experiences.

To learn about the titles in our Indigenous collections, explore one of our curated lists:

- [Adult Fiction](#) | [Adult Nonfiction](#)
- [Children and Teens](#) | [Picture Books](#)
- [Movies and Documentaries](#)

### 4.3 ART INSTALLATION

Over several months in early 2021, the Working Group worked with Katzie First Nation artist [Rain Pierre](#) (słóməx<sup>w</sup>) to commission 2 designs to cover 37 of our pendant lamps at City Centre. Rain is a well-established artist who has worked with School District 43 as well as several municipalities for a variety of large-scale graphic pieces. The lamps are focused in the front entrance/coffee lounge area and then are interspersed along the main walkway to the meeting rooms. The planning involved several discussions with City staff to ensure compliance with their facilities procedures. More information, including a video of the project, is posted on our [website](#).



*"I chose the butterfly because it represents the final stages of transformation. Like people are ready for help and wanting to expand their wings and learn, which is what a library represents. I chose two hummingbirds to echo being two spirited and having acceptance of all people as equal in the library. Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards, which makes them unique – just like LGBTQ2s people" – Rain Pierre*

## 5 NEXT STEPS

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The Calls to Action Working Group will be maintained as an ongoing part of our operations to ensure we continue to build and expand our Truth and Reconciliation work in all facets of our organization. The major focus for CPL in the coming months will be the Race and Social Equity Initiative on the 2021 Action Plan, including continuing to build relationships with Indigenous partners, and developing a training program for staff.