

BCLA Community-Led Interest Group Meeting

September 23, 2020, 1-3 pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom

In attendance: Ilona Stachura (SL), Ravi Basi (SL), Kelty Roberts (VPL), Mark MacKichan (VPL), Emily Aspinwall (VPL), Eleonore Shaffer (VPL), Nicole Sousa (BPL), Peter Musser (BPL), Mariah Gastaldo (BPL), Shideh Taleban (NVCL), Leila Meshgini (WVML), Ann Johannes (CPL), Tara Thompson (ORL), Nick Ubels (UBCLE), Millicent Mabi (RPL), Ginny Dunnill (RPL), Heather De Forest (SFU), Caitlin Ottenbreit (GVPL), Gordon Yusko (Write to Read BC), Andisheh Fard (CDI, guest speaker), Daniella Cohen (CDI, guest speaker).

This was our second virtual CLIG meeting after the pandemic, providing an opportunity to share and reflect on the current situation in a community-led services context. Shideh started with some quick Zoom housekeeping and then Kelty began the session.

- 1. May 26, 2020 meeting minutes approved**
- 2. Roundtable discussion of what is going on at the various library systems (current projects, employment situation, reopening progression)**

Richmond Public Library (RPL)

Ginny – Has been working for the last two weeks. RPL recently opened all branches for limited services. Some in person programming in the park, drag queen storytime for Pride, a digital letter exchange for seniors. Community services are limited.

Millicent – Also just back to work earlier in the month. Doing much more programming (e.g., employment for newcomers, ESL conversation circles) than outreach currently. All full-time librarians have been recalled, as well as some of the library technicians.

Coquitlam Public Library (CPL)

Ann – Have been doing regular storytimes in the park (Jul-Sept), but otherwise everything is virtual (e.g., conversation circles, trivia, digital storytimes, reading buddies, etc.). Mobile library is doing holds pickups. Story Walk is going to happen Oct to Dec. No one was laid off, but some staff were redeployed. Have been open with limited services since June 22.

Vancouver Public Library (VPL)

Mark – VPL currently in phase 3 (most locations are open with limited services). Most FT and PT staff are back at work. Majority of programming is happening online. Accessible services resumed delivery to homes and care facilities. [Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre](#) is focused mostly on

digital programming. Some in-person services. One-on-one appointments done by phone. Some of their new programs include a LinkedIn workshop for permanent residents and one on how to impress recruiters.

Kelty – Added that some auxiliary staff have also been recalled, mostly to fill vacation and sick leave. They are in cohorts of 3 branches/work units to minimize contact and make contact tracing possible.

Emily – Got back a couple weeks ago. Programming department only retained a skeleton crew to offer digital programs during the closure (e.g., Indigenous Storyteller in Residence workshops, ESL conversation circles, Chinese programs, etc.). Digital literacy programs pose a unique challenge as not all patrons are able to participate effectively over Zoom. Some partnerships (Greater Vancouver Family Services, MOSAIC, etc.). As a learning and literary librarian responsible for program evaluation, is currently looking into stats and figuring out what their priorities should be going forward. Would appreciate hearing more from other library systems regarding these two questions:

- How can libraries better serve the community's needs when there are organizational and societal constraints, such as budgets cuts, vertical hierarchies, and on top of that, public health emergencies?
- What data and research are you using to assess patrons' current needs (i.e. in COVID times) in order to plan and prioritize adult programming?

Eleonore – This is the first week the whole community librarian team is back at work. They are working half the time from home, and half the time onsite. So far in-person community visits have been limited to book deliveries and outside events/hangouts. Zoom is not a great fit for a lot of their community partners.

Greater Victoria Public Library (GVPL)

Caitlin – Nine out of twelve of their branches are now open with limited services (last one is scheduled to open on October 6th). Coordinating the re-openings across ten municipalities has been complicated. Some community outreach happening and they are starting to talk about in-person visits. Planning some story walks. They also have story walk kits that patrons can check out, which is nice for combating social isolation. GVPL working on narrowing down their 3 broad priorities to work towards. Almost all staff are back now (librarians were never laid-off).

Burnaby Public Library (BPL)

Mariah – .Is responsible for outreach for Indigenous community in Burnaby. All four branches open for limited services (browsing, holds, computer use for 30 minutes, etc.). Most staff have been recalled. Larger community outreach team than pre-pandemic. Working on prototypes for programs (3 streams: job search; conversation circles; book clubs). Neighbourhood history series partnership. Burnaby Climate Emergency Panel for action and dialogue.

Peter – An auxiliary called back to work on the expanded Outreach Team. Speaks Mandarin so mostly does outreach in the Chinese community. Lots of positive response to programs (storytimes in Chinese, MOSAIC BC Seniors group, South Side Church food bank/distribution centre). Noticing a big language barrier to healthcare so has been handing out cards in Mandarin with his name and the contact info for the BC health line. Most outreach is virtual, but they are doing some in-person visits.

Nicole – BPL is one of the few systems whose outreach team grew during the pandemic. Involved over the past five months with [Burnaby's Primary Care Network](#), attending meetings with other organizations that serve vulnerable populations (e.g., meetings on food security, meetings on homelessness services). Some in-person visits (e.g., weekly food bank visits over the last 4 months, some tech in the park for seniors in partnership with the Burnaby Neighbourhood House and ISS of BC, book deliveries, SRC medal handouts), but also Zoom visits where possible (e.g., transition house). Worked on online [Community Resource Guide](#) and interactive [Community Resource Map](#).

West Vancouver Memorial Library (WVML)

Leila – WVML reopened virtually two days after the closure for phone/email/chat reference. Pivoted programs to online (youth and tech, book clubs, cookbook clubs, Climate Future, TED countdown). New Normal – conversations about COVID. ESL conversation circles three times per week, Library Champions, CDI/antiracist workshops. Activity kits for seniors with dementia. New website. Library has been open since June for limited services. Some auxiliaries are back at work to cover vacations.

City of North Vancouver Library (CNVL)

Shideh – Opened (partially) since July 7th. Silent study room open at partial capacity for 1hr visits. All programs virtual. Fall plans: weekly storytimes, 3 weekly ESL conversation circles (one for seniors) in partnership with the Bahai's group and the North Shore Multicultural Society. Seniors monthly gathering is back over Zoom/phone. No one was laid off. Auxiliaries are not back yet. Librarians work 3 days on site, 2 days from home. All staff split in two teams and should only visit the library on their assigned days. More programs in fall such as On the Table in partnership with the United Way, Culture Days celebration: poetry night, computer classes, etc. Testing out "fresh air library" experience to enable folks to sit and access wi-fi, read a book, drink a coffee, etc. - all the things they love to do in the library, but outside. Working with [Centre for Diversity and Innovation](#) to plan antiracist workshops.

Simon Fraser University (SFU)

Heather – Only back from leave of absence after a year for a couple of weeks now, still figuring out Zoom. Last stages of evaluating the [Community Scholars Program](#), providing access to scholarly publications for non-profits (used for program development, grant applications, etc.). The evaluation project is wrapping up and they are looking at the next steps on how to engage participants with the results. [COVID Community Resilience Network](#) (Burnaby and Lower Mainland) is looking now at how to go beyond the initial response. Open to anyone who is interested in joining. Actual action is coming out of this group, not just talk! Non-profits are shuttering due to lack of funding. SFU is offering records management advice for non-profits in

the process of shutting down. Interested in collaborations between academic and public library spheres.

Surrey Libraries (SL)

Iloa – Most regular staff have been recalled, but were operating on a skeleton crew for a very long time. David Kerr continues to do outreach (in person since end of June, going to new food bank and a modular housing facility that both have larger spaces within which to maintain a safer social distance). Virtual outreach still new, haven't done much yet. Now with more staff, they are ramping up their virtual outreach. Physical distance important factor for in person visits.

Ravi – During the closure, mass lay-offs, info staff were doing clerical work in addition to providing reference services by phone and email. Virtual outreach: ESL classes, Library Champions (1st cohort went great, now into 2nd round). Mandarin outreach in partnership with Options and S.U.C.C.E.S.S. Acquired 35 Chromebooks to lend to the public. Funding came from a grant from the Ministry of Education (Libraries and Literacy branch) as part of a one-time grant for digital initiatives. Working in partnership with six settlement agencies and one seniors group. Library staff are doing workshops in digital literacy. Opened all branches at once on September 9th.

Write To Read BC

Gordon – Left UBC a year ago and is now a consultant for [Write To Read BC](#), an organization that develops libraries and learning centres in small Indigenous communities throughout BC, mostly up north. They currently have 24 libraries/learning centres in operation. There is still a disconnect between these establishments and mainstream libraries across the province; his role is to help bridge that divide. They want to collaborate internally first to come up with a common set of directions before reaching out to the library organizations like the BCLA. There will be an article in the November issue of [Perspectives](#). Concerns about sustainability, particularly when there is a change of leadership/priorities in the communities that have established these little libraries or learning centres.

Okanagan Regional Library (ORL)

Tara – None of the librarians were laid-off. All staff back now, including auxiliary employees. Currently in phase 3 of reopening, and all but one (UBC) branches are now open. Services are limited to browsing and borrowing. Figuring out how to bring back the maker space safely. Other than a phone-in book club for seniors, all programming has been via Zoom. Looking to branch out into other formats, including piloting an in-person book club and doing storytimes outside or in a gym. [Techserve](#) phone line for students or other people to help older adults with technology. Planning for Culture Days. Trying to find non-virtual ideas!

UBC Learning Exchange (UBCLE)

Nick – Computer drop-ins have been entirely virtual, but they will be restarting in-person computer access soon; will be twice weekly at 1pm and 2:15pm to start off. Still working on the

[DTES Research Access Portal](#), which is a platform to make scholarly research done on the Downtown East Side more accessible to those who live and work in the area. Doing workshops for various user groups, including librarians as they often act as intermediaries. Building an advisory group to get more engagement from community organizations and will be meeting in October to discuss further and build relationships. Shared the [Digital Justice for B.C.](#) petition via email.

3. **Guest Speakers – Andisheh Fard – Manager, [Centre for Diversity and Innovation \(CDI\)](#) – Daniella Cohen – Diversity Coordinator at CDI**

Shideh – Introduced our guest speakers from the Centre for Diversity and Innovation (CDI): Andisheh Fard (Manager) and Daniella Cohen (Diversity Coordinator).

Andisheh – CDI is based out of the [North Shore Multicultural Society](#) (NSMS) and tackles issues surrounding racism, antiracism, equality, equity, diversity, and inclusion. Based on the values of inclusion, curiosity, and compassion, the CDI is dedicated to educating and empowering people, communities, and organizations about diversity and inclusion. Part of CDI work is innovative programs for newcomers and racialized folks on racism and belonging. On September 10, 2020, they hosted “Conversation on Building Anti-Racist Communities” and on September 30th they will be hosting a Town Hall, “Let’s Talk about Achieving Racial Equity”. Weaving Our Humanity is another upcoming annual program on December 2nd. All these programs are aiming to help in the development and implementation of a North Shore Racial Equity Strategy.

Daniela – CDI also provides training for organizations, tailoring courses for specific groups. Youth workshops (grades 7-10) focus on stereotypes and how to get involved in creating more inclusive communities.

Ilon – Asked if CDI is limited to the North Shore? Andisheh replied that although they are based out of North Vancouver, they do workshops in surrounding municipalities as well.

Ilon – Asked if they work with similar agencies in other cities. Andisheh brought up the Design Team (which both Shideh from NVCL and Leila for WVML are a part of). Daniella added that they are also a part of [Resilience BC](#), an anti-racism network active across the province.

Shideh – Asked if the upcoming Zoom town hall is open to everyone. Andisheh responded that it is and that they will share the [Eventbrite registration](#). It is being moderated by Aslam Bulbulia and features a number of distinguished speakers. There will be an opportunity for questions and answers at the end.

Ravi – Mentioned that SL is also working towards an equity and diversity strategy and that she will follow up with Andisheh and Daniella afterwards.

Kelty – Asked if they could elaborate on the work that they have done with libraries like CNVL and WVML. Andisheh and Daniella suggested that Shideh and Leila take this question. Leila said that she’s been involved with CDI and the NSMS for around 4 years now and gave the

Weaving of Humanity, a storytelling event, and the Unconference as examples of some of the work they've collaborated on. North Shore libraries are connected to CDI through the [North Shore Immigrant Inclusion Partnership](#) (NSIIP). Shideh added Brave Conversations as another example, and mentioned that they've also done training for CNVL staff.

Kelty – Inquired as to what exactly is meant by a “Design Team.” Andisheh replied that it refers to a bunch of representatives from different organizations who are part of the broader NSMS umbrella and who collaborate together on events. Daniella added that the idea is for community to be involved from start to finish.

Gordon – Asked over chat: “I can see on the BC government website there is info on Resilience BC Anti-Racism Network. It mentions “hubs” and “spokes” as part of the structure. What can you say about this structure?” Andisheh explained that the [Victoria Immigrant and Refugee Society](#) is the centralized hub that connects and coordinates all the spokes – i.e., community-based branches across BC that develop protocols to respond to hate and racism. Their particular community is North Vancouver, West Vancouver, and Lions Bay. Daniella emphasized that the idea is to connect different people and organizations who are doing the same type of work, rather than having each organization work on the problem individually.

4. Library world’s response to racism and the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement

Surrey Libraries (SL)

Ravi – Introduced the topic by commenting on how there were a lot of antiracist statements after George Floyd’s death, but not much else in the way of actual action. At SL, they’ve traditionally taken a piecemeal approach (e.g., introducing a cross-cultural workshop a few years back as a result of a racist incident that occurred inside the library). Presently, SL is planning to conduct a staff-wide survey on the topic and is looking into hiring an Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion consultant. If anyone has any suggested candidates, please send them to Ravi.

Vancouver Public Library (VPL)

Kelty – Asked how other library systems have been addressing the issue, adding that VPL has taken a collection/programming approach in terms of purchasing, booklist promotion, and an ongoing antiracist audiobook club (the next two sessions in October are on *So You Want to Talk about Race* by Ijeoma Oluo).

Emily – Commented that although a lot of people registered for their Antiracist Conversation Circle back in July, far fewer actually attended.

Burnaby Public Library (BPL)

Peter – At BPL, staff started sharing books that they found to be meaningful with their colleagues. There was also an expression of interest (EOI) sent out to start up an antiracist working group/committee. As with SL, there is also talk of hiring a consultant.

Nicole – Added that the decision to not issue a public statement was purposeful – BPL wants to address their internal library practices and complete that work first. Every week, each staff member is given an hour to spend on professional development in this area. Additionally, antiracism became part of the community librarian’s portfolio.

Mariah – Mentioned that there will be an Equity in Action event next week for staff that looks into racism within libraries. She is leading an Indigenous working group and looking at ways to promote BIPOC voices in the work that they do.

City of North Vancouver Library (CNVL)

Shideh – Shared that CNVL promoted antiracist reading lists for the whole family over social media and hosted two drop-in book club sessions (one on *So You Want to Talk about Race* and another on *21 Things You May Not Have Known About The Indian Act*). She is also involved in the CDI Design Team for the Town Hall, Community Conversations, and Weaving Our Humanity programs.

West Vancouver Memorial Library (WVML)

Leila – WVML also did a book circle on Oluo’s book. At the time of Floyd’s death, their library system was busy working on their reopening plans and so most of the library’s response (departmental discussions, booklists, resource lists, a self-directed learning page for the city, etc.) fell to her. She is also on the CDI Design Team working on the programs mentioned above. Recommended a webinar from Niche Academy on [Dismantling Institutional Racism in Your Library](#).

Coquitlam Public Library (CPL)

Ann – Back in February, CPL set up a diversity committee based on feedback they received from settlement organizations. Worked with Tri-City to put on three talks about racism in June-July. Also engaged in topic via social media posts, booklists, a Facebook Live book talk on antiracism, and even picked *The Picture of Nobody* by Rabindranath Maharaj for one of their ESL book club sessions.

General Discussion

Ravi – Shideh, Leila, and Ravi are all on BCLA’s [Multicultural Services Committee](#) (MSC) and had previously created a survey about racism that they wanted to send out to library staff, but were asked to hold off on doing so. BCLA is now looking at a more coordinated approach to the topic so perhaps something will end up being sent out in the future.

Emily – Shared a recent initiative to help address the lack of diversity within the library profession. At the conclusion of the last February’s Library Champions program, she put on a workshop for the participants (with input from VPL’s HR department) on how to land a library job here. It was attended by 25 and she plans to continue it with subsequent cohorts. Nicole asked if any of the participants were hired at VPL, but unfortunately the pandemic hit and so it’s unlikely VPL will be hiring any new staff for quite some time.

Leila – Added that there is a CDI working group (NSIIP) on increasing diversity in hiring practices.

Emily – Raised the question of how to go about advocating for change within one's own library system.

5. Next Meeting – Date? Guest speakers?

Next meeting will be either late November or early December, most likely on Zoom again.