

BCLA Community-Led Interest Group Meeting

July 27, 2023, 10am – 12pm

Virtual meeting via Zoom

In attendance:

Shideh Taleban (NVCL), Logan Shea (NWPL), CJ Pentland (NVCL), Ann Johannes (Coquitlam Public Library), Tara Thompson (ORL), Alison Campbell (NVDPL), Jessica Stol (London Public Library).

1. Land acknowledgement & Introductions

The group practiced sharing placement statements, where attendees shared where they come from and the places that have shaped them and their worldview throughout their lives. Placement statements are a way for individuals to pay respect to their ancestors as well as acknowledge they are entering a space with good intentions.

Attendees also practiced giving descriptive intros of themselves for those who may be visually impaired.

2. April 6, 2023 meeting minutes approved

3. Discussion on community-led programs, resources, and learnings

Shared the [Resources](#) list on the CLIG webpage, where links to community-led resources and last year's Community Development Days information can be found.

Tara shared that she created a deconstructed training about community engagement for the Okanagan Regional Library staff. The training took inspiration from Beanstack's badges in order to create a staff training based around doing activities. Badges include learning about various community engagement concepts as well as activities to do, such as going on walks to do community mapping and connecting with a community group. Vancouver Public Library shared their training with Tara and she used that as a starting point. Tara is happy to connect with people to share what it looks like and how she made the training.

The group discussed the importance of setting healthy boundaries in community-led work. The amount of help or support that can be offered to a community can sometimes be misinterpreted, and this can become very challenging when community members ask library staff for services that they are not able to deliver, such as counselling. As information professionals, we can help connect individuals with other organizations who do offer these services. When attending other committees or community meetings, it is important to vocalize these needs so that others are aware of what the community is experiencing.

The group also discussed the differences between an individual versus a library system approach to community-led work. Community-led work looks different in different library

systems: given to just one staff member versus divided among many staff, just one part of an individual's job portfolio versus a staff member's main focus.

Shideh shared how NVCL has tried to share community-led work and outreach among the staff. Different staff have joined virtual English Conversation Circles at Impact North Shore so that participants see and know many different faces of library staff, rather than just one person. Using the approach of Burnaby Public Library, NVCL also has different staff members involved in community-led work, such as those who are responsible for adult programming, which allows staff to have a better knowledge of the community and get inspiration as they plan programs. For example, several daycares reached out to NVCL looking for computer program trainings for their daycare staff, and this has prompted the Computer Literacy Librarian to reach out to other organizations to see if they could also benefit from these types of services.

Community-led work relies heavily on people and sometimes specific people within an organization; it can take a lot of work to have this approach become embedded into a library system in such a way that the system is supporting community-led work. There are often questions about what happens when an individual leaves the organization and how can community-led work continue to have momentum or be reinvigorated. Burnaby Public Library's model of community-led work has stressed the importance of debriefing, with staff sharing their learnings with each other and writing their own notes after community visits.

Jessica shared about London's [Health & Homelessness Whole of Community System Response](#), which has local organizations and individuals with lived experience helping to create a response to the health and housing crisis in the city. The library has been part of these discussions and staff are hopeful to learn more about community needs for the unhoused patrons that regularly visit their library spaces.

Alison shared that NWPL is in the process of doing community asset mapping. Staff have been visiting organizations and groups without an agenda, introducing themselves, and learning more information about who is located where and what they offer. Through one of these visits, a librarian was able to help connect a local historical society with student volunteers at the UBC iSchool archivist program who may be able to help the society with their papers. This occurred just through an unscheduled meeting, recognizing a need, and being able to connect two groups who did not know about each other.

When we think of community-led work, which groups come to your mind first?

The group discussed several populations that came to mind, including seniors and marginalized folks in the community, such as unhoused populations, those living with addictions, or those in community residential facilities.

Coquitlam Public Library will be screening "[Love in the Time of Fentanyl](#)," a documentary about the downtown Eastside, drug addiction, and overdoses. The library will have resources and people coming in to talk with attendees who may be triggered

by the documentary's content. CPL has had incidents of overdoses in the library space, but it has helped to have connections with other community organizations, through the Tri-Cities Homelessness & Housing Task Group, in order to handle some of the challenges the library is experiencing.

Discussed the multiple definitions of community-led work, where:

- The community is involved from the beginning, with planning and delivering a program or service, like those who approach the library to suggest a program;
- And underserved folks who we don't see in the library, such as unhoused populations, newcomers, or seniors.

Also discussed the importance of recognizing the ripple effect and serendipitous moments, where we connect with people we did not intend to connect with.

The group discussed the challenges of programming and having people attend scheduled programs, as well as the opportunities for unscheduled visits in the community and going "where the people are" in order to do surprise programs.

The group also shared the challenges of taking on new community engagement tasks while still continuing long-established library programs. Staff are not able to do everything and this may be why community-led work is slow, but progress is still made even when it's slow and steady.

Community Development Days 2023

This year's planning team includes Shideh Taleban, Jessica Stol, Jorge Cárdenas, Saara Itkonen, Noreen Ma, Tara Thompson, and Andrea Galbraith. The team's first meeting will be in mid-August.

The CLIG group looked at potential CDD themes that had been identified at previous CLIG meetings. Any ideas for additional themes can be shared with Shideh by early August. The [Community Development Days 2022 Final Report](#) can be found on the CLIG webpage, under the Resources section.

4. Round Table Discussion

North Vancouver City Library

NVCL is offering an Adult Summer Reading Club for the first time this year, and are also offering Book Tasting programs for adults. They are in the early stages of working on Sensory Sundays at the library, as well as adding different types of sensory kits. The library is trying to spread outreach work and include different team members in outreach activities, such as home services librarians, computer literacy librarians, and adult programming librarians.

The library is looking forward to Welcoming Week, where they will offer programs that highlight and share the voices of immigrants, as well as BC Culture Days at the end of September. NVCL has been collaborating with North Vancouver District Library and

West Vancouver Memorial Library on a variety of programs and upcoming events, including the Books and Brew series, [North Shore Reads](#), the [North Shore Authors Collection](#), and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

NVCL will also be putting together a second [Community Cookbook](#), where community members can submit their favourite recipes. The first cookbook was in a digital format, but they are hoping to make a print book this time. The first version included lots of diverse stories about family history and the connections behind the recipes. A Learn to Play Backgammon program has also started, in response to feedback from community members who wanted to learn after seeing a regular backgammon group gathering in the library. Shideh is in the early stages of planning an EAL Book Club and would love to hear from anyone who has run this type of book club before.

Coquitlam Public Library

CPL is doing outdoor storytimes several times a week. The library will have many Summer Reading Club-related events throughout the summer, as well as an Adult Summer Reading Club. CPL will be hosting a three-day [Indigenous Film Festival](#) at the end of September as part of their Culture Days event; one of these days is dedicated to kids and the library is working with Indigenous educators and the school district to do programming within the library branches during this day. Almost all of the movies selected are from the National Film Board of Canada.

CPL will also be offering another speaker series in the fall, focusing on racism and race. The library hosts and facilitates the event, with different community partners doing the talks. This is their third year running the series. The sessions allow for community conversation, with a Q&A period after the talk.

New Westminster Public Library

Staff have been doing embedded work in multiple organizations on a weekly basis all over town, and the community librarians will soon be doing evaluations. NWPL is currently navigating the questions they want to ask community residents and service providers about the work the library has been doing, the impacts, and the general desire to continue seeing library staff in the neighbourhood. They are in the preliminary stages of this work. If folks have community evaluation resources or ways that they conduct evaluations of community-led work, please reach out to Logan.

Staff who have been doing embedded work at a transitional house realized that many of the women were photographers. There is an upcoming photovoice exhibit at NWPL, called "[What Housing Means to Me](#)." The exhibit will include photographs by the women, and is also hoping to incorporate the library's podcasting equipment in order to add recorded elements and a programming component, too.

NWPL is also working on creating a second version of their community asset map. Their children's team has been doing lots of community work, including outdoor storytimes and upcoming Pride events, like drag storytime with the [Storytelling with Drag Queens Foundation](#). NWPL has collaborated with New West Family Place on their toy lending

library. The toys and toy packs are owned by New West Family Place, but they are housed at NWPL, have been added to the catalogue, and can be checked out from the library.

Okanagan Regional Library

ORL is also offering an Adult Summer Reading Club through Beanstack. The Kelowna branch offers a Perspectives Book Club where they talk about social justice themes. They have heard that InterLINK is working on an online province-wide author speaker series. In the fall, ORL will also be continuing a community cookbook project that began during the height of the pandemic. The Kelowna branch has teamed up with UBC Okanagan to run a feminist horror festival in October, and the Vernon branch offers a [newcomer knitting and stitching circle](#).

London Public Library

LPL has been using the Reading Garden at their downtown branch to host Music Mondays throughout the summer, where local musicians are highlighted. This is the first summer where LPL is doing an Adult Summer Reading Challenge. The library will be running in-person Dungeons & Dragons starting in the fall and several librarians have been trained as Dragon Masters to facilitate these programs. The program will hopefully help the library connect with more teen and adult populations, and potentially patrons on the autism spectrum since staff have heard through Autism Ontario that D&D is one of their most popular programs.

North Vancouver District Public Library

NVDPL is working on a climate action series in conjunction with the district, relating to their nature and biodiversity strategy. Some NVDPL staff are involved in the planning of InterLINK's author speaker series. This fall is a time of transition at the library after the summer, where staff are slowing down from a programming focus and looking to spend time on a variety of activities.

5. Next meeting?

The next CLIG meeting will be at the end of September or early October.

If anyone has suggestions for guest speakers or additional discussion topics, please let us know. [Tangled Art + Disability](#) was suggested as a future guest speaker.