

BCLA Multilingual Services Interest Group Meeting Minutes

Date: May 20, 2025 from 9:30-11

Location: Zoom

Present: Ravi (Surrey Libraries), Emily (Burnaby Public Library), Ann (Coquitlam Public Library), and Andrea (West Van Library)

Agenda:

1. New business
2. BCLA Conference highlights
3. Roundtable
4. Next meeting and summer hiatus

Land Acknowledgement

Emily shared a land acknowledgment. Emily shared that Burnaby has recently changed their land acknowledgement from being language-based to being Nation-based.

1. New Business

The group discussed the impact of the recent Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) cuts. We shared tips on how to support our community partners through this difficult time. Some libraries are making spaces available to community partners free of charge, others are prioritizing limited library meeting spaces for community partners. Everyone is still trying to figure out the best way forward.

The long-running Library Champions program has been heavily affected by the IRCC cuts.

2. BCLA Conference highlights

Ann attended a safety session on providing Drag Storytimes. CUPE talked about avoiding the word "Drag" and using the word "Pride" in promotional material instead to protect front line staff from negative comments from the public. The keynotes were able to boost the morale of library staff which is low.

3. Roundtable

Emily has been working for the past 6 months on developing a strategy for how to offer multilingual services, and get buy-in from staff with and without multilingual skills. The strategy includes a priority matrix and an assessment in 2-3 years to see how the strategy is working.

Emily is now trying to build the recommendations that they prepared into workflow. Many of the recommendations are specific to the multilingual communities in Burnaby but other systems may be able to implement some of the more general recommendations. Andrea shared that West Van Library is excited to share that the Youth Department is planning kids programming in the fall of 2025 that will be in Farsi and Mandarin.

Ann shared information about the upcoming Tri-Cities Writers Festival (May 28-31, 2025). The festival will be featuring several BIPOC authors.

Ravi shared that Surrey Libraries will keep running Library Champions for at least the next 2 years. Ravi also shared that the system will be soft-launching the Newcomer Welcome Centre after SRC with a hard launch in September or October 2025. The City of Surrey has also made funding available for the Library to offer some programming for an underserved population namely, International Students. Surrey Libraries will be working on this with the South Asian Legal Clinic of BC (SALCBC).

4. Next Meeting

The meeting we held in February on the topic of Multilingual Storytime was very well attended. So we decided that we would select a theme for at least some of our four meetings in the coming year (2025-2026). Emily is also going to look into a mailing list.

Emily and Andrea will connect on the mailing list and dates for Sept. 2025- May 2026 over the summer. Dates will be shared on the BCLA Branches Forum in August 2025.

Next meeting will be in September 2025, date to be determined.

Meeting adjourned at 11:00am.