

Selwyn Public Library Board Legacy Document 2022

This document highlights the accomplishments and challenges of the Selwyn Public Library Board for the term 2019-2022.

Our Vision

Selwyn Public Library is a welcoming and inclusive place fostering a love of reading and life-long learning through access to resources and programs, while building social connections and community identity.

Our Mission

Selwyn Public Library empowers the community to read, learn, connect, and be inspired.

Our Values

- Our people including patrons, volunteers, and staff
- Service Excellence
- Inclusive and Equitable access
- Public Stewardship including fiscal, ethical and environmental responsibility
- Intellectual Freedom of thought, belief, and expression
- Community well-being and social connections
- Innovation and a focus on the future

Our Community Relationships

The Library Board is very fortunate to have a positive and supportive relationship with Council. Council has always been very receptive to the Library system and very open to exploring new endeavours that would be of benefit to the Selwyn community. It remains important that the Board continues to strive for a strong partnership with Council.

The Selwyn Public Library is regarded as a natural gathering place within our community, where people can connect, create, and explore. In addition to physical and digital collections, we offer a wide array of programs and services, electronic resources, special events, computer and internet access, and community meeting space.

We pride ourselves on developing meaningful partnerships with other community groups and organizations in order to achieve common goals that will benefit our community members. Community agencies such as Parks and Recreation, services to seniors, daycares, and preschools, as well as elementary and high schools, and various social service agencies all see the Library as a valuable partner in delivering their services throughout the Township. These partnerships in turn help the Library promote its own services to residents. As well, the two thrift shops operating in partnership with

Community Care help to generate funds that directly support Library collections and programs.

The incoming Board should explore opportunities to work in partnership with Curve Lake First Nation to develop meaningful Indigenous programs and services.

Additionally, the Makerspace will also provide various opportunities to partner with community groups and individuals, including small businesses.

Strategic Directions

We are currently two years into our new strategic plan.

It has 4 main areas of focus:

1. Develop and strengthen the library's human resources (Service Delivery)
2. Expand access to programs, services, and collections (Services)
3. Provide versatile, welcoming, and safe spaces (Facilities)
4. Engage the community in developing and promoting resources and partnership opportunities (Community)

1. Develop and Strengthen the library's human resources (Service Delivery):

Improving the sustainability of the volunteer program has been a major focus this term. With the intention of strengthening our volunteer workforce, the Library Board undertook a review of our existing volunteer model and policies, keeping in mind the recommendations from the Trent Centre for Aging and Society's "Selwyn Public Library Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability Study" (May, 2018/Appendix B). We concluded that having a more consistent, centralized and comprehensive volunteer model with improved flexibility, along with the inclusion of shorter-term and project-based commitments would be beneficial. This review process led to new policies and procedures that changed in some key areas:

- recognition of the importance of meeting the personal goals of volunteers, as well as the needs of the Library
- enhanced commitment to recruitment of youth volunteers
- centralized and consistent recruitment, screening, and orientation across branches
- staff-led Library branch volunteer coordination and supervision
- commitment to ongoing training on at least a semi-annual basis
- ongoing commitment to formal and informal recognition of volunteers

Though it was anticipated that volunteer retention and recruitment could be a concern in the near future, the onset of the COVID pandemic placed an additional stress on our volunteer work force. Policies and procedures were developed and instituted to protect the health of the volunteers, staff and patrons, including a vaccine policy. However,

volunteer attrition and COVID related absences have led to some ongoing staffing shortages. Additionally, there is a need for recruitment of more volunteers for the Makerspace that will open in the fall of 2022. This could provide a good opportunity for youth volunteers to become involved in a different aspect of the library system.

With the COVID related social gathering limitations over the past two years, it has been a challenge to hold traditional group volunteer appreciation events, and we opted instead for gift cards to local restaurants and video messages from the staff and Board. However, this obstacle has also provided an opportunity to consider and experiment with new and creative ways of celebrating our volunteers in the future.

Staff have had to negotiate numerous challenges over the past two years, but they have also remained focused on moving forward with new projects and implementing the strategic plan. The introduction of staff-led volunteer coordination has improved the consistency of supervision and training of volunteers, but it has also increased librarian workloads, a situation that will require monitoring over time. Additionally, the Makerspace/Technology Training Coordinator is devoting more time to launching and supervising the new Makerspace, and her new time commitment will also need ongoing monitoring.

A new Board training plan and orientation package was implemented with the 2018-22 Board term. Additionally, Board packages were digitized, which eased the transition to online meetings throughout the pandemic. We also succeeded in introducing a new Board Code of Conduct and Board Succession policy, along with an anonymous annual Board self-evaluation process. A policy sub-committee was formed to review the policy collection and streamline existing library policies. The policy collection is in the process of being uploaded to the Library website to improve policy access by the Board, staff and the public.

2. Expand access to programs, services, and collections (Services)

The COVID-19 pandemic created both challenges and opportunities in providing access to our library services. Lockdowns required intermittent branch closures, and then the introduction of quarantining of materials and curbside pickup with safety measures in place. There was reduced circulation of physical resources at that time, but staff bolstered and promoted electronic resources including Hoopla and CloudLibrary, platforms that provide access to e-books, audiobooks, music, magazines, TV series and movies. These resources have remained popular even as physical library branches have re-opened. Currently the Hoopla platform is considered an enhanced service and

is supported through fundraising efforts. Offering Hoopla as a standard rather than enhanced library service may be a future consideration.

Lack of reliable and equitable internet access was evident throughout the pandemic, as some patrons and communities struggled to access services online. The Ennismore library branch had a history of unreliable connectivity and a review of these issues resulted in a new internet service that has improved the quality of connectivity. WiFi hotspots were also added to the physical collections for circulation and have helped fill a need for patrons with limited internet access.

Cancellation of in-person programming during the pandemic also led to new and creative ways to continue to offer library programs. Staff quickly and successfully pivoted to virtual programming for both children and adults. Children's programs were very popular and provided another means of support for families providing in-home education. The introduction of virtual programming also provided the opportunity to explore and experiment with various types of content and delivery options for adults, and improved accessibility for patrons unable to attend in-person programs.

With the successful grant of \$78,200 from the Trillium Foundation, the library is launching a new Makerspace. A Makerspace is a place where people can come together to learn about technology, crafts, and other kinds of making, to share knowledge and skills with others, and to apply this knowledge and skill by creating things. In a Makerspace, you can find a variety of high-tech and low-tech activities. They are spaces filled with technologies, tools, and toys, including sewing machines, 3D printers, vinyl cutting machines, photo scanning equipment and a podcasting suite. By creating the first permanent Makerspace within Peterborough County, we will be creating access to new and emerging technologies while creating opportunities for learning, fostering problem-solving skills, and creative thinking for people of all ages and abilities. Local small business start-ups within our community will also be given the opportunity to explore and utilize new equipment without the financial burden of purchasing the expensive capital themselves. Once the community has been introduced to the Makerspace, it could also serve as a new revenue stream for the Library, as there will be a charge to use or order various supplies or materials, and the potential to open a Makerspace shop. Strexor-Harrop Consulting Group, created, pro bono, an exciting logo and brand for the new Makerspace.

3. Provide versatile, welcoming, and safe spaces (Facilities)

A facility needs assessment of the Lakefield Library was completed during the previous Board's term, and Council approved the plan in principle. However, so far we have been unsuccessful at obtaining a grant to support the project. Our library CEO and Township staff remain vigilant in seeking new grant opportunities.

In 2021, a decision was made to close Renewed Classics, a New-to-You shop that provided fundraising support to the Selwyn Library system. This decision was made due to a combination of factors that included reduced revenues, volunteer attrition and the fact that this particular location was well suited to the Makerspace. If, in the future, there is a successful grant opportunity that allows Selwyn Library to move ahead with a renovation of the Lakefield Library branch, the Makerspace could be moved, possibly to the second floor of the building.

Selwyn Library has also focused attention on outdoor spaces. Two new pollinator gardens have been installed in the Lakefield and Ennismore locations. Additionally, there has been discussion regarding the installation of shade shelters on the Bridgenorth Library porch. Different options are being reviewed with Township personnel, and the intent is to have new shade shelters in place in 2023.

With the intent to improve accessibility, there has been a redesign of the Library website, and it is now AODA compliant. We have also adopted a scent-free policy for Library spaces, and the adoption of a Green Events policy is in progress.

4. Engage the community in developing and promoting resources and partnership opportunities (Community)

It has been challenging to work on increasing partnerships and establishing new community relationships throughout the pandemic. However, in a virtual event, the Board invited a representative of Curve Lake First Nation to improve awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation process and educate on the development and adoption of a meaningful Land Acknowledgement Statement that is now read at all Library meetings and events. The Library board also successfully adopted a Truth and Reconciliation Position Statement that will act as a foundational policy for the development and review of current and future policies. The creation of the new Ennismore Pollinator Garden was inspired by the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, which provides reconciliation-based public education, research, and support to promote the well-being of First Nations children and families. The pollinator garden includes two gardens on each side of the library's main entrance: a pollinator garden and a sensory garden. It was made possible thanks to a Queen's Platinum Jubilee grant.

The Library also engaged with the community in new ways through a different approach to fundraising. With the increased financial pressures on the Library due to COVID-related closures of the New-to-You fundraising stores, and cancellation of traditional annual book sales, a fundraising committee was formed. An Online Silent Auction was held in November 2021 that not only successfully raised \$6000, but also allowed the Library to communicate with many local businesses to raise awareness regarding the Library and its important position within the community. Additionally, the Library adopted the 'Canada Helps' platform to allow online donations. Book sale shelves are now a regular fixture in each branch. The success especially in the Bridgenorth branch of the book sale table means that annual large scale book sales that require a great deal of volunteer time and labour may no longer be necessary. The Library also partnered with Community Care at the 2022 Shamrock Festival, holding a joint book/clothing/bake sale. While sales were lower than in other years, it was a good experience to partner with Community Care and should be considered again in 2023. Ongoing fundraising will likely be necessary due to potential future financial pressures in light of a possible recession and limited funding for public libraries. Recently, Selwyn Township has announced that the Library will be able to partner with them in developing a more robust fundraising strategy. We anticipate that the next Board will likely need Board volunteers for a working committee to develop a fundraising strategy.

We accomplished...

- development of a new Strategic Plan
- development and implementation of a new and streamlined volunteer model
- development and implementation of a new Board Code of Conduct, Board Succession policy and the digitization of Board meeting packages
- review and streamlining of the current policy collection, along with digitization for upload to the Library website
- creation and launching of a new Makerspace in Lakefield, the first in Peterborough County, including a new brand and logo for the space
- development and implementation of new COVID-related policies and procedures and successful maintenance of Library services and programs throughout the pandemic
- improved internet connectivity at the Ennismore branch
- adoption of a new Truth and Reconciliation Position Statement and Land Acknowledgment Statement
- creation of 2 new pollinator gardens
- AODA compliant website and a new Scent-free Policy
- Green Events policy adoption
- Developed new fundraising opportunities (Online auction, Canada Helps online donations)

We have yet to accomplish...

- increased recruitment of student volunteers- in Makerspace and consideration of a Teen Advisory Group
- assessing the impact of the COVID pandemic on physical and electronic circulation for future planning
- the impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Position Statement on the development and review of policies
- digitization of local history collections
- re-development of the Lakefield library branch facility

Future Considerations

Having seen a trend during the COVID-19 pandemic toward the increased use of e-resources and virtual programming, it will be important in the post-pandemic era to carefully monitor and accurately identify how the current virtual and physical spaces of the Library are being used by the community. In addition, it would be worthwhile to measure the subjective impact of the library system, ensuring a better understanding of how the Library improves our quality of life. It would be beneficial to consider the role of the Library as a community hub in a post-pandemic environment. This assessment could potentially include patron interviews, testimonials, and social media feedback. It could also include the reasons people visit the library that may not include the circulation of resources.

It is important to note that Lakefield South development is moving forward and future Boards should explore the renovation and expansion of the Lakefield branch to meet Lakefield's current and projected population growth. A feasibility study on this expansion was completed in 2016 and accepted in principle by Council, and is appended to this document.

Monitoring and assessing how the Makerspace is used and valued by the community is an important future consideration, but it will also be crucial to monitor how successfully it, in itself, integrates with the rest of the library system. Currently, staffing hours have not been increased to accommodate for the increased workload associated with the new Makerspace. With this increased operational demand on staff time, consideration should be given to potentially increasing staffing hours.

Prior to COVID, there had been a trend in volunteerism toward a desire for more flexibility in scheduling and shorter-term project-based commitments. During our Board

term we developed a new Volunteer Model in an attempt to address these trends. However, the pandemic has put additional strain on our volunteer system that must be closely monitored.

Our Board Leadership

We believe that our current Board demonstrates some diversity of gender, age and life experience and represents all areas of the Township, though there is room for improvement. We would welcome representation from under-represented groups such as BIPOC, 2SLGBTQ + and younger community members. If a Teen Advisory Group was developed, regular feedback from this group would help the Board to understand youth needs and strengthen youth services in our library system. Board members first and foremost need to be engaged advocates for the library system and our community, with strong communication skills, a willingness to become involved, and a need to be prepared to set aside personal motives to represent the community as a whole.

Our Wishes for your Success

We encourage you to take advantage of available training materials through Learn HQ, SOLS and the annual library conferences to familiarize yourself with Board governance and trends. Ensure that your voice is heard in meetings, have open discussions, and ask many questions. We wish you an enjoyable and rewarding experience!

Attached Documents

Appendix A: Strategic Plan with updates

Appendix B: Selwyn Public Library Volunteers and Rural Community Sustainability Study Summary, May 2018

Appendix C: Lakefield Branch Feasibility Study on Expansion, September 2016