



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: November 17, 2016  
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Meeting Date: November 23, 2016  
TO: Library Board  
FROM: Christina de Castell, Director, Collections & Technology  
**SUBJECT: Activities Responding to Truth and Reconciliation in 2016**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report provides a summary of activities to date that VPL staff have undertaken to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board receive this report for information.

### **POLICY**

This work aligns with VPL's core values of respecting diversity and social inclusion as expressed in the Library's Values and the Library's Diversity and Inclusion Statement, the latter last updated in 2010 ([http://www.vpl.ca/about/details/diversity\\_and\\_inclusion\\_statement](http://www.vpl.ca/about/details/diversity_and_inclusion_statement)).

The Draft 2017-2019 Strategic Plan includes within its goal "Community Connections" the initiative "Continue to act on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission." The activities undertaken in 2016 represent early work on this initiative.

## **CHIEF LIBRARIAN COMMENTS**

While work to respond to the TRC Calls to Action are noted in our Strategic Plan, VPL has a long history of trying to better connect with and serve local Indigenous community members because it is the right thing to do for a public library and also because our branches and work take place on the traditional and unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish and [Tsleil-Waututh](#) Nations. As well, and equally as important, we are committed to responding to the direct Calls to Action by the TRC and to contributing to the City's collective responsibility to support reconciliation. An important aspect of this work is recognizing that VPL as an organization and staff as individuals still have much to learn about reconciliation and how our commitment to it will continue to evolve our organization as we work to further develop authentic relationships in our community to help us understand how to best address the systemic and other barriers and issues. These ongoing efforts are critical to ensuring that VPL, as a public library, provides inclusive, accessible, and relevant services to our residents and that our services represent the full diversity of Vancouver residents, their culture, knowledge, and history.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was created in 2008 as part of the settlement agreement between the Federal Government, the churches, and survivor parties to the Indian Residential Schools Class Action Settlement Agreement to determine the truth about Canada's residential schools and establish a reconciliation process.

VPL staff's consideration of the TRC Calls to Action began almost immediately upon release of the Calls to Action in June of 2015. In January 2016, VPL staff presented a formal report to the Board – *Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action* – that described VPL's preliminary plans to respond to the TRC's Recommendations [[Link to report](#)], recognizing that further relationship building with the community was required before the library could fully understand the scope of action required. The preliminary VPL actions flowed from the following Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action:

### **1. Language and Culture**

TRC Recommendation #17: We call upon all levels of government to enable residential school Survivors and their families to reclaim names changed by the residential school system by waiving administrative costs for a period of five years for the name-change process and the revision of official identity documents, such as birth certificates, passports, driver's licenses, health cards, status cards, and social insurance numbers.

**VPL Action 1.1:** Upon request, VPL will change patron records to reflect reclaimed names and issue a new membership card at no cost. There is no time limit on the waiving of these fees.

## **2. Professional Development and Training for Public Servants**

TRC Recommendation #57: We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.

**VPL Action 2.1:** VPL staff will participate in internal departmental training in cultural competencies designed by the city’s Equal Employment Opportunity office (EEO).

## **3. Education for Reconciliation**

TRC Recommendation #62: We call upon the federal, provincial, and territorial governments, in consultation and collaboration with Survivors, Aboriginal peoples, and educators, to: (i) Make age-appropriate curriculum on residential schools, Treaties, and Aboriginal people’s historical and contemporary contributions to Canada a mandatory education requirement for Kindergarten to Grade Twelve students.

**VPL Action 3.1:** VPL will create a resource guide for information on residential schools and themes of reconciliation.

## **4. Museums and Archives**

TRC Recommendation #69: We call upon Library and Archives Canada to:

- Ensure that its record holdings related to residential schools are accessible to the public.
- Commit more resources to its public education materials and programming on residential schools.

**VPL Action 4.1:** VPL will update the Library’s Aboriginal Collection Profile to reflect the impact of residential schools and the theme of reconciliation, including collections for K to Grade 12. *(The Aboriginal Collection Profile provides guidelines to assist Librarians to purchase materials that highlight, acknowledge and honor the unique cultures and experiences of Aboriginal communities and to encourage*

*ongoing discussion and collaboration between the Library and Aboriginal communities.)*

**VPL Action 4.2:** VPL will continue to offer the Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence Program. The Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence program started in 2008.

**VPL Action: 4.3:** VPL will provide a link from the VPL's website directing patrons to both the TRC report and the "National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation" which holds the archives of the TRC.

## **5. National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation**

TRC Recommendation #78: We call upon the Government of Canada to commit to making a funding contribution of \$10 million over seven years to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, plus an additional amount to assist communities to research and to produce histories of their own residential school experience and their involvement in truth, healing, and reconciliation.

**VPL Action 5.1:** VPL will encourage use of the Inspiration Lab at Central Library and the Digital Creation Lab at the forthcoming ná'ca?mat ct Strathcona branch to produce histories of Aboriginal experiences for their communities and possibly to share with others.

In addition to these commitments, VPL staff planned to continue to explore further potential actions that fit within the spirit of the Calls to Action as well as support the City's broader commitment to reconciliation.

In September 2016, the Canadian Federation of Library Associations-Fédération canadienne des associations de bibliothèques (CFLA-FCAB) established an interim Truth and Reconciliation Committee to work together until the first elected CFLA-FCAB Board is appointed in January and the new Board can confirm a standing Committee. The interim committee's mandate is:

- to promote initiatives in libraries across Canada to advance reconciliation by supporting the TRC Calls to Action and;
- to promote collaboration on these issues across all Canadian library communities.

Megan Langley, Manager, Neighbourhood Services, and Karen Hoffman, VPL Trustee, are members of this committee. The committee will work to define a broad national response to the TRC Calls to Action which will be presented at CFLA-FCAB's annual meeting in February 2017.

The January 2016 report identified that VPL has been seeking to build relationships with Aboriginal community organizations in Vancouver for many years and has been using a community-led approach to help us better understand the needs of Aboriginal community members and to develop responsive services. Activities have included program development and collection building, including the development of an Aboriginal collection profile and Aboriginal collections at Britannia, Carnegie, Hastings, Kensington and Mount Pleasant branches, as well as materials within general interest collections available at all locations.

The nácaʔmat ct Strathcona Branch, which encompasses the idea of ‘we are one’ in the həńǵəmińəń (Musqueam) language, will open in early 2017, and will be the first major civic building in Vancouver to have an official Indigenous name.

## **DISCUSSION**

VPL established a staff working group to coordinate our efforts around the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action. As staff have discussed the Calls to Action, we have been reflecting on how our understanding of Indigenous Peoples will change our work when we plan libraries, choose our materials, work with our communities, and deliver services in our branches. The steps we have taken in 2016 have begun the process of increasing our understanding of Indigenous Peoples and this has furthered our previous efforts, however, we recognize that we have just begun our learning in this area. This report provides an update on activities for VPL’s response to the Calls to Action in 2016 as well as other opportunities that fit within the spirit of the recommendations. The 2017-2019 Strategic Plan with its draft initiative to “Continue to act on the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission” will offer the opportunity to redefine and expand VPL’s responses to the recommendations through consultation with Vancouver’s Aboriginal communities and participation in the activities of CFLA-FCAB.

The priority in 2016 has been to:

- Begin to raise staff awareness of the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the legacy of residential schools and colonization.
- Educate supervisory staff and the working group so that they can gain confidence in guiding their colleagues through the process of learning and reconciliation.
- Continue to build relationships with Aboriginal communities.
- Build on existing activities that promote Aboriginal culture.

VPL working group members attended the September 2016 meeting of the City of Vancouver’s Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee, which advises City Council on issues of concern to the Aboriginal community in Vancouver. VPL staff listened to the discussion and shared VPL’s plans for action. VPL staff will be attending the quarterly meetings of this committee.

The following presents a summary of activities in 2016 based on the actions identified in the January 20, 2016 report.

**VPL Action 1.1: Upon request, VPL will change patron records to reflect reclaimed names and issue a new membership card at no cost. There is no time limit on the waiving of these fees.**

Circulation Services and Systems staff have developed procedures to facilitate changing names and will launch the new procedures to staff in December 2016, along with guidance on ways to engage in respectful conversations with patrons on this topic. At this time, VPL's integrated library system requires hand-coding traditional characters, and staff have identified that this will be a challenge for many organizations as activity related to this call to action increases. Staff have planned a manual process to address this at VPL. In September, members of the working group shared VPL's intention to support this action with the Urban Aboriginal Peoples Advisory Committee. Several committee members expressed appreciation for VPL's efforts to recognize names. Staff will promote the availability of this option to our community partners in early 2017.

**VPL Action 2.1: VPL staff will participate in internal departmental training in cultural competencies designed by the city's Equal Employment Opportunity office (EEO).**

With the support of the City's Equal Employment Opportunities Program and our Chief Librarian, residential School Facilitator, Brad Marsden, delivered a half-day workshop at the Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre to fifty VPL directors, managers, branch heads, supervisors and programming staff on October 6, 2016: "Fire Across the Land: Impacts of Residential School and Colonization." The experiential workshop was to help educate staff about the collective trauma that has affected Indigenous people throughout Canada's history and to prepare staff to work more effectively with members of the Aboriginal community.

Staff are now planning to deliver this workshop for another fifty staff members in December 2016 as we understand that internal departmental training is not yet available for all City staff.

The working group has created a page on the staff intranet containing information on the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the legacy of residential schools and colonization. It includes links to the TRC's Recommendations, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, reading recommendations, and upcoming programs related to Truth and Reconciliation. In addition, staff were encouraged to participate in Orange Shirt Day on September 30, 2016 to keep the discussion of the impact of residential schools happening annually (<http://www.orangeshirtday.org/>).

**VPL Action: 3.1: VPL will create a resource guide for information on residential schools and themes of reconciliation.**

VPL has produced three public subject guides to help library users access a variety of resources related to the history of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, the impact of residential schools and colonization, and themes of reconciliation.

- Indigenous Peoples (<http://guides.vpl.ca/Aboriginalpeoples> )
- Residential Schools (<http://guides.vpl.ca/residentialschoolsystem>)
- Missing and Murdered Women of the Downtown Eastside (<http://guides.vpl.ca/mmiw> )

In addition, staff have identified residential school images within the VPL historical photograph collection and have added the subject “Natives – Canada – Residential Schools” so that images that were previously hidden under more generic or inappropriate subject headings, like “schools” or “Indians – education” will be easier to find and match terminology used by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Indigenous Peoples. Work on this collection will continue as the Library and Archives Canada Canadian Subject Headings review progresses, as discussed below.

**VPL Action 4.1: VPL will update the existing Aboriginal Collection Profile to reflect the impact of residential schools and the theme of reconciliation.**

This collection profile provides guidelines to assist librarians in selecting materials that highlight, acknowledge and honour the unique cultures and experiences of Aboriginal communities, and encourages ongoing discussion and collaboration between the Library and Aboriginal communities. The original profile was updated in consultation with Aboriginal community representatives during the Working Together Project 2004-2008, and again in 2012-2013, but now needs further updating.

The working group received input from a number of sources:

- Selected libraries with large and well established Aboriginal collections: Xwi7xwa Library at the University of British Columbia; Native Education College; and the Albert Branch of Regina Public Library.
- Members of the working group attended the Reconciliation in Action community engagement event at Britannia Community Centre in September, and discussed the Library’s Aboriginal resources with community participants.
- Branch Heads, Children’s and Teen Services librarians, and community librarians sought input from Aboriginal community members about the Aboriginal resources available at VPL in September and October.

- The Branch Head of náčá?mat ct Strathcona has had several informal conversations with Aboriginal community members regarding collections for the new library between July and September.

Highlights of the changes as a result of the consultation and staff research include:

- Changed Euro-centric terminology to more inclusive ones which reflect Aboriginal perspectives (e.g. changed “rituals and beliefs” to “ceremony.”)
- Expanded and specified the subjects to include traditional plants and medicines; Aboriginal perspectives on technologies such as trapping, hunting, fishing, and canoe building; and the residential school experience and its impacts.
- Expanded from the previously limited emphasis (peoples of the Pacific Northwest) to recognize that urban Aboriginal communities include people from many Nations across Canada
- Updated to include supporting community creation and development of materials, in particular for preserving and learning Indigenous languages.

**VPL Action 4.2: VPL will continue to offer the Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence Program. The Storyteller in Residence program started in 2008.**

The 2016 Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence program was offered March 7-July 1, 2016. This year’s storyteller, Renae Morriveau, focussed on themes of reconciliation in her series of “Conversations” where she engaged with patrons in sessions at Central Library and neighbourhood branches. The final celebration was a collaboration between VPL’s Storyteller and writers and performers from the Aboriginal community. The City of Vancouver contributed additional funding for the event. The call for applications for the 2017 Aboriginal Storyteller in Residence closed on October 14, 2016, and the program is planned for January 3-April 24, 2017.

The selection process for the Storyteller-in-Residence is being further refined to include the previous Storyteller-in-Residence.

**VPL Action 4.3: VPL will provide a link from the VPL’s website directing patrons to both the TRC report and the “National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation” which holds the archives of the TRC.**

A link has been added to VPL’s website footer “TRC Calls to Action” directing patrons to both the TRC report and the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation. We will display it more prominently when our site is updated in early 2017.



**VPL Action 5.1: VPL will encourage use of the Inspiration Lab at Central Branch and Digital Creation Lab at the forthcoming néca?mat ct Strathcona branch to produce histories of their experiences for their communities and possibly to share with others.**

This year's Storyteller In Residence, Renae Morriseau, and eight other Aboriginal artists involved with the closing celebration recorded music or spoken word in Inspiration Lab. In addition, there were tours of the lab given to three Aboriginal groups connected with Renae's project.

In addition to these actions, in the spring of 2016, the Chief Librarian requested of the National Librarian and Archivist that Library and Archives Canada review the Canadian Subject Headings representing Indigenous subjects. Library and Archives Canada has committed to this review and is currently working with several Indigenous library professionals who have been working on Indigenous knowledge classification and thesauri to develop a review process for the Canadian Subject Headings.

#### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The activities undertaken in 2016 were within the Library's operating budget. Costs associated with the strategic initiatives for the 2017-2019 will be identified in the coming months.

#### **TIMELINES**

A revision of the VPL actions for 2017-2019 will take place within the development of VPL's operating plan and will include plans for further consultation with local Aboriginal communities.

#### **FINAL REMARKS**

As noted in the January 2016 report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action represent one of the most important documents in Canada today. VPL's work in 2016 has begun to contribute to addressing the calls to action, and staff look forward to continuing to develop initiatives for VPL and participating in the City of Vancouver's initiatives that contribute towards reconciliation.