

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: September 21, 2023  
Author: Kevin Lowe, Board Chair  
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Meeting Date: September 27, 2023

TO: Library Board  
FROM: Kevin Lowe, Chair, Governance Committee  
**SUBJECT: Board Learning Plan on Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report provides an opportunity for the Board to discuss a learning plan for Board members related to Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for discussion and information.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board receive the report for information.

### **POLICY**

The VPL Board passed the Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation Strategy in November 2022, which included a commitment to “Provide a culturally safe environment both internally (among VPL staff and Trustees) and externally (for partners, patrons, and community) in which to address harms and support the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous communities, including residential school survivors, intergenerational survivors, and Indigenous women, girls, Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ communities (Early Action 6, 2.13)” and to “Identify educational strategies for VPL staff, Trustees, and patrons to build understanding of original Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh laws, and learn how colonialism impacts Indigenous Peoples and their laws. (4.1)”

## **INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination is unique and rooted in settler colonialism, which perpetuates an ongoing system of power that seeks to eliminate, segregate or assimilate Indigenous Peoples. Settler colonialism in countries like Canada is the process of White European societies taking control over Indigenous land and removing or attempting to eradicate Indigenous peoples for the purpose of building a European-dominant settler community. It involves the exploitation of Indigenous peoples through a system that is created and reinforced by White and settler privilege. Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination has, therefore, been built into the fabric of Canadian society and is encoded in public norms, values, legislation, policies and institutions.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Lands**

Vancouver encompasses the territories and homelands of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. These First Nations have resided on, cared for, and stewarded the lands and territories since time immemorial. The Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh did not consent to ceding any form of their traditional lands and territories, through historical treaties or otherwise, and therefore, all institutions and society are constructed on unceded First Nations land. To recognize and acknowledge this relationship is to understand that Vancouver and its institutions are built on foundations of systemic Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination, and that settlers have flourished on these lands as uninvited guests, or more accurately, as uninvited occupiers.

Recognizing these truths, VPL has made Truth and Reconciliation a strategic priority that is considered across all library policy and operations. VPL trustees and staff are expected to understand Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination and how it applies across society and within our system, including in public libraries. VPL trustees are also expected to apply an advanced knowledge and understanding of Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination in the implementation of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in all planning and decision-making.

### **Board Training**

All trustees are required to attend training to support them in their role as a governance board, including training to understand the role of the Board, the VPL budget process, obligations under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, an introduction to Truth and Reconciliation, and current issues such as intellectual freedom and digital collections.

The need for education and training in the history and legacy of residential schools, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous rights and Indigenous law, as well as

Indigenous cultural safety, human rights, and anti-racism, has been identified in multiple reports including by Truth and Reconciliation Commission (Call to Action #57).

## **DISCUSSION**

At the June Governance meeting, the Governance Committee indicated that education and training related to Indigenous-specific racism, rights and reconciliation is a priority. The Board Chair proposed that the Board further discuss training related to Indigenous Rights and Reconciliation, and whether an additional level of personal commitment would be supported.

Education and training in Indigenous-specific racism, rights and reconciliation is meant to provoke learners to understand and reflect on settler colonialism and how it operates, so that the Board is capable of moving to action to eradicate Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination and advance work towards Rights and Reconciliation.

In order to be effective, education and training requires personal and collective commitments. In alignment with the Mission and Values of VPL, creating an environment for learning, growth and change will equip the Board as-a-whole and as individuals to disrupt the status quo through identification and action against Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination.

### **Training Opportunities**

To advance this work, a revised Board learning plan could include:

- 1) Foundation learning activities
  - annual VPL Board in-person workshops such as from <https://nahaneecreative.com/workshop-booking> or <https://www.kairoscanada.org/what-we-do/indigenous-rights/blanket-exercise> , followed by:
  - Committing to individual and collective sharing, reading and discussing materials related to Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination, and Indigenous Reconciliation
  - Group activities such as a cultural tour, e.g., <https://takayatours.com/tours/>
- 2) Actions to advance individual and collective learning and accountability
  - Developing a schedule for trustees to deliver a land acknowledgement, including discussing and sharing learnings, at each Board and Committee meeting.
  - Advanced workshops , such as on understanding the patterns that get in the way of addressing Indigenous specific-racism (fragility, resistance) and ways of interrupting these patterns.

### **Staff Training**

Where possible, it would be ideal if trustees and VPL staff participate in the same or similar education and training. Currently, VPL staff participate Indigenous-specific education and training such as:

- Impacts of Residential Schools and Colonization (in-person, 3.5 hours)
- Cultural Competency: Reconciliation and Indigenous People, Colonization, and Decolonization (online, 3 hours, designed by Kory Wilson/BCIT)
- Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples (7 hours, for full time staff working with Indigenous peoples or organizations or by interest)
- Cultural Competency: Indigenous and Urban Indigenous Peoples - Indigenous Consultation & Engagement (7 hours, as relevant)

A new training plan for the Board related to Indigenous-specific racism, rights and reconciliation could be implemented in 2024. The training would be optional for Indigenous Board members.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- On an annual basis, what level of collective and personal commitment could be supported to advance this work?
- Are there other education and training activities or initiatives that should be included in a training plan?
- What parts of the education and learning should be mandatory and what parts optional?
- What do we need to consider as we implement this education and training plan?

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Board has an annual budget of \$25,500 for meeting expenses, training and continuing education, which includes expenses for individual trustees to attend BC Library Trustees Association conferences and events and for group training costs. This has historically been sufficient for training needs and appropriate meal expenses for Board committee and public meetings. The Chief Librarian & CEO can advise on potential additional sources of funds if required.