

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

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Meeting Date: October 30, 2024

TO: Library Board

FROM: Raji Mangat, Chair, CRPD Committee

**SUBJECT: Promotion of Cultural and Library Events and Observances at VPL**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report provides a framework to determine which cultural events and observances VPL publicly and proactively recognizes and promotes, and the level of recognition given.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for decision.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the Board approve the principles and evaluation criteria for public-facing events, programs and observances as amended and direct the Chief Librarian & CEO to implement these in operations.

THAT the Board approve the major and intermediate non-library events and themes for recognition beginning in 2025, and direct the Chief Librarian & CEO to maintain the list in future years.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

The Committee discussed and supported the approach of requesting Board approval of the framework for decision making for recognizing events and observances, and requested amendments to reduce ambiguity, and to remove the need for approval of library delivered

programs. They identified that the framework should prioritize events and observances related to Indigenous peoples and the local Nations, and opportunities to enhance this in the framework.

## **POLICY**

VPL's Endorsement and Advocacy Policy states that a goal of endorsement and advocacy is "to advance VPL's strategic priorities and goals," and that "VPL will not endorse or take a leading role in issues that do not directly impact VPL services." When VPL recognizes specific days, months, or themes, the public may see this as advocacy, endorsement, or special treatment related to certain people or cultures in Vancouver. Consequently, staff are recommending that the Board approve an evaluation framework and criteria for major and intermediate levels of recognition. This recognizes that advocacy efforts must be approved by the Board.

Board approval of the major and intermediate events and themes will also affect implementation of other related administrative policies.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

VPL's public-facing events, programs and observances should reflect and contribute to achieving our strategic goals. A coordinated calendar for recognition and a robust roster of supporting programs and services is particularly relevant to achieving Priority 3 "Belonging & Connection."

## **INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

VPL's Strategic Plan expresses a commitment to Truth and Reconciliation that underpins all of VPL's strategic goals, and the VPL Board approved the Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation Strategy on November 23, 2022. Within the Strategy is a goal to address Indigenous-specific racism and discrimination. Toward this, VPL will: provide public programs that encourage understanding of truth, reconciliation, and Indigenous rights; celebrate Indigenous excellence; and implement recommendations from the City of Vancouver's MMIWG2S Response Report applicable to VPL. VPL acts on this goal year-round, however, public facing activities and communications associated with days and months of observance offer an opportunity for greater public visibility. VPL's annual planning for recognizing events and days of note should reflect the importance of the Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation Strategy, and be resourced to meet these strategic goals. As a result, days and months associated with celebrating Indigenous culture and recognizing the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada have been prioritized in the proposed framework.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2023, staff identified the need to create an annual calendar of public events and observances to proactively and consistently manage public-facing events and observances, enabling a planned

and more balanced workload for staff across multiple departments as well as an approach to public promotions that reflects our strategic priorities and goals. Lack of clarity on priorities had led to missed opportunities and last minute requests to support various days of observance and events.

A team of managers developed a framework that included overarching principles and evaluation criteria. Staff compiled a comprehensive list of events and observances referencing current practice, requests received, and City of Vancouver policies. VPL Directors approved the categorization of priority events using this framework, and implemented the framework starting in early 2024.

A working group of managers subsequently reviewed and recommended to directors reprioritization of some events based on experience to date. Directors discussed capacity constraints and the increasing politicization of cultural and/or religious observances, which is resulting in changing approaches by public institutions. For example, the City of Vancouver recently [amended its illumination program](#) for City Hall and the Burrard Bridge to focus on local community events and remove international recognition. Many large urban public libraries across Canada are discussing similar issues, due to the increasing volume of potential days to recognize.

## **DISCUSSION**

VPL as an organization seeks to advance its strategic priorities through promotion of collections and services. This extends to our public facing promotion across various touchpoints (e.g. website, social media, book displays, and recommended reading lists).

The number of potential days of celebration and remembrance has become too numerous to dedicate adequate resources to promoting, particularly when combined with core library programs and services that require promotion. Based on experience from 2024, staff have a better understanding of timelines and resource requirements for various major and intermediate events, and are now beginning to plan for 2025. Additional operational guidelines are being developed to address some of the challenges, and through this process, staff have identified that a Board-approved framework would be helpful to guide decision-making.

### **Events and Observances Framework**

The framework, comprised of Principles and Evaluation Criteria, is designed to provide a strategic and holistic organizational lens when assessing whether, and to what level, to dedicate resources to promoting events to the public. The purpose of the framework will be to guide decision-making by staff.

#### **Principles**

- 1. VPL Board-approved evaluation criteria are used to prioritize events**

Events and observances are assessed against the following criteria: Strategic Alignment, Core Library Mandate Alignment, VPL-created, and Celebration. VPL will prioritize events and observances with the highest strategic alignment, with approval by VPL Directors.

**2. VPL applies three tiers of events/observances, with a maximum number of each per quarter and annually: Major (2/6), Intermediate (2/6), Minor (dependent on workloads).**

VPL management allocates resources based on how an event/observance is classified. Major and intermediate events require advance planning and involvement from multiple internal departments. Due to capacity constraints and to avoid overwhelming the public with too many messages, there are a limited number of major and intermediate events that VPL can recognize in a year:

- Major events have strategic alignment and require coordination across multiple departments. Activities may include development of a themed web page, reading lists, book displays, public programs, and social media. No more than 6 major events can be supported annually (no more than 2 per quarter).
- Intermediate events have a high degree of strategic alignment, but do not require the same cross-departmental effort as major events. No more than 6 Intermediate events can be undertaken annually.
- Minor events require little cross-departmental coordination and can be acknowledged as long as they do not affect VPL's resourcing and public attention for major and intermediate events.

**3. Event communications refer back to library activities**

Public promotion related to an event will refer the public to library activities, such as programs, book lists, and other resources. If VPL does not have, or cannot easily create, resources appropriate to support understanding of an event or observance, the event will not be a part of the calendar until these are available.

**4. Recognition of non-library events will be selected from events and observances recognized by Federal, Provincial, Municipal and local Nation government sources**

VPL will consider for recognition days/months provided by Canadian Heritage on the list of [Important and commemorative days](#), as well as days/months recognized by the Province of BC or Vancouver City Council through designation as a [public or statutory holiday](#), or [proclamation](#), or identified by Musqueam, Squamish or Tsleil-Waututh Nations' governance.

In addition to the above principles, operationally VPL will assign a managerial sponsor and project lead for each major event. These roles will be associated with one of the key producing or relevant support departments. Some intermediate events may also require this level of resourcing. Recognition of events and observances, or participation in activities, may need to be

limited to avoid compromising regular library services. Minor events or observances that are not included in the government sources listed above may be included in developing activities at the unit level, e.g. activities for children and families.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

Events will be evaluated relative to others being considered to create a balance of themes distributed throughout the year. The overall mix of events to be publicly promoted will be assessed through the lens of VPL's goal to engage and celebrate the diverse cultures and languages of Vancouver. VPL managers will review major and intermediate events in Q3 for the following calendar year, and if changes are identified, will present recommendations to VPL directors for approval.

- **Strategic Alignment** – Is the event or observance specifically mentioned in the Strategic or Operating Plan or does it significantly align with major themes in the Strategic Plan or the Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation Strategy? (e.g. National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Pride)
- **Core Library Mandate Alignment** – Is the event or observance significantly aligned with traditional/core library work? (e.g. Summer Reading Club, Library Month, Freedom to Read Week)
- **VPL Created** – Is the event created/produced exclusively by VPL? (e.g. Writer in Residence, Indigenous Storyteller in Residence)
- **Celebratory** – is the event or observance widely recognized in Vancouver but not core to VPL? These may be recognized as a minor event only (e.g. Mother's Day, Halloween)

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Promotion of events and observances under the above framework is designed to be accommodated within the regular operating budget. Staffing and budget capacity limit the number of events that VPL can publicly recognize each year. If VPL identifies additional events for major or intermediate recognition, additional funding will be required for staffing and program delivery.

## **APPENDIX**

### **Major and Intermediate Events:**

As noted above, VPL's Endorsement and Advocacy Policy has guided development of the principles for VPL's approach. When VPL recognizes specific days, months, or issues, the public may see this as advocacy, endorsement or special treatment of certain people or cultures in Vancouver, therefore staff are recommending that the Board approve the initial list of major and intermediate events. This recognizes that advocacy efforts must be approved by the Board.

The events selected are in alignment with VPL strategic priorities and goals and the advocacy efforts of the City of Vancouver, as well as supporting the VPL-Board approved Indigenous Rights & Reconciliation Strategy and the Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Inclusion Strategy.

Staff would implement this calendar in 2025, and make minor adjustments as required in the future. Should significant changes be identified due to risks for the Library, the Chief Librarian & CEO will consult with the Board Chair.

The Board is requested to approve the major and intermediate events and observances below, as indicated with an asterisk (\*). The other major and intermediate events recognized are library programs which have already been approved by the Board through the annual Operating Plan and budget.

### **Major Events:**

- Q1: Indigenous Storyteller in Residence
- Q2/3: Summer Reading Club
- Q3: National Day for Truth and Reconciliation / Orange Shirt Day\*
- Q3/4: Writer in Residence

### **Intermediate Events:**

- Q1: Black History Month\*
- Q2: Asian Heritage Month\*
- Q2: National Indigenous History Month\*
- Q3: Pride\*