

## MANAGEMENT REPORT

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Author: Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian & CEO

Meeting Date: April 28, 2021

TO: Library Board

FROM: Kurt Heinrich, Chair, Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee

**SUBJECT: Governance Input, Feedback, and Relationships**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report was referred from the Governance Committee to the CRPD and SFHR committees to discuss sources of input and feedback for library governance decision making and summarize sources of input for staff. The discussions of all three committees are summarized under Committee Discussion.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board receive the report for information.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

In their discussion in April, the Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee observed that while they do not always feel connected to community in Board meeting, the community input and feedback that is needed for decision is included in reports from staff to Board. Some members noted that they are confident in the amount of engagement and the relationships of staff, and did not find Board involvement needed. The challenge may be in improving the understanding of the engagement done by staff, and drawing on the diversity of

perspectives among Board members. Trustees noted that there may be additional opportunities to engage with City of Vancouver advisory committees, and their appreciation of surveys.

At their discussion in February, Services, Finance and Human Resources Committee members discussed that input on strategic priorities during strategic planning, and input on specific issues are likely the most valuable when considering other ways to build input, feedback and relationships into governance for their committee role. They noted that strategic planning consultation is complemented by the feedback shared through staff in reports including monthly staff reports from branches and units, through statistics, and through other regular reporting linked to initiatives, as well as through surveys on issues. They also noted that existing mechanisms like Board delegations are not the best way to consult and facilitate people feeling heard. They asked about ways to seek input and build relationships with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and the Chief Librarian & CEO shared information about upcoming plans coordinated through the City of Vancouver.

In their discussion on November 16, 2020, Governance Committee members suggested Indigenous organizations that VPL could build connections with, and identified the need to challenge ourselves to ensure the local Nations' perspectives are considered. They asked questions about the role of the City of Vancouver Advisory Committees, and noted that surveys or seeking feedback through social media could be considered by the Board as more current approaches than structures like advisory committees, while recognizing the challenges of hearing from diverse voices on some issues. The committee members identified the value of feedback received through relationships that involve deep engagement, such as those with community librarians and other staff, and that this can at times be more meaningful than what is received from advisory committees. They also noted that legal advice is valued and necessary in some policy decisions. They expressed interest in hearing practices at other libraries or related organizations.

## **POLICY**

Under the provincial Library Act, the library board is made up of one member from municipal council and the remainder are residents or electors of the municipality. The Library Board governs VPL on behalf of the community.

VPL's values include patron-centred services, community-led planning, and community partnerships, and these guide the work of staff and the Library Board. The Library Board has two policies that specifically apply to the role of community input into the Library: [Diversity and Inclusion](#), and [Programming at Vancouver Public Library](#).

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

VPL completed strategic planning in 2019 and the Board approved the 2020-2023 Strategic Plan priorities and goals. Community input and feedback shapes the strategic plan, as described under background below.

## **INDIGENOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

Needs and opportunities for input and feedback from the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, and from urban Indigenous people living in Vancouver, should be considered within the scope of the Committee's discussion.

The City of Vancouver has a government to government relationship with the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, which includes staff intergovernmental meetings and Council to Council gatherings. VPL staff work through the City of Vancouver Intergovernmental Relations department and Manager, Indigenous Relations to seek formal participation by the Musqueam, Squamish or Tsleil-Waututh Nations. These meetings regularly include facilities development projects and discussion related to land use and long range planning. The Library will use these formal processes to consult with the Nations on upcoming branch redevelopment projects in the Marpole and West End areas, hearing areas of interest and concern, and seeking opportunities for collaboration. This consultation will also include the invitation to participate in other library priorities identified in the strategic plan, and provide the opportunity to develop appropriate processes. This is distinct from library services that are provided by VPL to Musqueam reserve residents through a library service agreement.

Relationships with Indigenous community organizations and those supporting urban Indigenous people in Vancouver exist at the branch level, through community librarians, and through managers, as well as through programming such as the Indigenous Storyteller in Residence. These relationships provide opportunities to learn about community needs and interests and to shape the Library's service delivery, applying our community-led approach to program and service development. As an example, the Connections to Kith & Kin program started at the request of young urban Indigenous leaders. It began as a partnership with Library and Archives Canada (LAC), ALIVE (Aboriginal Life in Vancouver Enhancement), Indian Residential School Survivors Society, Britannia Community Services, Our Place and the North West Indigenous Council. The program uses VPL and LAC's staff and resources to host workshops that are supported by Our Place's connection to Indigenous cultural supports. These cultural supports help participants reconnect with people and places that have been lost due to colonial interference.

## **BACKGROUND**

VPL staff undertake a community-led approach to program and service development, receiving direct input of community members through day to day operations verbally both in-person and by phone, and in writing by email and letter, and incorporating this input into planning. More focused input and feedback that leads into planning occurs through relationships with community organizations serving specific populations, such as immigrant-serving organizations, Indigenous community organizations, family and childcare focused centres, and those serving people who are homeless. VPL staff have hundreds of these types of relationships, which are coordinated on a neighbourhood basis, primarily by branch heads and community librarians, and that influence the programs and services the Library delivers.

For VPL's collections, more than 5,000 suggested purchases are typically received annually from VPL cardholders. Staff purchase all materials that are under \$50 and meet the Library's collection development policy, guided by our value of intellectual freedom. When materials are more expensive or their match with our collection development policy is less clear, such as for highly academic materials, guidance is sought from a supervisor.

The Library also undertakes a strategic planning process, typically on a four year cycle. During this process there is robust public engagement through surveys and conversations, as well as targeted activities with certain groups, such as the leadership from organizations that VPL partners with frequently for programs and services, as well as aligned organizations. In the planning process for the 2020-2023 strategic plan, more than 5,000 points of input were received from our community members, including a forum with leaders of more than twenty local community organizations that helped to identify shared priorities for Vancouver.

In addition to the operational and strategic plan processes, VPL staff participate in a number of City of Vancouver advisory committees that contribute to operations and provide opportunities for input on strategic and policy matters.

VPL staff are designated as liaisons to the following City of Vancouver advisory committees:

- Urban Indigenous Peoples Advisory committee (Manager, Neighbourhood Services)
- Children, Youth and Families advisory committee (Head, Children's Library)
- 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee (in transition)

When VPL is seeking additional input or relevant topics arise, staff also attend:

- Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Inclusion (TGD2S) Advisory Committee (Park Board)
- Persons with Disabilities committee
- Public Art Committee

- Seniors Advisory committee

An Anti-Racism Public Partners table is in discussion with VPL staff participation. A full list of Agencies, Boards, and Committees is available on the City of Vancouver website, and includes the Library Board: <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/find-an-advisory-board-or-committee.aspx>. Staff are able to attend these meetings when relevant topics arise or when input is needed from these groups.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Board identified an interest in discussing additional ways to receive input into decision making for governance beyond the strategic plan, such as for policy development. The Governance Committee discussed these issues in November 2020, and referred the report to the Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee and Services, Finance and Human Resources Committee for further discussion.

The Board's existing three committees act in an advisory capacity to the Board. The scope of the discussion for the Governance Committee was limited to the scope of the committee, which is to ensure that the Board is able to govern effectively, and this includes ensuring that the Board has effective governance policies and procedures and receives appropriate training.

The role of the Community Relations, Planning and Development Committee is to advise the Board on communications, marketing, advocacy and community relations relating to the library.

The role of the Services, Finance and Human Resources Committee is to advise on the delivery of library services, financial matters, human resources and information technology.