

Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives

Date:	April 18, 2017
To:	Toronto Public Library Board
From:	City Librarian

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to request Toronto Public Library Board endorsement of the strategies for Indigenous initiatives at Toronto Public Library (TPL) as part of TPL's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) 94 Calls to Action, released June 2015.

These strategies have been developed for consultation with Toronto's Indigenous communities and in collaboration with Indigenous service providers in Toronto, and the next steps are to consult with these communities and service providers. Any resulting initiatives requiring Toronto Public Library Board approval will be brought forward to a future Toronto Public Library Board meeting.

TPL has an important role to play in the Reconciliation process by: bringing together Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in a culturally safe and relevant space, and helping to facilitate public education and awareness on Truth and Reconciliation, residential schools and treaty relationships. For this reason, TPL's Indigenous initiatives are relevant to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Toronto. TPL also has a responsibility for ensuring that the Library is a culturally safe and relevant space for members of Toronto's Indigenous communities.

The strategies for Indigenous Initiatives are wide-ranging in scope and support all six Strategic Priorities for 2016-2019. They represent a key initiative on the 2017 Strategic Plan Work Plan, which is to determine TPL's response to the TRC's Calls to Action and develop and implement programming and service to support Toronto's Indigenous communities, and to raise awareness of Indigenous culture and societal issues.

Reconciliation is an ongoing and long-term commitment and, as such, TPL should consider additional recommendations that emerge after these strategies have been presented, approved, or implemented.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Librarian recommends that the Toronto Public Library Board:

1. endorses the strategies for Indigenous initiatives for consultation with the Indigenous communities in Toronto.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Individual project plans to address the strategies will be developed to identify the resources required for the implementation path selected. While there will be costs for the increased programs and services, there will be no net impact beyond what has already been approved in the current year's operating budget.

The Director, Finance and Treasurer has reviewed this financial impact statement and is in agreement with it.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2019

Strategies outlined in this report are consistent with *Priority 5: Creating Community Connections through Cultural Experiences*, and are in specific response to TPL's 2017 Strategic Work Plan initiative to "*Determine TPL's response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and develop and implement programming and services to support Toronto's Indigenous communities, and raise awareness of Indigenous culture and societal issues.*"

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In June 2015, the TRC released a report, calling on all levels of government and institutions to "...redress the legacy of residential schools..."¹ by responding to 94 Calls to Action. In 2016, Toronto Public Library created a new position, Services Specialist for Indigenous Initiatives, as a first step in responding to these Calls to Action. The Services Specialist for Indigenous Initiatives was given a four-month timeline to conduct an environmental scan and suggest recommendations on how TPL might respond to the TRC Calls to Action and drive forward the direction of Indigenous initiatives at TPL. The Services Specialist for Indigenous Initiatives began the assignment on November 7, 2016 and submitted the final report to Directors' Committee on March 7, 2017, where it was approved in principle. This final report puts forth 42 strategies.

As part of efforts to develop strategies for TPL's response to the TRC Calls to Action, internal and external environmental scans were conducted. In late November 2016, a Survey of Indigenous Initiatives was distributed to staff across the system to support data collection. The purpose of the Survey of Indigenous Initiatives was to request information and staff

¹ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action*, p. 1

feedback on programs, services and collections with Indigenous content or with an Indigenous focus.

Survey response was positive, with 99 out of 100 branch locations responding to the Survey of Indigenous Initiatives. Other divisions and service areas responded as well, including Children's Services, Collection Development, and Staff Training.

During the collection and analysis of feedback from the Survey of Indigenous Initiatives, some misconceptions emerged. Many branches suggested that they did not offer programming with Indigenous content because of lack of interest from their branch community, or lack of Indigenous communities in the area. This pointed to two main misconceptions:

1. that branch and/or local Indigenous initiatives are only necessary if there is an interest from the community, and;
2. that Indigenous initiatives are only for Indigenous communities.

Going forward, TPL will need to address these misconceptions with staff and promote the understanding that TPL and its branches have a responsibility to Toronto's Indigenous communities and an important role to play in the Reconciliation process, regardless of whether there is a perceived lack of interest from branch communities; also, that Indigenous initiatives are relevant and of interest to non-Indigenous communities as well.

Another concern that arose during the environmental scan as well as when developing these strategies for Indigenous initiatives was that, due to time and staffing constraints, no extensive consultations took place with Indigenous communities or service providers in Toronto. The strategies listed below are based on the results of the Survey of Indigenous Initiatives, information from conversations with staff, personal and work experiences of the Services Specialist of Indigenous Initiatives while working at Spadina Road Branch, and one-on-one conversations with members of the Indigenous community and agency staff. The next steps are to consult broadly with Toronto's Indigenous communities and Indigenous service providers on these strategies. Any resulting initiatives requiring Toronto Public Library Board approval will be brought forward to a future Toronto Public Library Board meeting.

COMMENTS

Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives

The following strategies are preliminary draft recommendations that will help inform the direction of Indigenous initiatives at TPL. They are to be reviewed, approved, and implemented in consultation with Toronto's Indigenous communities and in collaboration with Indigenous service providers in Toronto, following Toronto Public Library Board approval, where required. The 42 strategies put forth here have been divided into the following categories:

1. Breaking Down Organizational Barriers
2. Indigenizing Library Spaces: Physical and Virtual

3. Incorporating Indigenous Content into TPL Programming
4. Improving Access to Indigenous Content through TPL Collections
5. Enabling and Empowering Indigenous Communities
6. Building Capacity and Staff Competency

Breaking Down Organizational Barriers

1. Establish a permanent Indigenous Advisory Council (IAC) at TPL, to be comprised of representatives from key Indigenous agencies and organizations throughout the City, individual members of Toronto's Indigenous communities, and key representatives from TPL's branches and service areas. An Indigenous Advisory Council will help move forward TPL's strategic priorities to break down barriers to access, drive inclusion, and create community connections through cultural experiences.
2. Implement an ongoing Elder-in-Residence program at the Library, the selection process of which will be determined by the IAC. The Elder-in-Residence will work out of branch locations as needed, meeting with members of the public, either by appointment or on a drop-in basis. The Elder-in-Residence will sit on TPL committees, as needed, advise staff on protocols, and conduct opening and closing ceremonies at key library programs, events, and meetings. An Elder-in-Residence program will help establish TPL as Toronto's centre for lifelong and self-directed learning, while providing opportunities to create in-branch environments that connect neighbourhoods and communities, and offer opportunities for partnerships, civic engagement, and resident participation.
3. Make land and treaty acknowledgement statements before all meetings, programs and events. Wording will be determined by the IAC and provided to staff in English, French, and any Indigenous languages as requested.
4. Establish system measures and service benchmarks, including a logic model, for Indigenous initiatives at TPL. Staff to work to improve tracking of data and statistics on Indigenous Initiatives and activities. Encourage branches to deliver library services and programs with Indigenous content once a quarter.
5. Conduct formal community consultations and needs assessments via a third party to ensure impartiality, and protect the anonymity of community members. The purpose of these formal community consultations is to identify specific areas for improvement in TPL's already established programs and services, and to determine opportunities for new services and initiatives that are appealing, welcoming, and culturally relevant to Toronto's Indigenous communities.
6. Create an internal and external communications strategy to position TPL's Strategies for Indigenous Initiatives as a long-term service effort.

Indigenizing Library Spaces: Physical and Virtual

7. Post land and treaty acknowledgement statements in all public service locations, including TPL's library locations, book mobiles, and online platforms. The wording will be determined by the IAC, and posted in English, French, Anishinaabemowin, Mohawk, and any other Indigenous languages deemed relevant and necessary by the IAC.
8. Encourage, enable and empower Indigenous peoples to practice their beliefs by removing barriers and restrictions on smudging at TPL programs, meetings, and events, and by formalizing this practice through a Rules of Conduct Bulletin and other staff communication documents.
9. Create a dedicated space on the TPL website for Indigenous content. This online space will provide information on Indigenous initiatives and content at TPL as well as access to digitized resources, including items from special collections, audio files from Spadina Road Branch's Oral History Collection, and links to language learning resources. This online content will also include information on the Native Peoples Collections, Indigenous programming at the Library, and recommended reading lists highlighting Indigenous authors and titles in TPL's collections.
10. Commission an Indigenous artist to design artwork for TPL to be used in templates, logos, and social media promoting Indigenous programs, initiatives and events at TPL.
11. Support the issues deemed important by First Nations communities in Ontario, specifically those of the Haudenosaunee and the Mississaugas of New Credit on whose traditional territory TPL sits, by providing spaces for members of the communities to meet, share information, and deliver programs through opportunities for co-sponsorship.
12. Engage in ongoing local consultation with members of Indigenous communities, through a variety of approaches, both formal and informal, on ways to make library branches across the system more culturally relevant, respectful and welcoming.
13. Collaborate with the IAC and staff to identify appropriate branch signage to be posted in local Indigenous languages, including Anishinaabemowin and Mohawk.
14. Consider the use of Indigenous names for new building projects, and the reopening of renovated branches, where possible.
15. Adopt and implement the CFLA-FCAB's Truth & Reconciliation Committee's recommendation that "Renovations or new construction projects engage with Indigenous architects and stakeholders so as to incorporate authentic Indigenous designs."² TPL will incorporate Indigenous perspectives into building design, signage

² CFLA-FCAB Truth & Reconciliation Committee Report, p. 34, recommendation #3.

and architecture, where appropriate, through state of good repair, branch renovations, and other capital projects, including the building of new library branches.

16. Include the planting ceremony of an Eastern White Pine tree, also known as the Tree of Peace by the Haudenosaunee, as part of branch reopening events in 2017/2018, as a symbol of TPL's commitment to fostering better relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities for the next 150 years, with a plaque commemorating this commitment.
17. Incorporate Medicine Gardens into library landscaping space. Include plans for Medicine Gardens in any new and/or upcoming capital projects.
18. Engage and consult with Indigenous agencies and community members in any branch capital projects, as part of the larger consultation process.

Incorporating Indigenous Content into TPL Programming

19. Provide a statement for TPL's Canada 150 events and programs acknowledging that Indigenous nations were vibrant and active on the lands and territories now called "Canada" thousands of years before confederation in 1867. This statement will be read before TPL Canada 150 programs and events, and will also be posted on any TPL Canada 150 promotional materials, and any other communication platforms, including TPL social media and tpl.ca. This strategy is based on the CFLA-FCAB's Truth and Reconciliation Committee's recommendation that libraries rebrand Canada 150 programming to Canada 150+.³
20. Expand programming with Indigenous content from Aboriginal Month in June to year round.
21. Launch a reading campaign under the banner "Read Indigenous" that features Indigenous authors and titles that are easily accessible to the public.
22. Work with Indigenous agencies to expand the Community Librarian Pilot Project to key Indigenous organizations and institutions across the City.
23. Offer Indigenous language programs at branches across the City.
24. Have at least one traditional teaching program available at one branch location per month.
25. Integrate Indigenous content into already established system programming, and in particular children's programming, such as Ready for Reading.

³ CFLA-FCAB Truth & Reconciliation Committee Report, p. 20, Call to Action #68, recommendation #2

26. Ensure that Dial-A-Story includes Indigenous stories, in English, French and Indigenous languages, throughout the year, beyond Aboriginal Month in June. Consult with the IAC to determine protocols and guidelines for posting Indigenous stories on Dial-A-Story, including which stories can be told and shared, and appropriate times of year to post certain stories.

Improving Access to Indigenous Content through TPL Collections

27. Expand the Native Peoples Collection to library locations serving neighbourhoods with Indigenous agencies and larger Indigenous populations, including Cliffcrest, Dawes Road, Morningside, Parliament, St. James Town, and Wychwood.
28. Ensure that library locations across the system, even those that do not serve Indigenous communities, have a thorough representation of Indigenous content in their branch collections, especially on the topics of Truth and Reconciliation, treaties, and residential schools. TPL collections should also be representative of the achievements, successes, and accomplishments of Indigenous communities by making available and accessible the rich diversity of Indigenous writers, authors and illustrators.
29. Ensure that children's materials with Indigenous content are well represented at library locations across the system, and that the Indigenous content in children's collections is culturally relevant, appropriate, and respectful. Indigenous children should see themselves and their cultures reflected positively in TPL collections.
30. Work with TPL's Collections Development Department to ensure that Indigenous language-learning resources are well represented in library collections, and easily accessible.
31. Facilitate ease of finding books and materials with Indigenous content in library collections by applying a special label. Supply labels to all branches with guidelines for applying to materials with Indigenous content.
32. Update cataloguing and classification practices to include more culturally relevant terminology that reflect Indigenous perspectives of knowledge.

Enabling and Empowering Indigenous Communities

33. Extend TPL membership to include persons living on First Nations reserves in Ontario in keeping with TPL's provincial mandate and offer longer loan periods to persons living on First Nations reserves in Ontario in order to improve access to collections and in keeping with strategic goals of removing policy barriers, and determine with vendors, guidelines for including access to downloadable and digital collections to eligible borrowers living on reserves in Ontario, in the spirit of Reconciliation and in keeping with TPL's provincial mandate.

34. Continue to support staff work on the *Impact to Access to Technology Study* with Naotkamegwaming and Wikwemikong First Nations libraries.

Building Capacity and Staff Competency

35. Support recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff.
36. Ensure that all TPL staff attend Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centre's (OFIFC) Indigenous Cultural Competency staff training session.
37. Establish curriculum-based Indigenous Cultural Competency training for all TPL staff to augment their knowledge and understanding of Indigenous communities. In addition to OFIFC's compulsory training, other courses and sessions should be offered through a curriculum-based model. TPL staff who complete all courses and training sessions in the curriculum would receive a certificate of acknowledgement.
38. Create a dedicated space on TPL's intranet for Indigenous initiatives, with resources to help inform and enable staff to provide library services with Indigenous content and/or an Indigenous focus.
39. Establish protocols for staff engaging with Elders and Indigenous communities, to be posted on the Indigenous initiatives page of TPL's intranet.
40. Provide staff with Medicine Wheel/Reconciliation buttons in order to facilitate interactions with members of Toronto's Indigenous communities. Ensure that staff who have completed the OFIFC's Indigenous Cultural Competency training are given these buttons after their session.
41. Develop land and treaty acknowledgement statements with the IAC that staff can use in their work email signatures.
42. Build a Community of Practice for staff on Indigenous initiatives to promote open discussion, the sharing of best practices, and testing of ideas and approaches.

CONCLUSION

Reconciliation is an ongoing and long-term commitment that requires, first and foremost, relationship-building. In the words of Justice Murray Sinclair, "Reconciliation is about forging and maintaining respectful relationships. There are no shortcuts."⁴

TPL has an important role to play in the process of Reconciliation. As a leading public institution, TPL has a responsibility, not only to educate and raise public awareness on Truth and Reconciliation, but to drive the reconciliation process between members of the

⁴ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada website:
<http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=3>

Indigenous and non-Indigenous public. As David Newhouse points out, “Those who lead Canada’s public institutions need above all to spearhead the reconciliation effort and work for change within Canadian society as a whole.”⁵

Serving Indigenous communities and responding to the TRC Calls to Action are not a checklist or a list of accomplishments to brandish and parade about. We must approach Indigenous Initiatives with an affirmation and commitment to supporting and celebrating Toronto’s Indigenous communities, while at the same time raising awareness and providing a bridge between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. There is a lot of work ahead of us. Let us begin now.

"We have described for you a mountain.
We have shown you the path to the top.
We call upon you to do the climbing."

— Justice Murray Sinclair.

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SIGNATURE

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⁵ Newhouse, David. “Indigenous Peoples, Canada and the Possibility of Reconciliation,” *IRPP Insight* no. 11 (2016): 1.