

Spotlight – Calgary Public Library

“The road we travel is equal in importance to the destination we seek. There are no shortcuts. When it comes to truth and reconciliation we are forced to go the distance.” Murray Sinclair

Organization/Business Unit Name:

Calgary Public Library

Description/purpose of the Organization/Business Unit:

The Calgary Public Library’s vision, mission, and values speak to the Library’s role as a community hub where everyone belongs. Our vision is “Potentials Realized,” and our mission is to “empower community by connecting you to ideas and experiences, inspiration, and insight”. Rooted in our values of Equity, Curiosity, and Collaboration, the Library is committed to removing barriers and increasing access to information in all its forms to support a successful future for Calgary. Everyone belongs at the Library and literacy and learning live within each of our 21 libraries, as we continue to grow our reach and impact each day.

Overview of Truth and Reconciliation actions/programs/tasks of the past year:

- A wide range of year-round programming that shared and celebrated Indigenous experiences, voices, and culture including community programming for Red Dress Day, National Indigenous History Month, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and more.
- In fall 2023, Central Library was honoured to host The Witness Blanket, a large-scale art installation created by master carver Carey Newman or Hayalthkin’geme (Ha-yalth-kingeme). This symbol of resilience and Reconciliation was brought to Calgary through a new partnership with the Human Rights Museum of Canada.
- Caretakers of the Land is the Library’s virtual school program that helps to extend and support classroom learning about Indigenous history and culture. This program is quickly becoming a trusted and valuable learning resource for schools across Alberta. Over 14,106 students from 539 classes attended a Caretakers of the Land event last school year.
- The Library is honoured to work with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from Treaty 7 through our Elders’ Guidance Circle, a program that allows community members to connect and learn from Elders. Relationships with our Elders has been a critical component of our work and we cannot be successful without their knowledge and support. In 2023, the Library formally renamed the space at Central Library where the Elders’ Guidance Circle meets as the Children’s Lodge, a name approved and gifted by the Elders, and confirmed through ceremony. In the Children’s Lodge, individuals, small groups, and students, can meet with Elders to explore topics relating to culture, history, and reconciliation. The Library also implemented an *Elder-in-Residence* program, a system-wide library staff program created for employees to engage with and build meaningful connections with an Elder from the Elders’ Guidance Circle Program at Central Library.
- The Library is also proud to be one of six Western organizations who form a Circle of Relatives supporting the Elders Knowledge Circle Society with the Elder Story Project.
- Indigenous Placemaking – permanent art installations featuring the work of Indigenous artist with a connection to Treaty 7 and surrounding areas – are now located at nine locations in the system.
- The Library invested in Land Acknowledgement plaques for all locations and worksite. These bronze plaques featured the artwork of Madison Tailfeather and were developed by Library’s

internal Truth and Reconciliation Stewardship Group who worked in consultation with the Elders' Guidance Circle members.

- Powwow Trail 101 Program was developed to create awareness of the powwow trail for non-Indigenous visitors and nurture respect for cultural traditions. Over the last two summers, seven community libraries (Signal, Forest Lawn, Giuffre, Southwood, Saddletowne, Seton, and Crowfoot) hosted the program and Indigenous dancers and drummers were invited to showcase their style of dance while Elders and community leaders shared information on protocols of powwow and encouraged attendees to visit a nearby powwow.

Why does this work matter?

The Calgary Public Library is committed to forging a path of Truth and Reconciliation as outlined in the Library's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan by working together with community to learn, share, and develop innovative programs and services. The Library's continuing work in Indigenous Services is a key example of how a sense of belonging, community empowerment, empathy building, and personal meaning can be built through relationships, collaboration, and inclusion.

Alignment with City/Corporate/Council plans, actions, and outcomes:

The City's White Goose Flying Report asks the Library to inspire stories, and work with community partners to coordinate and collaborate on exhibits and programming about the true history and legacy of Indian residential schools in and around Calgary.

Alignment with the Calls to Action and Truth and Reconciliation:

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Final Report includes 94 Calls to Action. Call to Action 69 specifically asks libraries to reexamine their commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and commit more resources to sharing the true history of Indigenous peoples with our communities.

Planned/Expected/Future work and activities on Truth and Reconciliation:

Along with continuing to maintain and strengthen existing programs and services as noted above, the Library is also exploring opportunities to further enhance access and resources for the learning and sharing of Treaty 7 languages and outreach strategies.