

# 10.4

**Report to / Rapport au:**

**Ottawa Public Library Board  
Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa**

**September 13, 2022 / 13 septembre 2022**

**Submitted by / Soumis par:**

**Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer / Directrice générale**

*Contact Person / Personne ressource:*

*Alexandra Yarrow, Program Manager, OPL Board & Strategic Services / Gestionnaire de programmes, Conseil d'administration de la BPO et services stratégiques  
(613) 580-2424 x32312. Alexandra.Yarrow@bibliooottawalibrary.ca*

**File Number: OPLB-2022-0913-10.4**

**SUBJECT: Update – Indigenous Services**

**OBJET: Mise à jour – Services aux Autochtones**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS**

**That the Ottawa Public Library (OPL) Board:**

- 1. Receive this report for information; and,**
- 2. Direct staff to provide the Board with an update regarding Indigenous Services at OPL once per term of Board, as further described in this report, and to update Board Policy 010 – CEO Reporting and Board Monitoring to reflect this reporting timeline.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Conseil d'administration (C.A.) de la Bibliothèque publique (BPO) d'Ottawa :**

- 1. Prenne connaissance du présent rapport à titre d'information; et,**

2. **Dirige le personnel à fournir une mise à jour sur les Services aux Autochtones de la BPO une fois par mandat, telle que décrite dans le rapport, et de mettre à jour la politique 010 du C.A, Redition de comptes de la DG et surveillance du C.A. afin de refléter l'échéancier du rapport.**

## **BACKGROUND**

In keeping with the *Public Libraries Act*, RSO 1990, c.P.44 ("the Act"), Ottawa Public Library ("OPL") provides "a comprehensive and efficient public library service that reflects the community's unique needs." The City of Ottawa ("the City") and OPL are located entirely within the unceded territory of the Anishinābe Algonquin people. Many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples now live, work, and study in this territory, and are part of this community.

In June 2017 the OPL Board ("the Board") received a staff presentation regarding Indigenous services. This presentation highlighted work occurring at OPL, linked to the City, at the local and national level, including with the Anishinābe Algonquin Host Nation and other partners. Trustees inquired regarding First Nations, Inuit, and Métis employees and customers at the Library, OPL collections, and asked for information about OPL's sponsorship of a First Nation public library's membership in the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL) (which is ongoing). Staff noted that they have "learned that it is important to meet with the Indigenous community, and work with authors that reflect that culture." They also noted that "there is excitement from this community as more events have been introduced such as family festivals, children's programming, etc."

Reconciliation work also includes a recognition that large organizations such as public libraries often have barriers to equitable service for racialized individuals, including Indigenous peoples. In November 2017, the Board directed staff to "...take appropriate action to become a signatory to the ULC Statement on Racial and Social Equity, to take meaningful steps to carry this through in our operations, and report back at a future date with respect to actions undertaken." Along with more than 180 public library systems across North America, OPL committed to intentional, systemic, and transformative partnerships. Specifically, the library systems agreed to "...achieve equity in the communities we serve by ... eliminating racial and social equity barriers in library programs, services, policies, and practices."

In February 2018, a report about Indigenous services, “OPL Response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action” (OPLB-2018-0203), was received by the Board. At that meeting, the Board directed staff to develop a position statement on Indigenous services and to work with the City to develop protocols regarding land acknowledgement in library locations and events.

In July 2019, the Board received an update about Indigenous services, “Update – Indigenous Services at Ottawa Public Library” (OPLB-2019-0703). This report observed Elders had counselled OPL staff that relationship building should always be the primary focus in any initiative undertaken, prior to jointly developing documents such as position statements and land acknowledgements with the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation. Discussions also revealed that OPL had not yet succeeded in developing relationships with local Indigenous representatives at a more fundamental level.

At the May 2021 Board meeting, the Board directed staff, following a suggestion from Vice Chair Fisher, to report back to the Board with updates about the Library’s reconciliation actions before the end of the term.

The purpose of this report is to report back as directed since 2017, providing an update on relationship-building with the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation and local First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representatives, and about Indigenous services at OPL.

## **DISCUSSION**

In the three years since the “Update – Indigenous Services at Ottawa Public Library” report, OPL has worked to build relationships with the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation and local First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representatives in several ways.

OPL recognizes the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation and local First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representatives as rights holders and important Library partners. The Library’s relationships with them include enriching OPL’s collections with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis content, respecting and including Indigenous voices, reflecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis culture and perspectives in OPL programs and spaces, and embarking on a reconciliation journey, acknowledging that a commitment to this work is key to serving and reflecting the community.

Branch staff at OPL have maintained ongoing relationships with a number of local Indigenous organizations over the last decade. More recently, staff in other service

areas have built relationships with members of the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation and local First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, most notably during the design phase of Ādisōke, home of the new Ottawa Central Library. OPL has also worked closely with City staff in the Community & Social Services department to align initiatives when possible, share best practices, and communicate and promote key projects.

Staff also track best practices within other Ontario public libraries. As noted in the Ontario Library Association's Information Brief, "Indigenous Matters," recent initiatives include events and speakers, art exhibits, book clubs, training sessions for employees, Indigenous-led spaces such as Knowledge Centres and healing gardens, and Elder-in-Residence programs.<sup>1</sup> Several initiatives also focus on sharing resources, including:

- The Brantford Public Library, County of Brant Public Library, Haldimand Public Library, Hamilton Public Library, and Norfolk Public Library entered into reciprocal borrowing agreements with Six Nations Public Library;
- Markham Public Library signed an agreement of Cultural Collaboration with the Eabametoong First Nation, which includes access to the library's online system, management resources and mentoring opportunities;
- The Rainy River District Library Cooperative provides full public library access for all Kindergarten to Grade 12 students in the Rainy River District. Participating institutions include the Atikokan Public Library, Emo Public Library, and the Fort Frances Public Library Technology Centre, the Northwest Catholic District School Board, the Rainy River District School Board and the Seven Generations Education Institute; and,
- Sioux Lookout Public Library provides free memberships to residents of the Lac Seul First Nation.

As a result of the developing relationships between OPL and First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners, OPL has committed to meeting with Anishinābe Algonquin Nation representatives regularly to discuss Library services. Staff hope to build similar regular touchpoints with local urban First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representatives, in collaboration with City colleagues.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Indigenous Matters." Ontario Library Association. <https://accessola.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-Indigenous-Matters-Info-Brief.pdf>

Recent initiatives of note at OPL include:

### Collections

- **2020:** The 2020-2023 Content Services Framework approved by the Board included an Indigenous Collections Statement that confirms OPL's commitment to reflecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis experiences, culture, and languages within the library collection (OPLB-2020-0304).
- **2020:** First Nations and Inuit language collections were initiated. Currently housed at Main and St Laurent branches, these collections include Cree, Inuktitut and Ojibwe material, some of it for language learning. This collection will develop as more resources are published and made available.
- **2020:** Guest blog post on the OPL website by Albert Dumont in honour of Orange Shirt Day: personal essay, "Our Young Leaders, They Guide Our Path."<sup>2</sup>
- **2022:** To mark National Indigenous History Month, OPL offered simultaneous digital access to electronic copies of *Noopiming: The Cure for White Ladies* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. OPL also nominated *Noopiming* for the Dublin Literary Award. Lastly, Anita Tenasco from the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation shared her thoughts about reading *Noopiming* in a guest blog post on OPL's website. She wrote: "Within *Noopiming* the Anishinabemowin language is given its elevated place.... One step at a time, one story at a time, one teaching at a time - we can build relationships that are filled with respect, compassion and joy. We are all connected."<sup>3</sup>

### Expertise

- **2020:** OPL endorsed and actively promoted an online learning module titled "Pathways to Indigenous Learning." This training was made mandatory in 2021 for all employees to enhance their knowledge of the histories and cultures of Indigenous peoples.
- **2021:** Jenny and Anita Tenasco presented a learning and development session for employees about the residential school experience.

---

<sup>2</sup> "Our Young Leaders, They Guide Our Path." <https://bibliottawalibrary.ca/en/blogs/our-young-leaders-they-guide-our-path>

<sup>3</sup> "*Noopiming* valorizes the Anishinābe language." <https://bibliottawalibrary.ca/en/blogs/noopiming-valorizes-anishinabe-language>

- **2021:** OPL worked with Diamond Phoenix Creations, an Indigenous-owned graphic design and print shop located at Kitigan Zibi to procure orange t-shirts for all employees to wear leading up to the first National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (t-shirts will also be available in 2022, and on an ongoing basis).
- **2022:** OPL launched the online learning course “4 Seasons of Reconciliation” for employees and trustees. This training complements Pathways to Indigenous Learning by exploring the truths and implications of the historical and contemporary relationship between Indigenous peoples and those who settled on their land in Canada. This training is also mandatory.
- **2022:** Representatives of Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation participated in several Library conferences, and an OPL employee information session, to share their experiences of being involved in the design and planning of Ādisōke.
- **2022:** Representatives from OPL’s management team made a group visit to the Kitigan Zibi Anishinābeg community, where they were welcomed by Elders Albert Dumont, Josie Whiteduck, Joan Tenasco, Jenny Tenasco, Tony Quedent, David Decontie, and Edward Cote, among many others. This event provided an opportunity to learn about the Host Nation, visit the community, share stories and ideas, plan for future creative partnership opportunities, and share a meal together. The Ottawa Central Library team also visited Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation.
- **Upcoming:** For the upcoming National Day for Truth and Reconciliation (September 2022), employees will receive pocket-sized copies of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s 94 Calls to Action* and Kerry Andrews from the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation will be providing a virtual presentation for employees about residential schools and their intergenerational impacts on her family and her community. In October, Jesse Wente will be speaking to a group of employees. Representatives from OPL’s management team are in discussion with community members to undertake a group visit to Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation later this fall.

## Programs

- **Ongoing:** When planning programs, staff apply an equity and inclusion lens, consult with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis service providers, and collaborate with City partners. While programming around key dates such as National Indigenous

History Month and the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is a priority, so too is weaving Indigenous perspectives throughout OPL programming.

- **Ongoing:** OPL collaborated with the City on its “Reconciliation Action Plan” and was an active partner in developing the “Anishinābe Algonquin Nation Civic Cultural Protocol and Implementation Plan.”<sup>4</sup>
- **Ongoing:** OPL promotes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis authors via programming for the general public, for students in Ottawa schools, and for community partners (including, for example, staff at CHEO).
- **2019:** Programing highlights included a book launch, in partnership with Ottawa International Writers Festival (OIWF) and Library and Archives Canada (LAC) for *tawâw: Progressive Indigenous Cuisine* by Chef Shane Chartrand and Jennifer Cockrall-King, an Indigenous film series, and several author visits including Cherie Dimaline.
- **2020:** Highlights included integrating First Nations, Inuit, and Métis perspectives into the Older Adult Speaker Series about resiliency, musical performances for youth with Samian, a rapper from Pikogan, and several author visits including Karen McBride (whose novel, *Crow Winter*, was a community e-read), Jesse Thistle, and Joshua Whitehead.
- **2021:** Highlights included a Kairos Blanket Exercise program, writing workshops, cooking demonstrations, jigging dance classes for older adults, and author visits including Katherena Vermette, Jesse Wenté, Eden Robinson, and Thomas King. First Nations voices were also included in Pride Week celebrations at OPL: storyteller Teddy Syrette (Ozhawa Anung Kwe/Yellow Star Woman), a 2-Spirit Anishinaabe from Rankin Reserve of Batchewana First Nation of the Anishnabek spoke about their advocacy work. Lastly, the Bookmobile participated in the Ottawa Summer Solstice Pow Wow for the first time (now an annual event for OPL).
- **2022:** The Board approved public opening hours on the newly declared public holiday: National Truth and Reconciliation Day (September 30). OPL will host virtual programming including speakers Bevann Fox (a residential school survivor and author of *Genocidal Love*) and Jay Odjick. Numerous branches will feature

---

<sup>4</sup> City of Ottawa - Anishinabe Algonquin Nation Civic Cultural Protocol and Implementation Plan (2022-2026). <https://pub-ottawa.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?Id=aadd7f8d-4cbe-4ff6-bd5a-3be06288df2c&Agenda=Agenda&lang=English&Item=83&Tab=attachments>

displays of additional reading material (offered in 2021 as well, even though branches were closed on National Truth and Reconciliation Day that year).

- **Upcoming:** First Nations Public Library Week takes place in October, during Canadian Library Month. OPL's Library Month messaging will include elements celebrating First Nations Public Library Week, particularly highlighting the nominees and winners of First Nation Communities READ via reading lists, displays, and posters in branches.

## Spaces

- **2019:** As part of the work to design Ādisōke, OPL and Library and Archives Canada ("LAC") undertook a meaningful engagement process with the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation communities of Kitigan Zibi Anishnābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, built on friendship, trust-building, and respect for cultural protocols and traditional Indigenous knowledge. The involvement of these two communities resulted in a building design that is more in tune with the land it sits on.
- **2020:** The Ādisōke project team engaged with local and national First Nations, Inuit, and Métis organizations, as well as members of the urban First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community, via virtual sessions and an online survey.
- **2020:** The Indigenous web page in OPL's virtual branch, which features Indigenous creators in OPL's collections and programs, launched. The content on this page is regularly refreshed by staff with relevant content and lists of current Library resources.
- **2021:** At the May Board meeting, trustees adopted a land acknowledgement statement for Board meetings that was co-created with Host Nation partners. Staff and Host Nation representatives subsequently worked together to develop land acknowledgement statements for use in Library programs and training sessions starting in the Fall of that year.
- **2021:** The name Ādisōke was given to the OPL-LAC joint facility by the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation Kitigan-Zibi Anishnābeg and the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation. The name is an important way to demonstrate OPL's commitment to relationship building, active listening, reconciliation, and decolonization.



## Tools

- **2021:** For National Truth and Reconciliation Day, OPL worked with partners to display material, which included:
  - Tablecloths sewn by Jenny Tenasco (a residential school survivor from Kitigan Zibi), Veronica Chabot (a mom, grandmother, and talented seamstress from Kitigan Zibi) and Grace Wawatie (a crafter and creative seamstress from the Algonquins of Barriere Lake);
  - Birch Bark items and craft items created by members of the Algonquins of Barriere Lake, members of the Manawan community who are a part of the Attikamek Nation, Lise Brascoupe from Kitigan Zibi and others from the Kitigan Zibi community;
  - Small paddles created by Daniel Pinock Smith (a master craftsman from Kitigan Zibi), Jenny Tenasco, and Trish Polson (Jenny's daughter-in-law who is a member of the Long Point First Nation - an Anishinābe Algonquin community);
  - “Every Child Matters” flags printed by Diamond Phoenix Creations in Kitigan Zibi; and,
  - A “Read, Listen, Learn, and Collaborate” poster developed for OPL in honour of the National Day of Truth and Reconciliation by Jenny Tenasco and her daughter Anita Tenasco, and printed by Anishinābe Printing in Kitigan Zibi. The beaded orange shirt pin that is present within the poster was beaded by Samantha Tenasco (Jenny's youngest daughter). Samantha gifted this beaded pin to her mom (as a residential school survivor and Indian day school survivor) “in honour of her love, dedication to family, traditional knowledge, strength and resilience.”
- **2022:** The Inuit Circumpolar Council of Canada (ICC) partnered with OPL to access OPL's Digitization Lab at the Beaverbrook branch to digitize VHS tapes currently in storage, in order to make this content more widely available.<sup>5</sup>

Many other actions have taken place since 2019 that help to address barriers faced by First Nations, Inuit, and Métis community members using OPL. In October 2020, the Board approved moving from an Overdue Fines Model to a Materials Recovery Model,

---

<sup>5</sup> The ICC is a multi-national non-profit NGO that represents approximately 180,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia). The ICC holds permanent participant status on the Arctic Council, and Consultative Status on the UN Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues.

thereby eliminating late fees, for a number of reasons including an increasing awareness of the inequity created by overdue fines particularly for those living in poverty (OPLB-2020-1004). According to the City of Ottawa's Equity and Inclusion Snapshot about people living in poverty: "we have higher risk of living in poverty if we are Aboriginal, live with disabilities, in a female, lone-parent household, racialized or recent immigrants."<sup>6</sup> The adoption of a Materials Recovery Model and the elimination of late fees allows OPL to take concrete action to remove systemic barriers and advance its commitment to equity and reconciliation.

In the June 2017 presentation to the Board, staff noted that they would be reviewing the recommendations emanating from the the Canadian Federation of Library Associations (CFLA)'s recent report regarding truth and reconciliation and anticipated returning to the Board to seek their endorsement of the CFLA Truth and Reconciliation Report.<sup>7</sup> This report subsequently resulted in the CFLA adopting a "Library & Literacy Services for Indigenous (First Nations, Métis & Inuit) Peoples of Canada Position Statement." OPL did not subsequently bring this position statement forward for the Board's consideration. Staff have since learned that a CFLA statement about Indigenous peoples is being revisited and updated, and as such recommend that staff continue to monitor this and return with a recommendation to the Board when a new statement is available.

Lastly, in order to ensure regular reporting regarding significant initiatives, staff recommend updating Board Policy 010 – CEO Reporting and Board Monitoring to reflect the suggestion to report once per term regarding Indigenous Services. The regular scheduling of these updates will confirm the importance of these relationships to Library employees and trustees, and to the future of OPL's services.

### **Next steps**

Building on these initial steps on OPL's journey to engage in meaningful relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners, staff will continue to meet regularly with Anishinābe Algonquin Nation representatives to discuss Library services and foster greater collaboration between local urban First Nations, Inuit, and Métis representatives and OPL. In terms of collections and programs, OPL is making progress in reflecting First Nations, Inuit, and Métis perspectives more holistically. In terms of staff expertise,

---

<sup>6</sup> City for All Women Initiative and the City of Ottawa (2017). People Living in Poverty: Equity & Inclusion Lens Snapshot. Retrieved from [https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/poverty\\_ss\\_en.pdf](https://documents.ottawa.ca/sites/documents/files/poverty_ss_en.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> [https://cfla-fcab.ca/en/indigenous/trc\\_report/](https://cfla-fcab.ca/en/indigenous/trc_report/)

spaces, and tools, initial steps have been taken. Staff look forward to continuing to listen, learn, and engage in fulsome conversations with partners in order to continue to expand and adapt the Library to serve all members of the community.

## **CONSULTATION**

Staff are grateful for the continued advice and support received from Anita Tenasco, Director of Education, from the Anishinābe Algonquin Nation community of Kitigan Zibi and Della Meness, former Manager of Education Services, from the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation, as well as from Lindsey Kirby-McGregor, Program Manager, Indigenous Relations, City of Ottawa Community and Social Services department. Their collaboration with OPL and consultation on this report are greatly appreciated.

## **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

OPL complies with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, (2005)* in its operations. There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report.

## **BOARD PRIORITIES**

This report aligns with OPL's value of inclusion, as well as its strategic direction to promote the value of OPL, specifically by strengthening relationships and advocacy with community partners.

## **BUSINESS ANALYSIS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no business analysis considerations associated with this report.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## **INDIGENOUS AND GENDER EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific Indigenous, gender or race equity implications associated with the report. OPL branches are located on the unceded, traditional territory of the Anishinābe

Algonquin Nation, who have lived in the area since time immemorial. OPL will continue to work with the Anishinābe Algonquin Host Nation communities and urban First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities in the spirit of relationship-building, active listening, decolonization, and reconciliation.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

### **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no technology implications associated with this report.

### **DISPOSITION**

If approved, staff will:

- Update Board Policy 010 – CEO Reporting and Board Monitoring to reflect the suggestion to report once per term of Board regarding Indigenous Services;
- Provide an update regarding Indigenous Services to the Board once per term on an ongoing basis, generally in the third year of the term of Board; and,
- Continue to build relationships of trust and collaboration with the Anishinābe Algonquin Host Nation and urban First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities.