

Report to / Rapport au:

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

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**Submitted by / Soumis par:
Danielle McDonald, Chief Executive Officer / Directrice générale**

*Contact Person / Personne ressource:
Monique Brûlé, Division Manager, Programs and Services / Directrice de Division,
Programmes et services
613.580.2424, x32155 / monique.brule@bibliooottawalibrary.ca*

File Number: OPLB-2018-0102

SUBJECT: Canada 150 Project Report

OBJET: Rapport du projet de Canada 150

REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Ottawa Public Library Board:

- 1. Receive this report for information; and,**
- 2. Disband the Canada 150 Board Ad Hoc Committee.**

RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT

Que le Conseil d'administration de la Bibliothèque publique d'Ottawa :

- 1. Prenne connaissance de ce rapport à titre d'information; et**
- 2. Dissous le groupe du Comité spécial de Canada 150 du Conseil d'administration.**

BACKGROUND

The year 2017 was a significant milestone in Canada's history as it marked the 150th anniversary of Confederation. As the Nation's capital, eyes of Canadians were focused on the City of Ottawa to lead the celebrations marking this "once in a generation" event. As a prominent Ottawa venue and resource, Ottawa Public Library (OPL) recognized that it had an important role in collaborating with the City, community partners, and residents to commemorate this anniversary. In addition, as the largest, bilingual (French and English) public library in North America, Canadian public libraries looked upon OPL as the venue of choice to mark this occasion in the library world.

On April 11, 2017, the Ottawa Public Library Board (the Board) approved its 2017 Work Plan (Report OPLB-2017-0404). The Canada 150 project was one of the plan's nine key action items, aligning with the strategic direction of Success through learning, literacy, and innovation, and the priorities of - Strengthen and promote the library's reach and value, and Foster community partnerships.

The overall goal of the Canada 150 project was to develop and deliver OPL events and programming to mark and celebrate the 150th anniversary of Canadian Confederation, thereby increasing awareness about OPL, and enhancing OPL's profile, reach, and value. A Board Ad Hoc Committee composed of Vice Chair Bergeron and Trustee Fisher was established in June 2016 (Motion OPL 20160614/7) to serve as advisors to staff and champion the project.

To close out this Board-supported initiative, this report summarizes activities and events that occurred during this year-long celebration and provides insights for staff on best practices and lessons learned.

DISCUSSION

The public library has always been a destination for anyone seeking knowledge and ideas. Taking its place in the heart of the community, the library is constantly growing: it grows to include more voices, more perspectives, more ideas, and more stories. Stories are the way we connect with each other; they are the way we share our experiences and how we learn from others. In Canada, where we strive towards greater diversity and mutual understanding, storytelling is at our cultural core. Within this context, from January to December 2017, OPL celebrated Canada's 150th anniversary with a year of storytelling in traditional and unique ways.

Each month featured a different storytelling theme that highlighted OPL's role in connecting people with stories, providing customers with a gamut of system-wide events and programs to celebrate and mark this significant Canadian milestone. The themes explored were:

- January: Storytelling through Song;
- February: Storytelling through Experiences;
- March: Storytelling through Images and Words;
- April: Storytelling through Poetry;
- May: Storytelling in Theatre, Cinema, Popular Media;
- June: Storytelling through Traditions;
- July/August: Storytelling in Canada and through Canadian Authors;
- September: Storytelling through Food;
- October: Storytelling through Novels and Short stories;
- November: Storytelling through Entrepreneurship;
- December: Storytelling without Borders.

Throughout the year, OPL hosted four (4) marquee events, one-of-a-kind events of higher profile and scope. Kicking off the year with the theme of Storytelling through Song, the community gathered together and welcomed 2017 through the music that inspires us. On January 14, OPL hosted a large concert featuring Alan Doyle and the Beautiful Gypsies, an evening of music, stories, and songs for all ages. The event, held at Centrepointe Theatres, sold out in two weeks, with 903 tickets sold. Feedback was positive with a customer satisfaction rating of 97% based on a three-question online survey.

In April, the Mayor's Poetry Contest invited students of all ages to capture a Canadian moment or image by writing a short poem to celebrate Storytelling through Poetry. The contest was held in partnership with Ottawa2017 and four Ottawa school boards: Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, Conseil des écoles publiques de l'Est de l'Ontario, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, and Ottawa Catholic School Board. 100 schools selected winning poems to represent their school. These were printed or written on leaf templates and hung from PoeTrees created by students from each school board. The PoeTrees were displayed in the following four OPL branches (one

tree per branch) during the month of May: Main, Alta Vista, Beaverbrook, and North Gloucester. They were then transported and displayed in Ottawa2017's Inspiration Village in the Byward Market over the summer.

On July 8, OPL hosted its first-ever family fun day, at Ben Franklin Place, complete with live mainstage entertainment, games, programs, storytime, displays, crafts, educational activities, technology demonstrations, roving entertainers, and a tranquil reading nook. In keeping with July's theme, Canada and Canadian Authors, traditional storytelling, Canadian history, and Canadian authors were featured as part of the day's activities. More than 2,000 people attended this free event and 725 event passports were distributed to children. The contributions of the following partners greatly enhanced the success of the event: Friends of the Ottawa Public Library Association (FOPLA), Centrepointe Theatres, City of Ottawa Archives, the five City of Ottawa museums, and Dovercourt Community Centre. The overall satisfaction rate was 89% and 86.4% of respondents said that based on their experience at this event, they were extremely likely or very likely to use OPL's services or attend another program in the future.

Finally, to highlight the December theme of Storytelling without Borders and to wrap up the year-long celebration, OPL presented Chris Hadfield's Canada 150 Show at Centrepointe Theatres. From his unique perspective, Colonel Hadfield looked at the history and future of Canada through its people and the land itself. This show for all ages sold out in less than two weeks, with 903 tickets sold. 95% of respondents to the onsite satisfaction survey rated the event as excellent or very good.

In addition to the four marquee events, many other system-wide programs and events were held, and branch employees were encouraged to organize local programs under the banner of Canada 150. In total, OPL offered 561 programs to customers allowing many to celebrate our nation's anniversary.

OPL also explored other means to connect people to each other and share their stories, namely through social media and online venues. Most months featured a contest whereby customers were invited to share a story by answering a Facebook question aligned to the monthly theme. Prizes were awarded by picking a winner at random. In total, OPL received 349 responses. To celebrate National Aboriginal History Month, and as part of the Canada 150 programming, OPL hosted an online Indigenous Book Club during the month of June and invited readers to join in live online chats with Indigenous writers including ones who authored or edited the featured books.

OPL also took the Canada 150 theme of Storytelling and paired it with Library Month in October in two unique ways: a) hosting a Canada-wide social media campaign to share moments and stories about libraries, and b) the distribution of book bags that “have a story.” Using the hashtag #LibraryMoments (or #MomentsBiblio in French) customers were encouraged to share their stories to illustrate how libraries are special, shared places of learning, transformation, and connection. With the support of more than 25 library systems across Canada that participated, the campaign had a nation-wide combined reach of more than 5 million people. For the book bags, OPL and FOPLA collaborated to produce and distribute book bags with the slogan “this bag has a story,” reflecting the multiple layers, lessons, and meanings contained with stories.

Finally, to welcome visitors to Ottawa, OPL provided card-free internet and public wifi access from June 19 to October 19 2017. During this period, 9% of customer logins to the OPL public network were established using the card-free user account (16,721 out of 196,289 logins).

Document 1 (immediately following the report) provides a compilation of the number of programs offered as well as attendance and social media activity.

2017 was a milestone for our country and became a turning point for OPL in terms of system-wide programming. It provided an opportunity for OPL to create unique programs and events and new partnerships as well as further develop existing ones. Throughout the year, 13 new partnerships/co-hosting opportunities were established as a result of the project. Employees across the OPL system of 33 physical branches, a virtual branch, two bookmobiles, and services such as Homebound collaborated to ensure the success of this initiative, which had a secondary benefit of fostering employee and Board engagement. Many lessons were learned and best practices established in the process, which will be applied in future programming, including in a new central library, namely:

- The one-time financial contribution from OPL’s 2017 operating budget and the financial sponsorship obtained from FOPLA was essential to the successful delivery of the high-profile components of the project;
- Partnerships and collaboration are crucial to the success of any event. OPL staff took partnership building to a whole new level with regards to the type of partners as well as the scope and depth of their terms. Staff need to build on the momentum established during the course of the year by cultivating and

sustaining these new partnerships, fostering collaboration at all levels of the organization and within the community, and establishing new ones with non-traditional partners. Formal collaboration agreements should be secured for all large-scale events and programs;

- The central theme of Storytelling provided the necessary framework and driver on which to build system-wide and local programs and events. Beyond the actual events and programs delivered throughout the year, it created the central thread that tied together all of the work provided by staff in a way that helped extend OPL's reach and value more so than ever before;
- High-profile events such as the four marquee events provided an opportunity for the community to gather in great numbers to partake in a shared experience, thereby further extending OPL's reach and value. Staff should replicate this best practice by offering two to three high-level, signature events per year in addition to regular and new system-wide programs; and,
- Knowledge and understanding of the audience is essential, as is a strong marketing plan.

This report is the last installment towards this project, which is now considered closed. At this time, staff are recommending that the Canada 150 Board Ad Hoc Committee be disbanded. Sincere appreciation to the Trustees who volunteered their time to support staff in these initiatives, and to Vice Chair Bergeron and Trustee Fisher who provided excellent stewardship over, and advice for, the OPL Canada 150 project.

CONSULTATION

A Board Ad Hoc committee provided guidance and advice to staff during the planning and the subsequent delivery of programs and events.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS

There are no accessibility impacts associated with this report. Accessibility was considered throughout the planning and delivery phases of the project.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

There are no technology implications with this report.

BOARD PRIORITIES

This report aligns with the Board's Strategic Directions and Priorities, including Success through learning, literacy, and Innovation - Strengthen and promote the library's reach and value and Foster community partnerships.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Document 1 Monthly storytelling themes, with number of programs offered and program attendance.

DISPOSITION

Upon receipt of the report and approval of the recommendation, the Canada 150 Board Ad Hoc Committee will be disbanded.

Staff will share and endeavor to apply and further develop the lessons learned from this project.

Document 1:

Monthly storytelling themes, with number of programs offered, program attendance, and social media activity

Month	Storytelling Theme	Programs offered	Program attendance
January	Song	17	282
February	Experiences	18	225
March	Images and Words	174	3 655
April	Poetry	39	550
May	Theatre, cinema, and popular media	23	470
June	Tradition	20	711
July/August	Canada and Canadian Authors	175	6731
September	Food	25	523
October	Novels and short stories	35	1 263
November	Entrepreneurship	23	576
December	Without Borders	12	133
Total		561	15 119