



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: February 19, 2020  
Author: Christina de Castell, Chief Librarian  
VanDOCS #: DOC/2020/047773  
Meeting Date: February 26, 2020  
TO: Library Board  
FROM: Kurt Heinrich, Chair, Community Relations, Planning & Development Committee  
SUBJECT: **Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Inclusion Action Plan Interim Report**

---

### **SUMMARY**

This report provides interim progress towards creating an action plan for including the Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Inclusion Strategy in the 2020-2023 VPL Operating Plan.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board receive the report for information.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

The Committee identified opportunities to explore VPL's governance structure within the governance pillar of the action plan, such as the use of advisory groups linked to the Strategic plan, and these will be referred to the Governance Committee for further discussion. They inquired about conversations with local organizations and the barriers that staff have encountered as a result of the March room booking, as well as opportunities the law reform conversation may present. The Chief Librarian noted a common preference among those she has talked to that their names be confidential.

## **POLICY**

The Library Board has three existing statements that apply to trans, gender diverse and Two-Spirit inclusion: [Diversity and Inclusion](#), [Community Engagement](#) and [Customer Service](#). Also related is the [Human Rights and Harassment Policy](#) and the [Respectful Workplace Policy](#).

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

The VPL Board approved the VPL Strategic Plan 2020-2023 in December 2019 and staff are now developing an operating plan. In 2020-2023, VPL will build on the work of the former strategic plan by recommitting to and strengthening our work related to Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit inclusion. This will be included within the Belonging & Connection pillar and the “Engage in civic dialogue” goal as well as the Organizational Strength pillar and the “Inclusive and diverse workplace” goal.

## **BACKGROUND**

In September 2019, the Board endorsed including a VPL goal to increase understanding of, and reduce discrimination against, trans, gender diverse and Two-Spirit people through recommitting to and strengthening the Trans, Gender Diverse and Two-Spirit Inclusion Strategy, and directing staff to develop an ongoing action plan as part of the 2020-2023 Operating Plan.

Organizations that support transgender, gender diverse and Two-Spirit people and individuals have told us that hate speech, hate crimes, and inappropriate behaviour related to people’s gender identity and expression is constant. With this understanding of the prevalence of discrimination and harmful behaviour affecting transgender, gender diverse and Two Spirit people, the VPL Board and staff have chosen to actively work to reduce discrimination against, and promote understanding, of transgender, gender diverse and Two Spirit people in Vancouver within the Strategic Plan in 2020-2023, as we did in the previous Strategic Plan.

Staff and Board members understand that the decision to uphold bookings that use a legal threshold for hate speech for speakers that are considered anti-trans has damaged relationships between the Library and transgender, gender diverse and Two Spirit staff and patrons, as well as with community members and Library partners. Time and effort will be required to repair these relationships and to provide space for those affected to heal. The damage to these relationships, and the second booking for March 21, 2020, have made it difficult to engage with LGBTQ2+ organizations in the past four months.

VPL has been working in this area since 2017, and on January 24, 2018, the VPL Board received an [update report](#) outlining activities undertaken in 2017, and a subsequent [report at the January 23, 2019 board meeting](#), on activities in 2018.

## DISCUSSION

At the Board meeting of January 22, 2020, the Board passed a motion to call for law reform related to addressing discrimination. An accompanying report for this meeting discusses planning for this activity, which will enable a new and positive avenue for potential engagement.

Staff will present an action plan to the Board in June 2020 for this work. This is an interim update.

In September 2019, staff recommended that based on feedback from groups and individuals that reached out to the Library in 2019, the following activities would help inform development of the action plan:

- Continuing conversations with local LGBTQ2+ organizations and supporters to learn about needs and concerns and discuss potential programs and services;
- Initiating new relationships with organizations working in this area;
- Focus groups by staff to gather information from individuals, in collaboration with supporting organizations;
- Town Hall with Board and staff participation to hear about experiences in Vancouver and suggestions for programs and services.

Staff began by reaching out to dialogue experts, who advised that small group sessions would be advisable rather than a town hall format. These require the engagement of partners, and while some interest has been expressed, the latest room booking has proved a barrier. Additional individual authors have withdrawn from participation with the library, and those who previously withdrew have not returned.

However, in September, staff noted that two different trans groups were holding events in the Central Library, and these occurred successfully during the Fall. The Chief Librarian recently met with the City of Vancouver LGBTQ2+ Advisory Group co-chairs, and this is a potential avenue for future partnership for programs.

The action plan framework will begin with four pillars, based on our experience with the 2017-2019 approach: public spaces, public programs and services, human resources and governance. These will be modified if consultation indicates there are other areas for focus. The following actions have been taken so far:

- **Pillar 1 Public Spaces:** Discussion among staff, including LGBTQ2+ Allies, about public spaces resulted in management deciding to restrict public facing event rentals to the lower level conference centre rooms, and maintaining rooms inside the Central Library for library programs and private events. This helps to communicate that within the Library, the *Respectful Workplace* and *Human Rights & Harassment* policies apply, and provides an increased sense of safety for staff and some individuals.

- **Pillar 2 Public Programs and Services:** staff have scheduled a gender identity training public program, which will take place in the evening on March 26, 2020, delivered by lawyer Adrienne Smith. Staff are seeking authors and other program partners for additional programming that promotes trans inclusion.
- **Pillar 3 Human resources:** the staff LGBTQ2+ Allies group continue to discuss ways to support each other, provide training, and opportunities to improve within the organization. We have posted a call for members for a staff LGBTQ2+ advisory group.
- **Pillar 4: Governance:** Planning for 2020-2023 offers the opportunity to increase Board engagement in trans, gender-diverse and Two-Spirit inclusion as part of governance, which may include training, advisory roles, or participation in engagement.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff training and public programming are normally funded through the operating budget. If specific programs or services arise that would require additional funding, staff will provide a report to the Board describing the planned activities and the funding requested.

### **FINAL REMARKS**

From the outset of this initiative in 2016, VPL has been evolving both as a workplace and as a public service, and has actively worked to increase the understanding of the public and staff about trans, gender diverse and Two-Spirit experience. These efforts will continue as we seek to rebuild relationships.