



## MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: June 28, 2019  
Author: Kathy Payne, Human Resources Consultant  
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Meeting Date: July 24, 2019  
TO: Library Board  
FROM: Rhonda Sherwood, Chair, Services, Finance & Human Resources Committee  
**SUBJECT: Women's Equity Strategy at VPL Update**

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### **SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the actions over the past year related to the Women's Equity Strategy.

### **PURPOSE**

This report is for information.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board receive this report for information.

### **COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

The Committee commented on the work accomplished to date and the value of the information contained in the report. Committee Chair Sherwood shared information about discussion around terminology at the City of Vancouver Women's Equity Committee, and Trustee Lowe suggested that intersectionality is often not well understood, and Gender-based Analysis training could be helpful for Board members.

### **POLICY**

The Library Board has several statements and policies that support the Women's Equity Strategy. These include: the Diversity and Inclusion Statement, the Code of Conduct, the Collection

Development Policy, the Human Rights and Harassment Policy, the Respectful Workplace Policy, and the Public Internet and Computer Usage Policy.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATONS**

VPL's initiatives to advance the Women's Equity Strategy contribute to our Strategic Plan goals of Access & Equity and Organizational Strength by ensuring inclusive spaces, supporting reconciliation, and improving continuously.

## **BACKGROUND**

The City of Vancouver published "[Vancouver: A City for All Women, Women's Equity Strategy 2018 – 2028](#)" in February 2018. The Board endorsed this Women's Equity Strategy and VPL staff [recommendations at the Board meeting of June 27, 2018](#) and asked for a progress report one year later for the five priority areas: intersectional lens, women's safety, housing, childcare, and leadership and representation.

City Council discussed the City of Vancouver's [Interim Report – Women's Equity and Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Inclusion](#) on May 27, 2018, and referred the report to the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Vancouver Public Library Board, Vancouver Board of Education and Vancouver Police Department Board for information.

## **DISCUSSION**

This report provides an update on VPL's activities since June 2018, which included developing an action plan to implement and track the recommendations. VPL has completed or operationalized 14 of 20 actions and staff will continue activities through 2019 and beyond. The status of the activities are indicated below.

Although the five priorities are addressed individually, they are inter-related. During implementation, staff consider all priority areas and apply recommendations with consideration to how they interact, for example, using an intersectional lens across other priority areas.

### ***Update on Action Items***

#### **Priority 1: Intersectional Lens**

City of Vancouver Goal: The City's decisions, programs and plans are informed by an intersectional lens to ensure that all citizens have equitable access, inclusion and participation in community life.

Recommendations for VPL actions:

- 1.1 [ON TRACK] Implement the City of Vancouver's intersectional framework once it is developed.

**UPDATE:** The City is working on the intersectional framework, we are following their progress, and will be implementing once developed by the City.

- 1.2 [ON TRACK] Develop a framework for VPL's naming of spaces including an intersectional lens, with consideration of donor and commemorative options, following the creation of the intersectional framework.

**UPDATE:** We will be developing following City's creation of the intersectional framework.

- 1.3 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to use an intersectional lens to plan and provide public programs and resources.

**UPDATE:** The Library continues to offer a range of collections, resources and programs that recognize and represent the diversity of our community. The following are examples of programs delivered since the last report:

- *T'uy't'tanat-Cease Wyss as VPL Indigenous Storyteller in Residence - March - June 2018.* Cease Wyss's time as VPL Indigenous Storyteller in Residence focused on intergenerational relationships among women and highlighted women's perspectives and work in Indigenous communities.
- *World Refugee Day – June 2018.* This day commemorated the strength, courage and perseverance of millions of refugees around the world. VPL hosted an information fair where library visitors could meet local refugees and support organizations. Patrons were invited to participate in the simulated experience of a refugee's journey to Canada. This event was with the Multi-Agency Partnership (MAP), which works collaboratively to identify barriers and provide solutions to promote the protection and well-being of refugee claimants and service providers.
- *Night of Storytelling (part of Year of the Queer) - August 2018.* In celebration of Vancouver's "Year of the Queer" and Pride, Lambda Awards-celebrated authors Zena Sharman, Hasan Namir, SJ Sindu, and Amber Dawn joined moderator Ahmad Danny Ramadan at Central Library for A Night of Storytelling: Celebrated Voices. The authors read selections from their books and discussed their queer and trans characters.
- *Open Book: Trans, Gender-Variant and Two-Spirit Reading Circle - September - December 2018.* This series of programs invited patrons to discover literary works by trans, gender-variant and Two-Spirit authors and share their favourite reads (including books, films, articles or blogs). Each event was curated and facilitated by a different local trans, gender-variant or Two Spirit writer.

- *The Afronautic Research Lab - February 2019*. Patrons were invited to time travel to the future, and become researchers in a futuristic reading room, uncovering evidence of Canada's Black communities and histories, with the goal of acknowledging the past to change the future. Artist Camille Turner presented the project, in partnership with the Or Gallery, the Surrey Art Gallery, and with funding by the City of Vancouver Public Art Community Grant.

- 1.4 [ON TRACK] Have VPL senior staff participate in Gender-Based Analysis Plus training with City of Vancouver senior staff by December 2019.

**UPDATE:** VPL senior staff are scheduled to receive gender-based analysis training with City staff in November 2019.

- 1.5 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to support diversity among Library Board members.

**UPDATE:** VPL continues to support diversity among Library Board members. VPL Board representation is presently 58% women and 42% men.

## Priority 2: Women's Safety

City of Vancouver Goal: Vancouver is a safe city in which all women are secure and free from crime and violence, including sexual assault.

Recommendations for VPL actions:

- 2.1 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to provide public programs and resources to promote ending violence against women.

**UPDATE:** VPL offers an extensive online guide ***Community Resources, Social Services & the Nonprofit Sector*** in Vancouver which includes community resources on violence prevention. VPL hosts visits and tours for women participating in WISH (Women's Information and Safe House) programs.

- 2.2 [ON TRACK] By December 2019, pilot a framework that allows community service delivery through VPL spaces by partnering with one or more community service providers that support women's safety and services.

**UPDATE:** VPL is exploring opportunities through ongoing conversations with community service providers.

- 2.3 [ON TRACK] Review parking, exits, and other higher risk or low visibility areas, and identify improvements required to increase safety of public and staff, by December 2019.

**UPDATE:** Staff have begun this review and have identified a range of parking approaches at branches, including underground, community centre parking, small rooftop lots, and street parking. Parking security concerns are most significant at Central Library, and the parking lot has orange pillars with “Assistance” call boxes; VPL Security responds immediately if the situation is urgent. Security staff have identified a need to raise awareness of safe walk escorts for staff, which will be conducted through crew talks and a manual update prior to December 2019, along with continuing the review to identify any needs for security modifications, such as lighting.

- 2.4 [COMPLETE] Ensure staff awareness of supports that the employer provides, such as security escorts to transportation and VPL’s Employee and Family Assistance Program, through presentations and crew talks, by December 2018.

**UPDATE:** VPL created a Safety Co-ordinator position in September 2018 to support staff safety and enhance staff awareness through increased site visits and engagement with staff. The Safety Co-ordinator works closely with VPL Security, City of Vancouver Safety Specialists and WorkSafeBC Board Officers. Staff are informed of supports, such as “SafeWalk” and VPL’s Employee and Family Assistance Program, through leadership team meetings, safety talks at staff meetings, intranet pages and departmental protocols.

### Priority 3: Childcare

City of Vancouver Goal: Women’s full participation in the workforce and engagement in public life is supported by affordable and accessible quality childcare for children.

Recommendations for VPL actions:

- 3.1 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to provide programs for early childhood educators and caregivers that support them as they care for children.

**UPDATE:** As part of its ongoing commitment to parents, families and caregivers, the Library continues to provide public programs and services that support those caring for children. VPL’s early learning and literacy programs are free, accessible, and support the delivery of high-quality childcare throughout the city. Although all caregivers are welcomed, staff report that attendees are predominantly female. Examples of supportive programs include those below:

- *Early Language & Literacy Workshops for Early Childhood Educators:* Early childhood educators regularly request resources to support the early literacy skills development of the children in their care. Workshops are offered free of charge to childcare providers. In May 2019, VPL delivered the second annual *Read, Sing, Engage!* full day conference aimed at Early Childhood Educators. Upcoming

workshops can be found at: <https://www.vpl.ca/program/early-language-and-literacy-workshops>

- *Parents' Time Out Programs:* Parents' Night Out programs are informal sessions where parents socialize and learn how to support their children's learning. Programs include strategies for getting children excited about books and reading. Participants leave the program with practical tools to use at home. A key program goal is to provide participants with an opportunity to make connections with other parents who live in the neighbourhood. Upcoming sessions can be found at: <https://www.vpl.ca/program/parents-time-out>
- *Group Childcare Storytimes:* VPL librarians deliver targeted early literacy programming for childcare groups where demand or needs justify this investment. These supportive programs focus on early learning principles. These targeted programs support childcare providers who may be working with vulnerable populations, or are new to the library's services for children.

- 3.2 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to participate in city-wide committees such as the Joint Childcare Council and the Vancouver Early Years Partnership.

**UPDATE:** The library participates in City-wide actions to support childcare. VPL continues to sit as a member of the Joint Childcare Council (JCC). The JCC provides input and assistance on implementation challenges in childcare and child development services, and advice on proposed policy and issue papers. While the focus of the JCC is primarily childcare in publicly-owned facilities and/or land, consideration is given to policies and practices that support the broader childcare system.

VPL is in discussion with the City's Social Policy and Projects staff around a proposed Fresh Air School Aged Care pilot program. This innovative pilot will investigate opportunities to deliver school-aged care in outdoor settings, in order to address the unmet childcare needs in Vancouver neighbourhoods. VPL is collaborating to embed strategies around language and learning in this pilot, and to explore the opportunities to support childcare access to public indoor spaces.

- 3.3 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to support Board participation by parents and caregivers by providing reimbursement for childcare expenses as legislated, and providing the option for trustees to bring children to meetings when childcare is not available.

**UPDATE:** The library continues to make this available.

- 3.4 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to provide options in addition to full-time work at VPL including job-shares, posted part-time, and part-time positions and to provide flexible start times to accommodate childcare needs when operationally feasible.

**UPDATE:** The Library continues to make full-time and non-full-time work as well as flexible start times (where operationally feasible) available. In 2019, VPL created 4 new job share pairs (for a total of 12 job share pairs) and 11 new posted part-time positions (for a total of 75 posted part time positions at 20+ hours per week). Additionally, the *Family Status Accommodation* process has been developed and shared with staff and will provide clarity for supervisors in supporting staff when they are unable to maintain their current work schedule/duties due to parental or family duties or obligations related to the care of their family.

#### **Priority 4: Housing**

City of Vancouver Goal: A range of affordable housing choices is available for women of diverse backgrounds and circumstances, including single parents, seniors, newcomers, and those facing vulnerable conditions.

Recommendations for VPL actions:

- 4.1 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to connect patrons with community services that support those who do not have housing or who have unstable housing. Pilot a framework that allows community service delivery through VPL spaces, prioritize partnerships with community services which assist people with finding housing, including modular housing.

**UPDATE:** While VPL does not have a direct role in providing housing, the Library's services continue to support connecting people with housing. The following program is an example of a program that supports this priority:

- *Housing Resources in Metro Vancouver (organized by Champlain Heights Branch) - May 2019.* South Vancouver Neighbourhood House presented a free Dialogue Circle. This program provides an opportunity to learn about housing resources in Vancouver, practice spoken English, and meet new people.

- 4.2 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to explore opportunities for library branches to be co-located with partners who provide compatible services to the community including housing or social services for women.

**UPDATE:** While VPL does not have a direct role in providing housing, branch developments offer opportunities for co-location. The new Oakridge and Marpole branches (currently in planning and development) will be co-located with residential and childcare spaces.

#### **Priority 5: Leadership and Representation**

**City of Vancouver Goal:** The City will elevate the visibility, influence, representation and contribution of all women in the organization by providing equitable access to work opportunities, including leadership roles and other under-represented occupations and by creating and implementing initiatives to specifically enhance their development and leadership. As a female-dominated workforce, the Board adopted the following priority and goal as an alternative to the City of Vancouver Priority 5.

#### **Priority 5: Human Resources and Participation**

**VPL Goal:** The Library will continue to deliver public services that support women in the workforce and will seek opportunities to improve access and equity in its own workforce through reviewing human resources practices and policies.

- 5.1 [OPERATIONAL] Continue to deliver public programs and services that support women in the workforce.

**UPDATE:** The Library provides programs for the public that support women's leadership and representation and the City of Vancouver priority. The following programs are examples of what the Library has provided in the past twelve months:

- *Storytelling in the Digital Age* - June 2018. In recognition of National Indigenous History Month, the Inspiration Lab partnered with Indigenous digital media artists Amanda Strong and Bracken Hanuse Corlett, who spoke about storytelling in the digital age.
- *Ruth "Stella" McLean, Romance Writer, as VPL Writer in Residence* - September-December 2018. In addition to several series of consultations, workshops and intensives, the writer in residence organized five public programs, including two panel discussions engaging participants in considering the modern heroine in romance fiction and diversity in romance fiction. The finale event included readings by four emerging writers that Ruth "Stella" had been working with over her time in residence.
- *Women in STEM Job Fair* (organized by the VPL Skilled Immigrant Info Centre) – May 2019. A job fair focused on connecting employers to women and other underrepresented groups in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields. This event featured employers on site, workshops, panel discussions, resume reviews, free head shots and a networking reception. Offered by VPL's Skilled Immigrant InfoCentre, in partnership with Society for Canadian Women in Science and Technology.
- *Women Deliver Conference - June 2019*. Staff supported and promoted the Women Deliver Conference by hosting streaming and other events. The Women Deliver global conference brings people from across a multitude of sectors, issues, and



cultures together. It is the world's largest conference on gender equality and seeks to remove barriers and empower women to succeed in their leadership and career goals.

- 5.2 [COMPLETE] Explore supports for staff returning to work after maternity and parental leave and develop recommendations to enhance staff awareness and/or further supports by June 2019.

**UPDATE:** Staff returning to work after maternity and parental leave (which now may be up to 18 months) will have overlap with the employee who has temporarily replaced them allowing for peer support and orientation for their re-entry to the workplace. To further enhance staff awareness of supports available to them, HR will include the *Family Status Accommodation* process document and the *Breastfeeding* policy (once approved - see 5.5 below), along with an updated version of the Employee and Family Assistance Plan New Parent Support information for staff. HR is also reviewing/revising a draft return to work checklist for employees returning from maternity and parental leave.

- 5.3 [ON TRACK] By December 2019, research compensation and job classification in conjunction with the City of Vancouver.

**UPDATE:** HR is currently working with the City.

- 5.4 [OPERATIONAL] By December 2019, explore options to further reduce precarity of employment at VPL.

**UPDATE:** Instead of posting for auxiliary librarians, VPL is piloting hiring temporary full-time librarian positions that have a guarantee of hours. VPL is working with the Union to discuss options to further reduce precarious employment. Additionally, eleven new posted part-time positions (for a total of 75) were created in 2019. These positions consolidate individual part-time shifts to create positions of at least 20 hours per week.

- 5.5 [ON TRACK] Adopt the City of Vancouver's breastfeeding policy once it is adopted at the City.

**UPDATE:** VPL will adopt once approved.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In alignment with the City of Vancouver's Women's Equity Strategy, staff will continue to work on initiatives that are not yet complete and to look for opportunities to improve on the initiatives that have become part of our operations.

## **FINAL REMARKS**

The City of Vancouver's Women's Equity Strategy aligns with many longstanding VPL values and commitments.