SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the actions for the trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion initiative, initiative 3.6 in the VPL 2020 Strategic Plan.

PURPOSE

This report is for information.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Board receive the report for information.

POLICY

The Library Board has three existing statements that apply to trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion: Diversity and Inclusion, Community Engagement and Customer Service. Also related is the Human Rights and Harassment Policy.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Vancouver Public Library has a long-standing commitment to inclusive and responsive library services, a commitment that is inherent in the role of the library as a social equalizer in the
community. The Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit initiative is a strategic initiative within VPL 2020, aligned under Access & Equity → Patron Centred Experience → Reduce Access Barriers.

**CHIEF LIBRARIAN’S REMARKS**

VPL’s Library Square Conference Centre staff received a room rental booking in November 2018 by Feminist Current for a ticketed event to be held January 10, 2019. Staff and the VPL Board received numerous expressions of concern and requests for VPL to cancel the room booking due to its impact on the trans community. The VPL Board discussed the room rental and chose not to cancel the booking, identifying that intellectual freedom is a fundamental value of VPL, while acknowledging that, in the case of this room rental, this value conflicts with efforts that VPL has undertaken since 2016 through the Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit strategic initiative and the principles of diversity and inclusion that characterize our work.

In December, the Board requested that staff undertake a review of the Meeting Room and Facilities policy and to seek to clarify or improve it in several areas. These include discussing how VPL’s values interact, identifying the relevant Canadian law that applies, providing for consultation, discussing the changing role of library spaces, and making clear that the Board has a role in the decision making. This review has begun.

The Board and Chief Librarian issued the following statement on December 20, 2018.

> A group renting space at VPL in January has raised issues that put two of our core values in conflict. This is an incredibly difficult situation and one that public libraries struggle with every day.

> As an institution, we have been doing a lot of listening. At a Board level, we have been having robust discussions – about our values and our various accountabilities as public library trustees. Many people have shared their personal perspectives and stories with us. Thank you to everyone who has spoken up and contributed your voice. This is what drives systems to reflect and to evolve.

> We will undertake a review of our Meeting Rooms & Facilities Policy in early 2019. We must continuously adapt and evolve to better listen to the voices of those who are most subject to discrimination.

> As we understand activities related to the Feminist Current booking may disrupt library services and affect our users, the event will be moved to an alternate time when the Central Library is closed. For the safety of everyone who chooses to be at the event or on the grounds of the library that evening, we have planned for increased VPL security and will work with City of Vancouver to address risks that have been identified.
We believe in always seeking to grow, nourish, and when necessary, repair our relationships with our communities.

Staff and Board members understand that the decision not to cancel the booking has damaged the trust built over the past two years between the Library and trans staff and patrons, as well as with community members and Library partners. Time and staff effort will be required to repair these relationships and to provide space for those affected to heal; staff will continue to discuss this and to share information with the Board on these efforts and on the impact on the trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion initiative.

**BACKGROUND**

In the spring of 2016, the City of Vancouver’s Equal Opportunity Office invited the library to participate in a consultation session regarding trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion, which led to a series of recommendations for the City and VPL. The resulting report “Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Inclusion at the City of Vancouver” included a series of general recommendations for the City and recommendations specifically for VPL (pp. 35-36). Staff provided a summary of the VPL related recommendations to the VPL Board in a report on July 21, 2016, along with examples of recent VPL work related to trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion. The Board received the recommendations and directed staff to develop an action plan.

Staff provided a report on planned actions by VPL on February 22, 2017. The recommended activities encompassed five areas:

- Public spaces, facilities, and signage
- Programs and services
- Human resources
- Communications and data
- Community consultation and public partnerships

The VPL Board received an update report on January 24, 2018 outlining activities undertaken in 2017.

**DISCUSSION**

Staff met quarterly in 2018 to review implementation of the action plan. Below is the staff action plan, with updates on actions that are finished and those that are underway. 33 of the 37 actions are now complete, and timelines for the remaining five actions have been revised.
Recommendation 1.1: Finalize and apply trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion guidelines to current facilities projects underway or planned with ongoing, iterative input from representatives on community advisory bodies.

**Pillar 1: Public Spaces, Facilities and Signage**

1.1.1. [COMPLETE] By December 2016, VPL will support the recent implementation of the “trans people welcome” bathroom signage by creating speaking points for staff and presenting them at an All Supervisors meeting.

1.1.2. [COMPLETE] By February 2017, VPL will confirm that náčaʔmat ct Strathcona and Levels 8/9 projects are following these guidelines to the degree budget allows for modification.

1.1.3. By February 2019 (was December 2018), VPL will assign content ownership to the washroom guidelines, finalize them, and ensure they are made easily accessible in the VanDocs document management system.

**UPDATE:** The washroom signage guidelines were finalized and implemented in June 2016 and have been applied to new projects. Discussion for the Oakridge Branch includes exploring gender neutral washrooms. The remaining work is to ensure the washroom signage guidelines are easily accessible in the VanDocs document management system.

1.1.4. [COMPLETE] By March 2017, VPL will implement the Vancouver Police Department Safe Place program by installing decals at branches that are not in shared facilities and preparing staff.

1.1.5. [COMPLETE] By December 2018, VPL will update the language used in floor plans to reflect gender-neutral staff washrooms.

**UPDATE:** The floorplans for staff washrooms in Central Library have been updated. For new facilities, including Oakridge and Marpole branches, staff will explore gender neutral washroom planning as part of the design phase.

**Pillar 2: Programs & Services**

VPL aspires to showcase diverse voices and perspectives in all library events.

Recommendation 2.1: Create trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit specific lists of library materials (“LibGuides”).

2.1.1. [COMPLETE] By December 2017, Information Services staff will work with the community to identify what information will be useful to include, and will produce and make available trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit specific guides.
Recommendation 2.2: Develop programming that involves trans, gender variant, and Two-Spirit Vancouver residents as presenters, participants and attendees, and that advances our programming approach to be more inclusive of the trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit community.

2.2.1. [OPERATIONAL] By December 2017, VPL will create two public trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit focused events that will provide trans, gender variant or Two-Spirit writers and performers an opportunity to share their work with a library audience and provide members of the public an opportunity to broaden their understanding of gender identities and experience.

**UPDATE:** Public programming that promotes trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit voices and discusses current issues has been incorporated into regular programming. In 2018, the following VPL programs took place:

**Psychology Month: Gender Identity in Children and Youth**  
February 1, 2018  
Psychologist Wallace Wong addressed common misconceptions about children and youth with gender dysphoria, and offered support strategies for parents and teachers.

**Breaking Boundaries: LGBTQ2 Writers on Coming Out and Into Canada**  
May 14, 2018  
Authors Austin Lee, JL Lori, and Anne Hofland, along with story subjects Rainer Oktovianus and Eka Nasution, and artist Wokie Clark Fraser read from their new anthology and engaged in discussion about their work and experiences, asking “What does it mean to be LGBTQ2 in Canada?”

**Inheritance of Shame: Peter Gajdics with Morgane Oger**  
May 17, 2018  
Author Peter Gajdics discussed and read from his memoir, *The Inheritance of Shame*, which recounts his experiences in conversion therapy to "cure" his homosexuality. Afterward, trans activist Morgane Oger conversed with Peter about the prevailing themes in his writing.

**Nek’iłus Stélmexw Kwtsi7ts syewíň txwta7 (Smart People Talking About Life): Indigenous Storyteller in Residence Finale**  
June 20, 2018  
Storyteller T’uy’t’tanat-CEase Wyss was joined by trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit artists and Indigenous poets from many nations for an evening with songs, stories and slam poetry.

**A Night of Storytelling: Celebrated Voices**  
August 2, 2018
Five Lambda Awards-celebrated queer authors came together to share their enchanting and deeply personal work, moderated by Ahmad Danny Ramadan.

2.2.2. [OPERATIONAL] By December 2017, VPL will explore a trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit book club or reading series in partnership with a community organisation.

**Open Book: Trans, Gender-Variant and Two-Spirit Reading Circle**
September 13, October 11, November 15, 2018
Participants discovered literary works by trans, gender-variant and Two-Spirit authors and shared their favourite reads in discussions facilitated by jaye simpson, Ivan Leonce, and Molly Billows.

**Open Book: An Evening with Kai Cheng Thom**
December 6, 2018
A special event featuring writer and performer Kai Cheng Thom, with Molly Billows, Ivan Leonce and jaye simpson. This event was modified by Kai Cheng Thom with the agreement of the authors to share of the impact of the Feminist Current room rental on the trans communities’ relationship with VPL, and included the participation of the Chief Librarian to hear these concerns.

**UPDATE:** The series “Open Book” took place in the fall of 2018 in partnership with Qmunity, PeerNetBC and the Vancouver Park Board. The closing event of this program and the relationships it built were affected by the Feminist Current room booking.

Recommendation 2.3: Define and implement best practices in LGBTQ2 collections, displays, and promotion.

2.3.1. [COMPLETE] By September 2017, a VPL working group will research best practices and create a draft LGBTQ2 collection profile document.

2.3.2. [COMPLETE] By February 2018, VPL will consult with the community about the LGBTQ2 Collection Guidelines document, and will incorporate the feedback into the final version.

2.3.3. [OPERATIONAL] By September 2018, VPL will purchase refreshed collections as appropriate, using the guidelines.

**UPDATE:** The team that purchases library materials have incorporated purchasing trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit materials into their everyday buying practices.

2.3.4. [OPERATIONAL] By December 2018, VPL will promote LGBTQ2 collections in Central and Branches through displays.
**UPDATE:** Throughout 2018, a number of LGBTQ2 displays were featured at Central Library and in Branches. For example, this summer, Pride-themed displays of LGBTQ books and materials were offered at various locations throughout the city. VPL staff also organized trans, gender-variant and Two-Spirit-themed displays during trans awareness month in November. Staff continue to include LGBTQ2 materials in relevant displays.

Recommendation 2.4: Review library subject headings specific to LGBTQ2 collections.

2.4.1. [COMPLETE] By June 2017, VPL Bibliographic Services will review existing relevant headings.

2.4.2. [COMPLETE] By September 2017, VPL will identify issues to Library and Archives Canada, if any.

**Pillar 3: Human Resources**

The purpose of these recommendations is to support employees in the workplace.

Recommendation 3.1: Identify and designate system-wide Trans, Gender Variant and Two-Spirit Champions/Safe Contacts, who will act as safe and knowledgeable resources for VPL employees.

3.1.1. [COMPLETE] By October 2017, VPL will select trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit Champions/Safe Contacts for the system. All contacts will receive training to support the impact of their role.

**UPDATE:** This action evolved into a staff-led group called the “LGBTQ2+ Allies.” In October 2017, 26 allies came forward and received training to support their role. Since then, the LGBTQ2+ Allies group has grown to 100 staff. The group identifies themselves by wearing rainbow coloured lanyards with the word “VPL Ally” printed on them and meets quarterly for discussions. The Allies group’s main goals are to develop and support staff. Past meeting topics have been discussions of “intersectionality” and “what does privilege mean?” The topics are researched and facilitated by members of the group. The meetings create a venue where staff feel safe to share openly about their own stories. One staff member shared, “I never thought I’d be able to do this at work. VPL has always been accepting but I wasn’t visible. It was hard to see myself here. Now it’s more normalized.” The rainbow lanyards have also prompted conversations with the public. These conversations are an opportunity for VPL staff to share with our community our efforts around inclusion and creating a welcoming and safe space for everyone.

In December 2018, the LGBTQ2+ Allies group met with the Chief Librarian to discuss the Feminist Current room booking and its impact on staff and community.
Recommendation 3.2: Expand and update policies to include gender identity and expression.

3.2.1. [COMPLETE] By June 2018, VPL will develop a framework with suggested language to use when reviewing and updating policies.

**UPDATE:** Policy & Planning has created this framework.

3.2.2. By December 2019 (was December 2018) as part of the ongoing policy review, VPL will review all policies and ensure they are consistent with the language recommended in the framework.

Recommendation 3.3: Utilize a phased approach to deliver trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion in-person competency training for staff.

3.3.1. [COMPLETE] By April 2017, VPL will offer training for the Chief Librarian and directors.

3.3.2. [COMPLETE] By June 2017, VPL will offer training for managers and supervisors.

3.3.3. [COMPLETE] By June 2018, VPL will offer more in-depth training for HR staff and LGBTQ2+ Allies.

**UPDATE:** HR staff who had not been trained in June 2017 received training in June 2018, and new Allies since October 2017 have received training as they have joined.

3.3.4. By December 2019 (was December 2018), VPL will offer training for all staff.

**UPDATE:** The City of Vancouver will be adding a module about trans inclusion to the existing Respectful Workplace online training. The VPL steering committee will review this module in 2019 and determine whether VPL staff need additional training. Through 2018, staff were offered the opportunity to attend in-person training delivered by City of Vancouver and participate in additional activities such as the Allies Group. VPL-staff developed a video on trans inclusive washroom signage to support public service staff training.

Recommendation 3.4: Promote trans, gender-variant and Two-Spirit inclusive employment practices in recruitment, hiring, and workplace relations.

3.4.1. [COMPLETE] Effective immediately, VPL will review the diversity language in job postings and will use inclusive, non-gendered language.

3.4.2. [COMPLETE] Effective immediately, VPL will liaise with City of Vancouver staff to share best practices and learn from each other.
Pillar 4: Communications + Data

Recommendation 4.1: Develop and implement consistent policy and protocol for collecting gender data across all departments.

4.1.1. [COMPLETE] By June 2017, VPL will implement procedures to accommodate chosen names on library cards for individuals who use a name that does not match their government issued ID.

**UPDATE:** HR implemented procedures for staff to identify their chosen name as part of the new hire orientation process, to ensure that all communication and systems, including email addresses, network logins and ID badges use the name staff choose. Training and discussions continued with staff in support roles to ensure chosen name procedures are understood and implemented appropriately. Payroll and legal documentation continues to require staff’s legal name.

4.1.2. [COMPLETE] By June 2018, VPL will identify all current practices around gender data collection and determine and implement best practices for VPL, including for library card sign up.

**UPDATE:** Staff determined that gender should not be asked when collecting personal information unless absolutely necessary. The children’s registration form, the only place where library still asked for gender data, has been updated to remove the gender fields. If surveys require gender data, VPL will follow City of Vancouver practices.

Recommendation 4.2: Develop and implement consistent practices for internal and external communications.

4.2.1. [OPERATIONAL] By July 2018, staff who host events and deliver training will receive guidance around using non-gendered language.

**UPDATE:** Staff developed a guideline and implemented it starting in early 2017. Training on the use of gender neutral language is ongoing.

4.2.2. [COMPLETE] By October 2017, Marketing and Communications will update VPL style guides to reflect non-gendered language, and will communicate to other teams the updated approach.

4.2.3. [COMPLETE] By November 2017, Marketing and Communications will review their in-house produced materials and publications and ensure compliance with the updated style guide.
Recommendation 4.3: Create and implement an ongoing approach to communicate about trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit--inclusive initiatives and events at VPL.

4.3.1. [COMPLETE] Effective immediately, expand communications vehicles as they are refreshed (e.g. annual report) to include communication on VPL's trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion initiatives, and highlight trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit initiatives, patrons and partnerships where opportunities emerge.

4.3.2. [OPERATIONAL] Effective immediately, ensure VPL programming and initiatives are communicated through key marketing channels that offer the best opportunity to reach communities (broad and targeted).

4.3.3. [COMPLETE] By April 2017, VPL will increase broader staff participation in trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit initiatives through delivering two staff presentations about the action plan.

4.3.4. [OPERATIONAL] By July 2017, VPL will collaborate with the City of Vancouver and the Parks Board to raise public awareness about trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit initiatives.

**UPDATE:** VPL received poster files created by the Parks Board at Hillcrest Community Centre to promote trans inclusion and will be updating them for a VPL audience and mounting them in multi-stall washrooms at Central Library. Other collaboration continues at an operational level.

**Pillar 5: Community Consultation + Public Partnerships**

Recommendation 5.1: Conduct consultation on the VPL trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit inclusion recommendations with relevant communities.

5.1.1. [COMPLETE] By December 2017, VPL will have undertaken to seek feedback from TGV2S communities on the VPL recommendations, will integrate the feedback and edit the action plan.

Recommendation 5.2: Continue to initiate and foster partnerships with organizations serving trans, gender variant and Two-Spirit Vancouverites.

1.1.1. [OPERATIONAL] VPL will continue to have a VPL liaison on the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Trans and Gender Variant Inclusion (TGVI) Steering Committee, and will initiate a working relationship with the City of Vancouver LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee in 2017.
**UPDATE**: The City of Vancouver will be establishing new advisory committees in 2019, and VPL will seek appropriate liaison roles as they are established.

1.1.2. [OPERATIONAL] VPL will continue to work with partners such as IDAHAT, Qmunity, etc.

**UPDATE**: As a result of the Open Book event and community feedback related to the Feminist Current room rental, VPL staff have identified additional community organizations and relationships that will help us continue to explore opportunities to promote trans voices and issues and improve our work and understanding.

1.1.3. [OPERATIONAL] VPL will continue to work with staff to share information in their local networks.

1.1.4. [OPERATIONAL] VPL will extend invitations to library events to the members of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation Trans and Gender Variant Inclusion (TGVI) Steering Committee and the City of Vancouver LGBTQ2+ Advisory Committee, and ask them to distribute through their networks.

**UPDATE**: Invitations have been regularly extended by email to these channels, as well as via the online calendar, posters, email newsletter and social media.

**NEXT STEPS**

Staff will continue to work on initiatives that are not complete, and to improve on the initiatives that have become part of our operations. As noted, staff will work to rebuild relationships with the trans, gender-variant and Two-Spirit communities damaged by the January 10, 2019 room rental, and will continue to consult with community members. A review of the Meeting Room and Facilities policy will be undertaken in 2019. Staff will provide a final report to the Board on this initiative and how it is being incorporated into regular operations by December 2019.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Staff training will be incorporated in the operating budget. If staff identify recommendations for activities to support rebuilding relationships that require additional funds, a report will be provided to the Board describing the planned activities and the funding requested.

**FINAL REMARKS**

From the outset of this initiative in 2017, VPL has evolved practices both as a workplace and as a public service, and increased the understanding of all staff about trans, gender variant and Two-
Spirit experience. These efforts will continue as we seek to rebuild relationships in 2019 and strive to be an inclusive and welcoming place for everyone in our community.