

“As the lockdown drags on, the highlight for the kids is when we pick up a new box of library books every week.”

# ANNUAL REPORT 2021



STRATHCONA COUNTY  
LIBRARY



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LIBRARY



# Message from Board Chair and CEO

## Challenges and Opportunities

Alberta libraries spent roughly six months of 2021 closed to the public due to Provincial COVID-19 health restrictions. These closures presented very real difficulties for some of our patrons and for library staff - but Strathcona County Library is not one to back down from a challenge. With each new closure, we aimed to reach more County residents with as many library services as possible, while also ensuring everyone's safety.

Two key projects completed at the end of 2020 guided our actions in 2021. First, we had launched a new holds pickup appointment system to make it easier for patrons to access physical collections. By early in the year, we had begun to review our customer feedback and refine our system. We streamlined our processes, reduced wait times, increased the number of pickup stations, and added a popular series of take-home craft and activity kits to the items available for pickup.

Another key project was the community engagement process we undertook in fall of 2020 to identify where the library could be most effective in meeting current community needs. While gathering input from residents, the library was able to respond immediately to address some needs, such as connecting individuals to needed resources. We then took time to analyze the full set of results and develop a new Plan of Service focusing on the three goals you see illustrated on page 10.

We truly appreciate the ongoing efforts of our staff as they continue to re-think and explore new methods for providing library services, and we so appreciate our library patrons for their patience and enthusiasm throughout each transition. Our new Plan of Service has just begun; we are happy to share with you some of what we have already achieved, and very excited to see where we will all go next.

*Thank You,*

David Atkinson, Board Chair

Sharon Siga, CEO



# Bookmobile Wins Service Award

In May, the Bookmobile was honoured with a Strathcona County Award of Excellence for Community Service. The nomination came from residents of the South Cooking Lake community. Bookmobile Services Manager Diana Balbar talked about her moment on stage:

*We could use only three pictures and I was given only one minute to extol the virtues of my incredible staff—an impossible task! I was so pleased that community members saw the value of the library and its Library on Wheels...*

*Our motto, 'Part of the Service, Part of the Community', highlights that the Bookmobile does not stand alone, but relies on the support of the entire library and the communities we serve. We are so fortunate to be part of this very special municipality that combines both the urban and the rural way of life.*





# National Day For Truth And Reconciliation

As part of the momentous first National Truth and Reconciliation Day on September 30, the Central Library hosted a variety of online resource lists to help residents of all ages explore and learn, while the Bookmobile partnered with the Strathcona Wilderness Centre for an in-person event. Elder Bert Auger opened the day with a prayer, smudge and teachings, after which families were invited to participate in a variety of fun educational activities, such as:

- a Métis trappers' tent that offered cultural education; and
- Felice Gladue, who performed Métis storytelling and dance to live music.

As our country acknowledges its past and the mistakes we have made in regards to Indigenous Peoples, libraries are recognizing that their catalogues are no exception. Over the next few years, our users will see changes beginning with Canadian subject headings and the inclusion of some First Nations syllabic languages. Watch for examples like this one:



**Grandfather Bowhead, Tell Me A Story**  
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by Johnston, Aviaq

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Book - 2021  
PIC JOHN  
Available [View details](#)

# Summer Reading Program Celebrates Anniversary with Imperial Oil



Summer of 2021 was the 25th anniversary of this very special partnership. Imperial Oil's Strathcona Refinery became a sponsor of the library's summer reading program in 1996. Since then, this sponsorship has touched roughly 50,000 young lives, helping kids maintain critical reading skills over the summer break, through a fun game that rewards their efforts with a variety of reading-related prizes.

Twenty-five years is a remarkable milestone for any partnership, but it's particularly gratifying to have had Imperial with us for a project that has such a direct impact on children's literacy. As each summer progresses, we see kids

become more confident and adventurous in their reading, and the game aspect is a fun incentive that often motivates otherwise reluctant readers.

## Reinventing Programs And Services

With pandemic restrictions preventing in-person programming most of the year, our staff found innovative ways to continue offering library programs and services.

- Staff provided help over the phone to callers who were having trouble with eReaders, phones, laptops and tablets.
- Youth programs moved online, so County kids and their grownups could attend Zoom-based Baby Laptimes and Storytimes from the comfort of their homes.
- Programs like "Strolling Sherwood Park" took adults outdoors to check out local landmarks and learn about their community.
- Bookmobile's popular online program, "Rural Kids Can" interspersed craft and STEM projects with cooking classes.

2021 also became the Year of the Craft Kit! Program attendees collected supplies through the library's holds pickup service, then follow along to assemble and show off their creations on the day of the program. Library craft kits were wildly popular with all ages, from preschoolers to adults.

# Literacy Support For Primary Grade Students

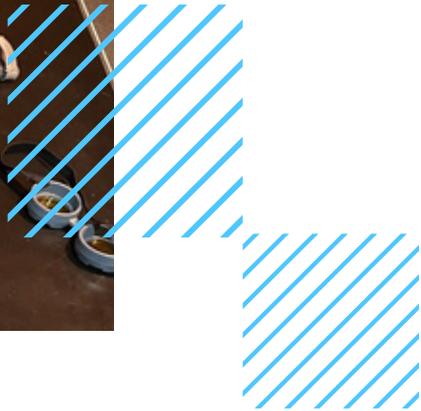


Adapting to online learning has been a challenge for many students. By the end of the 2020 school year, several students in early grades were falling behind in learning to read. After discussion with teachers in the rural County, Bookmobile staff decided to extend their annual spring Grade One “Book Buzz” reading incentive program to include students in Grade Two.

Meanwhile, at Fultonvale School, a different challenge arose for Grade One teachers. The library had provided them with Squiggle Park, an award-winning online resource that encourages early reading skills. When it turned out that students were having trouble accessing it due to a batch of outdated iPads, the library freed up some iPads for a six-week loan to get those classes back on track for reading success!

## Library Hosts A Pop-Up Covid-19 Vaccination Clinic

In late August, we agreed to be the host site for a COVID-19 vaccination clinic. The request came from the Sherwood Park Primary Care Network (PCN), with the suggestion that some individuals might find it more convenient to be immunized in familiar and comfortable surroundings like the library. To make things as simple as possible, the clinic was provided on a walk-in basis one afternoon in August, with no appointments necessary. PCN staff administered vaccinations to 16 individuals.



## Discovering Digital

During the COVID-19 pandemic, when libraries were limited to offering physical materials only through holds pickup, many library patrons tried digital resources for the first time. Even when physical items became more available again, many of these new users continued to borrow books, magazines, audiobooks, comics, music and movies in the digital formats they had learned to enjoy.

Digital borrowing increased by 39 per cent from 2019 to 2020, and rose another 3 per cent between 2020 and 2021. Patrons borrowed just over one million items from the library in 2021: 75% in physical formats and 25 per cent online.

The library also offers online research articles, newspapers, and streaming educational videos. Usage of these kinds of resources increased by 14 per cent between 2019 and 2021.

# Pro Tips For Library Tools

## Quick Tip Videos

In 2021, Adult Services staff launched a series of “Quick Tip” videos. These minute-long tutorials are designed to help patrons get the most out of our online catalogue and resources. You’ll find these titles and more on the StrathCoLibrary YouTube channel:

- Browsing the Catalogue like a Bookshelf
- Finding Items on the Shelves
- Browsing Library Staff Picks
- Finding New Stuff with Smart Search
- Magazines in OverDrive
- Finding New Things to Read in NoveList Plus

To see more, head to the StrathcoLibrary channel on YouTube.

## Stack Map Location Finder

We’re excited to offer Stack Map, a new feature of our catalogue that helps you locate print materials on the shelf! When you find an “available” item and follow the link to its “availability by location”, you’ll see a little blue “Shelf map” icon on the page. One more click will open up a map of the library’s shelves with a pin directing you to your item.

### ◀ Shelf map

One more click will open up a map of the library’s shelves with a pin pointing the way directly to your item.



# From our Patrons



Hi, I would like to send my compliments on the bookmobile and the great work that the ladies who run it do. My kids can't wait every week to get new books, or to sign up to a new craft online class. During the hard times it brings a spark of joy to us to be able to visit and get to pick our books. The ladies have nothing but smiles for all of us especially the kids. Thank you for doing such an amazing job running this program!!!

Thank you so much for taking the time to reply and provide me with helpful insight and suggestions. I know I am way behind the times with online stuff and have a steep learning curve trying to keep up with my kids, as well as all the online stuff due to the pandemic. The library has done an amazing job of adapting to offer books through holds, online classes, and kits to take home. It's me that is scrambling to keep up and adapt. That said, I am totally loving all the online classes (especially through the library and the county) from the comfort and convenience of our home!

*I wanted to contact you folks at the library to tell you thank you for all your help getting resources and books and all the extra effort you've had to put in to keep our hunger for learning and knowledge and entertainment satisfied. Your services have added so much to my quality of life during Covid and before Covid for that matter. I have a vision disability and I never get anything but great help when I call help so thanks again take care and be well.*





# New Plan of Service

Every three to five years, Alberta public library boards are required by provincial legislation to conduct a formal needs assessment within their communities. Libraries must then develop a plan of service that outlines what public services they will provide in order to meet the community needs identified.

In 2020, our library began its process by analyzing the results of projects that had recently been completed by other community groups who were looking into community and pandemic-related needs. We also interviewed a number of library-specific stakeholders. When seven dominant categories of needs emerged, we asked community members to help us prioritize in which of those areas they felt the library was best suited to respond. We gathered input through surveys run on the Strathcona County Online Opinion Poll (SCOOP) system and on our library website.

The process resulted in three focus areas for the library's 2021-2023 Plan of Service:



Our Library Board chose a short timeframe for this plan, to help the library remain flexible and responsive to emergent needs during this period of economic and societal transition.

# 2021 Library Board

We are a ten-member board of Strathcona County residents, appointed by County Council to represent the community. Our job, as outlined in the Alberta Libraries Act, is to ensure that the library remains a vibrant, relevant and healthy organization by exercising governance in a variety of areas: policy, finance, advocacy and strategic direction.

## EXECUTIVE

David Atkinson, Chair

Denise Charbonneau, Vice-Chair

Gene Syvenky, Secretary-Treasurer

## BOARD MEMBERS

Cathy Allen

Courtney Chamulke

Keely Cronin

Councillor Glen Lawrence

Korinna Levangie

Susan Miskiman

Pam See-Too

## **Land Acknowledgement**

We acknowledge that Strathcona County Library is located on Treaty Six Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Region Two and Four: a traditional meeting ground, gathering place and travelling route for centuries of peoples whose histories and cultures continue to inform our community. We dedicate ourselves to working together in the spirit of partnership, reconciliation, and collaboration.



Participants in our “Strolling Sherwood Park” program

**Strathcona County Library**

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