

The Library as a Community Builder: Rebranding our public library as a complete learning centre

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Greater Madawaska Public Library & Learning Centre

Prepared for: Prepared for the GM Library Board



**GREATER MADAWASKA
PUBLIC LIBRARY AND
LEARNING CENTRE**

Executive Summary

Making the changes that will add value to our community and serve as a cultural centre for our patrons

More than a community centre, town hall, or public park ever could, libraries connect their communities in a way that benefits everyone. They pool local resources and put them all under one welcoming roof for everyone to share. Whether you're a family looking for a fun story time, an unemployed individual searching for online job help, or a senior community member who needs help with government forms, you can all go to one place: the library. There, communities come together to learn, share, and celebrate where they live, who they are, and what they want to become. Libraries truly are remarkable places, and in today's world, we need them now more than ever.

Right now, all Ontario public libraries – rural and urban -- are under physical lock down – although there has been a slow reopening of circulation through online reservations and curbside pick-up. It's important to remember that we're in this boat with a host of others – social institutions, schools, governments, businesses and so many more.

Some predictions suggest this crisis could last months or come in waves. Scientists are unsure if people's adherence to social distancing and widespread adoption of face masks will result in a significant enough decline of the threat. As we plan to reopen, we need to investigate new and revised categories of essential services or new rules for services based on the extent of openness we are allowed to achieve. This could include mandatory masks for public service, limits on building occupancy or visitors, or limits on the core social services that support our most challenged populations. All of this is relevant to public library operations.

But every challenge represents an opportunity. With longer school and higher ed closures and more distance learning, now is the ideal time to re-imagine an expanded role the Greater Madawaska Public Library can play in the larger community as a fully developed comprehensive learning centre. It may require us to strengthen digital

services, reassess resources, and launch community-based programs (all with potential staffing and budget adjustments.)

At this point, we are assured that the provincial Public Library Operating Grants are not affected but with retail, tourism, and restaurants mostly closed, HST collection is severely impacted. Income taxes will be impacted by historically high unemployment that will only return gradually. Municipal revenues on property taxes, business taxes, building permits, licenses, hall rentals, etc. are way down.

We need to promote an expanded role of the public library to reduce major cuts. Now is the time for our Board and Management to increase our relationships with our local community, partners, businesses, and government. The Greater Madawaska Public Library has lots to offer and share in the broader community – the NEW NORMAL can be influenced and created by us. Now is the time for great vision, and based on our great values, to achieve our mission of improving the lives of our community's residents.

Who we are

The Greater Madawaska Public Library -- currently located in St. Joseph's Catholic School, 12629 Lanark Road, Calabogie – has grown into a much-valued community resource contributing to the high quality of life in Calabogie and environs. Through exceptional programming and valued partnerships, the Library provides accessible services using current technology and contemporary facilities to all demographic groups. The Library catalogue is fully online – accessible through the Township website:

<https://greatermadawaska.insignails.com/Library/Home>

Library has always been committed to ensuring high quality and excellent services to our clients – both permanent and seasonal -- while responding to their expressed needs. Part of our commitment is to enhance our overall services through

partnerships – including with the local First Nations bands -- and consultation with the community.

Library materials include a good collection of fiction and nonfiction books, magazines, DVDs, audiobooks, CDs, large print books, and reference materials. We have three public access computers for high-speed internet use. We also provide free wireless access within the Library.

Consider how the traditional Library will operate post-COVID-19

What can we do that would fundamentally improve the lives of our residents and the quality of life in our community? These recommendations from the Ontario Federation of Public Libraries on improvements to implement in the traditional operation of the Library are worth our attention and consideration.

Increase virtual programming & collections

- Creating the new normal is a strong digital opportunity. Do we have our basics, such as e-books, right-sized and adequately promoted based on our clients' needs as all evidence shows these usage categories increasing significantly. E-magazines, e-audiobooks, and similar resources should be reassessed and publicized to reflect the growing demand that became evident throughout the closure.
- DVD collections were restricted during the closure along with our print resources. Since it's a dying format, we need to plan for the future.
- Under most scenarios, we can expect in-person traffic to decline and digital to increase – regular collection balance reviews over the coming years are essential. And as we switch to digital formatting, we need to provide guidance to older or less tech-savvy users on how to maximize usage.

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- Expect governments at all levels to appreciate the need for better broadband – quickly. Now is the time to invest in audio, podcast, music and streaming media and digital film collections. Let’s investigate what we can afford and monitor, learn, and build.

Taking the first step to becoming a fully developed Learning Centre

e-Learning is the new normal and major on-trend highlighted throughout the province’s education strategies at all levels and patron adoption.

Public Libraries who have already subscribed and promoted free online learning resources gained the rewards. Let’s be one of them.

- There are many free resources that our library can curate. We can also reach critical mass more quickly by subscribing to major e-learning collection aligned with our community’s needs for personal development, learning and employment. Examples include Lynda.com (LinkedIn Learning), and Gale Courses.
- Research articles and Homework Helper are usually core services. Print magazine collections have been supplanted many years ago. Most libraries have millions of articles available in databases to promote to local schools, colleges, adult learners, and students.
- We want to partner with the local school to cross promote resources and programs – especially as distance education and e-learning evolve.

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Libraries are important cornerstones of healthy communities. Libraries give people opportunities to find jobs, explore research, experience new ideas, get lost in wonderful stories, while at the same time providing a sense of place for gathering. Our Library is a unique and valuable resource in the community – not only partnering with other agencies and groups, but also in initiating activities and events to help support our residents of all ages.

But as we move to an increasingly digital world, the traditional role of libraries needs to change. We need to reinvent our public library services to focus on building our community face-to-face, inspiring, and educating patrons about relevant topics related to the local issues. More than just books and computers, our library needs to fully develop as a place where individuals gather to explore, interact, and imagine.

Among the specific ways in which our library can add value to our communities and serve as learning centres for our patrons, we're suggesting an expanded Speaker's Bureau in which local experts would deliver short 20 minute seminars on topics ranging from running a business, through natural resource issues facing the county to sewing and cooking.

By expanding our services to create an atmosphere on continual learning and development, we will have differentiated ourselves as a distinctive resource in the Ottawa Valley; by adopting this unique approach, we will position ourselves to qualify for a wider range of grant applications, potential donations and sponsorships. We want to expand community awareness and seek out participation (and volunteers) not only from all our wards 2 & 3 but from our neighbours in the adjacent First Nations communities. By offering this Speaker series in conjunction with the adjoining school, we will complement their curriculum to help students meet academic goals after their long hiatus. Participating speakers, organizations and businesses will get recognized and we anticipate students who take part will generate interest with their parents and in the wider community – increasing our clientele overall.

In addition to the Speaker’s Bureau, the use of Library program room which is significantly under-used can be optimized by making it available for small workshops.

For example, Susan Veale expressed interest in using the program room for her eight-week meditation sessions. Although we do not see this as a revenue generator, we could request a nominal donation – say \$25 -- to the library or the school to cover the costs of cleaning. All activities will be geared to target audiences, and be mindful of accessibility and mobility issues.

Potential topics and speakers			
General interest topics		Running a business topics	
The History of Libraries	Skippy Hale	Calabogie Mini Storage	Rob Tripp
The Risks of Radon Gas	Janine Grant	Charbonneau’s	Annette/Bev
Money Management	Lucie Perrier	Restaurant Operations	Redneck/Brown’s Pub
Dental hygiene	Tamatha Strackan	Brewing	Calabogie Brewers
Mindfulness for Kids	Susan Veale	Clothing Design	Paddy Mann
Canada’s role in the World Wars	TBD		
Understanding the WHO	Rob Tripp	Potential careers	
Sewing	Joanne Levitsky	Serving or Waitressing	TBD
The role of the OPP	TBD	Farming	Johnny Slack
Art in the community	Karen Phillips Curran	Nursing	Sue Slattery
		Web Design	David Abraham
Social Services			
The Food Bank	Judith Herweyer	The Outdoors	
Seniors issues	Jean Libby	Water safety	Marg Legear
Home support, what do they do	Tracy Strudwick	Local trails	Councilor Chuck
Community Service	Women’s Institute	Graphite Rock in GM	Johnny Slack
The role of the Military	TBD	Environmental Protection	MNR
		Fishing	Joe Ballas
		Hiking Safety	Gil Wilson

New roles for staff present exciting development opportunities

With lower traffic to our physical branches in the medium term as we recover, opportunities emerge to create new or expanded roles for our team

While we assume that this pandemic emergency is a once in a century event, it would be unwise to plan on hope alone. Our Library will be much better prepared for any other local disaster – and we’ve had our share – of floods, tornadoes, blackouts, ice storms, earthquakes, fires, etc. However, most of digital and other initiatives are just building on public library best practices and known long-term trends. Going forward, as our staffing model include more digital roles, opportunities present themselves for:

- Website development (ensuring mobile-first and device agnostic strategies).
- Social networking support for staff (Slack, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, et al).
- The addition of social tools to our website for community recommendations and more. (LibraryThing, Bibliocommons, Goodreads, etc.)
- The addition of conference, video-call, and virtual programming software to our staff toolkit. (WebEx, Adobe, Google Hangouts, etc.)
- The addition of online calendars integrated with online registration and communication tools. (Eventbrite, etc.)
- Ensure that our ability to generate virtual library cards online and using mobile devices to issue cards is implemented well.
- Our Wi-Fi will be our most critical service. That said, how does our floor layout encourage physical distancing?

We can’t open until we’re fully ready and staff are trained and oriented to all new policies, directives, and procedures. The good news is that all books are COVID-19 free if they’ve been locked in the library for over a week. For staff safety, we’ll need to implement protocols for returned books and re-shelving. (IMLS, CDC Offer Guidance for Disinfecting Returned Library Books <http://fopl.ca/news/imls-cdc-offer-guidance-for-disinfecting-returned-library-books/>)

In short, our library may need to quarantine returned books for 48 hours before processing them back in and order staff to take appropriate precautions with them.)

We have a big responsibility to keep staff and users safe and confident. These include but are not limited to:

- Identifying COVID-19 cleaning protocols videos and webinars and sharing them with staff prior to opening and even now.
- Implementing hands-free holds and customer pick-up. It may require branch reconfiguration before re-opening but, it will minimize physical contact with staff and users.
- Repositioning self-check machines if not two metres apart.
- Assembling kits for the library – thermometers, masks, cleaning supplies, etc.
- Purchasing plexi-shields for circ/info desks early before they run out. If the weather is nice, prop doors open at our entrance and throughout our library (but clean the door grabs regularly).
- Thinking of how we can redesign public spaces. How will we rearrange tables & chairs (Four chairs per table won't likely meet physical distancing rules or patron expectations)? Our social seating / community living room spaces may need separation. We may choose to not allow seating at first until we've learned from the behaviours you observe.
- Reviewing staff workspaces. Are they ready for physical distancing? Are they ready for a deluge of returned books?
- Reviewing how our public PCs are set up. Patrons won't feel comfortable using them at first until they're two metres apart and spread out.
- Providing high visibility and signage on our cleaning protocols.

Welcoming our clients back

Consider what events or activities can be appropriate to reconnect the library and our neighbours, residents, and community

Long before we physically open, the community needs to have been advised of the new programs, services and protocols that are in place and on offer – a responsibility that our staff will have had to craft in detail through our digital presence.

A major Communications effort will be required to launch the Speaker's Bureau, not only to attract attendees but to generate participating speakers. Surveys will be taken of participants seeking guidance on what worked and what could be improved.

As the overall goal of the program is to increase traffic to the Library and increase use of our services following our prolonged closure due to Covid-19, participation rates will be monitored. Promotion of all activities and services will be via the Township website, the Library website and other Library social media – which will require ramping of our staff's digital skills.

Success will be measured by

- the number of participants
- positive feedback
- levels of circulation of borrowed materials
- Positive social media exposure
- Requests to modify or enhance offerings

It will be imperative to plan for a "Grand Reopening " to celebrate the community back to the library and all the new and exciting changes available. We will need to craft our official opening day carefully and frame for our returning and new clients that we've created a safe space, built on the community's trust, and communicate any new rules. Physical distancing and masks – if they're plain, we can make them more welcoming by drawing a smile on them - will likely continue and the inside of the library may look a little different because of that.

Until we know when the province's restrictions of social gatherings will be lifted, it's too early to consider what events can be appropriate to reconnect the library and our neighbours, residents, and the town. When we can, we could consider outdoor story times, Barbeques, or coffee/cake in the adjacent park or parking lot. These are great opportunities to re-build our community's connections when it is declared safe with happy pictures to our blog, websites, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest. Instagram spots can be set up in our library (outside too) to specifically promote the

library as a welcoming a relevant place! Photos also work very well on Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest.