

BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

AGENDA

Regular Meeting

DATE: 2022 May 19 (Thursday)

PLACE: via Zoom

TIME: 19:00h (7:00pm)

CHAIR: Sarah Bartnik

Our dream is:

A welcoming community where all people can explore, learn and connect.

To realize our dream:

We empower the community to engage with and share stories, ideas and information.

We would like to recognize we are on the ancestral and unceded homelands of the hə́nqəmińə́m and Skwxwú7mesh speaking peoples, and to extend appreciation for the opportunity to hold a meeting on this territory.

PAGE NO.

1. **Motion** to receive agenda

2. **Minutes** (5 minutes incl. agenda)

i) **Motion** to adopt the minutes of the regular meeting held 2022 April 21 as circulated

ENCLOSED

3. **Reports** (10 minutes total)

i) **Board Chair** (verbal)

ii) **Council Liaison** (verbal)

iii) **InterLINK Representative** (verbal)

4. **Items for Decision**

i) **Delegation of Authority to Close Branches** (10 minutes)

5. **Items for Information**

i) **Intellectual Freedom** (presentation and discussion) (20 minutes)

ii) **Picard Trust Award Recipients** (5 minutes)

iii) **Metrotown renovations** (10 minutes, verbal update)

6. Other Business
7. Next Library Board Meeting – 2022 June 16 via Zoom.
8. Adjournment

Motion that the regular meeting adjourn.



TO: CHAIR AND TRUSTEES
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

FROM: CHIEF LIBRARIAN
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE: 2022 MAY 19

SUBJECT: DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO CLOSE BRANCHES

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT in cases where a decision needs to be made within 48 hours, that the Board delegate the authority to close library branches to the Chief Librarian or designate.

REPORT

Burnaby Public Library practice is that any closure of library branches must be approved by the Library Board in advance. There is no official policy that codifies this practice.

Burnaby Public Library has established procedures that staff follow in the event of emergencies or staff absences, including clear direction for when a library branch must close. Examples include:

- When there is a power failure
- When there is an earthquake or fire or other emergency
- When staffing levels fall below the minimum guidelines

In situations like these, the decision to close the library is usually made by the Branch Manager, in consultation with the Chief Librarian and/or Director, Public Service. On weekends, there is now a manager on call system, where the Chief Librarian, Directors, and most Managers are available on a rotating basis to assist staff in case of a major emergency or disruption to library operations.

Staff recommend that, in cases where a decision needs to be made within 48 hours, the Board delegate authority to close a library branch to the Chief Librarian or designate.

All other decisions to close a library branch will continue to be brought to the Library Board for approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Beth Davies'.

Beth Davies
CHIEF LIBRARIAN
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY



TO: CHAIR AND TRUSTEES
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

FROM: INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM RESEARCH GROUP

SUBJECT: INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM: THE LANDSCAPE

DATE: 2022 MAY 19

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Library Board receive this report for information.

REPORT

As part of the Library Board’s review of the Intellectual Freedom Policy, a staff group was tasked with preparing background information for the Board. The group will present a summary of their work at the May Board meeting, and have provided this report for background information.

Intellectual freedom has been a growing discussion topic in libraries and in public discourse over the past few years. Topics of conversation have ranged from controversial public speakers using library spaces, to which materials do or do not belong in the public library, to whether library staff can freely express themselves on these topics and others. This report aims to distill the landscape of intellectual freedom, a founding principle of libraries that seems poised to undergo a major shift.

Many library associations are reviewing intellectual freedom policies, and looking at ways to uphold both intellectual freedom and social justice (equity, diversity, and inclusion). British Columbia Library Association (BCLA) has begun surveying library workers to review their [Statement of Intellectual Freedom](#), and the American Library Association (ALA) has formed the Working Group on Intellectual Freedom & Social Justice to examine the issue.

Collections:

- Intellectual freedom in libraries comes up most often when we look at the materials we collect. [BPL’s current intellectual freedom policy](#) states “The Library provides access to expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity, including those which some individuals might regard as unconventional or unacceptable.”
- However, there have been many recent questions about which materials we collect and how we present materials with potentially upsetting content. This includes materials that

are considered racist (particularly children's materials with racist content) or anti-trans. Halifax Pride [ended their partnership](#) with Halifax Public Libraries over the decision to keep a book considered anti-trans in the collection.

- On the other hand, materials containing LGBTQIA2S+ and BIPOC content are frequently challenged in libraries. Here's a [recent Canadian example](#), where an Indigenous author's children's book was removed from school library shelves. As this article states, "book bans" like these are very rare in Canada.
- [*More information & background reading in the May 2021 board report '[Intellectual Freedom and Library Collections](#)'*]

Space (including digital space, displays, programming):

- In recent years, public libraries such as Vancouver Public Library and Toronto Public Library have rented rooms for controversial events, including a [memorial organized by white nationalists](#) and a talk by a [trans-exclusionary speaker](#). This has sparked debate over intellectual freedom in library spaces. Is allowing controversial groups and speakers to use library spaces promoting intellectual freedom, or is it platforming hate speech and misinformation?
- How does this translate to a digital space? BPL's catalogue shows community-created lists, some of which promote things like COVID misinformation and transphobic views. Our catalogue is on the BiblioCommons platform, and we have limited control over user-generated content. We've received at least one question from a member of the public about these lists, particularly whether they are moderated by the library and how their presence in our digital space could be seen as an endorsement of the information they contain. Here's a [recent blog post](#) from a former librarian summarizing this problem.
- The International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) has published a paper called [Objectionable Third-Party Content: Library Responses](#) which provides examples of what other libraries have done in response to "events which range from controversial to potentially harmful, hateful or offensive."
- 'Is the library legally liable for groups and people who use their space?' – A Canadian Federation of Library Association (CFLA) [position statement](#) interprets intellectual freedom relating to room bookings and, in an addendum, features best practice suggestions to address and mitigate safety issues and liability.
- [*More information & background reading in the November 2019 board report '[Intellectual Freedom and Room Bookings](#)'*]

Worker and Workplace Speech:

- Although the ALA has a more developed '[Speech in the Workplace](#)' guideline, the CFLA only briefly mentions workplace free speech in their [Code of Ethics](#) as a right if it "does not infringe the principle of neutrality toward users". (Section 5)
- [An article](#) by a recently retired BPL staff member claims that shifts in library structure and attitudes can affect the ability to debate potentially divisive issues, initiatives, and decisions; especially if dissenting opinion is against social trends.

- Coming from another perspective, [Sam Popowich](#) argues that current discussion on the concept of Intellectual Freedom also does not allow for differing or critical opinions in the library community.
- A US [recent case](#) of a library employee fired for burning books on his social media demonstrates that actions/speech relating to workplace-related freedom of expression can lead to employment termination.
- This [human resources-related blogpost](#) succinctly summarizes the legal aspects of freedom of expression in the workplace in a Canadian context.

Prominent Theories Regarding Intellectual Freedom

- There continues to be much discussion about libraries and intellectual freedom, especially in relation between **Intellectual Freedom** and **Social Justice**. Both terms have become weaponised in the debate and can be seen as competing values. Public libraries must wrestle with the tension between the two.
- One established voice in Canadian discourse around Intellectual Freedom belongs to **Alvin Schrader**. In response to the challenges to intellectual freedom made by the trans community in 2019, [he wrote](#), “Social justice triumphed through the supremacy of expressive rights, not in spite of them. We insisted on more voices, not fewer.”
- A prominent voice offering a critique of existing, dominant perspectives of intellectual freedom is **Sam Popowich**. [He says](#) the idea of the individual cannot be separated from a social context. He poses a new definition of Intellectual Freedom which acknowledges the hierarchy and power relationships between individuals outside the library. Popowich denies the myth of neutrality that traditional views of Intellectual Freedom make claim to.
- Other prominent thinkers look for a way of [connecting Intellectual Freedom with Social Justice](#). **Emily Knox** says, “Intellectual freedom leads to social justice. A quick review of the 2020 American Literature Association’s Most Challenged Books list as well as the current challenges across the U.S. demonstrate that the majority of the books on the list are focused on diverse topics including race and gender expression. Without support for intellectual freedom, the voices of people who are marginalized would not be heard. Full integration of these two values [...] is vital to the future of librarianship.”
- Knox moves beyond the idea of collections in her understanding of Intellectual Freedom. Knox believes that the **Right of Access to Information** is a lynchpin of Intellectual Freedom. Traditional ideas of Intellectual Freedom state that if multiple points of view are neutrally available in a library, intellectual freedom has been achieved. However, Knox crucially points out that there is also a difference between what is ‘**Available**’ versus what is ‘**Accessible**’. For instance, Intellectual Property, Copyright and Library Behaviour Policies can technically restrict Intellectual Freedom.

Alternatives to Neutrality:

- At a recent ALA-hosted discussion, the Working Group on Intellectual Freedom & Social Justice outlined possible alternatives to neutrality in intellectual freedom policy. For further reading on neutrality and intellectual freedom, take a look at [this paper](#) from the Journal of Librarianship and Information Science.
- Radical empathy involves actively striving to better understand and share the feelings of others, changing our perspectives from judgmental to accepting, combating implicit & explicit bias, dismantling structural inequities, & prioritizing marginalized people's safety over privileged people's comfort. Here's the Working Group on Intellectual Freedom & Social Justice's [Radical Empathy Report](#).
- Trauma-informed response involves understanding that people experience trauma throughout their lives that shape them in the present day, avoiding policies & actions that retraumatize people, and examining the library's complicity in harmful power structures. The Working Group on Intellectual Freedom & Social Justice proposes using the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's model](#) as a starting point. Here is an [introductory guide on the topic for libraries](#).
- Cultural humility involves not only learning about other cultures, but starting with an examination of our own beliefs. It requires awareness and sensitivity to history, including historical oppression of marginalized people. It involves a willingness to acknowledge uncertainty and mistakes, while being aware of power imbalances, biases, & how these things impact how we interact with others. Here's a [brief explanation of cultural humility](#) from the American Psychological Association.

For further reading:

- Freedom to Read's [News Bytes](#) is a frequently updated list of articles about library-related freedom of expression issues, primarily in Canada. Their ['Articles' section](#) also includes annual reports about intellectual freedom challenges within Canada.

Trustees are encouraged to bring questions, concerns and comments to the meeting.

Alex Anaya, Gillian Bassett, and Caelin Crosby
THE INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM RESEARCH GROUP
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY



TO: CHAIR AND TRUSTEES
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

FROM: CHIEF LIBRARIAN
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY

DATE: 2022 MAY 19

SUBJECT: PICARD TRUST AWARD RECIPIENTS

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the Board receive this report for information.

REPORT

At the April 2022 Board meeting, trustees received information from the Picard Trust Adjudication Committee about the 2022 award recipients. This information provides more details about the award recipients.

Sue Choy and Maite Mayeta Cumba are the 2022 recipients of the Picard Trust scholarships, which support BPL staff or Burnaby residents who identify as Indigenous, Black or a person of colour to attend library school. Both Maite and Sue attend library school at UBC. Maité and Sue will be attending the July Board meeting to meet with trustees.

Maité says: I am thrilled and honored to receive The Picard Award from Burnaby Public Library. From a young age I realized that education was my way out of poverty and the only way to thrive and succeed in life. I feel like I am finally being recognized for my many years of determination and hard work. With this award Burnaby is taking a leadership position and it is my dream that more local libraries will make a real effort to support minorities and people of colour to bring equal representation to the library field. It is a huge encouragement and affirmation for me to be receiving this award.

Sue says: It is an honour to be one of the first recipients of the Picard Trust Award. To me, the establishment of the Picard Award for BIPOC staff acknowledges that BPL is working towards becoming a more inclusive and equitable organization which will result in better reflecting the diverse community serve, and create a safer and more welcoming environment for BIPOC staff. It took me over twenty years to finally decide to pursue a Librarianship degree, because growing up and even into my adulthood, I never saw librarians who looked like me. I hope that my example will encourage other BIPOC staff considering a future in librarianship to go for it!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Beth Davies'.

Beth Davies
CHIEF LIBRARIAN
BURNABY PUBLIC LIBRARY