

# Saskatchewan Library Association

## Diversity Progress Report

### Diversity Plan Development

In 2015, SLA worked with a consultant to develop a Diversity Plan which is reviewed by the Board of Directors annually. Although the content of the Plan has been embedded in the Strategic and Operational Plans, the existence of a separate plan underscores the emphasis that the organization places on Diversity. In October 2019 the SLA Board of Directors decided to complete a more detailed review of the Diversity Plan to the Advocacy and Development Committee. Next steps will be determined following this review. The following are key areas where diversity has been emphasized in the planning and operations undertaken by SLA.

### Governance

Every attempt is made to have a board of directors that includes members from diverse groups. SLA recruits board members from across the province with emphasis on having at least one member from a rural/northern library system. There has also been a senior (i.e. age) on each board in the past number of years. In 2019, SLA was fortunate to have an Indigenous board member and a member from a rural library system.

In 2018, SLA requested that LSSAP (Library Services for Saskatchewan Aboriginal People) provide ex-officio advice to the Board. The request stands, although LSSAP has not been able to provide a resource. In December 2019, an SLA Board member attended an LSSAP meeting.

SLA will continue to strive for a Board of Directors that reflects diversity (rural, senior, Indigenous and newcomer representation). SLA board members will continue communicate with LSSAP.

### Communications

In 2018, SLA developed a Diversity Banner to run along with other rotating banners on the website.

In 2017, SLA designed a Saskatchewan Library Week poster entirely in the Cree language – this was considered a strong statement of inclusion and diversity and represented the respect and recognition that SLA has for Indigenous languages.

In 2018 and 2019 the Saskatchewan Library Week Poster included the theme in Cree, Dene, French and English languages. Rather than having a different poster in the Cree language, it was determined that one poster including all languages was reflective of our messages on inclusion, diversity and cooperation. In 2017- 2019 the Book Spine Poetry Contest allowed for entries of poems in French (in addition to English) and a poster with rules translated in this language have been offered.

The practice of including Indigenous languages and the French language on posters for Saskatchewan Library Week will continue and we will determine opportunities to expand this practice for other information/promotional materials.

### Programs

SLA encourages libraries to include a diversity lens in all programming and ensure that programming reflects respect and inclusion for people of all races, genders, cultures, sexual orientations and persons with disabilities.

Since the inception of the One Book One Province Program 3 out of 4 book selections focused on Indigenous content: *The Education of Augie Merasty; Just Pretending* by Metis author, Lisa Bird- Wilson; *A Geography of Blood: Unearthing Memory from a Prairie Landscape*, by Candace Savage. The later selection offers a real version of plains history far different from what has been traditionally taught. Although previously focused on Indigenous content and settler experiences with cooking/food preparation this program can appeal to other diverse groups also and be delivered to promote the value of inclusion.

Saskatchewan Libraries Conferences in 2016-2019 have had increased Indigenous content with keynote speakers, session lectures, panels and blanket exercises all raising awareness, increasing knowledge and emphasizing the importance of Indigenization in library services. In 2020 the Conference Program Committee is planning an Indigenous forum that explores key areas in library and information services such as Welcoming Spaces, Staff Support, Programming and Subject Headings with a view to developing policy or guidelines documents for future reference. In 2020 the Conference will be preceded by an afternoon session which although in the planning stages will have the theme of equity and inclusion/empathy in libraries. Exploring what happens when library values like freedom of expression come in conflict with other values like inclusion and building community as has happened in libraries in a number of cities across the country. How do libraries and library staff support minority groups and help them see themselves represented in our libraries when they may see our professional norms or values coming in conflict with inclusion?

A gap in SLA programming for Northern Saskatchewan was identified and SLA successfully experimented with a Northern Tour. This tour had authors visit schools and libraries for readings and discussions. We hope to launch a new program (Northern Tour) whereby artists, authors or performers who are current or former residents of Northern Saskatchewan will visit libraries/schools with a focus on the arts (writing author readings, music, dance, visual arts) either performing or engaging students in workshops or other experiential events. Students and potentially other community members would benefit from exposure to forms of culture and may regard the artist as a role model. Our experience with northern tours in the past indicated a high potential for uptake and success.

Culture Days is supported by grants to 10 libraries and in some years has had more applications than funding permits. The wide range of programming reflects the diversity in Saskatchewan and the interest in sharing and experiencing culture a variety of forms. All programs indicate a high level of responsiveness to inclusion and diversity.

SLA is well positioned to continue to deliver enhanced and expanded programming that advances the interests of inclusion and diversity in Saskatchewan. We have the planning framework, the infrastructure and the delivery mechanism through the library network to effectively respond. Our experience to date has been positive and we are prepared to build on experience.

In regard to policy, SLA is exploring the development of a generic human resources diversity policy to be posted on the website. This policy would focus on the recruitment, orientation, ongoing support and retention of employees from diverse backgrounds. A researcher from University of Saskatchewan who is

involved with the Visible Minority Librarians of Canada and has completed research in the area of academic librarians' diversity and leadership perceptions has offered to provide consultation.

The above will support SLA plans as diversity and Inclusion are fundamental in SLA's strategic and operational plans. They will continue to be reflected in both and assessed in accordance with how we meet the objectives in those plans.

Within defined parameters and subject to approval, there is considerable latitude in programs such as Culture Days, Library Week and OBOP so local programmers can determine the type of programming (lecture, performance, workshop, experiential) that best fits their community).

The majority of SLA work involves partnerships with organizations (e.g. SWG, SBA, community-based Libraries, MAS, and SCAA), groups (Committees) or individuals (authors, writers, and translators, lecturers). The role(s) of SLA vary, including but not limited to funder, joint planning, providing approval, and facilitating, leading, advising, recommending resources.

Annual conference speakers have and will continue to represent diverse groups and diverse perspectives. Indigenous, East Indian, and French individuals have recently been keynote and lecture speakers.

Ensuring authentic engagements through strengthening existing relationships and developing new or changed relationships is important to SLA. This involves exploring relationships with new partners who share mutual interests and a mutual commitment to diversity and inclusion.

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