

Indigenous Student Talking Circle 2024

VCC Library



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Executive Summary

The purpose of this project was to open up discussions with Indigenous students to better understand successes and opportunities for improved support in the VCC Library. This project's goal remains to put forth recommendations for change to be made in the VCC Library to better support Indigenous Students. Implementation of these recommendations will be supported by the researchers of this project, the Indigenous Librarian when that appointment has been filled, and the library staff as part of our service renewal. The researchers of this project aspire to deepen the relationship between the library and Indigenous students, allow Indigenous students to lead the conversation in developing supports, and more generally, support VCC's value of Reconciliation.

Key to this project was the involvement and leadership of Toni Gladstone from VCC's Indigenous Education and Community Engagement (IECE). She was responsible for reaching out and inviting Indigenous students to the Talking Circle. Once participants responded with interest, they received the Research Participant Consent Form and further details about the Talking Circle. The Talking Circles were booked as follows: Downtown Talking Circle was February 7th, 2024 in the Downtown Gathering Space and Broadway Talking Circle was February 8th, 2024 in the Broadways Gathering Space. The same procedure was followed for both Talking Circles.

To compensate for student's time, each participant was given a gift card and food was provided by Friendship Catering. Elder John, a VCC Elder-in-residence opened each Talking Circle and, in both cases, chose to remain and participate. Toni facilitated both Talking Circles and Mari Paz Vera, Department Head- Library Public Services, was there to take notes, with the session being recorded for the researchers after the session. The Talking Circle consisted of 5 open-ended questions to prompt discussion about the library.

The Talking Circles comprised of 6 participants and at both sessions, Participants discussed predominantly using the Broadway Library. This resulted in most recommendations focusing on the Broadways location. Through these Talking Circles, Participants shared the various successes and opportunities they have experienced and seen in the library. These findings have allowed us to create concrete resolutions that will be reviewed and put into action during the service renewal process.

Key Findings

- Successes
 - Across both sessions, participants discussed their appreciation for the Indigenous art that is already present in the library.
 - At Broadway participants liked the display case present outside the library and suggested it could also be used for important events around Vancouver, and program areas around the college.
 - Participants highlighted their appreciation and the importance of computer availability for class time.
 - When participants feel that staff are being attentive, the help they receive is very useful.
- Opportunities
 - Communication
 - To further information sharing with Indigenous students, participants from both sessions suggested the library put signs up in the Indigenous Gathering Spaces that detail library services. This could be supported by quarterly newsletter emailed from the library to Indigenous students, which participants were keen to see regularly.
 - Events and Collaborations
 - There was discussion among both groups on the need to bring more Indigenous voices into the library, whether that be through a speaker series, book talks, and more invitation for collaboration with Indigenous students on decisions and design of space
 - A suggestion was made for a family room where Elders, Indigenous Storytellers, and community members could come and share stories, learn from each other and connect.
 - Services
 - The need to pay for printing came up as an issue for participants across both sessions.
 - The Broadway participants suggested dedicated tutoring space and time for Indigenous students with longer tutoring appointments than currently are available.
 - At the Downtown library, participants requested longer weekend library hours and library sessions on topics like time management and interview skills.
 - A participant said they would benefit from more support on some of the tech we loan out.
 - A participant suggested it would be beneficial to create a more welcoming environment around the services desks, where staff are readily available to welcome and assist students when they come in.
 - Space
 - A common suggestion across sessions was an interest in more comfortable seating and spaces to relax in the library, which is echoed by the wider student population in the 2023 Library Student Space Survey.
 - Collection
 - In both sessions, participants recommended an increase in Indigenous language learning books,
 - In support of Indigenous language learning there was a discussion about an online space that listed resources for learning specific Indigenous languages
 - Another collections suggestion was adding more chapter book to help any student whose English level is lower than in the popular reads we currently hold.
 - A request was made for more Manga and in general, easier ways to request books.

Recommendations

- Short Term Recommendations
 - Work with VCC’s Indigenous Education and Community Engagement team to display more library information in the Gathering Spaces
 - Share with LC feedback about tutoring services
 - Review welcoming procedure on service desk
 - Highlight Indigenous Language Learning resources
- Medium Term Recommendations
 - Seek opportunities to bring Indigenous community members, authors, speakers, and students into the library
 - Increase collection on Indigenous Language Learning
 - Increase collection of shorter chapter books
 - Create more comfortable spaces to relax
- Long Term Recommendations
 - Explore the creation of a space in the library to be used as a family room or events space to host some of the events suggested in the Talking Circles
 - Explore location hours and possible extension
 - Explore ways to remove payment barriers from printing
- Ongoing Recommendations
 - Find and create opportunities for collaboration with Indigenous Students in the library
 - Continue to develop tech support available in the library

Highlighted Quotes

“Try and get Aboriginal books that teach you your native language. Like some kind of language book that would teach you how to speak and translate.”

“At the beginning of the semester, so September, October, I was looking for a book for one of my courses and even though it was in the system, they didn’t have it because I guess someone checked it out and never returned it. So the librarian was very nice to look up the book for me and when they saw that it wasn’t there, they requested for the book to be ordered.”

Questions Asked in the Talking Circle

1. Can you share a positive experience with using the library?
 - a. In the times you have been to the library, what did you like about your experience?
2. Can you share a negative experience you have had with the library? The space or services?
 - a. In the times you have been to the library, what could be improved?
3. Imagine you are talking to a prospective student who is touring the campus. What would you tell the student about the library?
4. How would you see the library supporting you? What ideas do you have? How can the library be a more comfortable or welcoming place for you and other Indigenous students?
5. Is there anything else anyone would like to share?