

SML Christian Academy in Partnership with the Stony Plain Public Library: Community Analysis and Report



Krista Belanger

University of British Columbia

LIBE 463 61C

September 23, 2018

School Community

SML Christian Academy is an independent faith-based school in Stony Plain, Alberta. The school serves a population of 208 students in grades K-9 (School Enrolment Data, 2018-19, unsubmitted). Families either pay \$800 per child to take the public school division bus, drive across town, drive in from the surrounding acreages or drive in from the city of Spruce Grove. Of these students, less than 25% belong to the congregation which owns the building and employs the staff at the school. Approximately 43% of the students attending the school do not attend religious services outside of school (Dressler, 2018). The school, being independent, does not receive all of its funding from the province. Approximately 50% of the school's funding comes from the government, and the other 50% comes from contributions from the congregation and fundraising (Lande, 2018). At the time of this report, the school has purchased two portable classrooms and are currently renovating them and adjoining them to the school to increase available work space and use the former classrooms (now relocated) to create a Learning Commons for students as well as offices for administration. Given that the former school library is currently being used as a temporary classroom, the books once housed in the library are in use in individual classrooms and boxed on the stage in the gymnasium. Due to the limited access to books in the school, all classroom teachers utilize the public library in town. Weekly and bi-weekly field trips to the public library are typical. The public library has indicated in their mission statement in their 2015-2019 strategic plan that they connect "the people of our community to the knowledge and cultures of the world, and to each other" (see Appendix A). SPPL has connected with many schools in the local area to increase the use of the library and increase involvement in their programs.

The town of Stony Plain has a population of over 17 189 (Statistics Canada, 2016 Census of Population). According to the 2016 census, 2 235 children were between the ages of 5-14 years. At the time of the 2016 census, the school's population (under the name St. Matthew Evangelical) was reported as 180 students (2016-17 School Enrollment Data, Government of Alberta). There are seven schools in Stony Plain; of those, one is a high school and the remaining six are K-9. There is one other religious school in Stony Plain, which is a part of the local public Catholic school division. Of the seven local schools, less than three go to the public library on a regular basis (Stewart, 2018).

Collaborators/Partners

Partners invested in this inquiry include the staff at the Stony Plain Public Library (SPPL). When approached with the request for help, the staff and Director of SPPL agreed to meet and discuss how they could assist in this inquiry.

Additional collaborators include staff who currently work at SML Christian Academy. There are a number of staff who have taught grade 5 Social Studies and who will be teaching grade 5 Social Studies next year. These persons on staff include Andrea Carson and Kailey Schmidt-Morrison. Both of these women are aware of the curriculum and while Carson has taught grade 5 Social Studies before, Schmidt-Morrison will almost certainly be teaching it next year.

A final collaborator of this inquiry is Robbie Kaboni (Mskwa ma'iingan kwe miptoo). Kaboni is a personal friend who identifies as Anishinaabe and is personally invested in Indigenous culture and curriculum within schools. Kaboni's employment is in Indigenous education and training.

Curriculum and Learning Objectives

The curriculum chosen for this inquiry is the grade 5 Social Studies curriculum. The grade 5 Social Studies curriculum in Alberta covers the Geographic Regions of Canada, the Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada, and Shaping Canadian Identities. The focus of this inquiry is contained in the unit the Histories and Stories of Ways of Life in Canada. This unit, while large, and typically consuming the better part of two thirds of a school year, can be broken down into several major outcomes:

- 5.2.1 - appreciate the complexity of identity in the Canadian context
- 5.2.2 - examine, critically, the ways of life of Aboriginal peoples in Canada
- 5.2.3 - examine, critically, ways of life in New France
- 5.2.4 - examine, critically, ways of life of the fur traders
- 5.2.5 - examine, critically, ways of life of the United Empire Loyalists
- 5.2.6 - examine, critically, the ways of life of immigrants from the British Isles during the Great Migration
- 5.2.7 - examine, critically, how the North West Mounted Police shaped ways of life in Canada
- 5.2.8 - examine, critically, ways of life of non-European immigrants
- 5.2.9 - examine, critically, how European immigrants shaped ways of life in western Canada

For the purpose of this inquiry, the focus will be placed on the resources for the following outcomes: 5.2.2 examine, critically, the ways of life of Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

Outcome 5.2.2 states that students must explore and reflect on the following:

- What do the stories of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples tell us about their beliefs regarding the relationship between people and the land?
- How are the Aboriginal cultures and ways of life unique in each of the western, northern, central and eastern regions of Canada?
- How were the natural environment and geography of each region of Canada determining factors of the diversity among Aboriginal groups (e.g., languages, symbolism)?
- What was the significance of the potlatch to the identity of the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest Coast?
- In what ways do anthropology and archaeology contribute to our understanding of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples?

There will be two teachers who will use this collection that I am aware of in the near future, with class sizes of 18 and 24. One teacher has been teaching for over eight years, the other having taught for nearly five. Both teachers have taught a variety of grade levels and specialize in different areas. One teacher specializes in special education and inclusion, while the other specializes in literacy and reading instruction. At the beginning of each year, the current grade 5 teachers has conducted a student survey regarding reading. The results of the survey are often that students either enjoy reading and spend a significant amount of their free time reading, or they read only when they “have to”. See Appendix B for the questions from the survey.

Currently, the public library collection for the focus of outcome 5.2.2 is used by SML Christian Academy approximately three times a year while students engage in report writing and their own inquiry projects. Inquiry projects are based on individual student interests. Over the years, many students have chosen to research and learn about the differences between Indigenous communities across the country. Another popular topic of inquiry chosen by students is how

storytelling plays a role in Indigenous culture. Students are often interested in learning about creation stories and comparing Indigenous creation stories to the creation story they have heard from the Bible.

Due to the library collection being a shared use collection, the flexible schedule is limited to the time where the students and staff of SML Christian Academy are able to walk over to the library, which is limited to school hours. This flexible schedule has numerous benefits, including the benefit of working in partnership between the classroom teacher and library (Mardis, 2016), however, if students are absent on a day at the library, they potentially miss out on accessing the collection. There are a number of contributing factors which result in the success of accessing the collection which include the time of the year, the availability of resources in the physical library, and the programming going on within the library at the time. Given that access may not be readily available at a moments notice, students and staff have access to Alberta's Library TAL online (see Appendix C).

Conclusion

The success of the partnership between SML Christian Academy and SPPL is reliant entirely on the staff and students of the school. SPPL is committed to welcoming both staff and students into the library at any given time. SML Christian Academy must plan ahead to ensure success in accessing required resources from the collection. Students of the school are welcome to access resources outside of school hours, however, they are assisted only by a librarian. SPPL has demonstrated that they are eager and willing to help both students and teachers with assignments, pulling books from the collection in advance, and providing necessary library services.

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Appendix A

Goal 4

Residents who are underserved will have more opportunities to discover and use library services.

- Increase per capita library memberships for Stony Plain.
- Establish at least three regularly-scheduled outreach programs.



Mission

The Stony Plain Public Library connects the people of our community to the knowledge and cultures of the world, and to each other.

Vision

A world without limits in the heart of our community.

Value Statement

Our actions demonstrate that we value:

- Accessibility and Openness
- Intellectual Freedom
- Diversity and Collaboration
- Respect and Courtesy
- Accountability and Integrity
- Excellence in Service







Plan of Service
2015-2019

Goal 1

Residents of all ages will connect with each other by using the library as a physical and virtual gathering space.

- Create and maintain at least two active virtual communities.
- Create and maintain comfortable physical and virtual gathering spaces.



Goal 2

Residents of all ages will use the library to improve their 21st century literacies.

- Create and deliver programs that improve 21st century literacies, which include:
 - Digital Literacy
 - Social Literacy
 - Information Literacy
 - Basic Literacy
 - Physical Literacy
- Increase circulation of our Adult Literacy collection.



Goal 3

Residents will explore topics of personal interest and continue to learn throughout their lives.

- Increase usage of the library's electronic resources.
- Create and deliver satisfying lifelong learning programs.



Appendix B

Reading Survey Questions

- What does one have to do in order to be a good reader?
- What makes reading easy for you?
- What is the hardest part of reading for you?
- How do you go about choosing books to read?
- What are the qualities you look for in a good book?
- What's the best book you've ever read? What made it so good?
- How did you learn to read?
- What kind of reading do you do just for you?

Appendix C

