



NVision Insight
Group Inc.

YOUR VISION, OUR INSIGHT

ONTARIO FIRST NATION PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Needs Assessment Report

October 2017

Acknowledgements

NVision Insight Group would like to thank all of the First Nation Public Library (FNPL) staff members, Elders, Band Councillors and others who participated in this Needs Assessment. FNPL staff members diligently support their community libraries to improve the lives of First Nation community members across the province. This document reflects their valuable input. Thank you to staff members from the following libraries:

Alderville First Nation Public Library	Mattagami First Nation Public Library
Algonquins of Pikwakanagan Public Library	M'Chigeeng First Nation Public Library
Atikameksheng Anishnawbek FN Public Library	Michipicoten First Nation Public Library
Beausoleil First Nation	Mississauga First Nation Public Library
Big Grassy First Nation Community Library	Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation Library
Bkejwanong First Nation Public Library	Naotkamegwaning First Nation Public Library
Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation Public Library	Nipissing First Nation Public Library
Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation Public Library	Ojibway of Onigaming First Nation
Chippewas of Nawash Library	Ojibways of Pic River First Nation Public Library
Chippewas of Rama Public Library	Rainy River First Nation Public Library
Chippewas of the Thames First Nation Library and Resource Centre	Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation Public Library
Curve Lake First Nation Public Library	Serpent River First Nation Public Library
Delaware First Nation Library	Shawanaga First Nation Public Library
Dokis First Nation Public Library	Sheshegwaning First Nation Public Library
Garden River First Nation Public Library	Six Nations Public Library
Henvey Inlet First Nation Public Library	Temagami First Nation Public Library
Iskatewizaagegan First Nation Public Library	Thessalon First Nation Public Library
Kanhiote-Tyendinaga Territory First Nation Public Library	Wahta Mohawk First Nation Public Library
Magnetawan First Nation Public Library	Wasauksing First Nation Public Library
	Whitefish River First Nation
	Wikwemikong First Nation Public Library

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1 Executive Summary

Purpose

This report provides the results of a project to assess the needs of Ontario's First Nation Public Libraries (FNPLs). NVision Insight Group conducted this Needs Assessment between September 2016-February 2017 under the direction of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS).

MTCS contracted with NVision Insight Group in order to implement a commitment in the *Ontario Culture Strategy* (released July 2016) to "work with FNPLs to better understand their unique needs and identify opportunities for responding through improved supports" (Government of Ontario, p. 20).

The Culture Strategy commitment followed a 2015 project led by the MTCS Parliamentary Assistant to "assist with continuing to build partnerships and engage Aboriginal communities across the province to support Aboriginal community access to recreation opportunities and libraries," which recommended the Ministry undertake a Needs Assessment.

Report Structure

This report contains the following sections:

- Executive Summary
- Background and Context
- Overview of Ontario First Nation Public Libraries (Research Results)
- Barriers and Challenges Experienced by FNPLs (Research Results)
- Analysis
- Recommendations
- Bibliography
- Appendices

Key Findings

The research indicated that FNPLs function as vital community hubs that are safe spaces for community members. The research indicated that support for language and culture revitalization is a priority for First Nation communities and that FNPLs see themselves as well positioned to play a role in this area. FNPLs support community literacy, provide First Nation-specific and Indigenous resources and encourage literacy and reading among children and youth.

The research indicated FNPLs face the following challenges and barriers:

- Lack of funding
- Inadequate Salary Support
- Lack of Understanding of FNPLs' Unique Role

- Geographic and Infrastructure Barriers
- Training Barriers
- Collections and Technology Barriers

Recommendations

This report provides recommendations grouped into four themes:

1. Improved funding structures, formulas and supports
 - a) Implement a new funding structure and process
 - b) Consider other funding for operational funding
 - c) Provide funding support for additional staff
2. Support the management, preservation and revitalization of First Nation languages and cultural resources and programming
3. Improved Coordination and Advocacy
 - a) Bring northern and southern library staff together more frequently
 - b) Coordinate with other Ontario Ministries and the Federal government for funding and support to FNPLs
 - c) Advocate for and support broadband Internet access for all First Nations in Ontario
4. Streamline and simplify reporting processes and expand eligible expenses.

Methodology

Forty (40) FNPLs participated in the project. The work consisted of:

- A review of all relevant documents, statistics and reports related to FNPLs
- Organizing and facilitating Needs Assessment meetings:
 - Southern FNPLs in Alderville First Nation on September 13, 2016 (libraries represented = 10) and
 - Northern FNPLs in Sudbury on September 19, 2016 (libraries represented = 16)
- Conducting follow up phone interviews with FNPL representatives who were unable to attend the northern or southern meetings (total interviews conducted = 16)
- Creating and conducting an online survey for FNPLs to prioritize needs expressed during the meetings and interviews (total survey responses received = 29)
- Holding several teleconference meetings with the First Nation Strategic Advisory Group (FNSAG) to discuss methods, initial findings, and receive feedback and clarification and
- Submitting a Needs Assessment report to the ministry.

2 Background and Context

Public Libraries in Ontario

Public libraries offer access to library services for 99.34% of Ontarians. In total, 444 municipalities offer public library service through 1,157 service outlets (Federation of Ontario Public Libraries, 2015).

The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport (MTCS) is responsible for administering the *Public Libraries Act* and statutory grants under the Act. MTCS provides operating grants to all libraries in Ontario through Public Library Boards and First Nation Bands, as well as for municipalities, Local Service Boards or First Nations that establish a contract for library service with a neighbouring public library board.

Ontario is the only province that recognizes First Nation Public Libraries in its *Public Libraries Act*.

MTCS develops library policy, funds Ontario's library service agencies (Southern Ontario Library Service and Ontario Library Service-North), builds relationships with the Ontario Library Association (OLA) and the Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL), publishes the annual Ontario Public Library Statistics, delivers the annual Ontario Public Library Awards and attends the First Nations Public Library Week.

First Nation Public Libraries (FNPLs)

There are 133 First Nations in Ontario and 46 FNPLs, 45 of which received support from MTCS in 2015-16.¹

FNPLs exist in all regions of the province from Sachigo Lake First Nation in the north, to Delaware Nation in the south; from Iskatewizaagegan First Nation in the west, to Mohawk Nation of Akwesasne in the east.

While all FNPLs share some features – such as having books and e-resources – there is significant diversity among them.

FNPLs, for example, serve communities both large and small. Michipicoten First Nation has a FNPL and less than 75 on-reserve residents; Six Nations of the Grand River, at the other end of the scale, has an on-reserve population of more than 12,000. More than 80% serve a First Nation with a population of less than 1,000.

¹ The remaining First Nations in Ontario have the ability to establish a public library and apply for funding from MTCS, but they have not. First Nations without FNPLs are not the subject of this Needs Assessment.

First Nation Strategic Action Group (FNSAG)

The First Nation Strategic Action Group (FNSAG) is a committee of FNPL representatives that meet quarterly to coordinate the development and execution of key goals and initiatives that supports the growth and sustainability of FNPLs in Ontario. Membership consists of two representatives from the north and two from the south. It also includes one management representative from each of Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and Ontario Library Services North (OLS-N). The SOLS and OLS-N representatives are non-voting members.

The responsibilities of FNSAG are to:

- Coordinate advocacy for sustainable funding from communities, private, federal and provincial sources
- Work with First Nation communities to develop goals, strategic direction and key priorities
- Monitor and document the success of each goal and
- Coordinate and track work at the community and agency level.

Government and Library Sector Support Available to FNPLs

2.1.1.1 Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG)

The PLOG is mandated by the *Public Libraries Act* and funding goes to “an Indian band or a local service board that has established a public library” (p. Section 30 (4)). This is an annual grant.

PLOG funding provided to FNPLs is calculated on a per capita basis based on Statistics Canada population data (circa 1998). This is a set formula of \$1.50 per capita. (Municipal public library boards receive their PLOG grant based on a per household rate of \$4.80 in rural areas and \$4.08 in urban areas).

In 2015-16, 45 FNPLs received a total of \$123,186 through this grant. The highest grant amount was \$28,947 and the lowest amount was \$197.

In 2015-16, these same 45 FNPLs also received an additional \$90,000 in one-time operational funding (\$2,000 each).

2.1.1.2 First Nations Salary Supplement (FNSS)

FNPLs currently receiving PLOG, and that have met all program terms and conditions, may also apply for the FNSS, which provides \$13,000 per FNPL that must be used for salary and wage support. This is an annual grant.

In 2015-16, 43 FNPLs received a total of \$559,000 through the FNSS. In some cases, this is the only salary funding available to an FNPL.

2.1.1.3 Ontario Libraries Capacity Fund – Information Technology and Service Capacity (OLCF-ITS)

This was a three-year fund (2014-15 to 2016-17) that helped libraries improve and expand Internet and wireless services, develop user-friendly websites, and enhance collections development including books and e-books. In 2015-16, 35 FNPLs received a total of \$121,396 in OLCF-ITS funding. The highest grant amount was \$10,097 and the minimum \$2,500. Fiscal year 2016-17 was the final year of this program.²

2.1.1.4 Connectivity Funding

MTCS has a connectivity program that supports Internet connectivity in public libraries, including FNPLs. In 2015-16, MTCS provided \$28,308.51 to 17 FNPLs in Connectivity Funding. The grant amount ranged from \$204 to \$4,353.

2.1.1.5 MTCS Staff Support

MTCS library program staff provide regular support to public libraries, including FNPLs. This includes in-person training on Grants Ontario as well as guidance on library grant application processes, the annual survey of library statistics and the *Public Libraries Act*.

2.1.1.6 Ontario Library Services-North and Southern Ontario Library Service

MTCS has two transfer payment agencies – Southern Ontario Library Service (SOLS) and Ontario Library Services-North (OLS-N) – that support all public libraries in Ontario, including FNPLs. MTCS provides the majority of funding support to these organizations (in 2015-16, \$1.66M to OLS-N and \$3.3M to SOLS).

Currently, OLS-N supports 28 FNPLs and SOLS supports 18 FNPLs (Data Catalogue-Ontario public library statistics, 2015). The organizations have staff dedicated to supporting FNPLs.

OLS-N and SOLS work collaboratively on a number of services for FNPLs including:

- support with reporting
- training
- funding administration (e.g., Connectivity Funding)
- facilitating access to shared collection and material pools and
- supporting networking and information sharing.

SOLS leads the First Nation Community Reads program. OLS-N leads FNPL Week and hosts two annual gatherings for northern FNPLs. OLS-N has an “Establishing a Public Library in a First Nation Community” toolkit. OLS-N has an online Indigenous languages portal.

² On June 22, 2017, MTCS announced a new program to help people access to technology, digital services and training opportunities at public libraries in towns, cities and Indigenous communities across the province. <https://news.ontario.ca/mtc/en/2017/06/ontario-increasing-access-to-technology-at-public-libraries.html>

2.1.1.7 The Ontario Library Association (OLA)

The largest library association in Canada, the OLA is a non-profit organization that provides learning and networking opportunities for library staff and supporters. MTCS provides an annual transfer payment of \$40,600 to support this organization. To strengthen FNPLs in Ontario:

- The OLA has an Indigenous Task Group to raise awareness about issues pertaining to FNPL services. The Task Group also works to ensure that communities are aware of funding opportunities and other supports for establishing libraries on reserve.
- OLA provides financial support to First Nations Community Reads and First Nations Public Library Week.
- OLA founded the Grace Buller Aboriginal Student Scholarship at the University of Toronto, which provides financial support to an Indigenous student to study in the Master of Information program at the University of Toronto.
- OLA coordinates the Forest of Reading, Canada's largest reading program for young people, which has provided thousands of new and recently published books to FNPLs (and other First Nations without a public library), particularly in northern Ontario.
- OLA features an Indigenous stream at its annual Super Conference. This includes an Indigenous spotlight speaker, an Indigenous libraries luncheon, and reducing or waiving the registration fee to the conference for First Nations delegates.

OLA partnered with the SOLS and OLS-N to host a provincial gathering of FNPLs in May 2017, which also included First Nation staff and community members. Draft results of this Needs Assessment were shared at the gathering, and MTCS staff provided training on Grants Ontario and the administration of MTCS library grants.

2.1.1.8 The Federation of Ontario Public Libraries (FOPL)

FOPL is a membership-funded organization that represents Ontario's public library system and "ensures that funders and decision-makers know the full breadth and depth of the role of public libraries in Ontario and advocates for the needs, support, programs and resources to continue to make a difference for all Ontarians."

FOPL provides free membership to all FNPLs in Ontario, and has a First Nations Caucus that seeks to support access to library services for First Nations. The federation also produces statistics and reports on FNPLs across the province. FOPL is advocating for broadband access for all FNPLs across Ontario.

FOPL includes First Nation perspectives in all of their plans, documents and papers including:

- Ontario's First Culture Strategy 2016 Discussion Paper
- Public Library Program Funding Review 2017 Discussion Paper
- Cabinet Task Force on Community Hubs 2016-17 Discussion paper
- Municipal Act Review 2016
- 2105, 2016 and 2017 Provincial Budget Consultations submissions
- Queen's Park Library Day meetings annually

2.1.1.9 National Aboriginal Library Association

The National Aboriginal Library Association is the new name of the National Aboriginal Public Libraries Organization. This new association developed a three-year business plan in 2016.

The new association came out of the National Reading Campaign, which promotes literacy in Canada and recognized the need for Indigenous specific programs and services. The National Reading Campaign struck an Indigenous committee to determine how to improve Indigenous literacy in Canada. This led to the development of the National Aboriginal Library Association.

2.1.1.10 Government of Canada

The Government of Canada has no program that specifically supports FNPLs. First Nations have access to funding from various federal government programs. For example, the Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada provides infrastructure funding which First Nations can access to support FNPLs (Three Year Business Plan: Improving Reading of Aboriginal People, 2016, p. 7). However, FNPLs face competition for this funding from other priority areas within their First Nations, such as on-reserve education.

2.1.1.11 Other sector partnerships and support

FNPLs benefit from free access to accessible format reading materials and deposit collections from Canadian National Institute for the Blind/Centre for Equitable Library Access (CNIB/CELA). CNIB/CELA provides free access to their accessible library collections for all Ontario public libraries, including FNPLs. This includes deposit collections of Daisy audio CDs that are refreshed at least once annually and do not have to be returned. MTCS has provided \$11.5 million since 2009 to support CNIB/CELA to develop their accessible collections.

Other partnerships between the library sector and First Nations are also emerging. For example, in May 2017 the Toronto Public Library Board voted to expand access to its collection to people living on First Nation reserves. It has not been determined how this will be operationalized.

In January 2017, the City of Markham³ and Eabametoong First Nation signed an agreement of Cultural Collaboration. Eabametoong is located 360 kilometres north of Thunder Bay and is accessible by air and winter road. Among other benefits, the agreement means citizens of Eabametoong will have access to Markham's online library system.

³ <http://www.markham.ca/wps/portal/Markham/AboutMarkham/NewsRoom/NewsReleases/eabametoong-first-nation-accord/>

3 Overview of Ontario First Nation Public Libraries (Research Results)

3.1.1 Library Space

FNPLs are located in a variety of spaces. Only 8% of the FNPLs surveyed have their own building. Most share space (e.g., with a band office or health centre) and cohabitate with other services, such as adult education, food banks, or health services. One-fifth of FNPLs surveyed are in a school. FNPL spaces vary in size: some FNPLs reported only having room for books, while others have dedicated space for computer labs and programs.

3.1.2 Infrastructure

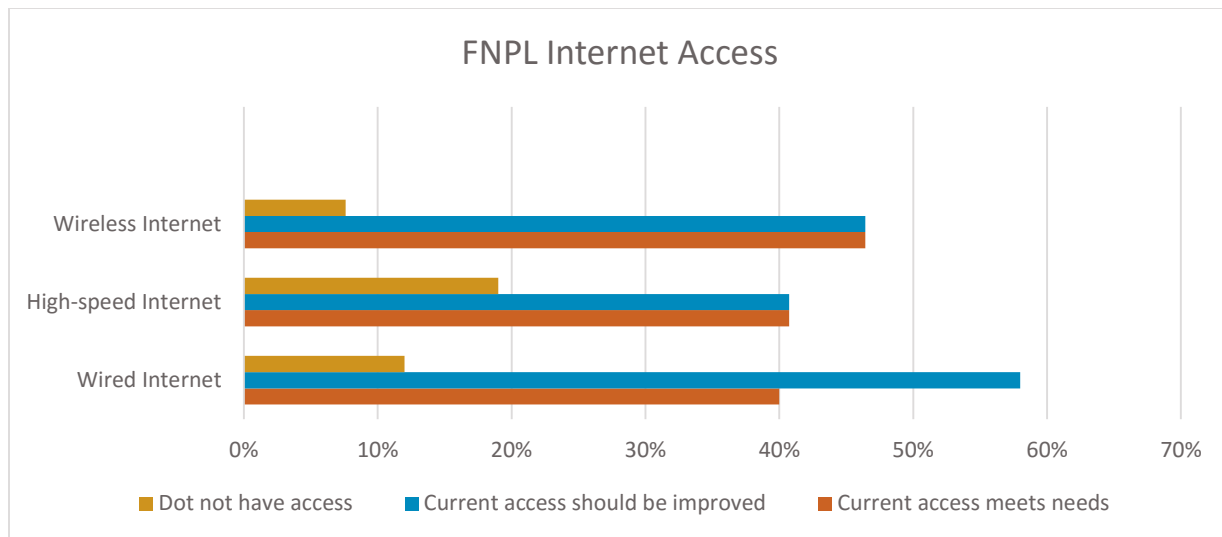
Half of survey respondents said their library is modern and up-to-date, but 18% said it is in need of upgrades. Infrastructure problems reported by FNPLs include the presence of mould, lack of proper washrooms, inadequate space for bookshelves, and the need for improved accessibility (e.g., to accommodate strollers and people in wheelchairs and scooters).

3.1.3 Collections

Collections are seen as the heart of the mission of libraries. Research results showed the quality of the collections in FNPLs across Ontario is uneven. Respondents also reported that some material is outdated or inappropriate (e.g., inaccurate portrayals of Indigenous people). Some FNPLs have only books and magazines. Some, in addition, have computer databases, e-resources and other collections.

3.1.4 Technology

All respondents said their FNPL provides access to computers, but the quality of the access is highly variable, especially related to Internet connectivity (see table below). FNPLs reported a variety of challenges related to technology, such as the need to update software and hardware. FNPLs reported a variety of technology needs, such as access to e-readers and other e-resources



3.1.5 Staffing

FNPLs have a low number of staff and limited budgets for staffing and staff training.

Staff positions: Overall, at the 46 FNPLs, as reported for the 2015 Ontario Public Library Statistics, there are 37 full time staff and 58 part time staff. This is based on a full-time equivalent (FTE) position working 35 hours per week. The 2015 statistics indicate: 60.5 FTEs working at 46 FNPLs (37 full time staff and 23.5 FTEs from part-time staff).

Based on the 2015 statistics (total = 46):

- 25 FNPLS have 1 staff person
- 15 FNPLs have more than 1 staff person but fewer than 4
- 4 FNPLs have between 4 and 7 staff people
- 2 FNPLs have more than 7 staff people

Note: The numbers in the list above do not distinguish between full-time and part-time staff.

The FNPL with the most staff is Six Nations of the Grand River. It has 4 full-time staff and 6 part-time staff, based on the 2015 statistics.

Training/education: FNPL library staff reported having various levels of education: nearly 45% of Needs Assessment survey respondents had a university or college degree; no one surveyed had a Master's level library accreditation; and 14% had a community college library technologist diploma.

3.1.6 Hours

FNPLs reported being open between 10 and 52 hours per week. FNPLs in shared space reported that they are often unable to control their hours, which restricts their ability to provide

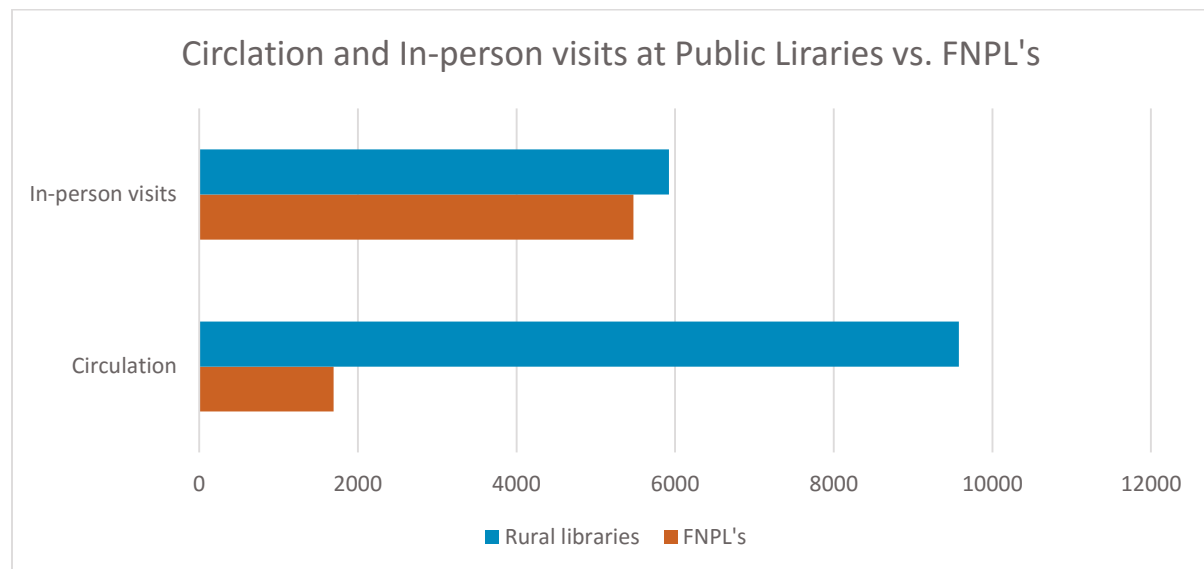
library programs and services to their communities. For example, FNPLs that are in schools need to close at the end of the school day and are unavailable to patrons in the evenings.

Some FNPLs surveyed indicated that the operating hours are related to the availability of library staff and the salaries they receive (e.g., part-time staff cannot keep open a library full-time).

3.1.7 Programs and Services

The Needs Assessment research confirmed that FNPLs do much more than provide books and other resources. In some cases, FNPLs reported that the library is the only place to access cultural programs, language classes, or community and historical resources in their First Nation. FNPLs said the library is often considered a community hub and safe space.

FNPLs have a significantly lower annual circulation average than public libraries off-reserve with a similar number of patrons, according to a 2016 FOPL report by Dr. Bob Molyneux, yet FNPLs maintain roughly the same number of in-person visits (First Nation Public Libraries in Ontario Needs Assessment PowerPoint presentation, 2016, p. 10).



On a per capita basis, according to the FOPL report, the total library visits of patrons per capita at FNPLs is significantly higher than visits of patrons per capita at non-First Nation libraries (Ontario Public Library Operating Data 2005-2014 Overview, 2016, p. 34):

- “These figures...are quite remarkable and bespeak an active commitment to this function in those libraries” (Ontario Public Library Operating Data 2005-2014 Overview, 2016, p. 31).

This indicates that patrons of FNPLs are more likely to visit the library to access a program or service than they are to access the library's collections, when compared to the patron of a non-First Nation library.

The FOPL report said that between 2005 and 2014 FNPLs steadily increased the number of programs they offer.

Programs and services reported by FNPLs as part of the Needs Assessment research included:

- Access to printers, scanners (some libraries)
- After school programming
- Age-specific programs (moms and tots, children, youth, seniors)
- Arts and crafts
- Author visits
- Book clubs
- Book giveaways and contests
- Book sales
- Chess club
- Community newsletters
- Community partnerships to leverage programs and services
- Computer and Internet access
- Computer tutorials
- Cultural activities
- DVD and CD's available
- Educational computer games
- First Nation Communities READ
- First Nation/Indigenous books and resources
- Game nights
- Homework clubs
- Inter-library loans and partnerships with other libraries
- Language programming
- Library services to local school
- Literacy supports
- Movie nights
- Poetry and book readings
- Programs in partnership with other departments (i.e. parenting skills)
- Repository of community books, local stories, audio-visual resources, cultural items
- Sewing/quilting/beading/leather work classes
- Social gatherings
- Storytelling events
- Summer reading programs

3.1.8 Funding

FNPLs are poorly funded when compared to non-First Nations libraries with similar numbers of patrons.

Given the unique role of FNPLs in First Nation communities, and the unique needs of First Nations communities, this funding disparity amplifies the challenge FNPLs have in meeting the library service needs of their communities.

In reports to MTCS, 23 of 45 FNPLs reported receiving no operating funding from the Band Council. These 23 FNPLs rely on the PLOG/FNSS, other grants, donations and sources of funding.⁴

For more than half of the FNPLs surveyed for the Needs Assessment, the PLOG/FNSS makes up more than 50% of the library's revenues. For 11 libraries, PLOG/FNSS represents more than 70% of revenues.

⁴ MTCS has not increased the PLOG/FNSS amount for FNPLs since the early 1990s. The PLOG amount is based on 1998 population statistics, which are significantly out of date for many communities. This flat-lining of provincial funding means that FNPLs are losing spending power due to inflation annually.

4 Barriers and Challenges Experienced by FNPLs (Research Results)

4.1.1 Lack of Funding

The following table, based on the 2015 Ontario public library statistics, highlights some of the funding disparities between FNPLs and other public libraries. The table compares two FNPLs and two public libraries in communities that have a similar number of active library cardholders. OLS-N serves all four libraries.

Library Full Name	Type of Library Service (English)	No. of Active Library Cardholders	Public Library Operating Grant (PLOG)	Total Provincial Operating Funding	Local Operating Funding	Total Operating Revenues
Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation	First Nations Library	221	\$ 3,073	\$ 16,073	\$ 0	\$ 21,073
Big Grassy First Nation	First Nations Library	228	\$ 758	\$ 13,758	\$ 11,300	\$ 38,955
White River Township	Public Library	253	\$ 2,266	\$ 3,102	\$ 30,903	\$ 49,727
Spanish Township	Public Library	227	\$ 1,949	\$ 1,976	\$ 43,780	\$ 54,394

This snapshot demonstrates how FNPLs operate with a low level of funding when compared to similar-sized public libraries in Ontario. This lack of funding is a significant barrier for FNPLs to provide effective library programs and services to their communities.⁵

The majority of funding for off-reserve public libraries comes from the municipal level of government, supported through local taxation.⁶

⁵ Funding provided to FNPLs by Ontario is calculated on a per capita basis based on population statistics (circa 1998) provided by the federal government. This is a set formula of \$1.50 per capita (Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2017, p. 2). The use of outdated population statistics of on-reserve population creates an imbalance for communities like Big Grassy First Nation in the example above, where its PLOG grant is significantly below Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation even though it has more active library cardholders. The PLOG grant has not increased to keep pace with population growth on reserve (Our Way Forward: Strategic Plan First Nation Public Libraries, 2004, p. 2).

⁶ In the examples cited in the table, municipal funding accounts for 62% of the funding public libraries in White River Township and 80% of the funding in Spanish Township. Libraries throughout Ontario are paid

FNPLs, on the other hand, are unable to access municipal tax base funding. This comparative disadvantage is somewhat mitigated through the province's provision of \$13,000 in salary support per FNPL through the FNSS program; however, a significant funding gap remains.⁷ Twenty-three of the 45 FNPLs report receiving no band/local operating funding and rely on the PLOG, other grants, donations and other sources of funding.

Currently no Federal program or funding structure to support FNPLs, despite the federal government's responsibility for on-reserve funding. The Department of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada provides infrastructure funding which First Nations can access to support FNPLs (Three Year Business Plan: Improving Reading of Aboriginal People, 2016, p. 7), but FNPLs face competition for this funding from other priority areas within their First Nations, such as on-reserve education.

4.1.2 Lack of understanding of unique role of FNPLs

On-reserve communities have identities and needs distinct from other communities in Ontario, based on the historical relationship between First Nations people and the Crown, now represented by the federal and provincial governments. The legacy of the residential school system is only one example of the unique challenges First Nations communities face.

In all communities, public libraries are important community hubs. In First Nations, FNPLs are vital centres for access to cultural activities and language revitalization in ways that are distinct from non-Indigenous public libraries.

In addition, Canada's Indigenous population is young and growing. Children age 14 and under make up 28% of the total population, compared to 16% of the non-Indigenous population (Statistics Canada, 2011). This is seen on most First Nations across Ontario.

The support and funding for FNPLs does not always take the distinct identities and needs of First Nations into account.

The presence of FNPLs within schools distinguishes them from public libraries in non-Indigenous communities, where there is a clear separation between the education system and public library boards, but this is an area that could be more fully explored to better address the needs of First Nations students and community members.

Furthermore, Ontario provides salary support for FNPLs through the FNSS, which it does not provide to municipal library boards. However, FNPLs remain significantly under-funded when compared to public libraries in non-Indigenous communities. Ontario's library policies also do not address the complex realities of First Nations communities, such as the intersection of

a provincial operating grant (PLOG) based on a per household rate of \$4.80 (rural libraries) and \$4.08 (urban libraries).

⁷ This was referenced in *Third Generation Public Libraries*: "In First Nations communities, which do not have taxing authority, the lack of capital support is an impediment to innovation in library services" (p. 27).

FNPLs with other social policy organizations in their communities (e.g., schools, health care centres, culture centres, band council offices).

In a 2009 report, titled *Sound Practices in Library Services to Aboriginal Peoples*, the Aboriginal Library Services Working Group noted there are multiple realities in First Nation communities that require community-based approaches and solutions. In the context of providing library services to Indigenous people, the report said, ‘diversities must be recognized as manifesting multiple realities that preclude firm or simplistic categorization of policy issues or solutions for all Aboriginal peoples’ (Aboriginal Library Services Working Group, 2009, p. 5).

In failing to recognize and respond to the extent of these diversities, governments and funders create barriers by developing ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches. While there is an acknowledgement that FNPLs are different from other libraries, this has not always translated into different funding, training or staffing approaches.

Examples of where governments and sector partners fail to understand the unique role of FNPLs include:

- The training provided by non-Indigenous library trainers doesn’t always take into account the unique needs and identities of First Nations.
- FNPLs are in a unique position to support existing on-reserve schools and promote lifelong learning. While reports (e.g., Gulati, Aboriginal Library Services Working Group, Ontario Ministry of Culture, among others) have highlighted the disparity in education and literacy levels between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada, the opportunity for FNPLs to play a role in this area has not been adequately explored.

FNPLs are also unique because they do not have library boards to support them. (Only one FNPL – Six Nations of the Grand River – has the support of a library board based on the municipal public library model.) In non-Indigenous communities, MTCS provides funding to public library boards in municipalities, and these library boards support library branches in their municipalities (e.g., developing policies and providing governance and strategic management).

4.1.3 Location and Infrastructure Barriers

Many FNPLs are located in rural or remote areas of Ontario. One FNPL is accessible by air only. This creates barriers and challenges due to the ‘high cost of living and doing business’ (Our Way Forward: Strategic Plan First Nation Public Libraries, 2004, p. 2).

Many FNPLs are located in a school or band administration office, which restricts the ability of the FNPL to establish a distinct identity in the community (First Nation Public Libraries Fact Sheet). As noted above, for example, FNPLs that are in schools need to close at the end of the school day and are unavailable to patrons in the evenings.

Additional barriers include: inaccessible buildings, insufficient space, damaged space (e.g., mould, old wiring, or other infrastructure issues), high cost of maintaining space (heat/hydro/water), lack of Internet and intermittent Internet access.

4.1.4 Inadequate Salary Support

The \$13,000 FNPLs receive for a FNSS-supported wage would cover fewer than 20 hours per week at minimum wage in Ontario. The libraries are open on average 29.5 hours per week. It is, therefore, easy to conclude that the FNPL library staff are underpaid for the work they do and the vital service they provide to their communities.

The low level of salary support for FNPLs significantly limits the ability of FNPLs to provide library programming and services to their communities.

Participants in the FNPL research meetings and interviewees said that First Nation community members with relevant education and credentials have little interest in FNPL positions or they leave the positions for better salaries elsewhere, contributing to high staff turnover.

This disrupts the ability of the FNPLs to plan strategically and support community members. The over reliance on volunteers to run programs and offer services also leads to instability.

4.1.5 Training Barriers

There are barriers to providing training for FNPL staff. For example, online training is a problem in regions with poor or no Internet access and often with no coverage during business hours.

In addition, where libraries have only one staff member, it is necessary to close the library when that person is away for training, thus disrupting the library services provided to the community. Training often requires staff to be away from their community for several days.

Lack of transportation and funding for training are barriers, particularly for library staff in rural and remote communities, where travel costs can be significantly higher.

4.1.6 Collections and Technology Barriers

FNPL collections tend to be smaller than off-reserve libraries. Here is an example from the four communities highlighted above (Data Catalogue-Ontario public library statistics, 2015).

Library Full Name	Type of Library Service (English)	Total Titles Held	Total No. of CD and DVD Titles	Total No. of Copies of E-resources, including E-books	Total No. of Database Subscriptions
Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation	First Nations Library	5,503	226	0	0
Big Grassy First Nation	First Nations Library	9,675	0	0	0
Spanish Township	Public Library	10,528	166	3,524	18
White River Township	Public or Union Library	15,660	1,848	78,915	18

The table above illustrates that limited funding restricts the ability of FNPLs to acquire e-readers and tablets or upgrade existing e-readers and tablets.

FNPLs widely access funding for e-resources when it becomes available; however, when this funding runs out the libraries cannot sustain the services and need to cancel subscriptions, which turns patrons away from the library. Other deterrents to patrons visiting FNPLs include outdated resources, inadequate resources and/or resources that are not available in multimedia such as e-readers and online databases.

Lack of broadband Internet and technological support are both barriers to providing library programming and services in some First Nation communities.

4.1.7 Other Barriers

In addition to the barriers and challenges listed above, there are other factors that affect the ability of FNPLs to deliver library programming and services that meet the needs of their communities. Some are listed below:

- Ontario's accountability requirements for grant programs can be a barrier for FNPLs. This is exacerbated, in some communities, by a lack of support and time to prepare reports, as well as poor Internet access.
- Due to the high workload of FNPL staff – and limited paid hours of work – there is little time or capacity to navigate existing and potential partnerships with government and the broader library sector.
- Some libraries are unaware of existing supports and how to access them (such as, OLA's Indigenous Task Force, FOPL's First Nation Caucus, National Aboriginal Library Association).
- FNPLs have limited opportunities to promote the FNPL to community members, which affects community-participation in FNPLs.
- Research meeting participants and interviewees noted a number of reasons for the FNPLs not being able to offer consistent programming and services:
 - lack of space
 - staff turnover
 - lack of volunteers
 - lack of staff availability and
 - limited library hours.

5 Analysis

Library Programs, Services and Training

FNPLs are integral to the life of First Nations and their communities consider them to be vital community hubs. A number of FNPLs indicated their library was a safe space for community members.

The Needs Assessment research confirmed that at a time when communities are reclaiming cultural practices, revitalizing languages and strengthening Indigenous ways of knowing, governing and being, FNPLs have a unique role and opportunity to support these activities in order to help address the needs of their communities.

Programs and services offered by the FNPLs surveyed included:

Programs and Services	% of FNPLs offering this program/service
Participate in community events/gatherings	89.29%
Provide supports and information related to improving health and wellbeing	55.56%
Connect in a formal way to your community Elders	53.57%
Provide cultural teachings, arts and crafts or other opportunities to learn about and strengthen culture	50.00%
Offer Indigenous language classes	28.57%

All libraries expressed a need to increase their collections. FNPLs, the research indicated, are particularly interested in First Nation-specific and Indigenous resources, including e-resources. FNPL respondents emphasized the need for books written or developed by Indigenous people. Not all library staff are aware of the breadth of culturally-appropriate resources available.

Books and resources for children and youth are a priority. Many existing resources for these audiences are outdated and some, respondents said, are inappropriate. FNPLs said collections for children and youth are well-used, but more variety is needed. The survey results confirm that parents with babies and toddlers are the most frequent users of the library, which demonstrates the need for children and youth focused programming.

Half of survey respondents indicated they provided cultural teachings, which are well-used, appreciated and essential. In some cases, the library is the only place that offers cultural, language and social programs.

FNPL staff stressed the importance of offering language classes but, in many cases, lack of capacity, inadequate meeting space and lack of available teachers and compensation resulted in FNPLs not being able to offer these classes.

Library staff said they receive many requests to offer cultural activities, speak to schools and other groups, provide tutoring, offer arts and crafts, make space for language classes, and to be a repository for community stories, artifacts and cultural items. This puts a strain on library staff, and sometimes the space available in the library is inadequate to meet these community requests.

Library staff expressed a need for a variety of programs and services to promote literacy (e.g., after school homework clubs, book clubs, tutoring, basic literacy programs, First Nation-specific literacy resources).

The survey confirmed that FNPLs require increased access to training and support in collections development. More than 96% of survey respondents said they needed 'some' or 'a lot' of support in collection development. This includes library management, cataloguing, finding First Nation resources, and maintaining existing collections.

FNPL staff mentioned the following areas where they could make use of training:

- Computer hardware and software
- Small library management
- Cataloguing
- MS Excel training
- Book ordering
- Setting up web site
- Maintaining library collection
- Mentoring with another librarian
- Customer service
- Proposal writing
- Volunteer management
- How to start, organize programs
- Advocacy
- Fundraising
- Post-secondary professional library training
- Basic computer skills

Funding, Infrastructure and Technology

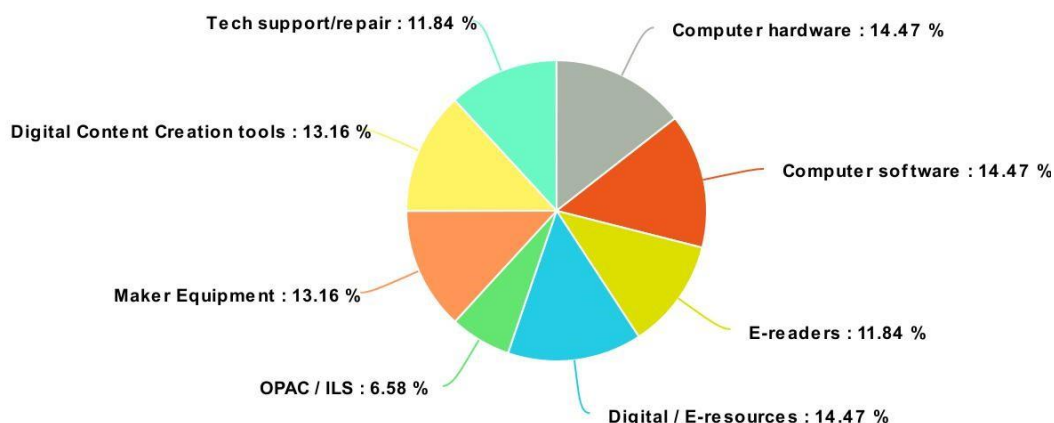
Funding for staffing is a top priority for FNPLs. Many FNPLs operate with one staff person who is expected to perform many functions (e.g., librarian, library technician, IT professional, financial and HR manager, program developer, volunteer coordinator and administrator) in addition to offering programs and services during evenings and weekends. This is not feasible for one individual. Some communities have dedicated volunteers, but the research indicated that this practice is not consistent across FNPLs. Library staff said there is a need for additional staff to support their work providing library services to their communities.

FNPLs have facility and infrastructure needs such as: improved accessibility (e.g., wheelchair ramps), adequate furniture, bigger space, more centralized locations, permanent

locations, major renovation and retrofits, more shelves for books, better lighting, computer labs, and improved storage space.

FNPLs have a wide variety of technology needs, as evidenced in the chart below.

The following is a list of technology needs that you identified as needing support. Please check up to three that are most important to you and your library



Access to the Internet and computers was rated by survey respondents as the program/service that gets used the most and is most beneficial to patrons, despite the challenges FNPLs face in providing these services.

FNPLs in northern Ontario expressed a need for better Internet connectivity and broadband access. Nearly 15% of survey respondents have no high-speed Internet. Between 40-48% of respondents who do have access to the Internet (wired, high-speed and/or wireless) indicate that access needs to be improved.

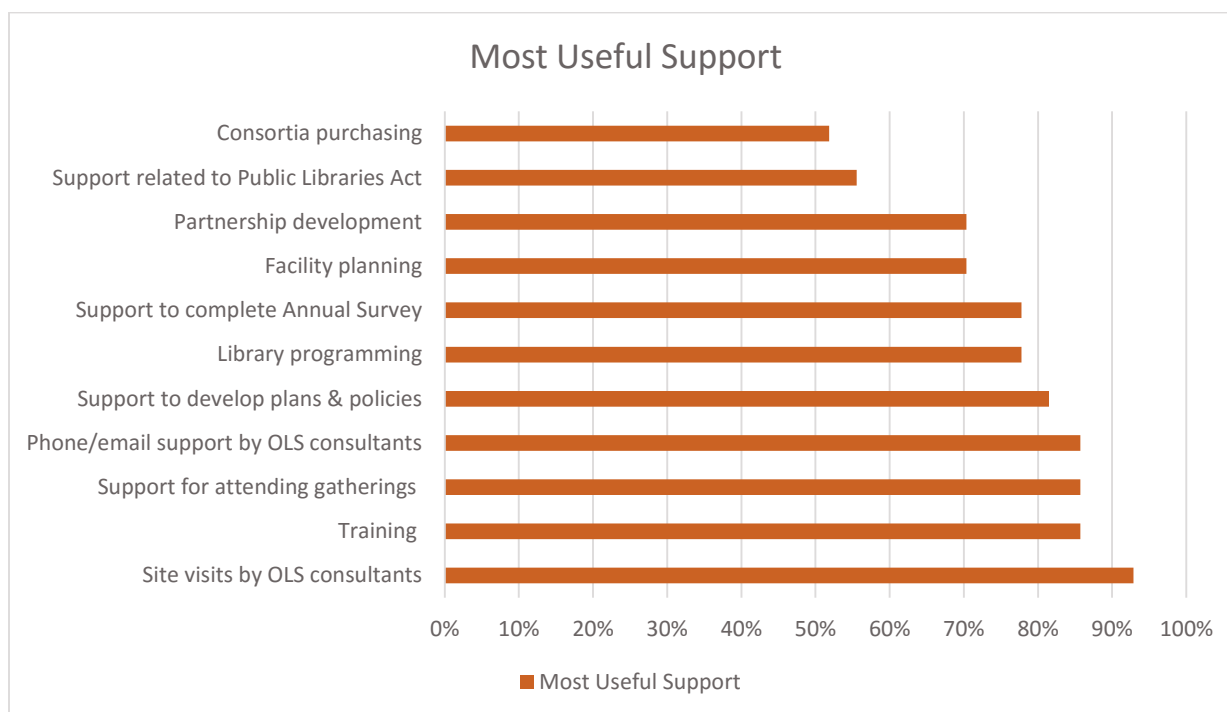
FNPLs indicated a need for more e-books and e-resources, though some northern libraries said that there is little demand for these resources due to poor Internet connection, lack of awareness of what is available and limited e-collections.

There have been some funds made available (from MTCS, other departments and funders) for e-resources, but these funds are typically for a limited time only. FNPLs cannot maintain access to online resources in the long-term with time-limited one-time funding. When the library cannot maintain consistent, ongoing access to e-resources, this causes frustration among community members. Resources also become outdated and are no longer supported.

Ministry Supports

Responses to ministry supports are listed in the chart below.

The research indicated that the most useful support provided by the ministry to FNPLs is site visits by OLS consultants/advisors.



The majority of survey respondents agreed that it would be useful to improve or offer supports to FNPLs in the following areas:

Type of support	Useful
Support to share information among FNPLs	100.00%
Advice and support to apply for other sources of funding and to write reports for funders.	96.30%
Advice on collections development	96.30%
Better promotional materials and signage to promote and advocate about library programs and services in the community	96.30%
Opportunities for FNPLs to provide feedback about SOLS, OLS-N and Ministry programs and services	96.30%
Cataloguing support	89.29%
Support for library staff accreditation at post-secondary level	88.89%
Combined north-south FNPL networking and training meetings	88.46%

6 Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Improve funding structures, formulas and supports

Recommendation #1 a): Implement a new funding structure and process.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that FNPLs would benefit from a new funding structure and process based on grassroots planning and models focused on improving services to First Nation communities. This report recommends, therefore, that MTCS work with the First Nation Strategic Action Group and FNPLs to implement First Nation-led planning process to identify options and opportunities for change. This could include: examining the role of First Nation consultants, First Nation advisors, CEOs, as well as the north/south divide; opportunities to streamline the proposal writing and reporting process, administrative responsibilities, and funding accountability structures (e.g., approaches for flowing funding outside of the Chief and Council); and ways to increase Indigenous cultural competency among FNPL staff.

Recommendation #1 b): Consider other funding formulas for operational funding.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that changes to MTCS's operational funding formulas would benefit FNPLs. For example, the current PLOG formula applied by MTCS is based on 1998 population statistics. This report recommends that PLOG be applied to the most recent available population statistics. In addition, when calculating funding formulas MTCS should take into account on-reserve realities: such as, access to basic needs (e.g., running water, adequate housing), community literacy levels, remoteness, and existing access to high-speed Internet. MTCS could look to the First Nations Education Council for advice in how to approach these changes. The First Nations Education Council developed a funding formula which "takes into account the quality and range of services schools must offer, as well as considering the additional costs inherent in certain factors that are unique to, or more prevalent among, First Nations schools" (p. 7).

Recommendation #1 c): Provide funding support for additional staff.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that FNPLs need additional funding to increase staffing levels, so that they can more adequately meeting their communities' needs for library programs and services. Library staff recommended various ways in which additional staff members would be beneficial, including providing administrative support, cataloguing, designing and delivering programs, advocacy and promotion, supporting programs and services outside regular business hours, filing, and researching new collections. MTCS should consider increasing the FNSS as well as work with other provincial ministries and the federal government to identify opportunities to increase staffing at FNPLs.

Recommendation #2: Support the preservation and revitalization of First Nation languages and cultural resources and programming.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that FNPLs have a unique opportunity to support the preservation and revitalization of First Nation languages and cultural resources and programming. This report recommends that MTCS explore opportunities support the FNPLs' ability to maintain and further develop these resources and programs. This recommendation is also mentioned in the National Aboriginal Librarian Association business plan (p. 9), in the FOPL's Culture Strategy Discussion recommendations (p. slide 13) and in the Parliamentary Assistant's report (p. 2).

Recommendation #3: Improve Coordination and Advocacy

Recommendation #3 a): Bring northern and southern library staff together more frequently.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that most issues facing FNPLs are common in the north and the south and that the division of libraries between SOLS and OLS-N an unhelpful separation. This report recommends that MTCS and the provincial library services agencies find ways to bring FNPL staff together more frequently to support, encourage, and learn from each other. Training and networking sessions are one way to do this.

Recommendation #3 b): Coordinate with other Ontario ministries and the federal government for FNPL funding and support.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that FNPLs require support accessing and being eligible for funding opportunities. This report recommends that MTCS work with other provincial ministries and the federal government to identify opportunities to increase funding and other supports for FNPLs.

This was also recommended in the Parliamentary Assistant's report (p. 3) and it was included in the FNPLs' strategic plan in 2004 (p. 12), in the FOPL's submission to the Special Advisor to the Premier on Community Hubs (p. 10) and in the Parliamentary Assistant's report on conversations with FNPLs (p. 3) and mentioned as a challenge by the National Aboriginal Library Association, the Ontario Library Association and others. The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) adopted Resolution 49 in 2011 encouraging First Nations to support the need for federal funding dedicated for the ongoing operations of FNPLs (Southern Ontario Library Service, 2012).

Recommendation #3 c): Advocate for and support broadband Internet access for all First Nations in Ontario.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that FNPLs need significantly improved Internet access; the digital divide continues to be a major barrier in

accessing materials in many First Nation libraries (Aboriginal Peoples and access to Reading Materials, 2015, p. 16). This report recommends that MTCS work with other provincial ministries, the federal government, the Assembly of First Nations and other organizations (such as FOPL) to identify opportunities to improve Internet access for FNPLs.

Recommendation #4: Streamline and simplify reporting processes and expand eligible expenses.

Rationale: The Needs Assessment research points to the conclusion that MTCS's current grant reporting and proposal writing is an unreasonable burden for FNPLs. In addition, the current definitions for eligible expenses for programs are too narrow. This report recommends that MTCS, in collaboration with FNPLs, streamline reporting requirements and expand the definitions for eligible expenses. This was also recommended by the Parliamentary Assistant (p. 2). This could include asking for information once per year, same time of year; condensing and simplifying annual reports; expanding list of eligible expenses to take into account the unique realities of First Nations and the ways FNPLs provide essential services to their communities beyond what non-Indigenous libraries provide; and develop plain language templates and tools.

For further consideration

While this needs assessment focused on the 46 existing FNPLs, there are 87 First Nations in Ontario without a public library. MTCS could consider an engagement strategy or Needs Assessment with First Nations without a library to address questions, such as: What are the barriers, challenges and needs of those communities? Are there ways to support these communities to establish a public library?

In addition, more than half of First Nation citizens in Ontario live off-reserve. These individuals have access to municipal libraries, but how well are those libraries meeting the needs of Indigenous people?

Some First Nations are located in close proximity to municipalities. What is the relationship between the municipal library and the First Nation or between the municipal library and the FNPL? How could this relationship be strengthened (including cultural awareness opportunities, resource sharing, cost-savings)?

There may be opportunities, as part of ongoing reconciliation, for MTCS to work with library sector organizations and municipal library boards to ensure libraries offer programs, services, collections and opportunities for Indigenous people.

For example, First Nations individuals who live on reserve near a municipality (e.g. Wasauksing First Nation) may want to access to the local public library, because they are not local taxpayers they face steep annual fees to get a library card. Could these fees be waived?

Friendship Centres are important institutions for First Nations individuals who move from their First Nation into a town or city and seek out programs and services. Some Friendship Centres have libraries and resource centres. How could Friendship Centres be better connected to public libraries and FNPLs? There may, for example, be opportunities for partnerships, collaboration or knowledge-sharing between local libraries and Friendship Centres.

Resources are available to address these approaches. Numerous reports (Lee and Crichton, Aboriginal Library Services Working Group) have highlighted successful programs, services and collections that meet the needs of Indigenous people, including a five step approach for Library Boards, developed by Six Nations Public Library, to create policies “around commitment to Aboriginal content” (Saunders, 2013).

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8 Appendices

Appendices for this Needs Assessment are provided in a separate document, entitled **Volume II-Appendices**. Volume II includes:

Appendix A—FNPLs that received PLOG in 2015-2016

Appendix B—Alderville First Nation meeting notes

Appendix C—Sudbury meeting notes

Appendix D—PowerPoint presentation used during Alderville and Sudbury meetings

Appendix E—Survey Data

Appendix F—How Recommendations Align with Ontario's Priorities