

Bulkley Valley Museum
Strategic Plan 2017 – 2022

Adopted by the Board of Directors
July 18th 2016

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Executive Summary

The need for a strategic plan for the Bulkley Valley Museum was identified by the Curator, Kira Westby, and Board of Directors of the Bulkley Valley Historical & Museum Society in 2015. Building on a previous needs-assessment study from 2001 and a strategic plan developed in 2007, the following document is intended to guide the Museum's planning and focus over the next five years to 2022.

The strategic plan was developed internally by the Board of Directors and Curator without the assistance of an outside facilitator through two formal strategic planning sessions held in 2015. The plan was drafted by the Curator. Feedback on the draft plan was sought via distribution to the Museum's membership and their contacts, as well as two museum colleagues of the Curator.

Organizational Profile

Mandate and Mission

Mandate:

The purposes of the Bulkley Valley Historical & Museum Society are:

- a) to gather and preserve local historical artifacts, information and records
- b) to maintain and operate a museum to house and display said artifacts
- c) to provide access to archival materials for research purposes
- d) to encourage preservation of historical landmarks, including buildings and monuments
- e) to facilitate learning

Mission Statement (adopted 2015):

The Bulkley Valley Museum collects, preserves and presents items of historical and cultural significance from Smithers and the Bulkley Valley, with the purpose of making our local history exciting and engaging.

History of Organization

The Bulkley Valley Museum (BV Museum) was founded in 1967, and was originally located in the Centennial Building with the Smithers Public Library. In 1974 the Museum was relocated to the Central Park Building, which at the time was considered a temporary move. The Museum has occupied one half of the lower floor of the building since that time. In 1977 the Museum was incorporated as the Bulkley Valley Historical & Museum Society under the BC Society Act. In 1987 the Museum registered as a charity with the Canada Revenue Agency, which it continues to maintain.

The BV Museum continues to be centrally located at the corners of Main Street and Highway 16 in the historic Central Park Building. The proximity to the Tourist Information Centre, and the walkability to Main Street are considered assets to the organization.

The Town of Smithers, located mid-way between the larger regional centres of Prince George and Prince Rupert on Highway 16 is a community of approximately 6000. The larger regional district is home to approximately 20,000 people. Smithers is a service centre to residents living in the regional district, in terms of healthcare, shopping, arts, culture, and other essential services.

Profile: The Bulkley Valley Museum in 2016

The Bulkley Valley Museum is operated as a registered charity by the Bulkley Valley Historical & Museum Society. The Museum is governed by a Board of Directors elected from the membership of the Society. The Museum retains at least two full time permanent staff members: the Curator, and the Museum Administrator. Summer students are hired annually to assist with operations and special projects. Contractors are leveraged on an as-needed basis.

The Board is accountable for the Museum's resources and activities, for ensuring the care of the museum's collection to professional standards, and for ensuring public access within the constraints of security and preservation. The board's role is to set policies in consultation with staff for the effective administration of the museum, and to monitor adherence to these policies. Implementation of policies and development of internal practices is the role of professional staff. In 2015 the Museum board and staff completed policy and procedural documents to guide the management of the Museum.

The Bulkley Valley Museum leases office, exhibition, and artifact and archival storage space within the Central Park Building (former government building) built in 1925, which it shares with other non-profit and artist groups. The office space on the main floor includes the Administrator and Curator's desks and the gift shop. This leads directly into the main exhibition space. A locked room for small artifact storage is adjacent to the first floor exhibition space. Another office space on the 2nd floor of the building houses the library and reading room, microfilm reader, and exhibition storage. Archival collections are stored in a walk-in vault safe that was part of the former government services. Access to this vault is through the gallery space of the Smithers Art Gallery. Additional off-site artifact storage space in three separate buildings is leased for a \$1 a year from the Town of Smithers. The buildings are maintained by the Town, but there is no heat or electrical service. Some large agricultural artifacts (farm equipment, etc.) are stored outside under a lean-to roof.

The Museum also administers the rental of a Town-owned former Anglican church (constructed 1913) converted to a community events hall known as "The Old Church". Revenue generated from the hall rental is a fundraiser to support the Museum. Use of the Church by the Museum is leased for \$1/year from the Town. Under the terms of the lease the Museum is responsible for organizing and paying for maintenance and repair of the building and grounds.

The Museum receives financial support for its operations from the Town of Smithers, the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako, the British Columbia Arts Council, and the Province of British Columbia through the Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch. The Museum applies for other grants (e.g. federal summer student funding, special project funding) as required and available.

The need for strategic planning was identified in 2015. Together the Board and Staff completed two preliminary sessions, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis of the Museum (see below) and a session that identified the priorities outlined below. A community feedback survey conducted in the spring of 2015 as part of the re-formalizing of the Museum's mission statement also contributed to the selection of priorities.

Strategic Planning Preparation

Previous Strategic Planning

In 2001 the Museum hired Faverholdt & Associates of Kamloops BC to complete a Needs Assessment Study for the Bulkley Valley Museum. The study was conducted in order to “*evaluate the total current operation of the Museum and its future needs, including the proposal for a new facility*”.¹ The assessment was conducted over three site visits to Smithers, and a review of all policies, financial statements, reports, plan, statistics, and other relevant information available at that time.² The assessment provided 41 recommendations for all aspects of the Museum including governance, collections, exhibits, programming, research services, marketing, and on a new facility.³ Several of the recommendations made in the report remain relevant to this day.

In 2010 the Museum contracted Bill Barkley Consulting to complete a feasibility study for a new museum. The study included a proposed visual marketing identity, a five year strategic plan culminating in a new museum, a market assessment, a comparable facilities analysis, and an exhibit design proposal.⁴ The five year plan which was to conclude with the opening of the new museum in 2015 was likely beyond the scope achievable for the Museum and did not succeed.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Analysis

In 2015 in preparation for strategic planning the Board and Staff conducted a SWOT analysis of the Museum. The results of the analysis are available in Appendix B.

Community Feedback Survey

In 2015 the Museum conducted a community feedback survey in part to help focus its mission statement after considerable mission drift over the past decade. Forty-seven responses were received. A full analysis of the responses is available in Appendix C.

Strategic Vision for 2022

In 2022 the Museum will present a standard for museum practice in north western British Columbia. The Museum will have a collections storage space that fits the current space needs of the collection, plus a minimum ten years of collecting growth. The space stores both the artifacts and archival holdings of the Museum. The space has environmental monitoring and control for temperature and relative humidity, and provides protection against the agents of deterioration. All artifact and archival collections inventorying is up to date, including artifact photography. The Museum has made considerable progress digitizing its archival collections. The Museum’s database is available online for public research. Researcher access of the collections has increased, and awareness of the Museum’s holdings is widespread, particularly within the region.

¹ Faverholdt & Associates, page 14

² Ibid., page 14

³ Ibid, page 81-88

⁴ Barker et al., 2010.

The Museum's gallery has a permanent but refreshable exhibit installed that provides visitors with an in-depth overview of the history of Smithers. The gallery balances settler/Euro-Canadian history with the history of local First Nations, particularly the Witsuwit'en. One portion of the gallery space is reserved to host a temporary rotation of exhibits either from the Museum's collection, or loaned by other Canadian museums. The Museum has regular funding set aside for temporary exhibits on loan. A schedule of temporary exhibits outlines upcoming exhibits for at least 2 years in advance of the current year.

The Museum has educational programs that can be offered to primary, junior/intermediate and senior classes that use the exhibit content to meet curriculum expectations. The Museum has established a week long (5 day) summer camp program that runs at least once per summer in July or August. The Museum's Collections Online website is used in classrooms by teachers for their history curriculum.

The Museum has a core group of volunteers that spend weekly hours as sitters, and/or assisting with collections and/or research related projects. The Museum has volunteer assistance for the organization and running of fundraisers and events, and has a healthy and active membership.

Strategic Priorities for BV Museum

The following four priorities have been outlined as strategically key to the Museum's success over the next five years. Detailed action plans for achieving these strategic priorities is outlined below in Appendix A. The following outlines the four priorities, and the current situation of the Museum as it relates to those priorities.

1. Collections Management: Documentation and Storage

In order to meet its Mission to preserve the history of Smithers and the Bulkley Valley, and to meet standards for museum practice in Canada, the Bulkley Valley Museum's first priority for the next five years is to ensure that its collections are documented in a way that makes them accessible to staff, researchers, and the public, and to obtain an appropriately sized storage space that meets the standards expected of a Canadian museum for artifact and archival collections.

Current Situation:

In 2015 the Museum took several steps to improve the documentation of its collections. Through the Collection Renewal Project the Museum began inventorying the entirety of its artifact holdings, one item at a time. The project includes verifying that each item is accessioned and has a database record, verifying or updating artifact condition, verifying and updating storage location, and improving the storage packaging. As of June 2016 approximately 900 artifacts had been processed onsite at the Museum. This represents between 25 -30% of known artifacts. Most artifact processing has occurred onsite, and collections stored offsite have yet to be processed.

As of 2015 the archival portion of the Museum's collection has been documented to the *fonds* level, with some series level descriptions completed. There is a backlog of unaccessioned material and no item level descriptions available in the database, meaning that much of our holdings are not searchable.

2. Community Investment: Volunteer and Membership Participation

The Museum desires to increase volunteer participation in the organization, not only to increase the level of service or to mitigate some tasks, but also to demonstrate a high level of community interest and participation in the Museum as a public institution.

Current Situation:

With the exception of the Board of Directors, and the Old Church Committee, the Museum currently has little regular volunteer activity. The Museum does have a few researchers or interested parties that assist with research or special events on an as-needed basis, but does not have a core group of volunteers that assist with the key areas that museums generally rely upon volunteer assistance including: visitor services, fundraising, event planning, exhibit research and development, or collections care and cataloguing.

The Museum has identified a number of goals tied to increased volunteerism including opening on Saturdays year round, increasing our fundraising, and accelerating the inventorying of the collections. Increasing volunteer participation within the organization underlies each of these goals.

The Museum also wishes to increase and diversify its membership base to ensure ongoing support for the Museum in years to come. Like increasing volunteer participation, increasing our membership also demonstrates community interest and participation in the Museum. Increasing and diversifying membership is viewed as closely tied to volunteerism.

3. Exhibit Renewal

The Museum desires to install a permanent exhibit in the gallery space that outlines local history, as well as establish a temporary gallery space and schedule of temporary exhibits.

Current Situation:

The Museum's last permanent exhibit was in place for close to two decades. It provided a narrative view of primarily settler history of Smithers and the Bulkley Valley and utilized an open storage concept with dozens of artifacts on display, including exhibits on blacksmithy, telegraph, railroad, general store, mining, and Euro-Canadian household items. There was also a natural history fossil component, as well as a display of ethnographic material that examined Witsuwit'en history (archaeological, fur trade, etc.). This display was removed and the gallery space was renovated in 2012-2013. As of 2015 the Museum has installed a number of temporary displays focusing either on local history or specific collections of artifacts in lieu of a permanent display (Photography in the Valley, Mining the Northwest, Sir Alfred Smithers, Skating Through History, Pre-Emption 1915, etc.). There is no established schedule for temporary displays or displays on loan from other museums. Plans for "feature" exhibits in 2017 and 2018 include displays on Asian immigration, and the 1918 Spanish flu.

The 2015 Community Feedback Survey indicated a desire among the local community to see more items out on display in the Museum. While temporary exhibits offer the ability to frequently rotate through items in the collection, staff time to research, develop, write, and execute exhibit is limited. The Museum desires to strike a balance between the crowded "open storage" of the past and the more open concept minimalist display that was put in place in 2012-2013.

4. Outreach and Programming

The expectation for museums in the modern era is that they will engage in dynamic programming that enables them to reach a broad audience, both physically in the museum gallery spaces as well as virtually through online content, including virtual exhibits, and social media. The Museum desires to grow its current educational programming to increase the number of yearly classroom visits, and to ensure that the tour/activities offered are tied to the BC curriculum. The Museum also desires to expand its collections access and programming into the digital realm through online collections access and/or virtual exhibits to ensure that the Museum and its collections remain relevant in the digital era.

Current Situation

As of 2015 the Museum does not offer educational programming beyond staff-led or teacher-led tours of the Museum. The Museum offered formal educational programming with curricular ties leading up to the mid-2000s, but no longer has the resources or expertise to develop formal programming with each new exhibit as developed.

As of 2015 the Museum does not offer any virtual exhibit content, beyond the “virtual tour” of James Cronin’s life built using Google Tour Builder and presented at the Museum as part of the *Mining the Northwest* exhibit. Virtual exhibits would allow the Museum to offer additional learning and exhibit content accessible offsite, and without taking up physical space in the gallery.

Currently there is limited searchability for the archival collections in particular, as many documentary collections have only been recorded in a basic way. In 2015 the Museum received funding from the Library and Archives Documentary Heritage Communities Program to build an online interface for the public to interact with its collections. This funding will enable the initial build of the system. Additional expansion of the surface and increased digital content development will continue.

Implementation

The success of the Museum’s five year plan will depend on the support and oversight of the Board of Directors, and their close working relationship with Museum Staff.

In order to move forward on implementation, Museum Staff and the Board will establish a work plan to ensure that we are moving towards our goals in a timely manner. Specific working groups of board members (e.g. volunteer recruitment) will be established to assist Staff with implementation.

The Strategic Plan is not static, and changes are expected. The Board and Curator will review the strategic plan annually in November to ensure that the Museum is on track to meet its goals, or to make adjustments where required. The Detailed Action Plan in particular is expected to change as details on funding, etc. come together. Updates on implementation of the Strategic Plan will be reported to the Society membership annually at the Annual General Meeting.

At the end of the five years (2022), a thorough review of the success of the Strategic Plan will be undertaken prior to beginning the next five year plan.

Appendix A: Detailed Action Plan for Strategic Priorities

1. Collections Management: Documentation and Storage					
Objective	Steps	Responsibility	Completion Date	Projected Costs	Potential Funding
1.1 Completion of Collections Renewal Project inventory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete inventory of onsite collections 2. Complete inventory of offsite collections 3. Complete set of artifact photographs for each item 4. Identify material for deaccessioning 	Staff	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$1000-1500 collections supplies • \$25,000 summer student wages 2 years (2017 & 2018) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVCF, Wetzinkwa, and other local funding • BCAC and other operational funding • Summer student funding (YCW, CSJ)
1.2 Deaccession items identified during inventory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deaccession as per the Collections Policy 2. Develop a public communications document about the deaccessioning process 3. Process the deaccessions through the database, ensuring that no records are deleted 4. Find an appropriate home for the object in a similar institution or, if necessary, send the items to an auction house. 5. All proceeds will be added to the Collections budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Board of Directors 	2018	N/A	N/A
1.3 Consolidate offsite collections to one building at Works Yard	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Purchase shelving and/or other storage furniture for space 2. Move as many small/sensitive items to onsite storage as necessary 	Staff	2017-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$2000-\$5000 shelving and other supplies • Summer student wages (see above) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BVCF, Wetzinkwa, and other local funding • BCAC and other operational funding • summer student funding
1.4 Create facility plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a Storage Facility committee to conduct this project. Volunteers, staff, and board members 2. Consult previous Needs Assessment and facility plans for information currently of use 3. Obtain CCI Facility Assessment to determine updated needs and costs (will apply annually starting 2016 until successful) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage Facility Committee • Staff • Board of Directors 	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCI assess \$1000 • Consultation with contractor or museum storage expert ~\$5000-\$8000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Building Fund • BVCF, Wetzinkwa, and other local funding • BCAC and other operational funding

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Create a document that outlines various types of artifacts and storage needs, and estimates of future growth 5. Consult with other organizations (e.g. Peterborough Museum, Fanshawe Pioneer Village) that have recently completed similar projects 6. Identify potential funding sources 7. Fundraising 8. Identify potential locations 9. Finalize one to three options 				
1.5 Facility Implementation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select preferred option 2. Funding applications and fundraising 3. Contractor hired and commence work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage Facility Committee • Staff • Board of Directors 	2020-2022		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museums Assistance Program • BCAC Capacity & Sustainability Grant • Canada Cultural Spaces • Other TBD funding • New Building Fund
1.6 Collections moved to new storage location	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collections are moved to new storage facility 2. Database records for all items updated as they are moved to new location 	Staff	2022-2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$13,000 summer student wages • Supplies TBD • Moving vehicles TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summer student funding
2. Community Investment: Increased Volunteer Participation					
Objective	Steps	Responsibility	Completion Date	Projected Costs	Potential Funding
2.1 Attract new volunteers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a volunteer coordinator position within the Board 2. Develop volunteer marketing plan to attract volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors • Volunteer Coordinator 	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$500 marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
2.2 Increasing membership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a membership coordinator position within the Board 2. Develop marketing plan to attract new memberships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors 	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$500 marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD
2.3 Develop / increase participation in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sitters (volunteers opening Museum) 2. Fundraising 3. Collections and data entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer Coordinator • Staff 	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD

volunteer committees	4. Old Church 5. Event planning				
3. Exhibit Renewal					
Objective	Steps	Responsibility	Completion Date	Projected Costs	Potential Funding
3.1 Determine theme and outline of exhibit content	1. Consultation with community and stakeholders groups 2. Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff Board of Directors 	2017-2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
3.2 Consult on layout and construction	1. RFP for exhibit layout consultation with exhibit design professional	Staff	2018-2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
3.3 Research and text development	1. Outline main “storylines” related to theme 2. Research and content development	Staff	2018-2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BVCF, Wetzinkwa, and other local funding BCAC and other operational funding summer student funding
3.4 Artifact selection		Staff	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
3.5 Installation		Staff	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
3.6 Establish schedule for rotating exhibits	1. Establish budget for traveling exhibits 2. Research traveling exhibit options 3. Develop schedule of loaned in and in-house developed exhibits	Staff	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD
4. Accessing History: Outreach and Programming					
Objective	Steps	Responsibility	Completion Date	Projected Costs	Potential Funding
4.1 Collections Accessibility Project – collection documentation	1. Accession and complete data entry for backlog 2. Complete series and item level descriptions 3. Digitize documentary heritage materials	Staff	2017-2018	TBD	LAC Documentary Heritage Communities Program
4.2 Digital access to collections	1. Development of online interface 3. Advertise/publicize the service 4. Continued digitization of content (e.g. document scanning, artifact photography)	Staff	2016-2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$15,000 (online interface) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAC Documentary Heritage Communities Program

4.3 Development of educational and summer programming	1. Establish budget for educational programming 2. Establish stable volunteer or part time position for educational programming development 3. Development of programming related to exhibit content and that is curriculum based 4. Establish funding relationship with school district and/or college for program delivery 5. Advertise available programming to teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff • Volunteers 	2017-2019	TBD	TBD
4.4 Online exhibit content	1. Establish budget 2. Content development 3. Virtual exhibit build and launch N.B. Could include expansion of cultural offerings on Salmon Trails, working in partnership with participating museums/sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff 	2018-2022	TBD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual Museum of Canada • BVCF, Wetzinkwa, other local funding • Funding for digital initiatives

Appendix B: BV Museum SWOT Analysis

BV Museum SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis

Strengths

- Open year round
- Relatively stable operational funding from government sources
- Competent, trained staff
- Committed, focused board
- Value of a museum is recognized in community / commitment to a museum from community/council
- Strong media (social, print, etc.) and marketing
- Interest in museum at Council
- Excellent exposure, media coverage, public relations
- Strong outside advocates
- Strong base artifact and archival collections
- Attractive, well recognized premises
- Name recognition
- Community support
- Resource individuals to turn to for expertise (e.g. local historians, others)
- Good relations with other arts/ cultural/ heritage organizations in the area

Weaknesses

- Lack of general volunteers / membership activity and participation
- Lack of fundraising
- Geographic isolation
- Operating outside mandate/mission pre 2015
- Lack of clearly articulated policies pre 2015
- Lack of exhibit and programming space
- Collections storage not environmentally controlled
- Collections storage existence (i.e. Old Works Yard) not in our control
- Displays/exhibits
- Lack of younger volunteers
- Quiet membership – not active
- Lack of educational programming
- Lack of manpower
- Lack of space
- Backlog of items to be processed

Opportunities

- Town of Smithers support for a Cultural Center
- Canada's 150th anniversary/ Museum's 50th anniversary
- Educational programming
- Local/regional funding bodies (e.g. Wetzinkwa, NDI, OBAC, BVCF)
- Rebranding and recognition of change in focus/vision/leadership
- Leadership role for other regional museums
- Old Church
- Geographic isolation – argument for our importance
- Smithers is attractive year round destination site
- Opportunities for leadership
- Opportunity for blank slate
- Opportunity for displays outside the museum
- Opportunities for partnerships (e.g. fall fair)

Threats

- Cuts to government financial support
 - Federal: summer student grants
 - Provincial: BC Arts Council, Gaming Grant
 - Municipal: Grant in Aid from Town/RD
- Lack of fundraising
- Loss of offsite storage space
- Loss of artifacts or other collections due to storage conditions they are in
- Exclusion from Cultural Center (e.g. due to lack of planning)
- Unexpected / unbudgeted costs

Appendix C: Results of Community Feedback Survey, 2015

Bulkley Valley Museum
Community Feedback Survey Results
June 2015

In order to determine how the Museum is perceived by the local community, the Museum conducted a Community Feedback Survey from April 15-May 21st.

The survey results were gathered with the intent of informing strategic planning and visioning for the Museum, including the exercise of evaluating and clarifying the Museum's Mission Statement, as well as plans for programming, exhibits, and marketing.

Background

In a review of the Museum's operational documents 10 different versions of mandates and/or mission statements were identified. The Curator and Board of Directors determined that clarification was required, and that the Museum needed to reaffirm and clarify its statement of purpose in order to commence future strategic planning and visioning.

Mandates and/or mission statements identified ranged from 1991 to 2013. Most existing statements referenced key concepts such as collection, preserving, and educating, as well as both natural and cultural/human history.

Challenges

The range of mission/mandate statements and indicate a lack of focus. A lack of clear mission can result in issues related to governance, as well as expected managerial decisions and priorities.

Lack of focus can also impact one of the Museum's primary responsibilities, which is collecting and preserving history. The Bulkley Valley Museum, as a community museum has traditionally had a broad focus in terms of its collecting and programming, ranging from natural to human history, and covering all manner of industrial and cultural development, as well as rail, forestry, mining, and aviation history. While the Museum's collecting activities have primarily focused on Smithers, other areas of the Bulkley Valley including Telkwa, Houston, Hazelton, Moricetown, Aldermere, Hubert, Driftwood, Quick, Evelyn, the Babines, etc. are represented in the collection. Areas outside of the Valley, including Terrace, are also represented. Telkwa, Houston, Hazelton, Moricetown, and Terrace all have their own local museums.

Research Methodology

To obtain feedback, a Community Feedback Survey was developed and distributed through the survey website Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). The survey was available from April 15 to May 21st 2015.

The Survey was advertised through the following means:

- Distributed via email to the Museum's membership list (70 possible responses)
- Distributed on several occasions via the Museum's Facebook page (148 possible responses)
- Distributed through the "Smithers Memories" Facebook page (410 possible responses)
- Distributed through the BV Museum's Twitter account (190 possible responses)
- Posted on the Museum's website (unlimited possible responses)
- Mentioned in the "View from the Porch" column of the Smithers Interior News, April 22nd (unlimited possible responses)
- Paper copies available at the Northwest Trade Expo (~150 responses based on direct engagement recorded with visitors at the Museum's booth)

Questions asked of participants were:

1. Are you currently or have you ever been a member of the Museum (yes/no)
2. How often do you visit the Museum? (dropdown)
3. Why do you think the Bulkley Valley Museum exists?
4. What services does the Museum provide?
5. What do you like best about the Museum?
6. What would you like to see us do differently?
7. What challenges do you think exist for the Museum? (multiple choice)
8. What is your age? (dropdown)
9. Which community do you live in? (dropdown)
10. Additional comments/feedback
11. The range of mission/mandate statements and the differences in focus represented indicate a lack of focus. This lack of clear focus and mission can result in issues related to governance, as well as expected managerial decisions and priorities.

Results

In total, 47 responses were received.

The survey questions largely required text based entry, resulting in a large amount of qualitative data. Responses were therefore analyzed for the ideas that they contained, as well as reoccurring impressions or themes in responses.

In response to **Question 1**, surprisingly the majority of respondents (29, or, 62%) indicated they were not or had never been members of the Museum. This was surprising and disappointing, as the membership was specifically targeted for responses via email.

In response to **Question 2**, 18 individuals (38%) indicated they visit the Museum 1-5 times per year. This was encouraging as it indicated that a good portion of the respondents had visited the Museum recently, and would likely give strong responses to the questions.

Example responses include:

- “history and research”
- “local history interpretation, display of some artifacts”
- “tours, displays in the Museum and around town”
- “research archives, school tours”

For **Question 5** (“What do you like best”) respondents commented 8 times about the staff. All comments were positive and stressed the friendly nature of the staff. Other responses commented on the rotation of exhibits and the variety of artifacts. Respondents commented almost equally on a preference for the “old” exhibit layout vs. the “new” open layout that was put into place when the Museum space was renovated in 2011. Several commented on the desire to see more artifacts on regular display.

Example responses include:

- “I loved the artifacts and history. I loved being able to help with some displays”
- “I love the Central Park building; it is the ideal site for a local museum, given its own historical significance. The building also has great “character” on its own”
- “the communication i.e. facebook”

Question 6 asked what respondents would like to see us do differently. The question was framed in a positive manner, rather than asking “what could we do better”. This question generated a number of rather lengthy and strongly worded responses. Again there were comments on the “old” vs. “new” exhibit designs, and calls for a balance between the open concept and having a number of items and stories told through the exhibits.

Six responses commented on the need for either a new museum or expanded space in order to continue to meet programming and exhibition needs.

Six responses commented on a need to improve advertising and promotion of exhibits and materials.

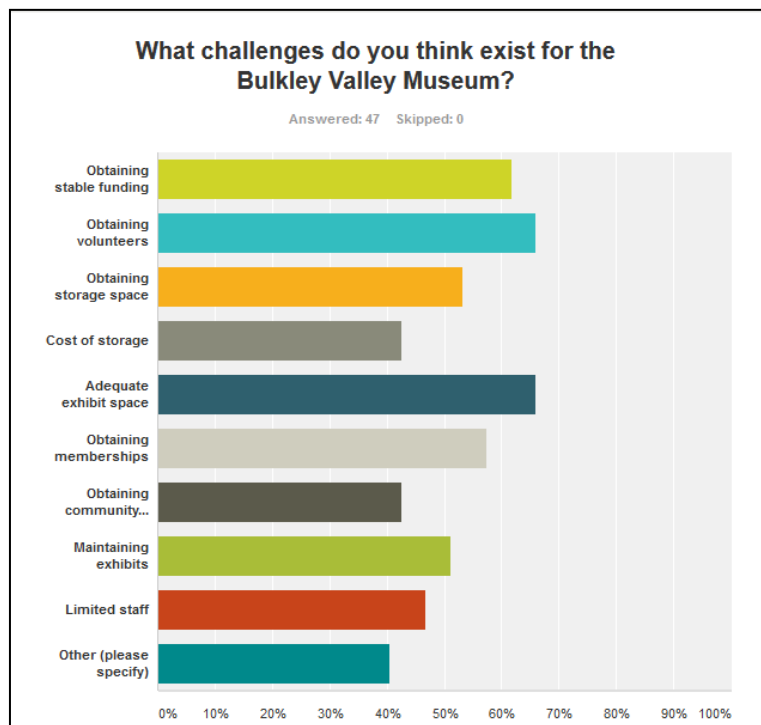
Several responses also asked for more interactive displays and content.

Example responses include:

- “Love the open space concept and minimal displays, but this should only be done if you can keep some of the older displays - providing a balance for all ages and interests of visitors.”
- “Bring back many of the display items and artifacts that have been absent for too long; increase First Nations history aspect of the museum”
- “more *immersive* displays like walking into spaces that recreate time, place, or experience. More hands-on activities”
- “do more marketing and letting the public know the focus”

Question 7 asked respondents what challenges they think exist for the Museum. A list of the following possible selections was provided: obtaining stable funding, obtaining volunteers, obtaining storage space, cost of storage, adequate exhibit space, obtaining memberships, obtaining community support, maintaining exhibits, limited staff, other.

Respondents did not select one specific challenge predominately over others.



Question 8: Majority of respondents were aged 55+. No individuals between the age of 18-24 responded, only 6 were between the ages of 25-44.

Question 9: Overwhelmingly our respondents were from Smithers (76.6%).

Of note: The Central Park Building

Comments in response to questions 3-5 as well as Question 10 (Additional Comments) saw several remarks about the Central Park Building. Some comments focused on the CPB as a desirable location for the museum due to its historic significance. Other comments indicate that the CPB and the Museum are frequently seen as being one and the same. For example, there were comments suggesting services such as the office spaces, Farmer's Market space, and washrooms were those offered by the Museum, or comments on how the CPB could be improved (parking, etc.). It is possible that the Museum's use of the CPB as its logo for many years has resulted in the perception that the Museum operates the CPB.

Conclusions

Based on the survey responses received, there appears to be general positivity towards the Museum.

It appears that Survey Monkey is a useful format for gathering information, but that the means of advertising the survey, or the length of time the survey is available may need to be improved/expanded.

Future survey topics of interest identified through responses include:

- Marketing: how best can we market our activities and events, as well as our services
- Membership: opinions on our membership benefits, how to encourage/boost membership, how to encourage volunteerism
- Educational programming: survey teachers, parents to determine what content or formatting for educational programming would be of interest