



2023 Year in Review



Sharing stories.

Inspiring dreams.

Connecting Wood Buffalo to limitless possibilities.





A Letter From Our Director

2023 was another great year at Wood Buffalo Regional Library (WBRL), with new materials and online resources, fun and rewarding programming experiences, innovative technology solutions, and a continued focus on serving the wonderful region we call home. I'm incredibly proud to share the accomplishments of our staff in these pages and hope that, as you read through, you see some of your favourites highlighted.

We also closed out our work on our 2019 to 2023 Plan of Service. What an unexpected, challenging, and rewarding five years it's been! When we hosted the community planning meeting and drafted goals in 2018, none of us could foresee the changes and events the next five years would bring. Despite the differences between now and then, the objectives of this plan - a connected community, robust technology resources and skills, inclusive and welcoming spaces, and equitable access - are more relevant than ever before. They will continue to be at the center of our work going forward, for the next five years and beyond.

As we embark on our next chapter, we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to our patrons. Whether you attended a weekly story time, borrowed the latest video games, read every James Patterson mystery or Dog Man graphic novel, used a public computer, or asked for a reading recommendation, we are grateful for the ongoing support of every one of you. We are excited for what the future will bring to our library and our community!

Melissa Flett



A Letter From Our Board Chair

As we look back on 2023 and all the amazing accomplishments of the Wood Buffalo Regional Library, I hope you will see what I see - hard work, dedication, and love for our community.

Libraries are more than just a place to hold books. Libraries teach, inspire, and support everyone no matter who they are, where they come from, or what they look like. Libraries are an essential service, and they are vital to building vibrant and resilient communities. I'm so thankful we have such a wonderful Library in our community.

In 2023, the WBRL continued to provide over one thousand programs in both urban and rural areas, tens of thousands of hours were spent by patrons on our computers, and hundreds of thousands of physical items and online resources were circulated throughout our community - all at no cost to our patrons. More importantly though, WBRL staff were in every part of our region to provide library services at schools, community organizations, and senior facilities. In June, WBRL was able to provide services at hotels throughout Fort McMurray for the Fort Chipewyan wildfire evacuees.

"A library is not a luxury but one of the necessities of life." - Henry Ward Beecher

To the WBRL staff and volunteers - thank you for the essential work you do every day. You make our community a better place.

To our funders, sponsors, and community partners - thank you for your ongoing support of the WBRL. Your contributions are crucial to our continued success.

Corinna Pirie

PROMOTE CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND FOSTER AN ENGAGED COMMUNITY

WBRL continued to offer high-quality, free programming for participants to develop connections to one another and their community. In 2023, WBRL offered 640 in-house programs and 410 outreach programs to residents of the municipality. We reached over 36,000 participants in programs for children and families, teens, adults, and seniors. Through story times, crafting and creativity, games, and community learning, participants engaged in shared interests and developed support networks and friendships.

WBRL is also focused on the future and developing spaces for connection, reflection, and creation. In 2023, we commissioned a design plan to better utilize our beautiful space. Stay tuned for exciting changes in 2024!

Adult Book Club

One of WBRL's most popular programs was our monthly adult book club. With 114 participants across nine books, participants gathered to discuss a selected title. In October, in response to community demand, we began offering the same book club in Anzac, in partnership with Anzac Recreation Society.

Board Game Collection

WBRL added an exciting new collection this year: board games! What better way to connect with friends or family than through a little friendly competition. Launching in May, with 22 different items, the board games circulated 180 times in 2023.

LOOKING BACK: 5 YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

From 2019-2023 WBRL:

Supported the community through the COVID-19 pandemic through virtual programs and take-and-make kits in 2020 and 2021, returning to in-person programs in 2022.

Celebrated our annual Words in Motion Poetry Competition recognizing talented poets from across the region.

Launched STEAM kits for children to encourage creativity and problem solving through technology.



REDUCE BARRIERS FOR TEENS AND ADULTS TO ACCESS INFORMATION AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

2023 brought exciting changes to technology at WBRL. In February, we launched a new website and online catalogue to make finding and using WBRL resources easier than ever before. New features included themed lists of resources, intuitive search terms, better search results, and the ability to rate and review borrowed titles. The new site also features single sign on for placing holds, using online resources, and registering for events –sign in with your library card and PIN once and access everything WBRL has to offer!

In 2023, we added 11,128 items to the physical collection, including books, DVDs, Blu-Rays, and more, to meet the informational needs of the region. Physical resources circulated almost 290,000 times, up 19.8% from 2022.

Online resources, including eBooks and eAudiobooks, digital newspapers and magazines, and learning platforms, continued to grow in popularity, with over 80,000 circulations, up 23.7% from 2022.

Digital Literacy

WBRL expanded initiatives in 2023 to support digital literacy in the community. Staff answered over 8,000 technology assistance questions at the Service Desks! Starting in February, we also offered monthly technology help for seniors to receive one-on-one support with their digital devices. Through 11 sessions, staff assisted 76 seniors with their phones, laptops, email, and more.

In June, WBRL added Niche Academy, an online tutorial site focused on tips for the library’s online resources as well as the Internet, data privacy, Google apps, and social media.

LOOKING BACK: 5 YEAR HIGHLIGHTS *From 2019-2023 WBRL:*

Replaced all public computers and WiFi access points throughout the library for a high performance experience.

Expanded circulating technology for patrons to borrow and use from home

Added popular adult and teen learning kits for Astronomy & Photography.

Offered programs on a wide variety of topics, including entrepreneurial skills, taxes and financial literacy, and English language learning.

“I met another senior yesterday who was raving about Senior Tech Bar. This particular senior had purchased a smart phone without realizing it and was intimidated to use it. She couldn’t say enough positive things about the program. She still isn’t use to the technology but is open to try the program again as staff are so welcoming and friendly.”

-Kim MacDougall, St. Aidan’s



NURTURE AN INCLUSIVE AND INFORMED COMMUNITY

In 2023, WBRL concentrated on inclusive services to meet a wide variety of needs. We continued to build a collection that focuses on diverse voices. Through reading suggestions provided by staff, displays and title lists, and story time and book club selections we connected patrons to materials reflecting the diversity of the Wood Buffalo Region and expanded awareness of various perspectives and experiences.

WBRL offered programs and resources aimed at supporting the community in learning about Indigenous history, culture, and way of life through collaboration with local Elders and experts. Highlights from 2023 include our ongoing story times with Elder Lorraine Albert, programs with Elder Ron Janvier in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan celebrating his new book *Sakísak and the Brown Weasel*, and an event with activist Stephanie Harpe honouring the National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. We continue to listen and learn and thank our community partners for their valuable feedback and insight.

WBRL proudly accepted the 2023 Pride YMM Leadership Award for Non-Profit Ally at the Pride Festival in June. Through our programs and services, our words and actions, we strive to lift up the LGBTQ2S+ community and contribute to a sense of safety and belonging.

English Language Learning

WBRL's weekly English Language Learners Conversation Group, offered in partnership with the YMCA of Northern Alberta and Keyano College, gained in popularity and numbers throughout 2023. In total, we welcomed over 800 drop-in participants across 40 programs. We received feedback from a participant that passed their CELPIP test as a result of improving English skills through the program!

LOOKING BACK: 5 YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

From 2019-2023 WBRL:

Partnered with the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo on It's Time to Read, a book club focused on Indigenous voices

Offered programs for community members with disabilities, including Afternoon Activities and sensory story times

Expanded our world language collection with junior Telugu and junior/adult Ukranian

Created an accessible collection of DAISY audiobook discs for patrons with print disabilities



EXPAND BEYOND THE PHYSICAL SPACE TO CONNECT WITH THE ENTIRE WOOD BUFFALO REGION

WBRL aims to bring library services to the entire region through rural and outreach initiatives.

In 2023, WBRL staff ran over 280 program sessions in rural communities (Anzac, Conklin, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Fort McMurray 468 First Nation, and Janvier), reaching out through schools, daycares, and community organizations. In June, WBRL was proud to provide programs and library services to Fort Chipewyan evacuees at hotels throughout Fort McMurray.

Elsewhere in Fort McMurray, outreach programming delivered service to vulnerable populations through collaborations with the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre, Willow Square, Rotary House, Stepping Stones Youth Services, and Centre of Hope. WBRL also delivered items to patrons who are homebound and unable to visit the library facility.

WBRL Out and About

WBRL attends a wide variety of community events throughout the year to offer programs and materials and bring awareness to the amazing services available through the library. Highlights from 2023 included Family Safety Day, Seniors Tailgate, Fort McKay and Janvier Treaty Days, Keyano Student Orientation, and the Athabasca Tribal Council Cultural Festival.

Thank you to our rural space partners:

- **Regional Recreation Corporation** - Conklin Multiplex & Anzac Recreation Centre
- **Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo** - Janvier Municipal Office & Fort Chipewyan Municipal Office

LOOKING BACK: 5 YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

From 2019-2023 WBRL:

Implemented item delivery in rural communities making the whole collection accessible to rural cardholders

Added homebound delivery service to rural communities

Expanded outreach programs to long term care at Willow Square and the mental health unit as Northern Lights Regional Health Centre

Increased access to the MacDonald Island Park Go Pass from four passes to six in collaboration with the Regional Recreation Corporation of Wood Buffalo and the Suncor Energy Foundation



179,836

in-person visits

81,377

website visits

669

in-house programming sessions

20,870

participants

313

active readers in WBRL reading challenges

12,254

books read in WBRL reading challenges



427

outreach programming sessions



15,339

community members reached

930

items brought in from other libraries



4,900

items loaned to other libraries

369,944

total circulations

289,245

physical materials

80,699

digital materials



9,119

unique borrowers were active over the year

4,174

new library card holders

19,129

information inquiries

1,843

library space bookings

14,892

computer sessions

Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

	2023	2022
REVENUE		
Municipal	4,270,150	4,232,480
Provincial	741,306	706,610
Library Generated	190,678	81,882
Donations and Fundraising	120,305	182,744
TOTAL	5,322,439	5,203,716
EXPENSES		
Wages and benefits	3,519,713	3,471,497
Facilities and operations*	1,112,800	1,084,808
Amortization	301,479	358,349
Library services*	288,273	296,032
Special projects and other	120,495	143,208
TOTAL	5,342,759	5,353,894
Annual deficit	-20,321	-150,178
Library materials**	202,624	182,820

*Includes expenses funded by internally restricted reserves.

**Funded as a capital asset.





We thank our funders, the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo and the Government of Alberta, for their support.
We are also grateful to our sponsors, donors, and grantors.

2023 SPACE MAKING AT WBRL:

Bouchier (Indigenous Cultural Corner)

Canadian Natural
(Teen Area)

Syncrude Canada Ltd.
(Syncrude Corner & Program Room)

2023 PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

Enbridge Pipelines (Athabasca) Inc.
(Community Outreach)

Pembina Pipeline (Afternoon Activities)

Suncor Energy Inc. (Indigenous & Rural)

Syncrude Canada Ltd. (Children's)

Telus (Internet to Go Circulating Smart Hubs)

2023 EVENTS:

**Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival
World Tour**

Northland Forest Products Ltd.
(Presenting Sponsor)

Country 93.3 & 97.9 Rock
(Supporting Sponsor)

Team Trivia

Country 93.3 & 97.9 Rock
(Supporting Sponsor)