

The role of Edmonton Public Library as a partner in serving vulnerable populations



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Edmonton Public Library

Spread the words.

Edmonton Public Library

Urban public library with 21 locations.

In 2018—

- **275,272 Edmontonians used their card**
- **5.5 million in-person visits (and 9.9 million virtual visits)**
- **11.3 million items borrowed**

So how do vulnerable Edmontonians use the library?

Space

- **A safe and (hopefully) welcoming space.**
- **(Comfortable) seating, tables, shelter from the elements**
- **Security: a blessing and a curse**
- **9 AM – 9 PM and early opening**
- **Bike locks**
- **Coming soon: lockers!**

Digital Services

- **Free, no-barrier Wi-Fi at all 21 locations**
- **Outlets and charging stations**
- **Public computers (827,530 hours)**
- **Support and training! (e.g., Google IT Certification)**
- **Lending (“We share”)—**
 - Chromebooks
 - Wi-Fi hotspots
 - Devices (e.g., radon screening kits, pedometers)

Makerspaces

- **Multiple locations, largest downtown**
- **Creative outlets—**
 - Digital gaming (solo and group)
 - Music, film, photography, art – performance, recording, production
 - Technologies like vinyl cutter, laser cutter, 3D printers, robots, scanning/conversion, sewing machines, book machine
- **And, support and training (of course!)**

Classes and events

Partnerships:

- **Traditional arts and crafts (Canadian Native Friendship Centre)**
- **Assertive housing outreach (Bissell Centre)**
- **Family law classes (Edmonton Community Legal Centre)**
- **English conversation (CSS)**
- **Kinship and foster care (BearPaw Legal Education)**
- **Get your SIN (Service Canada)**
- **Flu shots (Rexall)**
- **GSA Youth Drop-in (Pride Centre)**
- **Bereavement Support Series (Edmonton Healing Centre for Grief and Loss)**
- **Financial literacy (Financial Pathways Collaborative)**
- **Adult and child literacy and rec programs**

Outreach

- **Homeless Connect**
- **Services to prisons team (Remand, Edmonton Institution for Women, Grierson Centre)**
- **Classes and events on site at other agencies—
Ambrose Place, Treaty Six Recognition,
George Spady, Boyle McCauley Health Centre**
- **Lending programs—Buffalo Sage, Stan Daniels**
- **Epl2you— accessible to all homebound
individuals (group or individual living)**

Library Services

- **Reference and information services**
- **Printing, copying, scanning**
- **Books, audiobooks, DVDs and Blu-rays, CDs, magazines, newspapers, videogames**
- **Access and temporary cards**
- **Settlement workers (EISA)**
- **Staff training and development (Aly)**

Social workers (Outreach program)

Strategic Plan – Socially Responsible

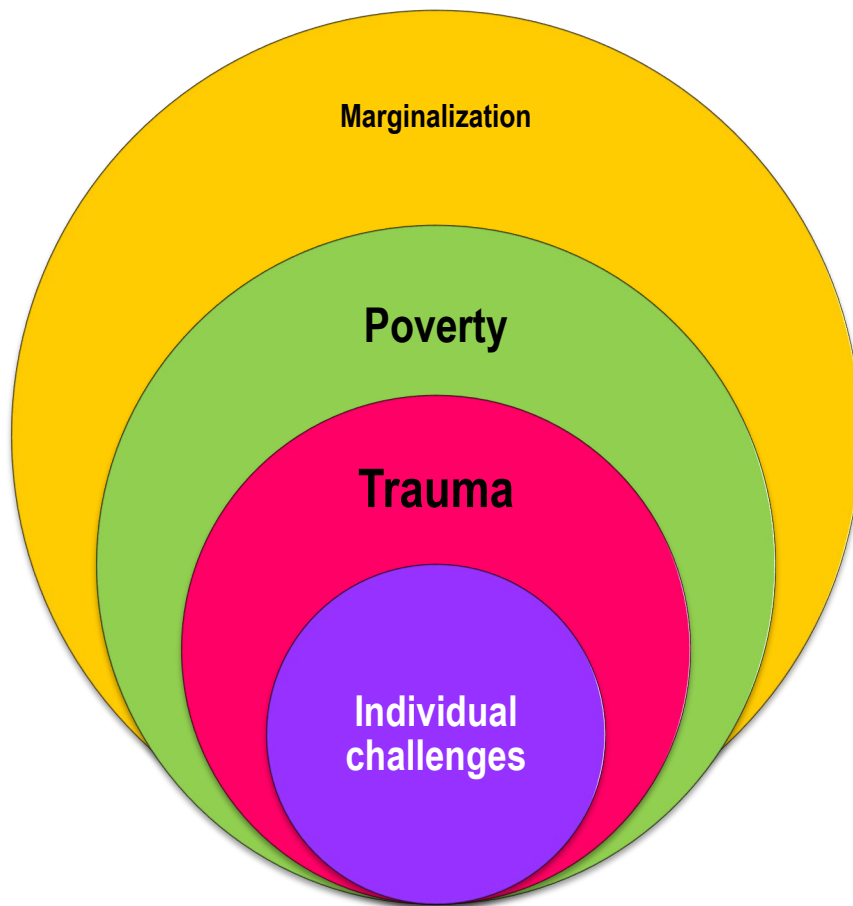
The Library will be a socially responsible institution, a participant and an active initiator in community dialogue and development.

Enriching People's Lives
EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS
2006-2010

History

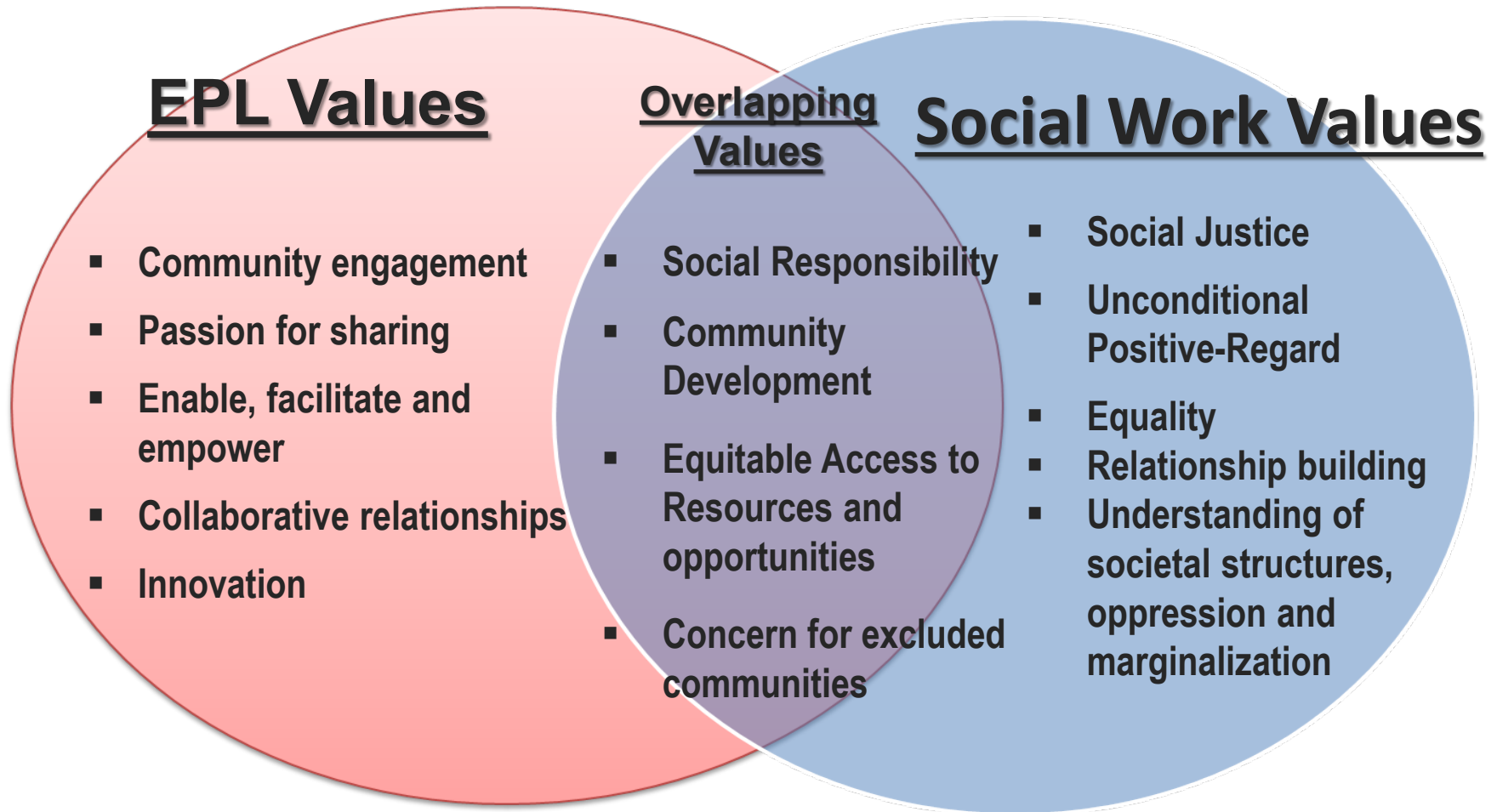
- **Safe Communities Innovation Fund (Govt. of Alberta grant)**
- **2011, three year pilot, \$630,000**
- **Social Return on Investment: \$3.56 million in savings and/or reallocation of funds to society over a 20-month period**

Social Work Perspective



- **Marginalization:** *Limits opportunities and access to resources*
- **Poverty:** *Affects self-worth and executive functioning*
- **Trauma:** *Affects how the brain receives information and assesses environment*
- **Individual Challenges:** *Mental illness, addiction, lack of support*

Shared Values





Outreach Social Work

EPL Transforms Lives

Services provided:

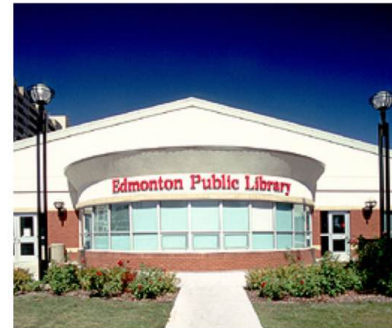
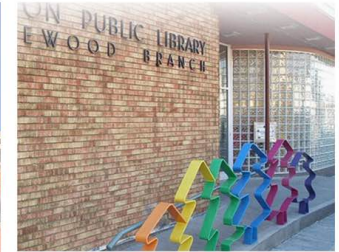
- Housing referrals
- Employment counselling
- Income support
- Legal support
- Medical referrals
- Addiction referrals
- ID support
- Suicide intervention

6,000
SOCIAL
SUPPORT
encounters
— BY —
outreach
workers

Outreach Social Work

Pilot at 5 Additional Branches

- Selected based on greatest need
- Rotating schedule
- Focus now on 3 branches where greatest need



A Harm Reduction Infrastructure

“Change does not occur outside of relationships.”

- Peter Smyth, Specialist for High Risk Youth Services, Edmonton and Area Child and Family



Outreach Social Work

Helping the Most Vulnerable Edmontonians

“Basically my whole life I have been a non-member of society. This outreach program is part of my sobriety right now. For the first time I have ID, I have a family doctor. I love this building. Without this building I don’t think I’d be halfway to where I am right now.”

Douglas Myers, Outreach Services
Customer



Outreach Social Work

Stories from the Branches



Experiment!

Public libraries are great places to experiment and test ideas—

- **Bus pass distribution (City of Edmonton)**
- **Wi-Fi hotspot, bike lock lending**
- **Vending machine (Boyle Street Community Services and Alif Partners)**
- **Housing outreach (Bissell Centre)**
- **Radon testing (partners?)**
- **Outreach program (Govt. of Alberta)**

Back to Aly and TPL...

