2025

2025 IMPACT REPORT

REPORTING ON THE YEAR 2 DELIVERY OF THE VIRL STRATEGIC PLAN

WHO WE ARE

Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) connects and empowers island and coastal communities by providing equitable, barrier-free access to essential library services. We serve 38 jurisdictions spanning more than 42,000 km². VIRL is a vital hub for **connection**, **discovery** and **community conversations** throughout one of Canada's most diverse regions.



2025: OUR STORY

In 2025, we focused on addressing the evolving needs of our communities by aligning our efforts with strategic objectives that enhance literacy, equity, and access to knowledge across our service area. With a special focus on connection, discovery and dialogue, we expanded and enhanced access to our collections; we hosted powerful conversations with Indigenous voices; and we created unique learning experiences and programs for all ages with support from valued community partners. **VIRL builds capacity for people to thrive in every community we serve.**

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

- **1/3** of people in our service area were active library card holders.
- **3,495** meeting room bookings across our service area in 2025, attracting over 24,381 participants.
- **7.3%** increase in visits to our website (virl.bc.ca), driving 2.3 million digital checkouts in 2025.
- **2,671** people attended 536 digital literacy training programs in 2025.

BY THE NUMBERS

25,800+ NEW CARD HOLDERS

VIRL is one of the largest public library systems in BC and one third of residents in the VIRL service area were active library card holders. In 2025, our number of card holders increased by 3%, for a total of 154,821 system-wide. More than **6,650 people** used their **new library card** for the **first time!**

5.1 MILLION ITEMS BORROWED

Our communities love to read, watch and listen. And with more than one million items at their fingertips, they can pursue their curiosity without limits and without financial barriers to information. In 2025 alone, **2.8 million physical items** were borrowed, while online, **2.3 million digital items** were checked out.

4.2M VISITS IN 2025

VIRL welcomed more than 1.8 million visitors through our doors in 39 branches. But our 40th branch (virl.bc.ca) was even busier, with **2.4 million visits!**

71,511 EVENT ATTENDEES

Literacy-inspired programs and events are what we do. And in 2025, they were very popular. Across 3,428 programs delivered, we had more than **71,500 attendees**; on average, **21 people per program.**

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS

VIRL's Strategic Plan prioritizes actions in alignment with five strategic goals. Below are key achievements in 2025 that respond to each of these areas:

01 STRATEGIC GOAL ONE

Recommit to improving literacy levels across our region.

- VIRL hosted a system-wide Reading Link Challenge. More than **1,200 grade 4 and 5 students from 44 schools** participated in a province-wide "sport of reading," fostering teamwork and literacy skills from the Comox Valley, Cowichan Valley, Masset, Nanaimo/Gabriola, Port Alberni, Sidney, Sooke, and, for the first time, Bowser and Qualicum Beach.
- VIRL presented the annual BC Summer Reading Club tour with Drag Queen Storytime featuring Miss Frida. More than **200 adults, children and teens attended** a story time. BC SRC celebrates diversity and promotes literacy through fun, vibrant and inclusive programming.

02 STRATEGIC GOAL TWO

Review, innovate and design service models in service to equity.

- Launched an **upgraded online library catalogue** to provide a responsive, accessible experience that makes it easier for readers across the region to discover and engage with library collections.
- Added 15 radon detection kits to the library catalogue through a partnership with the BC Lung Foundation. Health Canada, Simon Fraser University, and Airthings, enabling library users to **measure radon levels** in their homes and take action to reduce exposure. The kits provide communities with practical tools to support healthier living and raise awareness about this important public health issue.

03 STRATEGIC GOAL THREE

Extend the impact and reach of our services through partnerships and reciprocity.

- Opened the new Masset Library and Haida Language Immersion Lab in partnership with Old Massett Village Council and Xaad Kil Nèé-ihlaada Language Office. Within four months of operation, branch welcomed more than **7,300 visitors**, **156 new cardholders** (a 20% increase), and reported strong participation in programs, partnerships, and events.
- Hosted the 11th annual Fresh Start charity event at the Nanaimo Harbourfront branch, providing nearly **160 mid-island students** with haircuts, backpacks filled with school supplies, books, and wardrobe items to start the school year prepared.

04 STRATEGIC GOAL FOUR

Foster safe, inclusive, and welcoming spaces, and Collective Services.

- Hosted Season 5 of the Learning with Synyutsus free virtual speaker series, presented in partnership with Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools and UBC Press; **amplifying Indigenous voices and perspectives** on Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Call to Action #57. The series connected audiences to Indigenous knowledge, cultural revitalization, and decolonial practices through conversations with authors and thought leaders.
- Hosted the travelling **Love in a Dangerous Time: Canada's LGBT Purge** pop-up exhibition at Campbell River, Cowichan, and Nanaimo Harbourfront branches in partnership with the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, providing communities with opportunities to learn about and reflect on the historic discrimination faced by 2SLGBTQI+ individuals in Canada.

05 STRATEGIC GOAL FIVE

Grow organizational culture and effectiveness.

- Hosted the **2025 VIRL Staff Summit**, bringing together staff from across the central region for a day of learning, connection, and reconciliation, featuring the KAROS Blanket Exercise, cultural teachings from Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, and reflective sessions on justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion to strengthen organizational commitment to inclusive and culturally responsive library services.
- Launched **Accessibility Foundations: From Legislation to Action**, a region-wide virtual training course developed in partnership with the Strathcona Regional District Accessibility and Inclusion Advisory Committee. This course builds understanding of disability and the Accessible BC Act, and promotes inclusive practices throughout the community. Since becoming available in July 2025, over 50 people have completed the training.



STRATEGIC GOALS IN ACTION

SPEAKER SERIES TRC57

Coming in 2026: the TRC57 Speaker Series is back for a new season inviting community members across British Columbia to a free, virtual public education series grounded in Indigenous law, land-based teachings, and lived relationships.

Launching on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, the TRC57 Speaker Series brings together Indigenous and settler scholars, writers, and legal thinkers whose work centres the Land as teacher. In 2026, Vancouver Island Regional Library assumes stewardship of the series from Nanaimo Ladysmith Public School (NLPS) in collaboration with UBC Press and welcomes University of Toronto Press as a guest partner for Season 6. NLPS continues as a valued legacy partner.

To register for the series, visit http://trc57speakerseries.ca.



THE BIG STORY OF 2025

BROADCASTING THE STORIES OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Vancouver Island Regional Library partnered with CBC to foster meaningful dialogue and shared cultural experiences across Vancouver Island communities.

In **Port Alberni**, a series of events uplifted Indigenous voices and strengthened local connections through a live broadcast of On The Island, performances and conversation with Tsimka and Michael Red, and an Indigenous Youth Workshop where Grade 6 and 7 students explored language and music hands-on. The **Cowichan** branch later hosted All Points West, sharing stories that matter to the Cowichan Valley alongside live music from Juno Award-winning duo Blue Moon Marquee.

In **Nanaimo**, more than 170 people attended the live CBC IDEAS broadcast "Do I Count? A Canada That Leaves No One Behind," a panel on housing, democracy, and civic solutions presented with the Samara Centre for Democracy, hosted by CBC's Nalah Ayed and filmed at the Harbourfront branch.



THANK YOU

Lighting the Way to Literacy

VIRL's second annual Giving Tuesday campaign exceeded expectations once again raising **over $5,200**! The contributions from Giving Tuesday directly support the enhancement of our collective services and allow VIRL to continue making a meaningful impact in our communities. VIRL extends a heartfelt thanks to individuals and organizations for their generous support and invite others to donate at virl.bc.ca/donate. Your generosity makes an impact in your community.

virl.bc.ca/donate



We Acknowledge

With great respect, Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) acknowledges that the Coast Salish, Haida, Heiltsuk, Kwakwaka'wakw, Nuu Chah Nulth, and Nuxalk people have been the stewards of the lands within our service area since time immemorial. We are privileged and grateful to work within these territories, and in relationship with Inuit, Métis, and all other First Nations in the region. We are honoured by the teachings of knowledge keepers, who reinforce for us that Land is the first teacher and that we must proceed on our journey with Quum quum uy'skskuluwun (good heart, good mind). As we learn to walk in two worlds, our commitments to Reconciliation will only deepen. These multi-generational commitments will align with and transcend this Strategic Plan. In 2026, VIRL is continuing its work on these commitments with an Indigenous-led consultancy.

For more, visit virl.bc.ca