

Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force Minutes, 21 Feb 2025

Joined via Zoom Meeting
10am-11:00 am

- **Land Acknowledgement** – Giiwe Shko Naaniibwida (Standing Strong Together)



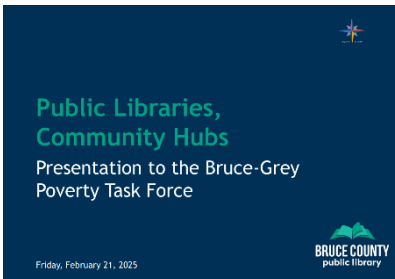
The Poverty Task Force acknowledges that we are situated on the traditional and ancestral territory of the Anishnaabek Nation. We give thanks to them, and to the Saugeen First Nation and the Chippewas of Neyaashinigmiing Unceded First Nation, collectively known as Saugeen Ojibway Nation.

The **Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 69** specifically asks libraries, museums and archives to reexamine their commitment to truth and reconciliation and commit more resources to sharing the true history of Indigenous peoples with our communities. Listening to, learning from and building relationships with local Indigenous communities is critical to share the truth. Libraries committed to the principles of decolonialization can play a role in the restoration and recreation of history.

For example, the West Grey Public Library at its Durham Branch hosts an elder-in-residence program. Oji-Cree Métis Elder and Drum Carrier Diane Owen is there on the first Wednesday of each month for conversation and questions. No registration, no cost, no pressure - a chance for conversation and learning.

Community Hubs in Grey Bruce Series

- **Bruce County Public Library** – Brooke McLean



The evolution of Libraries as community hubs: Bruce County Public Libraries provide reading books/spaces but have transformed into welcoming and inclusive spaces for everyone. They have 17 branches and 1 mobile library to service underserved communities. They actively minimize barriers and provide programs that are particularly relevant in times of economic hardship.

All 2,575 social programs offered are free and all ages. Library cards are free, and temporary cards are available to people who have no ID. They are a “library of things” and offer more than books – they lend instruments, sensory kits, museum and park passes, snowshoes, etc. They are fine free. They also offer free period products, seed libraries, new resident packages and some libraries have hydroponics.

They are warming/cooling stations and public washrooms during regular operating hours, offer public computers and free internet; and meeting spaces are free for community organizations. <https://library.brucecounty.on.ca/>

Programs and Partnerships: Programs such as early literacy story time, after school book clubs and programs on PD days/school holidays support literacy skills and offer programs for working parents. CVITP completed 480 tax returns at a value of over \$1.5 million in 2024. They have expanded the program to 5 branches in 2025. They will also be working partnership with Bruce County Human Services to support their clients to file their taxes. Digital literacy program supported 550 people; partnership with VPI, ALC and college support job readiness, partnership with Language and Settlement Services to offer English Conversation Circles and some branches host the Good Food Box pickup.

Book Mobile: has a small collection of books and non-traditional items; lot of visits to long-term care homes, social housing sites and areas where people are challenged to access the library or underserved. Has high speed internet and a printer.

Sustainability strategy and challenges: larger, urban centres are able to offer more social services, but Bruce County Public Library does not have the budget for social workers. Financial resources for social navigation. Are there ways that community organizations could support current staff? Any consideration or ways that community organizations can support the libraries. Staff have received training: Ryan Empathy Studio's homelessness training <https://www.homelesstraining.com/>, cultural awareness training and mental health training.

Grey County Libraries Updates – Roundtable Updates (no formal presentations)

- **Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library:** no fine fee and it is very important to have that in place. Experience with parents who were concerned with fees from late/lost books by children prevented them from taking out a membership. It costs more to collect fines by staff than the revenue brought in. Staff also receive training to respond to difficult people/scenarios, but difficult patrons are a very few number of people. There is a huge number of resources online and in the “library of things”. <https://www.osngupl.ca/>
- **Adult Learning Centres:** are also part of the library and provide a wide range of services and programs. <https://alcentres.ca/>
- **Hanover Public Library:** does still have late fees but no late fees for children’s material. Still working on phasing out fines. It is a single branch system. It supports the payment/pickup of Good Food Box. And how has socks/coats for people who are unhoused. Space limits their capacity to expand programming. Library cards are restricted to Hanover residents and a fee exists for non-residents. <https://hanoverlibrary.ca/> Now offers free tutoring program – Help Now – <https://home.brainfuse.com/k12/helpnow-on-demand-tutoring/>
- **Hanover CVITP:** Potential partnership with CVITP program was discussed in 2024 but there was a lack of volunteers. In 2025, we have some volunteers to build the program in Hanover. Partners will follow up after this meeting.
- **Public Libraries Operating Grant:** is based on housing population and has been frozen since 1992. The Owen Sound and North Grey Union Public Library has the same number of staff since 1972, 50 years ago, but the needs and demands for a much higher level of service has significantly increased. The Owen Sound library is underfunded by \$750,000/year compared to libraries of the same size. The Hanover Public Library saw a significant budget cut in 2024 resulting in a reduction of its winter hours. This has an impact on it

being a warming station. \$20,000 has to be raised through public donations to operate programs resulting in some fee-based programs. Public donations support the Help Now tutoring program.

Other Responses:

- **Cambridge Public Library** offer private study space for students. This is important for students who may not have safe spaces to study at home. There downtown libraries also offer supports for people who are experiencing housing instability and have a Immigration and Settlement Services welcome desk in their downtown library. <https://ideaexchange.org/services/room-bookings-rentals>. Bruce County Public Libraries range in size and some can offer meeting spaces for studying, if rooms are not in use but others are much smaller and physically can't offer private study spaces. Owen Sound library has a quiet space upstairs that many students and tutors use to study.
- **Georgian College:** would welcome any partnerships to support students.
- **United Way of Bruce Grey:** does not have offices throughout Grey Bruce and uses library spaces to meet with clients for its financial literacy program.

Election Education and Engagement – Jill Umbach

Open Letter and Valentine's Day Card to Provincial Candidates: were sent out to all candidates in 3 ridings and some response was received. Relatively good coverage in the media both print and radio. Some All-Candidate Debate info was shared.

<https://povertytaskforce.com/open-letter-to-provincial-candidates/> and <https://povertytaskforce.com/2025/02/13/press-release-nothing-says-love-like-ending-poverty/>

New Resource:

Guiding Your Journey: A Toolkit for Lump Sum Payments – Prosper Canada Learning Hub: financial empowerment tools and resources intended to support both Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations working to help Indigenous Peoples navigate the receipt of a lump sum payment. <https://learninghub.prospercanada.org/knowledge/guiding-your-journey-a-toolkit-for-lump-sum-payments/>

Next meeting: 21 March 2024, 10-11am.