

**Progress Report from the Idaho Commission for Libraries
to the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
on the *Idaho Libraries Welcome All Project*
(Quarter 1: October - December 2021)**

Greeting Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship members and Happy New Year!

A lot has been happening on the projects being supported by your contributions. Of the \$15,000 in donations you awarded ICfL, \$7,995 have been spent to date. Please see below for some progress reports on our BUUF-funded projects.

FY22 Welcoming Libraries Grants (3rd Year of Grants) - (BUUF funds spent = \$3,000):

ICfL successfully awarded 8 new Welcoming Libraries Grants in December. At \$1,000 each, we disbursed \$8,000 to eight different Idaho libraries (6 public libraries and 2 school libraries) to work on various equity, diversity, and inclusion related library services, \$5,000 came from federal funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and \$3,000 came from BUUF funding. Attached, please find a summary of what each library plans to work on/implement with these grant funds. The only downside was we had an additional \$2,000 in funding for two more grantees, however we did not receive enough applicants this round. See page 9 of the latest edition of our monthly Youth Services newsletter, *The Scoop*, for a note about new grantees and a thank you to your organization for its support of this grant.

Several of our grantees this year are second- or third year returning grantees and are really diving in deep with their projects as they build onto their activities each year. Lewiston City Library has done a significant amount of work establishing and promoting use of a library sensory room over the course of two grant years and recently sent us this project update:

“Our efforts to improve access were highlighted in this week's edition of *The Inland 360*, published by the Lewiston Tribune. Since the grants and programs we work with you on are mentioned, I thought I would share.”- Lynn Johnson, Lewiston City Library Director.

You can find the article here: <https://www.inland360.com/lewiston-moscow/library-upgrade-has-all-the-feels/Content?oid=11985936>

***Evaluating, Auditing, Diversifying Your Collection Library Journal Course –
Feedback/Lessons Learned (BUUF funds spent = \$3,995)***

ICfL registered and paid for twenty-one (21) Idaho library staff (11 public and 10 school library staff) to take this 3-week online course. Twenty of the 21 library staff participants completed the course and provided ICfL with an evaluation summary in December 2021. Here are a few lessons learned/next steps presented in the course evaluations by the participants:

In this course, I was most surprised by...

- “I thought I knew our small community better. I also thought I was more knowledgeable than I actually was on diversity and making sure we covered it in our collections.”
- “As advised in the course materials, I looked at our latest census data for Nez Perce County and definitely surprised not only that the median age was much younger than I had previously assumed, but also that a large number of people under 65 are living with a disability of some kind. It made me want to assess our collections not only for ethnic diversity, but also for how well we represent a population with diverse abilities.”
- "Just how much there is to learn in this area and how I can keep growing. I really appreciated each speaker, guest, and the time for me to reflect on our own collection.”
- “How underrepresented so many areas are. It amazed me to see my collection broken down and how many topics weren't included or had only a handful of books to represent that content. It showed the discrepancies...with providing a truly diverse collection. It also demonstrated the lack of support diverse books and authors have been receiving.”
- “I actually had no idea that there were ways to scientifically create spreadsheets to analyze library collections for something like diversity. I always thought diversity was a sort of subjective, squishy term, not something that could be quantified and clearly demonstrated. None of this was addressed in my library courses 15 years ago.”
- “I was surprised by how little I understood or even thought about native Americans' misrepresentation - how many stereotypes of "native" culture there are. It was humbling and shameful. I was a teacher who used those general regional terms to put all the tribes in one pot - southwest region, northwest region, etc. I didn't see how reductive that is. I appreciated all the wonderful resources shared from that presentation.”

What I learned...

- “While I've done some reading about white privilege and unconscious bias, I have not read much about cultural appropriation and intersectionality - so those concepts were fairly new to me. It makes a great deal of sense to be aware of and careful not to "appropriate" another's culture. I learned a lot about diversifying within diverse groups, which is what intersectionality means essentially. It was so helpful to have presenters show us what stereotypes exist in literature that many of us are not aware of, and to make a point of selecting materials that highlight contemporary voices - ones that are joyful, successful, and living life like everyone else. “
- “I learned that libraries can NOT be neutral! You can't be actively anti-racist AND neutral. I learned that this work is ongoing, that we will make mistakes, but we need to keep moving forward. And if we can't see a problem, we can't fix a problem. And that we all have biases, not matter how we were raised or what our background is. “
- “That it's ok to start in one small area or part of your collection and work out. I ran an audit solely of major topics within our collection to see what we owned. I was shocked

we only owned 1 book on homelessness. There proved to be so many areas that need attention in our library and I am committed to growing a diverse and great collection for our students.”

- “I learned the importance of remembering to include a diverse range of authors and subjects in our displays and RA [Readers Advisory] recommendations. While our staff has been making a conscientious push to branch out with #ownvoices recs and marginalized communities' stories, it was nice to hear from other librarians about where they get indie or less mainstream titles, and how they get them in the hands of readers, both excited and reluctant.”
- “I gained a lot of perspective about how very closed the institution of libraries can be, or can look to the BIPOC communities, and how we tend towards status quo and white supremacist ideals. It is easy, as someone who benefits from and has grown up in white privilege, recognizing bias is a going to be a muscle I need to flex and exercise long term.”
- “I learned that there needs to be a written policy/written procedure for inclusive and diverse collection development. It can't just be one person who makes sure to do these kinds of purchases, what if they leave? I also learned that it is best to create a list/spreadsheet of titles of concern (i.e. Little House on the Prairie). Create a list so that you (and your fellow librarians) can know about the problematic issues in these books. And librarians should NOT promote these books (through RA, new book displays, social media, other displays, etc.). It's fine to have these in your collection, just try not to promote them. The rule should be “buy, then let die. I learned that at least 33% of collection purchasing should reflect marginalized communities (marginalized voices), being sure to showcase all identities (neurodiverse, disabled, etc.). I also was reminded that we can't "fix" racism, but we can make our library collections anti-racist and inclusive.”
- “I learned a lot about how to assess collections. In particular, one simple idea I'd never thought about before is that displays are a great way to bring awareness to diverse authors...Seeing authors and characters displayed or promoted through reviews right alongside of mainstream authors can only enrich our community and library. I also had never thought of how being inclusive can literally save a person's life -- or at least improve lives. I learned the basic steps of how to assess the diversity of our collection. The course offered lots of frameworks and examples, as well as inspirational speakers.”
- “The main benefit of this class to me was a chance to pause and reconsider how as library director, I'm making choices every day that could be more inclusive. For example, Chimamanda Adiche's lecture about the Single Story helped me to understand how sometimes problematic stereotypes sneak into our general understanding of the world. She says "show a people as only one thing, over and over again, and that is what they become." White privilege gives power to one group only. Power is also involved in WHO tells the stories -- are they own voices, or voices "interpreted" or "filtered" by someone

higher up in the power hierarchy? That really opened my eyes to the importance of own stories.”

In the following 1-2 months, what next step/s do you plan to take...

- “As lead librarian for our district's collection development, with 21 selectors doing different collections, I am able to inform and influence our work on what we select. I compiled a list of the resources, websites, social media and blogs from each of the presentations and shared it with all of our selectors. Next year, 2022, we will begin selecting diverse materials using those resources, aiming to fulfill appropriate percentages for each group. Therefore, we will be conducting ongoing ordering audits, with the goal of including more diverse and authentic representations in our materials.”
- “Continue to concentrate on diverse displays by authentic authors, focus my purchasing lists around minorities, and continue to create open dialogue with acquisitions and technical services to create the best and most representative collection in Idaho.”
- “Over the next month, I will guide our staff through annual performance evaluations. I plan to discuss 1-on-1 with all staff members where they consider themselves along the *Bennett Continuum for Cultural Competence*: Denial, Defense, Minimalization, Acceptance, Adaptation, Integration. Secondly, over the next year, I would like to audit several sections, but have decided to start with the J Biography section since it is relatively small and feels like a manageable place to familiarize myself with the process. For our community, I would like to audit for disability, religion, class, ethnicity, and race. One thing that excites me about this is that our Children's Librarian is very interested in learning alongside of me, and so with her trained, she can help carry a diversity audit forward into other sections in the children's library. “
- “I want to make an effort to make sure my library's displays are free from problematic stereotypes (even if this means having uncomfortable conversations with other staff who do displays).”
- “I have begun a diversity audit, which I began early last month. I have an Excel spreadsheet where I have created criteria and am utilizing our ILS to run shelf lists for each genre in adult fiction and subject area in adult nonfiction. I have also presented to the library's board of trustees on this project.”

Idaho Indian Education Course/Seminar - exploratory – no BUUF funds spent to date:

In October – November 2021, three ICfL staff members (2 Youth Services staff and our School Library Consultant) took a course offered by the University of Idaho titled [Introduction to Indian Education](#), an undergraduate level course in the College of Education. This course “provides participants with a brief introduction to the five federally recognized tribes of Idaho and serves as a prelude to culturally responsive teaching and practices.” The idea behind taking this course was to see if it would be a good fit for Idaho library staff to participate in and for ICfL to use BUUF donation funds to pay for their registration. Since the course was originally designed for

U of I students studying to become teachers, we wanted to ensure it would be applicable to a library education setting.

Our conclusion was that this course, as is, would not be the best way to educate Idaho library staff on Idaho tribal history or cultural competence. This course lacked live discussions of the reading, live presenters, and a diverse reading material. Understandably so, it also lacked a connection to library programs and services. We have decided to pursue our own version of this introductory course with the help of some of our ICfL co-workers, Johanna Jones, Indian Education Coordinator at the Idaho State Department of Education, members of Idaho's tribes, and libraries who are doing work in this area. We plan to design a 3–4-week course that is a hybrid of live presentations/discussions and independent reading/homework through our Niche Academy site. We hope to have a course/seminar up and running by summer 2022. We hope to provide either a set of new library books by and about Native Americans or a stipend with which to make this purchase to all libraries who complete the course, using BUUF donation funds.

Thank you for your contribution and please let me know if you have any questions about any of the projects and activities we are working on involving your donation.

Thank you for your time,

Kristina Taylor