

# Valuing Northern Libraries

## Community Report

### Powassan and District Union Public Library

## Social Return on Investment

Compiled by

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**Powassan**  
and District Union  
Public Library

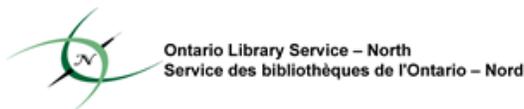


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## Executive Summary

In 2016, Powassan's municipal contribution to the library was \$151,930. Application of the SROI Measurement Tool to 2016 data demonstrated this investment resulted in \$361.09 of economic benefit per resident, and \$694.05 per household. The library is open 3,594 hours per year for the year evaluated, yielding a minimum impact of \$344.45 for each open hour in 2016. Through the application of these calculations it is apparent that the Powassan & District Union Public Library yields at minimum \$2,494,398.75 in total economic benefit and a \$16.42 return for each dollar of its base municipal funding. Expressed as a percentage, this amounts to 1,642%. These calculations demonstrate the monetary value of the library's cultural, social, cognitive, health, and economic applications as well as its contributions to community cohesion and an improved overall quality of life.

Despite clear evidence of economic spinoff of library services, not all of the impact can be quantified in terms of its monetary value. Anecdotes that illustrate the intangible benefits that libraries provide to their communities also need to be included. By demonstrating the intangible effects on their communities as well as their considerable SROI, libraries can demonstrate how they drive community and economic development across the North.

Based on a review of relevant literature, focus groups, consultation with steering committee members and site visits, NORDIK designed a measurement tool to encompass the many diverse and unique roles that public libraries play in the North as community hubs. Seven key areas, or sectors, were identified as components of libraries' benefit to their communities, namely: Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity, Social Inclusion, Cognitive and Literacy, Health and Wellness, Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities, Entertainment and Enjoyment, and Economic Development. In collaboration with the pilot sites, three indicators were chosen within each sector that best reflect how libraries' operations and expenditures contribute to each respective area. The data for each is typically already collected by most libraries or is otherwise accessible through other library data collections methods.

## 1.0 Why We Value Northern Libraries

Public libraries serve their communities as centres of information, art, technology, history, and community life. Libraries compete for scarce public funding along with other community institutions.

Small and rural Northern libraries are increasingly challenged to explain their value in the community amid mounting municipal and band council priorities. In addition, funding organizations request that grant applications identify outcomes that will be achieved through grants. As this becomes more prevalent, small, rural, and remote libraries are under pressure to define and use outcome based analytics. Small northern libraries need the capacity to define, assess, and report on outcomes or return on investment.

For the first time, we are studying the Social Return on Investment (SROI) in Northern Ontario's public libraries. That is to say, how much do our communities benefit through its local support of a public library. In addition to economic benefit, this study also examined library-based benefits in the areas of literacy, cognitive development, citizen engagement, and health and well-being.

There are no studies specific to small and rural Northern Ontario public libraries that provide the tools necessary to demonstrate the return on the investment from a public library. The Valuing Northern Libraries project created a measurement toolkit with corresponding online training.

The relative value of remote libraries and the financial challenges they face must be measured against the economic reality of the North. For example, successive Nutritious Food Basket studies have confirmed the cost of basic goods in Northwestern Ontario is double the cost of the same goods in Toronto. Based on the difference between the Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto and individual northern communities, a premium value was calculated and used in this measurement toolkit to acknowledge the access and benefits to services provided by public libraries in Northern First Nation, francophone, and rural communities and which may otherwise be unavailable.

This community report is a narrative report based upon the results of the SROI Indicator Template and the focus group discussions. The tables are also derived from the SROI. Thus, all Ontario public libraries are able to duplicate this report in their own communities.

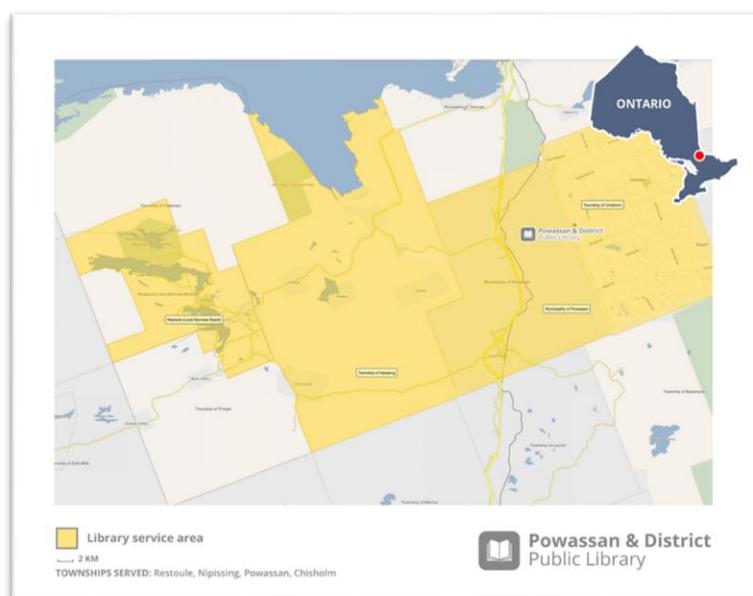
## 1.1 Community Profile – Powassan

Founded in 1880 the community of Powassan was the location of a construction camp for the Northern and Pacific Junction Railway, later known as Canadian National Railway, and is currently located on Highway 11 in Northeastern Ontario (Powassan, 2017). Originally part of the Township of Himsworth, the Township of Powassan officially separated in 1904. In 2001 the Townships of Himsworth, Trout Creek and Powassan amalgamated into the Municipality of Powassan. It is part of the Parry Sound District (Statistics Canada, 2012). Today the town of Powassan has a population of 3,455, up 2.3 percent from 2011 (Statistics Canada, 2016). The dominant language spoken in Powassan is English, with 3,030 residents reporting it as their language spoken most often at home, while a small number (140) indicate French. A very small percentage of the town's population report Aboriginal ancestry, with the nearest First Nations being the Anishinaabe Nipissing First Nation near the City of North Bay, and Dokis First Nation, located along the upper French River. The local Métis population is served by the North Bay Métis Council, a charter member of the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Powassan's economy relies on tourism and the utilization of local non-timber forest products, such as maple syrup. The community has developed an economic diversification strategic plan in response to major changes that have taken place over the last few years in municipal governance and administration, servicing and transportation and other sectors. The municipality would like to focus on building their human and financial capital.

The Powassan District Union Public Library is a collective initiative of the Municipality of Powassan, the Township of Chisholm, and the Township of Nipissing, governed by one board. It also serves Restoule, a Local Service Board, on a contract basis. It allows the three union municipalities to maximize the impact of their respective budgets. Figure 1 indicates the area served.

Figure 1: Service Area of Powassan & District Union Library



Access to the library is free for the residents from all three municipalities and Restoule, serving the 3,455 locals of Powassan, as well as 1,707 community members of Nipissing, the 1,291 population of Chisholm and the 455 permanent residents of Restoule. It hosts a diverse array of activities and programs including crafting workshops, baking, outreach to senior homes and other community events. The library is a central meeting space for many active groups in the region, as well as providing vital services. It has also been developing an expansion plan that will provide much needed space for the many patrons that attend regularly. Students from Laurentian University's School of Architecture have been engaged in the development of the expansion plans.

## 2.0 Valuing the Powassan & District Union Public Library

Focus group research conducted by Powassan & District Union Public Library demonstrates that the library actively contributes to all seven aspects of individual, organizational, and community capacity building: 1) Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity; 2) Social Inclusion; 3) Cognitive and Literacy Development; 4) Health and Well-being; 5) Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities; 6) Enjoyment and Entertainment; and 7) Economic Development.

### 2.1 Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity

The Powassan & District Union Public Library supports the cultural integrity and identify of the region, as well as the cultivation of a sense of local identity and place in several ways, from offering free access to books, local history, programs for the diverse community, as well as providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

The Powassan & District Union Public Library houses a wealth of historical information on site as well as access to 'Our Digital World', an online historical website which is an important repository for Indigenous history and local knowledge, serving to raise awareness, promote, and retain cultural identity. Such resources and services help maintain the record of locals' shared heritage as well as being a means by which to acquire and promote local knowledge thereof.

The library offers a variety of interventions to support and promote local culture. The building hosts an onsite art gallery that features one local or regional artist per month, presenting different artistic mediums to the community. The library's catalogue offers a means for locals to learn more about the area's own cultural diversity, as well as that of other regions. The library also supports the local Amish and Mennonite populations. Through a partnership with the Ontario Anglers, the library has created a tackle and rod loan program for patrons, encouraging local cultural activities.

The library also offers many local crafts for sale, such as mitts and scarfs, and fabric art graces the walls creating a welcoming atmosphere while highlighting local artists. The quilted 'donor book' in Figure 3 is unique, depicting the names of donor patrons on the books' spines.

Figure 2: Donor Quilt and Hook Rug Fabric Art



Table 1: Cultural Integrity & Regional Identity Benefit

1. Cultural Integrity & Regional Identity Indicators	Economic Benefit
Economic benefit of special collections and other materials related to culture and history of area (incl. snowshoes, fishing rods, GPS, and Indigenous, French, and Immigrant languages)	\$1,010.00
Economic benefit of the promotion of local cultural and historical events, programs, advertising space and information services about local area	\$3,780.00
Economic benefit of cultural events	\$34,170.00
<i>Total economic benefit of Cultural Integrity &amp; Regional Identity indicators</i>	\$38,960.00

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to cultural integrity and regional identity totals \$38,960 based the indicators in the SROI template.

## 2.2 Social Inclusion

Libraries are key community sites for fostering social inclusion, providing services that can serve to equalize skill levels and foster relationships of mutual support and trust (see Rao 2012; Rankin 2012; Rosenfeldt 2006). The Powassan & District Union Public Library has endeavoured to ensure that its services are accessible, welcoming and inclusive of a diversity of peoples.

The library aspires to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment for everyone. The sense of inclusion is intentionally cultivated through a number of outreach activities, with programming ideas being brought forward by both library staff and by community members. These suggestions have helped create outreach programs in senior homes, night programs, baking and basket making classes, as well as summer and after school programs for youth.

In a similar vein, the public space the library provides affords its patrons a place to cool off in the summer, to warm up in the winter, and a place to go when other places are closed. The library is a destination open to the entire community regardless of one’s ability to pay for goods or services. It offers an engaging, visually attractive space, plays a critical role as an information hub for both the community and visitors alike.

A large number of people in the Powassan area do not have reliable home-access to the internet, therefore, the broadband internet connection offered by the library is crucial for the public to access web-based information or services. The fact that internet and Wi-Fi services do not require a membership card makes them more accessible for patrons residing outside the library’s catchment.

There is no fee for local library membership, and privileges are also extended to the seasonal camping community. There is a \$25 charge for memberships outside of the local catchment area which is enjoyed by people from as far away as two townships away.

Likewise, membership cards are not always required for programming or on-site use of collections, ensuring that rural populations can access the library as a shared public commons. Furthermore, the library also reaches connected patrons through its active social media presence.

Table 2: Economic benefit of Social Inclusion

<b>2. Social Inclusion</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
Economic benefit of accessible collections, (i.e., Braille, large print books, Talking Books on CD, etc.)	\$18,600.00
Economic benefit of inter-library loans	701.73
Economic benefit of internet access	\$103,485.00
<i>Total economic benefit of Social Inclusion indicators</i>	\$122,786.73

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2015 through services and activities related to social inclusion totals \$122,786.73 based on the indicators selected. The library provides a safe place for people to socialize, making PDUPL a more inclusive and equitable place to live, work and play.

### 2.3 Cognitive and Literacy Development

Recent research shows that adults with low literacy levels have more health problems, earn less and live shorter lives than other adults (Canadian Council of Learning 2010). The Powassan & District Union Public Library addresses literacy and cognitive development in a variety of ways, ranging from the provision of materials that cater to multiple different forms of literacy to programming that creates positive associations with reading and literacy itself.

The library’s catalogue and the inter-library loan service are important for families homeschooling their children in the area, one of the several contributions the library makes to local education. Aside from offering a monthly meeting space for families who are homeschooling, the library also delivers 100 new books monthly to the local Amish school, as well as delivering books to Eastholme Home for the Aged and Lady Isabelle Nursing Home.

Special attention has also been focused on programming for children and youth. The Early Years Program for toddlers and their caregivers known as ‘Raising Readers’ was also initially a partnership, but is now run entirely by the library. These programs, along with the after school program geared to grades 7 and 8, are examples of the youth centred support that the library is focused on providing in the community.

The Powassan & District Union Public Library offers materials and adaptive technologies that facilitate literature and media access to a broader cross-section of the local population. They provide online links to audio literature, as well as a bank of 9 publically accessible computers.

Computer and internet access is also complemented by on-demand technology workshops that help foster computer literacy and promote the access of technology among a broader cross-section of the population than would have otherwise have access through private means.

Table 3: Cognitive & Literacy Development Benefit

<b>3. Cognitive &amp; Literacy Development</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
Economic benefit of children and youth circulation (incl. books, audio books, DVDs, databases and other materials directed at this age)	\$101,067.00
Economic benefit of children and youth programming	\$31,530.00
Economic benefit of class instruction at a library or a school	\$17,850.00
<i>Total economic benefit of Cognitive and Literacy Development indicators</i>	\$150,477.00

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to cognitive and literacy development totals \$150,477 based on the indicators selected.

### 2.4 Health and Wellness

Research (Brewster, 2014) reveals a strong connection between the services of public libraries and the health of their patrons, particularly serving those who experience mental and physical health challenges. Many patrons know that they are more than just another face to the staff at the Powassan & District Union Public Library. In Northern and rural communities, libraries also serve as a major source of health information (Wathen & Harris, 2007) and libraries have also made considerable contributions to wellbeing through environmental interventions (e.g., Antonelli, 2008).

Among the primary environmental initiatives offered by the Powassan & District Union Public Library is the large collection of materials pertaining to healthy food and gardening, bee keeping and backyard chickens, as well as environmental health and wellbeing, contributing to greater local small-scale production of agri-food products.

The library also facilitates connections between patrons and the natural environment through such programs as its bee keeping, small-scale farming activities and composting. It has also taken steps to help reduce the municipality’s carbon footprint by offering on-site electronic recycling. This has helped to generate funds for the library as well as improve the library’s electronic resources through repurposing and reuse within the library. The electronic recycling also compliments the book recycling program, which helps to divert valuable materials away from landfills and protects the natural environment.

Table 4: Health & Wellness Benefit

<b>4. Health &amp; Wellness</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
Economic benefit of health-related programming delivered at the library	\$23,950.00
Economic benefit of Health and Wellness related collection (incl. books, e-books, DVD's)	\$14,200.00
Economic benefit of in-library information requests	\$26,000.00
<i>Total economic benefit of Health and Wellness indicators</i>	\$64,150.00

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2016 through its services and activities related to health and wellness total \$64,150 based on the indicators selected.

**2.5 Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities**

Previous research has identified the considerable impact that libraries have demonstrated in strengthening community relationships between individuals, families and other groups, by developing a shared sense of place and community while contributing to crime prevention through social development (Rankin, 2012). Promoting and improving community dialogue and understanding was one of the most consistent outcomes noted in the 2012 study in Yorkshire, England. Early interventions, provision of meeting spaces, and community partnerships all contribute to building community capacity and the ability of library patrons to engage in public life and access government services (Hanna, 2012; Ulvik, 2010; Rankin, 2012).

Developing relationships as discussed in other sections of this report is also important with respect to developing engaged citizenship and building safer communities. Through various programming, workshops, and accidental interaction, patrons have an opportunity to create and develop relationships with a broader cross-section of the population at the library than they might ordinarily meet in their daily lives. The library’s meeting space supports the work of local citizens in strengthening the social economy and the city’s overall resiliency.

Children’s programming has helped to foster not only the cognitive development of children, but also create opportunities for parents to meet one another, engage in much-needed adult social interaction, and foster long-term friendships both among the children and the adults that bring them to the programming. The library hosts a communal puzzle table on its main floor that encourages intergenerational engagement. For socially isolated individuals accessing library service, the staff can also be among the only people a patron might see or talk to over the course of a regular day. This positions the staff as being the first who may notice an injury, behaviour change, or other sign that a patron is in need of help or support.

Volunteer positions provide opportunities for people of all ages to develop professional behaviours and interpersonal skills, providing informal mentorship opportunities, and fostering the exchange of knowledge that supports the intellectual development of both volunteers and patrons.

Numerous leadership development opportunities also exist across the library’s programming and services. The library board consists of nine members and is responsible for contributing to the budgeting and policy manual, conducting employee evaluations, and strategic planning; all valuable skills in the job market. Social and creative programming also helps foster the interpersonal and public speaking skills of patrons. Similarly, the meeting space that the Powassan & District Union Public Library makes available to community groups helps to support the work that many local citizens are engaging in to strengthen the social economy and the town’s overall resiliency.

The library’s meeting space is used for public information sessions and by various community groups including the Photo Club, the children’s literacy program, and Raising Readers.

The library has both assisted and benefitted from community members and community partnerships, from allowing space for the youth to showcase their personal stories to participating in large community events like the food symposium, as well as hosting local art exhibits. The library also provides a local exam proctoring space for students pursuing long-distance learning. This also generates revenues for the library and allows more people to remain in the community while gaining their education. The library’s engagement in partnership building has contributed to mutually beneficial promotion of partners’ works and strengthened the social fabric within the area.

*Table 5: Engaged Citizens & Safer Communities Benefit*

<b>5. Engaged Citizens &amp; Safer Communities</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
Economic benefit of a library membership	\$929,775.00
Economic benefit of volunteer hours (incl. adults, board members, community hours and student coops)	\$10,617.48

Economic benefit of community development workshops (incl. community development workshops; newcomer programs; technology, social media and computer literacy workshops)	\$17,100.00
<i>Total economic benefit of Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities indicators</i>	\$957,492.48

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2016 through its services and activities related to promoting engaged citizenship and safer communities totals \$957,492.48 based on the indicators selected.

## 2.6 Entertainment and Enjoyment

In 2014, the Canadian Library Association reported that libraries provide enjoyment and entertainment to their patrons in two important ways: 1) through their ever-changing collections of books, CDs, DVDs, eBooks, audio books, and a wide range of other materials, and 2) as a place to hang out. For populations living in Northern, rural, and First Nation communities, both of these functions may be of even greater importance than in larger urban centres.

The Powassan & District Union Public Library collections and programming have adapted to changing technology and interests, providing access to a wider breadth of goods. For example, there are now six to seven themed events per month (i.e. Pressure Canning 101, reading with Ronald, town-wide scavenger hunt, chicken night, local history night, etc.), writer’s workshops, photo club, as well as a monthly Seniors Lunch and Learn.

Outside of additional programming, the library is a place that is a destination, where patrons can sit and enjoy coffee, ‘hang-out’ or purchase locally made goods such as mitts and hats. The library, however, also plays an integral role within the enjoyment and entertainment sector. Many members are attracted to the monthly exhibitions of local artists which take place at the on-site Downstairs Art Gallery. Similarly, the library provides space for musicians and author visits, book launches, and readings from both within the community and visiting artists. Such supports foster the local arts community and create new opportunities for recreation and creative expression.

Powassan & District Union Public Library also provides a number of entertaining opportunities to diverse groups, including Henna tattoo sessions, a music program supplied by donated instruments and taught by a local musician, an outreach program offered to a local seniors’ home, as well as the ‘Raising Readers’ program for families. These activities, along with the container composting program, bee keeping, backyard chicken keeping, meditation groups, baking classes, and other recurring crafting workshops provided by the library offer an insight into how the Powassan community has shaped their library to fit their collective focus. The library’s ability to facilitate these

programs provides families and individuals with affordable entertainment, social interaction, and opportunities to learn new practices in a casual setting.

Table 6: Entertainment & Enjoyment Benefit

<b>6. Entertainment &amp; Enjoyment</b>	<b>Economic Value</b>
Economic benefit of Adult Circulation (All materials)	\$572,079.34
Economic benefit of Adult & Seniors programming and services (incl. cooking, knitting, yoga etc.)	\$26,900.00
Economic benefit of library visits	\$172,900.00
<i>Total economic benefit of Enjoyment and Entertainment indicators</i>	\$771,879.34

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2016 through its services and activities related to entertainment and personal enjoyment totals \$771,879.34 based on the indicators selected.

## 2.7 Economic Development

Public libraries boost the economy of their local communities, not only through the provision of direct jobs and spin-off jobs (MPI, 2013) but also by the role libraries play in facilitating entry into the labour market (Rao, 2012). Other advantages include access to Wi-Fi services, providing office space and equipment for home-based businesses and local entrepreneurs, as well as supporting the local economy by purchasing goods and services in the community.

The Powassan & District Union Public Library is no exception, providing direct employment to two permanent full-time staff, and four part-time staff providing an \$301,743.20 average annual contribution to the local economy. Its unique union library status was created to help the three municipalities maximize their budget potential while supporting the work that the library does. The hiring of a programming coordinator was one of the main benefits of the union.

The library offers assistance to those seeking employment, as well as supporting local entrepreneurs. They not only promote local businesses through their online media presence, but also seek to employ local contractors for the library's needs. The role and services provided by the public library also play a role in attracting new resources or employers to the community, and are a strategic advantage to some surrounding communities.

Table 7: Economic Development Benefit

<b>7. Economic Development</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
Economic benefit of funds leveraged from outside the community (incl. library-specific funding, e.g., capacity building, pay equity, provincial operating grants).	\$34,242.00
Economic benefit of self-generated revenues (incl. contracts, donations, employment funding, fees, grants, room rental) Project funding available only through application	\$80,899.00
Economic benefit of Employment, Training and Development	\$303,730.20
<i>Total economic benefit of Economic Development indicators</i>	<i>\$418,871.20</i>

The economic benefit generated by the Powassan & District Union Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to economic development totals \$418,871.20 based on the indicators selected.

### 3.0 The Social Return on Investment of the Powassan & District Union Public Library

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a term originating from return on investment (ROI), as used by traditional investors. It describes the social impact of a business or non-profit’s operations in dollar terms, relative to the investment (Lingane, 2004).

The social return on investment assesses three main areas: direct spending, direct tangible benefits, and indirect tangible benefits.

The SROI of the Powassan & District Union Public Library cannot be fully captured by economic indicators. In fact, perhaps the most significant value of the library is serving as a community hub, which contributes to the community’s overall health and well-being, cohesiveness and engagement. This is necessarily under-rated when reported in primarily quantifiable terms. Nevertheless, the SROI calculation is a valuable exercise in that it reveals some aspects of library service that would otherwise remain hidden from the general public, policy-makers and funders. Table 8 indicates the total of each of the seven benefit areas of the framework.

Table 8: Total Benefits

<b>Totaling Indicators</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
1. Cultural Integrity & Regional Identity	\$38,960.00
2. Social Inclusion	\$122,786.73
3. Cognitive & Literacy	\$150,447.00
4. Health & Wellness	\$64,150.00

5. Engaged Citizens & Safer Communities	\$957,492.48
6. Entertainment & Enjoyment	\$771,879.34
7. Economic Development	\$418,871.20
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$2,524,586.75</b>
<b>Premium Value for underserved area<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>0.99</b>
<b>Total Economic Benefit of the 7 indicator areas</b>	<b>\$2,494,398.75</b>

Once the totals of the seven indicators are tabulated, the SROI may be calculated as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: SROI for the Powassan & District Union Public Library

Social Return on Investment Data		Economic Benefit
Economic Benefit	Economic Benefit of the 7 indicator areas (Table 8)	\$2,524,586.75
Total Economic Benefit	Economic Benefit x Premium Value for locale	\$2,494,398.75
Benefit per Resident	Total Economic Benefit divided by number of residents in catchment area	\$361.09
Impact per household	Total Economic Impact divided by the number of households in catchment area	\$694.05
Impact of an Open Hour	Total economic benefit of the circulation of all materials for all ages, plus the total economic benefit of all programs and services, plus the economic benefit of internet access, divided by the total number of open library hours of all branches, not including statutory holidays.	\$344.45
Total Social Return on Investment	Total Economic Benefit divided by the municipality's operating grant	\$16.42
Total Social Return on Investment as a Percentage	Total Social Return on Investment expressed as a percentage	1,642%

In 2015, the monthly cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit area, which encompasses Powassan & District Union Public Library is \$837.03 whereas Toronto's monthly cost is \$847.16. The difference represents a premium value of .99% as an underserved area. This premium value is used in this measurement toolkit to acknowledge the access and benefits to services provided by

<sup>1</sup> The Premium Value calculation for the underserved area is based on the percentage difference between the cost of a Nutritious Food Basket in Toronto and the locale. Figures are obtained through regional public health units.

public libraries in Northern First Nation, francophone, and rural communities and which may otherwise be unavailable. Powassan & District Public Library's catchment area serves a population of 6,908 residents, comprised of 3,594 households. The library is open 3,274 hours per year yielding a minimum impact of \$344.45 for each open hour. In 2015, Powassan and District's municipal contribution to the library was \$155,103.

Through the application of these calculations it is apparent that the Powassan & District Union Public Library yields at minimum \$2,494,398.75 in total economic benefit and a \$16.42 return on its base municipal funding. Expressed as a percentage, every dollar invested by the municipality in the public library yields 1,642% in economic benefit. These calculations demonstrate the monetary value of the library's cultural, social, cognitive, health, and economic benefits as well as its contributions to community cohesion and an improved overall quality of life.

Despite very evident economic spinoff of library services across each of the sectors measured in the pilot sites, not all of the benefits to community life that libraries offer can be quantified in terms of monetary value. Consequently, future applications of these measurement tools should supplement quantifying indicators with anecdotes that illustrate the direct benefits that libraries provide to their communities, as has been exemplified in the preceding pages and past research (MPI, 2013; Sawyer, 1996) on quantifying the value of libraries.

In terms of its SROI, the Powassan & District Union Public Library is integral to its community's life and future development. It has demonstrated its capacity as a driver of community development and ability to maximize the local benefit of its funding.

## Appendix A: Methodology and Framework

### Methodology

Ontario Library Service – North (OLS – North) received two years of funding through the Ontario Libraries Capacity Fund (OLCF) – Research and Innovation grant to develop a tool to measure the value of small libraries in Northern Ontario to their communities.

OLS – North contracted NORDIK Institute, a community-based research institute at Algoma University to measure the benefits that 121 libraries across Northern Ontario provide to their communities. Six pilot sites, chosen for their diverse geography and demographics, volunteered to participate in the design and testing of a tool for measuring the SROI of northern libraries. Dryden, Kenora, and Rainy River were the three public libraries from Northwestern Ontario. In Northeastern Ontario, the pilot communities are Powassan, Temiskaming Shores, and Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve. Rainy River serves the smallest population (2,175) while Kenora has the largest population of the pilot sites (15,348). These communities are predominantly English speaking with small groups of French, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, and Cree speaking people. Librarians from these pilot communities served on the Steering Committee to guide this process.

NORDIK Institute submitted a written literature review to the Steering Committee prior to site visits. This draft revealed seven distinct areas for assessment, identifying that public libraries act as community hubs providing services and programs that reach far beyond the now-outdated concept of libraries as mere storehouses of books. Focus groups within the pilot sites confirmed that the valuing of public libraries in Northern and rural settings required that the measurement tool reach well beyond circulation materials to encompass the many diverse and unique roles of public libraries. Based on a review of the literature, site visits, and input from the Steering Committee, seven areas, or sectors, were identified as key components of libraries' benefit to their communities: Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity, Social Inclusion, Cognitive and Literacy, Health and Wellness, Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities, Entertainment and Enjoyment, and Economic Development.

NORDIK designed a measurement tool in collaboration with the pilot sites to measure Social Return on Investment. Three indicators were chosen within each sector that best reflect how libraries' operations and expenditures contribute to each respective area. The measurement tool was tested in the pilot communities.

The *Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit* contains background information to the study, and data collection methodology including indicator formulae, enabling each library to conduct its own Social Return on Investment. The Social Return on Investment is used to describe the social impact of a business or non-profit's operations in dollar terms,

relative to the investment required to create that benefit and exclusive of its financial return to investors (Lingane, 2004).

A measurement framework outlined in Figure 7 below was designed, based on the research conducted for the study.

Figure 3: Measurement Framework



## Developing Evaluation Indicators

An Indicator is a quantifiable measure used to monitor progress or benefit in a given area or sector. The same number of indicators is measured in each of the seven sectors for the purpose of demonstrating the equivalent value of each sector in the overall calculation of its Social Return on Investment.

Many public library services and activities could arguably demonstrate benefits in multiple sectors. For example, a program funded by the Ministry of Health might be placed in the Health and Wellness sector, even though it may have implications for cognitive and literacy development, or another sector. This study has relied on the

preferences of the pilot sites to identify the placement of indicators within each of the seven sectors.

The indicators have been selected based on data that is collected by most libraries through its automation system or is otherwise available through other library data collections methods.

## Defining Outcome Measures

1. Small libraries have a reliable and user friendly tool to measure their benefit to the community.
2. Small libraries will gain an understanding of Return on Investment and value measurement.
3. Small libraries will have a social and economic measure of their community benefit that will support discussions with key stakeholders and funders about the value their library brings to the community.

## Powassan & District Union Public Library Pilot Site Visit

NORDIK staff visited the Powassan & District Union Public Library on November 8, 2016. The goals of the visit were as follows:

- To obtain feedback on both the design and content of the draft toolkit (see draft version 3.0 attached as Appendix B), i.e., clarity, level of user-friendliness, 'look', etc.
- To obtain direct feedback on the proposed methodology for establishing the value of public libraries, including assessing indicators and formulae for measuring the libraries' value and eliciting suggestions of alternative indicators and/or formulae
- To obtain greater insight into how the library responds to its community's needs
- To develop a model 'report' that other libraries in Northern Ontario may use to guide their own study and report on their public library's value to its community.

## Focus Groups: Powassan and District Union Public Library

Each library has built a unique mix of resources—collections, programming, services, etc. in response to community needs, enabling community members to improve their quality of life and to participate in the life of the community in meaningful ways. In many

instances, libraries have demonstrated leadership by promoting services that are otherwise non-existent, under developed or under serviced.

The focus groups were facilitated electronically by NORDIK staff, and participants were asked to identify what they considered to be the 'value of their public library to their community'. The focus group for Powassan was held on June 1, 2016, with four participants drawn from the Library Board, staff, volunteers, and Friends of the Library. The focus groups reinforced the need for a measurement tool that could determine value across the broad spectrum of areas in which public libraries contribute. A meeting with the Steering Committee on September 8, 2016 confirmed that the Northern libraries were prepared to adopt indicators that might be specific to the Northern region, and vary from those used in the best-known study in Canada, conducted on Toronto public libraries by the Martin Prosperity Institute (2011), so that the value of libraries in rural, Northern and First Nation communities could be better reflected.

## Appendix B: Detailed Indicator Charts

Please see the SROI Indicator Template for Powassan and District Union Public Library attached.

## Glossary of Terms

**Children:** 0 - 12 years of age

**Community Development:** Libraries may provide a variety of programming that addresses community capacity building, community empowerment or organizing, municipal planning or municipal cultural planning, forums for public input and participatory planning, community-based planning and group work, or that brings together representatives from a number of sectors for development and planning purposes.

**Economic Multiplier:** Multipliers are used by economists to estimate the impact of investment or job creation on the economy of a community or region. They are developed from complex mathematical models which identify the interrelationship between spending/job creation in one sector (e.g., an industrial employer) on another (e.g., household) (The Importance of Economic Multipliers, Fact Sheet-04-59, University of Nevada, Reno, 2004).

**Indicators:** An Indicator is a quantifiable measure used to monitor progress or impact in a given area or sector.

**Premium Value:** The total value - economic and quality of life – that rural, Northern, Indigenous and francophone libraries provide may be difficult to fully ascertain, however, should be recognized as a significant factor in attracting and retaining citizens and investment. A premium value has been assigned in this toolkit to acknowledge such access and benefit. Such premium value is calculated by applying the percentage difference of the cost of the Nutritious Good Food Box<sup>2</sup> in local communities versus such cost in the City of Toronto. Community Nutritious Food Basket costs can be located through regional public health units<sup>3</sup>.

**Social Return on Investment (SROI):** Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a term “originating from return on investment (ROI), as used by traditional investors. It describes the social impact of a business or non-profit’s operations in dollar terms, relative to the investment required to create that impact and exclusive of its financial return to investors” (Lingane 2004). The social return on investment assesses three main areas: direct spending, direct tangible benefits, and indirect tangible benefits.

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<sup>2</sup> Health Canada, Nutritious Food Basket (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/index-eng.php>)

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, Public Health Units

(<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>)

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## **Appendix A: Detailed Indicator Charts**

Please see attached SROI Indicator Spreadsheet.

[Printing and attaching the detailed SROI Indicator Charts is optional]