

# Social Return on Investment

## Rainy River Public Library

### Pilot Site Final Report



*rainy river public library*

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## Executive Summary

Ontario Library Service-North has contracted NORDIK Institute to evaluate the impact that the 121 Libraries of Northern Ontario provide to their communities. Six diverse pilot sites volunteered to participate in the design and testing of a tool for measuring the Social Return on Investment (SROI), including Dryden, Rainy River, Kenora, Temiskaming Shores, Powassan and Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve.

Based on a review of relevant literature, focus groups, consultation with Steering Committee members and site visits, NORDIK designed a Measurement Toolkit 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 easily accessible.

In 2018, Rainy River's municipal contribution to the library was \$35,002. Application of the SROI Measurement Tool to 2018 data demonstrated this investment resulted in \$505.36 of impact per resident, and \$678.60 per household. The library is open 1,250 hours per year yielding a minimum impact of \$276.23 for each open hour. Through the application of these calculations it is apparent that the Rainy River Public Library yields at minimum \$1,003,440.37 in total economic impact and a 2,867% return on its base municipal funding. These calculations demonstrate the monetary value of the library's cultural, social, cognitive, health and economic applications, as well as its contributions to fostering community cohesion and an improved overall quality of life.

Yet despite very evident economic spin-off of library services across each of the sectors measured in the toolkit, not all of the impact on community life that libraries offer as a community hub can be quantified in terms of monetary value. It is recommended that libraries also supplement the quantifying indicators with anecdotes that illustrate the intangible benefits that libraries provide to their communities. By demonstrating the intangible, human impacts of libraries' on their communities as well as their considerable SROI, libraries across the north can demonstrate how they act as drivers for community development across the North and form integral components of the lifeblood of our towns, cities, and First Nations.

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
1.0 Background.....	4
1.1 Community Profile – Rainy River.....	4
2.0 Pilot Site Methodology.....	7
2.1 Designing a Framework for Measuring Public Libraries.....	7
2.2 Developing Evaluation Indicators.....	8
2.3 Focus Groups and Steering Committee Meetings.....	9
2.4 Rainy River Pilot Site Visit.....	9
3.0 Valuing the Rainy River Public Library.....	10
3.1 Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity.....	10
3.2 Social Inclusion.....	12
3.3 Cognitive and Literacy Development.....	14
3.4 Health and Wellness.....	15
3.5 Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities.....	16
3.6 Enjoyment and Entertainment.....	17
3.7 Economic Development.....	18
4.0 The Social Return on Investment of the Rainy River Public Library.....	20
Glossary of Terms.....	23
References.....	24
Appendix A: Steering Committee.....	26
Appendix B: Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit Version 1.....	26
Appendix C: Detailed Indicator Charts.....	26

## **Figures**

Figure 1: Service Area of Rainy River Library.....	6
Figure 2: Measurement Framework.....	8
Figure 3: Butterfly Buddies Kits.....	11

## **Tables**

Table 1: Cultural Integrity & Regional Identity Benefit.....	12
Table 2: Social Inclusion Benefit.....	13
Table 3: Cognitive & Literacy Development Benefit.....	15
Table 4: Health & Wellness Benefit.....	16
Table 5: Engaged Citizens & Safer Communities Benefit.....	17
Table 6: Enjoyment & Entertainment Benefit.....	18
Table 7: Economic Development Benefit.....	19
Table 8: Total Benefits.....	20
Table 9: SROI for the Rainy River Public Library.....	21

## 1.0 Background

Ontario Library Service-North has contracted NORDIK Institute, Algoma University's community-based research institute, to evaluate the Social Return on Investment (SROI) that the 121 Libraries of Northern Ontario provide to their communities.

Recent research in Ontario (Baker, 2015; Broad et al., 2015; Diamanti 2014; Guelph Public Library 2014; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2013; Milton Public Library, 2014) has utilized tools in valuing public libraries that focus heavily on financial inputs and outputs, but have not measured the full impacts of the multiple services that libraries deliver (Rao, 2012). Identifying the impact of libraries in areas such as literacy and cognitive development, citizen engagement or health and well-being, for example, which do not have a retail value that can be easily assigned, is a more challenging goal. Further, research on the value of public libraries has, to date, been concentrated in larger urban centres, and questions have arisen therefore regarding its relevance and validity for communities in Northern Ontario, dominated by its geographic and cultural uniqueness, including First Nation, francophone, and primarily small rural communities.

Six diverse pilot sites volunteered to participate in the design and testing of a tool for measuring the SROI of the 121 libraries across the region. Three communities are located in the Northwestern portion of Ontario, including Dryden, Rainy River, and Kenora. In the Central and Northeastern portion of Ontario the pilot communities are Temiskaming Shores, Powassan and Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve. Rainy River serves the smallest population of the six locations with 1,986, and Kenora has the largest population at 15,348. The majority of the six communities are predominantly English speaking, with small contingencies of French, Ojibway, Oji-Cree, and Cree speaking people. A representative from each of the six pilot libraries sat on a Steering Committee to guide the process.

### 1.1 Community Profile – Rainy River

Settled in 1895 as Beaver Mills, the Town of Rainy River was established in 1904. People were drawn to the community's thriving lumber industry, however, the "Great Fire of 1910" burnt the town's two mills to the ground and displaced two-thirds of the population. Today, the Town of Rainy River has a population of 807<sup>1</sup>, down 4.2 percent from 2011. More recently the town has relied mainly on tourism as its economic base, which it continues to develop today.

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<sup>1</sup> StatsCan, 2016

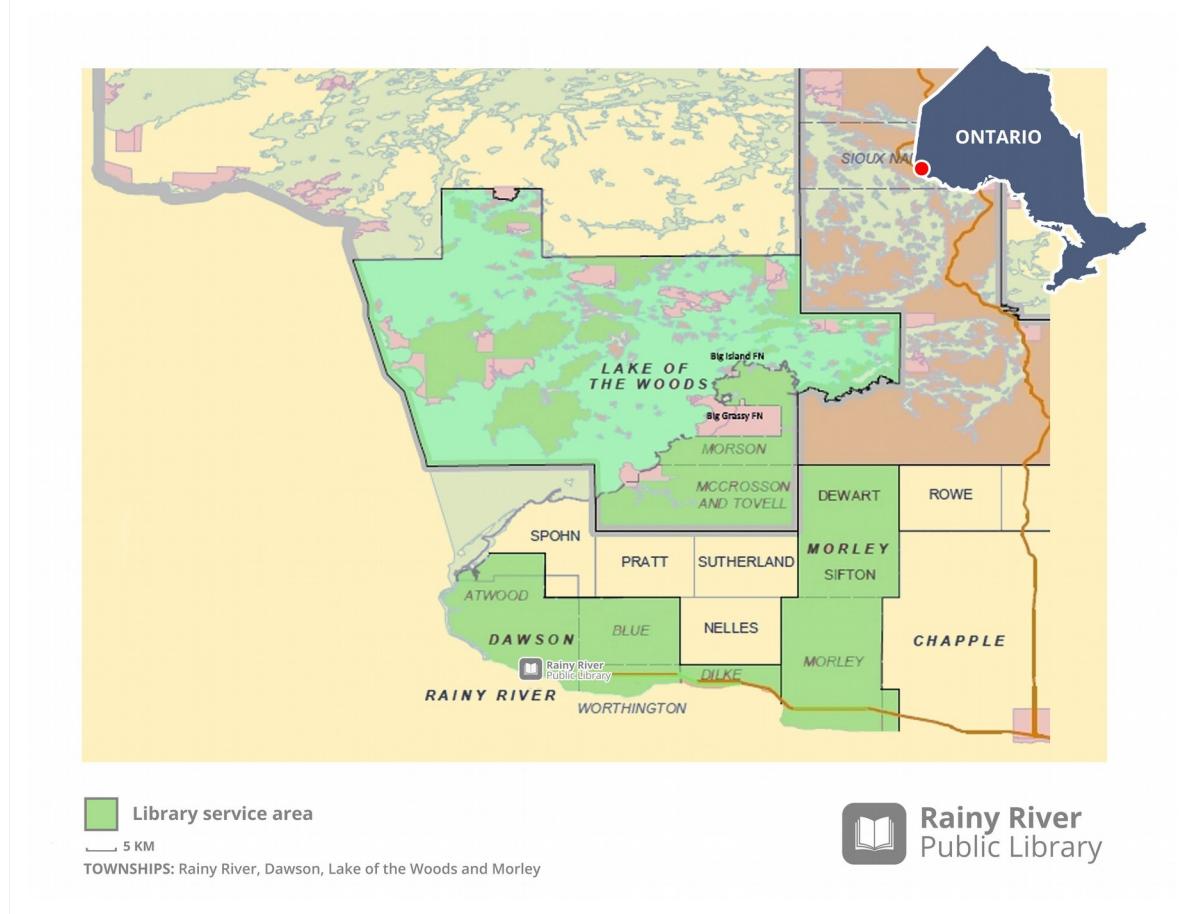
Located on the international border along the Rainy River from which the community takes its name, the town is considered the gateway to “Sunset Country” from the United States, with easy access by a toll-free bridge across the river. Just 22 km south of the storied Lake of the Woods, the small town supports a far-flung agricultural community and a substantial seasonal population. Rainy River has a small, volunteer-run railway museum, roughly 12 retail establishments, one restaurant, and health care facilities. The region is also a vital transportation centre for North America: local railway lines carry a high volume of grain, fuel and lumber traffic for the Canadian National Railways.

The dominant language spoken in Rainy River is English, with 785 residents reporting English as their language spoken most often at home, while none report French as their dominant language.<sup>2</sup> Rainy River has a significant off-reserve First Nations population, and three Ojibway Anishinaabe First Nations, Mishkosiminziibiing (Big Grassy First Nation), the Ojibways of Onigaming First Nation and the Anishinaabeg of Naongashing (Big Island) have reserve lands in the area around the south eastern reaches of Lake of the Woods. The local Métis population is served by the Sunset Country Métis Council, a chartered member of the Métis Nation of Ontario. Figure 1 depicts the service area of the Rainy River Library.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=3559042&Geo2=PR&Code2=35&Data=Count&SearchText=Rainy%20River&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&GeoLevel=PR&GeoCode=3559042&TABID=1>

Figure 1: Service Area of Rainy River Library



Open a total of twenty-five hours per week, year round, spread over Tuesday to Saturday, the Rainy River Public Library has two part-time staff members and is the only public service in the community open on Saturdays. Access to the library is free for all of the 2,000 residents of the four sponsoring municipalities, i.e., the Town of Rainy River, Dawson Township, Lake of the Woods Township and Morley Township. The Library, established in 1956, also maintains reciprocal borrowing agreements with libraries at Big Grassy River First Nation, Emo, Fort Frances, Atikokan, and Baudette, Minnesota. The agreement with Big Grassy River First Nation is one of only two such agreements in the province.

## 2.0 Pilot Site Methodology

Prior to undertaking the valuation of the pilot sites, NORDIK staff undertook a literature review and a series of electronically conducted focus groups to inform and assist in determining both the content and the process for evaluating the libraries. Additionally, consultations with the Steering Committee members, prior to testing the evaluation method, provided feedback to NORDIK regarding the proposed measurement topics. Based on this research, NORDIK then designed a Measurement Toolkit for testing in the pilot communities. NORDIK staff then visited each of the pilot sites to test out the measurement tool.

### 2.1 Designing a Framework for Measuring Public Libraries

A literature review was conducted and a draft written and submitted to the pilot sites prior to site visits. The literature review 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 with the Steering Committee and each of the pilot sites confirmed that the valuing of public libraries in the Northern and rural settings of this study required that the measurement tool reach well beyond circulation materials to encompass the many diverse and unique roles that public libraries play in the community. Based on the review of the literature, site visits, and input from each of the pilot sites, 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.

A Measurement Framework outlined in Figure 2 below was therefore designed, based on the research conducted for this study.

*Figure 2: Measurement Framework*



## 2.2 Developing Evaluation Indicators

An Indicator is a quantifiable measure used to monitor progress or impact 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 economic benefit and calculation of its Social Return on Investment.

While many of the services and activities of the libraries could arguably demonstrate benefits in multiple sectors assessed by the measurement tool, this study has relied on the preferences of the pilot sites to identify the placement of indicators most appropriate to each of the seven sectors. Such preferences have been informed, in part, by the development of a particular service or activity itself, for example, a program funded by the Ministry of Health might be placed in the Health and Well-being sector, even though it may have implications for cognitive and literacy development, or some other sector. The narrative has attempted to identify the reason(s) for selecting the overall sector.

Similarly, the indicators that have been selected for measuring the value could arguably be used for different sectors. The indicators have been selected based on data that is collected by all libraries, or alternatively, can be easily collected during the ‘typical week’ usage survey which is usually conducted in November of each year. Revisions to the indicators occurred throughout the pilot site testing phase to best address validity and reliability of data for the final tool.

## 2.3 Focus Groups and Steering Committee Meetings

Prior to testing the Measurement Tool in the communities, NORDIK conducted a total of 7 focus groups: the first was with the Steering Committee members and Ontario Library Service – North (OLS-N) staff on May 16, 2017 (see Appendix A for a list of Steering Committee members. The subsequent six were conducted over the period of June 1, 2016 to June 27, 2016. 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 Rainy River was held on June 10, 2016, with nine 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.

## 2.4 Rainy River Pilot Site Visit

NORDIK staff visited the Rainy River Public Library on September 13, 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 1.0 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.

NORDIK staff spent approximately five hours in discussion with the librarian of the Rainy River Public Library, obtaining substantial feedback on the above, and an additional three hours observing library operations and patrons during open hours. Key comments resulted in several revisions to the Toolkit (Version 1.0), as well as greater insight into how the library responds to its unique community and how it reflects its role as a community hub.

## 3.0 Valuing the Rainy River Public Library

The research demonstrated that the Rainy River Public Library actively contributes to all seven aspects of individual, organizational and community capacity building identified by the literature: 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.

### 3.1 Cultural Integrity and Regional Identity

The Rainy River Public Library supports the cultural integrity and identity of the region in diverse ways ranging from forging relationships and partnerships with the surrounding townships and First Nations, through to accessing special funding to support access to local activities such as bird-watching.

The Rainy River area shares its cultural history with two First Nations, Big Grassy and Big Island. Rainy River Public Library has established a reciprocal lending arrangement with Big Grassy, the largest of these with a population of 246, one of only two such arrangements in Ontario. The Rainy River library has been growing its collection of both culturally-relevant materials as well as materials in Anishinaabemowin and Ojibway languages, thereby supporting the maintenance of the Indigenous languages of the region, a key component of maintaining cultures that are under severe threat and are often overlooked by broader public policy (CLA 2014, 9; Thorpe & Galassi 2014, 83).

The library in Rainy River also demonstrates a commitment to responding to the diverse needs and wants of the region, a commitment that has resulted in a 93.5% increase in usage of the library since 2010. Sponsoring the annual Christmas bird count in the area; hosting speakers on various topics related to identifying birds and their habitats and behaviours, and partnering with the local Health Unit to develop birding buddies backpacks for elementary aged children, for instance, are among the library's responses to the growing popularity of birding among both residents and tourists.

Figure 3: *Butterfly Buddies Kits*



In addition to tourism, agriculture plays a significant role in the area's economy. Once again, the library has responded to this economic driver by developing a collection with a specialization in this sector. Small family farms and a growing Mennonite community have created demand for information and materials related to the 'local food' movement and the related growing, harvesting and marketing of locally grown foods. By partnering with the local chapter of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which provided a donation and advice on topic areas, the library has been able to add significantly to its agriculture-focused collection.

These are just a few of the innovative examples of how the Rainy River public library responds to the unique history and culture of its service area. The library also serves as a repository for local history, including a significant genealogical and newspaper archives and microfiche. In sum, the 93.5% increase in traffic clearly demonstrates that the library has become a community hub that is highly responsive to its region.

*Table 1: Cultural Integrity & Regional Identity Benefit*

<b>1. Cultural Integrity &amp; Regional Identity Indicators</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of 'special collections' and other materials related to culture and history of area (including snowshoes, fishing rods, GPS, Indigenous/French/Immigrant language) <sup>3</sup>	\$11,791
b) Economic benefit of the promotion of local cultural and historical events, programs, advertising space, information services about local area <sup>4</sup>	\$3,780
c) Economic benefit of cultural events <sup>5</sup>	\$0
<i>Total economic benefit of Cultural Integrity &amp; Regional Identity indicators</i>	<b>\$15,571</b>

The economic benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to cultural integrity and regional identity totals **\$15,571** based on the indicators selected to assess the contribution to this sector.

### 3.2 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 Rainy River has endeavoured in numerous ways to ensure that its services are accessible, welcoming and inclusive of a diversity of peoples.

As noted in Section 3.1, Rainy River has encouraged greater use of its services by local First Nations and responded to their needs by targeted increases in its collections. In this time of Reconciliation, these efforts are key to supporting greater equity for Indigenous peoples of the region. To date, this outreach has resulted in 22 additional membership families.

The library, though small and with limited means, has also attempted to foster greater social inclusion by scheduling its two part-time staff members in a manner that maximizes the number of open hours, including Saturdays and evenings. Often the only public service centre opens during the day, the library also serves as a hub for the community, providing space for information about local events and activities, meetings and other service providers who visit the area only occasionally.

<sup>3</sup> Formula: [Collections value] x [No. of items] = Economic Benefit

<sup>4</sup> Formula: [Cost of a 2-week radio campaign] x [4 events or the actual No. of cultural events per year] = Economic Benefit

<sup>5</sup> Formula: [Total Attendance] x [cost of the programs] = Economic Benefit

Seniors are a growing demographic across Northern Ontario, and Rainy River has endeavoured to adapt to this change. The library has targeted specific programs to meet the needs of this population including home delivery of books by library staff; computer assistance provided in part by student volunteers; and assistance in completing government forms. This latter support is essential as some forms (e.g., boating operator's licensing application) are only available online.

The Rainy River Public Library also provides book deposit locations at several community locations including at the local medical clinic and the Stratton Best Start Hub. These locations reduce travel for library users, and provide greater access for those facing transportation and mobility issues. Likewise, the library's collection includes a variety of materials in large print as well as audio books.

The Rainy River Public Library also provides a needed meeting space for parents, through their children's programming, and a much needed community space for socializing. During the visit of the researchers to the library, several youth were using the library in the 'after school' period without parental supervision. In a small rural community where spaces for children and youth to meet outside of school are extremely limited, this library is providing a crucial social networking space.

*Table 2: Social Inclusion Benefit*

<b>2. Social Inclusion</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of accessible collections, (i.e., audio books, Braille, large print books, graphic novels, etc.) <sup>6</sup>	\$36,429
b) Economic benefit of inter-library loans <sup>7</sup>	\$6,570
c) Economic benefit of internet access <sup>8</sup>	\$6,935
<i>Total economic benefit Social Inclusion</i>	<i>\$49,932</i>

The economic benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2015 through services and activities related to social inclusion totals **\$49,932** based on the indicators selected to assess the contributions to this sector. It additionally provides considerable and consistent human interventions that can't be quantified, but make Rainy River a more inclusive and equitable place to live, work and play.

<sup>6</sup> Formula: [Collections value] x [No. of items] = Economic Benefit

<sup>7</sup> Formula: [No. of borrowed books] x [Cost of service\*] + [average shipping cost] x [No. books borrowed] = Economic Benefit

<sup>8</sup> Formula: [No. of users] x [Cost of service] = Economic Benefit

### 3.3 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). Rainy River Public Library tries to address literacy and cognitive development in a variety of ways, including providing one of the few Wi-Fi access points in the area; a highly interactive and innovative set of children's programs, materials and activities; and providing a number of community-based activities outside the doors of the library itself.

Rainy River's remote corner of the province has very limited broadband internet capacity and most of the library's service area does not have access to Wi-Fi. The library provides this service free of charge to anyone who steps in the door, but also provides it 24/7 to anyone who happens to park their car or finds a chair within a 20-metre radius of its site. It also provides five computer stations, access to printing and faxing, and a full suite of software packages. To encourage skills development among youth, the library has contracted with students from the local high school to deliver free computer and internet workshops and training.

Books in the collection are targeted at the user's age rather than their reading level, making literacy a positive, welcoming and non-judgmental activity, and the library provides a space to develop a love of literacy. Both the Birding Buddies backpack and the Butterfly Buddies tote bag encourage literacy as well as physical activity for children and youth.

The library has also initiated a number of off-site activities to stimulate reading, literacy and cognition development and retention. Library staff attend the schools and read to younger children, and provide readings within the community and at community events. Its service to the townships surrounding the town of Rainy River ensure that rural families have access to a library within driving distance and at no-cost, an essential service for a population sustained by agriculture and seasonal employment in the tourism sector.

*Table 3: Cognitive & Literacy Development Benefit*

<b>3. Cognitive &amp; Literacy Development</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of Children and Youth Circulation (includes Books, Audio books, DVDs, Music CDs, Databases and other materials directed at this age <sup>9</sup> )	\$33,509
b) Economic benefit of Children and Youth Programming <sup>10</sup>	\$2,625
c) Economic benefit of class instruction at a library or a school <sup>11</sup>	\$450
<i>Total economic benefit of Cognitive and Literacy Development indicators</i>	<b>\$36,584</b>

The economic benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to cognitive and literacy development totals **\$36,584** based on the indicators selected to assess the contributions to this sector.

### 3.4 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 health issues. 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 well being through environmental interventions (e.g., Antonelli, 2008).

The Rainy River's Public Library has worked closely with local farmers and the local chapter of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to support a growing local food movement in the area. In addition to the materials funded through external donations outlined above, the library also works with the Agricultural Society to ensure that its materials are up to date and relevant for Northern agriculture. This has supported the growing understanding of the crucial role that nutritious and healthy food plays in early childhood development, reducing chronic illness and increasing the ability of seniors to stay longer in their homes. These concerns have led to the library offering a seed library including heritage species that respond well to the soil and climate of the region.

The proximity to the US has encouraged collaboration with American enterprises for the re-sale and re-cycling of books that are due to be removed from circulation. In collaboration with Better World Books from 2013 to 2017, the library was able to recover some costs of damaged or outdated materials, as well as recover paper from books that are beyond restoration, thereby contributing to environmental health as well as the library's 'bottom-line'.

*Table 4: Health & Wellness Benefit*

<sup>9</sup> Formula: [Collections value] x [Circulation] + [In-library use 18%] = Economic Benefit

<sup>10</sup> Formula: [Total attendance] x [Cost of program] = Economic Benefit

<sup>11</sup> Formula: [Total attendance] x [Cost of program] = Economic Benefit

<b>4. Health &amp; Wellness</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of health care programming delivered at the library <sup>12</sup>	\$0
b) Economic benefit of Health and Wellness related collection (incl. books, e-books, DVDs) <sup>13</sup>	\$2,537
c) Economic benefit of in-library information requests <sup>14</sup>	\$98,750
<i>Total economic benefit of Health and Wellness indicators (to date)</i>	<b>\$101,287</b>

The economic benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to health and wellness total **\$101,287** based on the indicators selected to assess the contributions to this sector.

### 3.5 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 groups' capacity and the ability of library patrons to engage in public life and access government services (Hanna, 2012; Ulvik, 2010; Rankin, 2012).

The Rainy River Public Library has demonstrated its value in building community cohesiveness through its broad range of partnerships in the community including with the public health unit, local farmers, local First Nation communities, the Best Start Hub, and many others. By partnering with these multiple and diverse community organizations, the library encourages dialogues that break down silos and foster collaboration and cooperation across the community. Its program that encourages high school students to support the development of technological skills with adults and seniors is just one example of the library's capacity to bring diverse age groups together within the community. Their work in building closer ties with the two nearby First Nation communities is a significant step in working towards reconciliation and stronger regional cohesiveness.

Rainy River is one of a number of Northern libraries that are sponsored through several small communities' collaborative efforts. This ongoing initiative, in and of itself, builds relationships between the residents, businesses, groups and elected officials of the area.

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<sup>12</sup> Formula: [Total attendance] x [Cost of program]

<sup>13</sup> Formula: [Collections value] x [No. of items] = Economic Benefit

<sup>14</sup> Formula: [No. of requests] x [Cost of service] = Economic Benefit

*Table 5: Engaged Citizens & Safer Communities Benefit*

<b>5. Engaged Citizens &amp; Safer Communities</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of a library membership <sup>15</sup>	\$337,134
b) Economic benefit of volunteer hours (incl. board members, student coops, and community hours, adults <sup>16</sup>	\$2,772
c) Economic benefit of community development workshops (incl. community development; technology, social media and computer literacy; information communications technology, software and social media support requests; and new comer programs <sup>17</sup>	\$575
<i>Total economic benefit of Engaged Citizens and Safer Communities indicators</i>	<b>\$340,431</b>

The economic benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to promoting engaged citizenship and safer communities totals **\$340,431** based on the indicators selected to assess the contribution to this sector.

### 3.6 Enjoyment and Entertainment

The Canadian Libraries Association (2014) has indicated 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 wide range of other materials; and 2) as a place to ‘hang-out’. For the populations living in Northern, rural and First Nation communities, both of these functions may be of even greater importance than in larger urban centres.

In Rainy River, the library is the only public building open and accessible to children outside of school hours. Without it, there would literally be no place for children and youth to go for entertainment or to just ‘hang out’ with friends after school. For the youth of this rural community, the library is a key drop-in centre where programs that include drawing and colouring, puppet shows, and of course, internet use and gaming stimulate imagination and interaction with others of similar ages.

The library also provides a venue to showcase local authors and artists, adding another dimension to the enjoyment and entertainment of adult and senior patrons, and an important opportunity for socializing for an increasingly aging population.

*Table 6: Enjoyment & Entertainment Benefit*

<sup>15</sup> Formula: [No. of library members] x [average cost of a recreation membership] = Economic Benefit

<sup>16</sup> Formula: [Total no. of volunteer hours] x [Minimum wage + benefits] = Economic Benefit

<sup>17</sup> Formula: [Total attendance] x [the cost of programs and services] = Economic Benefit

<b>6. Entertainment &amp; Enjoyment</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of Adult Circulation (All materials) <sup>18</sup>	\$172,445
b) Economic benefit of Value of Adult & Seniors programming <sup>19</sup>	\$0
c) Economic benefit of one library visit <sup>20</sup>	\$23,250
<i>Total economic benefit of Enjoyment and Entertainment indicators</i>	<b>\$195,695</b>

The economic benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2015 through its services and activities related to entertainment and personal enjoyment totals **\$195,695** based on the indicators selected to assess the contribution to this sector.

### 3.7 Economic Development

Public libraries have a considerable economic impact on their communities, ranging from direct jobs and spin-off jobs created in the community (MPI, 2013) through to the role libraries play in facilitating entry into the labour market (Rao, 2012). Other impacts include access to Wi-Fi services, thereby providing a ‘home office’ and local purchasing, while Jeanotte (2008) has observed that there is a notable gap in the literature on public libraries related to the leveraging of resources from other levels of government, foundations and the private sector.

The research conducted in collaboration with Rainy River Public Library has demonstrated impacts in all of these areas. While the annual budget provides part-time employment to only two staff members, this is still significant in a community whose population numbers just 2000 people, and where subsistence levels of income are the norm. Additionally, the library’s Wi-Fi services, as noted above, are used extensively and are only available to the public at the Rainy River library. Library staff have been advised on numerous occasions by tourists of the region that it would be impossible for them to frequent their cottages or regional tourist establishments were Wi-Fi not available to them.

The library’s services have been much used by job seekers for resume development and referral services. As outlined above, secondary school students are able to build their resumes through volunteer hours at the library, and it has been recognized by a number of institutions as a valid site for proctoring examinations, thereby providing students and professionals with a local alternative to out of town travel. The library’s collection and broadband internet access also provide substantial information on small business development and entrepreneurship resources as well.

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<sup>18</sup> Formula: [Collection value] x [Circulation] + [In-library use 18%] = Economic Benefit

<sup>19</sup> Formula: [Total attendance] x [Cost of program] = Economic Benefit

<sup>20</sup> Formula: [Total turnstile number] x [Cost of service] = Economic Benefit

Although there are no publishers locally and the library's collection must be purchased from other locales around the province, the library does purchase materials, advertising and nutrition break supplies for its programming locally. Its collection, valued at \$344,792, along with subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, would be impossible for local residents to access other than through the library service. Additionally, the library hosts two book sales per year ensuring a steady renewal of its collection, while also providing access to discounted books for local residents.

The library's staff have been quite active in leveraging funding from granting organizations other than the municipalities and province who provide core program funding. As identified above, funds have been leveraged from the Ministry of Health, the local chapter of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and additional applications are being submitted to increase services for seniors.

*Table 7: Economic Development Benefit*

<b>7. Economic Development</b>	<b>Economic Benefit</b>
a) Economic benefit of funds leveraged from outside the community (incl. provincial operating grants, pay equity, capacity building) <sup>21</sup>	\$26,856
b) Economic benefit of self-generated revenues (incl. contracts, grants, employment funding, donations, fees, room rental) <sup>22</sup>	\$27,574
c) Economic benefit employment, training and development <sup>23</sup>	\$85,329
<i>Total economic benefit of Economic Development indicators (to date)</i>	<b>\$139,759</b>

The monetary benefit generated by the Rainy River Public Library in 2018 through its services and activities related to economic development totals **\$139,759** based on the indicators selected to assess the contribution to this sector.

## 4.0 The Social Return on Investment of the Rainy River 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 required to create that impact and exclusive of its financial return to investors (Lingane, 2004).

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<sup>21</sup> Formula: [Total of Funds] = Economic Benefit

<sup>22</sup> Formula: [Total of self-generating revenues] = Economic Benefit

<sup>23</sup> Formula: [Total salaries & benefits] x [Multiplier effect of 1.7] + [Training and development costs] = Economic Benefit

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

The SROI of the Rainy River Public Library cannot be fully captured by economic indicators; in fact, perhaps the most significant value of the library, (i.e. that of serving as a community hub, which contributes to the community's overall health and well-being, cohesiveness and engagement) 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 totals of each of the 7 areas of the framework's indicators.

*Table 8: Total Benefits.*

Indicators	Economic Benefit
1. Cultural Integrity & Regional Identity	\$15,571
2. Social Inclusion	\$49,932
3. Cognitive & Literacy	\$36,584
4. Health & Wellness	\$101,287
5. Engaged Citizens & Safer Communities	\$340,431
6. Entertainment & Enjoyment	\$195,695
7. Economic Development	\$139,759
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$879,259</b>
<b>Premium Value for under-serviced area<sup>24</sup></b>	<b>1.14%</b>
<b>Total Economic Value</b>	<b>\$1,003,440</b>

Table 9 Calculating the Social Return on Investment (SROI)

*Table 9: SROI for the Rainy River Public Library*

Social Return on Investment Data		Economic Benefit
Economic Benefit	Economic Benefit of the 7 indicator areas (Table 8)	\$879,259
Total Economic Benefit	Economic Benefit x Premium Value for locale	\$1,003,440
Benefit per Resident	Total Economic Benefit divided by number of residents in catchment area	\$505.26

<sup>24</sup> The calculation for the Premium Value of the under-serviced 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.

Impact per household	Total Economic Impact divided by the number of households in catchment area	\$678.46
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.	\$276.09
Total Social Return on Investment	Total Economic Benefit divided by the municipality's operating grant	\$28.67
Total Social Return on Investment as a Percentage	Total Social Return on Investment expressed as a percentage	2,867%

The monthly cost of the Nutritious Food Basket for the Northwestern Health Unit area, which encompasses Rainy River, is \$976.20, whereas Toronto's monthly cost is \$855.39. The difference represents a premium value of 1.14% as an under-served area. Rainy River Public Library's catchment area serves a population of 1,986 residents, comprised of 1,479 households. It is open 1,250 hours per year yielding a minimum impact of \$276.09 for each open hour. In 2018, Rainy River's municipal contribution to the library was \$35,002.

Through the application of these calculations it is apparent that the Rainy River Public Library yields at minimum \$1,003,440 in total economic impact and a 2,867% return on its base municipal funding. These calculations demonstrate the monetary value of the library's cultural, social, cognitive, health and economic applications, as well as its contributions to fostering community cohesion and an improved overall quality of life.

Despite very evident economic spin-off of library services across each of the sectors measured in the pilot sites, not all of the impacts on 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 intangible 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.

The Rainy River Public Library, both in terms of its intangible and dollar-value SROI, is evidently 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 and impact of its funding.

## 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>25</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>26</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>25</sup> Health Canada, Nutritious Food Basket (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/surveill/basket-panier/index-eng.php>)

<sup>26</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: Steering Committee

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## Appendix B: Valuing Northern Libraries Toolkit Version 1

(See attached PDF)

## Appendix C: Detailed Indicator Charts

(See attached spreadsheet)