Hi! My name is Beth Dimond and I am the Children’s Services staff member at the Prince Rupert Public Library.

At our library, we are continually looking for ways to improve our connections with our First Nations community members. This only makes sense as we live on unceded Tsimshian territory, while over 30% of our population, and almost 50% of our children aged 14 and under, self-identify as Aboriginal.

It also makes sense to bring aspects of First Nations culture into all of our Summer Reading Club programs, whether we live on First Nations territory, in a small town, or in one of the bigger centres of our province. 2019 is the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages. What a perfect time to explore and share ways to include First Nations content in our Summer Reading Clubs, as well as take the SRC out into smaller remote communities.

Prince Rupert is situated on the north coast of B.C., 750 kms by air and 1,500 kms by road from Vancouver. As isolated as we are, we are the nearest, larger centre for several small coastal communities, including four First Nations communities that are north, west and south of us. All are accessible by boat or seaplane only.

At various times, and in various ways, we have been looking to connect with some of the communities in hopes of partnering to offer the SRC resources to any programs that might be running over the summer, or to set up a passive SRC program to be used however they wish. This could be a bookcase or tote of donated books in an office or facility, with take-home kits containing reading logs and handouts.

Although we have yet to be successful, this summer is looking very promising! We have been gradually building these connections over the past four or five years, with mixed results. Although we haven’t yet created an ongoing Summer Reading Club program, we have:

- had visits into one community – participating in their school-wide literacy program,
- hosted a group of children and their families for a tour and magic show at the library,
- donated a tote of free books for the ferry that travels between our community and theirs,
- invited classes and families to visit the library while in town, or while waiting to catch the ferry home, and have hosted several classes with stories and activities during their visit
- included all four villages in our catchment area, so that community members are entitled to free library access
- supplied SRC materials and books to one of their summer programs,
- and supplied books to a teacher in another First Nations community several hours east of us!

These last two opportunities came about through casual conversations with the respective people while they just happened to visit our library. We were thrilled that we could share resources and books with them.

Within our own community we strive to include First Nations content in all we do. In regards to the SRC, we try to include indigenous content throughout our program. This can include stories, word searches, colouring sheets, crafts, even a demonstration on how to make soapberry ‘ice cream’! We were very fortunate two summers ago to have an indigenous SRC coordinator who shared her family’s berries and
traditions with all of our SRC program attendees. Many of the students reported this to be a highlight of the program!

We have also connected with our local First Nations Friendship House regarding their own summer camp. We held a few extra SRC classes just for their camp members, at a time that fit their schedule.

Our local Aboriginal Headstart preschool program visits on a regular basis, which brings the children’s families into the library to pick the children up at the end of the program.

The library started our Northwest History Collection over 40 years ago. It is a reference collection of over 1,000 books pertaining to northwest British Columbia, the vast majority of which are First Nations content.

Several years ago the library was very honoured to have Tsimshian artist Henry Green design our ‘halibut’ library card. We have also carried his design on our book bags and tshirts. We love our halibut card, and are very appreciative of Mr. Green’s work.

Our newest addition to our circulating collection are our First Nations Literacy Bags. Each bag contains a beautiful plush puppet, a board book, a story book and a puzzle, all of First Nation’s design, including the carrying bag! They will also include booklists and activity sheets for the families to keep.