



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

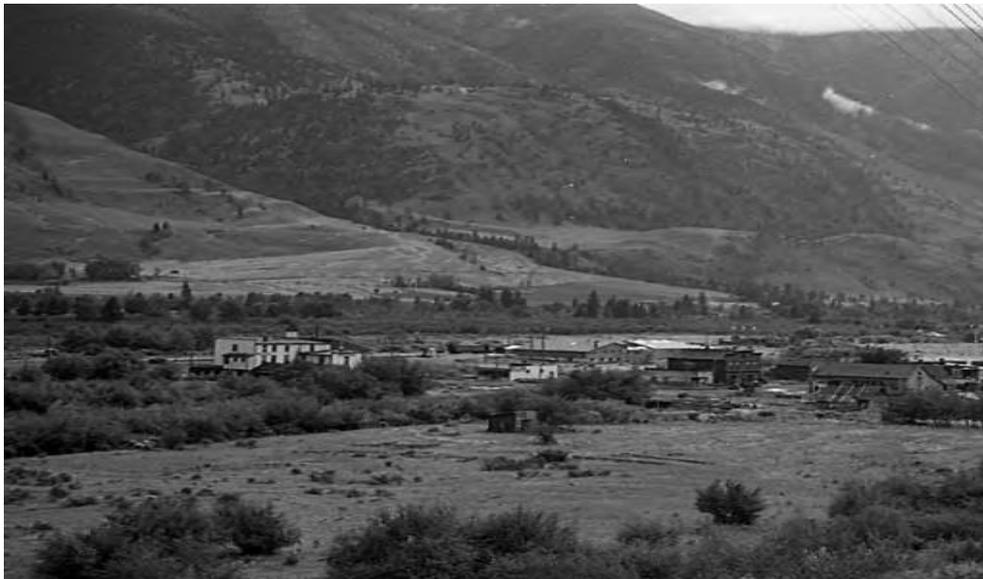
Library

Irving K. Barber Learning Centre

**The Irving K. Barber Learning Centre's Rural & Northern Focus
By Gordon Yusko, Assistant Director for Community Engagement**

In 2018 UBC Library's Irving K. Barber Learning Centre celebrated its 10th anniversary. With its unique mandate, the Learning Centre has, and continues to look to the communities in rural and northern British Columbia for guidance and collaboration.

In the Learning Centre building, there are 28 rooms with names derived from rural communities and next to each of these is a small historical photograph from UBC Library's Digital Collection. Together they form a [virtual museum](#) that provides students with a connection to the province's rural places.



Keremeos, 1937 (UBC Library, Rare Books & Special Collections) – displayed next to the Keremeos Lounge in the Learning Centre.

BC History Digitization Program:

The longest and probably the best known of its initiatives is the BC History Digitization Program. As shown on the [program's home page](#), since 2007 the digitization of unique historical material from many rural and northern libraries, archives, museums and galleries has increased access to British Columbia's rich trove of historical resources. Free, online access to these digitized collections

remains an important component of the migration project, and access to content from rural communities remains a priority.

Small Business Accelerator:

During the late Mr. Barber's community consultations in 14 communities around BC, prior to the Centre's completion, there was strong advocacy for an effort to support small businesses. In 2010 the Learning Centre launched the [Small Business Accelerator](#) (SBA), which offers free online access to reliable business information and tools for secondary market research for BC businesses and entrepreneurs. SBA staff will handle e-mail enquiries from anyone, and rural communities can locate resources in their town or region by searching the [BC Business Support Directory](#).

Small Business Accelerator Program »

BC Business Support Directory

Add your organization to the directory

Need Small Business Support?

Whether you need help finding specific information, or someone to evaluate your current business plan, or to help you to find financing -- chances are pretty good that there are experts nearby who will be eager to help. Use this directory of support agencies and libraries in BC to make the right connection today.

Does your organization support small business in BC? [Join our directory](#) and help us to create a strong community for BC's entrepreneurs.

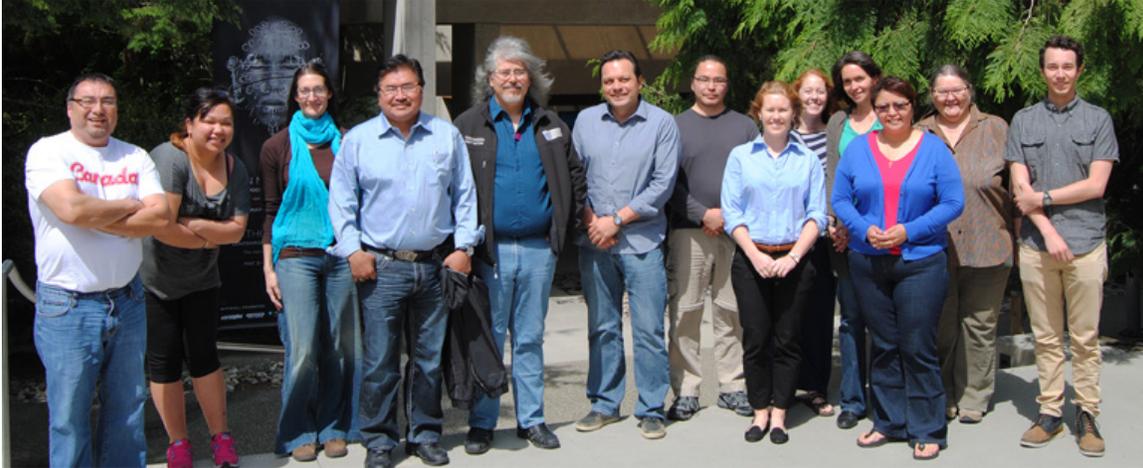
Keyword	Location	City	Service Cost	Services Provided
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[AANDC - Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Business \(PSAB\)](#)

BC Business Support Directory search page (Courtesy of UBC Library, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre)

Indigitization:

Working closely with Indigenous communities around the province since 2013 the Learning Centre, along with key partners, has supported First Nations organizations to rediscover missing or lost heritage through the digitization and analysis of audio recordings dating back to the late 1960s. The overwhelming majority of [41 projects](#) have been located in BC's rural and northern communities. There is an open-source [online toolkit](#) that communities around the world can adapt and use in ways that support local priorities. For more information, visit [Indigitization.ca](#)



Indigitization Training Cohort, 2015 (Courtesy UBC Library, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre)

Rural Capacity-Building and Education:

Community engagement and staying true to the model for community-led libraries is a “long game” and at times it is a difficult path to walk, especially given the traditions inside of academic libraries. For us, that is where our connections to rural and northern communities are extremely beneficial. We are grounded and guided by the voices and experiences of residents in rural areas. Our connections are often channeled through and supported by existing networks. It’s vitally important for us to remain flexible and adaptive to the changing circumstances in communities and to the dynamics of these networks.

Experiential learning by UBC students and faculty in rural and northern communities is another key initiative of the Learning Centre. In partnership with the [UBC Centre for Community Engaged Learning](#), the [BC Rural Community Engaged Learning Fund](#) enables faculty and students the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom in collaboration with partners in BC’s rural areas. For example, we heard directly from students in the School of Community and Regional Planning after they worked with non-profit agencies in different areas of the province. In [a short video](#) they highlighted the benefits of working directly and collaboratively with these agencies.

Remote Community Based Learning Fund at-a-glance



Infographic for Community Based Learning Fund, 2016 (Courtesy of UBC Library, Irving K. Barber Learning Centre)

Deepening Our Efforts:

Over the past two years the Learning Centre has deepened our connection to BC's rural communities. We had a voice on the Board of the BC Rural Network and participated in the September 2017 conference, in Nelson, of the Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation. We also maintain regular contact and information sharing with the BC Rural Centre.

Since 2017 we have funded travel for representatives from six rural public libraries to attend the annual BC Library Association. For the June 2017 Beyond Hope Conference in Prince George we sponsored the keynote address and in 2019 we are doing the same, as well as sponsoring one session.

A recent message about [Rural Routes Podcasts](#)¹ is just one more way that we provide suggestions to libraries about engaging with communities in meaningful ways. Here are summaries of three recent episodes:

¹ *Rural Routes* is a [Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development](#) and [Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation](#) initiative.

This show is supported through a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Connection grant.

1. Rural Media:

“Media industry is in trouble. For a long time now it has been shedding jobs and converging into ever larger corporate entities where profits outweigh any residual sense of responsibility to small communities for whom a local paper is often a necessity. Are there solutions? In this episode we will bring you interviews with journalists working a community owned paper . . .” **

2. Islands and their universities:

“Islands are often perceived as being at a disadvantage compared to their mainland counterparts. And sure, there are some tough issues that are at least somewhat unique to islands. However, there is also plenty of evidence of the potential for unique successes, partially because island geographies necessitate doing things a little differently. Universities located on islands tend to have a different relationship with their communities, often working together to find new, appropriate ways of approaching those old island challenges. . .” **

3. Community First Tourism Development

“Developing rural tourism is a complicated process fraught with pitfalls, but, when done right, it provides economic and social benefits to rural communities. In this episode we talk to researchers and practitioners about tourism development in Newfoundland and Labrador, Scotland, Denmark, Alberta, and BC. . .”²

² Source: [Rural Routes Podcasts](#) © 2016