REPORT TO: STRATFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING DATE: MAY 2, 2023
FROM: KRISTA ROBINSON, CEO
SUBJECT: DRAG STORY TIME

The Stratford Public Library's mission is that "we are an equitable, safe, and welcoming community where everyone can explore, learn, create, connect, and be inspired." With this mission, we try our best to ensure all members of our community see themselves reflected as part of the library, whether it is through our staff, our collections, advertising, or our outreach and programming.

BACKGROUND

In 2022, SPL entered into a partnership with Stratford Pride Community Centre to financially help support a number of drag story times. A drag story time is when story tellers using the art of drag, read books to children in libraries, schools and bookstores. These family friendly events, provide children with an opportunity to learn about diversity and inclusiveness, as well as different forms of self-expression.

Despite drag story times occurring in libraries for over a decade, libraries have seen an increase in opposition to these family friendly events in the past year. Some libraries have experienced pushback online, while others have seen in-person protests and threats of violence. Most often the protesters are not residents of the municipality hosting the event, but rather coordinated groups of people from across the province who travel to events.

DRAG STORYTIME AT SPL

Through the partnership with Stratford Pride Community Centre, a number of drag story times were held in 2022 and one was held earlier in 2023. The story times were held at the SPCC, and unfortunately were not well promoted in advance, and in turn, did not see a large turnout. To ensure the success of this partnership, SPL has formalized a MOU with SPCC, and have agreed to host an upcoming drag story time at the library and be the lead in the creation of promotional materials.

The next drag story time will occur on Saturday June 3, at 10:30am in the library auditorium. This event is also part of Pride Month in Stratford, a month-long celebration, supported by the City of Stratford.

We know Stratford is a welcoming community and we are hopeful this event will be a positive experience for all attendees. We are hopeful there will not be any pushback here, however we will be prepared should the situation arise.

- talking points for staff should they receive any criticism regarding this event
- created a marketing strategy to promote the event and to monitor for feedback
- alerted the Stratford Police Department of the event and will continue to be in communication should the need arise
- a letter requesting support from City Council will be sent to Council in early May

By coming together in support of the drag story time and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, we show that the values of inclusiveness and acceptance are much more powerful than hate and intolerance.

Strategic Directions: Reach Out and Bring In, Lead Grounded Practice, Build Sustainable Partnerships to Expand Capacity, Intentionally Support Our Team

BOARD ACTION

Submitted to the Board for information.