

Sheryl Pelletier: High Energy Librarian in High Level, Alberta

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High Level is way up there! 800 km north of Edmonton and on parallel with Juneau, Alaska and Churchill, Manitoba, High Level is rich in forestry, oil and gas resources. With 4,200 people in town, the community is fortunate to have a town librarian with chutzpah.

Well-known in Alberta's regional library systems (and described as "quite a pip"), Sheryl Pelletier brings enthusiasm to her work in the community. In 1988, Sheryl was hired as an Inventory Clerk to create a shelf list but became the town librarian within a year. Sheryl counts it to her advantage that she didn't know what she couldn't do or what wasn't "proper." She has grown with and implemented new technologies, including E-books, and understands the impact of greeting customers by name when they come to the Library. In a town with no bookstore, the Library is *the* place for books. Not only does the Library lend books but Sheryl takes pride in operating the "Library Bookstore," providing special order services and used books for the entire area. Some day Sheryl hopes to go to university to "get the degree" but in the meantime she values the friendships and support she receives from the professional librarians. That said, Sheryl is as professional as they come, looking at the big picture and for what is best for the customer.

While the regional library systems provide valuable service, Sheryl notes that "they know in their heads but not in their hearts" what it is like being a librarian in a remote area. She is frequently contacted by regional library systems and The Alberta Library consortium to provide insights into "how rural librarians feel" about service, developments and new directions in Alberta.

In talking about her community, Sheryl offered this story which provides a glimpse at her environment and her capabilities. The library offers a youth drop in program. Every Tuesday, kids from the High Level Native Friendship Centre visit. One boy, described by Sheryl as the “the kind of kid that picks the labels off of books” was an on-going concern. One day, Sheryl brought out a Braille slate and gave it to the boy. Within minutes he had figured out how to use the Braille slate and proceeded to teach the other kids how to use it. Sheryl says she learned that day that he was really “a smart kid that was bored.” Since Sheryl was able to engage the boy and meet his needs, his visits to the library are less a challenge and more positive for all.