

**Gordon Yusko's
Career Information and Personal Impact Statement for
"How UBC Treated One of Its Own"**

September 2023

Right after graduating with a Master's Degree in Librarianship and Information Studies from UBC, I was hired at the UBC Library to fill a temporary vacancy for a librarian on maternity leave. I was chosen for that position in part because I'd been a student librarian there while completing my degree and had demonstrated strong skills and expertise that were valued by the UBC Library.

So, it has been very hurtful that years later when I returned to the UBC Library as an alumni and previous employee that as "one of its own" I was treated in the way that my open letters describe.

When I returned UBC in 2012 I thought that it would close the circle of a long career, ending it in the place where I began. Instead, the unfair manner in which I was treated involuntarily pushed me into unemployment for over two years. It has delayed any hope of retirement until I reach well into my 70s. As family, friends and my physician know well, I continue to be deeply traumatized by UBC's conduct. This is not how a university should treat one of its own.

This career, biographical and personal impact statement is meant to show that throughout my life, I have succeeded in meeting and frequently exceeding the responsibilities that were assigned to me. That was the case too at UBC between 2012 and 2019. But, as I read through documents that were released under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, my contributions to UBC were inaccurately portrayed and improperly devalued. In a confidential letter to the Board of Governors' Employee Relations Committee I described in detail how these portrayals were not substantiated by the facts contained in my application for a confirmed appointment. Yet that letter was disregarded and without notice or permission, was shared with the University's Administration. This too was intensely traumatizing to me. It signalled that even the Board that has the role of governing the University did understand the consequences of its action in this matter.

Between 2012 and 2019 I was the Assistant Director of the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre (aka IKBLC or the Learning Centre) at UBC, with a mandate to connect UBC to *"the intellectual, social, cultural, and economic development of people in British Columbia. By providing and enhancing access to information, knowledge, and innovative teaching through the support of learning and research on an interactive basis with people in British Columbia and throughout the world, the Irving K. Barber Learning Centre will provide the opportunity for future generations to be at the forefront of learning."*¹

Data consistently showed that IKBLC was **the** busiest building on campus with many months reporting well over 100,000 people entering its doors. It's home to several UBC libraries, and the University Archives and a team focused on community engagement through innovative programs and services.

I brought to UBC a decade of experience in Silicon Valley, as a senior manager at the San José Public Library, and with that experience I was designated as the project lead for three significant building

¹ <https://ikblc.ubc.ca/aboutus/charter/>

renovations at the Learning Centre. The first two were assigned to me a month after I began in 2012 with a completion deadline set 11 months later -- in March of 2013. Despite **many** challenges (i.e., 11 project stakeholders, unforeseen delays and problems with construction, etc.) the new spaces opened on time.

These projects and a third one that followed soon after, vastly improved the quality of library services and programs in the Learning Centre and for UBC students, generally. These physical changes led to changes in library policies and operations, and it was because of my years of experience that I was able to understand the impacts, and to expertly assess and make decisions on outcomes. During my time in Silicon Valley, I'd been the design teams for five new branch libraries; a rarity for most librarians since most go through long careers without the opportunity to serve even on one such project.

Internally, I championed the Community Engagement Team, and spearheaded the effort to see its important work reflected in the strategic directions of the UBC Library and across other departments and faculties. I focused outward and since I had worked for the provincial BC Library Services Branch in the 1990s, I knew the province and its communities in ways that were a solid asset to UBC. I integrated that knowledge into my work and the community engagement efforts by the UBC Library.

From 2013 until I left UBC and as part of fulfilling the IKBLC mandate, I made significant contributions to the [Indigitization Program](#), as a coordinator and a lead member of its steering committee. This program was a collaboration between the Learning Centre, the Museum of Anthropology and the UBC iSchool. In addition, there were partnerships with academics in Washington State doing similar work. The focus was and remains, to support Indigenous communities in their efforts to preserve vital records that document cultural and social history as well as their Indigenous languages. By 2019 over 35 Indigenous communities had received training and financial assistance as result of this collaboration. My contributions in achieving these outcomes were significant.

For six years while I was at UBC I played a vital role in a funding partnership with the Network of Inquiry and Indigenous Education or NOIIE. Dozens of teachers in the K-12 sector received funding and incentives from the Learning Centre and the Network to support further education of Indigenous students in culturally sensitive ways, using a variety of creative programs. As the Learning Centre's and UBC's representative, my role was to monitor these activities through regular assessment meetings with the NOIIE co-leaders. My influence in representing UBC led to an impact report in 2019 that is [available on the NOIIE website](#).

I presented at numerous library and literacy conferences, always on the theme of the future of libraries, and how to implement creative ideas and effective organizational structures and communication, in the context of constantly changing circumstances. My priority was on smaller public libraries around BC. For example, I led a two-day workshop in Smithers, BC, with library directors and staff focusing on key principles for enabling innovation and creativity in library organizations. For four years I ensured solid support for the annual conference of libraries held in Prince George, for those communities living, geographically speaking, "beyond Hope".

Again, focusing on community engagement, I offered UBC support to the Write to Read Project, which works in partnership with Indigenous communities, mostly in northern and rural areas of BC. The Project has successfully established libraries and learning centres [in over 25 communities](#) specifically for local Indigenous residents. My knowledge of successful collaboration with Indigenous Elders and

educational leaders as well as of my knowledge of libraries, administrative expertise and presentation skills is seen as an asset to the rest of the Write to Read Project leadership team.

Everywhere I appeared or spoke, with any partnership or collaboration, I ensured that UBC and its Library were promoted in a positive light and conveyed that “it was there” for people and residents all over the province. I did so even though internally at UBC I felt like the target of unfair, mean-spirited and unethical behaviour.

Touching on other career history, my decade on the senior management team of the San José Public Library in California included contributions to its winning of the “Library of the Year” award in 2004, not an easy feat, as it’s a North America-wide competition. I also led an initiative to integrate the City of San José’s programs for early childcare learning and spaces into the organizational structure of the Library. The initiative became a model for city departments working together to better serve its residents. It led to the Library strengthening its ties to early childhood education centres, something that continues today. I received formal recognition from the City’s Early Care and Education Commissioners for that leadership.

Before working for the BC Library Services Branch, I was a reference librarian for three years at the Legislative Library in BC’s Parliament Buildings. Our principal clients were MLAs, Cabinet Ministers, the Press Gallery and policy analysts from within Government. We were sworn to keep our work confidential, but I can share one effort, because I was praised by an MLA inside the Legislature and that was recorded in Hansard. [On July 24, 1990](#), I received specific praise from MLA Andrew Perry for providing him with significant background on historical facts which assisted his contributions to the debate over the Referendum Act, at that time. It was very rare for librarians in the Legislative Library to receive such open recognition and praise.

It was at the BC Library Services Branch, where I worked for nine years, that I managed a program for those with visual impairments, as it produced audiobooks that were available to eligible residents throughout the province. While there I developed a solid network of public library staff in many regions of BC, and it was that experience which added value to the assets that I contributed to UBC.

Outside of my work in libraries, I have been a strong contributor to heritage conservation, most notably in Langley, where I was on the Board of the Langley Heritage Society. I was a successful grant writer and publicist and played a key role in the saving and restoration of numerous historic buildings. Those include the CN Station in Fort Langley, the Michaud House in Langley City, the Wark/Dumais House on the Langley campus of Kwantlen Polytechnic, the Alex Houston House, now in Derby Reach Regional Park and the Annand/Rowlatt Farmstead in Campbell Valley Regional Park. Some related and now rare publications that I managed, wrote or edited were these:

Fort Langley C.N.R Station: Heritage Site Development Plan, (Byrnes, 1985) | *Derby: a report on the archaeological survey and test excavations at Fort Langley I (DhRp)*, 1983 (Langemann, Horsfall and Quackenbush, 1984) | *Inventory of Historic Buildings in Langley* (Langley Heritage Society, 1986) | *Langley Heritage Society's Fort Langley CN Station: When Rail Was King* [video] (Langley Heritage Society, 2016). URL: <https://www.langleyheritage.ca/cn-station/>

I was recognized for my leadership in heritage conservation and community engagement by the City of Langley and publicly given an award by the Mayor for this work. A search of UBC’s Open Collections shows roughly 30 newspaper reports of my contributions in this field over a decade. A search of the

digital archive for the Langley Advance newspaper results in 60 articles where similar contributions are documented over the decade of this community engagement.

And so, as seemingly “one of its own”, a UBC alum with an outstanding career as a librarian and leader in heritage conservation who was twice hired by the University, I was subjected to deeply unfair treatment when I applied for a confirmed position. The process was tainted by an allegation that was found to be without merit. Documents that were central and essential to fair consideration were either not updated or intentionally not submitted. Conflicts of interest were present. Facts were disregarded, and specific individuals with knowledge of relevant details or the positional authority to be apprised of details, either acted improperly or failed to act to restore fairness to the process. Even the Board of Governors Employee Relations Committee shared a private and confidential letter with others.

Getting to this point in the Fall of 2023 has been a lengthy, very difficult and hurtful process for me. I’ve been able to work only briefly at any given time in this effort to document how I was treated and its effects on me. Each time that I work on this I slide into depression and psychological pain that in turn has negative physiological impacts.

Lastly, the efforts I’ve made of getting access to records **about me** have consistently been met with very long delays, many denials and large blocks of blacked-out redactions in the versions of material that was ultimately released. UBC hired an expensive law firm and spent thousands of dollars to prevent me from seeing records that are detailed and specific about **my own** application for a confirmed position. It would require another long statement to describe the numerous challenges that I’ve faced in seeking full transparency from UBC, to see how the unfairness that I describe in my open letters played out internally.

As I mentioned earlier, I continue to be deeply traumatized by UBC’s large disregard for fairness, facts and ethics. This is not how a university should treat one of its own.