



from the Board Table

2021 Annual General Meeting

January 30, 2021 was a day of firsts for the Vancouver Island Regional Library (VIRL) Board of Trustees: it was the first time the AGM and elections were held in a virtual environment. New and returning Trustees convened from home offices, kitchen tables, spare rooms, and quiet corners to elect a new Chair, Vice Chair, and Executive Committee, receive a dynamic orientation from VIRL leadership, and participate in their first official meeting of the year.

In addition to providing an overview of the Board Procedural By-law, VIRL's budgeting, and snapshots from each of the directors' portfolios, the orientation also contained details on the Board's advocacy efforts, the Board's Foundational Documents that underpin all decisions and priorities, and a series of videos highlighting the successes, challenges, and opportunities brought to light by the pandemic.

The Board left the meeting energized, entertained, and ready to take on their important roles and responsibilities for the year ahead.



2020 Year in Review

2020 was, for many reasons, a challenging year. But despite it all, VIRL staff rose to the occasion and shifted many traditional in branch services to the virtual environment. From storytimes to author talks, book clubs to concerts, Trustees learned how VIRL staff found new and creative ways to keep people connected, entertained, and engaged with their library.

[This short video](#) beautifully summed up for the Board some of the ways VIRL brought the library into people's lives last year.

[Watch it here.](#)



Recovery Update

This report provided the Board with background on VIRL's response to and recovery from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of the AGM, the report noted all but three branches are open at Phase 3 levels of service. Although varying from branch to branch, Phase 3 services include:

- Access to physical collections
- Access to holds pick up and self checkout
- Assistance from staff in the branch for information needs and in-person checkout
- Access to computers, printing, and photocopying services
- Washroom access
- Access to external book returns
- Ongoing takeout services for those who prefer it

When it is deemed safe to do so, the Board learned that Phase 4 will see increased services such as limited in-person programming, increased capacity, and access to meeting rooms and study rooms. Moving to this phase is dependent on direction from the Provincial Health Authority.



Performing in a Pandemic

The fourth quarter of 2020 saw VIRL continue to adapt. This report provided a snapshot of some of the key metrics and initiatives that took place during the quarter.

Membership

- New membership continued to grow in 2020 with just over 12,000 new memberships. 82% were adult, 12% were children, and 6% were other types of membership (e.g. BC One Card, Non-resident, Homebound)

Online Visits

- Throughout 2020 we saw more and more visitors via the VIRL website, library catalogue and social media sites. Overall, we had over 1.4 million visitors online in 2020.

Programs

- Program offerings continue virtually. During Q4, programs included children's storytimes, babytimes, and outdoor story walks; adult events like author talks and book clubs; and tech help and eSports for all ages.
- Overall, 972 virtual programs, events, and workshops were offered in 2020 with over 16,000 attendees.



Finance

Finance Report

Balance Sheet: The balance sheet of \$36.7 million shows a healthy balance of cash and investments of \$2.9 million at the end of November and a year to date operating deficit of \$0.6 million.

Revenue and Expenditures: The small operating deficit as at the end of November reflects that revenues were in line with expectations and expenditures were within budget.

Reserves: The Board of Trustees is provided with updated reserves information at each meeting. At the end of November, the reserves stood at a balance of \$5.8 million. Appropriations to reserves are recorded on a monthly basis and at the end of November represented 92% of the budgeted contributions to reserves for the year.

Summary: VIRL's current position is sustainable and VIRL's operations are in line with expectations for this point in the year.



Facilities Update

Prototype Libraries

Masset: We are working on the design, floorplan, and other planning and tender documents.

Sandspit: Council to provide potential sites for review.

Tahsis: VIRL has submitted for a grant is awaiting the results of the application.

Tofino: Potential sites are under review by Tofino Council.

New Builds

Campbell River: Demolition of the existing branch to build the two-story, 20,000 sq. ft., new library is set to begin in 2021. [More information is available at this link.](#)

North Saanich: North Saanich previously identified a potential site at the Panorama Recreation Centre for a new branch. This site is part of the Agricultural Land Reserve (ALR). North Saanich continues to seek approval from the Agricultural Land Commission, who oversee the ALR.

Sooke: Construction is well underway. The lease at the current location has been extended to avoid disruptions to library service.

Refurbishments

Port Alberni: Preliminary floor plans have been developed and plans for a public information session are underway.

Courtenay: Planning documents are slated to be sent to the architect in early 2021.

Cowichan Lake: Remedial flooring work is required in 2021.

The 2021 Capital Plan also includes funding allocated for updates to Port Alice, Gold River, South Cowichan, Nanaimo Harbourfront, Port McNeill, Sointula, Bowser, and Port Clements libraries. This funding is identified for furniture replacement, new equipment, upgrades to work areas, or other required interior improvements.



2020 Elections and New Trustees



Board Chair

Gaby Wickstrom, Mayor of Port McNeill, was elected as Board Chair. Wickstrom has served as the Vice Chair for the past two years and previously sat on the Board's Executive Committee from 2011 – 2014.



Vice Chair

Daniel Arbour, Area Director for Baynes Sound, Hornby/Denman Islands at the Comox Valley Regional District, was elected as Vice Chair. Arbour has sat on the Board as a member of the Executive Committee since 2018.

2021 Executive Committee

Members at Large:

Penny Cote
Vanessa Craig
Colleen Evans
Erin Hemmens
Past Chair: Brenda Leigh
Duncan McMaster
Brenda Patrick
Fred Robertson

New Trustees

Welcome to the following new and returning Trustees:

Debbie Haggard (City of Port Alberni)
Scott Harrison (Town of Qualicum Beach)
Norm Kirschner (Village of Sayward)
Barb Lewis (Village of Zeballos)
Pat McKenna (Town of Comox)
Karen Proctor (District of Lantzville)
Peter Wainright (Town of Sidney)
Mike Wilson (Cowichan Valley Regional District)
Lorna Vomacka (Town of Lake Cowichan)