

## Executive Director, Arts Council of the North Okanagan

### Report to Annual General Meeting March 2021

September 2019 – October 2020

This was the year that none of us expected. We began our fiscal year optimistic about meeting all our strategic goals and continuing to build on the successes of the past few years. For the first six months we were well on track to achieving significant growth in program development and finances. The Arts Council invested time and energy in community engagement opportunities by actively participating in the development process towards the building of a Cultural Centre in Vernon and working with Tourism Vernon and other community groups to identify arts and culture as key to the economic development of the community. The Arts Council continued its work supporting the implementation of the goals and objectives identified in the Greater Vernon Arts and Culture Master Plan and strengthened its position as a community leader in arts and culture planning.

In March of 2020 everything changed for everyone and our focus became a remarkable story of resiliency, adaptability and pivoting.

The goals through Covid became very clear – reopen the doors of the Arts Centre and share the gift of creativity, keep everyone safe, pay our bills and bring all our staff back to work .... and spread joy during a very dismal time. We are happy to report that we surpassed even our own expectations and our organization thrives.

By adapting our organizational model and ensuring that all health and safety protocols are addressed we have been able to maintain programming levels at the Vernon Community Arts Centre and although operating with reduced class sizes, we have plans to expand our program offerings in the future. We have successfully navigated the adversity that came our way and have learned many lessons which we will carry forward into our strategic planning.

We really want to thank and acknowledge the staff for their patience, dedication, and kindness. Closures and lay – offs, applications for support and a world of uncertainty tested us all and the staff rallied, accepted the challenges, and helped our organization open its doors in just under 2 months.

The support from our local community will never be forgotten. Artists, groups, and individuals of all ages stepped up to raise the spirits of the community. You sang and danced, posted hearts and art in your windows, held virtual exhibitions and performances and you reached out to others to share your creativity. As a community we looked out for each other and came together, and it is with that inspiration that we will move forward as an arts council.

I wish to thank the Regional District of the North Okanagan and the British Columbia Arts Council and BC Gaming for their unwavering support through this crisis. Many organizations and agencies put measures in place to help us mitigate the untold impact that the Coronavirus has had on our local arts and culture community and we thank them.

We are an industry that relies heavily of bringing people together and recovery will mean looking at new and innovative ways of reimagining our future. Arts and culture have a significant role to play in society and in our local community and it will take the efforts of us all to meet the demands of the current situation and the planning required to build a brighter future.

The Arts Council of the North Okanagan remains committed to its mandate and will continue to work towards enriching and enhancing arts and culture in our community.