

The Vancouver Life Drawing Society's President's Report 2020/2021

To all members and to all participants of The Vancouver Life Drawing Society I address you now to report on the dealings of the Board of Directors over the past year. Because of Covid 19 we missed our chance to hold an AGM last year but hope to get back on track. In the interim please accept my President's Report ahead of schedule. It's an effort to reach out as this pandemic has a way of isolating us and as time passes can cause severe disconnect; one consequence of this plague.

So to start I bid you all welcome! Welcome to a New Year! Now if I were referring to the Gregorian or even Lunar calendar one might think me a little presumptuous welcoming you to a new year at this late date. The New Year I am referring to is one of a more personal significance to our Society. It was on the afternoon of Saturday March 14, 2020, at 5 pm that three of us met at Basic's studio at 1011 Main Street to attend an emergency meeting. Dean Gazeley, Alain Boullard and myself with our Secretary Paul Kernan on a conference call, faced the inevitable realization that the world was rapidly changing, gripped in a global pandemic that was fast spreading beyond anyone's control. There was no denying the facts as it was clear members had already voted with their presence or lack thereof, by the low session attendance during the previous weeks. In the end the decision was made. We voted to run our last two sessions on Sunday March 15 with March 16, 2020 being the date the studio officially closed. A date fast approaching as I pen these words, our own New Year is soon upon us.

However as I write, take heart, all is not lost! I bring you good tidings of how tirelessly the Board has been working to keep the studio viable and Society active. Yes the studio is closed however there was a short hiatus from June 20 to November 9, 2020 when we did manage to reopen. This was achieved in a large part to the auspicious and gallant efforts of some of our members. Our Treasurer, Ron Bijok set up online registration and payment via e transfer through our credit union to collect fees and pay models. Along with our Technology Director Nick Jackiw, the two of them colluded to draught safety protocols that sessions could operate under. Nick in addition took care of booking models. As an aside, Alain had been our Modelling Booker for years, retired from that position and devotes his Board duties to maintaining an assemblance of a gallery for Basic. Our Vice President Suzanne Saint-Pierre resurfaced the model stage to make it safer and easy to clean and got Marlene Van Tassell back as our Cleaner. Ron provided the studio with a disinfecting solution for the stage, drawing horses, easels and hands. Seating was arranged to allow the maximum attendance while maintaining some order of social distancing. We started with one session on Saturdays which in time grew to include six weekly sessions with Ron managing Saturday and Sunday mornings, Christen Geiser Tuesday mornings, Dean Wednesday mornings, Ban Wei Wednesday evenings and Nick Thursday mornings. However following the Thanksgiving holiday BC's Covid infection numbers started to spike and on November 7 the health

authorities brought in new restrictions. The Board agonized and debated via email what to do and in the end made the decision to close Monday November 9, 2020, as we remain so to this day.

For the time being the Society has sufficient financial reserves to carry us through as we have seen our funds haemorrhage badly. We are locked into a 5-year lease with the City until September 1, 2022. We still have hydro, phone and insurance to pay, then there was the vandalism of one of our storefront windows to repair; around the time we were facing our second closure. Despite all this the Board perseveres with the business at hand.

Long before this pandemic was upon us the Board had discussed the necessity to move towards a cashless system of session and membership payment. This corona virus has served as a catalyst to prod us in that direction. Before the pandemic Nick had developed Robobooker, a software to assist in managing the booking of models for our sessions; prior to the lockdown we were running 11 sessions a week that Alain had painstakingly been managing via emails, texts and phone calls. As Nick was about ready for the big rollout we had to close; but during our four month reopening, Robobooker helped locate, schedule, and coordinate all of our subsequent bookings. Well if that wasn't enough Nick has developed and is putting the finishing touches on another more complex bit of software, a "Robo-strar," that will make online registration and purchase of sessions tickets and memberships a reality. The Board looked at a couple of "off the shelf" products but none of them fit our business model and still required hours of someone's time to research and install. What Nick has come up with has its risks but with his guidance, creativity, expertise and ministrations has developed our own custom in house product that blows the competition out of the water. With it we will hopefully be able to run sessions with participants safely and securely making online purchases, freeing our session managers and Treasurer the headache of handling cash. We still have a few details to work out but are getting there.

Another big development on the horizon, Nick has been heading up a committee with Paul and Alain to start our own online sessions. Nick has managed to get Wi-Fi into the studio (which by the way turned into a real odyssey; almost on par with Homer's. But I will let him share in the gory details should any of you wish to know). With the uncertainty as to when BC will reach herd or (as Dr. Bonnie Henry calls it) community immunity the Board felt we should try, as a means of keeping active with our members, entering the online culture of life drawing; a phenomenon that has become a global pastime. You will be hearing more about this as the committee readies to roll out the programme.

Another success story has been the Board's ability to capitalize on our charitable status to receive donations and issue tax receipts. We have had this ability legally for years but never had a Board capable of, pardon the pun, "cashing in on it!" Thanks again to Ron for researching and acquiring the needed tax receipts and Dean for apprising the Board of the Canada Helps website, where donations to any

number of charities can be made (apparently Basic Inquiry was registered sometime in the past we just didn't know about it) we were able to kick start a campaign last December just in time for the conclusion of the 2020 tax year. I wish to take this time to thank all of you who gave so generously. The Board was truly humbled by the support shown. Sometimes we work so hard it's reassuring that there are members out there that care enough. So yes the campaign was quite a success with Ron managing numerous emails and tax receipts for those who gave directly through him and the Canada Helps website was a godsend for those you gave via that site. Nick will be establishing a link on our website to the Canada Helps site so in future, members and the general public may conveniently donate as they see fit without involving the Board.

Another success, Ron and Nick (boy those two are getting their names mentioned a lot) managed to apply for and receive some rent relief through the CERS, Canada Emergency Rental Subsidy, which will save us some needed cash.

Lastly I wish to revisit the yet to be announced AGM. As mentioned we missed our chance to hold an AGM in 2020. We realize the need to hold one for this year; just haven't quite figured out when. It will be by Zoom so stay tuned via our Board meeting minutes and emailed communiqués.

So that's about it for me. However should any of you wish to email the Board we can be found on the Contacts Page of our Website at www.lifedrawing.org. For your convenience they are:

- Vice President Suzanne Saint-Pierre, suzanne@lifedrawing.org, for general inquiries as to the state of the Society. If she hasn't the answer she will get it for you.
- Treasurer Ron Bijok, treasurer@lifedrawing.org, for particulars on our financial standing and charitable receipts.
- Secretary Paul Kernan, paul@lifedrawing.org, for any queries on our minutes, notices, filings and online sessions.
- Technology Director Nick Jackiw, nick@lifedrawing.org, for any queries on Robobooker, Robostrar, studio Wi-Fi, online sessions and models.
- Member at Large Dean Gazeley, dean@lifedrawing.org, for any queries on charitable donations via the Canada Helps website. Dean also serves on the Fee Structure Committee with Nick and Ron looking at questions of what to charge once we are back in operation.
- Gallery Coordinator Alain Boullard, alainboullard@shaw.ca, also serves with the OnLine Sessions Committee and would be happy to discuss with any

member wishing to show their work in our gallery during these times of Covid.

So folks, please remain safe, calm and kind and on behalf of the Board we look forward to seeing you back in the studio sometime real soon.

Douglas Smardon
President
March 10, 2021