



# BURNS BOG CONSERVATION SOCIETY

## **2021 Annual General Meeting Report of the Board June 29, 2021**

Hello everyone! Thank you all for attending our second virtual online AGM. The following Report of the Board provides a summary of the significant events experienced by the Society since our last AGM held on April 3, 2021.

Although our 2020 AGM took place three short months ago, the Board of Directors has been hard at work rebuilding and reinvigorating the Society, following a long period of stagnation and internal acrimony. That acrimony is reflected in the various emails that most of you have received in recent days from a few former directors who appear to have little interest in promoting the wellbeing of the Society or its supporters. But more on that a bit later.

2021 has been a mostly successful year for our Society thus far, aided first and foremost by a strong, vibrant and united Board of Directors, elected with the support of our members at our April AGM. Our new Board is comprised of a talented bunch of volunteer directors who are wholly devoted to protecting and preserving “The Lungs of the Lower Mainland” – the ecological jewel that is Burns Bog.

I would like to personally thank our long-time directors, Vice-President Liz Walker, Treasurer Ed Brown, Secretary Nancy McLeod, and outgoing Board-Staff Liaison Bob Saito, who have put their hearts into keeping this Society alive and well, not only during the past three months, but through the last several difficult years. I would also like to commend our new directors, Bev Bly, Chris Durrant, Laurie Haliburton, Pixie Hobby, Lynne Mackenzie, and Angela Rebrec, for their hard work, reliable support, and solid advice during their brief term of office. As President, I am proud to call these people not just my Board colleagues, but my friends.

The Society’s renewed success is equally the result of our amazing office staff, led by our new Interim General Manager, Evelyn Wedley, who was recently promoted from her long-time position as the Society’s Accountant. In both roles, Evelyn has been our bedrock of stability, dedication, and problem-solving expertise. She has worked so hard to keep this Society going through some very tough times. Thank you, Evelyn, for everything that you have done, and continue to do, to build our capacity to defend the best interests of Burns Bog, both within our community and beyond.

Evelyn and the Board are aided in our work by a fabulous group of new summer student hires, who have been hard at work planning summer educational and outreach activities, even as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.

Our summer students are currently working to organize summer day camps, multiple school tours through the Bog, and our annual Jog for the Bog. Our annual Step into Nature program is on hold until summer 2022 as we prepare to retool and expand it, but it will be back in style in a year's time.

In particular, our summer day camp program remains hugely popular. Despite reduced class sizes due to COVID protocols, the program is sold out for the summer and has a long wait list filled with excited kids. We are working to expand our numbers as BC government regulations allow.

The energy and enthusiasm of our summer hires is also assisting the Society with other matters. Some of our ongoing initiatives include updating and refreshing the Society's website, Burns Blog newsletters, and our social media pages, work that is greatly appreciated and long overdue. Our summer students have also been a huge help in completing our West Coast Seeds guerrilla gardening direct mail fundraising initiative, and organizing the July 24<sup>th</sup> Burns Bog Golf Tournament, in conjunction with the Burns Bog Conservation Foundation. Finally, we are also working to continue expanding our membership and donor bases, long-term projects which we know will bear fruit in due course.

Of course, the past three months have not been without their challenges. First and foremost, I would like to personally apologize to each of you here tonight for the many unwelcome emails that you have received since April from former Society directors Eliza Olson and her daughter, Porsha Von Kish, who continue to make unauthorized use of the Society's membership list to carry out what appears to be a personal quarrel with the Society, its Board, and its membership, despite having been warned against misuse of internal Society information. Such messages are an abuse of members' privacy and will not be tolerated. The Board is currently seeking guidance from our legal counsel, Norton Rose Fulbright, to ascertain how we can put a stop to this harassment of our valued members. We will update you on developments in this regard as they occur.

Secondly, you will note from our 2020 financial statements that our fiscal position has deteriorated by roughly \$70,000 over the past year. This is obviously not a good thing. This reversal, which we are confident is temporary, is almost entirely the result of two things. First, the Society has incurred substantial legal fees to (successfully) defend itself against illegal actions taken by a minority of former Board members in 2020, as outlined in our April 2021 Board Report.

Second, the Society lost more than \$70,000 in BC Gaming grant funds in 2020, again as a direct result of illegal actions taken by former directors last year to tamper with the Burns Bog's BC Societies Registration, its bank accounts, and its mail. This tampering directly led to the temporary loss of the BC Gaming grant, which we are working hard with staff to get back for 2021 and beyond. Were it not for those two significant impacts, the Society would likely have emerged stronger from the pandemic than when we entered it.

But optimism is this Board's watchword, and we are determined to build up our fundraising capacity by leaps and bounds. That job began on April 3, and it will continue following the close of this AGM. For starters, as you will see later on during this AGM, we have plans to apply for up to \$60,000 in funds through the federal government's Canada Emergency Business Account, and to seek up to another \$7500 from the provincial government's BC Launch Online Grant Program, to modernize the website and online sales capacity of both the Society and the Foundation.

My friends, this Board sincerely believes that the sky is the limit for this Society, and the good that it can do for Burns Bog, and the wider community. I'm equally confident that the next Board of Directors will continue to work productively with staff, volunteers, members, and our external partners, including the City of Delta and Metro Vancouver, to build a better, stronger Society in the months and years ahead.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of our valued members, from the bottom of our hearts, for standing with the Burns Bog Conservation Society through these challenging times. Together, we will continue our work to protect and preserve "The Lungs of the Lower Mainland" for future generations to come!

With sincere thanks,

Derek Zeisman  
President  
Burns Bog Conservation Society  
On behalf of the Board of Directors