



2021 Annual General Meeting

Executive Director's Report

The 2020 year began stronger than 2019 and by mid-March, VDPAC had significantly addressed the typical, annual Q1 shortfall. With the March 15 COVID-19 shutdown, we missed-out on four sell-out events that would have set us up nicely for the balance of 2020. Of the many challenges COVID presented from the outset, from a sustainable operational perspective, the constant has been, "For how long?!". With ongoing obligations, VDPAC's shutdown was not an option.

1. Continued Management Throughout the COVID Pandemic:

13 core staff (department heads, box office, technicians & maintenance) were retained on CEWS since March 15 (50% remotely); with 22 casuals & crew, and 235 volunteers without work until the return of public events. Management has continued since, to address:

- a) **Bookings:** At March 15, 86 contracted events, plus Holds & annual Spring & Summer events, with re-scheduling to Fall 2020, then Q1 in 2021, then Fall 2021, several now 2022;
- b) **Patrons:** Over 10,000 active ticketholders & 100,000 accounts, including Ticket Seller clients, notifications, movement to new show dates or refunds & several donations;
- c) **Artists & Agents:** Re-scheduling of contracted Artists; payment of Artist Guarantee deposits as directed by funders in support of Artists;
- d) **Sector Monitoring:** Weekly Zoom videoconferences – National (CAPACOA, Canadian Heritage); Provincial – (BC Touring Council Town Halls); Regional – (Kootenay Presenters Network; Prairie Presenters Network) to monitor pandemic developments, sector survival strategies, programming options, continued support for Presenters, Artists & Agents;
- e) **Annual Facility Maintenance:** Moved up to April to allow for possible Summer 2020 re-opening, despite uncertainty of the shutdown's duration;
- f) **Facility Upgrades:** Preparations for eventual re-opening – Green Room décor; Main foyer sound system to welcome patrons; foyer artwork & sculpture labelling; Venue signage;
- g) **Sector Compensation Funding:** Pursued all eligible sources of funding to offset almost complete loss of earned revenue from suspended SPOTLIGHT & Outreach activities;
- h) **PHO-Compliant "Safety & Re-Opening Plan":** Created and regularly updated to continue as a safe workplace & eventual event host, including purchase of COVID prevention fixtures & equipment, (plexi-barriers, extra stanchions, freestanding sanitizer dispensers, hydrostatic disinfecting sprayer, floor-markers, masks for patrons & staff onsite);
- i) **Professional Development:** Staff has participated in free sector online conferences, (ActSafe BC; BCTC's Virtual Pacific Contact), webinars and accredited post-secondary courses (digital storytelling & marketing; volunteer management); and firsthand training re: videography, editing & post-production, with onsite industry consultations pending.

2. Board Governance:

Monthly meetings moved to Zoom with regular reporting functions and a pivot to a cash flow operation, with monthly updated projections to the fiscal year-end from management.

3. Development & Introduction of Online Programming:

Secured \$78,740 from Canada Cultural Spaces Fund (CCSF) matched with a \$85,000 re-allocation of RDNO's 2020 VDPAC capital replacement budget for our "Digital Stages Development Project" (DSDP) to pivot to online content production; acquisition of state-of-the-art HD Video & Digital Audio recording & live-streaming & other equipment, including:

- a) **MFH Studio Conversion:** Acoustic & physical upgrade of MFH rehearsal hall to "MFH Studio" for recordings & streaming Artists; to also serve as an attractive, low-cost rental & small-scale performance, workshop, meeting or event venue to bolster PAC rentals;
- b) **Local & Area Artist Engagement:** First "Call for Artists" auditioned 37 performers, with 22 selected for first-time recording sessions (between November & January) for inaugural online programming. Post-production generated episode trailers & over 50 Artist featurettes, posted to VDPAC's YouTube channel;
- c) **FOCUS Online Series:** Introduced a 6-Episode, FREE bi-weekly series broadcast through Ticket Seller on the DaCast streaming platform; followed by 4-Episode, free bi-weekly **The B-Sides** series to May 30th, garnered over 3,900 viewers;
- d) **Live-Streamed SPOTLIGHT & Renters' Events:** Added *monetized*, streamed recorded & live events featuring Ballet Kelowna, Andrew Allen, Kym Gouchie & Sean Ling-Allen as pilot projects to cultivate online audiences, (1,116 viewers), for future integration with live, in-person programming & to develop online admission revenue & donations;
- e) **CCSF/RDNO Additions & Replacements:** DSDP Project also replaced the theatre's subwoofers in the line arrays (speakers); expiring network servers & T8 lighting fixtures with LED's throughout the PAC; and added MFH Studio drapery, window block-outs & projection screen system; a portable PA system & mic inventory, (\$183,240 project);

4. Adapted Public SPOTLIGHT Events:

Two, sold-out SPOTLIGHT OnSTAGE Concerts, (limited to 50-patrons), were hosted in November featuring two, back-to-back, 1-hour concerts by Andrew Allen & comedian Mike Delamont, with COVID safety protocols, prior to the PHO's reinstated shutdown in December, but proved a workable & expandable performance format for reopening under capacity audience limits.

5. Capital Projects:

Staff & Volunteer entrances' security enclosures; flooring replacement (all lino & carpeting throughout); Main entrance ramp & railings replacements are all to be completed by mid-June 2021, under RDNO's 2021 capital replacement budget.

6. Supplemental COVID-19 Funding & Compensation:

"Resiliency" funding in 2020 was made available by Federal & Provincial governments through existing Presenting funders to help fulfil pre-COVID & scheduled Artist guarantees whose dates

were cancelled or postponed. Annual Presenting Grants, (CAP-F from Canadian Heritage; CPA, MYE & WUTA grants from BC Touring Council; RDNO Presenting Grant), were still awarded in 2020 to assist with online programming development & to support both Artists & Presenters. VDPAC pursued all additional, accessible COVID relief funding, as compensation for lost programming & earned revenue:

- a) **Vancouver Foundation “Community Response Grant”:** \$50,000;
- b) **CAP-F Top-up:** \$11,250 (Max. 25% of \$45,000 annual Presenting grant);
- c) **BC Arts Council Resiliency Fund PRP Grant:** \$5,000;

COVID relief funding received in the first-half of 2021 to date:

- a) **BC Arts Council “Enhanced Arts & Culture Resilience Supplement (EACRS):** \$18,000 (Programming compensation);
- b) **BC Arts Council Resiliency Fund PRP Grant:** \$2,000 unsolicited top-up;
- c) **Community Foundation of North Okanagan (CFNO):** \$10,000 unsolicited, one-time, COVID-relief “operating” grant;
- d) **CAP-F Top-up:** \$10,000 supplement to annual Presenting Grant – pending.

7. Renewal of “Operating & Maintenance Agreement” (Re-Titled) with RDNO:

Following a 1-year extension for 2020 due to COVID, extensive negotiations continued throughout 2020 for the 2021-2025 term with the priority concern being to address the increasing costs of Theatre Operations, (56.1% in 2015-19 vs 17.1% increase in RDNO’s baseline funding by 2016, but flat-lined since); and achieving industry standards for staff compensation.

Over the shutdown, we identified new VDPAC measures to help address annually increasing costs, including: A comprehensive, comparative research of 34 BC & AB venues re: rental, tech & equipment rates & policies for re-structuring VDPAC rates in 2021, to remain consistent with venues along our shared tour routes; to remain affordable for 28 annual local user groups; and to generate added rental & related earned revenue. Add to this: Marketing the upgraded MFH Studio resources; and first-time, funder-eligible “cost recoveries” from our own SPOTLIGHT programming. These measures were projected over the new term & presented to RDNO to augment proposed increases in RDNO’s baseline funding; a proposed increase in the RDNO Presenting Grant in 2021; the addition of a “service level increase” for an added Marketing staff position; and a COVID Compensation grant in Fall 2021--for loss of bookings revenue, plus any safety-related equipment or fixtures required for safe, public reopening. A final Agreement renewal is now imminent.

I want to recognize the continued support of the Board and the dedication and the teamwork of our tremendous staff as we continue to navigate through all the uncertainty of the COVID pandemic and as we now prepare for reopening. I also want to acknowledge the added support of all our funders and the RDNO for their positive & collaborative approach in securing our continued role as stewards of the Vernon & District Performing Arts Centre.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jim Harding, Executive Director