

Vancouver Poetry House

June 6, 2021 4pm

Board attendees:

Amanda Eagleson

Holden Wall

Leslie Stark

Max Sumner

Regrets:

Guests/Staff: Colleen Brown (arrival

Joseph Dandurand, Laura Beatrice
Covaza, Sean McGarragle

Meeting Began: 16:13

Meeting End: 18:03

Motions:

- Motion to approve the May Meeting Minutes put forward by Amanda. Max Seconds.
Motion passes unanimously

Action Items:

- Holden (and rest of board) to set up meetings with those who expressed interest in the board membership callout
- Board begins committee member list conversation on Basecamp.
- Members of board to meet with Joseph regarding Slam Coordinator position
- Amanda to have an AGM agenda outline started and shared
- Amanda and Joseph to complete post for indigenous history month that acknowledges recent events and offers indigenous led organizations to donate to (Colleen to put out using Hootsuite)

Agenda Item 1:

Land Acknowledgement : *As we gather for this meeting physically dispersed and virtually constructed let us take a moment to reflect the meaning of place, and doing so recognise the various traditional lands on which we do our meeting today.*

Compassion Acknowledgement:

“I hope you will have a wonderful year, that you'll dream dangerously and outrageously, that you'll make something that didn't exist before you made it, that you will be loved and that you will be liked, and that you will have people to love and to like in return. And, most importantly (because I think there should be more kindness and more wisdom in the world right now), that you will, when you need to be, be wise, and that you will always be kind.”— Neil Gaiman

Approve Minutes May Meeting Minutes

- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/14ehsbhDTYQEwejCkkg1lgSeaS9Q2-pFJ0fwxpmCY39Y/edit>

Amanda puts forward motion to approve the May meeting minutes.
Max seconds motion. Motion passes unanimously.

Update action Items:

- Holden (and rest of board) to set up meetings with those who expressed interest in the board membership callout---This is not completed but Holden had reached out to the rest of the board for assistance due to his current capacity in relation to long work hours and process is will be put back on track. Amanda and Max are assisting. *This action item to extend through June.*
- Board begins committee member list conversation on Basecamp.-- This was just done. Process ongoing. *This action Item to extend through June.*
- Members of board to meet with Joseph regarding Slam Coordinator position-- *Holden has reached out but there is no current follow-up (as of meeting).*

Joseph has questions regarding this “If the artistic director hires the Slam Master/Coordinator why is the board involved?”

Holden: This was just because it will be your first time taking the lead on a hiring process.

Joseph asks about changes (as this was a ballot process before).

It was.

Sean: Historically we've always done elections. But what we've had in the past is people

have gotten elected but not actually been...prepped or...(Amanda states: "Qualified").
Yes. It becomes a popularity contest.

Holden: So our last hiring process was a bit more in line with current processes but it still ended up being...this situation where two interviews went through the process and then had a 'test' night at the Slam. And the Community voted for who they wanted.

Amanda: It ended up being very 'American Idol' . It was not a good process. Leslie: I agree. That was not good.

Joseph: Has Sam left us? I haven't seen anything in writing? Or are we just rehiring as they live in Victoria and we think we are going to go live sooner rather than later?

Amanda: It was going to be later but "it's related to whenever the cafe wants" (essentially).

Joseph: I would definitely accept some assistance with this (doesn't want to be "Simon Cowell").

Holden: We can set-up a meeting on this for sure (this week if need be)

Extension of Action Item 3: To Look over 2018-19 Canada Heritage grant for an outline as to how to improve the Slam Coordinator position (for guidance)

Amanda: We can go over that if/when we do a meet-up. But Colleen had brought that up because Johnny had some good ideas in there.

- Colleen will resend the PDF needed for accountants (to Laura to send or direct to accountants)--This was completed
- Amanda to combine the work of the Pivot and Work Plan and revisit what we started with HR (guidelines for internal hires/when to hire internally)-- Amanda: I had done the readover. I've just done an outline of the Guidelines for us to have a lookover (later in Agenda). I think it is a good idea to have these guidelines.
- Board to review and go over new contract with Colleen---This has been done. Colleen had some concerns before signing. These were addressed with Amanda following the meeting. Colleen also brought up the New Media Strategies Grant and that she and Brad wrote in receiving compensation for their own labor on that grant. She understands this to be separate from the contract money that we have. Amanda confirms this.
- Amanda to add the following to the post: That we are expanding the board, information about the raffle, boilerplate about Verses: artists, attendants, reach of festival. We should bring up that last year we remained committed to paying artists as we bring up the commitment to paying artists. ---This is done and posted.
- AGM Date: AGM date nailed down (vote)
August 7th (Sat)
14:00 (2pm)
Virtual Meeting

Amanda: I can put this forward as a motion but I believe this has been confirmed to work with staff and board members.

Holden: So we are all confirmed?

Joseph might be fishing. We are generally allowed Saturdays and Sundays. I can probably send in a written statement? Amanda: Or we can do something like what we did for Colleen last year as she had a class and was basically there for just that amount of time. We can try to work something like that out?

Sean: And the AGM is going to be in person or on Bluejeans?

Holden: Virtual (per write up in Agenda)

Leslie: We need to approve the financials before the AGM we should set a date for that (maybe at the July meeting?)

Laura regarding 2020 financials. Will contact [avisar](#) and Leslie will check in.

Holden we could have a meeting regarding this (assuming the first Sunday of August is a board meeting date). Colleen points out that this is a long weekend. This would need to be done during a quick meet-up in July (or as document based on Basecamp though people's understanding of financial documents should be taken into account if that's the way it is done).

Agenda Item 2: Financials

Leslie: Looking over the financials for the last month from what I understand our budgeted Vs actuals, our actuals are a little bit better off than what we had budgeted (though we are still in the red).

Laura: (To clarify) For May, the budget doesn't align (and it's more loss) but if you look year to date (up to date) it's actually better than the budget. We have incurred less overall loss than anticipated in the budget.

Leslie: Not a lot of people are making money in the Arts at this time.

Agenda Item 3: GM Report

I contacted Naomi Gracechild; she hasn't gotten back to me yet. Her outline suggested we would start the process in July. I'm eager to hear back from her. She recently wrote an article very critical of the BC Alliance for Arts + Culture. This has me questioning her if she would want to do this work with an arts organization (given her bad experience). I will send the link to anyone who hasn't read it, it's very well written.

I contacted the potential applicant for the WordPlay position so that might be resolved very quickly. People seem interested in Volunteering again so I would like to start the hiring process for that right away.

Brad got a hold of Zayn for (we owe them a show as cips winner). And there are a few things "in process" regarding awards. But essentially Verses is completed.

For 2022 we are very close to having all of the venues done (there are a few delays resulting from covid but we are really close).

Brad and I are doing a survey for artists (mostly performing artists), it's sort of focused on digital work artists are doing and what sort of workshops they would like to see (as well as accessibility needs they would like to see met) but if you have any questions you want included please share them.

A community member was asking why we don't use ASL/translate (French) everything? The obvious answer being that we can't afford it. I started to respond but outside of a digital environment but I was unsure. I mean regarding having a polyphonic community presenting work in several languages (I am unsure of the feasibility or if its even a goal).

Leslie: Regarding translation. That's not an easy thing to do very well. But for ASL. That is a good idea, it is also very expensive.

Colleen: We are likely never going to be able to afford an interpreter at (every) slam.

Amanda: It's a difficult format and would be more expensive as a result. There's no submitting work in advance you would need really experienced interpreters.

Sean: We might be able to approach cultural organizations (in Quebec) there might be opportunities for partnership there.

Colleen: I will continue the conversation as I think this person might be connected within the community and have information they could share.

Agenda Item 4: AD Report

We had a Verses meeting on June 1st and we summarized everything. There were three things that came out of that meeting. 1) Having other collaborators (2) Venues was another (which Colleen, Brad, and RC are working on (3) Amanda you had sent me the idea (which I thought was wonderful) for promoting donations for indigenous organizations (I'm not sure everyone else was privy to that).

Amanda: I have a spot in the Agenda for it.

I did want to add organizations for the missing and murdered women. I also liked the Poetry in Prisons idea. I have so many books. Once you make a connection we can send some right away.

We had discussed Stage to Page being associated with WordPlay.

Colleen: WordCamp. We can't do Wordcamp because there's no funding. And Johnny suggested a Stage to Page with a youth focus. The other thing Johnny brought up was that they (Johnny and Brad) are working on the next Stage to Page and they were looking for community partnership funding (\$500 straight-up). VPH would be a community partner so we would get publicity from them and vice versa. As long as I've been here we haven't given any money as a community partner so this would be a new arrangement. And I thought I should get board input. We would need criteria for deciding that (partnerships with fiduciary ties).

Joseph: Additionally, we are looking for a new graphic designer and will need to consider hiring

for that. [Jay Havens](#) is a name I would like to put forward. He is a wonderful designer. Beginning to write down thoughts for Verses 2022 and I've been thinking about designing this in a way that fits both a virtual and live space (should we need to do virtual still).

Holden: I think building in a virtual festival is smart. Currently people are so much more familiar with that space a pivot to fully virtual isn't as challenging as it was.

Joseph: Even doing a half and half.

Leslie: Eventbased (yes) I think Hullabaloo works better in a live space. I felt youth engagement there was really down this year (though events were attended).

Max: I wonder if online is more accessible for people with social anxiety who may want to participate in these things.

Sean: Simultaneous seems a possibility (online open mics/streaming).

Colleen: We can't afford to livestream everything but would you want to say that one or two of our events will be dual? I think it could be a good thought experiment (which events would work best).

Sean: You could do a sneak peek event. It leaves it open.

Amanda: I think workshops were well attended on Zoom.

Colleen: Our daytime attendance is better on Zoom than live. How do we think of money for community partnerships with Johnny.

Joseph: How does it work for Verses.

Colleen: It's different, we pay for a curated event.

Joseph: Couldn't costs be offset then?

Colleen: That's one way to think of it.

Leslie: I know for theatre companies it is pretty standard to be coproducers on shows (where they just give a production say \$5000. To have that on their roster and they don't necessarily have that much involvement in the actual direction or whatever. And it's not a bad idea, it's a good way to have your name on more productions. Also \$500 isn't that much to put VPH's name out there as co-producers of an event. Especially one that seems pretty successful and I think Johnny's work is really worth supporting.

Max: Would we want to then put, say, a yearly cap in terms of what we would be willing to

commit to for similar requests?

Amanda: I'm with Leslie, I've no problem with the \$500 I think it's a great idea. But when speaking of having criteria, I think having a financial cutoff point is smart.

Colleen: I like the idea of having a financial cutoff. We are vulnerable to both the appearance and actuality of making decisions based on friendships. (Brings up that she is to talk to Johnny on Monday).

Max: Would it be ok to make the decision now (given the timeframe) with the caveat that we will set standards for future requests?

Amanda: We can acknowledge it's a bit cart before horse, but yeah I think that's ok given the timeframe.

Leslie: When this happens in theatre companies it is usual a decision made in partnership (the GM and AD). As it's part of the programming for the year (and is incorporated into your programming for the year/comes out of your program funds). And as long as it fits with your programming and your mandate...

Max: And so you just account for it, in your reports.

Colleen: So Joseph and I can take it from here? Does that sound right?

(Yes)

Agenda Item 5: Talk About Slam

Amanda: Of the points mentioned I mainly wanted to confirm dates and that the reason we were moving this forward was the venue?

Sean: Can I ask when the date is and what the situation is with the cafe?

Colleen: I haven't contacted Jeff before but I will do that again soon. We do need to follow what the cafe says or risk losing the spot which would be a bit devastating. So it's "ready to go when you are". Also we need to have our own protocols.

Leslie: Like wiping down the mic...

Colleen: And Training staff

Some conversation about mic options. Max brought up just wearing a mask. Leslie confirms with a mic the mask doesn't really muffle that much. Colleen points out that this comes from the performance part of worksafe and isn't something that we have to invent ourselves.

Amanda: And I just wanted to confirm we don't have a hard date on this yet. We just want to be ready?

Colleen: Provincial Guidelines it is looking like mid-August (earliest).
And the "homecoming" event doesn't have to be tied to the venue.

Sean: It could also be done in conjunction with a group like Story Slam.

Leslie: And they are looking for a spot (because cottage bistro closed).

Colleen: They have reached out a couple times.
Partnerships and movement are good but it needs more ramp up.

Joseph and I will talk about a big event, getting money to Stage to Page, and I will bring you the worksafe plan.

Agenda Item 5: June Social Media

Amanda shares post previously discussed with Joseph about indegiounous People's Month.
Joseph and Amanda to go over the specific post (and organizations) and will share with Colleen who will post.

Agenda Item 6: Guidelines For Internal Hires

Amanda shares draft doc of Guidelines.

Holden: Just to clarify these are "When am I allowed to Hire Internally?"

Amanda: Or when does it make sense to hire internally. It's just supposed to be something, because we are aiming to be more expansive with hiring, to have (as a guideline) if you're not going to post externally.

Holden: It seems like any of our positions would be covered here. I'm wondering if this functions more as justification for hiring internally (maybe when it's not fully called for). I'm wondering if it wouldn't make sense to have more of a step-by-step. "Here are all the factors considered for hiring externally, and these are the reasons it is not an option in this case".

Leslie: And what we are talking about really is if we are posting a position or not.*

Colleen: This is a good point as there are two situations: One would be an internal hire that would be where someone works for us in one role and we want them to work with us in another

(and the position isn't posted as a result). The other is programming, so when do we design a show around artists and not have open calls. Maybe there could be a goal of having open calls for a manageable number of events.

Leslie: I would second Holden's concerns. And I'm concerned also that we aren't bringing up diversity in the documentation and it should be specified as a priority in all documents.

Amanda: Notes this and the importance of calling back to CoCo.

Offers to put the document up in Basecamp.

Holden: Thank you for getting started. We can narrow this.

Leslie: I did want to bring up going into the AGM that there will be questions around what we have done in the past year in terms of addressing systemic racism. We need to have answers to that as it will come up.

Joseph: Was there a conversation about policy.

Colleen: We did get \$28,000 to get the work.

Sean: You will want to be careful with that. In terms of people having opinions on where money should go, I think too it is a pandemic year. Hopefully people will be considerate of that.

Joseph: Were there racist events I'm unaware of.

Leslie: I think you know and were present for a lot of this conversation. The board had received a letter from a former staff member about systemic racism that was experienced and (while we have responded to that) it was very delayed and not well handled. And there have been other instances brought up by other former staff and what happened with the former board member and how that was handled.

Sean: Confirms that issues are ongoing. The organization was founded by a large group of well-meaning white people but there have been long-standing issues. But there have been some bad mistakes. Getting that grant is a huge step in the right direction on issues that were previously not addressed.

Colleen: And I did want to stress that when I brought up the grant it was in reference to the labor that went into it (not the dollar amount). There was labor that went into doing this work. Also, I can't speak for Joseph, but when I hear the board talk about this it still sounds very cryptic. If we are speaking about recent events there was the letter and also what went before it which involved tension between staff causing simmering issues to explode. With regards to the former board member. They were not a good board member. It felt, to me, like someone being disruptive to be disruptive, but race was involved there. We are in a good space as an

organization to do better.

Joseph: Is the holdup with Naomi? It's just scheduling correct? And is that the only candidate we have?

Amanda: There were a lot of people I talked to on the list, so we can go back to the list if need be.

Leslie: Just generally people who do this work are very busy right now.

Joseph: Do all of these issues need to be addressed? Specifically, are there legal issues?

(No. Primarily Personal)

Max discusses the importance of giving people tools.

Colleen: One other thing that could be brought up is we were not really good about getting artist contracts before and we've managed to do that. I consider that a teaching tool for young artists so they have and understand expectations to have from other organizations. We also have Worksafe Insurance (if someone gets hurt they can be helped now). This might not be specifically about racism but it is an improvement for everyone.

Max: And do we have a bullying and harassment policy in line with Worksafe BC?

Colleen: We do. In line with this we have to provide better training for our WordPlay poets (or anyone working with youth).

Leslie: I agree 100%.

Colleen: I think all of these things show that we are making steps for people to have clear expectations and hold us accountable to those expectations. We can also invent someone to do a workshop prior (like we did with Janice)?

Leslie: As Sean is here I did want to say their partner led a workshop for Touchstone Theatre (that I was a part of) which was one of the best anti-racism workshops I've ever attended.

Sean: Thank you for sharing.

Colleen: [221a](#) has done an amazing job of working together to do this work themselves. I liked that model but it was a lot of work.

Sean thanks the board and that he appreciates the work going into the organization. And how good it is to see people working together. Sean leaves meeting.

Amanda and Colleen stay back to discuss the contract.

Meeting adjourned at 18:04