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Community Relations Report – Annual General Meeting October 3, 2019

This report is for the fiscal year covering June 1, 2018 to May 31, 2019. I became the new Community Relations Coordinator for YANA in May 2018 (just before the new fiscal year began). The YANA office has been such a pleasure to work in over the past year plus. It is a friendly, busy, little office in Tin Town providing a tucked-away neighbourhood vibe that works well for our clients and office visitors. The Tin Town Cafe, in particular, has been such a supportive neighbour to our clients, staff, and board. This was a transitional year with me initially reporting to executive director Marcie Dumais and then our current executive director Kelly Barnie as of August 2018. Both women are such incredible leaders that I want to acknowledge the mentorship role they have been for me. Their individual passion and skill set always had YANA's team in good hands. Director Lesley Hunter is a dedicated "go to" figure for general historical knowledge and overall help in the office. Having a director in the office on an ongoing basis is valuable for the board to see how busy the office can be with phone calls, visitors, and especially during event times. Her consistent assistance at her office desk is so very much appreciated. Past president Judy Cryer also pitched in when Lesley was not available and was helpful with her emails providing myself and Kelly any YANA related background information. Lastly, our hard working Board of Directors have been a real asset in supporting my position, giving of their knowledge, energy, and time even though they all in their own right have busy lives outside of YANA.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Again this year, our presence in local media has been notable. Generally, our fundraisers have had great coverage in the Record newspaper, and in particular their promotion of the YANA Ride.

Many of our third-party fundraisers have also had their press releases make the paper. The Valley Vonka fundraising event sponsored in part by the Record gave us the chance to have feature stories in a series of articles called 'Birth Stories.' The community pages also featured photos of many of our cheque presentations as well.

Local radio stations and publications continue to be generous in their promotion of YANA. Kelly Barnie and myself have had several live interviews on air.

Board Director Dan Costain led the YANA Week in the Schools, taking the role over from Hugh MacKinnon. Many schools within School District 71 plan events during a special week dedicated to YANA, raising awareness and funds. Some schools support YANA at other times of the year. We are so very fortunate to have this relationship with the school district and see all ages of the students participating. I found that fewer school events happened this year but they did include a SD#71 dunk tank, student led baking sales, and youth Rotary Interac Club events.

Thanks to our staff, Board Directors and YANA Ambassadors, as they were a strong presence out in the community. YANA representatives attended many events and groups of people like church, Chamber of Commerce Mixers, sports events and Rotary/Lions service club meetings.

VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT

It's heartwarming to see YANA volunteers, of all ages, showing their generosity, spirit, and sense of community throughout the year. YANA is blessed to be in a position of having so many people who want to "do something" for YANA! As a rule, we try to reach out to those who have previously volunteered for a specific role first, and then use the computer volunteer database program SUMAC to email open volunteer positions. We sometimes then do a Facebook volunteer call out post if necessary. This process can rely heavily on many back and forth emails to coordinate, answer any further questions and finally schedule in volunteers. Alternatively, we do a group email call out to our YANA directors and/or ambassadors when it best suits someone who can be in a more official representative role for YANA.

Soon after this fiscal year ended we started using a new software tool for volunteer management and scheduling called Sign Up Genius. Although the initial startup required extensive buildout, I feel this program has been a vast improvement for streamlining communications to volunteers and will be an asset to build upon for future events. We have also discussed the benefit of an online volunteer form and can see that transitioning away from our paper version soon.

Our YANA volunteers make remarkable commitments around our big fundraisers and take on leadership roles in all of our YANA events: Big Love Benefit, Simon's Cycles YANA Ride (Comox Bike Company YANA Ride is re-branded and falls under our next fiscal year), YANA Kids Clutter Sales, and YANA Christmas Crackers. More third party fundraiser volunteer supports are noted in the third party fundraiser section.

GRATITUDE

Kelly Bernie implemented a new Google Sheet 'YANA Donation Acceptance form.' It's an improved way for all in the office to access each donor, and coordinate gratitude (thank you cards and, if applicable, web thanks.) I look after web thanks and, with assistance from director Rosanne Gerritsen coming on board to help last Fall, together we helped keep deadlines for web thanks and their monthly Facebook recognitions more possible. Lesley looked after the majority of the written thank you cards (she has the best penmanship). On occasion, myself & Kelly Bernie will strategically select cards to handwrite as well. Sending a handwritten thank

you note of acknowledgment sets us apart from other larger non-profits. It keeps the Comox Valley connected with YANA's 'grass roots' and helps to nurture a non-corporate feeling. I would recommend that YANA always have a system in place so our donors see that someone took the time to use personal handwriting for them. After large events it is helpful to have volunteers recruited for the logistics of getting hand written notes done. Champions at Community First Insurance were a big help after Big Love under director Kate Berg's coordination.

When requested, we meet with third party fundraisers after events and do an oversized 'novelty' cheque presentation and photo op either at the YANA office or location of their choice. We update our posts with these photos under 'Thank You's' on our website (under the News section, and sub-section Thank You's.)

Our Staff, Board Members and YANA Ambassadors are all very mindful of sharing gratitude to those who they interact with and see supporting YANA.

SOCIAL MEDIA

This fiscal year our YANA Comox Valley Facebook page started with 2688 likes and reached 2971 by the end of May. An increase of 283 new likes, up 10.5%. "Spoiler alert" we have since then broke through the 3000 benchmark! Facebook continues to be our main use of social media and works well for us to share stories, express gratitude, promote events, volunteer call outs and direct traffic to our website.

For example, one post had organically reached an astonishing 7,554 people. That was a volunteer call out for 2 able-bodied people in Vancouver to move large furniture from room to room at one of our apartments. This kind of community support and engagement (for what we thought might be a difficult one to fill) solidifies how Comox Valley folks show up for YANA's needs and have a direct impact on our YANA families. We have also strategically boosted two FB posts during this fiscal year when we wanted to ensure a large engagement. A "Why do you Ride" at the 2018 Simon Cycles YANA Ride which had 133 reactions, comments & shares. Budget spent \$50. The other, announcing the online Big Love auction closure, had 108 reactions, comments & shares. Budget spent \$50.

We generally don't post to our Instagram account but, when notified of any YANA related posts and follows, we 'comment' and 'like' where appropriate. Our Instagram page currently has 655 followers. FB has fit our demographic well, but as the influence on Instagram increases, we will most likely need to adapt to it. Lesser used platforms include Twitter (tied to FB) and YouTube.

THIRD PARTY FUNDRAISING

These are community led fundraisers initiated and organized by the Comox Valley community (and sometimes beyond). They have a large impact for YANA and are most important in our fundraising efforts. We are able to support these diverse events by adding them to our event calendars on Facebook and our website; sharing them through social media posts and posting

any available news stories to our website. We are able to provide YANA logos, signage, donation cans, and informational materials for these events and a YANA representative if requested. Providing YANA volunteer support to actively assist with the coordination of the event is considered an “other” request that we have to consider. We try to accommodate whenever possible, historically for larger community led events, those with wide-spread community outreach and those that we have a history with providing volunteer support.

The ‘Thank You’s’ section on the YANA website is a great place to scroll through to understand what all our community, organizations and businesses come up with to fundraise for YANA. These events range from little kid craft sales, to larger more coordinated events involving multiple businesses, media and groups working together. The long time YANA champions that put in the time running events for us year after year shows their ongoing heart and commitment to YANA. New people also come into the fold with YANA fundraising ideas and vision. It is always such a great feeling to be the CRC for YANA and share their community led successes.

CLOSING

Although I have resigned from my position as Community Relations Coordinator, (with my last shift being this evening’s AGM) I know I will maintain the YANA relationships that I have formed. I’ve spent a week training with Shormila and have enjoyed getting to know her better. I know you will all welcome and assist her to the new CRC position. YANA’s future is looking bright with the staff, board members, and YANA culture; the organization will continue to grow. I look forward to continuing on in a new capacity as a future YANA volunteer.

Deanne McRae | YANA Community Relations