

## **Introduction**

As many of you will remember, our last Annual General Meeting was postponed until early October due to the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic restrictions also led us, for the first time, to move our AGM to a virtual format. This has allowed for increased participation and greater geographic scope of participants in our group, which is one positive outcome of what has otherwise been a worrying and frustrating year for so many.

As with now two AGMs, we have also moved our regular board meetings to a virtual format, which has made it possible to attract the talents of a broader cross-section of our membership, beyond those who live in and around Victoria.

## **Achievements**

In less extraordinary times, I would be recounting a year-long list of ideas and initiatives, projects undertaken and goals accomplished. It's only been seven months since our Covid-rescheduled 2020 AGM, but I'm proud to be able to report that in those seven months, our all-volunteer organization has made a number of things happen that would have been considered an impressive record for a full 12 months in more ordinary times.

This record was perhaps foreshadowed by the heart-warming response of our alumni membership in supporting last spring's initiative by the School to create a Covid relief fund. The remarkably strong response of our alumni to this unexpected need spoke loudly and clearly that the generosity of our alumni is matched only by their pride in our School and their desire to see the SMUS community flourish into the future. As we approach the end of this school year, we can say with pride that the support of our alumni community has helped to retain our students and keep our enrollment full.

In many ways, the restrictions placed on our lives by the current pandemic have reminded me of a line from a 1980s rock song: "You don't know what you got till it's gone." [*Cinderella, 1988 in case you were wondering....*] The generosity of spirit with which so many have responded to this situation, both within our school and in our wider communities, has helped remind us to cherish and preserve those things which are most important, and has thus prompted many of us to look for ways, large and small, in which we can contribute to the places and institutions we value.

So, in our own small way, we are happy to report that, firstly, cricket has returned to SMUS! Through the support of a wide range of our alumni, who have given generously of their time, labour and funds, we have been able to undertake a refurbishment of the cricket pitch, nets and related facilities. Youth cricket programs are now underway for both boys and girls, thanks in no small part to the volunteer commitments of many of our members.

Those plans continue to evolve as we explore ways to renew and make best use of the Wenman pavilion facility; we are exploring ideas to create a space to attract and welcome our alumni and celebrate their accomplishments and the School's heritage, hopefully as a part of the Jubilee 50 celebrations which you will be hearing more about in the near future.

In March of this year, we organized our first SMUS Women Alumni [*or Alumnæ if you prefer – apologies for the Latin geekery...*] virtual wine tasting hosted by Tania Tomaszewska '88 and featuring wines from Liquidity Winery in Okanagan Falls, BC. With the success of that event, we are looking forward to staging additional wine and social events – hopefully in person in the very near future!

We have moved forward with organizing our Alumni mentorship program and have already helped to expose some of our more recent grads to career possibilities in our respective fields. We will be featuring many of the activities of this program in our social media feeds: Facebook, Instagram & LinkedIn [*and Twitter?*]. Anyone interested in helping support that program can contact.....

We are very happy to report that after several months of productive discussions coupled with some careful and detailed work, we have now finalized our renewed Memorandum of Understanding, which sets out the basic framework for the working relationship between the Alumni Association and the School. This is the latest step in the evolution of a partnership that began over 110 years ago, and will further define that partnership through the process of the School's Floreat 2030 strategic plan. Our role as key stakeholders in the School's success will be further strengthened by the new MoU, which will go a long way to harnessing our members' incredible pool of talents and strengths for the betterment of our School community.

In the longer term, we are beginning some initiatives which we hope will provide new avenues for our members' long-term support of the School. More information about these initiatives will be forthcoming in the next several months.

### **Board Changes**

As many more people are now comfortable using virtual meeting technology, we have continued to expand the geographical scope of our Board nominees. Last October, Neil Mulholland '88 joined us from Delta, BC; we are now pleased to welcome new nominees Jason Dearborn '90 from Saskatchewan, Matthew Adey '87 from Texas and Marina Uzelac '93. Regrettably, we will be saying goodbye to long-term member Chris Devlin '86. Chris was instrumental in getting the MoU project off the ground and bringing it to a successful completion. While he will be missed, we're certain that Victoria's cultural life will benefit from Chris' ongoing commitment to his community.

### **Conclusion**

As the last year or so has demonstrated, few things are truly certain in life. We have been reminded of the true nature of the term "resilience" as much of what we have taken for granted in our day-to-day lives has been altered in ways few of us would have chosen. All too many have had more to cope with than they ever thought they could bear. Those of us who have thus far been more fortunate, have been reminded that others are depending on our own resilience. In the process, many of us have discovered hidden talents, or reserves of strength we were never aware of. The pandemic reminded us that every one of us has a role to play when it comes to making our institutions work best in difficult times; it's up to us to remember that challenge when easier times return.

Samantha Stone '87

Chair

Neil Mullholland '88

Vice-Chair