

**Presented by Louise Evans-Salt at June 15th Board Meeting
BCLA conference 2021 (first ever virtual) May 3 -May 7**

Theme- Traveller there is no path, the path is made by walking

Libraries are undergoing change...we do not always know the right way forward in making change such as when managing, COVID, reconciliation, equity diversity, inclusion, climate change, access to technology, digital vs paper collections, virtual programming, as a few examples.

Every day began with a keynote of about an hour with a 15-minute question period, followed by two lightning sessions of 20 minutes, a health break, 45 minute break out sessions, in the afternoon, anywhere from 3-8, and 3 evenings of entertainment with recipes from the Sheraton Airport for Appies to make at home.

It was very full and I'm still trying to sort through the learning and information from high powered, extremely well educated and experts in their fields whether it was Dori Turnstall the first female black Dean of OCAD University, Sierra Tasi Baker the lead Indigenous Urban Design consultant for Sky Spirit studios and consulting.

Tricia Logan head of Research and Engagement at UBC's Residential School History and Dialogue Centre, Ry Moran the inaugural associate librarian with a focus on reconciliation at U Vic or Meghan McDermid a lawyer and Interim Policy Director at the British Columbia Civil Association to name a few of the many learned and engaging speakers.

I am not going to report on any particular session but will highlight what I took from the conference:

Libraries as public institutions of learning and equitable access for all have a responsibility and a moral obligation to relationships of reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion at every level and for all.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is one of the guiding documents for libraries as it is now a piece of BC legislation.

According to a panel of Racialized Librarians there is still a great deal of tokenism happening in the library world and the library world is very good at talking about EDI but not very good at doing it.

I have a much better understanding of the complexity of decolonizing public institutions and specifically libraries at a dry level of operations and governance. This will look different in every library.

Libraries are an intersectional point for so many of the social issues of today and if we are not acting on these issues we will quickly become irrelevant.

COVID has demonstrated the importance of libraries to individuals and communities as an integral part of service and infrastructure.

Although libraries have much work to do in many ways, the conference is an example of the ways the library world is on the cutting edge of change in many of these social challenges.

What does it mean for me:

An acknowledgment that I am a first generation settler who has been socialized to hold Eurocentric and white values, therefore I have a responsibility to learn the accurate complicated often horrific colonial history of this country in the context of race relationships, to understand and respect other world views and ways of being and knowing, to enter into relationships with respect and a desire to listen and learn, to validate the experiences of others even when I don't fully understand them and to let go of the need to have an opinion or to be right. I also have the responsibility not to point fingers at others for being racist, non inclusive, oppressive, colonial but rather see that I have these behaviours as a result of my history and whiteness and that I have benefitted from many of these unjust systems. I have to commit to specific actions in my daily life which will then be reflected in any public service that I embark on.

To sum it up I'll use the words of Sierra Tasi Baker of Sky Spirit consulting who challenged us "to take time to fully listen, to consider, to reflect and to understand"

What does it mean for trustees and governance:

As well as attending the conference I have attended several sessions with BCLTA which have also increased my knowledge, my questions, and my challenges as a trustee. So I especially want to pose these questions and challenges to all of us.

I attended:

Land Acknowledgment trustee meet up

Equity Diversity Inclusion trustee meetup

Reconciliation and Relationship Building Flavio Caron Trainer with Indigenous Corporate Training INC (his sister)

Trustees have a responsibility to educate themselves regarding these social issues and in particular Reconciliation. Some example of what boards are doing are:

Inviting trustees other than the chair to begin a meeting with an land acknowledgment and a personal experience of learning, forming book clubs outside of meetings or allowing a 15 min time slot in a meeting to read books by indigenous writers

Reading the 94 calls to action from the TRC and paying particular attention to #92
Reading the 231 calls to action from The MMIWG final report.
Learning and Understanding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and what it means in BC particularly for Public Institutions.
Studying the local history of FN people.

Using the BCLTA discussion Starters for generative discussion at the board table.
Participating in the 150 Acts of Reconciliation for Canada's 150 years.
Exploring the resources put together by BCLTA as individuals or as a board.

Overall boards cannot ignore the importance of building relationships with the many populations that exist in communities. As well we must understand the complexity and the organic nature of relationships. But what is most important is that we do not allow ourselves to stagnate and do nothing other than maintain the status quo as this will impact the strategic direction that we are responsible for in governance. I do not have answers for our library and our current board...only as I said questions, challenges, and excitement at the possibilities. I do know that some of the way forward is through operations which is not our area so I am encouraged by Karli's leadership in the response to the initial findings in Kamloops, and some of it lies and how we will function as a board. Each of you brings your own unique valuable perspective to this table and I hope you will use your time on the board to expand your perspective!

I'll end with the words of Tricia Logan Head of Research, Residential School History and Dialogue UBC "The way we appreciate and love libraries does not have to change but there are ways to change libraries that allow more people, more communities and more perspectives to find their spaces and voice inside libraries".

And as the theme of BCLA 2021 reminds us:
"The path is made by walking."

Thank you for listening.

You'll hear from Maxime about her experience at BCLA next reg. meeting