



ANNUAL REPORT

2020 - 2021



Christina Thomas

Board President

President's Report

I am very excited as we go into Vela's next fiscal year. This past year has been difficult in many ways, however, some positive outcomes have also developed. Virtual communications, example Zoom meetings, have been remarkably successful as we've seen an increase in families reconnecting with each other and Vela's staff - bringing some renewed energy to everyone involved.

Vela's leadership has also grown and changed this past year. After a successful 30 years from the inception of Vela, Linda Perry has officially retired and handed over her leadership reins to Vela's new Co-Executive Directors, Caitlin Goodsell and Kim Thomas. These dynamic women have been there for so many of us during this confusing and difficult pandemic providing both leadership and information with countless Zoom meetings.

Vela's Board of Directors are also changing as Wendy Langridge and myself step down from the Board. Wendy brought her many years of experience of supporting her son's Microboard and connecting with other families. These past few years, for me as a Board member, has been a wonderful experience in reconnecting with Vela and helping to support the leadership transfer. Above all, it has been an honour for me to have had the opportunity to work with some extraordinary people. Thank you, Alison Taplay, Beth Ott, Vikki Gee, Barb Warentine, Gabrielle Millar, Wendy Langrage, Linda Perry, Kim Thomas and Caitlin Goodsell.

Sincerely,

Christina Thomas



Linda Perry

Executive Director - Retired

Executive Director's Report

This year has presented more challenges than we could have imagined. The ability of our staff and Board to pivot and adapt during this time has been incredible.

As a result of the sea of change that came with the COVID pandemic, Vela was engaged by government, primarily Community Living BC (CLBC), to assist and rapidly adapt our responses to the unique challenges the pandemic presented.

This led to two short-term contracts. The first was to address the needs of Microboards, individuals with Individualized Funding (IF) and those with Person-Centered Societies to develop their coping strategies during the pandemic. The second was to assist with adjusting respite to allow for payment to family members. Both projects demanded a lot from our staff and they were up for the challenge.

We also received a two-year grant to work with the Family Support Institute to update and revise the employment website, Support Worker Central. The new website is up and running, receiving great reviews. Caitlin Goodsell and Lori Cochrane took the lead with this project and have done a fabulous job!

This year also saw a sizable increase in our ongoing funds from CLBC. After reviewing our funding structure and contract obligations the recognition of Vela's growth was acknowledged and supported. We are very grateful to CLBC for their financial assistance and understanding. This has been a tremendous help.

Due to the work assisting people through the pandemic, our work creating Microboards and assisting in the development of new IF situations has not been as busy as we would normally expect. We found many individuals and families have expressed an interest in the concepts but have "hunkered down" to wait out the pandemic.

As a result of the pandemic, we have adjusted our way of connecting with people individually and in groups. Caitlin has led the shift to Zoom as a primary platform for communications. She, along with other team members, has developed a wide variety of workshops, video info sessions, and the very popular "Chats with Vela".

The pandemic did not stop the yearly Zero Project conference held in Vienna each February. This year was virtual. Kim, Caitlin and I stayed up during the night for three nights enjoying the presentation and learning about creative developments from around the world. I found this was truly my time to shine, as a chronic insomniac I sailed through the nights.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Kim Thomas, our Fund Development Officer, has managed to hold a successful donation drive and we have received donations from our supporters including, once again, a sizable amount from Mott Electric's staffing team. Thank you to Kim and everyone that has donated helping with this success.

Writing this report has been an interesting exercise for me as it is my last official function as Executive Director of Vela Canada. It brings with it so many memories and emotions. I am so very lucky to have had my life's calling realized in my work. I am eternally grateful to the individuals, families, Vela's Board of Directors, Communications Consultant, Alexi McGreer, and the Vela staff team for the journey we have taken together over the years. You all have helped me grow and learn.

I need to add an additional acknowledgement for the Vela staff team. To Alison Found, our newest staff member, it's been lovely to watch you fit into

the team so seamlessly. Welcome aboard a wonderful voyage.

Kim and Caitlin, you are already shining in your shared roles as Co-Executive Directors as your reports demonstrate how many responsibilities you have embraced. I know you are going to captain the ship well, maintaining the integrity of the work and take it places much further than we've gotten to so far. To Terry Robertson, Lori Cochrane, and Yvonne Van Oort, no words can express my gratitude to the three of you for your undying commitment, humour and hard work. I treasure all five of you:

"No distance of place or lapse of time can lessen the friendship of those who are thoroughly persuaded to each other's worth." - Robert Southey

And finally to the large Vela family:

"What you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others." - Pericles

Thank you all for weaving your lives into mine, it's an honour I treasure.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda Perry

NEW

55

MICROBOARDS

55

INDIVIDUALIZED
FUNDING



Kim Thomas

Fund Development Officer

Development Officer Report

Like all of you, COVID affected Vela in many different ways. On March 13, 2020, we made the difficult decision to close our offices to ensure the safety of our staff and families we support. Although our office remains closed, I am extremely proud of our team and the way in which we pivoted to enable sustained and effective delivery of our support to all our families.

Because of the everchanging landscape and challenges brought forth by COVID and the small but agile size of Vela, I found new opportunities to become more directly involved with families during this period.

One of Vela's responses to the pandemic was to begin holding regular weekly Zoom meetings ("Chats with Vela") that I have thoroughly enjoyed, and attended regularly, to share important updates to families on COVID, Community Living BC (CLBC) changes, and nurture and create important social connections and support.

I was also part of the Vela team that provided vital assistance to families who wanted to navigate and apply for the CLBC Emergency Funding.

In December 2020, with the assistance of our Communications Consultant, I launched Vela's first "12 Days of Giving" campaign. A huge thank you to all those who graciously sent us their "thank you" videos to share over each of the 12-days. The response, especially during a pandemic, was overwhelming and I am very proud to say that we raised over \$5,000!

Despite the many challenges faced during COVID, Vela Membership was consistent with pre-COVID numbers, showing only a slight decline (-1.5%), an amazing statistic given the times and a testament to our wonderful community of supporters.

Although donations were understandably down, Vela was extremely fortunate to receive a \$10,000 donation from Mott Electric that went a long way to support our important work and helped fill the need. Thank you to Mott Electric for your continued support!

In 2020, I oversaw an important and innovative transition in how Vela conducts its financial accounting and transactions while sadly acknowledging the long service

and commitment of our retiring bookkeeper Beat Joehl. Thank you for your many years of service, you will be missed.

While COVID prevented many important events from taking place, I was very fortunate to be able to virtually attend the prestigious and innovative Zero Project conference held each year in Vienna - the important work this conference does and Vela's voice and experience at that conference over the last several years has helped validate our approach and need for others to share and replicate our successes worldwide.

It goes without saying that this past year has seen a lot of transition for myself as I prepare to enter my new role as Co-Executive Director (Co-ED). It has been a long and challenging transition as we see our long standing ED contemplate life beyond Vela; however, has provided an exciting series of opportunities for new ideas, growth and innovation. I welcome the challenge and look

forward to working with staff and families in my new capacity and welcome your input and support.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to again acknowledge the legacy of Linda Perry – she is and remains - the driving force behind the vision and community that is Vela – while she will remain in other capacities for the time being, to support me and my Co-ED – I want to wish Linda all my love and best wishes in her new endeavours. She will always remain my, mentor, inspiration and close friend.

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Thomas

CHATS WITH



VELA'S
12 DAYS OF
CHRISTMAS

DONATE



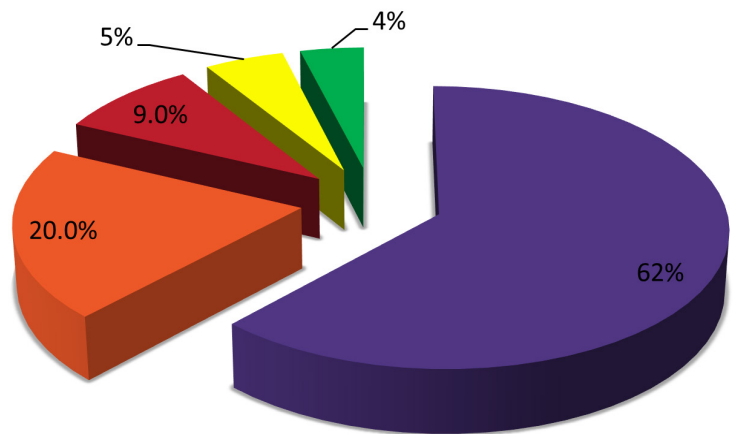
Give the Gift of
Independence



SUMMARY OF FUNDS

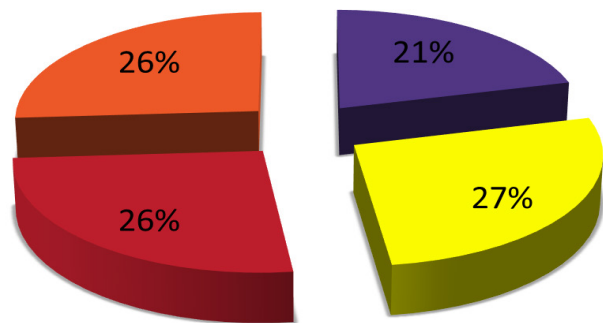
Where Our Money Comes From

Community Living BC	62%
Gaming	20%
Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction	9%
Special Project CLBC	5%
Donations, Membership & Consulting	4%



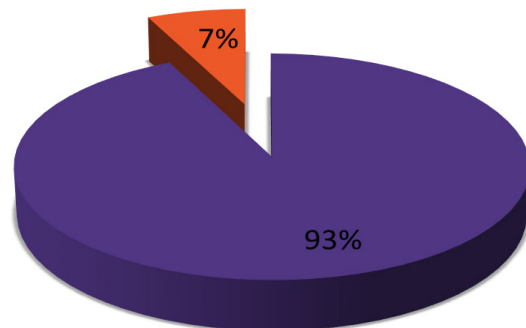
In-Kind Supports (= \$70,000)

Office Support	21%
Professional Consulting	26%
Tech Assistance	26%
Workshops, etc.	27%



How We Put Our Money To Work

Microboard & Individualized Funding Supports	93%
Administration	7%





Caitlin Goodsell

Lower Mainland Facilitator

**NEW
MICROBOARDS**

7

23

**NEW
INDIVIDUALIZED
FUNDING**

Facilitator's Report

Lower Mainland

What a year it was! This past fiscal year started out in the very beginning stages of the COVID pandemic, which meant this year involved a lot of pivoting for our team. We had to change the way we supported families in a very short amount of time, as well as keep up with the ever-changing landscape of new programs and initiatives that were part of solutions aimed at helping families to try and cope with the huge disruption in services that many people experienced.

From very early on in the pandemic, Vela was asked to join a group of community leaders and organizations from across the sector that met regularly to discuss the issues being faced by people in our sector, the impact that COVID restrictions were having, and solutions to try and improve outcomes. I was grateful to be asked to represent Vela as part of this. One of the largest successes we had together was advocating for, and seeing the change, in the language for the essential visitor's policy in hospitals in order for it to be more inclusive and actually reflect the need for people with disabilities. We also worked on ensuring people with disabilities were not forgotten in prioritizations for hospital resources and the vaccine distribution. Being part of this group allowed me to connect in a meaningful way with other leaders in our sector, and I truly value the relationships I was able to create who were there representing a wonderful cross-section of agencies, organizations, and family leaders.

In April, Community Living BC (CLBC) rolled out the Temporary Emergency Funding Program, and Vela was asked to assist Microboards, Individualized Funding users, and Person-Centered Societies that wanted to apply for this program. We spent time with CLBC staff learning about the program, policies, and application process and then spent many months helping families apply for these temporary funds. When it came time for the program to end in August, we were also asked to assist families in the reporting process for these funds.

At the end of December, CLBC announced that it would be putting some new interim policies in place to allow for a much broader and flexible use of respite funds and our team was brought in once again to provide guidance and assistance to families around the interim flexible respite policies. We again did some dedicated Zooms on the

policies that were brought into place and tried to walk families through the new ways available for them to use their respite funds in more creative and flexible ways.

Throughout the year, one of our most successful outcomes from the pandemic has been the creation of our Chats with Vela. These events began last March and continue today. As of now our plan is to continue holding these bi-weekly events for as long as people keep showing up!

Another gift of COVID was forcing our hand into moving towards webinars, which is something we have discussed implementing more regularly for years. With this last year forcing our staff and families to move to remote methods of communications, we successfully launched a new webinar series. This format has been very popular as it has allowed people from around the province to attend from the comfort of their homes. These webinars will be another event that we will continue, even when we are able to resume in-person meetings.

The last big project was the creation and launch of the new supportworkercentral.ca site. We received a grant from the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to re-develop the site just before COVID hit. When COVID altered our world, we had to alter the trajectory of this project as well, so our first few months were spent patching up the old supportworkercentral.com site and doing a marketing drive to encourage people who had lost jobs to post their ads on that site. As the fall and winter

dragged on, we were able to dedicate our time to creating the new site. We wanted it to be very user friendly, and to ensure we had enough resources and features built in that it would be helpful for both families and staff who were using the site. We spent a lot of time creating videos and factsheets for both families and support workers for the site (that we have also tailored to Microboards and Individualized Funding users). We officially launched the new site on April 16, 2021, and the marketing for the site will be ongoing over the next months to ensure that not only families, but also support workers, find their way to the site, and make it a success. It was a huge learning curve for those of us involved and we are still working on smoothing out bumps, but overall, we are thrilled with the product we have created!

Over the winter months, I was asked to complete three home studies for Microboards. After not completing one for a few years, it was a learning curve to remember the process but to also figure out a way to complete these home studies during a pandemic and to ensure the safety of everyone involved. I connected with a number of local agencies to see what accommodations they were making, and was able to tailor the process and successfully approve all three studies.

Writing down everything I was involved in over the past year seems almost surreal – when listing out all the bits and pieces that I worked in makes me realize why this year was so challenging and busy, and yet there were also so many successes for our team and for myself personally. COVID

threw a wrench into many things, but it also brought several amazing opportunities for Vela that I am grateful to be apart of. This next year, I'm sure, will be another full of challenges and learning, but I look forward to the opportunity.

Respectfully submitted,

Caitlin Goodsell





Yvonne Van Oort

Lower Mainland/Okanagan
Facilitator

8 NEW
MICROBOARDS

10 NEW
INDIVIDUALIZED
FUNDING

Facilitator's Report

Lower Mainland/Okanagan

I returned to work for Vela March 2020. My return was bittersweet because on the one hand, I was returning to a full-time ongoing position at Vela as a Mainland/Okanagan Facilitator that I was thrilled about, but on the other hand, not having Lori Emanuels as a co-worker took some getting used to.

I took the Home Study course through the Justice Institute of BC in March of 2021 and completed my first Home Study for a Vela Microboard in May-2021.

This year was not as busy as last year with incorporating new Microboards. I believe this year people were just trying to do their best to keep safe due to the pandemic. Vela Facilitators would normally have done many transition meetings in schools to get families familiar with Microboards and Individualized Funding users but this year this was not possible due to the pandemic.

This year I also helped two mothers who were working around the clock with their adult children through COVID to get an exception to policy in order to obtain Home Share funding. CLBC saw in these particular cases that there were valid reasons that were in the best interest of the individual for their mothers to care for them until other residential options become available to the individual in the future.

I look forward to what this next fiscal year will bring because I think it's safe to say we have been through the worst and there is light at the end of the tunnel. I hope to see more of the families I work with in person and establish a more meaningful connection that 'in person' meetings can foster. I hope to get out to transition meetings and get the word out to families about the benefits of Microboards and Individual Funding options.

Finally, to all my co-workers, you are all amazing and we made it through a tough year together. To Linda, I wish you all the best in your new role. I am so grateful to have had you lead the way during my first few years at Vela. You are truly a legend!

Respectfully submitted,

Yvonne Van Oort



Terry Robertson

Northern BC Facilitator

**NEW
MICROBOARDS 14**

**1 NEW
INDIVIDUALIZED
FUNDING**

Facilitator's Report

Northern BC

The work in the past year has been challenging and ever changing. While our personal lives have mostly been stay-at-home and hunker down, work life for me has been a whirlwind of change. We have gone from meeting with families to Zooming with families. We used to meet a family in the comfort of their home and we now must use our computers to offer support, educate and determine how well the family is doing. Transition is always a challenging time, but COVID has complicated the families' abilities to interact. Everyone is using Zoom or some form of online video communications. I feel like we don't always see how well people are coping with these new methods of connection and support.

I have found the conversation on our many Vela family calls very interesting and it is easy to see how much the families that join the Zoom regularly have bonded and talk so freely now asking questions of one another and not just of the staff. The change we have had to make in delivering supports this past year has also formed a more cohesive bond for us as staff team. We've worked hard to support each other so we can support families even better. Our language and responses are more aligned after a year of shifting landscapes and the need for quick course changes.

In my region it has been a little quieter than it has been in the past, and I feel like it is heavily due to the pandemic. Families have stayed at home and kept their bubble small and some have not chosen to apply for services this year in some cases and those that have, seem to be taking their time understanding the process. Families are scared to interview and invite strangers into their home, which is completely understandable. Long-time Microboards or Individualized Funding users have in some cases been faced with laying off staff and doing all the care and support themselves. There are many new demands on everyone these days.

When it's time, I look forward to meeting new families face-to-face, and catching up with the families I already have a relationship with.

Respectfully submitted,

Terry Robertson



Lori Cochrane

Vancouver Island/Lower
Mainland Facilitator

NEW
MICROBOARDS **24**

15 NEW
INDIVIDUALIZED
FUNDING

Facilitator's Report

Vancouver Island/Lower Mainland

Well, it is a massive understatement to say what a strange and difficult year this has been. We had to get use to not meeting in person which is difficult when so much of our work is about the connections and relationships that we develop with people.

Community Living BC (CLBC) had requested that we be involved in several initiatives they were developing such as the pandemic pay and flexible respite initiatives. We also received many calls to support families to develop COVID protocols, COVID related documents and problem solving around an array of COVID concerns and issues. Everyone had a layer of stress and apprehension which intensified most calls.

We have had a very successful year working towards our Recruitment and Retention Project. After a year of intense work, partnered with The Family Support Institute, we have created the new and improved Support Worker Central. It is our greatest hope that this website will be successful matching support workers with families and individuals who need support workers, easily and provincially.

Another really big change for us is learning and then getting used to the fact that our Linda Perry will be retiring. It has been a process, but we know she's not far away. We are excited about the new opportunity for Kim and Caitlin, who we know will do an incredible job for all of us!

Respectfully submitted,

Lori Cochrane

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & FUNDERS

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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Society
Aaron Schlogl's Society of
Friends & Family
Allan's Great Life Society
Alexi McGreer
Aine Rathwell's Independence
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