

Staff Report submitted by Will Coukell, Chief Operating Officer

Staff have had, to say the least, an interesting year. For the past few months, we all continued to work, but from home. What this has meant is that we ended up being somewhat on call as our phones were redirected to our homes and people call at all hours (Imagine my surprise at the members who call and wake me up to talk about ACO issues LOL). This has been a bit of a struggle as the learning curve was steep, not being in the same room has been an eye-opener as it means that staff can be out of the loop. It's much clearer to me now that information is spread not by reporting, but by being around the information. This was something that I studied in my non profit management classes years ago, but it crystalized for me during this time.

Alex and I are back to regular office hours and Devorah and Tai continue to work from home except for Tuesdays when we are all back in the office. Marie has had some health issues and has been at home since March, but we expect her back to the office after Thanksgiving.

Two things that we accomplished this year was getting the 2019 audit finished and in the process tightening up some of the ways we do this. We are very hopeful that our new system of using DropBox will be very helpful as it connects the branches *directly* with the auditors. The other accomplishment was completing all the items from the 2012 CRA audit. It feels as though we climbed a mountain and we are coming down the other side singing "the Sound of Music".... ☺

Other staff updates:

Programs

Alex has been busy this year with several projects including Heritage Advocacy Day, PreservationWorks!, the ACO Heritage Awards, staffing the Policy Committee and trying to setup new projects in line with the Strategic Plan. He was asked to specifically report on PresWorks! Stats for the year:

PreservationWorks 2019 Update

In April and May 2019, I set out to update and recruit new members to the PreservationWorks roster of volunteer consultants, which now consists of 22 individuals. Between June and December 2019, we received 6 requests, 3 of which were deemed eligible to go forward with a site visit and report:

1. Alfred Baker House, a residential home in Etobicoke (completed by Emily Cheng and Peter Stewart of George Robb Architect)
2. The Mindemoya Old School, in Mindemoya on Manitoulin Island (completed by Philip Evans of ERA)
3. Headford Baptist Church in Richmond Hill (delayed, then put on hold due to Covid-19; I will hopefully be arranging a site visit for this fall).

Membership

Tai has been busy working on a few different projects. An ongoing project is 'cleaning up' the database - including amalgamating memberships (many members have more than one membership account), and updating and collecting missing contact information. With a more accurate database, branches can easily reach out to their members, ACO has an accurate count of its' members, and fewer Acorn magazines were returned. Also, Tai is getting a current contact list for the branches, which include their positions and what they are responsible for. There have been many changes within the branches and an up to date list will make it easier to know who to contact within the branch for specific information including financial, branch reports and minutes. This list is almost complete, there are still a few branches that have not provided their information.

Tai's plans to visit the branches this spring were derailed by Covid-19. Picking up shortly, she will reach out to the branches and set up in person visits with those who are comfortable with a visit. As an alternative, she will offer online meetings. Tai will take this opportunity to get know the branches, find out their concerns, answer membership questions and teach those who need how to use Dropbox and the backend of the ACO website.

Tai has taken on assisting branches in collecting information for the audit and setting up and inviting branches to Dropbox. This means multiple emails and phone calls. If all branches know how to use Dropbox; collection of financial and other information will be easier and centralized for the auditors, bookkeeper and executives to access.

Tai and Will will continue to work on the membership handbook. This will be a guide to the branches, outlining duties and responsibilities.

Fundraising

Devorah continues to try to raise funds in what is probably the most difficult fundraising situation in my lifetime.

The crash of the stock market, the declining global economy, and the new focus on protecting people from illness and poverty, are all going to change the landscape for fundraising for the foreseeable future. All charities will need to retool their fundraising strategies to some degree and we are no exception. I have spoken to Devorah about this and we have agreed that in the short term, we will increase communication with donors and members so that we can maintain and deepen our connection with them. We need to tell all our constituents what we are doing to maintain ACO's resiliency, and we need to ensure that their confidence in us remains strong. Devorah plans to continue fundraising and will try to be very strategic/careful in her overall communication (e.g. Nutshell) and in her communication with donors. There are many unknowns (such as how charitable foundations will adjust their giving in light of tremendous investment

losses) and we will adjust to changing conditions on an ongoing basis. But in light of the expected recession and so much uncertainty, I think it's wise for us to reduce our expectations for fundraising this year and see what can be done to make the best of a very difficult situation.

Devorah does contribute in other ways, such as editing our excellent "Acorn in a Nutshell", but a focus on new methods and approaches to fundraising will be important as we move forward into 2021 and beyond.