

PAC Chair Year End Report

2015/16

This year has been one of introductions, innovation and inspiration. It has also been one of learning. We have learnt from each other and situations. We have learnt from events and experiences. Remembering our learning will make our PAC richer and more qualified for the future. I'd like to take this opportunity in this report to recognize some of the highlights of the year, to mention some thoughts for the coming year and to acknowledge people.

Our year kicked off in September 2015 with our helpful volunteers sporting their red PAC t-shirts at our **Stationery Pick Up** in the gym during the first week. Fresh coffee helped ease parents back into the school routine and encouraged everyone to stop and chat awhile. The PAC values community and the picking up of school supplies and having coffee together enabled us all to connect after the summer break. Dana Bell - thank you for sourcing and organizing this service for our parents. It saves us all a lot of hassle and is much appreciated!

We also had a **Welcoming Committee** for new students, Kindergarteners and their parents. Being escorted to your classroom by a friendly, been-there-done-that parent is surely a good way to start your journey at Willows. Thank you to all who helped make the start to the year a positive one.

Once children and staff had their bearings, it was time for the first Parent/Teacher Interviews of the year. The PAC took this opportunity to host our annual **Ice-Cream Social**. The children are always thrilled with this treat and this year was no exception. Angela Jackson, you do know how to ingratiate yourself with 600+ kids! Thank you for creating a positive association for the children and parents with this night.

Due to being short of organizers for the Holly Tree Festival, the PAC instead hosted our first **Movie Night** in the gym in December. This was a huge success! We had a junior (K-Gr.2) and senior (Gr.3-Gr.5) night. Popcorn from Kernels was handed out by helpful elves and parents and children snuggled in for a 'Prep & Landing' double feature. This event will probably remain a fixture on the calendar in coming years as it provides a low-key, low-energy but still fun event to share in together at a time when families' lives are usually fraught with social engagements. Well done everyone!

In February the PAC invited caregivers and parents to our first **Coffee Morning**. This was in a response to people saying that evening PAC meetings were almost impossible to attend due to family and work commitments. I met with an eager bunch of parents in a casual atmosphere in the staff room for an hour. It was a very inspiring morning and so the PAC continued having these meet ups the morning of official PAC meeting days and will continue to do so.

An event which always encourages kids and parents to be more environmentally friendly and healthy, is the **Bike to School Week and Grade 4 Rodeo**. The PAC funds the prizes for this week long event and the kids are rewarded with spot prizes. The class at the end of the

week that has the most cyclists wins a pizza lunch provided by the PAC. A big thank you to Jacqueline Lines who orchestrates this fun week.

May saw the PAC trying out another new event: the **Blossom Tree Festival**. The early spring meant that there were no blossoms to speak of but there certainly was a festival-like atmosphere on the day. A perfectly sunny evening was the backdrop for families to linger under the great trees and have food truck delicious dinner and dessert at communal tables. Happy tunes from a big speaker inspired some enthusiastic dancing in the front of the school. The children ran riot in the gym, spending their tickets on game favourites like the Balloon Stomp and the Treat Wheel. Outside UVic students made science fun with slime-making and kids took aim with water shooters. This was a brilliant evening. The children had fun and the parents got to chat with each other. There was a great feeling of community. Thank you to our head organizers, Angela Jackson and Dana Bell. You are extraordinary! Thank to everyone who blew up a balloon, manned a station, created a poster, spread the word, brought children out, supported something new at the school... without you there would be no Blossom Tree Festival. Thank you!

With the winding down of the year (where did it go?!) we had the opportunity to host a **Staff Appreciation Lunch** on the June Pro-D day. A cheerful team of parent volunteers (and their kids) helped set up a beautiful al fresco lunch in the front of the school. Truffles Catering provided a delicious luncheon for 53 members of staff. I made a small speech and then listened to the satisfied mmm's and yums that staff made as they munched their way through their sandwiches, salads and desserts. This was a pleasant event and staff enjoyed the gesture.

Whilst the PAC doesn't have much to do with the **Fun Day** in June, we do provide the cherry on top by handing out popsicles as a treat for students. Thank you to Angela for purchasing all of them, Dana for storing them and for helping hand them out on the day. It's amazing how quickly over 600 popsicles disappear!

That sums up our PAC-related events for the year. There are two initiatives that the PAC have introduced that has enriched the students' lives. Firstly, the installation of the **Gaga Ball Pit** and secondly, the continuation of the **Field Trip Allotment and Bus Project**.

The Gaga Ball Pit was installed on the back blacktop over Summer 2015. This has been a rollicking success with all Grades. Having new (relatively inexpensive) playground apparatus has contributed to a happier recess time. Thank you to the previous executive, the administration and Victoria School Board for making this installation happen. Willows has trail blazed a run on Gaga Ball Pits in the school district!

Our continued use of the Gaming Fund Grant money for field trips and bus transportation is popular amongst staff, students and parents alike. We spent just over \$15k on this initiative and will continue to for the foreseeable future.

The PAC body was treated to three **speakers** over the course of the year. Our first speaker for the year was Trevor Calkins, an inspiring math teacher and author. Our second talk was by a Willows parent, Bethan Ostermann. She spoke to us about her family's experience in 'greening' themselves. The Green Bicycle Co. is Bethan's venture to equip all families with green skills. Our final speaker of the year was Julie-Anne Richards. She is a clinical counsellor

and spoke to us about Childhood Anxiety. We had just over a hundred attendees and got overwhelmingly positive feedback about the speaker and topic. In an effort to promote community within our neighbourhood we invited the parents of Margaret Jenkins and Sir James Douglas. A quarter of those that attended were from outside the Willows family. I hope that as a school we may continue to foster inter-school relations and share our collective knowledge.

I mentioned that this year had been a year of innovation. As well as trying new events, I get the sense that the perception of the PAC is changing. This is due, in part, to a heavy focus on **communication** with parents and staff and also a more vibrant **online presence**. The PAC has piggybacked on the school newsletter with a **Monthly PAC Report**. Currently, this is our only guaranteed method of communication as the PAC doesn't hold a master list of everyone's email addresses. I hope that we can remedy this next year. A physical **Suggestion Box** was installed in the school office in January. It has yet to receive a missive so perhaps people have genuinely moved online to express themselves. As I said before, our **Coffee Mornings** were started to encourage an open flow of communication between parents and the PAC Executive. Our online presence was boosted by more regular postings on our **Facebook** page. Our 'Likes' grew by 20%. We have a **Twitter** feed now with a steady growth of followers. Our PAC **website** has been re-done. Kate Donahue and I have created a shiny new site that is user-friendly and informative. The plan is to drive parents and staff to the site as it is a one-stop shop for everything from Field Trip Forms (for staff), volunteer opportunities, information about meetings, historical minutes from meetings etc. Subscribing to the site will be pushed at the start of the new year.

Listening to the voice of the parent body on playgrounds and around school, there was a fair amount of talk about Willows being an intimidating place to get settled into, especially if arriving later in the year. Two parents are now heading up the **Welcome to Willows** committee. As Christine Patterson (Vice Principal of Willows) re-writes the Willows Handbook, Krissy Johns and Natasha Stott, are advising on any gaps of information therein. This committee will also hopefully serve to physically welcome newcomers to the school and be a point of contact for any questions they may have or any introductions they may need. The idea is that this will help create a positive experience and build community.

As stated at the beginning of this report, this has been a year of learning. As a brand new PAC Chair I have been getting acquainted with key people, processes and systems. This has ultimately led to a stall on spending a higher amount of the parent contribution funds. We still have our long term project of installing more playground equipment for the Cadboro Bay side play area on the cards, but things were on the backburner this year. Next year, I hope that we may forge ahead more strategically. Not just with the playground equipment but in general.

My learning wouldn't have taken off in leaps and bounds as it did if it weren't for the very experienced PAC executive members. You were always available to answer my questions via email or in person. Your guidance over these months has been invaluable. A heartfelt thank you to: Dana Bell, Past PAC Chair, you have been a great support as I try and fill your shoes; Angela Jackson, Vice-Chair, your enthusiasm and can-do attitude buoy the teams you work with; Chelsea Wozniak, Treasurer, you faced the finances with a fierce determination and conquered processes and spreadsheets with aplomb; Clint Lalonde, Assistant Treasurer, your deep knowledge of the PAC and its workings are going to be sorely missed and Brian Wagner,

Secretary, your time with us was short but your punctuality and attention to detail were appreciated. Our Members at Large were Stephanie Novak, Jacqueline Lines and Krissy Johns. Your respective roles as the Canadian Parents for French representative, the Class Representative Coordinator and Kindergarten Liaison Officer are all vital to the health of our parents' council. Thank you for your immense dedication and service.

Working under the PAC umbrella are a variety of important coordinators and committees. A big thank you to Jaqueline Lines, Bike to School Week and Gr. 4 Bike Roadeo Coordinator; Shannon Carmichael, Lice Check Coordinator; Michele Montgomery, Pizza/Sushi Day Coordinator; Edan North, Earthquake Preparedness Coordinator and Krissy Johns and Natasha Stott, Welcome to Willows Committee. Your hours of emails, research, strategizing and time spent at the school do not go unnoticed. Our lives at Willows would be less active, more louse-ridden, less yummy, less safe and more confusing without you all. Thank you!

To those of you that are moving on or dropping or changing portfolios; I wish you well. You have enriched our experience of this fantastic school that our children are privileged to attend.

Wendy Holob, Principal, and Launie Frankson, acting Vice Principal: thank you for helping me settle into my role as PAC Chair. Your open door policy has been well used by me and I appreciate the words of advice that you've both given. Not to mention help with the SMART board operation too! I look forward to continuing to build a strong relationship with the PAC, the Administration and Staff as we navigate the future of the school.

Last but not least, to all the parents without a portfolio or title but with a desire to be present in your child's schooling career, thank you for stepping forward to help out, for voicing your opinion, for offering a solution, for being part of the classroom, for answering a call for helpers... Everything that you put in makes Willows a richer place of learning and life.

In closing, I'd like to wish you all a well deserved summer break. Your passionate volunteerism warms the cockles of my heart. It is an honour to work with all of you. I look forward to welcoming our new and returning members to the executive and committees next year and to building meaningful connections within all spheres of our school. Thank you.

Bronwen Sharpe
PAC Chair
June 2016

