



Garth Homer  
SOCIETY



Garth Homer Society  
21/22 Annual Review

A life, a home, and a place in the world

# Report from the Chair

The twelve months from April 2021 to March 2022 have in some ways flown by, and in other ways had enough packed in them to fill twelve years. My report last year referred to the fiscal year 2021 as the year of COVID. For the Garth Homer Society and all of our community, fiscal year 2022 is also a year of COVID – again.

During the first twelve months of the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed great fortitude within our organization and in our sector. Safety plans were quickly developed and implemented; service providers, CLBC, and health officials banded together to face the COVID challenge head-on;

and, the community at large celebrated the efforts of essential frontline workers – which includes not only our staff at GHS, but also individuals supported in our Employment Services program.

When we turned the corner on March 2021, we acknowledged the one year anniversary of the pandemic – and with that, the realization that this was far from over. And that was a difficult thought to

digest. Yet despite the social fatigue we were all feeling, watching wave after wave of COVID hit the headlines, one thing did not falter – our commitment to the people we serve.

I would like to commend the staff and management of GHS for maintaining such a high degree of care and diligence throughout the year, ensuring everyone was kept safe, and everyone's needs were met to the greatest extent possible within the restrictions we were required to operate in. The efforts resulted in GHS being completely COVID-free for the first twenty-one months of the pandemic. And when the elusive Omicron variant eventually found its way in, it was quickly contained and outbreaks were prevented.

I would also like to express my gratitude to CLBC and the Public Health Office for ensuring access to vaccines was prioritized for our sector. Knowing that we had a means to combat this virus was a great benefit not only to our physical health, but also our mental health. I also applaud the steps taken to mandate vaccinations for our sector. While this did have an impact on some of our staffing, it also imbued our community with a sense of confidence that there will be an end to this pandemic. It gave us a sense of permission to look up from the day-to-day crisis management, and look once again to the possibilities of the future, and a new chapter.

As we think about a new chapter for the Society, this idea is punctuated by the transition in our Executive leadership. As was mentioned at our 44<sup>th</sup>





Annual General Meeting, after over ten years of strong and effective leadership, Mitchell Temkin retired as CEO of the Garth Homer Society in September 2021. During his tenure, Mitchell guided the organization through exceptional growth and change, and established a strong model for future sustainability. After a national search for Mitchell's successor, the Board appointed internal candidate Geoffrey Ewert as the new CEO.

Our new chapter at the Garth Homer Society is off to a promising start.

First, we have fully resolved all issues with CLBC and we look forward to a collaborative working relationship moving forward. I would like to thank CLBC for the confidence they have demonstrated in our Community Inclusion and Employment Services programs, and we look forward to continuing to work with them on the return of our Residential Services.

Second, after several years of displacement, our Learning and Employment programs have found a new home and are operating out of the Vancouver Island Technology Park (VITP). The VITP is a hub for research and innovation, and we are most pleased that our forward-thinking programs are a part of this thriving dynamic.

And third, after a series of challenges and delays, we are now regaining our momentum with the Nigel Valley Project. Due to the tireless and diligent work by members of the GHS Board and members



of the Garth Homer Foundation, we have satisfied the necessary requirements to progress with BC Housing on the redevelopment of our centre. While there is still a long road ahead on this project, we are once again taking steps forward.

I would like to conclude by thanking our GHS community. To the staff and management, thank you for your tireless efforts over the past number of years – more often than not, having to continually go above and beyond. To the GHS Board, your guidance, advocacy, and dedication to the Society has been invaluable – thank you, and I look forward to the year ahead with you all. And finally, to the families and caregivers who have been with us through highs and lows, thank you for your trust in the Garth Homer Society, and for being the foundation for our Garth Homer community.

*Chris Lovelace, Board Chair*



# Report from the CEO

As mentioned in the Chair's report, my tenure as CEO for the Garth Homer Society commenced in September 2021. In the months since, it has been my pleasure and privilege to connect with families, stakeholders, staff, management, our Board of Directors, the people we serve, and the greater community about the future of the Garth Homer Society. On a personal note, I would like to express my gratitude for the support and enthusiasm shown thus far by members of our GHS community for the possibilities that lay ahead.

While the early days of a leadership change are often filled with optimism and enthusiasm for the



road ahead, this is quickly followed by the realities of the hard work required to realize these potentials, especially while in the process of rebuilding the leadership team. Add on to that the ongoing challenges and restrictions of the pandemic, staffing shortages

across the sector, and the cumulative fatigue from staff and management compounded over more than two years, and one could expect some commitment to falter.

But this has not been the case.

If anything, we have seen a doubling-down from everyone – from support workers, to facilities staff,

to the administration, to management, everyone has come together to move this organization forward, despite the ups and downs we have had to navigate.

We continue to grow our Community Inclusion programs, and are regularly reconfiguring the layout of the Garth Homer Centre to create physical space for these intakes. Throughout the pandemic, we received many requests for new intakes – much of which we were not able to accommodate at the time. But as we have managed to return to more regular operations, and have demonstrated safety protocols and procedures in place, we have been most pleased to welcome new members and new families to our Garth Homer community.

Additionally, as mentioned in the Chair's report, our Learning and Employment programs are now operating out of an exciting new program space at the Vancouver Island Technology Park. This new location provides significant space for growth – which is needed given the high demand for our Learning and Employment programs. The VITP is located in close proximity to the Camosun College's Interurban Campus, where many of the people supported in Learning and Employment go for post-secondary education. We are pleased to have this opportunity to build on our relationships with Camosun College even further. The move to this exciting new location was made possible with the support of pandemic relief funding from InclusionBC, and program funding from the Norgaard Foundation, Community Gaming, and a Private



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Foundation. We are most grateful for this support.

The Nigel Valley Project is a very exciting and important part of the Garth Homer Society's future. While GHS experienced a change in executive leadership last year, so did the other service providers involved in the Nigel Valley. The new leadership group comprised of Virginia Holden (Greater Victoria Housing Society), Derrick Bernardo (Broadmead Care), Chris Forester (Island Community Mental Health), and myself, have all come together with a unified commitment to see the vision of this project through. Building on the foundation established by our predecessors, the new leadership group is infusing a new and refreshed energy to help get us out of this pandemic rut, and once again establish the community excitement and engagement with this project.

When I stepped into this position in September 2021, one of the priorities I identified was to improve communication with families, caregivers, and stakeholders, and provide more opportunities for direct engagement to provide input on the future of the Society. With our ongoing progress in managing the pandemic, this is becoming more and more achievable. I am most pleased that we are holding this year's AGM in person – it feels like a stake in the ground for more in-person engagement in the months to come.

While it took place after the end of the 2022 fiscal year, I would like to comment on the fact that we were able to engage in a strategic planning process this past summer that invited input and engagement



from all members of the GHS community. In the upcoming months, I look forward to bringing our community together to share this strategic plan, and to have all members of our community actively participating in its implementation. I look forward to bringing our community together to reconnect with the Nigel Valley Project, and to have active engagement from families and stakeholders in its development. I look forward to bringing our community together to just bring our community together.

My deepest of gratitude to the families and caregivers, our staff and management, our funders and donors, our Board of Directors, and the people we are honoured to serve. You are our community, and I am privileged to work on your behalf.

*Geoffrey Ewert, CEO*



# Treasurer's Report

Fiscal 2022 was a year of change for the Garth Homer Society. The timing of retiring executive positions, and bringing on board new talent to replace these key positions allowed us to be innovative with solutions around our many needs. While these changes impacted both our program delivery and financial security, we forged ahead with new leadership and a commitment to the future.

With the ongoing pandemic and expanding service delivery needs, we faced a variety of new challenges and rewards. Increased program delivery in our Community Inclusion program required innovative thinking concerning space planning and changes. From the ongoing support of our partnership with Community Living BC to the remarkable funds raised through Inclusion BC, Norgaard Foundation, Victoria Foundation, and the United Way. We recognize without these key funders and our very many corporate and private donors, we ended the year again in a positive position, allowing us to provide excellent service for our clients and the people whom we serve every day.

We completed the year ended March 31, 2022 on a positive financial note, with a surplus of \$121,125, before extraordinary expenses. Our Provincial contract revenue increased from \$5,850,771 to \$6,442,061, supporting our plan for current and future growth. We have had a strong recovery from past years and continue to move in a positive direction for the new fiscal year, assisting in our ongoing plan for growth and expansion across our program areas. We experienced increases in our fee-for-service revenue from \$327,047

to \$769,860, largely due to a one-time service revenue injection from CLBC. Our rental income increased only slightly from \$91,638 to \$98,794 this year, flattening the prior year's increase we experienced due to the pandemic. It is expected these fluctuations in extra revenue generation will subside and we will return to the consistent income streams we've seen in past years. Our new LifeStreams online learning platform will continue to assist us in providing more growth potential in our fee-for-service program areas, as the response to this community option has been very well received.

During the year additional costs continued to be incurred to meet the safety plan required by WorkSafeBC, CLBC, and the Vancouver Island Health Authority related to the ongoing pandemic. We also experienced an increase in wages and related benefits this year as our staff expanded to provide services to more clients. This increase was proportionate to the revenues received for our Provincial contracts.

This past year has been full of new challenges which we have met with resilience and determination to achieve the Society's goals of growth and opportunity, where none were thought to be. I would like to thank the Board and Management for their commitment to solidifying the ongoing success of the Garth Homer Society.

*Paul van Koll , Treasurer*

# Garth Homer Society Good News Story



## Meet Colin Johnson

Colin recently started attending music therapy at the Victoria Conservatory of Music. He and another participant from DREAMS go for 30 minute sessions every Thursday afternoon. Music therapy is catered to the individual needs of each participant to ensure the goals and benefits are of the utmost relevance. It is a safe place for people to explore their emotions, feel empowered, and to participate with others.

While music therapy sessions are highly individualized, there are a variety of shared goals and outcomes: improvement of communication skills, social development, self-expression, emotional support, cognitive development, feelings of empowerment, and a safe place to explore creativity. Colin's interaction with the other DREAMS participant during music therapy creates opportunities to foster and strengthen their friendship through shared experiences. Colin thrives in the smaller group setting as larger group settings can often be a challenge. This also provides Colin with an opportunity to grow and embrace shared learning environments, which is one of his goals while attending music therapy.

Music has always been a significant part of Colin's life, and is always looking for ways to bring a little more musicality into the world. From playing the same notes on a keyboard he has had in his room for 10 years, to tapping objects with a constant rhythm, or attending music therapy with the Conservatory for four years

during middle school, there is an ongoing connection with music. Colin also demonstrates his music aptitude at GHS by playing harmonious keys on the piano and strumming or tapping the guitar.

When Colin participates in a music therapy session, there is a notable shift where you can see him loosen up and embrace the different instruments offered to him. Music has a calming effect for Colin, and presents an opportunity for him to activate his brain in a more organized way. He can match the pace of the rhythm to how he may be feeling that day, which is a unique insight into his emotions. Music therapy is a valuable tool to help Colin process thoughts and emotions, and to express how he is feeling—both of which are part of his individualized goals at the Conservatory.

After Colin's hiatus during the pandemic, the immersion back in to music therapy has been noticeably beneficial to his emotional regulation and expression, his interactions socially with other peers, and his anxiety levels. His continued participation in this program will hopefully continue to foster growth in these areas which will then trickle into other aspects of his life.

Well done Colin!

# Our Funders

The success of the Garth Homer Society, and of its programs and services, relies on the continuing support of our funders and donors. We would like to express our appreciation and thanks to all of those whose generosity has helped to make so much possible this year.

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813 Darwin Ave. | Victoria, BC V8X 2X7  
Phone: 250.475.2270  
Fax: 250.475.2279  
[www.garthhomersociety.org](http://www.garthhomersociety.org)

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