



## **Briarpatch Annual General Meeting**

Chair Report

September 29, 2022

Report by Jacq Brasseur, Chair (2021-2022)

## **Overview**

While Briarpatch is led by a volunteer Board of Directors, it is important to keep in mind that *Briarpatch Magazine* is led by our excellent staff. I continue to stress the importance to our Board of staying out of editorial direction.

This leads the work of the Board to be mostly operational — ensuring that we're meeting our fiduciary responsibilities with regards to mitigating risk for the organization, ensuring efficient policies and financial processes, and overseeing the work of staff who've been hired to execute the work of running a magazine.

## **Successes**

- 1) **Reduced meeting frequency and focused more on Portfolio (committee) work.** Our board meetings have been reduced from one per month to one every two months. This has allowed board members to spend less time in board meetings, and encouraged them instead to get more involved on Portfolios.
- 2) **More support and supervision for staff.** Historically, Briarpatch has lacked the ability to have board members that provide direct supervision or support to staff, and staff have been left to manage various aspects of the organization that are the responsibility of the Board. Our Treasurer is now meeting more frequently with our Publisher, and our Chair touches base more often with our Editor to be able to take on some work associated with policies or other administrative tasks. While this is a success, there is still a lot of work to do!
- 3) **Staff are now voting members of the Board.** After last year's AGM and bylaw changes, we were able to ensure that Staff had equal participation on the Briarpatch Board. While this is unusual for most non-profit organizations, at Briarpatch, we value everybody's contributions and try our best to challenge traditional power-hoarding where leadership staff are not provided an equal vote with Board members.
- 4) **On track to renew the CBA with staff.** Our Chair & Treasurer are currently working on renegotiating the CBA with our staff. While we don't anticipate this to last long, our staff have been with an expired CBA for a couple of years.
- 5) **Started a Fundraising & Events Portfolio.** Briarpatch's events and fundraisers have historically been the whole responsibility of staff – which is unsustainable and inappropriate considering the role of staff in producing a magazine, not running the



organization. Our Board now participates in this committee to offer tangible support to our Publisher.

## Challenges

- 1) **Decreased number of Board members.** We continue to struggle with maintaining healthy board numbers and have consistently been at the minimum of board members over the past number of years. This may have something to do with board members generally being expected to be based in Regina.
  - a) It may be worthwhile to investigate the possibility of opening up board applications to people across Saskatchewan, or potentially even to people across Canada.
- 2) **Low capacity to fundraise.** Our Board does not have as much capacity to fundraise and support the financial growth of the organization as much as we'd like. While we have a lot of ideas for how to improve the organization, most notably in increasing salaries and contributor rates, this will remain difficult if we do not build our capacity in fundraising.
- 3) **Strategic planning delays.** Our Board had hoped to develop a meaningful strategic plan last year, but due to scheduling issues, capacity and overall concern about COVID19 and safety gathering in person, this continued to be postponed until finally it was too late. This should be a priority for an incoming Board.

## The Year Ahead

Over the next year, it's my suggestion that the incoming Chair (to be determined) focus on the following:

- 1) **Recruitment of Board and Portfolio members.** Our board needs to grow in order to support the organization in our hopes for growth.
- 2) **Finalize the new CBA.** The incoming Chair will be responsible for leading the Collective Bargaining Process on behalf of the Board, and this needs to be re-signed as soon as possible.
- 3) **HR Policies and governance.** Briarpatch should continue to develop more meaningful HR policies and processes.