

## REPORT OF DR. SABRINA SAUNDERS

# 2022 PRESIDENT, ONTARIO LIBRARY ASSOCIATION



2022 was a year of rethinking, recapturing, and growth. With the 2023 Super Conference theme of Walking in Two Worlds, the Board considered our roles in this concept and approved a budget that would see our programs continue to meet in both digital and in-person formats. The 2023 conference planning team ran with this theme and designed

an experience for members that may be two worlds of conference planning for the foreseeable future. For those who attended in person this year, it was great to recapture that experience of sharing and networking. We also heard our members who told us that having digital experiences gave them the chance to participate, many for the first time.

OLA continued its important lobbying work with the province, strongly advocating for the value of libraries. In the 2022 provincial budget processes, OLA brought back key messages about the need to support our First Nation Public Libraries. These Ontario public libraries on reserve are closing at an alarming rate and desperately need sustainable provincial supports. The OLA also continued to bring messaging on the state of our school libraries, many of which remain shuttered, many staff have not returned to their formal positions, as well as remain underfunded. Pertaining to public libraries, your OLA addressed the importance digital library collections are to community and requested funding for the Ontario Digital Library. Additionally, an increase to the public library operating grant was requested. Sustainability was a key theme throughout these four points as we demonstrated how sustainable funding is key to the to each of these areas, as well as our ability to bridge gaps and inequities across our communities.

In 2022 we dug into the new Strategic Plan, looking at measurable ways to achieve our 5 Strategic Priorities. The Board worked throughout the year on SP5: Organizational Innovation & Sustainability's Goal #3: Re-think and re-design governance to strengthen OLA. We are happy to be presenting to members a proposed fundamental change to our by-laws which will make the governance process more responsive to our Divisional Councils, as well as to add several key voices on anti-racism, equity, diversity and inclusion, which had been missing in the traditional governance model. This was informed by you in 2021 and further informed by research and consultation with our Divisional Councils in 2022.

If approved, the 2023 Board will prepare this fundamental shift for implementation in 2024.

As we near the end of the third year of the global pandemic, the Board and the OLA team have kept our 123-year-old association financially sound, and we look forward to beginning to increase our revenue options as more face-to-face gathering is planned. Our staff continue to demonstrate tremendous resilience and commitment to our organization and we thank them and our Executive Director Shelagh Paterson for keeping the OLA strong when so many organizations have faltered or even failed during these past years.

As the 2022 President I was able to experience firsthand the impact OLA has on our members and our industry, both provincially and nationally. Our Association is a leader among leaders and we should all be proud to be part of this institution. To the hundreds of volunteers, thank you for all you give. Our many committees, Divisional Councils, and Board collectively give tens of thousands of hours annually to our association, and we could not achieve what we do without your leadership and service. And finally, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to lead our OLA. As the first Indigenous member in this position, I am happy to see OLA's focus on anti-racism and EDI in our programs, policies, and recruitment. I know our association is strong and on the right path to continue to do great things.