

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

VULS AGM – January 15, 2019

Penned by VULS President Brett Anderson

Introduction

While the VULS ended the 2019 fiscal year as a stable and financially strong non-profit society, the staff, board and many members ended the year in a place of sadness, confusion, and profound sense of loss. The sudden passing of long-time employee, friend, and team mate Craig Kulyk was a shock to the organization and the community. Throughout this period I was reminded time and time again of what a great and supportive community we have that at its core is brought together by 175 grams of plastic, the pursuit of athletics, the challenge of competition, and the joys of friendship. Should anyone feel the need to reach out for support to speak with someone, contact information for the crisis hotline can be found at the bottom of my report. Craig's passing was the catalyst for moving the AGM from its usual autumn timeline into the new year. We appreciate your flexibility in us moving the timing and thank you all for attending this evening.

As stated above the VULS ends 2019 as a stable and financially strong non-profit society. Our spirit and satisfaction scores are consistently high, and the breadth of our programming is ever-increasing. With this growth we are presented with challenges in deciding where to allocate the resources that we have. We are limited not by the desire to do more for members and the delivery of programs, but by the scarcity of resources. That said over the course of the year we have managed to undertake some significant projects and initiatives. In contrast to the past two years we concluded the year with a small surplus.

While our ongoing focus as a board is driving strategic initiatives forward, I find myself humbled each year when we look at the aggregate numbers of the programs we delivered to our membership. This year our membership rose to over **6,400** members. Over the course of the year the VULS scheduled **5,621** league games and 100's of practices involving **528** teams across **28** programs (14 adult, 14 youth) on **50** fields in **5** municipalities. While we invariably hear about a few mishaps with permits or scheduling each year – a metric that we endeavor to drive to 0 – the ability to deliver this much fun, fitness, competition, and social interaction with a handful of full-time staff members, and only a few minor hiccups, makes me proud.

Recognizing that there are many reasons people participate in VULS programs – fitness, general health, social interaction, learning something new, or providing a competitive outlet – we endeavor to provide programs and resources that fit the bill. In addition to our leagues these include youth programs, development clinics, hat and team tournaments, as well as support for local club teams.

The ability to orchestrate this volume of ultimate centric programming is accomplished by an army behind the scenes. While not wanting to steal too much thunder from the ED report a huge shout out and sincere gratitude to the VULS staff, all the volunteers, coaches, mentors, and board members. We couldn't do this without you.

STRATEGIC PLAN

This meeting marks approximately 3 years since membership accepted a new strategic plan for the organization. For the 5 years preceding the updated strategic plan the organization was focused primarily on a single metric – Growth. With the advent of the new plan our focus shifted from a pure numbers game to four strategic pillars – Youth, Adults, Regional, and Leadership – each carrying their own targets. This new plan has provided us with lots of opportunity but has not come without challenges. Chief amongst these is what to focus on when and how to deploy resources across different areas. Striking a balance on priorities across staff and board members, all who care deeply about ultimate in Vancouver, often yields passionate and fruitful discussion.

As per my report last year 2017 was largely spent getting our ducks in a row. We spent a lot of time becoming compliant with statute and limiting potential risk and liability for the organization. 2018 by comparison was about getting our feet underneath us to be well positioned to move forward through this strategic plan and beyond. I'd suggest that 2019 was a mix of the two. We continued to document processes and improve our systems, with a significant amount of time and effort were diverted to reconciling our financials from 2018 and 2019. As we've grown as an organization the sophistication of our systems and processes hasn't kept up, this is an area that will require additional attention moving forwards – something that we'll discuss in due course.

Youth

Youth continues to be a driver of growth for the VULS. Youth players currently comprise 23% of our membership. Our youth programs span the lower mainland and consist of almost 1500 players, and over 100 coaches. A huge thank you to everyone that works with our youth programs to instill the next generation with an understanding of what spirited, satisfying ultimate is.

Adults

The engine that keeps the VULS running. This segment of membership is our largest and one that we monitor closely. Overall self-reported satisfaction levels amongst adults remains strong at 88%, while opportunity for improvement continues to persist, I'm we've seen this metric remain fairly consistent from last year. This year we saw increases in adult membership of 5% - some attributable to supporting registration of regional programs. This growth was spread across experience levels from those with <1 year of experience right through 7+ years of experience.

Leadership

The VULS continues to be looked at as a leader in the ultimate community in terms of policy, governance, and experience. Over the course of the year staff and board members have been sought out by other organizations to have conversations about what the VULS is doing or how we're approaching different situations. We've seen this play out nationally at, during and after, Ultimate Canada Conferences where we've witnessed the replication of our policies and social content at national and local levels. These engagements always prove to be interesting and give us an opportunity to inquire about others' operations as well.

Regional

This pillar in our strategic plan came out of the gates strong in the first couple years. Over this time the VULS was asked to step up and take on all or portions of the operations of volunteer run leagues across the lower mainland to varying degrees. Now with a couple of partnerships under our belt we have a much more refined tool kit with which to engage in these discussions and help support these organizations. We continue to support the operations in Surrey, New Westminster, Burnaby, and Maple Ridge.

Foundations

In addition to the pillars outlined above there are several foundations that underpin the ongoing operations of the organization. These are areas that are seldom seen by membership but form the backbone of the organization. Over the past two years the staff and board have worked to improve our practices around documentation of roles, activities, and processes as well as extensive work to improve the governance around our financials. The work that has been done around our financials from the past couple of years will be discussed in greater detail by Rob in the Treasurers' report. A continued focus on these and other process areas is critical in responding to any turnover, having ongoing fault tolerance across roles, and ensuring the scalability of our operations.

Board and Committees

The current Board of Directors (with current terms) are:

Brett Anderson, President	2017-2019 (Exiting after 4 years)
Trisha Roberson, Vice President	2018-2020
Rob Adams - Treasurer	2017-2019 (Exiting by By-Law Requirement after 6 years)
Sarah Cawston-Stewart, Secretary	2018-2020
Christa Hoy	2018-2020
Audrey Ng	2017-2019 (Exiting after 2 years)
Ken Su	2017-2019 (Up for re-election)
Lisa Riddle	2019 (Appointed mid-year, Up for election)

You'll notice that we had 8 board members this year. Part way through the year the board realized that we would be experiencing greater turnover this coming cycle that we've previously witnessed. At this juncture we solicited applications for board appointments targeting specific skills. The appointment of additional directors is something that is permitted within our bylaws and something that I've witnessed a twice during my tenure on the board. The decision to appoint an additional director was driven by the desire to increase the likelihood of having additional continuity across fiscal years. Per bylaws, Lisa's appointment ends at this AGM and she will have to stand for election by the membership to continue her involvement as a director across committees and board initiatives.

I'd like to recognize Audrey Ng, who finishes her term on the board and is not seeking re-election. Over the past two years I've worked closely with Audrey on committees and other board initiatives. Audrey helped us level up our game in all things HR. This contribution can not be understated as the society navigated a number of strategic HR initiatives over the past two years that seemed to be executed with ease. It's been great to get to know you and work with you during this time.

I'd like to recognize Rob Adams, who finishes his final term on the board. A legend. I'm not sure how many directors have been mandated out after serving three terms, but I am confident it is very few. As per

our director term limits Rob is not eligible to stand for election for fiscal year 2020. Rob has done it all as a director – president, vice president, treasurer, not to mention being a member of almost all committees over his tenure. Rob, thank you for your contribution to the VULS, and for being a soundboard for me as I waded through my tenure on the board. It's been a pleasure to work alongside you over the past 5 years.

We've seen a strong uptake in past board members continuing to serve on committees in recent years, this is something that I'd love to see happen with both of you. Thank you for your contribution over the past two years.

The following people deserve recognition for their commitment to committee work this year:

Board Governance	Ensures good governance practices are followed; Maintains VULS By-laws.	Rob Adams (Chair), Sarah Cawston-Stewart, Audrey NG, Zun Zhang*
Hall of Fame	Lead the selection process for inducting new members into the VULS Hall of Fame.	Ken Su (Chair), Christa Hoy, Sarah Cawston-Stewart. Anja Haman*, Ed Burnet*, Scott Lewis*
Human Resources	Supports Executive Director as required on staffing issues; Evaluates Executive Director performance.	Audrey Ng (Chair), Brett Anderson, Trisha Roberson
Strategic Planning	Develops Strategic Plan documents; Works with Executive Director to set annual metrics and review gap analysis; Annually reviews and reports progress of the Strategic Plan.	Christa Hoy (Chair), Trisha Roberson, Jordan Bower*
Finance	Supports the board in providing financial oversight for the society.	Rob Adams (Chair), Trisha Roberson, Ken Su
Member Conduct	Creation of a sexual assault policy and development of a procedure to address sexual assault complaints from membership.	Sarah Cawston-Stewart (Chair), Lisa Riddle, Christa Hoy, Trisha Roberson

* non-board member

The valuable work of committee members helps guide the VUL to operate as a vibrant, inclusive and sustainable Society. If you are interested in assisting with the guidance of this organization, please consider volunteering for a committee. There is a sign-up sheet at the back or track down one of your friendly board members to chat about getting involved.

Staff

I'd like to thank all our staff for their efforts this year. Their hard work, creative thinking, and willingness to adapt, has helped the VUL be a deliver our members programs and be a resource for other Ultimate organizations.

Katie, at the last AGM you were in your first week. It's been great to hear updates of how you've rolled up your sleeves and jumped in feet first. Thank you for making things run smoothly.

Will, you continue to run a top rate youth program. Your experience working with youth programs across the region is invaluable and your impact on the community everlasting. Thank you for being an advocate for youth development and a pillar of our community.

Michael, the man behind the scenes. Your continued support in improving our members' web experience while constantly improving the documentation of our systems and processes does not go unnoticed. Thank you for consistently delivering new features to improve our members' experiences.

Craig Woods, you continue to be an engaged leader of the organization and a great advocate for your staff. Your passion and commitment to the organization brings incredible value to our members. Thank you for all the work you do to keep things moving.

CHALLENGES

Historically we have been blessed with long serving employees, this year will be the second year in which we will be filling one of our key roles. Last year we saw the hiring and ramp of a new league manager, this year we will be hiring an individual to lead our marketing efforts. Replacing the institutional knowledge of our previous employees is a daunting task. We've made efforts in recent years to increase documentation but there is only so much that you can do to document the experience of long serving employees. We cannot underestimate the amount of time and resources it takes to bring new employees up to speed and the impact that has on the progress of other initiatives. Invariably strategic initiatives get put on the backburner as we prioritize program delivery and ongoing operations during new hire ramp.

Over the past few years we, as a board, have put a greater emphasis on process improvement and documentation. For me, this past year has re-affirmed that these are areas that we need to continue to focus on in order to continue to maintain or expand our programs, our leadership position within the community, and member satisfaction. In my opinion the inability to improve processes will continue to be a limiting factor on strategic initiatives and may result in burnout and additional churn. The VULS needs to turn the corner to enable our staff to have a higher focus on high value activities.

In addition to operational risks, we are concerned about the future availability of sufficient quality field space, particularly if we continue to grow. Regional expansion will support growth in field space, but this will remain a concern. The relationship with the Vancouver Parks Board through our ED is incredibly valuable.

We also acknowledge that there are affordability challenges within our city, and that could have long-term effects on our continued enrollment, depending on how that affects the demographic composition of the city. In addition to affordability challenges in the city affecting membership we've also seen our field costs increase, this is attributable to an increase in programs but also in the higher cost of synthetic fields. While our costs increase we need to be cognizant of the effect on our membership from fee increases.

CONCLUSION

The VULS continues to navigate through the challenges and opportunities brought on by years of growth and a broad strategic plan. As stated above there is no shortage of ideas and desires of ways to improve programs and the organization. As with most organizations the limiting factors are invariably time, human capital, and budget. As mentioned above process improvement and the ability to allocate staff time to higher value, member centric, activities will be critical as the organization continues to mature.

Five years ago, at the end of the AGM I approached then president Pete Mccann and said I'd be interested in getting involved. I joined the strategic planning committee as a non-board volunteer. This committee was in the first phase of developing the new strategic plan. Over the subsequent 5 years I saw a full cycle of the new strategic plan from initial research and brain storming through three years of adoption. It's been a fun ride and I appreciate all the staff, board, and committee members that have engaged in lively discussion about so many topics. As ultimate has become less of a focus in my life I feel that it's time to step aside and let others take the reins. Before I depart, I'd encourage you to read the paragraphs below that were penned by past board member Travis Smith as I believe they sum up the impact of ultimate on my, and likely many of our lives.

It's been a slice,
Brett

BC Crisis Center:

- Anywhere in BC 1-800-SUICIDE: [1-800-784-2433](tel:1-800-784-2433)
- Mental Health Support Line: [310-6789](tel:310-6789)
- Vancouver Coastal Regional Distress Line: [604-872-3311](tel:604-872-3311)
- Sunshine Coast/Sea to Sky: [1-866-661-3311](tel:1-866-661-3311)
- Online Chat Service for Adults: www.CrisisCentreChat.ca (Noon to 1am)

Someone asked me recently why I got involved with the VUL – why I became a captain, why I volunteered, why I joined the board. Put simply: I owe the VUL. I owe it for many things: a large portion of my friend circle, for my physical health and fitness. The community of Ultimate supported me at time when I needed it, and I've seen that happen for others, too.

Furthermore, Ultimate matters: to the people who matter to me and to this city. We all know people who have fallen in love because of ultimate. I have friends who played ultimate with guests at their weddings, with their family at Christmas, with strangers who didn't speak their language on fields halfway around the world (or halfway across the city). I've seen firsthand the joy it brings and the way that Spirit of the Game changes how people treat each other, even after they leave the field.

I believe we give to Ultimate, ultimately, because it brings more joy to the world. As we go forward, I encourage us all to remember that, and to be proud of what we are a part of, and to take Spirit with you, on and off the field, in all that you do.

** – borrowed and amended from Travis Smiths' 2016 president's report because it's so awesome and rings true to me, thanks Travis