

# Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea COVID-19 INITIAL RESPONSE REPORT

## COVID-19 IMPACTS and RESPONSE

The Centre's **safety response** was initiated as national COVID-19 concerns increased the week of March 9<sup>th</sup>. Public health messaging (written and verbal) was made commonplace for staff, volunteers and visitors. Enhanced sanitization procedures were adopted, and our high-touch interactives curtailed. Our required full public closure occurred later this same week.

Immediately upon closure, the Board and Senior Management of the Centre simultaneously and creatively reset our priorities. Key decisions taken formed the foundation of a **Business Continuity** approach with the purpose of sustaining our Centre for the future.

**FISCAL SECURITY** - Our current financial model relies heavily (approximately 80%) on earned income through admissions, memberships, programs and our Salish Sea Store. The full closure of the Centre occurred at the outset of one of our strongest revenue generating periods. As a result, expeditiously trimming expenses was fundamental to survival.

Our response strategy included:

- reduction of expenses wherever feasible
- reducing the number of saltwater habitats and thereby maintenance costs
- securing payments for confirmed and pledged funds from supporters
- preparing requests for emergency funding from all available, relevant COVID-19 programs
- the launch of a Board of Directors fund development working group

For the first three months of the pandemic (Mar to May 2020), our Business Continuity Milestones included:

- securing \$77K of federal (Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy) and provincial (Animal Care Initiative Fund) government support
- securing a \$40K Canada Emergency Benefit Account (CEBA) loan
- detailed preparation of facility modifications and associated Safety Plan for Centre reactivation (with gradual reopening beginning for members only on Jun 8, World Ocean's Day)
- \$106K (37%) reduction in expenses
- staff reduction (from 17 individuals to 6)

### Financial Management of Initial response to the COVID pandemic ('000)

	3 months Mar-May			
	actual	plan	var	
<b>earned revenue</b>	20.2	241.9	-221.7	\$222K loss (92%) in earned revenue
<b>contributed revenue</b>	160.2	69.2	91.0	\$91K increase (132%) in contributed revenue
<b>total revenue</b>	180.5	311.1	-130.6	
<b>total expenses</b>	177.8	284.1	-106.3	\$106K reduction (37%) in expenses
<b>net income</b>	2.7	27.0	-24.3	

## HUMAN RESOURCES

- staff reduction (from 17 individuals to 6)
- minimizing pandemic risk to staff, volunteers and visitors
- developing necessary safety protocols aligned with WorkSafe BC guidelines and adaptations to the visitor experience to make it possible for the public to safely return to the facility
- flexibility in continuum of responsibilities of all active staff throughout and beyond the closure (Administrative/Janitorial)
- cessation of all volunteer shifts (121+ volunteers affected)
- compassionately directing all staff affected by the necessary, temporary layoffs to government assistance programs
- maintaining ongoing connections with valued team members throughout the layoff periods

## ANIMAL CARE

- ensuring excellent life-sustaining service to the animals in our care
- identifying and securing alternate food supply
- physical environment adaptations and relocations (including closure of some habitats)

**OPPORTUNISTIC WORK** - The two-and-a-half-month closure period provided an opportunity to take care of specific projects that would have been more challenging to schedule and complete while being open to the public. This work included:

- preventative maintenance, including progress toward completion of the substantial sand filter replacement project
- deep cleaning
- habitat and exhibit improvements

The next stage in our response was the creation of an overarching **Go Forward Reactivation Framework** and development of a detailed WorkSafeBC informed **COVID 19 Safety Plan**. These materials were prepared with input and review from all active staff and the Board of Directors and in consultation with the Town of Sidney's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) team.

Prior to re-opening to the public, a final walkthrough inspection was conducted on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 with the Centre's Executive Director, our staff's Health & Safety representative and three representatives from the Town (two Fire Department professionals and one Business Liaison). These documents along with detailed visitor guidelines are available publically at [www.salishseacentre.org/covid19-safety-plan](http://www.salishseacentre.org/covid19-safety-plan). Physical copies of these resources are also available within our facility on the public notice board and in the staff and volunteer team room.

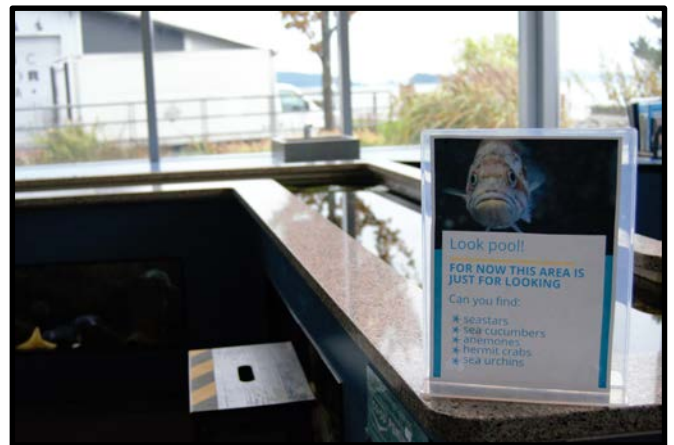
## SAFETY PLAN SNAPSHOTS

COVID-19 Safety Plan elements include providing hand sanitizer at entrance, exit and additional stations throughout the facility, hourly sanitization of surfaces and washroom facilities, one-way flow, removal of interactives, signage, the requirement for staff and volunteers to wear masks and most importantly, adherence to physical distancing. The images below capture several adaptations supporting COVID-19 Safety protocols.



Images from top, clockwise

1. store entrance sanitizer
2. touch pool transformed into a look only pool
3. artifacts displayed for looking only
4. microscopes removed
5. staff & volunteers



## REOPENING

A “soft” opening process with invited guests was used to test the new, adapted visitor experience. These facilitated test groups informed a series of final adjustments to our revised visitor flow, safety signage and the operations of the new exit into Beacon Park. These practice sessions included role-playing around line and capacity management as well as new specialized roles for staff and volunteers. These controlled test group experiences helped our team fine tune protocols, build confidence and prepare for the new operational realities prior to the publicized, public reopening.

The safe, gradual reopening of our Centre also included the following principles. The Centre will:

- initially reopen with reduced staffing levels
- start small ... and expand and add carefully when possible
- have a consistent opening schedule
- maintain operating hours as 10-4:30 (last entry 4pm)
- only open for as many days as we can safely staff and sanitize
- adjust staff daily duties to manage the new reality
- schedule daily redundancy and leadership support in the form of an “In Charge” position responding to concerns, performing additional cleaning and navigating unexpected issues
- have a “quick close down” procedure that is easy to roll out if multiple staff are off sick/ill at any time and/or in the unfortunate event of community outbreak in Sidney
- continue to receive Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) funding
- rehire staff conservatively depending on the success of the economy reopening, visitor satisfaction and overall attendance and revenue results

### **SCHEDULE**

#### **June 1-8 SOFT OPENING**

- June 1 = Final inspection walk through
- June 2 = Test Group #1
- June 3 = Test Group #2
- June 4 = Staff & Volunteer orientation
- June 5 = Store only for Members
- June 8 = World Ocean’s Day for Members

#### **June 12 COMMUNITY OPENING**

- Fri-Sun = Regular weekly schedule
  - Fridays = Store Only, 10-4:30
  - Saturday & Sunday = Store & Centre, 10-4:30

#### **June 25 EXPANDED OPENING**

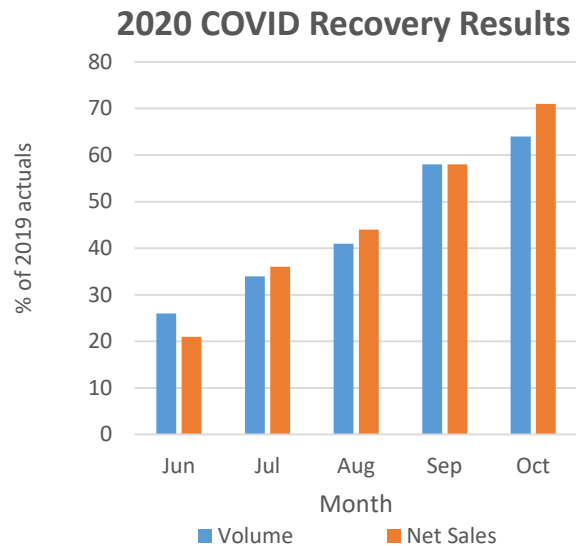
- Fri-Tue & Stat Holidays = Regular 5 days/week Store & Centre, 10-4:30
- CLOSED on Wednesdays & Thursdays

## RESULTS

Visitors continue to return to our community and our Centre. To date, our visitor volume has been improving gradually. Monthly attendance compared to 2019 results are understandably low but have been trending positively month-over-month.

While continuing to plan conservatively, we are cautiously optimistic. Throughout the fall and winter, creative experimentation is planned for the areas of:

- securing new locally-produced product for the Salish Sea Store
- small-scale shopping & meet the artist (“Pop-Up”) evenings
- new COVID-safe interactive experiences for visitors to the Centre
- online learning pilot programs with both traditional and homeschool audiences
- collaboration with community partners (including World Fisheries Trust, UVIC Department of Geography, SeaChange Marine Conservation Society and the Sidney Business Improvement Association) to share resources, learning and to increase our collective impact.



**COMMUNITY VOICE** - Below are several unsolicited comments received from visitors since reopening. They independently and objectively project a sense of our value in these uncertain times.

It's a pleasure to become a donor.

I am so grateful to the Salish Sea Centre and committed team. My teenage son recently joined the volunteer program and it is a powerfully positive experience.

--- First Time Donor, September 2020

A really nice time in a beautiful spot.

We really enjoyed our time here and went through several times. My son enjoyed the big submarine door the best! Ha ha. Everyone socially distanced well and even without the touch tanks there was a lot to see and enjoy. The atmosphere was really great thank you!

--- August 2020

What a cute little aquarium.

Went during the old COVID times so the touch pool was closed but that barely made a jot of difference.

We brought our 9-month old and he had a wonderful time. All the staff were informative and kind.

It was largely peaceful and we could tell the fish were treated well and the lack of sea mammals was a real comfort, it felt morally aligned with our values too.

The price point is the real seller here too. It feels like you really get your value for your money and not a penny more or less would feel the same.

--- First Time Visitor August 2020

Kids wonderland.

It is a magnificent hand on aquarium by the waterfront, great views on the marine life, kids love it! special the moon jellyfish tank. social distance spot on, feel very comfortable.

--- July 2020

**LEARNING & BUILDING CONFIDENCE** - This crisis has challenged us all. Our board, staff and volunteers have truly come together to ensure our organization remains viable for the future. We continue to learn and evolve as an organization with every challenge and opportunity.

The learnings from our facility closure have resulted in improved crisis response documentation and allowed our team to build unique, experience-based competence and confidence with our complex systems.

This crisis has also challenged the capacity, commitment and skills of our team. While individually providing leadership in our respective areas of expertise, our team members have grown into “Swiss Army Knife” performers who skillfully attend to tasks across our operations as needed. Cross-training has provided deeper understandings and compassion for what is required to run all aspects of our Centre as well as an increased focus on providing excellent service to our visitors from our entire team.

**SUCCESSFUL RESPONSE TO UNRELATED, EXTERNAL EQUIPMENT ISSUE** - In August, an unexpected shut down of the Geothermal System (managed by a commercial company) supplying continuous salt water to our habitats, further tested our emergency response readiness and skills. Although the issue was the responsibility of the commercial service provider, our Centre’s professional team responded exceptionally to the event and as a result, no animals were harmed. This unplanned event required:

- Designing, renting, setting up and sustaining an emergency salt water supply system for the aquarium pumped directly from the ocean.
- The assembled emergency system had to be maintained and monitored outdoors over 24 hours during a busy and warm weekend.

While challenging, this experience was a success. The Centre’s team responded well and executed an emergency salt water supply protocol never before performed. An unexpected, positive outcome of this experience was the significant interest from residents checking in on our team and expressing genuine interest in the success of our Centre and health of our animals.

**PROFILE** - Since reopening, the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea has been mentioned in 19 publications, two radio stations and two TV stations including the Vancouver Sun, the National Post, the Chronicle Herald, CBC, CHEK TV and CFX radio. The majority of this attention was in response to naming of the Centre’s current Giant Pacific Octopus (GPO) Animal Ambassador after our Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry.

**"If the ‘giant’ in giant Pacific octopus wasn’t a clear enough measure of admiration, octopuses have THREE hearts, a symbol that has come to reflect gratitude for Dr. Henry, healthcare and frontline workers."**



### IN VIDEO: X-Men's Olivia Munn handing her social media accounts to Dr. Bonnie Henry for one day

Carli Berry



Chief provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry provides an update on COVID-19 on April 2, 2020. Image Credit: Province of British Columbia

June 25, 2020 - 5:02 PM

An X-Men actress known for her role as Psylocke will be handing over her social media to B.C.'s top doctor for a day.

The Ministry of Health confirmed today that Dr. Bonnie Henry will be taking over Olivia Munn's social media accounts.

### Meet Henry. He has 3 hearts and 8 arms

Pedro Arrais / Times Colonist  
JUNE 27, 2020 06:00 AM



Two-year-old Dion Sheybari gets a close look at an octopus named Henry, in honour of Dr. Bonnie Henry, B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer, at the Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea.

Photograph By DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

**SHOW YOUR LOCAL LOVE**  
*Sidney by the Sea*

Our community organizations need us now more than ever.

**Support Sidney's Not-for-Profits**

Sidney's been feeling the local love this summer as residents continue to show their support for local community groups and not-for-profits by paying respectful visits, keeping updated on current happenings, and offering a helping hand when possible. Find out more about your favourite local not-for-profit at [SidneyBIA.ca/COMMUNITY](http://SidneyBIA.ca/COMMUNITY).

**SIDNEYBIA.CA / COMMUNITY**

Sidney by the Sea

The Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea released Pebbles the giant Pacific octopus back into the wild in March. Now the aquarium has welcomed a new octopus dubbed Henry in honour of provincial health officer Dr. Bonnie Henry. (Photo by Bob Orchard/Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea)

### Vancouver Island aquarium names new octopus after Dr. Bonnie Henry

Shaw Centre for the Salish Sea names new octopus for provincial health officer

NINA GROSSMAN / Jun. 25, 2020 8:40 a.m. / NEWS

## SUMMARY

COVID-19 affected and continues to impact all areas of our organization.

We are a small and tenacious team demonstrating flexibility and creativity in facing these challenges. Positive results and the ongoing support from members, volunteers and supporters continue to fuel our resilience.

We remain open to learning and adapting as needed to continue to serve our mission and support our community recovery.