

Executive Director's Report – 2020

2020 has been an unprecedented year in the history of the Canadian Fossil Discovery Centre.

When I took the position of Executive Director on February 3rd, I came with a route map in mind, to get the future I envisioned for the Centre.

With the irruption of the Covid19 virus in late February-early March, quickly converted to global pandemic, planned changes in the management, and mandatory changes due to the pandemic, became mixed together. Some of those changes were coincidental, and some of them were clearly due to separate reasons, but all of them supposed a huge challenge.

Quickly, the incoming future in early 2020 became highly unpredictable, always subject to the restrictions imposed by Public Health Orders.

The Centre was closed during 132 days in 2020 due to the restrictions to Museums and Community Centres imposed by the Provincial Government.

Both periods of closure and opening, were filled with uncertainty, and supposed a real challenge in many aspects, including maintaining a stable staff.

Despite of that combination of difficult circumstances, and with a high dose of resilience, the Centre finished the year with many fundamental improvements, and a few others were initialized and developed during 2020, and they will see the light during 2021.

Statistics

Even with the closure of the Centre during 131 days in 2020, the annual paid visitation kept the numbers in the average scope of the last few years, thanks to the higher visitation during the months the Centre was open, compensating the null visitation of the closure periods.

That increase of visitation was mostly due to the higher number of visitors coming from Winnipeg, after a special an intense focus on the advertising in Winnipeg.

This marketing increase was reached after a thorough examination of previous and present statistics, resulting in the decision of cutting down the local marketing expenses, and increasing the marketing efforts in Winnipeg.

Travel Manitoba was advised to focus their efforts for the Centre in Winnipeg, as well as some migration of advertising from local to Winnipeg.

Financial Management

The financial situation at the beginning of 2020, in the pre-pandemic time, at the CFDC, was weak.

Since October 2019 until April 2020, the Checking Account, where the Operational Budget is allocated, was unable to keep positive numbers in a consistent way, and the authorized overdraft was used several times, increasing the fee expenses.

This was an uncomfortable financial situation due also to the absence of any new agreement for operational funds with the City of Morden, since the previous 5-year agreement just finished on 2019, and that due to the delay in the City of Morden Budget approval, there was no such new agreement until June 2020.

During the following few weeks after the pandemic hit CFDC's capability of self-generated income, due to the cancellation of almost all of the programs and public events like the Gala or the Corn and Apple Festival during the year, and partially the admission related income, the situation was really delicate.

The initial management plan was adapted to the new circumstances, and a thorough analysis allowed to identify the reliability and the performance of every action, and every expense.

An aggressive campaign to capture Federal and Provincial grants and subsidies was initiated, since the availability of private funds was seriously weakened by the pandemic.

Many drastic measures were taken with the goal of strengthen the financial situation, which is one of the important pillars for the CFDC to be able to meet its Mission and Strategic Objectives.

In barely 10 months, CFDC came from negative operational numbers to the best financial position ever in its 50 years of existence.

All of the losses related to the pandemic, were highly covered, and the reliability of the operations totally surpassed the net results of any other year before.

Thus, while at the end of the year 2019 there was a deficiency of \$21,484 in operations, 2020 finished with a record revenue over expenses from operations of \$120,716.

2020 started with \$67,492 in Net Assets, and finished with the Net Assets record number of \$188,636, which represents an equity growth of approximately 280%.

To summarize an explanation of the financial results at the end of the year, we can simply say that we obtained as much as possible income, while optimizing the performance of every dollar spent.

The main idea was proportionally balancing the size of the expenses to the needs and income of the Centre.

Even noticing that the self-generated gross income (admissions, gif-shop, and programs) was significantly lower in 2020 than in previous years due to the consequences of the pandemic, the net income was even higher, due to the cancellation of unprofitable services and activities, and therefore all the expenses related to them.

The expenses in wages were **reduced** a 40%, 60% reduction in marketing, while **increasing** expenses a 40% in Galleries and Exhibits, a 35% in Office Equipment, or 40% in Lab Equipment.

And finally, the CFDC obtained a 60% more in grants and subsidies from Federal and Provincial sources in 2020 than in 2019, coming from \$77,941 in 2019, to \$198,203 in 2020.

We can confirm that this tendency is continuing in 2021, after reviewing the good results of the first quarter.

The core of this Strategic Financial Plan is to establish a path to the self-sustainability, while using the available funds to grow as a Museum and Research and Educational Centre.

This is certainly the necessary evolution the CFDC has to undertake, in order to be ready for the challenge of a new stand-alone facility.

The only chance to build a new facility is to demonstrate to all of the stakeholders that the Centre can be feasible and sustainable, and without any doubt, the Business Plan to support it has to start now.

The goal is to build a financial self-reliance, and a strong credibility, necessary steps to become a centre of reference for the preservation and the research of the Manitoba fossil heritage, and to be able to share this information with the public.

Centre Improvements

The huge increase of net liquidity at the end of the year was not on account of a lack of operations.

Very much to the contrary, 2020 was a very busy year in improvements of all sort, primarily focusing in expensive but necessary infrastructural updates, creation of new exhibits, as well as new agreements for research.

All of those improvements at the Centre were possible to the funds of the **Signature Museum Program**.

Actually, the CFDC had a record of activity and investment in connection with its infrastructure, both tangible and non-tangible, and the strategic plan is to continue this growth, in order to reach more and more public every year.

Main improvements and/or achievements completed before the end of 2020:

- New thematic display about Plate Tectonics, explaining the Continental Drift
- New assembling and permanent exhibition of the Mosasart Elements
- New Interactive Microeye Microscope Display
- New relocation of the replica skeletons at the Mosasaur Hall
- New Website
- New Online Gift-Shop
- New theme CFDC Truck
- New appointment of an Adjunct Curator of Vertebrates, Kirstin Brink, after the activation of a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Manitoba
- New advertising plan and orientation of marketing resources resulting in an increase of visitation and public reach

Ongoing Projects

Some of the most ambitious projects for the CFDC were initialized during the first semester of 2020, developed during the second semester, and will see their completion in 2021. Those projects are already in an advanced stage:

- State-of-the-art Collection Management System commissioned to the French company Skinsoft, specialized in Management Software for Museum Collections, complemented with a publishing Software to be able to share publicly all of the available data of CFDC Collections
- Design and installation, by Décor Cabinets, of glass cabinets surrounding all of the replicas at the Mosasaur Hall in order to display the original fossils of those replicas. Those cabinets will be purchased at a very reduced price, thanks to the sponsorship by Décor Cabinets.
- New display with a real-fossil complete Platecarpus mosasaur skeleton, first real-fossil complete skeleton ever assembled at the CFDC
- New big, spectacular exhibit, about a new shark species from the CFDC Collections.
- Feasibility Study, Engineering Proposal, Business Plan, and Museography Project, for a new stand-alone facility for the CFDC
- New Display about one of the most important fossil heritage in Manitoba: The Cretaceous Amber from Cedar Lake MB, with new discovered insects and plants.