

## **OBC President's Report - OBC AGM - Nov26, 2020**

**2020 - The Year of Covid19.** This has been an unforgettable year for everyone, including our orienteering community. In some ways, we have been fortunate - our community has not lost anyone to this disease, and we are inherently a 'low risk' sport within the current pandemic environment. Nevertheless, the usual programming offered by our clubs has been severely impacted by the provincial restrictions on social gathering. In addition, the *2020 BC Orienteering Championships*, *2020 Western Canadian Orienteering Championships*, and *2020 Canadian Championships* - all popular competitions in our annual orienteering calendar - were eventually cancelled (technically, postponed to 2021, but the competitive orienteering picture for 2021 remains unclear). International travel, notably to events in the USA, remains out of the question.

On the up-side, orienteers across the province quickly found innovative ways to continue providing fun 'running navigation' experiences for us, while still respecting the Provincial Health Officer's pandemic guidelines. Our beloved SI timing got put on the back-burner, while QR codes, 'treasure hunt' clues and GPS-based control marking became routine practice. *MapRunF* went from being an obscure niche app to being installed on many orienteer's phone. Start times got distributed over days, rather than minutes. "Event arenas" became ephemeral, existing more on the internet than on the ground. In effect, the entire orienteering enterprise in BC became virtual - except for the actual running and navigation.

This pattern of innovation at the club level was a gratifying response to an unprecedented situation, but it was not without its own challenges. Public promotion has had to be avoided, so club memberships have taken a hit, as did participation numbers (although *viaSport*, our provincial sport funding agency was able to provide extra funding to help compensate). Perhaps the most revealing deficit in this virtual orienteering scene, however, has been the lack of socialization opportunities. Restrictions on group size and requirements for social distancing have precluded the usual social interactions at the start/finish locales, dining together, or holding planning and debriefing sessions. It was really quite surprising just how much we all missed those face-to-face exchanges. Zoom is great, but it just can't replace that real-life experience.

Finally, from a Board perspective, I want to heartily thank the current 2020 Directors for all their contributions to the work of OBC during the year. They have been an engaged, thoughtful and responsive group - a genuine pleasure to work with. If they are a member of your own club, please thank them yourself for their efforts and commitment to orienteering in BC, because they are working for you. I also want to thank those orienteers, both on and off the Board, who have taken on important service roles, including Jonathan Bakker (OBC website), Marg Ellis (BC Orienteering Officials certification) Erica Lay (the OBC Strategic Plan revision process), David and Jonathan Bakker (building a province-wide membership system) and Ross Burnett (OBC Bylaws revision).

Brian Ellis

President