

A Message from the Past President: PNLA Presidency... A year of Discovery!

When I first got the idea of running for Vice-President back in 2015, it wasn't because I had any grand and glorious ideas about the direction of PNLA... not even much of an idea what the governing of such an organization might entail. I decided to toss my name in solely because there had been THREE emails over the course of two months asking for folks to consider running. I wrote an email to then Vice-President Gwendolyn Haley asking, "Are you folks desperate, or just making sure you've covered the bases?" She lost no time in contacting me to tell me what the job entailed and encouraging me to follow through on my impulse to volunteer.

I am SO glad I listened to her! The past two years have been a wonderful experience of teamwork and an opportunity to learn what PNLA truly is. When this year's elections arrived and no one volunteered to run for the Vice-President position I decided that I could do it again – but this time I want to demystify the office and have Board activities transparent enough that folks see it as something they can do and not be overwhelmed by the title.

It is a three-year commitment, with each year bringing its own duties. The first year I was the Vice-President/President Elect. This is a shadow year, a chance to learn the ropes and see how the Board operates and what the President does. The Vice-President may take on a project – in my case it was starting the project to update our Handbook (now available for viewing on our website). In my current term as Vice-President I will be assisting the President with his plans to make PNLA stronger, and getting ready to carry those over into next year as President when the positions rotate again. This initial involvement with the Board opened a window for me to start seeing the variety in our organization, and the many facets of the library world which we represent.

There are three required meetings each year – a web conference in November, a retreat near Seattle in February (paid for by PNLA), and the annual conference in August (PNLA covers the costs for the Vice-President and President). During the vice-presidential year I learned the schedule of when to ask for reports, when to schedule meetings, and when to send out reminders. During that year I was able to select and confirm Kalispell, Montana as the location for the 2018 conference. Conference sites usually need to be reserved about two years ahead of time, so this responsibility is not insignificant!

The middle year is the Presidency. The primary responsibility of this year is to represent PNLA at as many of the local (state/provincial) conferences as possible. The Vice-President or Past-President can help with this, and no one is expected to do more than they feel is reasonable for their situation. I am fortunate that my position with the Timberland Regional Library System in southwest Washington allows for time to cover my PNLA duties, and the administration has been supportive and encouraging. When I asked for permission to do this again, I was told that this is great PR for the library system and additionally they benefit from what I learn at the various conferences I am able to attend. I learned SO much about PNLA, issues concerning our relationship with First Nations peoples, management and leadership, and so much more. I met people from each of our areas and was able to learn about issues and concerns unique to their corner of our organization. In addition to

professional networking and learning, I experienced the totem poles of Ketchikan, explored Billings on foot, relaxed beside Vancouver Harbour on a sunny spring day, and hiked up Whistlers Mountain in Jasper. It was truly a year I will never forget!

The third year of the commitment is the Past-President year. The main responsibility of this person is to chair or co-chair the upcoming conference with the help of the state/provincial representative from that location and a committee of volunteers. The Handbook goes into exhaustive detail about how this is to be done, and everyone on the Board is more than ready to lend a hand or answer questions! This is an exciting opportunity to try new ideas, or to have the conference focus on a professional direction of your choice. The other responsibility of the Past-President is to find volunteers to run for office. Every year we need to elect a new Vice-President/President-Elect, and every other year we need to elect a Treasurer, Secretary and 2nd Vice President.

My hope is that by telling folks what is involved and what can be gained from the experience it will become less of a looming gargantuan task, and more of an adventure to be enjoyed in small segments! Other ways to become involved are to volunteer for the Conference Committee or to run for the office of state/provincial representative to PNLA (chosen by your local association). Whatever choice you make, explore what this great organization has to offer and help us make PNLA stronger! I am happy to answer questions, so feel free to contact me - especially if you want to help with next summer's conference! I look forward to meeting more of you at conferences, and getting to know better those of you who accept this adventurous challenge!

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