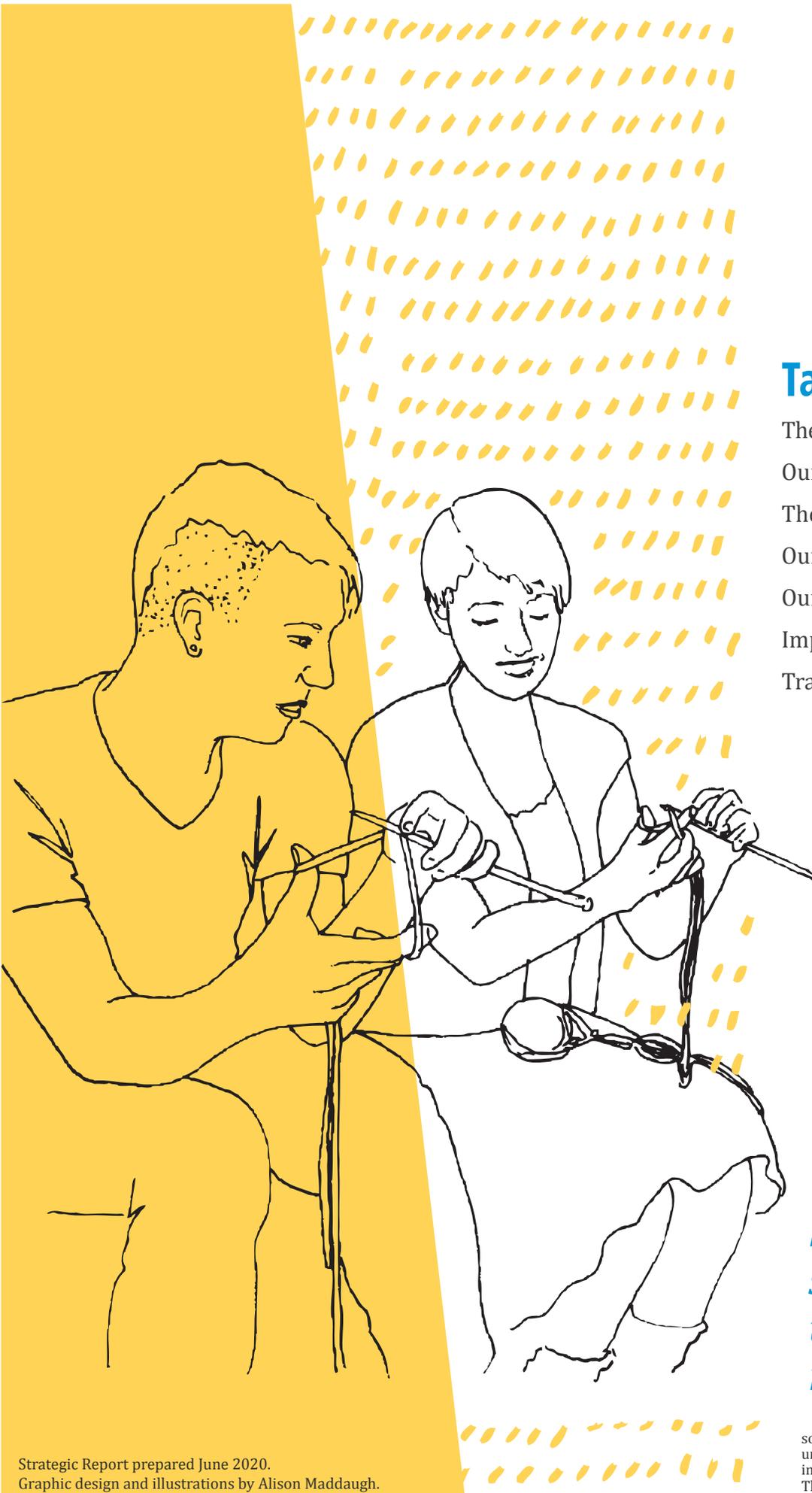


*a shop for  
curious people*



the  
**LEARNARY**

STRATEGIC PLAN  
2020-2025



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*“Inquiry builds  
lifelong learning  
skills that  
transcend content  
mastery...”*

## The Purpose of this Strategic Plan

This plan establishes a framework for our focus, activities and actions over the next five years. The plan identifies priorities and outlines a framework to assess opportunities that best match our values and mission. Through its implementation, we support a sustainable investment of our energy, resources and joy, and realize our goals in the near and long term.

## Our Mission

To offer affordable, multidisciplinary learning opportunities in east Vancouver; to be a social hub for nourishing intergenerational community connection; and to celebrate curiosity.

## The Learnary

The Vancouver Learnary Society is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to intergenerational and lifelong learning. The Learnary operates as a retail store and workshop space, and hosts mobile activities and special events at various locations across the City and within the neighbourhood.

The Learnary was founded by Helen Hughes, Surya Govender and Sam Mills, three women with many years experience working in educational systems and community building (over 100 years between them!) Their idea was to encourage and grow curiosity, facilitate a love of learning for all ages, build strong community connections, and provide resources for many different types of learners and educators.

The Learnary is located on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish Peoples, in the Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is a community rich in diversity and history, including a long tradition of grassroots involvement in local issues, active neighbourhood groups, community schools, and a business improvement association. The area's community centres and neighbourhood houses are heavily used and its parks and open spaces are considered key assets for residents. However, the neighbourhood has been undergoing significant changes and transition over the past decade. Similar to that of many neighbourhoods in Vancouver, Hastings-Sunrise is experiencing new neighbourhood development and welcoming new residents and businesses to the area. Integrating and connecting both old and new communities builds a strong sense of place and social wellbeing.

## Our Values

Our four core values provide a compass to guide our actions: curiosity, learning, community and responsibility.

### CURIOSITY

Curiosity is a foundational value of The Learnary. We believe that curiosity leads to learning, opens the door to social and personal change, and is a source of delight.

### LEARNING

We support learning and exploration for all ages, from young children to elders, and seek opportunities to foster intergenerational and diverse ways of sharing knowledge and ideas. We embrace making/doing as fundamentally linked to learning.

### COMMUNITY

We value strong social networks that include people of all ages, abilities, races, genders and sexualities. We cultivate personal relationships that support us to be resilient, encourage our engagement, and connect us more deeply to our local community.

### RESPONSIBILITY

We value taking responsibility for our actions, and deepening our understanding of how our actions impact one another in our community and our environment. We value the ability to sustain environmental, social and financial health over time, for oneself and for one's community.

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### HASTINGS-SUNRISE

#### Neighbourhood Profile

30-34  
Years

Dominant Age Group  
of Residents

63,755  
Residents

Population  
in 2016

70.4%  
English

Dominant  
Language

\$12-26  
per sq. ft.

Average  
Lease Rate

Source: BizMap



## Our Strategic Priorities

Our three strategic priorities are directly informed by our core values and will direct our work over the coming five-year term.

Each priority is outlined separately below and includes a **CONTEXT** – the reason this priority is relevant within the wider community; our **COMMITMENTS** – our intentions and focus areas to fulfill in order to meet this context identified; and **ACTIONS** – specific and measurable tasks required to align us with that strategic priority, context and commitment.

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*“I found the variety of activities and supplies available to be really inspiring...”*

posted on Facebook  
by a fan of The Learnary

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

1

*Strengthen community connections, support knowledge sharing, and build intergenerational resilience through the programming and workshop space we host.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

2

*Establish The Learnary retail space as a well-curated collection of materials that ignite curiosity, delight and exploration and serves as a resource for diverse learners and educators of all ages.*

STRATEGIC PRIORITY

3

*Develop resilient, effective and ethical systems to help us grow and sustain our mission.*

1



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY**

*Strengthen community connections, support knowledge sharing, and build intergenerational resilience through the programming and workshop space we host.*

## Context

With Vancouver in a housing affordability crisis that impacts most citizens,<sup>1</sup> our city has few non-commercial spaces that people can utilize both formally and informally. Home learners and unschoolers are looking for space to get together for programming and activities. Older adults want to stay engaged after retirement and to utilize their many skills to improve their community. Young adults often want to make things with their own hands but often don't have the space, funds, or mentorship to support them. Getting together seems key: according to a recent survey, "people in Vancouver are experiencing a growing sense of isolation and disconnection."<sup>2</sup>

Opportunities for intergenerational connection are remarkably limited; our current social and community structures lack spaces to collectively learn from one another. Research shows that pairing younger and older people has positive consequences for each,<sup>3</sup> and there is growing demand for hands-on activities to absorb new ideas and skills, and to spend time together away from screens and other distractions.

There are innumerable skills and interests held by our community, yet limited opportunities to showcase and share them outside of an online platform. Offering shared workshop space for diverse learners and educators to connect, explore, build and exchange is precious. The look and feel of such a space is important: for inquiry-based learning to occur, people must be attracted to the space and be inspired to use it<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://globalnews.ca/news/3773541/vancouver-among-worlds-most-expensive-real-estate-market-survey/>

<sup>2</sup> Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver. Vancouver Foundation Report, June 2012

<sup>3</sup> Stanford Center on Longevity June 2016, 'Hidden in Plain Sight: How intergenerational Relations can Transform our Future' <http://longevity3.stanford.edu>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.teacherlibrarian.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Kurti-article.pdf>

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*“It made me feel like if I wanted a community with which to do the craft I already know, or if I wanted to do something new, I could find it there. It seemed like a third space, which is incredibly valuable and necessary for community and accessibility.”*

posted on Facebook  
by a fan of The Learnary

## Commitments

- We promote local artists and makers.
- We support all kinds of educators through the programming and resources we offer, plus the shared use of our workshop space.
- We engage a diverse group of people in our community and connect people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.
- We build strong neighbourhood relationships by cultivating connections with local residents and families, developing programming collaborations with local organizations, and fostering connections with local schools, home learning networks and small businesses.
- We seek opportunities to provide affordable programming and free activities to ensure access to learning is not limited to those who can pay for it.
- We promote intergenerational activities and provide a place for adults, youth and children to learn with and from each other.
- We provide opportunities for local children, youth and adults to facilitate workshops and activities to generate their own programming.
- We seek opportunities to generate revenue from our programming, including rental of our space and by promoting retail sales through our activities.

## Actions

- Provide a clear, well-organized workshop room to support shared use by diverse groups.
- Build a workshop schedule for each season.
- Plan special events for specific occasions.
- Identify, track and deliver specific program opportunities that support community members, and in particular children and youth, to take leadership roles within our intergenerational community.
- Draft a rental policy and contract to facilitate the workshop room as a rental space for programming that aligns with The Learnary values and outline a strategy to promote this to the community.
- Identify specific opportunities for cross-marketing programming that links with retail goods for sale. Prioritize these within each program focus or service delivery area.
- Maintain space in the shop that features local artists and makers, including consignment sales.
- Track the educators we are reaching through programming, resources and shared workshop space.
- Increase our organizational diversity.
- Develop our strategy for building a more diverse community base.
- Continue to build strong neighbourhood relationships and collaborations.
- Apply for grants and other supports to support free programming.
- Develop a pricing template that accommodates scale-based offerings.

2



**STRATEGIC PRIORITY**

*Establish The Learnary retail space as a well-curated collection of materials that ignite curiosity, delight and exploration and serves as a resource for diverse learners and educators of all ages.*

## Context

Cultivating curiosity can foster lifelong learning and engagement with social and environmental issues<sup>1</sup> yet there are no retail spaces in Vancouver that explicitly champion curiosity, and few that serve as a resource for diverse learners and educators.

There is a growing demand for quality children's educational materials that address issues such as systemic racism, gender identity, decolonization, and environmentalism while promoting inclusivity and celebrating diversity.

Citizens are increasingly choosing locally-made products and retailers that promote social and environmental responsibility. A panelist at a recent marketing strategy event in Vancouver put it this way: "It's 'trendy' to be socially engaged and environmentally responsible, but it's also fundamental."<sup>2</sup>

The retail environment is increasingly influenced by emotional factors, seeking opportunities to build trust with consumers and generate alignment between the customer's values and those represented by a product. These values are increasingly expressed through not only the appearance but the experience of retail space, both in its shop space and its online presence.

<sup>1</sup> Natural Curiosity: Building children's understanding of the world through environmental inquiry/A resource for teachers. (2011). Toronto: The Laboratory School at the Dr. Erick Jackman Institute of Child Study)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.vancouverisawesome.com/2019/06/25/know-how-lifestyle-retail-conference-vancouver/> (Accessed August 2019)

## Commitments

- We sell a thoughtfully curated collection of books, games, DIY kits and maker supplies that nourish curiosity and foster intergenerational connection, utilizing revenue generated from our retail space to support the broader mission of The Learnary.
- We create an inviting retail space that offers a positive user experience for all ages and abilities, fostering long term connections with our customers.
- We carry products that are made locally and ethically, and we will demonstrate and promote waste reduction in our stocking choices.
- We elevate the profile of our retail space in our local community, online and through social media.
- We host a storefront that welcomes and encourages children's questions and engagement with our products as much as adult's.
- We provide a retail space that fosters meaningful social exchanges and helps build community within our neighbourhood.

## Actions

- Assess current and future retail items to help ensure they reflect The Learnary's mission.
- Refine the retail store inventory through an analysis of last year's sales, future projections and focus areas.
- Analyze retail sales on a quarterly basis or more, to track patterns and optimize stock.
- Review the online and retail space layout and shop organization in order to help optimize user experience and feature products for sale.
- Identify staple supplies which customers can come to depend upon. Continue to offer a rotating selection of making and learning materials.
- Draft a social and environmental impact policy and easy checklist for staff ordering that evaluates potential retail items, and promotes ethical products.
- Draft a supplier policy and easy checklist for staff that assesses supplier policies to increase flexibility for obtaining stock.
- As a regular practice, promote new products via social media, digital newsletters, workshop activities, etc.
- Allocate a shelf or small portion of retail space for local work created by children and youth to sell on a consignment basis.
- Offer opportunities for children to spend their money on items that are of high value and creative use.
- Offer individual consultations for educators and learners, and develop program ideas tailored to their needs.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITY

*Develop resilient, effective and ethical systems to help us grow and sustain our mission.*

## Context

In our organization, sustainability refers to our ability to sustain our own and our community's environmental, social and financial health over time.

As an emerging society, The Learnary is in the process of developing sound internal operations. We aim to establish systems that will sustain the mission of The Learnary from an environmental, social and financial perspective.

These systems will help us engage and retain supporters and volunteers of all ages, whom we depend on to help us grow and sustain our work. We deeply value these collective contributions.

According to a recent Vancouver survey, "Lack of time isn't the biggest reason people give for not getting involved in their communities - it's a feeling that we have little to offer."<sup>1</sup>

We recognize the wide array of skills and abilities in our diverse community, and how these can seem minimized in an era of social media that fosters opportunities to continually compare ourselves to others.

Through programming activities hosted at The Learnary and in the wider community, we will build relationships in our community that foster agency, resilience and engagement. We will highlight how *much* we have to offer each other:

Cultivating an engaging online presence and social media profile can help generate success in our retail and programming activities. As a nonprofit organization, revenue generated through our retail space, programming activities and fundraising will be re-invested in The Learnary, to support our society's mission.

We honor our connection to this land and its history; The Learnary is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people. We are humbled by this history and grateful for our use of this land.

<sup>1</sup> source: Connections and Engagement: A Survey of Metro Vancouver. Vancouver Foundation Report, June 2012.

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*“ Thank you to  
@thelearnary in  
East Vancouver  
for providing a  
positive literary  
pathway for  
future feminists  
like my curious,  
book-loving  
daughter.”*

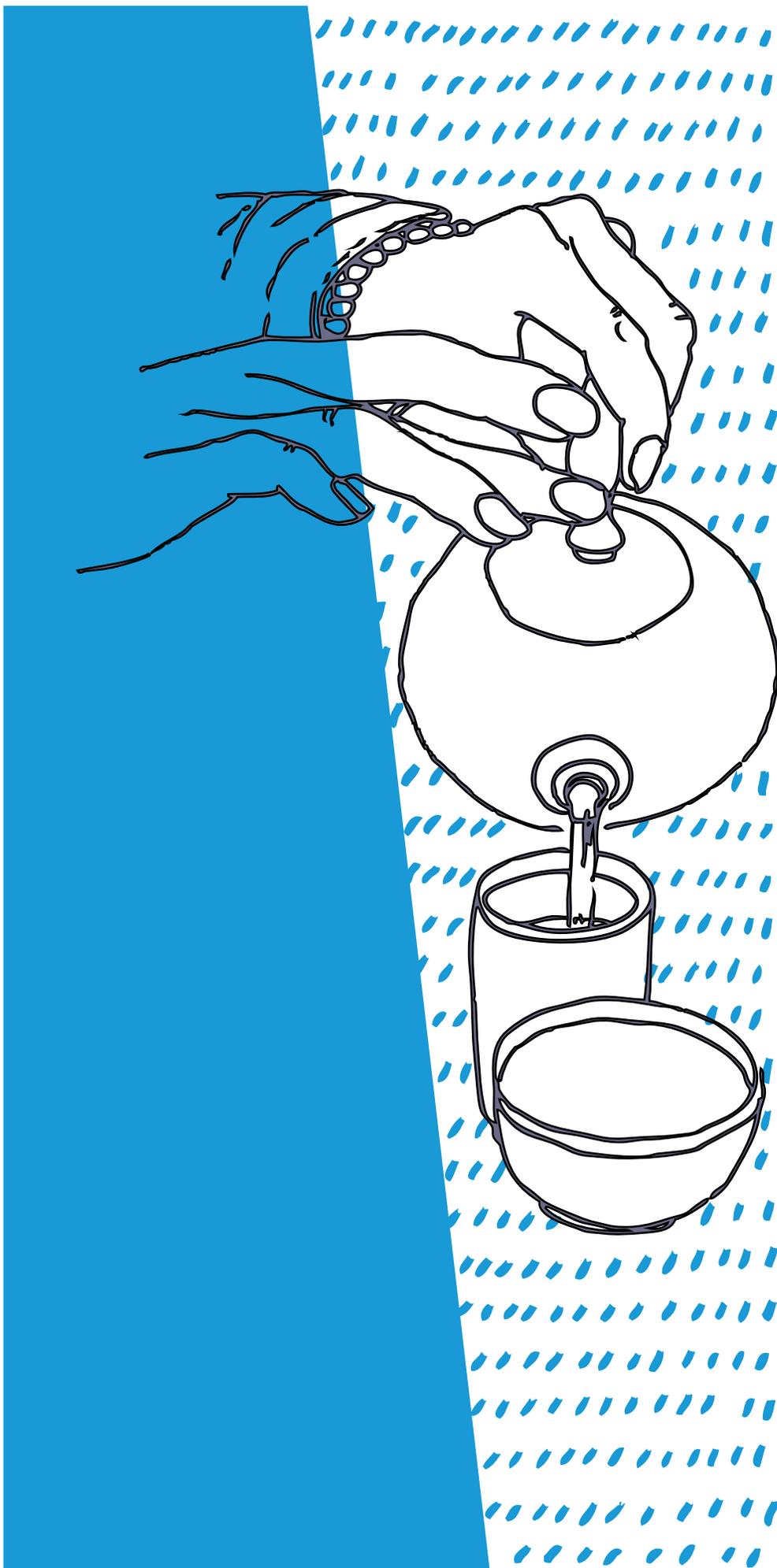
posted on Instagram by  
grantlawrencecbc

## Commitments

- To the best of our ability and with what we know today, we will be financially, operationally, environmentally and ethically sustainable.
- We operate as a self-sustaining social enterprise, re-investing our profits to further our organization’s mission.
- We reflect social and environmental responsibility throughout our operations.
- We seek to cultivate broad support for our work, from volunteers to funders.
- We engage social media and marketing strategies to elevate the profile of our organization.
- We strive to honour the history of this land, as the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh people.

## Actions

- Draft an organizational chart that includes roles and responsibilities of Executive Directors, staff, volunteers, and board members, including a term of reference for the Board of Directors.
- Develop a list of specific strategies to increase donations and revenues. Identify priorities and review annually.
- Create a list of grant opportunities and granting bodies, their information, application processes and deadlines. Assign a volunteer or Board member to manage this list, with the goal to increase fundraising capacity.
- Create a grant application template for use by Board and staff.
- Outline a plan to engage and manage a robust community of volunteers of all ages to support our mission by helping with our retail space, programming, workshop activities, social media and marketing.
- Engage a paid consultant, dedicated volunteer or board member with expertise to draft and maintain a social media strategy with the goal to elevate the profile of our programming activities and retail space.
- Engage a skilled volunteer to better understand our UX needs and build a new online presence that better represents our brand and facilitates engagement with our workshops and retail offerings.
- Identify specific ways and opportunities to foster a deeper understanding of the Indigenous history of this land that hosts us.
- Develop a checklist of social and environmental commitments we want to make as an organization.



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*One of my favourite spots on East Hastings is #thelearnary where you are warmly welcomed and encouraged to learn and share ideas. So many cool items to look at and even more items to take home to continue learning.*

posted on Twitter by  
abroadwithacamera

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*“Your [space] is a shared dream that I could walk through, reside in, explore, enjoy. And not only me. I loved watching the families who came in to sew, their younger children building with Lego. And the individuals who came in, overwhelmed by the possibilities! It felt at once like an extension of people’s homes and an awesome discovery, depending on who walked in the door.”*

Elana Couch  
community member

## Implementation

The actions identified in each of the strategic priorities outlined above is an important step. However, providing the focus, time and energy to complete them can be challenging.

The Learnary has developed an Implementation and Measurement Plan to support the implementation of the Strategic Plan. This companion document identifies actions items, deliverables, measureable outcomes and target timeframes for completion (short, medium or long-term). Action items are aligned with each of the three strategic priorities identified in the Strategic Plan.

The Strategic Plan and the Implementation and Measurement Plan have been developed collaboratively in order to help ensure the organization works together to commit to and complete actions laid out within these documents.

## Tracking

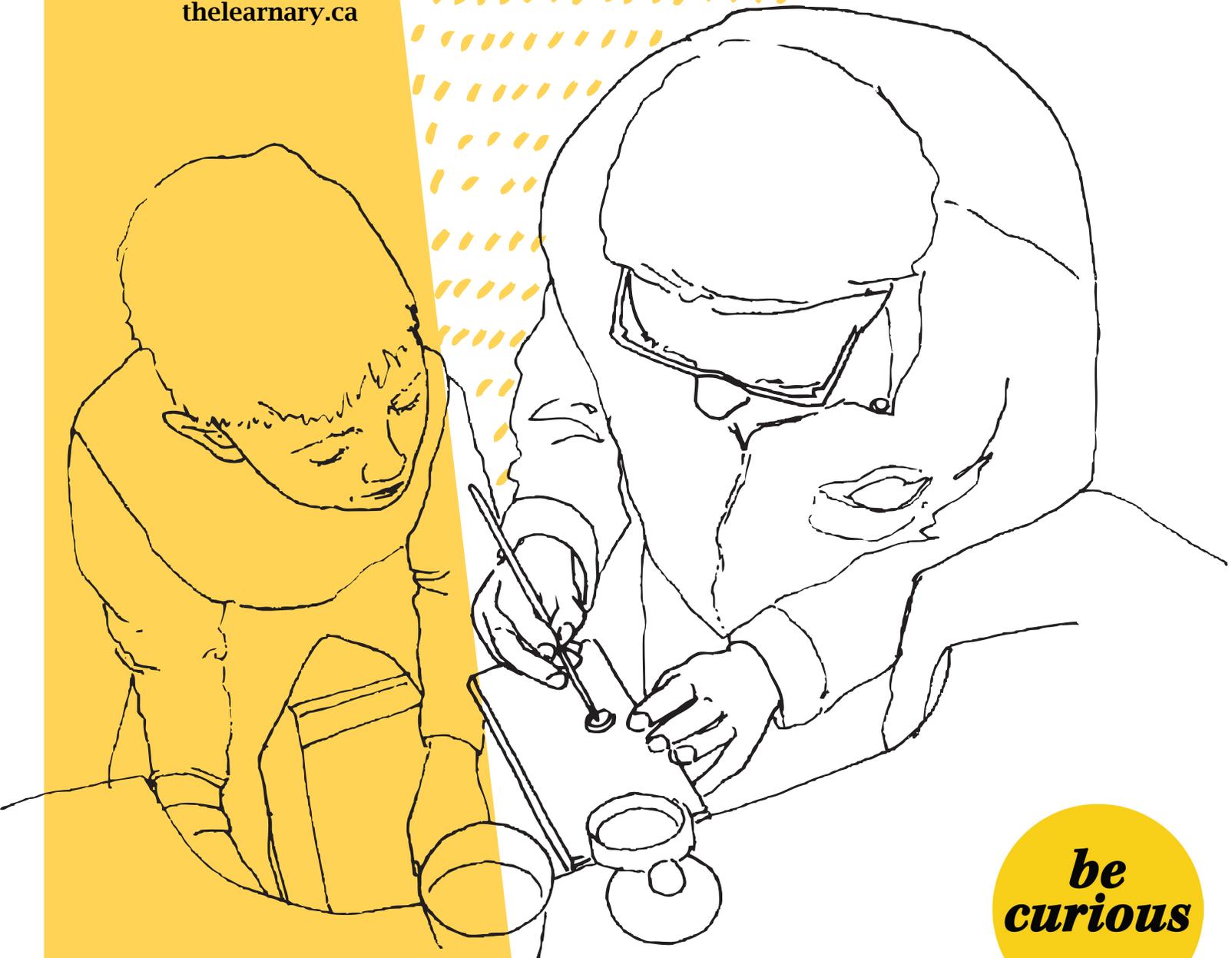
The Learnary will develop interim implementation summary reports, to regularly assess the society’s progress. These reports will be presented at each Annual General Meeting over the five year term of the Strategic Plan.

Our targets are:

- Accomplish all short-term projects in a specified timeframe.
- Accomplish 75% of all medium-term projects in a specified timeframe.
- Ensure all (100%) of projects identified as long-term are in progress or complete by the time a new strategic plan review occurs.

*Are you  
curious about  
The Learnary,  
and how you  
can help shape  
its growth?*

thelearnary.ca



**be  
curious**  
at  
THE LEARNARY