

## December 31, 2021

*Gratitude* might not be the first word that comes to mind when we reflect on the year that has been 2021.

From tragic events in our own backyards, to those from across the province, the country and beyond, the continued impacts from an extended pandemic, losses, and the effects of climate change and natural disaster have left us all reeling.

Our first instinct maybe to slam the door on 2021; but, as I've said before, there is something to be said for reflection and learning. Because even from tragedy, there is something to be learned.

The horrific discovery of the mass grave of children at the site of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School, and the subsequent similar discoveries around the country profoundly changed how we think about residential schools and opened our eyes to something that we need desperately to confront. I acknowledge, with respect, that there is much work to do. I am grateful for a safe space to acknowledge this, and to commit to this work and to move forward with intention.

I have much gratitude for our communities. We have asked for patience, for resilience and for kindness, and you have delivered.

I am grateful to the SLRD team – my fellow Board members, the leadership of our CAO, Melany Helmer, and the unwavering dedication of our team. The SLRD operates on a lean staffing budget, and every single member of the team is extraordinary. Our Emergency Operations Centre will have seen record activations this year, with more than 100 days of operation over the course of the year. This is work on top of the regular work that our team continues to deliver. When the EOC is activated, this means that a small, dedicated team of employees drop everything they are doing to step up – often well into the night, and sometimes into the wee hours of the morning. They put their lives aside for the safety of the community. Often, this also means that non-EOC staff members temporarily move into different roles, and it always means more work for everyone – whether in the moment, or after the fact. This takes a tremendous emotional and physical toll on our staff and we so appreciate their unwavering dedication to keeping our communities safe.

At the risk of sounding like a Pollyanna, I do, emphatically, want to acknowledge that for all of its awfulness (and there was a lot), 2021 has also shown me that we have much for which to be grateful, that our communities are strong and resilient and that in the most trying of times, we show up. We come together. We support one another. As 2021 comes to a close, I encourage you to reflect on all that is good in our world and recommit – with purpose – to showing up for the hard work ahead.

Jen Ford  
Chair, Squamish-Lillooet Regional District