

YEAR IN REVIEW

2020 was a year like no other.

Like any responsible organization, we at TELUS World of Science – Edmonton work hard to understand the risks we face in operating a major science centre. We implement processes to mitigate those risks. Suffice it to say that prior to 2020 the word ‘pandemic’ did not appear in our Risk Register and continual risk analyses. It does now. But it is worth noting at the outset that the organization’s ability to cope with COVID-19 was well-served by risk mitigations put in place to meet other challenges.



The year started with great promise, carrying forward momentum from a very successful 2019. Attendance in January and February exceeded expectations by more than 10%, reaffirming the community’s embrace of the science experience renewal that has come with *The Aurora Project*. The January and February attendance of over 121,000 was also fuelled by the

popularity of the travelling exhibition, *Marvel: Universe of Super Heroes*.

All that came to a very sudden end. On Friday, March 13, the science centre closed its doors to the public. However, we ensured that we did not lose the opportunity to deliver science and serve our community. We kept the building open to the core staff team to support construction, maintenance, and animal care. Once the initial shock wore off, the entire team turned its attention to finding new ways to keep TWOSE a vital and compelling part of the community, meeting audience needs in the time of COVID.

With the massive disruption created by COVID-19, we quickly modified our Strategic Plan and adopted five ‘COVID-adjusted’ goals:

- 1. Ensure Financial Stability**
- 2. Develop and implement new forms of science delivery**
- 3. Make progress in *The Aurora Project***
- 4. Build and maintain a strong relationship with the community**
- 5. Maintain the health and integrity of the TWOSE team**

Ensure Financial Stability

The COVID period started with layoffs, some of which turned into permanent job losses. The Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) enabled the centre to bring back most of its full-time staff and some part-time. Additional recovery programs and some nimble sponsorship and grant acquisitions allowed the centre to manage its finances while keeping most of the staff fully employed. Our net finances shrank through the year, but we were able to finish the year without having to tap into the Operating Reserve and with our science centre team largely intact, thanks mostly to CEWS.

Develop and Implement New Forms of Science Delivery

Our Education and Science teams focused on the development of on-line programs and resources for kids, parents, and teachers. The entire science centre team got involved in the production of fun science videos to animate scientists of all ages with science to explore in and around their homes and outdoors.

The first major move to an on-line experience came with our very popular program of Summer Science Camps. We collaborated with TELUS Spark in Calgary and TELUS, Inc. to move our Summer Science Camps to on-line delivery. We ultimately served about 1100 registrants through our on-line summer camps. The same approach was adopted for use with school programs, birthday parties, DIY science, science clubs, fundraising, *Science on Tap*, and much more.

We also began a relationship with Northland School Division, bringing on-line content to 2200 mostly Indigenous students in 30 schools spread across Northern Alberta.

On July 4, TWISE cautiously re-opened parts of the facility to the general public. Masks were required and capacity was controlled in order to maintain social distancing. The travelling exhibition, *The Science of Ripley's Believe It Or Not!*, which had been sitting in the dark since its installation in March, was finally available for visitors to enjoy. The IMAX Theatre, the Zeidler Dome, and the Galaxy Gift Shop were also opened with reduced capacity. This reduced science experience continued through the summer and fall.

On November 28, TWISE closed our building to the public once again, two weeks prior to the closure mandated by the Provincial government. Closing the bricks and mortar allowed the entire team to focus on serving our audience through on-line programming. That is how the year came to a close.

Thanks to CEWS, other programs, and generous support from community stakeholders, TWISE was able to maintain over 70 of its staff team on the payroll, all contributing to on-line science programming and to the development work required for the new galleries and functional spaces under construction.

Make Progress on *The Aurora Project*

With the building closed to the public for much of 2020, the major construction of Phase 4 of *The Aurora Project* was able to proceed a little more efficiently. Site preparation for the 20,000 sq. ft. expansion began in April. By December the site was ready for concrete and steel, the bulk of which was slated for install in early 2021. We initiated the Phase 4 Aurora construction with a smudge ceremony on Thursday, July 30, led by Cree Elder Tony Arcand. It was a powerful event and a truly meaningful way to express our aspirations for the future.

Build and Maintain a Strong Relationship with the Community

Regular communication with key stakeholders, particularly annual members, IMAX pass holders, sponsors, donors, and government stakeholders was essential in 2020. Managing the expectations of each of these groups while meeting our obligations to each was a continuous challenge. At the end of the year,

relationships with key stakeholders remained strong. As one indicator, the number of individuals making philanthropic donations to the science centre in 2020 increased by close to 500% over 2019.

Maintain the Health and Integrity of the TWISE team

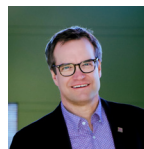
Our team's ability to work in new ways was made far simpler by previously introduced upgrades to the networking tools available to all staff. Our internal network, the fibre link to the outside internet, and the software solutions put in place all contributed to a relatively seamless shift to working from home. Many staff still had to come to the building to work and so careful safety protocols were introduced to keep staff protected.

The staff team was surveyed on several occasions to ensure they felt that staff safety was being appropriately addressed. On-line staff meetings were held every couple of weeks, and the team continued to work in the collaborative manner that is so important for what we do.

In summary, 2020 brought the true TWISE spirit to the forefront. The team never flagged in its commitment to serving our audience and in working together to make it happen. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Sharilee and I want to thank the entire staff for their amazing response to this crisis. The challenge has been complex and emotionally draining. The team has risen to the challenge and we are extremely proud and grateful.

We are looking forward to a return to normalcy and the day we can greet each of you in person. Take care.

Sincerely,



Alan Nursall

President and CEO

TELUS World of Science – Edmonton

Edmonton Space & Science Foundation



Sharilee Fossum

Board Chair

Edmonton Space & Science Foundation