

Building Capacity in BCLA

By Alane Wilson, Executive Director, BCLA.

I hope the 600 or so people who attended the 2009 BC Library Conference in Burnaby went to interesting sessions, met old friends and made new ones, and had a terrific time. If the evaluations are an indication of the success of the conference, I'd say it definitely was!

You might imagine that after the flat-out hard work of organizing and running the conference, the BCLA staff and Board members on the Conference Planning Committee would be seriously dialing the intensity meter down.

Not so. On April 30, the 2009-2010 BCLA Board members, and some Committee Chairs, traveled to Sun Peaks for a Board Retreat. Yes, the location was scenic and comfortable, and yes, there was time over the couple of days for some adult beverages and walks. But rest assured, your Board members worked hard under the very able and amiable guidance of facilitator Rebecca Jones of [Dysart & Jones](#).



Jim Looney, Chair, Fund Development Committee and Chris Middlemass, Assistant Treasurer. Photo by Second VP, Adrienne Wass.

Becoming an Effective Board member

In April of every year, at the AGM, new BCLA Board members take their seats. I am sure that their terms of office stretch before them and seem very long. Continuing and former Board members know, however, that one, two or three years can go very quickly especially when time is measured in Board meetings rather than months. Board members often comment that it can take a year to feel as if they

know "the ropes." For the one and two year members, that means a lot of time when being an effective Board member is a goal not practice.

The more quickly new-to-the-Board members understand their roles, how BCLA works, and what is expected of them during their terms of office, the more they can contribute. Having an effective Board made up of new and continuing members, focused on specific roles and strategic issues, ensures the Board is focused on governance matters, not operational ones.

The Importance of fun

Another reason to have a retreat early in the life cycle of a Board is so that the team can get to know one another. Having fun *and* working hard at a retreat models the interaction among a disparate group that is desirable for a Board's term.

Lots to do!

The outcome of the retreat was an extensive working document outlining an ambitious set of aspirations and goals for the next 10 months. Broadly, these relate to communications, advocacy, governance, and sustainability. Expect to see the benefits of the retreat and early planning unfold over the next 10 months.



Describing the BCLA Landscape - L to R: Recording Secretary, David Karppinen, Directors Mari Martin and Heather Compeau, Past President Lynne Jordan. Photo by Second VP, Adrienne Wass.