



President's Message April 2026

I have been proud to serve as President of COBSS this year alongside a dedicated and capable team of volunteers. It has been a privilege to work with individuals so committed to supporting students and strengthening our community.

As I reflect on 2025-26, I am pleased to share some of the achievements we've celebrated, opportunities we've embraced, challenges we continue to navigate, and improvements we've made along the way. I also want to offer a glimpse into the year ahead as COBSS continues to grow, evolve, and expand its impact.

This year, we welcomed new volunteers Elaine Johnson, Lori Oishi, Jodee Salmon, and Adrienne Skinner to our team. We have also benefited from another strong year working alongside our talented Administrative Assistant, Heather Oishi, and valued job-share partner, Bev Bourbonnais. As many of you know, these organized and meticulous women help keep us on track and moving forward. Their behind-the-scenes support is essential to everything we do, and we are deeply grateful for their contributions.

This year, we also said goodbye, and thank you, to our valued Treasurer, Debbie daSilva. Her more than 19 years of steadfast guidance and commitment have been an incredible asset to COBSS. It is hard to imagine where the organization would be today without her talent, and care. We are pleased to welcome Ike Thurbur to our executive team as Treasurer. Ike is a CPA with KPMG Kelowna, and we look forward to working with him.

One of the highlights of this year was our *COBSS Social*. This event was created to bring together donors, students, volunteers, and community members in a relaxed and welcoming setting. It provided an opportunity to connect face-to-face, share stories, and celebrate the collective impact of our work. The positive energy in the room reminded us of the strength and importance of community, and we look forward to building on that momentum in the years ahead. Special thanks to Mary Lou Inaba and her committee for bringing the event together so beautifully. Next year, we hope to host *The Mingler*.

This past year we have been working with local high schools to find meaningful ways for COBSS to be represented at graduation ceremonies. Beginning this year, COBSS will participate in each

convocation either in person or through video messaging to speak on behalf of our donors and share our passion for supporting students in the pursuit of post-secondary education. We also hope these opportunities will inspire future donors to support the next generation of graduates.

This spring, COBSS was honoured to receive the Kelowna Civic & Community Award for Volunteer Organization of the Year. COBSS volunteer Mike Dornian led this initiative and brought this recognition home to our organization. The award will be displayed proudly in our office, and the accompanying funds will be put to excellent use. It is deeply meaningful to have our work recognized by the broader community.

In the fall of 2025, Hollywood Road Education Services welcomed COBSS back to its newly renovated space for our monthly meetings. We are grateful for the Central Okanagan School District's ongoing support, which has benefited COBSS in countless ways over the years.

Then, in the spring of 2026, COBSS once again turned to the school district for support, this time seeking office space for our administrator, a mailing address, and a welcoming place to host donor meetings. Once again, the Central Okanagan School District stepped forward and generously offered us a space. As a result, COBSS will be moving from our longtime home on Tutt Street to Hollywood Road. We couldn't be more pleased.

This President's message would be incomplete without recognizing the generosity of the Leinemann family. For nearly 20 years, they allowed COBSS to operate rent-free from an office in their Tutt Street building. The stability and financial security the Leinemanns provided, enabled this organization to grow and support thousands of students over the years. Their generosity has had a lasting impact on COBSS, and we will be forever grateful.

In closing, I'd like to take a moment to reconnect with our core mandate: supporting students in their pursuit of post-secondary education through financial assistance. To continue fulfilling this mission, we must keep pace with the growth of our community. This means maintaining strong relationships, expanding our awards base, strengthening community partnerships, and continuing to host meaningful events that raise both our profile and our connection to those we serve.

I am especially proud of the strong governance and transparency that define COBSS. These values have guided us well over the years and remain central to our vision for the future.

COBSS is in good shape.

Thank you for allowing me to be part of this important work.

Respectfully,
Lorraine Miller