



May 31, 2019

**TO:** Park Board Chair and Commissioners  
**FROM:** General Manager – Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation  
**SUBJECT:** SKOOKUM Music Festival – Report Back & Addition to Annual Calendar of Major Special Events

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## RECOMMENDATION

- A. THAT the Vancouver Park Board receive for information the report back on the 2018 SKOOKUM Music Festival as outlined in this report; and
- B. FURTHER THAT the Board approve the addition of the SKOOKUM Music Festival to the annual Calendar of Major Special Events starting in 2020.

## REPORT SUMMARY

The inaugural SKOOKUM Music Festival (“SKOOKUM” or “Festival”) was hosted at Brockton Fields in Stanley Park on September 7, 8 & 9 in 2018. The Festival was enjoyed by over 50,000 people and received a predominantly positive response from attendees, artists, suppliers, Vancouverites, and visitors to the city. A number of areas for improvement were also identified. The purpose of this report is to provide a report back on the Festival, and given the successful delivery and response to the event, seek Vancouver Park Board (“Park Board” or “Board”) approval to add this event to the Park Board’s Annual Calendar of Major Special Events.

## BOARD AUTHORITY / POLICY / PREVIOUS DECISIONS

Per the [Vancouver Charter](#), the Park Board has exclusive jurisdiction and control over park land use in the City of Vancouver, including any structures, programs, activities, fees, and improvements that occur within designated parks.

As informed by the [Special Event Policy & Guidelines](#) approved by the Board in December 2003, as well as current practices, Park Board approval is required for special events not included in the Annual Calendar of Major Special Events and/or that are in variance with one or more Park Board by-laws. On May 13, 2019, the Board [directed staff to update the aforementioned guidelines](#). Concurrent with this direction, the Board also instructed staff to maintain and support the Park Board’s current portfolio of commercial events and activities, but issued a moratorium on the introduction of any new commercial initiatives until after the Special Event Guidelines have been updated and approved by the Board. The SKOOKUM Music Festival is a component of the Park Board’s commercial event portfolio that was in place prior to the moratorium, and as such, is not impacted by that decision.

On July 24, 2017, the Park Board approved an application from BRANDLIVE Group (“BRANDLIVE” or “Event Producer”) to host a contemporary festival of music, food and art, at Brockton Fields in Stanley Park on September 7, 8 & 9, 2018, with a maximum daily public attendance of 20,000 guests. The Board also approved an application from BRANDLIVE for a Special Event Permit from the BC Liquor Control & Licensing Branch to serve alcohol at the

Festival. Since public disclosure of the initiative at that preliminary stage would have been prejudicial to both the Park Board and the Event Producer, this event was considered and approved In Camera per Section 165.2(1) of the Vancouver Charter.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Event Overview**

The SKOOKUM Music Festival was delivered on September 7, 8 & 9, 2018, at Brockton Point in Stanley Park. Framed by the shoreline forests of Vancouver's iconic park, SKOOKUM featured a diverse mix of contemporary music, food, and art, located just minutes from the centre of the city. Key features of the Festival included:

- curated music lineups that blended well known artists with emerging performers from the West Coast, across Canada, and around the world;
- coordinated four stage programming located within the event area of Brockton Oval, Brockton practice field, and the upper and lower cricket fields (see Appendix A for the Festival site plan);
- celebration of Vancouver's foodie culture with diverse culinary offerings highlighting the city's favourite restaurants, accompanied by award-winning local craft breweries and winemakers; festivalgoers were also able to enjoy curated picnic baskets and long table dinners; and
- collaborative art murals, interactive installations, innovative sculptures, and communal art activities showcased renowned local artists, as well as Indigenous creators.

### **Event Location**

Since 2011, Stanley Park's Brockton Fields have hosted a variety of large scale concert events, including the SeaWheeze Sunset Festival, Vancouver 125, Parks Canada's 100-Year Celebration, and Sarah McLachlan's Voices in the Park (the latter two events were produced by BRANDLIVE). These initiatives were well received and established Stanley Park as a desirable music event venue, similar to Central Park in New York City, Grant Park in Chicago, and Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. Along with SKOOKUM, these events have provided many benefits for the public, the Park Board, and other partners/stakeholders (as outlined later in this report).

### **Event Producer Overview**

BRANDLIVE Group is a leading Vancouver-based event production and creative agency. They produce some of the most innovative events in the region and have worked collaboratively with the Park Board for many years to deliver signature events such as the Honda Celebration of Light, Stanley Park 125, the Beedie Group's Rock'n the Park event at Malkin Bowl, and most recently, the SKOOKUM Music Festival. BRANDLIVE has also produced numerous other high-profile events such as the Squamish Valley Music Festival, New Year's Eve Vancouver, and several Grey Cup Festivals. They were also entrusted by the City of Vancouver and Park Board with the responsibility of producing several Canada 150+ events, including the Gathering of Canoes Pulling Together Canoe Journey, The Drum is Calling Festival, and the Walk for Reconciliation.

### **Event Highlights**

The 2018 SKOOKUM Music Festival was enjoyed by over 50,000 people and received a predominantly positive response from attendees, artists, suppliers, Vancouverites, and visitors to the city. A number of areas for improvement were also identified and are addressed later in this report.

Key observations/highlights include:

***Safety & Security***

No major medical or safety issues occurred requiring Vancouver Police Department or Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services intervention. Specific attention was paid by the Event Producer to support the Board's motion pertaining to [Safety at Concerts & Major Events](#) (key actions included the integration and use of a Safe Fest feature on the Festival app, onsite signage, and specialized training for security personnel).

There was no damage or significant breaches to Park Board assets located in and around the Festival location.

Despite the concentration of activity at Brockton Point, there was very little operational impact on other areas of the park (west of Pipeline Road).

***Park Protection***

Notwithstanding the significant number of attendees, steps taken by the Event Producer to protect and prevent impacts to the Festival's ecologically and culturally sensitive event area proved effective.

Despite the rainy weather experienced during the Festival, Brockton Fields held up remarkably well throughout the event. BRANDLIVE took the initiative to provide protective flooring at Brockton Oval and ground cover over the cricket pitches.

***Indigenous Representation***

SKOOKUM set out to engage and recognize the Host Nations of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh, as rights holders in Stanley Park and established a new standard for Indigenous representation. Key outcomes included:

- 30% of Festival programming delivered by Indigenous artists;
- video developed and played recognizing the territory and its history;
- performing arts groups from the Host Nations were employed and featured;
- kiosks installed to explain local history, people, and connections;
- territorial welcomes delivered at beginning of various shows; and
- other opportunities as the Festival took form (such as pre-event family long-table dinner with the Host Nations and key stakeholders).

***Transportation***

A best practice based transportation plan was implemented to move guests to/from the event, and reduce impacts on the event location and other parts of Stanley Park. Key elements of the plan included:

- use of event shuttle bus services;
- partnership with a car sharing service; and
- promotion of alternative forms of transportation such as walking, biking, and public transit; success of this messaging resulted in record usage of bike valet and car sharing services.

### ***Sustainability***

The Festival incorporated a proactive and forward-thinking sustainability program; key highlights included:

- being the first event to utilize 100% green power at Brockton;
- implementation of hands-on recycling and waste diversion practices (resulting in 2,870 kilograms of recycled materials, 18,720 kilograms of composted items, and 98% waste diversion from landfills);
- using only compostable, recyclable or reusable food containers (no single-use plastic bottles, plastic bags, plastic containers or plastic straws; no styrofoam containers);
- no polyester fleece uniforms;
- encouraged & facilitated eco-friendly transportation;
- used only green certified & cruelty-free cleaning supplies;
- serving only 100% sustainable Ocean Wise certified seafood; and
- planting of 150,000 trees via partnership with Ten Tree.

### ***Public/Partner/Stakeholder Benefits***

Benefits for the public, the Park Board, and other partners/stakeholders, included:

- large scale engagement of residents and visitors through music, food, and art;
- collaboration and support with Stanley Park partners/stakeholders;
- collaboration and support for local musicians/artists and creative industries;
- delivery of long-term legacies in Stanley Park -- most notably access improvements to Brockton Oval, field improvements at Brockton Point, and installation of green power access for future events; and
- generation of important incremental revenues that were used to deliver non-budgeted programs and services in Vancouver's parks and recreation system.

The Festival produced \$17.3 million in regional economic benefits; \$8.7 million from out of region event attendees.

A charitable foundation was also created to benefit several Vancouver organizations, including:

- Ocean Wise Life;
- Music Heals; and
- Stanley Park Ecology Society.

### ***Awards/Accolades***

SKOOKUM received the following awards and accolades in its inaugural year:

- Best Festival (Canadian Special Event Awards); and
- Green Operations Festival of the Year (Canadian Live Music Awards).

## **Event Delivery & Key Learnings**

While SKOOKUM was enjoyed by tens of thousands and acknowledged as a strong success, as is the case with most first year events a number of lessons were learned and several areas were identified for future operational improvements. These include:

### ***Noise Impacts***

While large events and concerts are held regularly in Stanley Park without incident, sound bleed from SKOOKUM appeared to have been more significant than originally planned or anticipated. Managing sound emissions can be a challenging task and it is believed that the higher noise levels emanating from the Festival were attributable to several factors, including sound engineering, stage set-up/positioning, music/artist genre, performance time/day, as well as weather conditions and the geography of the region (the first four elements are controllable, the latter two less so).

In total, over 100 noise complaints were received, with most originating from Coal Harbour, the West End, and the North Shore. The majority of complaints were mostly associated with music volume and lateness into the evening.

The noise complaint data has been analyzed and shared with the Event Producer, and both the Park Board and BRANDLIVE are committed to ensuring that future Festivals will take specific action to minimize noise emissions from the concert venue. These actions could include the placement of real-time sound monitoring stations at key locations within the region, active response to noise complaints, improved sound engineering, concluding Festival performances earlier in the evening (particularly on Sunday), and adjusting music/artist programming.

### ***Park By-Law Violations***

A robust plan was developed and implemented to inform and enforce Park Board by-laws at the Festival (most notably those pertaining to no smoking and no camping in parks). The vast majority of festivalgoers complied with the by-laws, however, infractions related to smoking were frequently observed. Going forward, additional action will be required to increase compliance in this area, including reinforced communications, onsite signage, regular announcements, and security personnel oversight.

### ***Congestion Points/Bottlenecks***

The Festival's traffic management plan delivered solid results, however, some key pressure points were noted, including:

- pedestrian and cyclist interactions on the seawall at egress created some issues/challenges; potential solutions could include relocating the bike valet, introducing incentives to increase usage of event shuttles, or utilizing other areas of the park to support the event;
- unexpected high use of car sharing services created parking issues; establishing a dedicated location for car sharing vehicles can address this situation in the future; and
- festivalgoers using public transit experienced long waits at bus stops; it is anticipated that closer collaboration with Translink to enhance bus service to the park, especially during egress, will effectively address this issue.

### **Other Follow-Up Issues**

Consistent with the delivery of new events, every aspect of the Festival was analyzed by both the Event Producer and Park Board staff. Based on these observations and assessments, several additional issues were identified for improvement at future Festivals, including:

- some flow/capacity issues observed in the walkway between the two largest stages located at Brockton Oval (Mountain Stage) and the Lower Cricket Field (Skyline Stage); this issue can be addressed by widening the walkway;
- provision of additional turf protection in front of the stages, as well as in heavy foot traffic areas, will be required for future events;
- given the size of the event and the dwell time of festivalgoers, portable washrooms inventory will need to be increased;
- egress effectiveness can be improved with increased pathway lighting, more directional signage, and support from event volunteers;
- more frequent communication with park stakeholders will be required for future Festivals; while stakeholders were engaged and informed of the event in early March 2018, and again in the weeks leading up to the Festival, feedback from stakeholders indicated that more regular briefings are required to help translate higher level Festival information into a meaningful understanding of how the event may impact their operations;
- improved planning and execution during load-in/load-out based on lessons learned in 2018 will help mitigate potential field damage at future events; and
- increased coordination between the Park Board's Special Events & Filming office and Outdoor Sports Facilities staff to minimize scheduling disturbances on sport user groups at Brockton fields, particularly the rugby community.

### **Stakeholder Feedback**

As noted earlier in this report, the overall response to SKOOKUM was very favorable. Key highlights are summarized below.

- Strong and enthusiastic response from Festival attendees, performing artists, and suppliers:
  - Park Board received approximately 80 letters of support for the Festival; strong feedback was also received via social media platforms; and
  - post event surveys conducted by the Event Producer indicated:
    - overall festivalgoer satisfaction rated 4.25 out of 5; and
    - 81% of respondents agreed that "this event makes Vancouver a better place to live, work or visit".
- Positive feedback and response received from all three host First Nations – Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh – as reported by the Event Producer and posted on social media platforms.
- Positive feedback from local tourism agencies, BIAs, and downtown businesses.

- Despite the sound and traffic impacts created by the event, Stanley Park stakeholders are largely supportive of the Festival:
  - it is acknowledged that some stakeholders, particularly those located in closest proximity to the Festival venue, such as Legends of the Moon, Stanley Park Horse & Carriage, and HMCS Discovery, were more significantly impacted by the event; accordingly, the Park Board and BRANDLIVE will work to develop and implement strategies to minimize event impacts and enable these valued partners to participate more fully in the benefits accruing from future Festivals; and
  - conversely, little to no impacts were experienced by other stakeholders/businesses in the park, such as the Stanley Park Pavilion, Prospect Point Restaurant, Teahouse Restaurant, Second Beach Pool, Pitch & Putt, etc.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Event Proposal**

Given the popularity of the inaugural SKOOKUM Music Festival, and recognizing that the success and viability of the Festival is dependent on delivering the event in future years and increasing the number of paid tickets, BRANDLIVE is seeking approval to add this event to the Park Board's annual Calendar of Major Special Events. It is anticipated that future Festivals will be executed in much the same manner and have the same form factor as in 2018, with the exception that the maximum daily attendance would be increased to 25,000 guests (from 20,000 in 2018). Notwithstanding the addition of the Festival to the Park Board's annual Calendar of Major Special Events:

- the initiative would be subject to annual reviews by both the Park Board and the Host Nations before proceeding each year;
- any major changes to the delivery of the Festival would be subject to Board approval; and
- the Park Board reserves the right to remove the Festival from the annual Calendar of Major Special Events if the event is not delivered as intended and/or the Board determines that it no longer wishes to host the Festival in Stanley Park.

For the Board's reference, a summary of some of the key event parameters are provided below.

### **Event Set-Up/Tear-Down Period**

To accommodate the Festival, site set-up and tear-down at Brockton Fields would occur in a phased manner over a 10 to 12 day period in order to minimize access restrictions to sport user groups and the public in general. The Brockton SW Practice Field is a lower-use space and Brockton Oval is normally closed for field resting during the proposed Festival period, so the primary impacts would be felt on the Upper and Lower Cricket Fields, which would be closed for approximately 7 days. The proposed set-up/tear-down periods are in line with other Park Board music concert initiatives.

In order to ensure that the natural turf at Brockton Fields is well prepared to host the event, the Event Producer would work with the Park Board's Park Operations team to strengthen and reinforce the fields to accommodate the additional wear and activity. A post-restoration plan would also be implemented to ensure that the fields are ready for use by sports user groups, and further strengthened for future event initiatives. These additional maintenance procedures and field restoration costs would be covered by the Event Producer.

### **Compliance with Park Board By-Laws**

As with any initiative taking place on Park Board space, the Event Producer would be responsible for attendee compliance with applicable Park Board by-laws. Accordingly, the robust plan developed for the 2018 event would be implemented and improved to inform and enforce regulations (most notably those pertaining to no smoking and no camping in parks).

Key plan elements would include, but not be limited to, advance notification/communications, reminders at gate/bag check locations, on-site signage, regular stage announcements, and Park Ranger oversight. Staff would also work with the Event Producer's security team, the Vancouver Police Department, and Park Rangers to ensure the plan is delivered successfully.

### **Event Benefits**

Staff recognize that sensitivities and concerns exist when access to public spaces is restricted, and as a result, consider all requests of this nature very carefully. Staff are supportive of adding this initiative to the annual Calendar of Major Special Events due to its uniqueness, its marquis nature, and the significant benefits identified earlier in the report that would accrue to the public, the Park Board, and its partners/stakeholders, including most notably:

- large scale engagement of residents and visitors through music, art and food;
- unprecedented inclusion of Indigenous representation throughout the Festival (which will recognize the Host Nations of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh) and the provision of opportunities for Host Nations members and the broader Indigenous community;
- collaboration and support with existing Stanley Park partners/stakeholders;
- collaboration and support for local musicians and artists;
- potential for additional long term legacy investment in Stanley Park; and
- generation of important incremental revenues that can be used to deliver non-budgeted programs and services in Vancouver's parks and recreation system.

### **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Festival Expediting Staff Team (FEST) Committee members, including the Vancouver Police Department, Vancouver Fire & Rescue Services, Engineering Services, BC Ambulance Service, and the BC Liquor Control & Licensing Branch, have reviewed and conditionally approved BRANDLIVE's application for a 2020 event, subject to Park Board approval.

The Park Board Archaeologist has reviewed the proposed event and indicated that, subject to the implementation of an Archaeological Management Plan, there are no archaeological concerns associated with this proposed initiative. Further, no ground alterations/disturbances will be required to host the Festival.

This proposal is currently being reviewed by the three Host First Nations – Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh – and will move forward only with the support/endorsement of these three Stanley Park rights holders.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Subject to Board approval, Park Board staff will work collaboratively with the FEST Committee and the Event Producer to plan and deliver the SKOOKUM Music Festival in 2020 in the same

manner and form factor as the inaugural event in 2018. Both the Park Board and BRANDLIVE work very hard to be good neighbors to area residents and will design and deliver the Festival in a manner which mitigates the identified issues and concerns, while simultaneously enabling SKOOKUM to be a wonderful local entertainment experience and important contributor to the Vancouver-area economy.

## **CONCLUSION**

Large scale special events activate public spaces, foster community connectedness, and provide enriching cultural experiences. The 2018 SKOOKUM Music Festival established a new marquis event for the city that recognized and showcased the uniqueness and diversity of Indigenous culture, enhanced the vibrancy of our city, and generated important benefits for a wide range of partners/stakeholders.

Notwithstanding the identified operational/production issues typical of first year events, the SKOOKUM Music Festival was an overwhelming success and future festivals are eagerly being anticipated by Vancouverites and visitors to the city. Park Board staff have carefully considered the many aspects of this application and are confident that the initiative can be executed successfully and as intended. Accordingly, staff recommend that the Board approve the application from the Event Producer as outlined in this report.

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SKOOKUM Music Festival – Site Plan

