



ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

411 Seniors Centre Society

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411 SENIORS CENTRE'S LIFETIME MEMBERS

Under the 411 Seniors Centre Society's bylaws, Lifetime Membership is bestowed on persons who have given long and effective service the Society.

Louise Amero	Jack Jarnett	Elizabeth Porteous
Ruth Armstrong	Shams Jilani	Gary Running
Chuck Bayley	Margaret Kocuiba	Fred Sharp
Rupert Cameron	Art Lang	Roy Slater
Olga D' aloise	Kathleen LeBanc	Rose Smith
Elsie Dean	Bill Lim	Daisy Webster
Bill Farr	Marianne Maier	Rosita Taruc
Rose Fourchuk	Amal Marrache	Joseph Vannini
Dorothy Gallagher	Eylin Martin	Evelin Waldron
Lucy Giovando	Ethel Matlyn	Daisy Webster
Magdaleno Gomez	Audrey McLeod	Elizabeth Porteous
Jim Hahn	Virginia Moro	Gary Running
Muriel Hankey	Mary O'Neill	Fred Sharp
Jackie Hooper	Eunice Pearen	Roy Slater
Ann Hyldtoft	Archie Pechet	Rose Smith
Victor Jamieson	Edward Pedersen	Daisy Webster

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

- *Margaret Mead*

PRESIDENTS REPORT

This annual report covers the period from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. What a year it has been!!

The Board, Staff, and volunteers have all had to pivot to a “new normal” because of COVID 19. And, this “new normal” has been extraordinary effort, commitment, stress, anxiety, ingenuity, and creativity. The restrictions imposed as a result of COVID did not reduce or eliminate the need for the services provided by the 411 Seniors Centre. Seniors still needed information about the pandemic, they had to get their taxes done, they had to apply for Old Age Security, and many just needed someone to talk to. As Board President I want to thank all the staff for their amazing work during this period. I know that it has at times been very difficult and nerve-wracking but I so appreciate the fact that the staff came to work and toiled extremely hard to keep seniors safe, informed and connected.

The wonderful 411 Board has been my bedrock. They adapted to having ZOOM meetings, maintained their dedication and senses of humour. The Board worked so diligently and their spirit shone through everything.

The volunteers helped keep 411 running during this period. We could not have done it without you. The 411 Seniors Centre continued to operate because of the volunteers and for this I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

During this period the 411 Seniors Centre continued:

- To run two (2) income tax clinics
- To run a friendly phone callers program
- To assist seniors with their Information and Referral Issues
- To move the new facility forward

And much more.

The importance of the 411 Seniors Centre was driven home to me one day in early July 2020. We started getting phone calls from seniors saying that they had not received their

Guaranteed Income Supplement. They were distressed because without this money they could not afford to live and they knew that we could help them. Thus began a remarkable day. Staff, and Board members jumped on this issue immediately. We talked to Service Canada representatives, we contacted and spoke to politicians from several parties, we spoke to the BC Seniors Advocate, and we spoke to seniors. By the end of the day we had resolved the problem. Seniors got their Guaranteed Income Supplement deposited the next day. For me it showed how our Seniors Centre is trusted and respected.

I was also delighted to learn that the 411 Seniors Centre had received a United Way grant to be the backbone agency for their provincial Navigation and Peer Support (read Information and Referral) program. For several years, prior to this announcement I had been co-chair of the United Way Healthy Aging Information and Referral working group. All that hard work paid off.

The 411 Board had also had to grapple with a number of issues relating to the pandemic. We knew that seniors could not come to the Centre so we had to grapple with questions about membership and dues. This is why there are motions at this AGM dealing with the question of membership. I encourage you to read the motions, listen to the discussion, and to support the Board's recommendation.

Fundraising has become a priority for the Board. We will be moving into the new facility at 3510 Fraser Street next year, and we will need money to continue to operate. This is why the Board after lots of thoughtful discussion and debate voted on a motion -to be debated and voted on at this AGM - to separate the governance of the Society and the Foundation. We want the Foundation to become the fundraising arm of 411 and to be governed by a Board who will work exclusively on this issue. One again, I am urging you to read the motion, listen to the debate and vote to support our fundraising efforts.

This has been a very difficult year. However, throughout it one of the things that has given me both a perspective and hope is the 411 Seniors Centre. That has been an amazing gift. Thank you.

Marion Pollack, President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The year of a global pandemic. What an extraordinary year to try to report on.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in the spring of 2020 the 411 Seniors Centre closed its doors briefly. As a group we were forced to learn new digital platforms like zoom video-conferencing so our committees and board could continue to meet and guide our direction. We had to quickly move from a paper based financial system (we were still writing paper cheques) to an electronic banking system that had all the necessary checks and balances. After a brief closure, we re-opened our doors for essential Information & Referral and drop-in services in early June 2020.

There was one thing that we were certain of - nothing replaces in-person service. Sometimes we just need somewhere to go and someone to talk to.

Members of the 411 Seniors Centre set up a weekly friendly phone call program that supported over 200 seniors throughout the year. New friendships formed. Our board member Jeannie Kammins created a print newsletter, The Old Timers Rag, to go out to members, with great recipes and pertinent information. Our members started a unique Facebook group page 411: Informed and Connected where they could post information and ask questions to the 411 Seniors community.

Our Board of Directors did an incredible job advocating with the federal government on an extended income tax filing date for seniors on the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to ensure the continuation of much needed benefits while our staff responded to a new format to file taxes with volunteers at home. 411 Seniors operates the largest free income tax filing program for seniors in BC and thanks to onsite volunteers and volunteers working from home we filed over 1000 returns.

Some amazing partnerships supported us through this period, especially helping us across the digital divide. A very special thanks to Luke Schuss and Joel Flynn from Podstream Studios, our podcasting partners on Powered by Age, who provided us with invaluable expertise, worked hard alongside us and answered our many, many calls for computer help. I relied heavily throughout the pandemic on the expertise of our partners at Simone Fraser

University's Science, Technology & Aging Research (STAR) Institute. Dr. Andrew Sixsmith and the team from STAR along with former employee Karen Wong helped us capture our challenges in the research report "In Community: Information and Referral Services for Seniors in BC. Past learnings & Learnings since COVID19". This report has been shared with colleagues across the province.

Importantly, construction of the new 411 Seniors Centre at Fraser street and 19th Ave in Vancouver finally began in the spring of 2021. Finding a new permanent home for our centre has been a 10-year endeavor for the 411 board of directors, with many obstacles along the way. Thanks to a land grant from the City of Vancouver and the restricted capital funds in the 411 Foundation, we will be occupying our new centre in the summer of 2022.

The biggest challenge going forward for our organization, and our Alliance of Seniors Centre partners at West End Seniors Network and South Granville Seniors Centre, is securing stable, permanent funding for our operations. We currently operate our programs on annual applications for 1-year funding from varying sources. If anything, COVID19 has demonstrated the important role that seniors centres like 411 play in our community. Some have described our centre as "social infrastructure". We need committed government partners and sustainable funding models. We will continue to actively pursue new opportunities and advocate with our local and provincial governments for sustainable funding. I hope you promote the interests of 411 and other seniors centres, especially if you are talking to people who influence budget decisions such as elected Vancouver Councillors or Members of the Legislative Assembly.

It was not an easy year but it is a year that exemplified what makes the 411 Seniors Centre and the 411 Seniors community so special - the people. The 411 membership is our greatest asset. I want to extend my sincere appreciation to all of you who supported us with your time, your abilities, and your resources. I am very proud to be part of the 411 Seniors Centre Society.

In gratitude,

Leslie Remund
Executive Director

TREASURER'S REPORT

Hello Members, Staff and Guests, thank you to those of you able to join is today.

My name is Gwen Willox, I am a Board Member, Finance Committee Chair and Treasurer here at 411. I am pleased to provide some information on the financial activity at 411 during the fiscal year 2020-2021.

To begin, since the Auditor has provided a fulsome report on the financial status of the Society as at March 31, 2021, I will make a few general comments about operations during the fiscal year 2020-2021. The entire fiscal year, first day to last, was dictated by the COVID pandemic. There is no way to adequately describe the credit due to Leslie, Marion, Monica, Mariko, and the many, many capable volunteers that shut down, adjusted, developed alternatives, adjusted some more - in short they kept working for 411 clients throughout the year under shifting restrictions and protocols. Federal wage (CEWS) and operational supports (CERB) kept all staff working at full time, providing service remotely. External funding from traditional sources such as BC Gaming and United Way continued but new fundraising opportunities were few. As well, because none of 411's programs were possible, both revenues and expenses were extremely low, expenses being mainly wages and rent. 411 Foundation covered the residual shortfall. The total 411 Foundation financial support to the Society during the 2020-2021 year was just over \$152,000, which was kept down by the COVID supports of over \$100,000.

During the year our new Financial Coordinator, Maggie Taylor, has worked constantly to modernize and digitize all elements of 411's financial wing. Everything from banking to donation systems to our payment system have been updated, streamlined and made more efficient. Financial records are more comprehensive now, more focused, and all processes can be completed more quickly. Maggie's work is preparing us for a smooth, efficient transition into our new expanded service model when we go to 3510 Fraser Street.

Gwen Willox, Treasurer

NEW FACILITY & FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Shortly after the 2020 Annual General Meeting by Zoom, it became clear that the design and contracts for the new facility at 3510 Fraser Street were being finalized and that construction would start by the start of 2021. Consequently, the decision was made to disband the Committee and focus on Fundraising.

The members of the Fundraising Committee are myself, Marion Pollack, Alana Kenyon, Willem Haan, Carol Irene Weis, Leslie Remund and Maggie Taylor. We have met by Zoom almost once monthly. The Board of Directors agreed to retain the services of **LOVE fundraising** as consultants so David Love and David Landers were involved in a number of meetings where they presented ideas and got feedback on the documents and grant proposals they were working on.

The documents included materials that are being used to inform potential donors about various aspects of 411 and the plans for the future. They also included a well-researched list of potential sources of funding from Government, Foundation and Corporate sources and several of these are still in process. Others will be approached later.

The decision was made to channel all donations made through the website through Canada Helps to the 411 Foundation. This means that funds will be disbursed to the 411 Seniors Centre Society as needed but, until then, will remain in our investments.

Fundraising outreach started in June through personal contacts and the 411 Facebook. The results will be monitored through monthly summaries of donations received. All donors will be thanked and all donations over \$20 will be issued a receipt for tax purposes.

At the time of writing, your Committee has plans to mark the United Nations Day of Older Persons and Canada's National Day for Seniors on 1 October.

Respectfully submitted,
Stuart Alcock, Chair

SENIORS ISSUES COMMITTEE

Seniors come to the 411 Seniors Centre with a variety of concerns and issues. Some can be resolved by the amazing and dedicated Information and Referral volunteers and/or the staff. Others can be partially resolved by the I and R volunteers/staff but also need more general advocacy. And yet others, need to amplify seniors' voices.

This is why the 411 Seniors Issues Committee exists. It is made up of Board members, volunteers, and amazing members. We continued to meet during the pandemic via ZOOM. One of the overriding issues we always talked about is the digital divide. We know that some seniors have access to computers, the internet and feel comfortable navigating cyberspace while others do not. This is the digital divide. The 411 Seniors issues committee knows that this means that some seniors have access to a lot more information and resources than other seniors. We think this is wrong. Some places where the 411 Seniors Issues Committee saw the digital divide raising its ugly head include:

- Applications for the BC Recovery Benefit which was mainly on line and required certain information (such as bank numbers) that were difficult to access
- Increased social isolation for seniors who did not have access to the internet and ZOOM
- Difficulty to access information about COVID 19
- The fact that many stores were no longer taking cash payments

It is clear that we need to continue to focus on this issue to ensure that seniors are fully able to participate in our society.

The 411 Seniors Issues Committee also discussed the fact that many seniors cannot afford to access dental care. We are aware that there are numerous places offering low cost dental service, but we know that more many seniors even these discounted rates are too expensive. Housing has been an ongoing issue for the 411 Seniors Issues Committee. We want the BC Government's. Shelter Allowance for Elderly Renters (SAFER) to apply to housing coops. We support the comments by the BC Seniors Advocate that the rent ceiling for SAFER has to be increased. Currently the SAFER rent ceiling does not reflect the high rents in Greater Vancouver.

We are also concerned that in some subsidized housing buildings the mix of tenants results in some seniors feeling vulnerable.

The 411 Seniors Issues Committee has joined with organizations calling for an increase in the income seniors receive.

The 411 Seniors Issues Committee is a committee that is strong, determined, dynamic and welcoming. If you are a 411 member you are encouraged to join our committee. All you need to join is interest and a desire to make seniors lives better. Please join us.

Marion Pollack, Chair



SENIORS CENTRE SOCIETY

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS DONORS

April 1, 2020 - March 31, 2021

Wafa Al Dada

Gail Harmer

LULU Fund

Richard Johannson

Abbey of the Long Cedar Canoe Society

Rowena Moffett

Hospital Employees Union

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 And the many anonymous donors.

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