



The Centre

Recreation · Education · Wellness for 50+
PENTICTON, BC



Since 1994, The Centre (Penticton Seniors' Drop-In Centre Society) has welcomed adults aged 50+ from around the South Okanagan Valley to mix and mingle and enjoy a wide variety of activities specifically designed to engage older adults. Located near Skaha Lake, in sunny Penticton, "The Centre" is nestled in beautiful Robinson Park along with the city's bocce courts, horseshoe pitches and the pickleball courts. Although a drop-in centre, membership is encouraged and, at this time, over 1100 members have joined and are committed to the Centre's continuing success. The Centre is open from 9 to 4, Monday to Friday, with some special weekend monthly events such as a pancake breakfast and a concert.

Working with the City of Penticton and other groups, the Centre is a non-profit society that ensures seniors have access to programs and activities that satisfy a wide range of skills, interests, and abilities which aid in promoting self-development and life-long learning. It is the Centre's mission to provide affordable recreational opportunities encouraging physical fitness, intellectual stimulation, and good mental well-being. Meaningful interactions with like-minded people help to reduce social isolation and feelings of loneliness which is a serious mental health issue among seniors. It is through active engagement that significant connections are forged, and lasting friendships are built and nurtured, and a sense of belonging is created.

Not everyone wants to participate in activities but may still want to be involved, so volunteering at the Centre is another purposeful way for seniors to be connected, build friendships, and provide service to others. With only one paid staff member, the manager, volunteers are critical to the suc-

cess of the Centre's operations. Volunteers have many jobs - they welcome visitors at the front reception desk and teach classes such as line dancing, belly dancing, yoga, chair yoga, ukulele, and Tai Chi. They lead activities such as French Talk, Spanish conversation, sing-alongs, bridge, Scrabble, cribbage, and Mah-Jong. As well, volunteers work in the kitchen preparing food, baking treats and serving members and guests. They organize weekly Bingo games, Pool Room tournaments, and Friday Night Dances in addition to working behind the scenes setting up chairs, preparing rooms, and completing small maintenance tasks. They serve on committees, and help plan and execute special events and Live and Learn sessions. Finally, they serve as directors who ensure the Centre remains solvent, operational, and relevant. Our volunteers are gold and, as a volunteer-based organization, we welcome and encourage those who are looking to give back to join our volunteer team.

COVID-19 has had a huge impact on the Centre as it has on many other businesses. Not only did various closures, beginning in March 2019, create financial hardship, they also slowed the implementation of our Business Plan and our Strategic Plan. As well, with limited programming and reduced member involvement, we were challenged in our ability to fulfill our mission to serve seniors. However, we are optimistic and expect good things to come. We are filled with hope and confidence for a successful and positive future and the return of a bustling seniors' centre that is thriving and growing and will remain a valuable resource to an important segment of our community - seniors.

Mignonne Wood
Past President