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President's Report
Presented at the Netherlands Association "Je Maintiendrai" –
Dutch Network
Annual General Meeting, October 21, 2017, 11:00 am
VanCoeverden Court
1099 Sitka Square, Vancouver, BC

Introduction

I was elected president of the Netherlands Association "Je Maintiendrai" on October 3, 2015 at the Annual General Meeting held in Surrey, BC. Last year we held our AGM on October 15, 2016 here at Sitka Square and today I am completing my second year as president.

During the past year much progress has been made. The organization has transitioned from a strong leader oriented organization once lead by Edie Bijdemast to a delegated structured leadership organization with strong directorships. For example: attached is a diagram showing the Leadership Relationship of Responsibility and Communication. As well, attached is an outline of the additional leadership volunteers who have supported the Dutch Network during this last year making it possible "to promote a variety of social activities to further the unity of our Dutch members in the lower mainland and throughout British Columbia" as per the goal of our Constitution.

Special thanks to all Directors of the board of the Netherlands Association "Je Maintiendrai"- Dutch Network. This year our board members were as follows: our vice-president was Sandra van Ark and she was also our Sinterklaas liaison and coordinator of the Sinterklaas celebration. As well, Sandra was the manager of Facebook and Twitter and handled the position of Director of Family Events; Barb Buree was our Secretary and Director of Membership; Bettie Neels and Peter Buree were our Treasurers; our Director of Communication and Webmaster was Saskia Zeedijk who received a lot of website assistance from Noud de Rover; Rick de Loeff was the Newsletter Editor and received support from Tineke Schrande and Saskia Zeedijk and Sandra van Ark; and our Director of Cultural Events was Sandra Poppema. The Director of Koffie Clubs was unassigned. John van Rij and Noud de Rover were members of our board as well.

John van Rij officially joined the board on February 21, 2017 and Noud de Rover officially joined the board on February 28, 2017. Although John and Noud only joined the board in February 2017, both have become a tremendous asset to the Association. Their skills, talents and Dutch passion have greatly contributed to the success of the board.

John van Rij and Rick de Loeff have been coordinating our very successful monthly Pub Nights in Vancouver and Langley, and Noud de Rover has been a tremendous asset in supporting the redesign and launching of our website.

Much appreciation is also extended to our board Members-at-Large -- Bill Stroet, Jack Leon and Betty Leon. Also, very special thanks to the many volunteers who supported the various activities coordinated by the Association. Sadly, Sandra Poppema gave notice of resignation on March 10, 2017 and formally resigned on May 16, 2017 for personal reasons. Sandra joined the board in 2015 and filled the position as Director of Cultural Events and was coordinator of the European Festival and manager of Twitter. When Sandra Poppema resigned, I handled the responsibilities of the Director of Cultural Events.

During the year we accomplished three major objectives as a Board. A significant step we made in February 2017 was to acquire **Directors' & Officers Liability Insurance** by INTACT Insurance through an insurance broker Schill Insurance in Surrey. The policy provides protection for Officers and Directors of a non-profit organization against damages resulting from negligent or wrongful acts in the course of their duties.

Secondly, in June 2017 the Membership Committee comprised of John van Rij, Barbara Buree and Sandra van Ark conducted a **Membership Survey** and provided a written comprehensive overview of our membership status along with a detailed presentation to the Board. Approximately 178 respondents replied to the survey. Most of the respondents came from Vancouver, Surrey and Langely, the respondents were mostly immigrants and ranged in age from 23 to 92 years old but 60% of the respondents were over 60 years of age. Only 30% of the people who replied to the survey were members of the Association. The most valued events included: the E-newsletter, Website, Sinterklaas, Koningsdag, Dutch Bike Rides, Family Events, Pub nights, events for newcomers/immigrants and the Dutch Library. Finally about 48% of the respondents suggested we keep the name "Dutch Network". The information collated should provide clear direction in establishing membership guidelines for 2017-2018.

Thirdly, in March 2017, we reintroduced the production and distribution of a monthly **Dutch Network E-Newsletter** to our members. Rick de Looft and Saskia Zeedijk have managed to publish seven E-newsletters up to now. We hope to continue to publish monthly newsletters for 2017-2018.

At the present time, our attention is being focused on the process of meeting the requirements of the provincial Society Act to digitally file our Constitution and By-laws by March 2018.

Unfortunately, this year, I managed to visit only a few of the Koffie Clubs in the Lower Mainland. However, the **weekly and monthly Dutch Koffie Clubs** throughout the LowerMainland continue to be well attended. Average attendance at all the Koffie Clubs range from 10 to 30 participants. Koffie Clubs are held in 7 different municipalities including: Vancouver, North Surrey, South Surrey, Abbotsford, Langley, New Westminster, and the North Shore (West Vancouver). The Vancouver Koffie Club is held weekly at 1099 Sitka Square and all other Koffie Clubs are held once a month in either a coffee bar like Blenz or Starbucks or a food court of a shopping mall.

I recently learned of a unique marketing strategy used by Rita Hopmans of the Surrey Koffie Club to inform the Dutch community of the location and time of their Koffie Club.

Rita has taken the initiative to advertise their Koffie Club gathering in “Coffee News”; a free advertisement is available by contacting “Coffee News”. A few months ago, I received an email inquiry if there was a Koffie Club in Nanaimo. If anyone is interested in starting up a Koffie Club on the Island, please contact me. Thank you to our many volunteers who host the Dutch Koffie Clubs.

The third annual **BC Koningsdag Celebration** held on April 29, 2017 was a wonderful event and attended by approximately 150 people. The event was held at De Dutch Restaurant at Coal Harbour. Since the event was such a great success at De Dutch, we look forward to celebrating Konginsdag at this location again in 2018.

We worked with the Dutch Consulate to support **Dodenherdenking** on May 4, 2017 at the Vancouver BC Regiment (DCO) Drill hall, 620 Beatty Street from 2:00 to 3:00 pm. honouring the remembrance of the many soldiers who gave their lives to liberate the Netherlands in 1945. The National Remembrance Day Ceremony was attended by about 75 – 100 people. Special thanks to Gerhard vandenbosch for his participation on the Dodenherdenking Planning Committee. The event was so successful that the location has been reserved for May 4, 2018.

The Netherlands Association “Je Maintiendrai” was an active participant in the two day **European Festival** held at Swangard Stadium, Burnaby in May 2017. We had wonderful volunteer support to handle the Dutch cultural booth who spent hours supervising the booth and talking to attendees about Holland and its rich culture.

The monthly **Dutch Summer Bicycle Rides** we coordinated from May 2017 to September 2017 were organized with various leaders and averaged 10 to 25 participants per ride. Thank you to the following coordinators for their contributions and efforts in supporting a successful sporting activity. Jeanette van Hattem led the Tsawwassen/Mud Bay Bike Ride, Mieke Quinn led the Fort Langely Bike Ride, Bruce Melville and Adriana Zylmans led the Barnston Island Bike Ride with assistance from John van Rij and Rick de Loeff, and Peter Buree and Barbara Buree led the Vancouver/Stanley Park Bike Ride and the Richmond/Steveston Bike Ride. Although four of our five **Bike Rides** had great participation from our Dutch community; unfortunately, the Tsawwassen/Mud Bay ride had few participants and there is likely going to be a route change for next year.

During the year, we have made big strides in successfully updating our website to keep it current. The **Dutch Website with the title “Dutch Network”** has undergone a facelift during the past year. With thanks to the leadership of Saskia Zeedijk, Noud de Rover and Sandra van Ark, who have spent hours and days working to enhance the capabilities and provide current information for our daily users; the website is now user friendly with smart phones and tablets. With thanks as well, our **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts were monitored by Sandra Poppema and Sandra van Ark.

The **Dutch Library Program** started on March 4, 2013 continues to be a tremendous success at Holland Shopping Centre with the leadership of Janinah Jansen and Jerry van Zuuk. With the cataloguing and handling of books by Janinah and Jerry, and the shelve space donated to the Association by Tako and Frances Slump of the Holland Shopping Centre, 141 East Columbia Street, New Westminster, BC, the Dutch books library

program is visited frequently. Thank you to the Holland Shopping Centre for supporting the initiative of the Dutch Library and to Janinah and Jerry for their conscientious commitment in making sure books are processed and shelved.

Our **Pub nights** have increased from one monthly event in Vancouver to a second pub night in Langley. To help in notifying the Dutch community about pub nights, we established a "*WhatsApp group*" and a "*Meetup group*". The monthly Dutch Pub Night held in Vancouver is on the third Wednesday of each month, and in November 2016, we introduced a Langley Pub Night on the first Wednesday of each month. Special thanks to Rick de Looff and John van Rij for their commitment to leading this very successful activity.

The two hour weekly **Nature Walks** in Surrey hosted by Jeanette van Hattem continues to be a success with an average weekly participation of 5-10 walkers. By request, Jeanette introduced an "after walk luncheon at De Dutch" once a month. Check the website for updates. Thank you to Jeanette for her dedicated commitment.

A variety of family events coordinated by Sandra van Ark continued to be well attended including an Easter Egg Hunt in March 2017 for families with young children. Approximately 5 – 6 families participated in the event. Snowshoeing at Seymour Mountain was also a fun activity.

Learning to speak Dutch for children continues to be supported by the **Dutch School "de Esdoorn"** which commenced in September 2016 at Sitka Square by Sandra van Ark and Sandra Poppema. In September 2017, "de Esdoorn" is meeting in the basement of a Vancouver local church. If you have children interested in learning to speak Dutch, contact Sandra van Ark. Students meet weekly on a Saturday. The **Kindergarten program in Surrey** with Dutch lessons is held twice a month by Rita Hopmans and continues to be well attended.

The second annual **Vancouver Dutch Bike Ride** sponsored by the Dutch Consulate and the City of Vancouver was held in August 2017. Participants rode through the streets of Vancouver. The unique Vancouver event attracted approximately 500 bike riders which was significantly more than last year.

Horse Racing at Fraser Downs Racetrack and Casino in Cloverdale having taken place in previous years in March did not get off the ground for 2017. We hope to reintroduce this event in spring 2018.

The **Sinterklaas Celebration** held in November, 2016 in Langley attracted the interest of approximately 500 people. Special thanks to the Sinterklaas Committee for organizing the event; it takes much time and effort to create such an enthusiastic and successful event, and the Netherlands Association "Je Maintiendrai" is very appreciative of the unique team that handles this activity. If you are interested in volunteering for this year's celebration contact Sandra van Ark. The event is scheduled for November 25, 2017 in Surrey.

Closure

Throughout the year, the Netherlands Association "Je Maintiendrai" has continued to receive several complimentary copies of *DUTCH the magazine* and copies of *Maandblad de Krant* from Mr. Tom Bijvoet publisher of Mokeham Publishing Inc. Copies of the newspaper and magazine have been very useful for the Association to distribute to new members as a promotional tool to thank new members for their membership in the Association. The Association is most grateful to Mr. Bijvoet for supporting our Association and we hope to continue to have the benefit of the relationship in the future. Thank you!

To my Board members and directors for your support and dedicated service during my second year as president; thank you sincerely. Also, much appreciation is extended to all the volunteers who so kindly helped with hosting and leading events and activities; your assistance has been most valuable.

Overall, the year has been tremendously successful! We accomplished much of what we had planned to achieve. My objectives this year are to formalize the name change for our Association and identify a new logo for the Association, to visit all of the Koffie Clubs in the lower mainland, to improve communication with the Dutch Consulate and other Dutch organizations in the Lower Mainland, to finish meeting the requirements of the Society Act, to clarify Membership Guidelines for 2017-2018, to finish editing the job descriptions for each Director, to find a Director of Cultural Events and to identify a leader to handle the European Festival, a leader to liaison with the Dutch Consulate to organize Dodenherdenking, and a leader to plan the Koningsdag celebration, and to formally appoint an auditor to oversee our financial records and reporting.

In closing, I would like to mention that as a Board we focused on working together as a team and I note great improvements. We worked diligently to cement the transitions we commenced last year to achieve consistency and structural organization and to grow and meet the expectations from our Dutch community; which I believe we achieved too. I am very proud of all the activities we sponsored and the progress we made together as a Board and as an Association. We can be thankful!

I look forward to my third year as president and in working to increase the membership in our organization such that we can meet more fully the needs of our newcomers to Canada. Thank you sincerely!