

Dear members of the association,

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of Dutch Network, registered under the official name of Netherlands Association 'Je Maintiendrai'. It is perhaps unfortunate that we cannot meet in person for the second year in a row, but doing our AGM virtually allows those who are less mobile to participate in this important annual event. I want to start by thanking you for allowing me to serve as your President. This is my first report as your President, and I am pleased to announce that our association is in an excellent position regardless of the uncertain times COVID has spread upon our community.

There is no doubt that the past year has been challenging for our association due to COVID. Our mandate is to bring the Dutch community together in British Columbia. Still, when social distancing and limited gatherings continue to be imposed, it is difficult for the association to fulfill its obligations. Many of our events continued to be canceled or postponed. For instance, our Pub Nights in Vancouver and Langley, or our Brewery Crawls, have not taken place for the last nineteen months. Most Coffee Clubs are still not up-and-running, and Dodenderdenking took place with a small gathering in Vancouver. Especially the cancelation of Koningsdag was very painful to the association. It is our main event of the year and probably the most anticipated cultural event. Not providing the community with this event for the second time in a row was disappointing to your board members.

Despite the setbacks, it is with great pleasure that I can inform you that your Board of Directors has done a tremendous job reaching out successfully to members and the community at large. This is not unexpected. With the outstanding assistance of many volunteers, they have been very creative and worked tirelessly by dedicating a lot of their time. The result was a variety of new, very well-received events. True progress was made over the last year.

This has been reflected in the overall numbers. While other associations have been suffering during these challenging times, Dutch Network has increased its memberships. Members have also been very generous through donations throughout the year, supporting their association whenever they could. And finally, our new events, newsletters, and other community exposure have attracted new sponsors to Dutch Network. Our treasurer will report that the inflow of cash, together with the absence of some of our largest events, has strengthened our financial position over the last year. This will allow your organisation to organise better and more quality events for the community in the years ahead.

It is not fair for me to report on the work of others. In today's meeting, your board members will convey last year's events, and some of the new events that they are working on for the coming year. However, I would like to highlight the underlying philosophy of our activities over the past year. Dutch Network is

your association, and it has been our intent over the past year to ensure that as a member, you feel appreciated. We sent out holiday and Koningsdag cards, provided gift coupons, and phoned you personally to make sure that you feel included. It is extremely important to this board that you understand that you can influence everything the organisation does. Your elected board members do this for you, and therefore it is essential that you voice your opinion and ideas. Although voicing an opinion has never been an issue within Dutch culture, I may add.

In addition, our mandate is to organise social events for the community at large and bring the community together. While we may not have been able to provide our regular events, we did start our annual Scavenger Hunt, we made you paint birdhouses, continued to stock our libraries, sent you high-quality monthly newsletters, entertained you on Facebook, started an (outdoors) pub night in Dewdney, and even launched a radio show. Perhaps most exciting was relaunching our bike rides this year, which is loved by many.

We also introduced a family membership this year. This membership option was requested by many in the past. It is now possible to obtain an individual membership at \$35.00 a year, or a family membership, which includes a maximum of two adults, at \$50.00 a year. Some new members already took advantage of this new option.

Although the future may still be uncertain, I can guarantee you that your association is filled with good-hearted people who will continue to bring Dutch Network to you in the coming year. We may not be able to deliver Koningsdag again or see you at a coffee club soon. Still, there is a wind of change blowing through this COVID situation. Your Dutch Network will continue to adapt and organise whenever and whatever it can. Dutch Network will also continue to work together with the Dutch Business Club, De Esdoorn, CAANS, Sinterklaas Committee, and the Consulate of The Netherlands. Perhaps even more exciting, Dutch Network's relationship with BC's Indonesian association Permai BC will hopefully provide you with an exciting new event in 2022. It is in the works!

I want to acknowledge and thank my fellow board members. Many of whom had their own challenges over the last year. I have been incredibly fortunate to work with this team and rely on the work and the wisdom of all of them. All I do is keeping the board members happy and call monthly meetings. Your board members have been the ones who brainstorm, create, and deliver all the events and services we provide. Unfortunately, Sylvia is standing down at this AGM. Thank you, Sylvia, for all your social media work and for keeping the library stocked and organised. We know how much time you offered to us this last year.

I want to thank all our sponsors for their support. Some provided financial support, and others provided gifts for our events. Believing in us and providing us with the financial means to organise our events is important to our association. Special thanks to our main sponsor, Tako and Francis Slump at the Holland Shopping Centre. Throughout the year, you continue to support us. It is wonderful to have a sponsor who is so reliable and supportive. Thank you.

Finally, I would like to end my report by thanking you, our members, for your continued support. Your participation, either financially, as a volunteer, or both, is what continues to move this association forward. No association can be around for 57 years, like your association does, without the tremendous dedication of its members. As your President, on behalf of your board members, a heartfelt 'Thank You'! You are the most important part of this association.

We very much look forward to serving you for another year. The future certainly looks bright for your Dutch Network, arguably the oldest and largest Dutch association in Canada. If you have any questions, comments, or ideas, do contact me at any time. All our contact information is provided on the last page of the AGM agenda.

Thank you very much for your continued support.

John van Rij, President