

Dear members of the association,

Welcome to the Annual General Meeting of Dutch Network, registered under the official name of Netherlands Association 'Je Maintiendrai'. Your Board serves the needs of individuals who have joined the association first and foremost. Therefore, we decided to continue to host the AGM virtually to ensure that those who are less mobile or live further away are able to participate in this event. We are a member-driven association and would like to guarantee all members' access.

I would like to start by thanking you once again for allowing me to serve as your President. It is a true honour to represent the association on your behalf and to work with the people in our community. It is also my pleasure to inform you that your association experienced an excellent year. Our membership continued to increase, we experienced a budget surplus, and our alliances with other stakeholders strengthened. Your Board always believed that our events should be about quality, not quantity, and I think we have accomplished doing so this past year.

Although the pandemic may be over, COVID is here to stay for the foreseeable future, but that has not stopped your Board of Directors from (finally) bringing back our cherished events. Our past fiscal year started in September with a very successful scavenger hunt in Port Moody. It was a beautiful day with many participants, and the organizers incorporated old-fashioned Dutch games such as koekhapen. It was the second time we organized this annual scavenger hunt. In November, in partnership with De Esdoorn, we invited Sinterklaas back to the Lower Mainland. While De Esdoorn took the leading share of responsibilities, Dutch Network knew exactly where Sinterklaas and his pieten were hiding and arranged them for all kids to enjoy. We closed 2021 by sending out our annual Christmas cards with a small gift for our members.

Although it feels like a long time ago, in March, Dr. Bonnie Henry allowed larger social gatherings again. With less than six weeks till Koningsdag, your Board designed a plan to organize an unforgettable day. Under the direction of Dutch Network, Koningsdag became a joint effort between De Esdoorn, Dutch Business Club, CAANS, the Dutch Consulate, sponsors, and Dutch Network. The Dutch Consulate paid for the venue, the Roundhouse Community Centre in Yaletown. Dutch Network supplied 300 free pancakes in the morning and asked the Consul General and Deputy Consul General to serve them to over 200 visitors. During the day, your association provided free coffee and cookies to visitors and free sandwiches and drinks to all the volunteers, including those from other associations. We estimate that over 350 people visited Koningsdag during the afternoon.

As always, our annual Koningsdag party took place in the evening. Unlike previous years, we organized it in partnership with the Dutch Consulate. The Consulate paid for the open bar, and sponsors paid for the live music. Over 220 people participated in this sold-out event. We had visitors from the Okanagan, Yukon, Vancouver Island, and Washington State. Although the entire day was a much larger investment to Dutch Network than in previous years, your Board members ensured that it stayed within the approved budget. It was a great success, as was confirmed in a follow-up survey. The following month, word about our successful event spread across North America. Dutchies in Toronto and Edmonton are some of the people anticipating flying in for Koningsdag 2023.

On April 27, Erik van der Ven was awarded the Order of Oranje-Nassau (lintje) by his Majesty Koning Willem Alexander of the Netherlands. A dear member of our community, this was a well-deserved recognition of Erik's support and work for the Dutch community in British Columbia. We celebrated his achievement in our newsletter and our radio show.

Spearheaded by Dutch Network, a modest and intimate Dodenherdenking occurred at the Dutch war memorial at the Law Courts in downtown Vancouver. Representatives of De Esdoorn, the Dutch Business Club, Dutch Network, and the Deputy Consul General were present at this event, where we laid flowers, watched the live event on De Dam in Amsterdam, and took a few minutes of silence at 11:00 am together with those in The Netherlands. In addition, our six bike rides came back from May till September, and all three-monthly pub nights, Dewdney, Langley, and Vancouver, are operational again. Although the pandemic has closed some coffee clubs permanently, the gatherings in Coquitlam, Mission, the North Shore, and South Surrey are open to visitors again. The Nanaimo coffee club is currently seeking a new leader, but their full intent is to continue their meetings. Our library at the Holland Shopping Centre in New Westminster continued to be available during the pandemic and remains to be stocked with Dutch books.

Your Board aims to improve its marketing efforts over the next few years. Therefore, we participated in the Euro Fest at Country Fest in Maple Ridge and the Surrey Fusion Festival. At both fairs, we shared a booth with De Esdoorn, promoting our organisations and Dutch culture. We had a lot of interested visitors, Dutch people who had never heard of Dutch Network. We distributed our recently designed brochure and subscribed many to our successful newsletter, which continues to achieve more monthly readers. We also informed them about our popular weekly radio show Dutch Connections, hosted by Harma Volders, which is still going strong after two years. Our current marketing efforts include our social media presence, which a volunteer manages in Kelowna.

Finally, your association continues to improve its relationships with its stakeholders, which include De Esdoorn, CAANS, Dutch Business Club, the Dutch Consulate, and the Holland Shopping Centre. The associations have quarterly stakeholders' meetings to improve communications, share ideas, and assist each other with events and governance issues. Dutch Network also reached out to the Netherlands Association of Vancouver Island to establish an alliance between the two associations. Our connections with the Indonesian community in British Columbia are a work in progress but are slowly improving.

It is essential to state that none of this work would have been possible without the support of many. Our association is blessed with a good Board of Directors who donate their precious time every month, and I am grateful for their continued support. Not only do they provide good governance, but they also lead new projects and volunteer during the events. They take their fiduciary role seriously. In addition, I would like to thank our volunteers, those who donate, and our sponsors. Their presence and financial support are essential to our organisation, especially the effortless support we receive from Tako, Francis, and Sara Slump at the Holland Shopping Centre. However, the most important participants are our members, those who support the association annually. Thank you for your continued support, your participation, and your trust.

In the coming year, your Board will continue building upon our foundation. On October 19, we will host our first annual DN Kumpulan, an Indonesian dinner to celebrate Indonesian culture. 'Kumpulan' is the Indonesian word for 'gathering' or 'bringing people together.' This sold-out event is an intimate gathering exclusive to members and will include an opportunity for everyone to personally meet the new Consul General. In 2023, I intend to introduce a Code of Conduct for approval as part of my efforts to improve our governance. This written policy will be in addition to our Bylaws. Based on our values, it will lay out the association's moral and ethical expectations that our Board of Directors and members are held to as they interact with stakeholders or at events. I will also ask our Board to assist me in developing a three-year strategic plan in an effort to provide guidance and a clear vision to our Board and members. Your Board also hopes to launch a new, improved website this coming year, and we hope to finalize our digital repository for all our association's documents and multimedia. Finally, with Okanagan and Yukon members, we will explore if we can start pub nights, coffee clubs, or other events for Dutch community members in those regions.

We very much look forward to serving you for another year. The future continues to look bright for your Dutch Network. If you have any questions, comments, or ideas, contact me anytime. Your feedback is important to us. It is the only way your Board knows if they are doing it right. 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