



# Annual President's Report 2023/2024

Netherlands Association 'Je Maintiendrai'  
Thursday, October 24, 2024

Dear Members of Dutch Network,

I am honoured to welcome you to the Annual General Meeting of Dutch Network, registered as the Netherlands Association 'Je Maintiendrai' in British Columbia. As we reflect on the past year, I am pleased to report on our progress, challenges, and the exciting future that lies ahead.

## **Growth in Membership and Community Engagement**

Our membership continues to grow steadily, and I am proud that we continue to head in the right direction. Two key events that have contributed significantly to this growth are the continued excellence of Koningsdag and our exclusive members-only event, Kumpulan. These signature events have not only attracted new members but also deepened the bonds within our community.

Barbara Buree, our Secretary and Membership Chair, will provide a detailed report on these developments, but I want to acknowledge that the strength of our membership reflects the quality of our programming and the efforts of our volunteers.

## **Financial Progress**

This year has also been a milestone for our financial health. For the first time under my guidance, we booked a small surplus—albeit small. In 2020, our revenue stood at \$7,750. This year, we have reached a total revenue of \$49,000, a remarkable improvement that speaks to the growth of our activities and the increasing relevance of our association. Our Treasurer, Peter Buree, will provide you with all the details shortly.

While I am still convinced that financial size does not define our success, it is an important marker of the expanding scope of our work and impact. We are becoming a stronger, more dynamic organization, and I believe we are just beginning to tap into our full potential as we bring on younger people to move us forward.

## **Event Highlights**

Among our notable events this year was the dignified participation in Dodenherdenking, organized under the careful guidance of Erik van der Ven. This solemn occasion honoured the memory of those who lost their lives during the Second World War and in conflicts since then. We are proud to be a part of this event each year.

Another standout moment was the second celebration of Indonesian culture at our annual Kumpulan event, where 90 individuals gathered at St. Patrick's Church on Main Street in Vancouver to celebrate the 400-year relationship between the Netherlands and Indonesia. It was an honour to host the Consul Generals of Indonesia and the Netherlands, with Indonesian music and dancing providing a memorable cultural experience.

Koningsdag was a great success and was held at our new venue in North Vancouver. The Pipeshop, located at the Shipyards, proved to be the ideal setting for our evening party, where we had the privilege of hosting DJ Ben Liebrand, one of the Netherlands' most renowned DJs. Despite some food-related challenges, the 300 attendees enjoyed another improved event. Our inaugural Dutch Market, held in the Shipyards' commons area, was also well received despite the heavy rain. We plan to expand the market in 2025 with more businesses and interactive events for children. The Shipyards in North Vancouver may be our home for the coming years.

In addition to these more significant events, our monthly gatherings have continued to draw participants from across the Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. Pub Nights in Nanaimo, Victoria, Langley, Mission, and Vancouver are made possible by our dedicated volunteers, and they have become a vital opportunity for members to come together, speak Dutch, share humour, and enjoy the warmth of our community's 'gezelligheid.' The Dutch bike rides are traditional and valued events from May to September. Many members eagerly anticipate this event, which represents our identity as Dutch individuals. Also, Jette Warman maintains the free Dutch library at the Holland Shopping Centre for all to enjoy.

### **Acknowledging Our Volunteers and Board**

None of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of our volunteers. Whether organizing bike rides, pub nights, Eurofest, appreciation events, Koningsdag, Kumpulan, Dodenherdenking, or any other activity that brings our community together, our volunteers play an essential role in our success.

I would particularly like to thank our Board members, who continually give their time, energy, and financial resources to keep this association moving forward. Without their dedication, this association would not exist, and I am incredibly grateful to be part of such a committed and passionate team.

A special thank-you goes to Tony van Houten, who passed the torch to the next person after many years of serving as the editor of our newsletter. Tony's contribution has been invaluable, helping to connect our community not only here in British Columbia but also across Canada and even beyond our borders. His work has been a significant part of why our association has experienced steady growth, and we are deeply thankful for his dedication.

I would like to take a moment to acknowledge Harma Volders, who consistently put our radio show together each week despite facing serious and significant health challenges. Harma's dedication has not gone unnoticed, and we are immensely grateful for her tremendous commitment during difficult times.

### **Collaboration and Looking Ahead**

As we continue to grow, collaboration with other organizations within the Dutch community and vital partners across the Lower Mainland remains essential. Although not everything goes as planned—such as our rejection by DCABC to participate in the Dutch Street Market in Vancouver this year—we continue to move forward with optimism and determination.

Looking ahead, next year will mark our association's 60th anniversary. Registered on June 1, 1965, our association has a long history of serving the Dutch community in British Columbia. While we are still in the planning stages, we intend to celebrate this milestone with our members in the Spring of 2025. We are excited to share more details next year as our Board works to organize a special members-only event worthy of this significant occasion.

### **Call to Action**

As we prepare for the year ahead, I encourage each of you to participate in our events and continue to contribute to the success of our association. Your involvement is crucial, and together, we can ensure that Dutch Network remains a thriving community for us Dutchies in British Columbia.

Thank you once again for your support, dedication, and commitment to our shared mission.

Sincerely,

John van Rij  
Voorzitter/President, Dutch Network, Vancouver, British Columbia