

BCGREA VICTORIA BRANCH NEWSLETTER 2020



A Message from Victoria Branch Chair, Barbara Golder

Season's Greetings to all members of BCGREA Victoria Branch 1200 and your families.

Let me wish all of you who celebrate a very Merry Christmas, and wish everyone a Happy New Year for 2021 – it will be a better year!

Heaven only knows how the holiday season crept up so quickly but here we are. We are still in the middle of the COVID-19 Pandemic and we are being asked to keep celebrations to a very dull roar by limiting our social contacts still further, and keeping our get-togethers to those in our bubble. Staying home and living quietly is difficult around the holiday season as it is usually a time of celebration, travel and sharing, but for the sake of a healthy 2021 we need to temper our social instincts.

The Winter Solstice is on December 21, which is the date that marks the 24-hour period with the fewest daylight hours. The word solstice means 'sun standing still' because the apparent movement of the sun's path north or south stops before changing direction. After the shortest day of the year plus 4 days (which is Dec 25) the days start getting longer. I hope this is a metaphor for COVID-19 that after a stoppage (like our current lockdown) there is light at the end of our pandemic tunnel and our quality of life will improve daily.

This is also the season of the 'lighting' as we head into the Winter Solstice. I notice an increase in Christmas lighting around our region. From municipalities to condominium balconies, residents seem to be getting into the spirit of the season by expanding and switching on their outdoor Christmas lights. This is a wonderful contribution to the community, as we all can share the cheeriness of Christmas lighting. We are learning to take joy in the small things of life as we navigate the pandemic. Enjoying the outdoor light displays is one of the pleasures of the Christmas season we can safely share.

The BCGREA Board has also been navigating our way through COVID-19. As Chair, I would personally like to thank all the members of the Victoria Branch executive and our brilliant volunteers for their hard work, dedication and innovation in 2020. This year they contributed many hours of work, zoom meetings and invented ways of dealing with challenges like cheque signing, etc. to keep the Branch functioning and even offering some activities. I am proud of the whole Board, which has worked so well as a team.

Thank you to everyone on the local Executive and our volunteers including:

Sarf Ahmed – 1 st Vice President	Brian Green – 2 nd Vice President	Tammy Welch – Treasurer
Valeska Campbell – Membership Director	Cindy Fristoe - Director	Pauline Harding – Goodwill Director
Linda Snider – Secretary	Marilyn Spencer – Social Director	Vicki White – Director
Gerry Buydens - Program Director	Elsie Gerdes – Director	Sonja Ruffell – Phone Committee Director
Tracey Collins – Volunteer (email) Laura Lam – Volunteer (email)	Shirley MacBride - Newsletter contributor Our wonderful phone committee volunteers.	Carol Burman Volunteer (email) who has left us for personal reasons – thank you Carol

(I can hear your applause).

I could not single anyone out for special mention, except for Brian Green who does double duty, as he wears two hats in the BCGREA – Provincial 1st VP and Branch 2nd VP. He has devoted much time to expanding our provincial digital databases and communication capacity, setting up ‘a soon to be available’ improved website and liaising between Victoria and Provincial Branches. Thanks Brian from everyone here.

Looking forward to the New Year

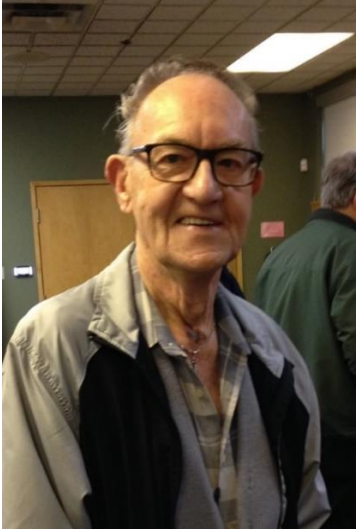
2021 will, we all hope, be a better year with a vaccine on the horizon and possibly return to our normal social interactions. We should have the results and analysis of the survey by February and these will be published in our e-bulletin. These results will help us plan for the remainder of the year and beyond.

We are assuming that the COVID-19 protocols will remain in place for a while, so we hope to bring you a CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) webinar at the beginning of tax season. We are also looking into branch activities that will deliver some interesting experiences and presentations, again within the protocols of the day. The executive will continue to meet monthly and continue our monthly \$25 gift certificate draw program.

Other webinars have been offered by our Affinity partners including Trip Merchant. Information on these has been sent via email, so check them out.

The 5 November Monthly draw winners for gift certificates are:

Lori Kirk	Charlotte Gann	Eileen Carlson
David Freed	Lorraine Holt	

<p>BCGREA VICTORIA MEMBER CORNER</p> <p>Featured for our 2020 Newsletter is Member George Wagg.</p> <p>George is an active LIFE member of our Victoria Branch, retired in 1985. He is a long-time resident of Victoria. He worked at the Ministry of Highways, Financial Services Branch for 36 years in the same department! This was in spite of the Ministry name, Title, Program, etc. changing several times over his career (sound familiar...?)</p>	 <p>We look forward to seeing you again at our future meetings and functions, once things return to normal. <i>Printed with permission</i></p>	<p>HEADS UP</p> <p>We plan to hold a Branch 1200 AGM in May 2021 to elect a new board and fill vacant positions.</p> <p>If you are interested in joining Branch 1200 as a board member/volunteer please keep your eyes open for the e-bulletins for more information.</p> <p>Training/shadowing can be provided if you would like.</p> <p>The commitment is about 10 hours per month and rewards are many.</p>	<p>CONTACT UPDATES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Have you moved recently? ❖ Changed your Email address? ❖ Got a new telephone number? <p>Please let us know so that we can keep our Membership database current.</p> <p>Just drop a line to our general Email: victoriabranch@bcgre.ca or send a short note to our mailing address: PO BOX 9017 STN PROV GOVT Victoria B.C. V8W 9L6 Website: www.bcgrea.ca</p>
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Christmas thoughts from Branch member Shirley McBride.

Some of you may remember the song from the Broadway play “Mame” in which the heroine has fallen on hard times and she sings: “We need a little Christmas, right this very minute”

Indeed, while we all need a little Christmas, it will not be the kind of Christmas many have anticipated, but it is an opportunity to rethink the commercialism that seems to have overtaken the holiday and to return to the themes of a wish for peace and goodwill that resonate with people around the world.

It is generally a time when people pay special attention to those less fortunate...and this year it cuts a wider swath than usual. So many have lost jobs or had their income cut in other ways. As BCGREA pensioners, we have been fortunate as we have not been impacted in the major way that many others have. Given the circumstances, it may be a good time to re-think our gift-giving.

Of course, donations to our favourite charities are a good place to start. Beyond that, however, it’s a good time to recognize that most people, including ourselves, have enough “stuff” so it might be a time to think about “needs” rather than “wants”.

What about making a donation on behalf of someone on your gift list to a cause that might be dear to their heart? Might there be a lesson for a grandchild in giving a less fortunate child a gift on their behalf? If someone on the list is on a very tight budget, could it be that they would appreciate a basket of specialty foods that might never appear in their grocery basket because of the cost?

No doubt you can think of many ways to make this Christmas a bit brighter for those who, for no fault of their own, have fallen on hard times, while furthering the spirit of giving in others.

It has been a challenging year for all of us. Let’s hope for a brighter 2021, and enjoy our pared-down holiday season by being grateful for the good things. **Merry Christmas, everyone.**

BOUQUETS

A big thank you to the **BC Pension Corporation** for their involvement in processing and collecting member’s \$20 annual dues for our Branch. Every February, they arrange for an automatic dues deduction run (or DCO Dues Check Off) which collects the fees from participating member’s pension benefit cheque or deposit. This process is used by approximately 80% of our Victoria Branch members and makes the dues reconciliation job much more streamlined for the Membership Director.

Thank you to **Janet at the BCGEU** hall for keeping us informed of the building closure status, and also for arranging some in person mail pick up ‘appointments’ in the spring.



Another thank you to **Sean Johnson at BC MAIL** who kindly made alternate arrangements for our PO BOX 9017 mail delivery during the “COVID-19 shutdown” period when the BCGEU building was closed. We appreciate the continuity of our mail flow during these difficult times.

Since the start of the pandemic in March the Board of Branch 1200 has met at least once a month, trying to provide activities in keeping with COVID-19 requirements and protocols. We have not had much luck with activities to date as venues have been closed, events cancelled, such as our Christmas luncheon, so we decided to continue at least part of that tradition with a Christmas Draw.

The Christmas draw was made on November 24 2020 at our last executive meeting of the year using a Random Number Generator, which we used to pull the names of our 20 winners. Congratulations to our 10 winners of \$25.00 gift certificates and 10 winners of \$50 gift certificates. The winners are: **Drumroll Please....**



\$25.00 Gift Card Winners

\$50.00 Gift Card Winners

Gurmeet Bal	Clarence Hack	Gary Ashton	Linda Jackson
Barbara Barnett	Jack Wah Hing Louie	Andrea Miller	Fred Colthorpe
Salih Cinar	Dianne Perry	Stephen Newell	Jean Harwood
Michael Freeman	Ingrid Shillington	Catherine Cottyn	Carolyn O'Connor
Ernie Gross	John Sutherland	Ian Fraser	Robert Wilson

Butchart Gardens

BCGREA Victoria Branch is inviting its local members to visit Butchart Gardens at a reduced price. The Board has agreed to subsidize any member of the Victoria Branch for their entrance ticket to the sum of \$15.00 per member, for tickets purchased between December 01, 2020 and January 07, 2021. At this time we are not sure if our offer can be made use of, but will leave it available just in case.

In order to receive your reimbursement portion, please submit your receipt in either of the two following ways:

- By snail mail - please forward the original receipt showing the date and amount of tickets purchased, include the member name & address of who the tickets were for. **Mail to BCGREA Victoria Branch, PO Box 9017, STN PROV GOVT, Victoria BC, V8W 9L6** by January 31, 2021.
- By Email - please email a scanned copy (or clear Photo) of the receipt showing the date and amount of tickets purchased, include the member name and address of who the tickets were for, to victoriabranch@bcgre.ca with **a subject line of Butchart Subsidy**. These emails will be forwarded onto the Treasurer.

If you would like an Electronic Funds Transfer, please ensure you provide the email, phone number and name of who this should go to. All others will be reimbursed by cheque as soon as possible.

EMAIL Communications

Our Branch relies heavily on Email to communicate with our Membership with Meeting Notices, special bulletins and event details.

However, of our branch's 2,000 members, there are currently approximately 500 registered without an Email address on file!

We understand that some of you just don't have an Email address and that's fine, or maybe you prefer to not receive updates this way. Our phoning committee is happy to continue calling those members that like the phone call. However, if you do have an Email and would like it registered, drop us a line and we will be happy to add you to the group of members that receive our electronic updates. victoriabranch@bcgre.ca

Publishing

Are you eagle eyed reading this newsletter? Have you noticed a few things such as inconsistent fonts, formats, columns, margins, etc.?

Well, let us segue into a volunteer opening for anyone out there who likes doing tidy publishing! Our newsletter has been put together from executive volunteers who don't exactly have a marketing or publishing background, so please excuse the job we have done here.

If you would like to help out with our future newsletter, please contact us – we would love to onboard you! This is published at least once a year, and most of the content is provided for you to "polish".

Victoria Branch Survey

If I wrote an account of our year in 2020 it would make for disappointing reading. So much of what we usually do has been cancelled or postponed. So we are taking the opportunity to find out from the whole membership, what the demographic composition of our Branch is, what do you want from the BCGREA and what is the best way to communicate with the members. A survey has gone out via email and through Canada Post with a request that it be completed by December 21 and returned to the mailing address given. Please remember to complete the survey and [enter for our draw for survey participants](#). There is one prize of \$100 and two prizes of \$50 for the lucky participants. This is the season of goodwill to all people, and the qualities of kindness, tolerance and generosity seem to be amplified during the Christmas period. It looks like we may not be spending this holiday season with all the friends and family we love, but that does not stop us sending our best wishes and good thoughts to those we will miss.

So Dr. Bonnie Henry's advice is even more pertinent: **Be Safe, Be Calm, and Be Kind**.