



CEWS

Qualicum Community Education & Wellness Society

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Table of Contents

Welcome and Opening Remarks
Highlights from Roundtable Leaders
Treasurers Report
Election of the 2022-2023 Board
Adjournment

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Submitted by Bill Preston – QCEWS Chair

Welcome to QCEWS 2023 AGM! This is our 8th year as a registered Non-Profit Society. This past year has featured remarkable outcomes generated through two of our Roundtables: Early Learning Childcare Council for Oceanside (ELCCO) and Universal Access Qualicum Beach (UAQB).

The Into The Woods Side table of ELCCO, established its own Non-Profit Society, Into The Woods Early Learning Childcare Society (ITWELCS). ITWELCS completed construction and successfully opened Into The Woods Early Learning Childcare Studio in Qualicum Beach.

Fitness For All Side table of UAQB established a Collaboration with Nanaimo Brain Injury Society (NBIS), changed their name to Brain Body Fitness (BBF) and successfully completed a six month pilot project in the Qualicum Commons.

Another significant feature this past year has been the beginning of a process aimed at re-imagining QCEWS organizational structure and operations while maintaining the heart of our ethos. Reviewing the evolving nature of our work we have recognized the need to establish a solid financial footing in the interests of building a sustainable future for QCEWS.

In our AGM Report we will receive reports from Roundtables, in some cases, Sidetable Leaders.

I very personally want to thank those on our Board who have stepped up and forward in leadership roles that are truly making a difference in the quality of life for all those who live, work, study and play within the Oceanside area! You each inspire me and I thank each and everyone of you! Each of our dedicated leaders have attracted many other volunteers who work side by side on their respective projects and initiatives. A big 'shout out' to all those folks as well!

A special acknowledgement to Lorna Gray - the backbone of QCEWS - she is both Secretary and Treasurer and is a consistently reliable leader of QCEWS Infrastructure Team on our Board of Directors. She keeps us all informed and organized in our mission. Thank You Lorna!

We wish to thank Mayor Teunis Westbroek for organizing Town Liaison councillors Petronella Vander Valk (QCEWS); Jean Young (ELCCO and ITWELCS); Scott Harrison (UAQB)

We owe a huge debt of appreciation to Social Planning and Research Council of BC (SPARC BC) and their Executive Director, Lorraine Copas for generous support and funding enabling the success of our work across Roundtables!

In CommUNITY, Bill Preston (QCEWS Chair)

Universal Access Qualicum Beach / Brain Body Fitness – Submitted by Lorna Gray & Bill Preston

Universal Access Qualicum Beach (UAQB), a QCEWS Roundtable, has spent several years working with local partners to try and get an accessible gym up and running in Oceanside. This year with the help of a generous grant from SPARC BC, we were able to bring this initiative to fruition at Qualicum Commons.

In April 2023 QCEWS collaborated with Nanaimo Brain Injury Society (NBIS) to offer the **Brain Body Fitness Pilot Project (BBF)**. The project ran from April to October, and provided participants access to adaptive exercise equipment on a weekly schedule, in addition, the opportunity to try out a cognitive health platform called NeuroTracker, which was made possible through partnership with the university of Victoria's Christie Lab. The project was supervised by facilitator Ryan Watson, a recent Kinesiology graduate who was hired by NBIS.



QCEWS/NBIS Project Team

In July, BBF hosted an Open House and opened the doors to the community. Participants, members of the public and key stakeholders, including the Mayor and various councillors from the Town of Qualicum Beach, showed up in support. An article was published in the local PQB Newspaper.

'BrainBodyFitness' pilot project established

MICHAEL BRIONES
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A BrainBodyFitness pilot project has been established at the Qualicum Commons to help residents and those from the surrounding areas improve their well-being.

The Qualicum Community Education and Wellness Society (QCEWS) and Nanaimo Brain Injury Society (NBIS) have joined forces to provide the accessible space that features adaptive exercise equipment that include Active Passive Trainer, an innovative piece of equipment designed to cater to diverse needs.

The primary objective of the BrainBodyFitness pilot project is to establish a sustainable program that enhances the quality of life for participants by offering greater access to adaptive exercise equipment that may not have been previously available in our community.

Since Jim's Gym closed due to COVID-19 more than two years ago, there has been a lack of training facilities for people with special needs. The new space, located at 744 Princeton St., that was unveiled in July will help fill the gap. It's now operating under the supervision of program



Diane LaMotte tries out the equipment at the BrainBodyFitness facility at the Qualicum Commons. (Michael Briones photo)

facilitator, Ryan Watson, who was hired with the help of funding from the NBIS. QCEWS spokesperson and registered clinical counsellor Bill Preston said they are excited to have the training facility open.

Since it's a pilot project, five people

were chosen to be involved with the initial start of the program. After 12 weeks, another five people will be added.

"Now that this is running, the next thing we need to do is find long-term funding to sustain the program," said Preston.

I have married in the past 10 years has been amazing," said LaMotte. "And I think that the program is absolutely vital, not just for me, to anybody that has disabilities because they can't go to a regular gym."

The NBIS is helping with the provision of brain health and wellness for all. One of the programs now available to clients is a cognitive health platform called NeuroTracker, which was made possible through partnership with the University of Victoria's Christie Lab. The technology has shown to improve brain function including attention, memory and processing speed.

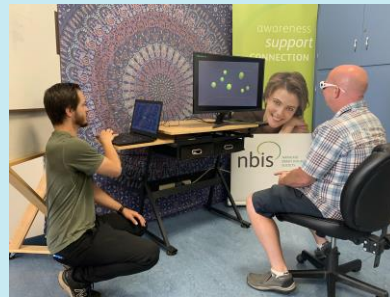
Watson indicated that it has helped people with brain injury, concussion, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Parkinson's and declining cognitive abilities.

"It's not a panacea by any means, but it does show it improves on different populations," said Watson. "And long-term improvements."

For more information on the BrainBodyFitness pilot project, contact rehs@nbis.ca or call 250-268-5766.

If you want to hear from us, send your comments to editor@qcews.com

The pilot project started with 5 participants, which included some of our founding donors, and quickly increased to 15 participants attending weekly.



NeuroTracker

Ryan Watson's final report highlighted the benefit of the pilot for participants. The long waitlist identified unmet needs and provided valuable information to both QCEWS and NBIS regarding the long term feasibility of the accessible gym model.



Labyrinth

QCEWS are continuing to pursue funding opportunities which will guarantee the ongoing operation of the initiative. Darwin and Linda Fraser have stepped up to offer their leadership for the BBF Project.

Early Learning & Childcare Council for Oceanside

Submitted by Carol O'Connor

Early Learning Childcare Council for Oceanside (ELCCO) operates as a Roundtable of QCEWS and is appreciative of the support QCEWS provides to the Council's work.

ELCCO's mission is to work on behalf of families in the Oceanside community to ensure their access to quality and affordable early learning childcare such as the \$10aDay campaign.

On behalf of ELCCO, Area F Councillor Leanne Salter, presented a resolution endorsed by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) which was later approved at the annual Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Conference in September 2023. This resolution asked that municipal funds be provided to local and Indigenous governments and non-profit organizations to coordinate, design and implement a systematic expansion of universal childcare that upholds the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

ELCCO received grant funding from SPARC BC to undertake a community inquiry exploring ways to develop local strategies that will "expand the pipeline" for early childhood educators. This project recognizes that affordable childcare is a key social determinant of healthy communities and is currently ongoing.

ELCCO enjoys the support of the Coalition of Childcare Advocates of BC and Executive Director, Sharon Gregson. Sharon occasionally joins monthly meeting to provide news of provincial campaigns and research that supports local childcare initiatives. ELCCO continues to be an effective changemaker and appreciates the regular participation of local government and school district liaisons, as well as childcare providers and advocates.

Marketing, Communications and Food

Submitted by Dr. Bob Rowe

Dr. Rowe has been working on a controlled-environment greenhouse project. Unfortunately, the grant application in support of this project wasn't successful. Bob has made some modifications to the plan and design to reduce overall costs. The building project is coming along - footings are in, with more concrete work for the walls and roof yet to be completed.

Bob has also been working with a colleague, Ron Garner, on a Wellness for All Project. This will involve a deep dive into factors that detract from health and how to regain it. Bob's contribution is his expert knowledge of the body and mind, and Ron's expertise is in body chemistry. The development project is ongoing and looks promising.

In addition, Bob continues to promote the benefits of QCEWS and has video recorded many of the key moments from this year. He took videos of the opening of Into the Woods Childcare Studio and the open house of BBF. He continues to provide educational content particularly in the area of food security. These videos can be found on the QCEWS YouTube channel @qualicumcommunityeducation.

Social Connections

Submitted by Bernie Brochu

Endeavors of the Social Connections Roundtable this past year included community pop-up conversation nooks, a neighbourhood garage sale, and collaboration with the locally founded I'd Love to Talk Project at Qualicum Beach Family Day.

In the Spring of 2022, QCEWS received an RDN grant to cover the costs of pop-up conversation nooks. In the Summer and Fall of 2022, I hosted pop-ups at the beach in Qualicum Beach and in three other locations around town. The Town of Qualicum Beach staff were supportive, helping find accessible locations to set up conversation nooks. People who stopped by were curious and easy to engage once they were told they could talk about whatever they had on their mind. The most common topic was, not surprisingly, the need for face-to-face communication.

I felt vulnerable setting up the sites, however hosting the conversations was emotionally fulfilling. It heightened both my and the drop-in participants' sense of connection.



The intention behind the neighbourhood garage sale was to make space for community connections and celebrations. Both these objectives were met successfully. The neighbourhood planning committee had over 60 households participate. Many neighbours enjoyed the festival atmosphere.

This year, I also formed collaborative ties with the I'd Love to Talk Project, an initiative led by Parksville resident Sharyn Sadauskas. The purpose of this project is to make interaction easier using a visual signal (a yellow flower or an I'd Love to Talk tent card) that invites conversation and connection.

At Qualicum Beach Family Day in May 2023, we used I'd Love to Talk signage and a relaxed seating area to encourage people to drop by and join conversations. We encountered a steady flow of individuals and families chatting with the hosts during the day.



I'd love to talk table

This Roundtable has focused on using low key social cues to enhance an atmosphere of care and belonging between community members. Our positive experience in this regard is confirmed by others who are using safe receptive spaces to enhance a sense of well being in neighbourhoods and even large urban centres. The ongoing purpose of this roundtable is to initiate these kinds of opportunities for residents and visitors.

Into the Woods

Submitted by **Carol O'Connor**

Into the Woods Early Learning Childcare Society, a Sidetable of QCEWS, has been successful due to dedication from QCEWS members.

Into the Woods Early Learning Childcare Society was awarded the operator contract by the Town of Qualicum Beach and has maintained a collaborative relationship to ensure quality affordable childcare is accessible to the Qualicum Beach community.

We would like to thank Jean Young, Town of Qualicum Beach Councillor and Into the Woods Childcare liaison for her support.

The Board of Directors established a budget that provided for a competitive wage and benefit package and increased staffing levels.



Outdoor & indoor play areas

The Society recruited Erin Guthrie as Executive Director. She obtained our childcare license and hired the staff required for the Infant Toddler program (12 spaces) and the Preschool program (22 spaces).

Into the Woods Society hosted an official Grand Opening in July 2023, marking the first month of a gradual opening for the childcare studio.



Grand opening day

The Society acknowledges the board secretary, Jenn Dextras Tyler, for the extra work she provided during the start-up and the completion of the application for charitable status.

At a strategic planning session held in September the Board of Directors further defined the Society's mission.

Our mission is to nurture a deep connection with nature for children and families. We offer programs that facilitate child-led explorations guided by their natural process of inquiry.

The Board of Directors will hold the Annual General Meeting in December with hopes of recruiting new board members.

Indigenous Relations

Submitted by **Lydia Blackwell**

Lydia has been working on her Master's thesis which will complete her Master's Program in Governance and Entrepreneurship in Northern and Indigenous Areas from the University of Saskatchewan. Her thesis was focused on the Qualicum First Nation and their food sovereignty programs. Lydia's new knowledge and experience in this area will help guide QCEWS in future food related ideas and initiatives in the community.

2022-2023