



AGE FRIENDLY Manitoba

Communities committed to healthy, active aging

Mission: To facilitate healthy aging by providing leadership and encouraging collaboration in creating age-friendly places (communities) that optimize the ability of all older Manitobans to do the things they feel are important.

BEING ACTIVE AND ENGAGED IN OUR MANITOBA WINTERS

A normal Manitoba winter causes some people to hibernate! Many socialize indoors or participate in indoor and outdoor sports, while others escape to warmer climates. Current COVID restrictions demand creative thinking to maintain social engagement and activity.

Many group fitness and physical activity leaders are delivering classes virtually so that people can continue their program at home. If not already available, the Recreation Director could help set up a virtual class. The Manitoba Fitness Council supports and trains its members throughout the province to use this method. Individuals wanting to start an exercise program can access programs on line. If people need help with the technology or referral to an online leader, contact the Manitoba Fitness Council at **204-235-1245** or **info@manitobafitnesscouncil.ca**.

Communities are creating ways to help all residents stay connected. Though texts and emails are wonderfully convenient and can be sent at any hour of the day, the Harrison Park Age-Friendly Initiative has not forgotten the importance of the phone! They launched a telephone tree to keep folks talking to one another, knowing the sound of a voice can be a salve to someone spending hours alone or missing their regular routines and social networks. Contact Doreen Stapleton at **gdstaple@mymts.net** to see how it is they make it happen.

These methods are helpful but don't forget the power of the written word and the joy of receiving a letter in a mail box. Consider how a pen pal group might work in the community or between communities.

Pine Dock Age-Friendly Committee is connecting with residents through delivering self-care bags. They also have an outdoor decorated community Christmas tree and a Pine Dock Community Board. Residents are invited to drop off a Christmas card to the community which will be laminated and displayed on the Board. Contact Colleen Weibel at **january8@mymts.net** or **204-276-2289** for information on their initiatives.

Many factors are creating increased stress on individuals and families. The Manitoba Farm, Rural and Northern Support Services offers free confidential and non-judgmental telephone and on-line counseling to anyone who lives on a farm or in a rural or northern community.

This Clinic Community Health Program is available 24/7 by telephone at **1-866-367-3276** or **info@supportline.ca**.

A Family Counselor is also available Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. in Brandon at 217 - 10th Street. Telephone **204-571-4182**.

Have a safe, peaceful and age-friendly holiday season and encourage kindness among all of our residents.

Literature Review - Social Isolation

Social isolation and loneliness have long been issues negatively impacting on good health even prior to the current pandemic impacts.

Previous studies have indicated that social isolation is a significant risk factor for developing coronary heart disease and stroke and contributes to a significant increase in premature mortality. It may be as impactful as smoking and obesity. Further, social isolation due to poor social engagement and lack of a social network is associated with an approximately 50% increased risk of developing dementia. With Covid -19 closures, potential barriers have been created

that reduces access to essentials including groceries, medical supplies, transportation as well as almost eliminating access to activities such as physical activity, volunteering and social events. These barriers have created higher degrees of loneliness and social isolation, thereby exacerbating the health impact.

A review of the literature by Queens University identified 5 interventions to ascertain



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impact on loneliness and social isolation; those 5 interventions included, social interaction activity, technological opportunities, educational, physical activity, as well as arts and cultural activity.

The review outlines several types of specific activities within each of these interventional categories....

An overall conclusion was that while these interventions have improved social connection, there is no significant difference between group activity or the one on one intervention. They did report that Covid-19 has exacerbated social isolation

and loneliness in three areas:

- use of technology (less people actually accessing available technology);
- ageism (people adopting negative stereotypes related to ageing and the concept of "mattering" or a sense of purpose);
- and bereavement, (limited abilities/ places to grieve loss).

Access to the review can be obtained here: <https://sagelink.ca/wpcontent/uploads/2020/10/Webinar-Social-Isolation-and-COVID-19.pdf>



COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT: RUSSELL— BINSCARTH

Russell joined the Age-Friendly Manitoba Initiative in 2012. Their Community Consultation Summary highlighted beautiful surroundings, supports to seniors, cooperation between the Municipality and Chamber of Commerce and strong volunteerism. Amalgamation with the RM of Russell and Village of Binscarth occurred in 2015

"Nana" (Marg Fraser) has had wonderful experiences using the Headingly toboggan slide with her grandchildren and a personal dream of hers is for people of all ages to enjoy similar family fun outdoors in both Binscarth and Russell! She chairs a diverse committee that developed a building plan and comprehensive fund-raising strategy, procured grants, led events and secured donations that flow through the Living Legacy Community Foundation to generate charitable receipts. They also have great cooperation from the local communities through gifts-in-kind and donated services.

Initially they consulted with the City of Winnipeg Parks which has similar slide structures and then contracted Edifice Engineering for designing the stamped blueprints. The Binscarth site is adjacent to existing recreation facilities and is very close to being ready to start the build for use this winter. The Russell slide will follow as site plans and funding are secured, hopefully in the fall of 2021! The slides, similar to other facilities, will be covered under the Municipal insurance plan (with annual replacement insurance paid by the Committee).

The community has been extremely supportive and eagerly awaits the addition of this age-friendly intergenerational recreation facility. A resident has pledged to celebrate her 89th birthday by going for a ride down the slide!

Marg would be pleased to share their experience with any community considering a similar project. marg_fraser@hotmail.com

Team Member HIGHLIGHT



MARY MITCHELL

Mary Mitchell lives in Winnipeg but maintains strong connections to rural Manitoba. She retired as Acting Director of the Recreation and Regional Services Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Tourism. She has always valued the contributions of the voluntary sector both as a volunteer for numerous organizations and as a professional in community development work. Mary feels

privileged to be part of the Age-Friendly Manitoba Resource Team working with communities which encourage active aging and an environment where everyone can participate in opportunities which provide an enhanced quality of life.



CONTACT OUR CONSULTANTS

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