



**ELLA**  
**Annual General Meeting**  
**June 19, 2020**

## EDMONTON LIFELONG LEARNERS ASSOCIATION (ELLA)

**Vision:** *A dynamic community of lifelong learners (adults aged 50 and older) who actively participate in learning*

**Mission:** *To offer adults, in partnership with the Faculty of Extension, University of Alberta, high quality and affordable non-credit educational courses, seminars and workshops which stimulate both mind and body by exploring liberal arts, fine arts, sciences, humanities and physical activities.*

**Values:** *We believe:*

- *that maintaining intellectual and physical health by the continued acquisition of learning contributes to an improved quality of life for older adults*
- *that the cost of attending ELLA programs must be maintained at a level that encourages the participation of retired individuals on a fixed income*
- *in providing a non-threatening and physically accessible environment for ELLA programming*
- *in the engagement and involvement of older adults in the planning, design and administration of their own programs*
- *that volunteers are our most valuable resource*
- *that a volunteer led, not for profit organization independent from and in partnership with the University of Alberta is an excellent vehicle for providing ELLA programming*
- *that an equitable relationship with the University of Alberta will enhance the university status in the community*

### Essence of ELLA

- *ELLA is passionate about the opportunity to create the learning we want in a community of lifelong learners.*
- *ELLA is best at providing quality well-rounded learning in a welcoming, warm and fun environment.*
- *ELLA's resource engine is our dedicated, committed volunteers and leadership working in partnership with the university to deliver a unique ELLA form of learning.*

### Member CODE OF CONDUCT

*ELLA is committed to providing an environment that is free of discrimination and harassment, and is supportive of the productivity, dignity, and self-esteem of every employee, volunteer, guest and participant in ELLA.*

*ELLA members, employees, volunteers and guests are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the Code of Conduct, which includes respectful behavior and the timely payment of any fees. Being in arrears to ELLA financially is grounds for removal from the membership and being barred from attending Spring Session.*

*If a member should conduct themselves in a manner not in accordance with the Code of Conduct they should be reported to a Board member who will take the matter to the Board of Directors for investigation. Failure to abide by the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action which may range from a simple discussion, to a warning, to revocation of membership including suspension from attending Spring Session.*

# AGENDA

## ELLA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### 10 am, Monday, JUNE 29, 2020 by Zoom

1. Call to Order, Shirley Forrest
2. Adoption of the Agenda – Motion
3. Approval of the 2019 AGM Minutes (Thursday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2019) **Attached** – Motion
4. Introduction of 2019-2020 Board Members, Shirley Forrest
  - a. Administration – Linda Riopelle
  - b. President Elect/ Board Recruitment & Development – Gertie Dean
  - c. Finance – Debbi Wallace
  - d. Fund Raising – Cindy Hanson
  - e. Information Technology – Shyamala Nagendran
  - f. Marketing – Tamara Baltzan
  - g. Member-at-Large – Linda Mattern
  - h. President Elect – Gertie Dean
  - i. Program Development – Ruth Collins-Nakai/Walter Archer
  - j. Program Implementation – Diane Mirth/Gwen Harris
  - k. Secretary – Mary Anne Yurkiw
  - l. Volunteer Recruitment – Vivian Mattia
5. Thank you to Retiring Members
6. Report of Officers
  - a. President, Shirley Forrest – Motion, Rescind the current By-laws  
-Motion, Adopt the new By-laws **Attached**
  - b. Treasurer, Debbi Wallace – Audited Financial Statements October 1, 2018 to September 30, 2019 **Attached** - Motion
  - c. Appointment of the Auditors – Motion
7. 2020/2021 Board of Directors – Motion, Approval of the Slate of Board of Directors
  - a. President – Gertie Dean
  - b. Administration – Vacant
  - c. President Elect/ Board Recruitment & Development – Vivian Mattia
  - d. Finance – Debbi Wallace
  - e. Fund Raising – Cindy Hanson

- f. Information Technology – Shyamala Nagendran
  - g. Marketing – Tamara Baltzan
  - h. Past President – Shirley Forrest
  - i. President Elect – Vivian Mattia
  - j. Program Development – Walter Archer/Ruth Collins Nakai
  - k. Program Implementation – Diane Mirth/Gwen Harris
  - l. Secretary – Linda Mattern
  - m. Volunteer Recruitment – Vacant
8. Closing Remarks, Shirley Forrest – Motion for Adjournment

*AGM Reports can be viewed on line at [my-ella.com](http://my-ella.com)*

# 2020 REPORTS

## President's Report

### Shirley Forrest, President

These days, we often hear the phrase “in these turbulent times”. That phrase brings new meaning to our ELLA membership. Our personal lives and those around us have been impacted by COVID-19, our travel plans put into question, our economy contracted, and our freedoms restricted. We have had to learn to think differently and be more creative as to how we go about our lives. We have also learned to be grateful for what we have. In our 19 years of operation as ELLA and from 1976 to 2001 when Spring Session was completely under the auspicious of the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta, we have never had such a year. This year the ELLA AGM will be held via Zoom and we hope that as many of you as possible will attend from the safety of your own homes.

ELLA started out the new year on great terms. Last year we had a remarkably successful Spring Session with almost 670 students in attendance and we hit a landmark on our membership with over 1000 members. In June of last year your Board met and optimistically began planning for Spring Session 2020. All was going very well until March of this year when our planning came to a full stop with the cancellation of Spring Session 2020. We were all very disappointed; our volunteers who had worked so hard to bring the membership another outstanding lineup of courses; our members who look forward taking courses and renewing friendships and our instructors who invested their time and talents into developing the courses that would appeal to our students. The Faculty of Extension was also disappointed as they value our program. However, there was nothing that could be done. For the health and safety of everyone Spring Session 2020 was cancelled. As some of you may know, we maintain a small ELLA office at the Faculty of Extension in Enterprise Square. That also had to be closed for the safety of our volunteers and will not reopen in the foreseeable future

After our Spring Session was cancelled, a group of Board members banded together to set up the online courses. Instructors came forward and committed to delivering the courses and there was a steep learning curve to learn the wonders of Zoom. Board members and volunteers came together to develop manual processes for registration and finances and our online pilot was on. The feedback has been positive on the delivery of the courses and I would like personally to thank all those who contributed to the success of the program. Your Board of Directors will be meeting in June to review the pilot, looking at what went well and what we could do differently. For instance, we know that the registration and financial functions need to be automated. It is just too much work for volunteers to handle that function. Thank you to the ELLA members who participated in the online survey regarding the online courses. Your input will certainly be taken into consideration during the discussion.

Our ELLA by-laws were not in line with the size and operations of the Association. This year we struck a committee of five members and Board members to review them. The new by-laws are ready for the approval of the membership at the AGM. We also developed a new ELLA Code of Conduct for our membership which reflects the ELLA values of respect and inclusion.

It was not all unsettling news this year at ELLA. Our Board Chair for Fund Raising applied for a Citizens Services Social Development Grant and we are going to receive a grant from the City of Edmonton in the amount of \$16,500. Your Board of Directors will discuss just where the Grant should be applied at our September 2020 Board meeting

This year our membership slipped slightly and not surprisingly as COVID-19 loomed over us during the early months of 2020. We have 967 members this year.

We have two members of our Board of Directors who are retiring from the Board this year. Linda Riopelle has been our Administration Chair for three years and has done a superb job. Linda never turned down a request and always found a way to make ELLA's administration shine. She will be missed by the members, the Board and especially her Committee members. Mary Anne Yurkiw served as a Director-at-Large and Chair of the Evaluations Subcommittee in her first year on the board, was the co-chair in Program Development for one year and went on to take on the role of Board Secretary for the past year, even though she was living in Ontario part of the year. Thank you, Mary Anne, you are a real trooper. Both these Board members will be missed and we thank you for your service.

Sadly, this year we had a Board member pass away. In February, our friend and Social Committee Chair, David Winfield, died suddenly. David served on the ELLA Board of Directors for five years will always be remembered for his big smile and cheerful laugh. He loved being Social Chair and always managed to find a way to host a great party.

So where do we go from here? All the uncertainty of the pass few months is probably not going away soon. However, your ELLA Board of Directors will plan for the best and be prepared for the worst. Flexibility is the word of the day. I would like to thank the University of Alberta and especially the Faculty of Extension for their commitment and support of ELLA.

I would also like to personally thank the ELLA membership, and especially the ELLA Board of Directors, for all of your support and, as I retire from the position of President after two terms, I will say, it has been quite a ride! I hope to see you at Spring Session 2021 at the University of Alberta (COVID19 willing) where we will celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ELLA.

## **Administration Committee Report**

### **Linda Riopelle**

This is the end of my 3 year commitment as Chair of the Administration Committee. It has been a wonderful experience working with a dedicated and committed group of volunteers that work

very hard in the office to answer your phone calls and emails, handle the mail out of newsletters and program guides, process membership and registration forms, and set up and administer Eventbrite registration for Spring Session.

Registration was open for 4 days before Spring Session was cancelled on March 13, 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At that time we had 503 members registered to attend, 458 of those were processed on the first day of registration. Members registered from Edmonton and all corners of the world.

The spring of 2020 was a time of transition when we went from the cancelling of Spring Session on campus to an online pilot project. When the Board decided to do an online pilot project for Spring Session we transitioned from Eventbrite to a manual registration process using email, spreadsheets and e-transfers. This process proved to be labour intensive but ultimately successful. 228 members registered for the online program which offered 10 courses during the same 3 week period that had been scheduled for Spring Session.

When the Board made the decision to cancel Spring Session we had 936 members. This number increased to 973 after the pilot project was announced. The membership system was closed during the first part of May but is now re-opened and members can now purchase their membership for the 2020/2021 membership year which runs from October 1st to September 30th. Membership in ELLA requires that all members abide by the Member Code of Conduct which can be found on our website under the “About Us” tab and the “Membership” tab.

The ELLA office remains closed for the summer and at this time we are not sure when the re-opening of Enterprise Square will be.

I would like to thank the wonderful group of volunteers on the Administration Committee that I have had the honour of working with over the past 3 years.

## **Board Recruitment & Development Committee**

### **Gertie Dean, President Elect**

This Committee is in its second year and works with information from the Volunteer Recruitment Committee to identify ELLA members who would be interested in serving on the ELLA Board. After contacting candidates, we meet in person to determine areas of interest and best fit on the Board.

Currently the Committee is seeking an individual interested in filling the *Administration Chair* position.

The Committee has also helped identify members to sit on the task group to update the ELLA Bylaws and identify a facilitator for our upcoming Strategic Planning Session.

Thank you to Committee Members Vivian Mattia, Shirley Forrest, Dennis Foth and Agnes Fisher.

## Finance Report

**Debbi Wallace, Treasurer**

This is my first report as Treasurer. The following are highlights from the 2018-2019 fiscal year:

- Membership and registration both increased substantially, approximately 8%.
- We budgeted a net income of \$2,461 and the actual net income was \$26,544.
- Actual revenue was approximately \$10,000 higher than budget, expenses were approximately \$14,000 lower, resulting in approximately \$24,000 higher income than budgeted.

The picture for 2019-2020 is different than anticipated.

- Spring Session was cancelled.
- We were able to refund the full amount of the registration fee because Eventbrite did not charge for the usual credit card processing fee.
- Administrative and marketing costs were incurred but none of the program delivery costs.
- The increase in membership fees this year was earmarked for additional costs, particularly related to administration and IT services. We recognized that there were a number of tasks within ELLA that we struggled to have members do, and that we would need to start paying for some of these services. At this point in the fiscal year, we have paid for IT services but not administrative services.
- As of the AGM date, ELLA has revenues in excess of expenditures of approximately \$39,000, which includes the \$16,500 grant from the City of Edmonton. Net assets are approximately \$210,000 represented mainly by funds in the bank, of which approximately \$195,000 is invested in short-term Guaranteed Investment Certificates.

I would like to thank the audit team of Hoanie Yong and Janice Friesen for conducting the audit of the 2018/19 financial statements, and for graciously agreeing to conduct the audit for 2019/20, subject to the motion for the members to approve this.

I would also like to thank the former Treasurer, Shirley Zylstra, for her assistance in training me for this responsibility, and for the effort she took in creating manuals with instructions for future Treasurers.



## Information Technology Committee

### Shyamala Nagendran

The IT team expected to have a busy year 2019-2020; as indicated at the 2019 AGM, we strategized a path forward to re-engineer the existing system to be robust and accommodate ELLA's significant growth, re-design the Web and streamline operations. Keeping in mind the day-to-day operational needs had to be supported at all times.

Our goal was to prioritize and get started on our IT vision. Please note, in general, re-vamping any system is complex and we were encountering our share of bumps and glitches as we progressed. Needless to say, the IT team had their work cut-out; armed with a "To Do" list we set out to accomplish the following:

#### *Refine IT*

- Re-engineer the system (back-bone) to increase efficiency and functionality --- work in progress
- Clean up Data Base -- accomplished
- Enhance security features and check points -- accomplished
- Member 'code of conduct' was added to the Web page -- accomplished
- Transition to G-Suite --- work in progress

#### *Re-Design Web*

- Crisp and easy to navigate
- Eliminate confusion with "Login" and "Log on" access
- Increase social media presence
- Under the guidance of the IT team a third party vendor has been hired to start the process

Thank you to the dedicated IT team Carol Vaage, Shirley Zylstra and Jean Posyniak for their outstanding work in supporting our IT platform, and the ELLA Administrative Chair, Linda Riopelle for her dedicated commitment, and her team of volunteers who spent hundreds of hours throughout the year in assisting with registration and course enrolments.

Then came COVID -19, turning our world upside down.

Rest assured IT will soldier on!!

## Marketing Committee

Tamara Baltzan

The Marketing Committee continues to increase awareness of the ELLA Association and the high caliber educational opportunities that we provide that are designed to reach our target audience (adults 50 years Plus in the Edmonton area).

*Goals:* To increase awareness of ELLA, ELLA Spring Session, to ELLA's pilot online learning session and to increase attendance at our 2020 Spring Session.

### *Key messages:*

- Education is an essential lifetime pursuit
- Education in Spring Session and the online pilot provides an excellent opportunity to continue learning
- Spring Session provides excellent value
- ELLA provides relevant, high quality programming

### *Objectives Measures*

Increase Awareness of ELLA and its programming	Increase the traffic to ELLA's Facebook page and website
Increase Enrollment at Spring Session 2020	To increase attendance over 2019 by 10%
Evaluate the effectiveness of our marketing tools	Ask new registrants where they heard about ELLA and modify our Marketing Plan based on this information.

*2020 Marketing Initiatives* ELLA and Spring Session were promoted by the following organizations and in print and digital publications:

- Sage Guide, Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council Directory and newsletters, Alberta Seniors Retirement Guide, New Trail Magazine, ELLA Newsletters, ELLA Spring Program Guide, Edmonton and area libraries, over 80 groups and organizations who provide seniors programming in the Edmonton area and over 40 Community League Newsletters.
- ELLA Website - <https://www.my-ella.com>
- Print: posters, Spring Session Program Guide
- Partnerships – U of A Extension, various senior groups and other organizations
- Paid advertising
- Internal – email blasts and newsletters to past and current membership

Thank you to all of the Marketing Committee volunteers who contributed their time, skills and talents. Special appreciation to Carol Vaage and to Rusti Lehay for editing and formatting the Spring Program Guide and our ELLA Office volunteers for distribution of the association newsletters and program guides!

### **Program Development Committee (PDC)**

#### **Ruth Collins-Nakai & Walter Archer**

The 40+ members of the Program Development Committee began their work of planning the 2020 Spring Session soon after the 2019 session ended. They solicited proposals from many potential instructors, and by September they had come up with a list of 57 courses to be offered, six of which were double-period Art Instruction courses. The PDC made good use of the evaluation forms submitted by ELLA members who took courses in 2019, as well as the many suggestions for new courses also made by members during the 2019 session. The structure of the planned program (distribution of courses across broad subject categories) was similar to that of the 2019 session, but its size was slightly larger, by four additional courses.

However, this plan, like other well-laid plans of mice and men, was upended by the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic and the “social distancing” measures that had to be taken to combat it. A few days after registration opened in March, the regular Spring Session had to be cancelled.

The PDC, aided and supported by the Board and members of other committees, was able to salvage part of the planned program by offering ten of the 57 planned courses online using the Zoom video-conferencing software platform. A full evaluation of these online offerings was done by the Evaluation Subcommittee of the PDC, and is enclosed separately. Overall, the on-line offerings were highly rated by attendees.

The PDC volunteers contributed many hours of volunteer time to plan, identify, detail and execute the 2020 offerings of ELLA. We are grateful for their hard work.

Here we will state only that this pilot project was very successful. However, it could not have been done without the hard work of non-PDC members of the board. In particular, we would like to thank Diane Mirth (Chair of the Program Implementation Committee), who worked closely with us to get the courses launched and supported while they were in progress. Also, Linda Riopelle and Debbi Wallace did a great deal of work “behind the scenes” in getting people registered in the courses and their payments accepted. And we would very much to thank all the members of the various subcommittees of the PDC who did the hard work of getting the program organized in the first place.

## **Program Development Committee: Evaluation Sub-Committee**

### **Vivian Mattia**

The 2020 Spring Session was cancelled due to the COVID 19 pandemic. In support of continuous learning for ELLA members, a pilot online program was launched to deliver ten courses.

The annual ELLA evaluation survey was rewritten to include questions regarding the delivery of the pilot program and future interest in online courses. An e-mail invitation was sent to 925 ELLA members on May 12, 2020 and a response rate of 551 members or 60% was received.

228 members or 23% registered for the online courses. 98% of online learners rated the courses as very good or good and 98% indicated they received value for the courses.

One question asked whether members would be interested in taking an online course if it were an option in the future. 526 responses were received with 81% indicating interest in future online courses, if available. A total of 19% responded with no, they were not interested in online courses.

What we learned:

- Survey respondents recognized and appreciated the work of ELLA volunteers in delivering the online courses under the restrictions of COVID 19.
- Good value was received for the courses and general endorsement of virtual courses was expressed.
- Respondents indicated a high preference for in-person courses but recognized the convenience of virtual learning.
- Technical and logistical problems were identified; however, issues were resolved quickly through the efforts of a small number of volunteers.
- Further discussion and analysis of the results will be undertaken by the ELLA Board of Directors in the coming months.

## **Program Implementation Committee**

### **Gwen Harris & Diane Mirth**

The Program Implementation Committee is charged with the management of eight areas that keep the delivery of ELLA Spring Session running smoothly. These functions include: Room booking, Recruitment and management of Ambassadors and Facilitators, Handout management, Registration table organization, AV support, and Noon-hour live streaming, plus the Hiring and management of a Spring Session Assistant at the Information Table.

This year has been unprecedented from a number of perspectives. The COVID 19 pandemic resulted in the cancellation of ELLA 2020 in its normal format. Hence, just as the PIC was gearing up to put all of these elements in place, and was in the process of recruiting volunteers,

the ELLA 2020 session was cancelled. Thank you to Gwen Harris and Doug Davey for your recruitment endeavours.

While most of our committee members were just beginning to get measures in place for the various functions, our Room Booking person, Elisebeth Checkal, had spent tireless hours over the course of the Fall and early Winter negotiating space and confirming bookings. She was almost completed when the session was cancelled. A very big thanks Elisebeth.

A huge thank you to the committee members who were poised ready to swing into action to make the session a success: Angel Crowder, Rick Leech, Tom Sakulak, Carol Pawlenchuk, and Carla Spinola.

### **Volunteer Recruitment Committee**

#### **Vivian Mattia**

The Volunteer Recruitment Committee is responsible for recruiting and matching volunteers for the various ELLA committees. The past year was challenging as the Chair first needed to re-build the Committee and then recruit for specific positions.

With the increased use of technology, volunteers with IT skills are in high demand. In addition, various Board positions became available and success from advertising enabled recruitment for several positions.

Many volunteers are required to deliver the ELLA program. In 2019, ELLA had over 111 volunteers working on the Board and serving on seven committees. In addition, forty-three Facilitators and Ambassadors signed up to assist with Spring Session but with the cancellation due to COVID 19, we were unable to utilize their assistance.

A consequence of COVID was the lost opportunity to hold a volunteer fair or recruit in-person. In 2019, ELLA received 113 expressions of interest from volunteers but only 45 in 2020. The Volunteer Recruitment Committee is following up with the 45 volunteers, however, you should expect to see more calls for volunteers in our ELLA Newsletter over the next several months as we plan for ELLA 2021.

ELLA is a volunteer-led, not for profit organization that is committed to the continued acquisition of learning. We cannot deliver the ELLA program without the assistance of our volunteers. We especially want to recognize the volunteers who supported the planning and delivery of the 2020 Online Spring Session. Your commitment and dedication ensured success.