

President's Report

The pandemic has not dampened CALL members' enthusiasm for learning nor the willingness of many amazing volunteers to keep our programs operating. We can be proud of our ability to work together to respond to the challenges we faced in a time of COVID 19. CALL has continued to provide engaging programming at a time when many lifelong learning organizations needed to seriously pare down or suspend their operations. It's time to reflect on what we have accomplished, to celebrate the vibrancy of our organization and to acknowledge the courage of many to make needed changes and to try new things.

- Most of us had never heard of Zoom until over 50 Interest Groups turned to this technology to support virtual meetings. Staying connected through Zoom was only possible due to the contributions of those working behind the scenes. The Zoom team stepped up to take on a task with a very steep learning curve and mentored us all as we struggled to remember to turn on our mikes and to figure out how to share our screens. Every CALL event since the beginning of the pandemic required hours of preparation, hard work, and a willingness to try. Through the efforts of the team, we have added Zoom webinars and panel discussions to regular Zoom meetings and have been able to offer features such as polls and Q&A sessions. All of which have enhanced our programming and viewing experiences.
- The Communications Committee worked hard to keep us informed through the CALL newsletter – a bi-weekly publication showing up in our inbox. Through the newsletter we received regular updates on the programs and people that kept CALL going. We also recently revived the CALL's social media presence. Be sure to check our Facebook and Twitter accounts for updates on CALL programming.
- A small group of volunteers, with the support of the CALL Web Team, took on the task of refreshing the CALL web site. Our home page is now more user-friendly and informative. The site has become an essential tool for program registration and delivery.
- What a year for programming! While Science and the Environment and Treks and Travels both had highly successful seasons, the pandemic did have a serious impact on other Speaker Series. But, out of the ashes have arisen some wonderful new and innovative programs. Because of the hard work and enthusiasm of those on the Programming Committee and many program volunteers we were able to experiment with individual speaker events, offer lecture series on timely topics, and deliver a hugely successful conference on Fake News – The Future of Democracy. Attendance has been strong and feedback from attendees gratifying.
- Even under the rules of social isolation, two CALL Interest Groups were able to collaborate to write, illustrate and publish A Winter's Song.
- The Ukefest Committee transitioned the festival into a series of workshops using innovative technologies to offer exceptional teaching opportunities to our Ukulele loving members. Well done Ukefest team!
- Interest groups are the backbone of our organization and very few chose to suspend meeting once we moved to Zoom. In fact, some new groups were established:

Geocaching, Massey Lectures, Coffee by Zoom, Calling ALL Poets, CALL to Lunchbox Theatre and Writing Fiction were all added post COVID.

- Over 135 members joined the Tuesday Walkers which evolved into a program of smaller groups travelling throughout the city – even in the cold Calgary winter. They put the “active” into active learning. Adhering to public health guidelines the Walkers were one of the few CALL groups which met in-person this year. Good news: no COVID cases were traced to CALL weekly walks.
- CALL to the Cinema was handed a game changing blow when Calgary theatres were closed. However, the group quickly pivoted and continues to meet by using Netflix as a source of films.
- Zoom has introduced us to a whole new way of connecting with each other and has enabled us to avoid traffic, parking, and weather concerns. The Science and the Environment Speaker Series had record attendance for all its events; the interest group, Not So Common Law, previously limited to the capacity of Room 310 at cSpace, was made available to all interested CALL members. Zoom has earned a role in our programming approaches. We will be exploring ways to improve program accessibility using this and other technologies in the future.
- For the first time CALL reached out beyond the borders of Alberta to join with other lifelong learning groups in Canada. Two groups were formed in collaboration with the McGill University group, Vive la Difference – NON and Prairie Quebec Novels. A third interprovincial group began this fall when lifelong learning groups in BC, Quebec and Ontario join us to discuss Don Smith’s relevant and timely publication Seen but Not Seen.
- During COVID a new type of CALL offering emerged: the study program. These time limited series of up to 8 sessions have included: A Touch of Islam, Equalization 101, Religions of the World, Money Sense and Compassion: A Global History of Social Policy.
- The new “CALL a Buddy” program allows members to find out if there are others who would join a new interest group.
- CALL is also actively investigating the possibilities of combination in-person and online events once meeting in person is appropriate.
- While we knew we would see a fall-off in membership from the record highs experienced in 2019, many continued with us and clearly took full advantage of what CALL has to offer. Along with those who stayed, others joined for the first time so membership, while not reaching past levels, did continue to grow and we expect an influx of new members once we emerge from COVID times.
- The CALL BOD conducted a strategic planning session over ZOOM under the guidance of Karen Sharp. The resulting plan focused on the areas of resumption to in person events, programming, growth and volunteer development.
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Nobody knows the future – but we will continue to try out new programming ideas and to explore how technology can help us reach our goals. We will be meeting in-person again soon. In many ways post-pandemic CALL will probably feel a lot like pre-pandemic CALL- older

Calgarians staying active, developing strong friendship bonds and pursuing new knowledge with other active learners. Heartfelt thanks are extended to all the volunteers whose dedication and commitment have carried us through these challenging times. Special thanks to those who have provided leadership during this time of challenge and change – to Board members, Committee members, Coordinators and Facilitators, the Web Team and ZOOM Help a much deserved thank you. It has been a year of challenges but also a year to celebrate the accomplishments of us all. It has been my privilege to serve as CALL president.

Lorraine Smith

(Thanks to Barbara Decker Pierce and Leslie Dort for their help with this report)