

CALL: YEAR THREE, A SHORT HISTORY

By Don Smith, Past President

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The beginnings of the **CALGARY ASSOCIATION OF LIFELONG LEARNING (CALL)** date back to the summer of 2010. Arlene and Bob Stamp, Don Smith, Carol Gerein, and Barbara Grant, first developed the idea. The initiating group wanted to establish a member-led lifelong learning non-profit organization in our city, one dedicated to the needs of older adults with a passion for learning and staying actively involved in the community.

Our initial meetings were inspired by the examples set by the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Santa Cruz, and by the McGill Community for Lifelong Learning at McGill University in Montreal. In Santa Cruz, a city of just 50,000, Arlene and Bob reported that they participated in the winter months in an active group of approximately 700 seniors who sponsored multiple interest groups, short courses and general meetings with speakers. Don shared what he had learned of the very active McGill Community for Lifelong Learning in Montreal with roughly 800 members.

Our first meeting that Fall generated the more detailed work by a larger, very enthusiastic Steering Committee, which met in a room generously provided by the Wild Rose United Church. The Steering Committee included the five founding members now joined by Pat Hogan, Gail Kingwell, Linda McFarlane, Anne Petrie, Tamara Seiler, Ona Stonkus, and Murray Vines. The committee met monthly, alternating between Wild Rose Church and the homes of Steering Committee members. Much work followed over the winter of 2010-2011, with the Steering Committee members all actively participating.

We made contact with the two universities, the Calgary Public Library and other institutions of learning in the city, informing them of what we were attempting to do, in what became known as the **CALGARY ASSOCIATION OF LIFELONG LEARNING**—thanks so much Anne for suggesting the name with the wonderful acronym, **CALL**! Barbara organized an incredible fundraiser at the Rosedale Community Association. We also thank those individuals who gave initial donations to get **CALL** started, and in particular our Charter Members who each made a donation of \$100.

The Steering Committee established our first basic structures, and under its leadership, CALL was incorporated as a registered non-profit organization on February 8, 2011. CALL launched its first programming in the Fall of 2011. Shortly thereafter, the Rosedale Community Association generously offered us a home.

We started modestly, unaware of the response we would obtain. What a response! By the time of our first well-attended AGM on November 8, 2011, all of our learning groups were full to overflowing, our lecture series were attracting substantial audiences, and our biggest challenge was trying to figure out how on earth we could mount enough programs to meet the needs of our growing membership. That winter our first President Tamara Seiler and the Executive and Board for 2011/2012 successfully restructured how CALL creates and delivers its programs. Under our second President Don Smith and the Executive and the Board for 2012/2013, CALL was the beneficiary of these changes, which allowed our members to participate in approximately thirty-five interest groups in our Fall and Winter sessions. The number of programs we offer has continued to increase dramatically.

One of the most remarkable developments in CALL's third year of offering programs has been its growth to 400 members. Our third President, Pat Roome and the Executive and Board for 2013/14 have spearheaded our expansion beyond our "home" at the Rosedale Community Association to among other locations, the Marda Loop Community Association and St. Stephen's Church. For our members, we offer many choices of programs: a monthly Monday afternoon CALL Cafe with topical speakers who attract large audiences; popular monthly Wednesday evening "Treks and Travels" presentations; interest group discussions focused on current affairs, Canadian authors, or Walrus magazine, to name a few; interest groups focused on activities like viewing and discussing films, attending theatre or philharmonic performances, playing bridge or scrabble, monthly walking tours, bird watching, creating art with peers or learning how to meditate; other interest groups focused on research and study on topics like Canada and World War I, or alternative housing for seniors; and finally special lectures such as "Oil Sands 101" offered in winter 2013.

Since its inception, CALL has attracted incredible people who have generously shared their experience as leaders and participants in our interest groups, and willingly volunteered in a variety of other ways. With enthusiasm we are currently planning **CALL's YEAR FOUR.**