

# Older and Wiser: Celebrate Seniors Week by honouring their many contributions

Seniors are a diverse group who contribute to our community in many ways

Margaret Coates

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Volunteer Judy Crooks serves up a meal at the West Vancouver Seniors Activity Centre earlier this year. June 2-8 is seniors Week in B.C., a time to celebrate the contributions seniors make to society, writes columnist Margaret Coates.

Paul McGrath / North Shore News

The BC Seniors Advocate's website announces that Seniors Week this year is celebrated from June 2 to June 8.

During this week, we need to "take the time to honour and celebrate the contributions older people made and still make to our community," a statement on the website says. Let us celebrate them this week and every day of the coming year.

According to the 2024 Simon Fraser Factbook on Aging, seniors make up approximately 19.5 per cent of the population of adults in British Columbia. The World Health Organization is predicting that between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of the world's population over 60 years will nearly double from 12 per cent to 22 per cent. Older people are a growing segment of the population in our society, and they play a major role in the economy and the community.

Regrettably, not everyone recognizes the contributions of seniors to our society. Many people believe negative myths about seniors – they believe that they are a homogenous group of people who are a drain on society and that they do not add value to our communities. They assume that older people are frail or dependent on society, causing economic and social strain.

But, just like the general population, seniors are a diverse group of people who have, according to the Canadian Government website, “multiple identities and experience different life circumstances.” Furthermore, older people contribute to our community in so many ways and we rely on their support and participation.

Older people today make a difference through volunteering countless unpaid hours, sharing their wisdom, caretaking their family and friends thus saving the government billions of dollars, paying taxes, working at part- or even full-time jobs, and continuing to buy goods and services.

Also, let’s not forget older people’s contributions to our history. In years gone by, as younger adults, they contributed to the economic and political growth of our country through their paid work and taxes, taking on public office and building the foundations of our democratic society. They contributed to building Canadian culture and values. They fought for our country, educated and parented our young, built our libraries and schools, and volunteered even during their busy working lives.

Though older people 65 to 85 years old do contribute to our society, for the 85 years old and older group, many may have slowed down, and they are less able to contribute. It has been noted on the Canadian Government website, “as more seniors are living to 85 and beyond, an increasing number of individuals will face limitations and long-term health challenges”.

I believe though that in a caring and appreciative society we prioritize older people’s needs by ensuring governments provide the supports necessary to make sure older people can age well. These older people contributed untold hours to our country throughout their lives and deserve the care they need.

During Seniors Week, try remembering older people’s contributions, be age friendly in all your activities, call an older person that you know and acknowledge their contributions, and lastly challenge yourselves and others to reject negative myths about older people.

*Margaret Coates is the co-ordinator of Lionsview Seniors’ Planning Society. She has lived on the North Shore for 52 years and has worked for and with seniors for twenty-seven of those years. Ideas for future columns are welcome. Email [lions\\_view@telus.net](mailto:lions_view@telus.net).*