



ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



Community Links

Community Links has supported healthy aging at local, regional and provincial levels by working in collaboration with older adults and senior-serving organizations since 1992.

Vision:

All Nova Scotians can age well in their communities.

Mission:

Community Links is a province wide organization that promotes and supports age friendly communities by connecting individuals and organizations.

Values:

Collaboration, inclusion, respect, equity, compassion, transparency, accountability and engagement.



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President's Report

Another year has passed since our last Annual General Meeting and we are still struggling with Covid-19. Through all this time Community Links has continued to function thanks to our great staff and the dedicated leadership of our Executive Director.

The Board of Community Links has also continued its work, meeting once in person but mostly by Zoom.

This year we lose our talented and gifted Vice President Dolly Williams. We thank Dolly for her six years of service on our Board of Directors and to the senior community of Nova Scotia.

We were challenged financially during the past fiscal year but in March 2022 received grants from the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care that will see Community Links expand its staff footprint to the entire province.

These grants hope to achieve the following:

- Conduct a current state assessment of needs, gaps and opportunities in the senior-serving sector;
- assess seniors' centres and groups throughout the province to better understand their scope, distribution and impact and how to better share information and training opportunities;
- Provide micro-grants to senior-serving organizations targeting urgent community needs;
- Assess virtual senior-focused social programming and create micro-grants to address gaps.

Community Links will be very busy in the coming months. We will be working with partners across the province and adding capacity to manage the various projects. It is a very exciting time for Community Links in the year ahead!



P. Earl Muise

As I leave the position of President of Community Links I wish to thank Board members past and present for their dedication to seniors in Nova Scotia.

I also want to thank my colleagues on the Senior Advisory Council whom I will miss greatly.

Thanks again to all our devoted staff and a great big thank you to Erin & Helen. I look forward continuing my participation in Community Links as your Past President.

Executive Director's Report



Helen MacDonnell

Community Links has worked to support and enhance the resilience of older adults in Nova Scotia for the past three decades.

It takes a village, no matter our age and stage of life.

Resilience through Connection

In a world rocked by Covid-19, rising prices, and war in Ukraine, community and resilience are crucial for people of all ages.

As international resilience expert Dr. Michael Ungar says, “We all play a role in each other’s resilience. A community that supports its seniors makes itself stronger.”

Dr. Ungar is the keynote speaker at Community Links’ June 2022 AGM.

30 years of Aging Well Together

Community Links has worked to support and enhance the resilience of older adults in Nova Scotia for the past three decades.

We don’t do it alone.

We do it by making connections, sharing information, supporting on-the-ground initiatives, raising awareness, and advocating for change on aging-related policies and issues with the many individuals and organizations focused on healthy aging in Nova Scotia.

Knowledge Exchange

We support resilience regionally by hosting monthly Aging Well Together Coalitions where members build relationships, engage in problem-solving, and collaborate on age-friendly initiatives; regional coordinators meet regularly to share these learnings and resources.

Coalitions host information sessions and guest speakers to spread awareness of programs and services such as the Seniors Care Grant, the Mind-Body-Spirit Toolkit, Mentoring Plus, and the Happy Community Project.

We annually publish and distribute 15,000 Aging Well calendars which include resources, local contacts, and age-positive prompts to encourage people to stay active and engaged as they grow older.

We enhance resilience by sharing information via social media on Facebook and Twitter from organizations ranging from the Canadian Frailty Network to Caregivers Nova Scotia.

We promote activities that range from fall prevention training to Seniors' College Association of Nova Scotia courses and active pursuits such as snowshoeing and cross country skiing.

We share information - weather warnings and emergency preparedness lists - as well as webinars on frauds and scams and where to pick up rapid test kits.

Many senior-serving organizations operate on limited funds; we include opportunities for support in our free monthly e-bulletin, available online by visiting <https://nsccommunitylinks.ca/our-latest-e-bulletin/>

Pictou and Antigonish Aging Well Together Coalitions met with Engage NS to review its Quality of Life survey findings and understand the impact of COVID-19 on social connection. They will use this to inform future grant proposals and age friendly communities work.



Capacity Building

We support and enhance the resilience of older adults via webinars like *Staying Connected for Optimal Aging*, partnering with the Fountain of Health and our virtual *Celebration and Conversation* of the contributions, talents, and dedication of older adults to their communities co-hosted with the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging.

We collaborate with organizations and champion on-the-ground initiatives. For instance, Community Links is among the groups assisting Dalhousie University's ACTing Collectively research project in CBRM/Victoria and Richmond Counties complete its important work.

The ACTing Collectively research project will pilot an innovative approach to gathering data on the needs of, and available resources for, community-living older adults to age well in communities.

Mental Health for Older Adults

The isolation and stresses of the past two years have been unprecedented.

In 2022, with funding from the NS Department of Health and Wellness, we provided virtual *Mental Health First Aid for Supporting Older Adults* training sessions.

The three sessions held to date included Senior Safety Coordinators, members of the senior serving sector and representatives of Regroupement des aînés de la Nouvelle-Écosse as well as Community Links' staff and Board. A total of 31 people have been trained; two more sessions are planned.

This program helps build confidence among professionals, volunteers, and community members working closely with elders to identify mental health concerns.

The project is ongoing and we look forward to continuing to engage with partners to better understand and advocate for the mental health of older adults in our province.



Advocacy

We support the interests of older Nova Scotians by contributing to policy discussions, including *Aging Well at Home* with Federal Minister of Seniors Kamal Khera (which lead to the introduction of the [Age Well at Home federal funding program](#)) and international Age Friendly Communities research with the [Imagining Age Friendly Communities research project](#).

We combat ageism by promoting the contributions of older adults and shining a light on the positive aspects of aging.

The Lunenburg Aging Well Together coalition publishes monthly "Aging Well Corner" articles in the *South Shore Breaker*.

Topics have included addressing ageism; supporting caregivers; dementia awareness; fall prevention and VON's role in connecting communities.

In a creative solution to combat the impacts of isolation and rising costs of living, The Annapolis/Kings Aging Well Together Coalition members are engaging with elders in communities to share traditional recipes and the stories that go with them.

This initiative will connect newcomers and neighbours of all ages, to improve community connectedness and build belonging, trust, and safety.

We play advisory roles to the Nova Scotia Government via the Seniors Advisory Council and the Nova Scotia Centre on Aging, and as well as bring the older adult perspective to provincial consultations on issues including suicide prevention (the rate of suicide among men over 80 is among the highest of all age groups), accessibility and fall prevention.

We partner with researchers to help them connect to our on-the-ground networks of service providers and older individuals. Our Age Friendly in Focus project is an example.

Age Friendly in Focus

We addressed accessibility through *Age Friendly in Focus – Understanding Access and Inclusion for Older Adults in the Built Environment*, partnering with Dalhousie University and the PEACH (Planning for Equity, Accessibility and Community Health) Research Unit to invite older individuals to identify what makes communities accessible or conversely, difficult to traverse and discuss solutions.

To find out more about the Age Friendly in Focus project visit our website at www.nscommunitylinks.ca/age-friendly-in-focus/

Growing out of a successful research project with Masters of Planning graduate Katie Vaughan, Community Links and PEACH secured Age-Friendly Communities funding to gain insight into how older adults experience accessibility in their communities.

This project included

- Recruiting photovoice research participants
- Individual Interviews
- 5 Community engagement sessions
- Graphic Recording
- A printed photo book with the project results





Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, we have been tasked with significant work by the Nova Scotia Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care which will see us:

- Survey senior-serving organizations to understand needs, gaps and opportunities in the sector;
- Provide micro-grants to senior-serving organizations targeting urgent community needs;
- Assess seniors' centres and community groups to understand their work and how to better coordinate information sharing and training opportunities;
- Create an inventory of virtual seniors' social programs offered in Nova Scotia and develop a micro-grant for organizations to address gaps.


This work will bring a deeper understanding of the issues, challenges and needs of senior-serving groups and organizations and enable us, collectively, to build a stronger circle of support for older adults to support aging well together in Nova Scotia.

I am grateful to Community Links' Board for its leadership and to our dedicated staff for their commitment, creativity and roll-up-their sleeves attitude to work which is hard to measure but counts so much.

Huge thanks to Dolly Williams for sharing her wisdom and leadership as a Board member for the past six years, and to Darlene MacInnes, who retired from staff in March 2022. You will be missed!

Our Board of Directors

Community Links' Board of Directors draws on volunteers from across Nova Scotia who bring wisdom, experience, regional perspectives and specialized learnings to provide direction and oversight to the organization.

Region		Executive Member
Western	Earl Muise	President
Member at Large	Dolly Williams	Vice President
Member at Large	Paul Rowe	Secretary / Treasurer
Western	Penny Carver	
Central	Madeleine Dillon	
Central	Pamela Fancey	
Northern	Jim Vance	
Eastern	Aaron Acosta	
Eastern	Eleanor Gallant	

Our Regional Coordinators

Our Regional Coordinators are our boots on the ground. They work within counties and their regions to identify local assets and gaps in service.

They create a network of professionals, individuals, and organizations to amplify the impact of the change-makers in Nova Scotian communities.



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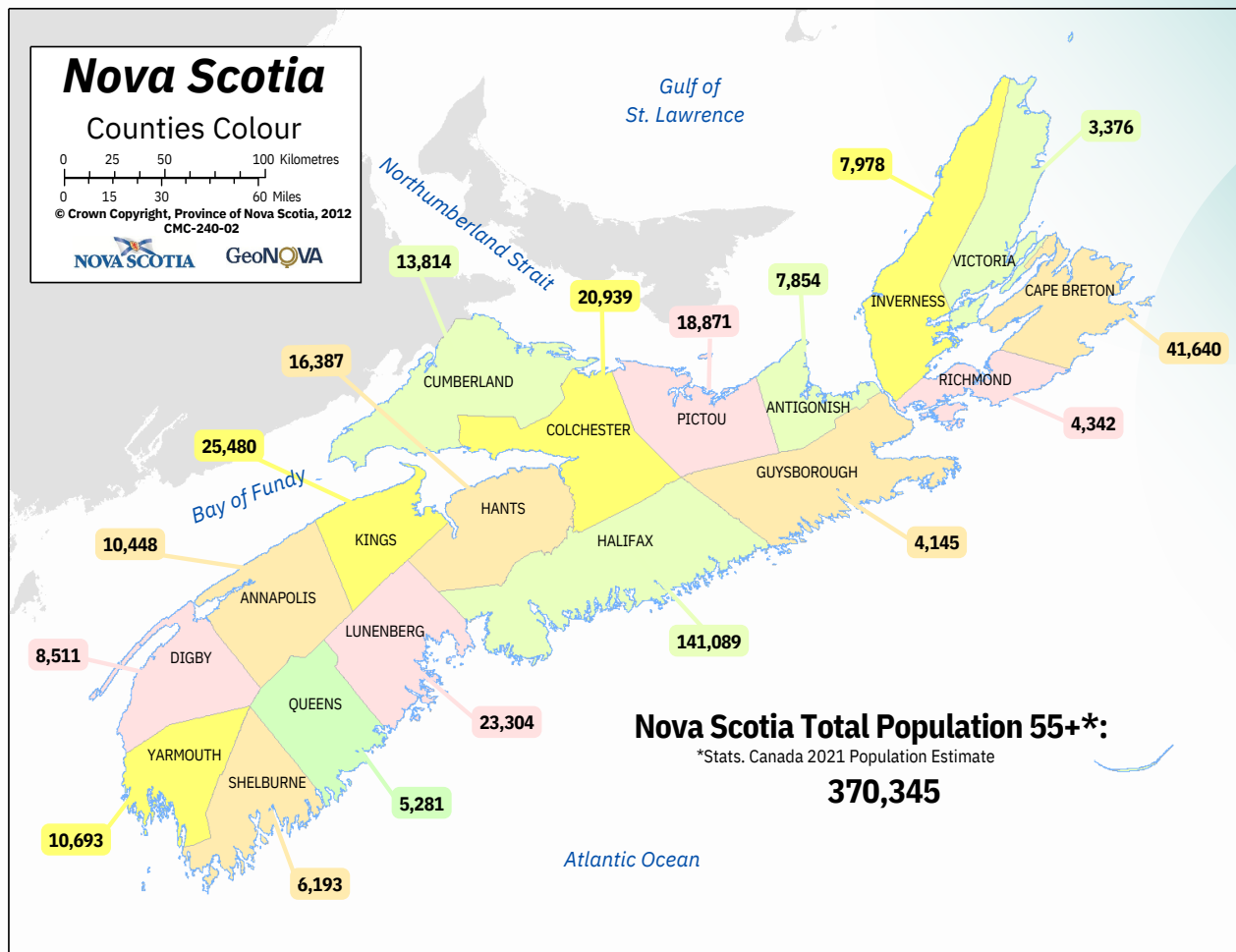
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The work of the Regional Coordinators includes:

- Make local connections and host Aging Well Together coalitions
- Offer presentations such as "Retirement its more than just money", "Finding funding for your Community Centre", and fall prevention workshops
- Work with and advocate for Senior Serving organizations
- Support Age-Friendly Communities initiatives
- Assist research partners in community engagement
- Share grant information and support organizations in funding applications.
- Engage with community members on Aging Well initiatives
- Champion accessible public infrastructure and shared spaces



Aging Well Together Coalitions

Community Links hosts nine Aging Well Together Coalitions each which meet monthly from September through June. Coalitions share information, identify regional issues, and collaborate on age-friendly community projects.

Affordable housing, food security, accessibility, social isolation, safe water, and emergency preparedness are among the topics addressed in 2021-22.

Coalitions vary from region to region and variously include VON, Libraries, Senior

Nova Scotia's population reached 1,000,000 in 2021.

One in three of those individuals are age 55 and older, the majority (229,256) live in the rural and smaller communities throughout the province.

Safety and Recreation Coordinators, LTC representatives, Women's and Seniors Centres, Community Health Boards, Caregivers NS, Service Canada, Efficiency NS and many others.

Thank You



Special Thanks to:

Dolly Williams
Board Member
2016-2022

Erin Henderson
Communications/
Administration

Sydney Patterson
Communications
Intern 2021

Meara Fletcher
Dalhousie MSW
Student 2022

Darlene MacInnis
Former Regional
Coordinator CBRM,
Victoria, Inverness

Glenna Jeffers
Book Keeper

Zia Shirtliffe
King's Fellow in Public
Humanities

**Coalition Members
and Community
Partners**

Photo credits:

The first mention of Adopt-a-Community, 1992 (cover)

Photo of Public Gardens by E. Henderson (4)

VON Tri-County Surf or Turf Event (6)

Art from Age Friendly in Focus (7)

Untitled, by Suzanne James (8)

Think Tank to develop Community Links 1992 (9)

Map courtesy of GeoNova (11)

Ella Rowell Harbour Lites New Horizons Club (12)

Community Links is grateful to the Department of Seniors and Long-Term Care for funding our work.