

## **Beacon Community Services History: Helping Seniors Live Independently**

2024 marked Beacon Community Services' (BCS) 50<sup>th</sup> year of service - Helping People, Empowering Communities, Improving Lives. In this article we explore Beacon's history providing services that enable seniors to live independently, comfortably and safely in their home for as long as it makes sense. Providing services for seniors was the third service to be offered in 1974. Initially, the services focused on in-home supports, but since 2007, have also included the SHOAL activity centre, helping seniors stay active.

1. 1974-1988:Homemaker Service
2. 1974-Current: Information & Referral Service
3. 1988-2002: Capital Regional Health Home Support Service Provider
4. 2003-2019: Island Health Home Support Service Provider
5. 1998-2007: Seniors Hotline
6. 2007-Current: SHOAL Centre

### **1974-1988: Homemaker Service**

In 1974, the Saanich Peninsula District Community Resources Society, as Beacon was called at the time, offered a homemaker service for pensioners. This fee-for-service program was delivered by homemakers with special health care skills and training that allowed them to provide different levels of care to those requiring assistance.

In 1979, additional grant funding was obtained and was used to expand the program to include the chronically ill, families in crisis, and people who needed care and help in their home. The program operated in partnership with the Capital Region, out of the "little white house on Fifth Street" in Sidney, which, in 2024, was the TD Bank parking lot.

From 1980 to 1985, the service operated out of 9788 Second Street, Sidney, which, in 2024 housed Sidney Nail & Spa and Second Street Tattoo. In 1984, the service was expanded to include a companion or companion-housekeeper for those who could not be left alone because of physical, mental or social reasons, and to provide emergency care for sick children of working parents.



Little White House at 9813 Fifth Street 1990<sup>1</sup>



9813 Fifth Street, April 2024



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<sup>1</sup> Photo P2019.21.278 courtesy of Sidney Archive



## Lighting the way for 50 years

From 1985 to 1988, the team was located at 103-9790 Second Street, Sidney. Unit 103 is the second office on the right, at the top of the stairs, and is above Brown's The Florist, who have the ground floor unit facing onto Beacon Avenue. The 2024 photo of the florist shop shows Unit 103 as the middle set of six windows on the upper floor.

In 1988, a pilot program was launched with Capital Regional Health that provided a new approach to delivering home support and the homemaker service ended.

### 9788 & 9790 Second Street April 2024



## 1977-Current: Information & Referral Service

In 1977, an information and referral service was initiated, staffed by volunteers and led by Sharon Wiegand, the Volunteer Services Coordinator. The purpose of the service is to help seniors and their caregivers navigate the various agencies and organizations that provide services.

## 1988-2002: Capital Regional Health Home Support Service Provider

In 1988, Beacon participated in the Victoria Health Project in partnership with Capital Regional Health. Under the project, services were provided to the frail elderly and the handicapped who live on the Peninsula. The focus of client care shifted to personal care, meal preparation, respite services, overnight supervision and live-in support. Services were provided seven days a week, with many clients requiring visits two or three times a day. Funding for the project also supported sending two home support workers to Camosun College courses on advanced orientation, enhanced personal care, psycho geriatrics, and palliative care.

From 1988 to 2002, the home support team worked out of the Beacon office located in School District 63's former administration building at 9751 Third Street, Sidney. In 2024, this site was a parking lot.

By 1995, Beacon was one of 16 Agencies delivering home support services in the Capital Regional District. Beacon's service area was on the Peninsula to Martindale Road, in Central Saanich. By this time, home support was a multi-care fee-for-service providing for the needs of many different types of clients, including families in crisis and clients discharged early from hospital, requiring palliative care, with debilitating conditions, with changes in mental function, or experiencing mental health concerns.

In 1999, Beacon worked closely with Capital Regional Health to implement a new home support service model and participated in its management review. Beacon became one of nine Agencies that implemented the new model, providing services on the Peninsula, with a slight expansion into Saanich.

In 2001, Beacon established a model of 'cluster care' at Amica Beechwood Village in Sidney. Under the cluster care model, one community health worker provided care for several clients living in the same residence, promoting quality, and continuity of care.



**School District 63 Former Administration Building circa 1995**



**9751 Third Street, Sidney April 2024**



## Lighting the way for 50 years

In February 2002, the home support team moved into the newly opened Beacon head office located at 9860 Third Street, Sidney, shown here in a 2023 photo.



Also in 2002, Beacon merged with the Southern Gulf Island Home Support Society, and continued to operate out of their office at #2 - 137 Crofton Road, Salt Spring Island<sup>2</sup>. This merger helped position Beacon to respond to a home support request for proposal from Vancouver Island Health Authority, as Island Health was known at the time.



<sup>2</sup> Photo courtesy Google Maps June 2009



## 2003-2019: Island Health Home Support Service Provider

In January 2003, Beacon was awarded a three-year contract, by Island Health to deliver home support to Saanich, as well as to Beacon’s current areas of service, the Saanich Peninsula and the Southern Gulf Islands. When this contract came into effect on July 1, 2003, Beacon became one of 3 Agencies delivering home support services in the region.

“Our goal was a smooth transition for 700 in-coming home support clients. The technical and human systems we’d put in place to handle the change-over told us immediately that all clients had been successfully transferred with no disruption to their service. It was a defining moment in our 29-year history,” said Isobel Mackenzie, Executive Director of Beacon in a 2003 interview. “The successful launch is a credit to the extraordinary efforts of our staff. They’ve put thousands of hours into preparing every last detail in anticipation of this event,” she said.

With the contract, the number of staff increased from 170 to over 400, and the number of clients increased from 450 to 1,100. To accommodate the additional staff, and to have an office that was more centrally located, the team moved to 3939 Quadra Street,<sup>3</sup> in Saanich.



<sup>3</sup> Photo courtesy Google Maps Aug 2017



## Lighting the way for 50 years

In 2007, with Beacon's purchase of the building at 2723 Quadra Street<sup>4</sup>, the home support team relocated to this building, sharing it with the Quadra Thrift Shop.



**2723 Quadra Street, Saanich March 2024**



<sup>4</sup> Photo courtesy Google Maps June 2009





On March 1st 2008, Beacon was awarded a home support contract to provide services for the entire Capital Region. With this contract, the over 500 staff of South Victoria Home Care and Juan De Fuca Home Support Societies and their over 2,500 clients transitioned to the Beacon family. The generosity of spirit shown by all those involved in the process, ensured a smooth transition for both clients and staff, enabling consistent and uninterrupted care for the clients.

“Another accomplishment in 2008. Beacon became the first home support organization in BC, and perhaps in Canada, to pass accreditation”, said Executive Director at the time Isobel Mackenzie in a 2024 interview. “By meeting Accreditation Canada’s requirements, Beacon demonstrated their commitment to quality, safety and people-centred care.”

In 2010, Beacon developed and delivered training for community health workers that ensured they were certified to provincial standards. As well, Beacon was able to negotiate with the federal government to allow people who were on Employment Insurance to continue to collect the benefit while they were in the training program. Beacon reached the same negotiated solution with the provincial government regarding individuals on Income Assistance. Allowing individuals to continue to be subsidized while being trained was a first for both levels of government. Individuals that successfully completed the program were hired to work for Beacon and received additional on the job orientation and training.

Also in 2010, Beacon participated in a rigorous external audit, and was awarded a WorkSafeBC Certificate of Recognition for its occupational Health and Safety programs – programs that ensured safe working environments for staff and volunteers and which, by extension, bring safe ,quality care and services to clients.

“Beacon was the first home support organization to go through this audit. This recognition not only resulted in Beacon obtaining a refund on their WorkSafeBC fees, but the audit process was used as a model for the WorkSafeBC SafeCare program”, said CEO at the time Isobel Mackenzie in a 2024 interview.

In 2013, Island Health again selected Beacon to provide home support services as their sole provider on Southern Vancouver Island and the Southern Gulf Islands. Beacon was selected over many other organizations (including national competitors), which spoke volumes about Beacon’s reputation as a reliable, skilled, and compassionate provider of care.



In February 2017, Home Support Nurse Manager Mari Green received the *Care Provider of the Year* award from the BC Care Providers Association (BCCPA). The honour recognizes a front-line care provider for demonstrated commitment to quality, compassion and excellence in delivering care in BC's home care sector.

**Mari Green<sup>5</sup>**



Mari has worked for Beacon Community Services as a manager since 2003. She demonstrates amazing flexibility and patience with the many changes in home support since that time. Mari is kind and compassionate and you know that she will always be truthful and supportive towards clients and staff. She is often one of the first to arrive and last to leave and has a mind that manages to keep track of the many complex situations she is faced with while always remaining available to encourage and support staff. She is a rare talent and works without complaint long hours supporting others. She deserves recognition for her exemplary commitment, kindness and dedication.

In March 2019, Beacon and Island Health announced that Island Health would assume responsibility for delivering publicly-funded home support. Since the current contract was to end in 2019, this provided a natural point for moving forward with a new model. The transition back to Island Health helped them ensure a consistent service approach as they implemented their team-based primary and community care models across the health authority. As part of the shift, Island Health also committed to offer employment to all Beacon staff affected by the change.

"We want to thank Beacon Community Services for their 15 years of service in home support delivery. They have been a valuable partner and we look forward to continuing our partnership in key areas of shared focus." said, Kathy MacNeil Island Health President and CEO in a 2019 interview.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://bccare.ca/2017/01/care-providers-of-the-year-winners/>



October 31, 2019 was the last day at Beacon for nearly 800 colleagues in Home Support, and they received a fond farewell as they transitioned to employment with Island Health on November 1. The Beacon team celebrated their success in helping people and improving lives through the Home Support program over many years of caring, compassionate community service. Over the years, the team had seen the program evolve and expand to provide services for clients of Veteran's Affairs, Insurance Corporation of British Columbia, WorkSafeBC, Ministry of Children and Family Development, and private pay clients. The goal of the service was to help those in need of home support to live independently, comfortably and safely in their home for as long as it made sense, and to assist with the transition when living at home was no longer possible. A goal that they successfully achieved throughout the years!

### 1998-2007: Seniors' Hotline

In 1998, Beacon merged with the Seniors' Hotline. The original impetus for the Seniors' Hotline was based on an initiative conducted by the Regional Seniors' Health Advisory Committee in 1993. That initiative identified the need for a readily accessible facility to respond to seniors' queries for information.

A group of concerned citizens volunteered to confirm the need for, and the funding of, such a resource centre. The original plan was that this would be a telephone-only information and referral service in which volunteers would work out of a small office and answer telephone calls from home.

A startup grant from New Horizons for Seniors was received in March 1994, and the Seniors' Hotline began operations in April in office space provided at Beacon's head office, 9751 Third Street, Sidney. The volunteers worked under the direction of Dell Wergeland, Project Coordinator, shown in this 1994 photo.



The demand for services quickly outgrew the space, and a small office was opened in October 1994 in unit #103, 9783 Third Street. This office also supported a drop-in service. In 2024, this space was occupied by Connections clothing store.

Almost immediately it was obvious that a larger facility, in a better location, with drop-in capacity was going to be essential to meet the needs of the adult population. It became clear that confirming information from the bewildering array of obtainable programs, services, and organizations needed a central clearing house.



## Lighting the way for 50 years

Suitable accommodation was secured at 2321 Beacon Ave in Beacon Plaza, in space vacated when Sears shut down their Canadian operations. The Hotline moved into the space in November 1995. In 2024, this space was occupied by Shoppers Drug Mart. In 1995, the door that became Shopper's main door provided access to a hallway where a number of offices, including the Hotline, were located.

### 2321 Beacon Ave., Beacon Plaza, Sidney April 2024



**December 4, 2000 – Christmas Tree decorating contest  
in hallway outside Hotline Office**



Because the Hotline was more visible in its new location, the number of calls with seniors, and their supporting families and caregivers went from 490 calls in 1994 to 18,579 in 1997. At the same time, the number of volunteers went from 10 in 1994 to 63 in 1997. These volunteers handled personal contacts, supplied literature and pamphlets, provided information regarding available services, and published a monthly newsletter. This activity resulted in the Hotline becoming a “Community Store-Front, Drop-in Resource Centre” dedicated to sharing reliable, current information to all those in need.

In 1996, the Capital Regional District launched the Phone Book Recycling Program as part of the region's broader waste diversion and environmental sustainability efforts. At the time, phone books were a significant source of paper waste, and the program aimed to keep them out of the landfill by providing dedicated drop-off locations where residents



could recycle their outdated directories. From 1996 to 2002, a refund of \$0.20 was paid per book, which motivated the Hotline to collect large quantities of books and, with the help of The Rotary Club of Sidney-by-the-Sea, drop them off at a designated location. In 1998, they collected 8,260 directories and raised over \$1,600.

**Volunteers Nadine Bukowski, Mavis Rowland, Bob Franklin unstack phonebooks from the “wall”<sup>6</sup>**



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<sup>6</sup> Sidney Beachcomber March 11 1998



Around 1996/1997, the Hotline was commissioned by the Victoria Disabled Resource Centre to process parking permits for people with temporary or permanent disabilities. In 2024, Beacon processed over 814 permit requests.

In January 1998, due to reduced provincial and federal funding, the Seniors' Hotline merged with Beacon, enhancing the community resource centre with volunteer drives, family and personal support, and other community programs offered by Beacon. Once the merger was complete, Dell retired to provide needed support to her extended family, and Kathy Mason, shown in this 2008 photo, took over running the Hotline.



Also in 1998, the Hotline took over management of the Senior Peer Counselling program funded by the Seniors Health Promotion Network. Volunteer lay counselors provided support for seniors experiencing distress, isolation, grief and loss. The program paused in 2015. In 2020, the program was restarted and renamed to Senior Peer 1 to 1 Support as a better reflection of its service.

From 1999 to 2003, the Hotline delivered a fraud alert and prevention program, called Fraud Busters, in cooperation with the Better Business Bureau and the RCMP. The program was designed to combat fraud that was directed at seniors.

In 2000, the Hotline introduced the Community Response Network program to assist seniors who were at risk of or were experiencing neglect, self-neglect or abuse. In 2024, Peninsula Community Response Networks and the BC Association of Community Response Networks (BCCRN) continue to provide information sessions and workshops in partnership with Beacon to raise awareness, and to support a shared journey of self-discovery, personal growth, empowerment, and joyful living.

In 2003, the Sidney Single Seniors (SSS) Group was launched with support from Kathy Mason and her team. "We are not a dating group, but rather a SOCIAL CLUB for people 55+ who are single or whose partner is housebound or in long term care." In 2024, regular SSS activities include monthly meetings, 5-pin bowling, drop-in coffee sessions and morning walks. The Group meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at the SHOAL Centre.

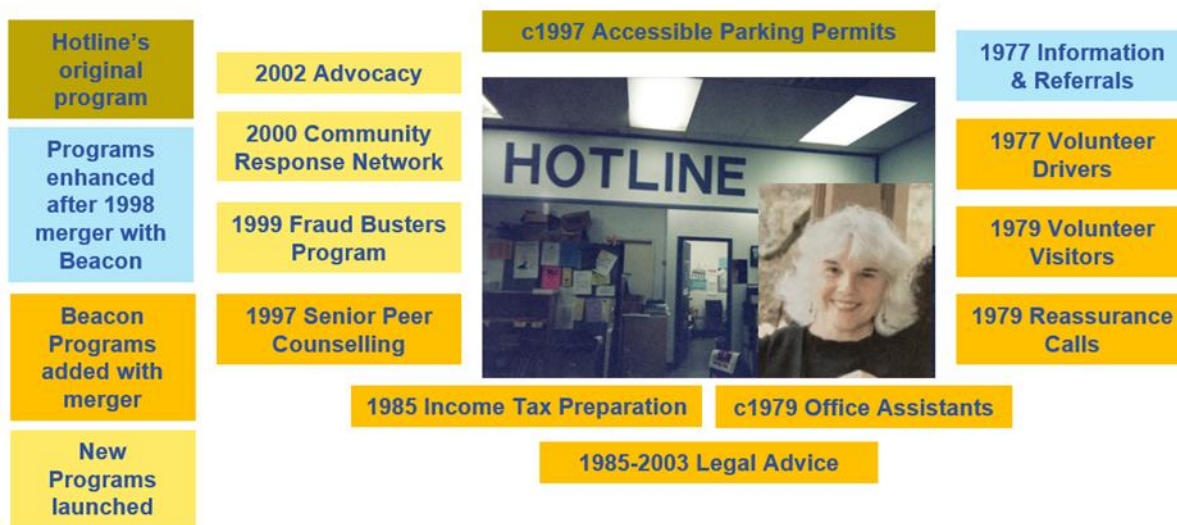
In July 2007, the Volunteer Centre, Seniors Hotline and Youth Employment Program moved from Beacon Plaza to the SHOAL Centre on Resthaven Drive.



## Lighting the way for 50 years

In a 2007 interview, Kathy Mason said, “I want to assure everyone that all the volunteer programs and services we currently operate – from processing Disability Resource Centre parking permits, helping with your income tax returns, arranging transportation to your medical appointments, to simply being ‘the place’ where you can go for information and referral – will still be there for you. So, when we move our things in and get settled, please drop in and say Hello. We look forward to seeing you there.”

### 1998-2007: Services for Seniors Provided by Seniors’ Hotline





**Just for Laughs – From Seniors’ Hotline Newsletter**

*Two elderly ladies* had been friends for many decades. Over the years they had shared all kinds of activities and adventures. Lately, their activities had been limited to meeting a few times a week to play cards. One day they were playing cards when one looked at the other and said,


“Now don’t get mad at me...I know we’ve been friends for a long time...but I just can’t think of your name! I’ve thought and thought, but I can’t remember it. Please tell me what your name is.”

Her friend glared at her. For at least three minutes she just stared and glared at her. Finally she said,

*“How soon do you need to know?”*

**The Way of Chocolate ...**

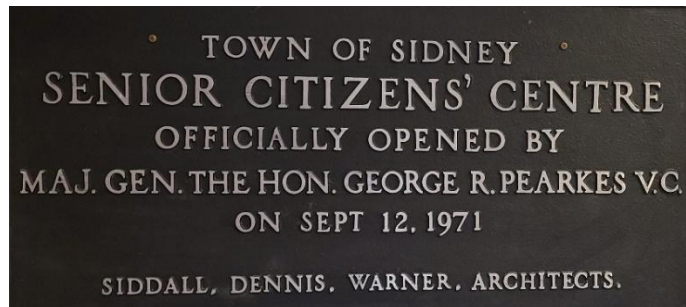
- Anything tastes better dipped in chocolate.
- Chocolate: Here today .... Gone today!
- When no one understands you, chocolate is there.
- Seven days without chocolate makes one weak.
- The 12-step chocoholics program: never be more than 12 steps away from chocolate!
- Nothing chocolate... nothing gained.
- Chocolate is cheaper than therapy, and you don't need an appointment.
- There is nothing better than a good friend, except a good friend with chocolate.
- Chocolate doesn't make the world go 'round. But it certainly makes the trip worthwhile.
- If God had meant us to be thin, he would not have created chocolate.




## 2007-Current: SHOAL Centre

The Sidney Healthy Options for Active Living (SHOAL) Centre opened in October 2004 with the official opening on March 10, 2005. At that time, the Centre was owned and operated by Silver Threads. They had planned to run their Meals on Wheels program out of its kitchen, delivering meals across the Capital Region. It turned out that this was not cost-effective, so, in 2007, Silver Threads sold the building to the Town of Sidney and moved their program to a more central location in Saanich.

Before the SHOAL Centre was built, a Senior Citizens' Centre owned by the Town was located on the site. The Citizens' Centre's official opening occurred on September 12, 1971. That building was torn down, circa 2003, to make room for the SHOAL Centre.



The construction of the SHOAL Centre was the result of a unique partnership between the municipality and private entrepreneur, Patrick Lenihan of the SCH Group. Also partnering in the planning were Island Health, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Housing, Silver Threads, Beacon, and Town staff.

The SHOAL Centre was built on land owned by the Town and has a number of different condominium units. In 2024, each condominium is owned and operated as follows:

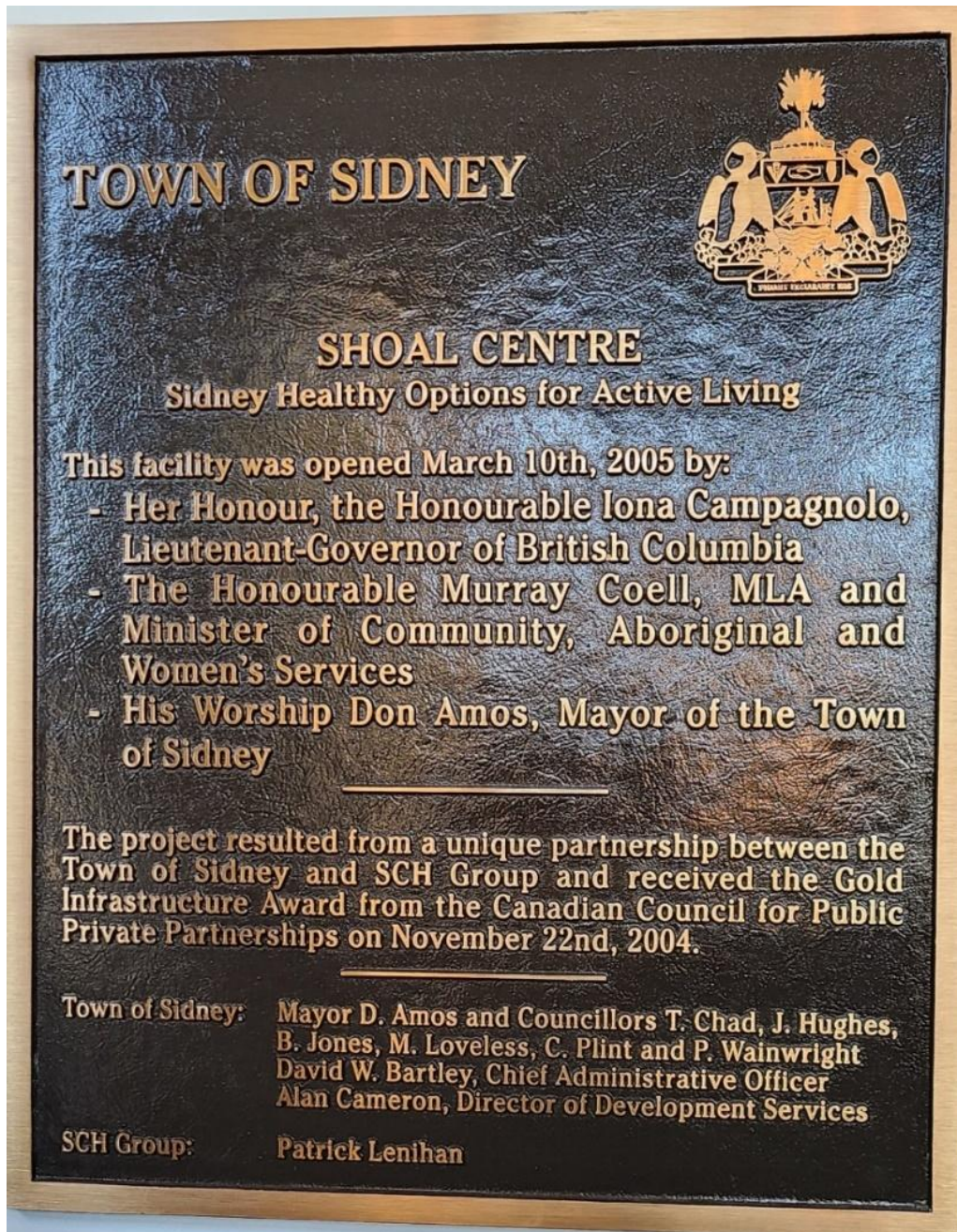
- An activity centre and dining room is owned by the Town of Sidney and is operated by Beacon. During the construction, it was agreed that a kitchen was required to serve the activity centre participants, assisted living residents, independent living residents, and the public.
- An assisted living section owned and operated by Beacon.
- 54 privately-owned independent living suites, the majority of which are rented.
- A commercial section on the main floor owned by individual businesses.

On November 22, 2004, the Town and the developer received one of only three Gold Awards presented across Canada that year by the Canadian Council of Public-Private Partnerships, celebrating their unique and successful partnership.



Another unique aspect of the SHOAL Centre was that it was built at no cost to taxpayers. Instead, Patrick Lenihan absorbed the building costs and recouped his investment from revenue generated by the independent living and commercial suites.

**Plaque at SHOAL Entrance**



**SHOAL Centre April 2024**





May 1, 2007, Beacon was awarded the contract by the Town of Sidney to operate the kitchen and activity centre. This contract continues to be renewed, most recently as of January 1, 2024.

The overall management of the SHOAL Centre has been the responsibility of the individuals shown in the table below.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Judith Ritson</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Manager SHOAL Centre May 2007-September 2008</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Judy Wiggins</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Manager SHOAL Activity Centre June 2008-October 2013</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Glenys Cavers</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Director Thrift Shops &amp; SHOAL Centre November 2013-September 2019 Director Volunteer &amp; Seniors' Services October 2019-August 2022</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Jennifer Van Es</b></p>  <p style="text-align: center;">Manager SHOAL Centre January 2022-February 2023 Director SHOAL Centre &amp; Senior Services March 2023-Current</p>
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In 2007, all the programs and services to support seniors that had been operating out of Beacon Plaza began operating out of the SHOAL Centre. At the same time, the programs, activities and events that Silver Threads had been providing at the SHOAL Centre such as (Bridge, Be Well, art classes, computer support, and many more) continued to be provided along with many new ones. Initially, staff from the Panorama Recreation Centre delivered the programs at the SHOAL Centre. When that contract ended in 2012, SHOAL Centre staff and volunteers began program delivery. Many of these programs are still offered in 2024.

In 2007, Volunteer Services was tightly integrated with the Seniors' Hotline. By 2014, the programs and services had evolved to the point that separate teams were needed – the SHOAL Centre team focusing on the activity centre programs, services for seniors, the community, wellness programs, and food services, while Volunteer Services focused on recruiting and managing adult and youth volunteers. For more information about Volunteers Services refer to the article *Volunteers, Thank you for all you do!*

On January 12, 2024, Beacon opened a satellite office in Brentwood Bay with the help of the District of Central Saanich. The office is based in the lobby of the library building at 1209 Clarke Road. It is open Monday, Wednesday and Fridays from 10 am to 2 pm., offering Resources & Services, Referrals, Income Taxes, Disability Parking Permits, and Wellness Programs.









By 2024, the SHOAL Centre team had grouped the programs, services and activities they managed into separate focus areas (Community & Senior Support Services, Wellness Programs and Support Groups, Activity Centre Programs and Activities, and Food Services, Events & Catering). Details of the evolution of each area is provided below.





**Community & Senior Support Services**

Since the 2007 move to the SHOAL Centre, delivery of Community & Senior Support Services has been the responsibility of the individuals shown in the table below.

<p><b>Kathryn Mason</b></p>  <p>Volunteer Services Coordinator, including Services for Seniors &amp; YEP June 1998-December 2013</p>	<p><b>Debra Greenaway</b></p>  <p>Direct Volunteer Coordinator, including Services for Seniors March 2014-June 2017 Community Services Coordinator, including Services for Seniors July 2017-August 2021 Manager Community Services, including Services for Seniors September 2021-Current</p>
<p><b>Lori Campbell</b></p>  <p>Coordinator More Than Meals March 2023-Current</p>	<p><b>Linda Lightbody</b></p>  <p>Coordinator Community Services &amp; Income Tax May 2023-Current</p>



<p><b>Jessica Cochrane</b></p>  <p>Seniors Housing Navigator September 2023-Current</p>	<p><b>Amelie Pomphrey</b></p>  <p>Community Connector July 2024-Current</p>
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The following diagram shows Community and Senior Support programs offered through the SHOAL Centre in 2024, and the year the service was originally started.

**1977-Current: Community & Senior Support Services**



In 2015, Beacon, together with Broadmead Care, began to deliver the *Better at Home* program. In 2018, Beacon became the lead agency for the program providing services across Saanich and the Peninsula.





The Better At Home program provides funding to support a mix of volunteer and subsidized, paid services (based on income) to help people 65+ to live independently at home. Clients are supported with services such as light housekeeping (included since 2015), friendly visitor/reassurance phone calls (included since 2015), handy-person service (included since 2015), in-home assessment and referral (included since 2016), free bus transportation to local shopping centres (included since 2017), and grocery shopping and delivery (included since 2020).

From 2016 to 2022, Beacon provided food, clothing and toiletries baskets for people in need, including Christmas hampers, and Good Food Boxes of fresh produce sold at below grocery store prices.

In the fall of 2018, the Beacon Volunteer Advocacy program was restarted. Trained volunteers provide guidance and assistance to Saanich Peninsula seniors. They share information on navigating the health care system, affordable housing, unexpected financial hardship, completing and submitting forms and correspondence, elder abuse, and more. In 2024, this free service is offered at the SHOAL Centre by appointment.

When the World Health Organization declared COVID 19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020 and isolation protocols were established in BC, Beacon implemented a number of programs to reach out and support seniors. Even though the SHOAL Centre was closed to visitors, staff and volunteers continued to support them.

- *Safe Seniors, Strong Communities.* With support from the United Way of the Lower Mainland, the program provides wellness checks by phone, virtual visits, grocery shopping and delivery, prescription delivery and medical drives to urgent appointments such as dialysis and cancer treatments. Beacon worked quickly to develop the program, then partnered with 14 other agencies throughout the Capital Regional District to deliver the services to new and existing clients.
- *More than Meals preparation and delivery program* launched on Mother's Day, 2020. With support from the United Way of Greater Victoria and in partnership with local agencies, the program provides 3 meals a week to seniors, including a special dinner at Christmas time! It was a true win-win for all: the meals warmed hungry bellies, and the opportunity for seniors to visit with volunteers brought smiles and brighter days. By the end of 2024, the funding was no longer available, putting the program at risk. Beacon's Board agreed to self-fund the program for their clients until the end of March 2025, while searching for an alternate source of funds.



- *Grocery Shopping at Thrifty Foods and Save-On-Foods* for seniors across Sidney and the Saanich Peninsula. SHOAL reception records grocery shopping requests which are then matched with available shoppers who purchase the items using gift cards paid for by the client and then deliver the items to the client's home.
- *Saanich Peninsula Lions Food Bank Delivery* had available drivers delivering food bank items to clients who couldn't get there because of health or transportation concerns.
- *Client Check-in*: Since COVID isolation protocols kept members and clients away from the Centre and isolated in their homes, the SHOAL team set up a regular phone call system to check-in on everyone to see if they were safe and if they needed any help. In reflecting back on that time, Jen Van Es, SHOAL Director said, "I just remember the team making so many phone calls, everyone was always calling someone to see if they were okay. From March 2020 to December 2020, our SHOAL team made 10,016 reassurance and check in phone calls."

Early in 2021, Beacon launched the Words on Wheels (WOW) initiative with volunteers delivering pre-selected books to residents in the area. WOW enriches lives by promoting literacy and providing opportunity to connect with isolated seniors.

In 2023, the Seniors Housing Information and Navigation Ease (SHINE) program launched. The program works with seniors to help with navigating housing, mental health and addiction services.





In the fall of 2024, the Community Connector program was launched. It is a holistic, person-centred, and community-based support program aiming to weave health and social services closely together to ensure a supportive network for older adults. Supporting older adults one-on-one to help them stay connected and engaged on their community in a way that works for them and fits their needs.

Also in the fall of 2024, the Social Meals program was launched. The program offers *Community Meals*: free dinners for seniors 65+ who are seeking to make new connections in their community, and *Soup Socials*: hearty soups, engaging activities and interesting speakers providing opportunities to forge new friendships and strengthen connections within the community.



**Wellness Programs & Support Groups**

Managing the Wellness Programs & Support Groups has been the responsibility of the individuals shown in the table below.

<p><b>Jemma Templeton</b></p>  <p>Coordinator Support Programs June 2020-April 2022</p>	<p><b>Anna Hudson</b></p>  <p>Mental Health Program Support 2020-Current</p>
<p><b>Jenna Foster</b></p>  <p>Coordinator Support Programs April 2022-August 2023</p>	<p><b>Jane McIntosh</b></p>  <p>Support Programs Coordinator August 2023-Current</p>
<p><b>Margo James</b></p>  <p>Support Programs Coordinator September 2023-Current</p>	



The following diagram shows Wellness Programs & Support Groups offered at the SHOAL Centre in 2024, and the year the service was originally started. As a result of the COVID pandemic, the staff saw a significant increase in the need for mental wellness and peer support.

### 1997-Current: Wellness Programs & Support Groups



Over the years, a number of wellness programs and support groups have been offered:

- Senior Peer Counselling (offered since 1997, paused in 2015 and after the COVID pandemic in 2020, it was renamed Peer 1-1 Support and expanded beyond the Peninsula to seniors across Greater Victoria)
- Family Caregiver Group (offered 2007-2016)
- Be Well blood pressure and glucose monitoring program (offered 2005-2020)
- Better Breathers for people with breathing difficulties (offered 2007-2021)
- Cardiovascular Health Initiative for Prevention (CHIP) / Take the Pressure Down (offered 2010-2015)
- White Cane Club (offered since 2014, paused during the COVID 19 pandemic)
- Dementia Caregivers Support Group (offered since 2016)



- Moving On (offered 2019-2021)

In 2020, Beacon received funding from the Province of BC and the United Way of Lower Mainland to deliver a brand-new Family & Friends Caregiver Support Program. The program, launched in January 2020, supports the health and well-being of older adults with higher needs, and their caregivers.

Supported by Family Caregivers of BC, the program focuses on people who provide unpaid care to older adults with complex needs (such as chronic illness, frailty, or life-limiting conditions). The program offers caregivers emotional support, social opportunities, and education services to enhance their skills, knowledge and confidence, and improve their own well-being. One-on-one support, information, referrals to community resources, and help navigating the healthcare system is also available.

A special highlight of 2020 was the launch of the popular new Caregiver's Café, an afternoon tea social gathering program. Participants enjoy fun afternoon tea and conversation.

Also in 2020, the *Senior's Mental Wellness* program was launched. This program offers individual and group sessions for those diagnosed with depression, anxiety or feel at risk because of isolation or loneliness.

In 2021, the *Choose to Move* program started. This program targets people 65+ who want to start moving more and feeling better, but may need some help getting started and staying motivated. Participants work one-on-one with a trained activity coach to create a program made just for them to reach their fitness and activity goals.

In 2022, a new group called, *Yes, we can! Cope with Depression*, was launched to help seniors who are struggling with depression.

In June 2023, a group was formed called, *Good Grief! Peer-to-Peer Bereavement*, for those who have lost a spouse or partner and are struggling to find meaning, purpose and joy in their life. This multi-session group explores topics related to grief, such as anger, guilt, loneliness, dealing with special dates, and so much more.

In September, a *Bereavement and Loss Support Group* was formed to support those individuals who have experienced the death of a loved one. At the facilitated sessions, compassionate, caring hearts walk alongside one another through one of life's most difficult experiences, so you don't have to go through the grieving process alone.



In 2024 two new groups were launched.

- *Movement for Caregivers*. Offering a mindful Pilates-based workout that will work the body from head to toe and uses calming breath work.
- *Wellness Wednesdays*. Presents health topics of interest to people 65+.

### SHOAL Activity Centre Programs & Activities

Managing the Activity Centre programs and activities has been the responsibility of the individuals shown in the table below.

<p><b>Cheryl Driscoll</b></p>  <p>Coordinator Activities &amp; Rentals May 2007-June 2008</p>	<p><b>Anna Hudson (nee Cibulak)</b></p>  <p>Coordinator Activities &amp; Rentals April 2008-January 2018</p>
<p><b>Jennifer Van Es</b></p>  <p>Activities &amp; Rental Coordinator September 2016-December 2021 Manager Activity Centre January 2022-February 2023</p>	<p><b>Michale Fjeldstad</b></p>  <p>Activity Coordinator June 2015-February 2019</p>



**Vanessa Normore**



Activity Coordinator  
October 2019-November 2020

**Tracy Levy<sup>7</sup>**



Activity Coordinator  
January 2021-February 2023

**Sarah Gait**



Office Coordinator  
March 2023-Current

**Ewa Ardiel**



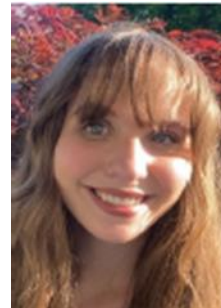
Administrative Assistant  
March 2023-Current

**Emma Eaton**



Communications Coordinator  
March 2023-April 2024

**Alexa Frietag**



Administrative Assistant  
November 2023-April 2024

<sup>7</sup> Photo courtesy LinkedIn



**Kyla Shauer**



Communications Coordinator  
May 2024-Current

In May 2007, Beacon took over management of the activity centre and dining room, and very quickly got operations up and running.

In June 2007, Beacon partnered with the Panorama Recreation Centre to deliver a full slate of programs at the Centre. This agreement ended in March 2012.

In July 2007, the first edition of TideLines was published. TideLines announces upcoming community events held at the Centre, provides information about registered and drop-in programs, activities and classes, and other information of interest to users of the centre. Over the years, issues often included a joke or funny story, or profiled volunteers, staff or programs. September 2008 was the first time the last page was used to show available classes. In 2010, it became possible to receive your copy of TideLines via email. July 2011 was the first time drop-in courses managed by SHOAL, and not Panorama, appeared in an issue. In April 2012, SHOAL began running all the programs, having ended the contract with Panorama at the end of March. March 2013 was the first time the drop-in schedule filled the last page, which continues in 2024 to show the wide variety and large number of drop-in activities available.

In September 2007, a wide variety of programs were delivered; popular programs originally delivered by Silver Threads that had been enhanced, plus more than 46 new programs, including everything from exercises to travel workshops, introduction to water colours, ballroom dancing, digital photography, to answers to your computer-related questions. Over the years, the September issue has always been used to advertise new programs for the fall and winter.

Also in September 2007, the first Open House took place. “It was a wonderful day. We estimated that the centre was visited by more than 230





members of the general public.” said, Manager Judith Ritson in a 2007 interview. Each September since then, except in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID 19 pandemic, the Centre has had an Open House that showcases the available programs and activities.

In November 2007, the first one-day Christmas Craft Fair was hosted. At that time, there was an entrance fee of \$1.00. A Christmas Craft Fair has been held every November since then except in 2020 and 2021 during the COVID 19 pandemic. In 2024, an entrance fee was no longer in place.

In July and August 2013 at the Summer Market held on Beacon Avenue each Thursday evening, the SHOAL Centre staffed a booth which featured different programs each week. The SHOAL Centre team attended the summer market every summer after that until 2019. The market did not open in the summer of 2020 due to the COVID pandemic, and when it resumed in 2021, the SHOAL Centre team did not participate.

In 2015, the SHOAL Centre joined the green revolution with the addition of organics collection in the kitchen, Tuck Shop, Reception area and Card Room to divert items from the landfill and turn them into compost.

In the fall of 2015, the SHOAL Centre launched an expansion into night time drop-in activities, with Movie Nights on the third Friday of each month. Movie night was paused during the COVID 19 pandemic, resuming again for September 2023 and continuing in 2024.

Fall 2015 also saw the arrival of a jigsaw puzzle for anyone to work on set up at a table beside the main staircase in the lobby. Reception is always looking for new puzzles that are complete and in good condition. Puzzle donations can be dropped off at reception. Extra puzzles are sold at the November Christmas Craft Fair to help raise funds for the Centre.

Also in 2015, refurbishing was completed in the public dining room and reading lounge, where comfortable and functional new furniture was added. A new modern sound system was installed to enhance workshops and presentations at SHOAL, and a new TV display in the lobby allowed members to keep up to date on activities at the Centre.

Upgrades were completed again in 2019/2020 when the SHOAL Centre was lucky to be gifted two New Horizons for Seniors grants. The funding allowed the Centre to bring even more connectivity to its guests and staff through a new, more modern phone system, and new tablets and projectors for workshops and other learning opportunities for seniors.



By 2016, the computer drop-in sessions had become so popular, the volunteer leaders added the ability to pre-book an appointment. In 2024, both drop-in and pre-booked appointments options are available to ensure quality help is provided for seniors who have questions about how to participate in the digital world.

In January 2017, a new era of fitness came to SHOAL with the introduction of a gym studio in the former billiards room on the lower level. With the fitness instructor Chad Savin of Savin Elite Training heading up this new venture, individual personal training sessions, fitness consultations, and small group training sessions were offered. In May 2019, Justine McNichol and Joshua Sutherland from Benecore Training took over providing the service. By 2024, they were offering a variety of programs for all fitness levels.

In October 2017, the SHOAL Centre joined social media and began posting on Facebook at: [Facebook.com/SHOALCentreBeaconCommunityServices](https://www.facebook.com/SHOALCentreBeaconCommunityServices).

Before the COVID 19 pandemic was declared and lockdowns started on March 20, 2020, SHOAL offered over 1,000 hours per year of fitness programs and activities to help seniors age actively. Knowing the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle, members of the Centre and the community, came to group fitness classes, table tennis, bridge, craft programs, woodworking – to name just a few. The Centre also hosted a wide range of information workshops.

Thanks to funding from an Island Health Community Wellness grant, Beacon was able to continue the very-popular seniors' Lunch 'n Learn program right up until COVID-19 lockdowns began – about 50 seniors a month gathered together to learn from guest speakers, listen to volunteer musicians, and enjoy a free delicious, healthy meal (and one to take home). Volunteer drivers made it easy for people to attend, as they picked up and dropped off guests from door-to-door.

On May 19, 2020, the province lifted some restrictions and allowed small groups to meet indoors, provided strict COVID protocols were in place. In July 2020, SHOAL Centre resumed programming for members-only, and with pre-registration required, offering fitness classes, some support programs, and foot care. The full drop-in program did not resume until fall 2021.

In 2021, COVID restrictions closed the SHOAL Centre for much of the year. With gradual re-opening, visitors continued to wear masks and show proof of vaccinations and many programs were modified, closed to drop-ins, or paused.



## Lighting the way for 50 years

Nonetheless, the Centre recorded over 9,000 visits for activities and programs. Even in a pandemic, the SHOAL Centre remained the community’s hub. Seniors and caregivers came to learn, grow, socialize, volunteer, and support one another in healthy aging.

In 2024, SHOAL continues to offer a wide variety of drop-in activities, registered programs and workshops involving computer support, fitness, yoga, games, music, arts, crafts, culture, and much much more.

**Table Tennis<sup>8</sup>**



**Bridge Club<sup>9</sup>**



**Chess Club<sup>10</sup>**



**Crafting & Knitting<sup>11</sup>**



<sup>8</sup> Photo courtesy Steven Heywood PNR January 12, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Photo courtesy Wolf Depner Black Press Media May 30, 2022

<sup>10</sup> Photo courtesy Wolf Depner Black Press Media April 14, 2022

<sup>11</sup> Photo courtesy Devon MacKenzie Black Press Media July 14, 2017



Lighting the way for 50 years

**Fitness<sup>12</sup>**



**Exercise<sup>13</sup>**



**Food Services, Events & Catering**

In 2007, Beacon assumed the management of the SHOAL Centre’s kitchen and dining room, and began offering food services programs, sponsoring events, and providing catering for events booked by the public.

The Kitchen Manager / Chef for the SHOAL Centre has been the responsibility of the individuals shown in the table below.

<p><b>Russell Hudson</b></p>  <p>September 2007-December 2010</p>	<p><b>Shaun Abbott</b></p> <p>January 2011 – April 2011</p>
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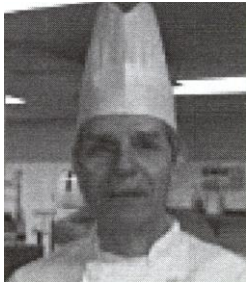
<sup>12</sup> Photo courtesy Steven Heywood, Hugo Wong News reporter Black Press Media October 25, 2017

<sup>13</sup> Photo courtesy Black Press Media September 23, 2016



Lighting the way for 50 years

**Don Bottcher**



Casual January 2011  
Chef April 2011-July 2013

**Karen Taylor**



July 2013-March 2024

**Steven Mugridge**







March 2024-Current



**Lighting the way for 50 years**

Rentals, Catering and Events Management has been the responsibility of the individuals shown in the table below.

<p><b>Cheryl Driscoll</b></p>  <p>Activities &amp; Rental Coordinator May 2007-June 2008</p>	<p><b>Anna Hudson (nee Cibulak)</b></p>  <p>Activities &amp; Rental Coordinator April 2008-January 2018</p>
<p><b>Jennifer Van Es</b></p>  <p>Activities &amp; Rental Coordinator September 2016-December 2021</p> <p>Manager SHOAL Centre January 2022-February 2023</p>	<p><b>Kirsten Tyler</b></p>  <p>Rentals, Catering &amp; Events Manager May 2023-Current</p>

In May 2007, Beacon’s Executive Director Isobel Mackenzie hired Judith Ritson to be the Manager of SHOAL. Judith hired Russ Hudson as Kitchen Manager/Chef, starting in September. His expertise in catering was expected to give SHOAL the opportunity to extend their repertoire and accommodate catered events and functions.



Chef Hudson, who was retired from a culinary career both in the military and corporate fields, and was a Culinary Olympic winning Chef, instituted several changes to the operation of the dining room during his tenure.

In September 2007, he worked with the activities staff, which at the time included Cheryl Driscoll, Coordinator, and Anna Cibulak (now Hudson), Admin Assistant, to run a monthly ticketed dinner event, called “*Guess Who is Coming to Dinner?*”. The dinners were held in the large auditorium, with the first dinner happening that October.

Prior to Beacon taking over the Centre, Silver Threads had offered dinners using the same title. Since they intended to offer dinners out of their Saanich location, they asked to retain the title. As a result, Cheryl and Anna renamed their monthly dinner event to “*An Evening at the SHOAL*”, with a different theme for each month, and an accompanying menu designed by Chef Hudson.

The new version of the monthly dinner and music evening began January 24, 2008 celebrating Robbie Burns Day. George McDowell and everything Scottish was featured as the entertainment. Initially, the dinners were priced at \$15 per person, then slowly increased over time to accommodate food and staffing, plus entertainment costs.

These monthly events were soon selling out (capped at 120 people) and included such fun themes as Oktoberfest, Robbie Burns Night, St. Patrick’s Day, Mardi Gras Night, Las Vegas Night, and A Night at the Oscars, to name just a few.

As the demands on Food Services increased, the *Evening At the SHOAL* dinners started to become cumbersome and costly. With the retirement of Chef Hudson in December 2010, and Judy Wiggins, Manager SHOAL Centre in October 2013, the new SHOAL Centre Director, Glenys Cavers, looked for ways to reduce Food Services operating costs. It was decided that, starting in January 2014, the *Evenings at the SHOAL* would be discontinued. Instead, smaller monthly ticketed events would be offered in the form of an Afternoon Tea in the Dining Room, also with a theme, such as fashion shows, War Bride Tribute, Queen’s 90th birthday celebration, Mother’s Day and many more.

Initially, the dining room was only open to assisted living residents. Then in November 2007, it was opened to not only assisted living residents, but also their guests and the general public for lunch and dinner five days a week. Starting in July 2014, the dining room opened to residents and the public for lunch and dinner seven days a week.

In February 2008, the SHOAL Activity Centre began offering Rentals and Catering, with a wide menu list to choose from prepared by Chef Russ Hudson. Hosting many private



events, including memorials, meetings, conferences, and even weddings, became part of the growth of the Centre.

To meet the demands of the expansion in services, Russ changed the operations of Food Services by hiring more staff, both cooks and servers. When in 2009, the servers and cooks voted to unionize, Chef Hudson, as management, was exempt from union membership.

In January 2010, Russ ran a contest to name the dining room and the winning entry, submitted by Rita Robbins, was: “*Tides at SHOAL Dining Room*”. This name carried the SHOAL Centre and TideLines newsletter theme, and spoke to the fact that things are ever changing, refreshed and renewed. Rita won two tickets for an *Evening at the SHOAL* of her choice.

SHOAL Food Services also did the catering for the very large Volunteer Appreciation events held at the Centre (usually 250 people per event) twice a year. Once Beacon took on the Home Support Contract from Island Health in 2003, Food Services also catered the Staff Appreciation Night which often was attended by close to 300 staff.

In February 2012, the Dining Room Menu Board arrived. Each day the menu is posted on the board outside the dining room, identifying the “Soup of the Day”, “Sandwich of the Day”, “Dessert of the Day”, “Salad of the Day”, and the Entrée choices.

In 2020, when the Better at Home program expanded to include the More Than Meals program during COVID 19, the number of home meals delivered by volunteers mushroomed to 400 meals a week, all prepared out of the Food Services kitchen at SHOAL.

On March 20, 2020, the province ordered all dine-in facilities to close as part of British Columbia’s stage 1 plan to fight the COVID 19 pandemic. Because the number of infections and deaths were flattening, on May 19, 2020 the province allowed some facilities, including restaurants, to reopen provided strict COVID 19 protocols were in place. The SHOAL dining room remained closed until November 2022, when it once again opened to the public from Sunday to Thursday. It opened seven days a week starting in December 2022.

In June 2020, the dining room started offering lunch or dinner meal pickup seven days a week, with the monthly menu posted on Beacon’s website.

In January 2023, after a pause due to the COVID pandemic, special themed feasts provided by the in-house chefs, returned to SHOAL. Each month the dinner provides something different than the usual fare, plus provides a great opportunity to visit the





restaurant to have a well-rounded meal and spend some time with those you care about.

When Jennifer Van Es became Director of SHOAL in March 2023, she recognized the growth in Food Services and hired a Rentals, Catering & Events Manager. Kirsten Tyler started in May 2023 and was the first person hired specifically to oversee all the events and catering at the Centre. Over the years, Food Services has been a hugely important part of the programs offered by Beacon at the SHOAL Centre.<sup>14</sup>

**May 7, 2023 King Charles III Coronation Tea**

Left to Right: Anna Hudson, Ingrid Shaw, Helen Kastner, Deborah Dodge, Angela Cuscianna



<sup>14</sup> Based on history written by Chef Russ Hudson (retired) & Anna Hudson nee Cibulak, March 2024



### **Donation From Niimi City, Japan, the Sister City of the Town of Sidney**

In a 2024 interview Don Amos, Mayor of the Town of Sidney from 1996 to 2008, explained the Sister City connection with Niimi Japan and the Japanese prints hanging at the SHOAL Centre.

“In late 2005, I met with a Japanese student, Megumi Iida, who was living in Sidney while studying at the University of Victoria. Megumi came from Niimi Japan and advised me that her community was interested in entering into a student exchange program with Sidney, which eventually could lead to a formal Sister City relationship.

Council was interested in the possibilities, so I involved our Sister Cities Association. In October 2006, my wife, Sabina, and I along with a delegation from our Association, visited Niimi at their invitation. They were great hosts and we enjoyed a fabulous tour of Niimi and the surrounding area.

In May of 2007, they visited Sidney at our invitation. Following that visit we agreed to become Sister Cities.

One of the highlights of their 2007 visit was an extensive tour of our newly opened SHOAL Centre. The Niimi delegation were very impressed with the facility and the concept of having the activity centre, senior services, assisted living, independent living, and private businesses all under one roof.

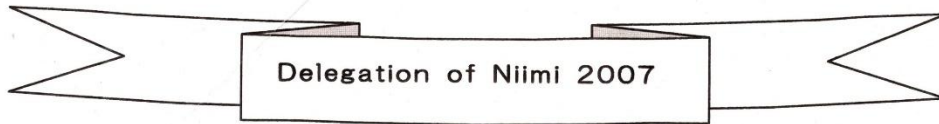
They presented the Town with works of art which the Town loaned to the Centre for permanent community display. Sidney Council wanted the prints displayed at the SHOAL Centre as it was thought they would get more exposure to the public, and because the delegation from Niimi had been so impressed with the Centre.

They visited us again in late June 2008. We signed the formal Sister City joint charter agreement on July 1, 2008 in front of the Pier Hotel, the hotel in 2024 which was at the east end of Beacon Avenue. Our visitors enjoyed our “Sidney Days Events”, and leading our annual parade as Honorary Guests. Since that time, the relationship has grown to include student exchanges, business exchanges, and visits of the mayors and councils.”



Becoming a member of the Sister City network is a commitment to promote peace, respect and mutual understanding across borders. Sister City relationships enable communities to realize and strengthen cultural and historical bonds, increase youth education opportunities, develop diverse economies, and collaboratively tackle emerging issues. These relationships foster thriving, globally competitive communities.<sup>15</sup>

**2007 Delegation from Niimi<sup>16</sup>**



The Head:  
Mayor of Niimi



*Masao Ishigaki*



*Hideo Enoki*

The vice-head:  
Chairperson of  
Niimi City Council



A member: President of Niimi  
Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
*Yoshihiro Niinaka*



A member: Chairperson of Niimi  
Art Association  
*Yukimasa Sugii*



A member: Chairperson of Niimi  
International Association  
*Akira Tsuchiya*



member:  
*Kyoko Henmi*



A member:  
*Hiromi Sadaoka*



A member: General Affairs  
Division, City of Niimi  
*Takashi Kodani*



A member: Planning Division,  
City of Niimi  
*Yoshinori Shibayama*

<sup>15</sup> <https://sistercities.org/become-a-member/>

<sup>16</sup> Photo courtesy of Don Amos Mayor of Town (retired)



May 8, 2007 Delegation's Visit to the SHOAL Centre<sup>17</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Photo courtesy of then Mayor Don Amos (retired)



Niimi Mayor Masao Ishigahi presents a work of art to the Town<sup>18</sup>

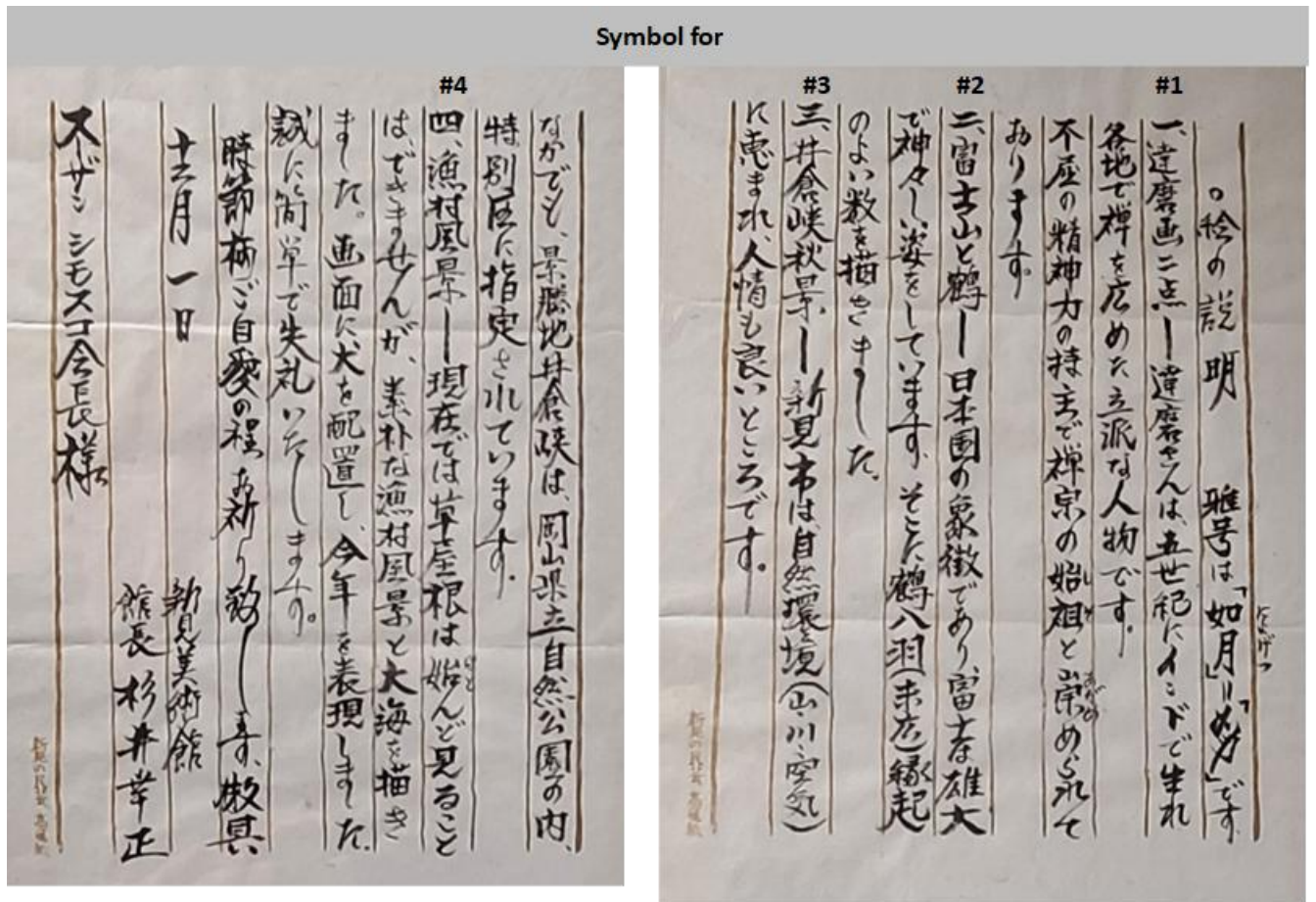


<sup>18</sup> Photo courtesy of PNR May 9, 2007




**Letter from the Curator of Niimi Art Museum, Niimi City describes each print**

The script is read from right to left and top to bottom – with the explanation of the first print (#1) on the extreme right, and the signature of the Curator on the extreme left in the photo below.



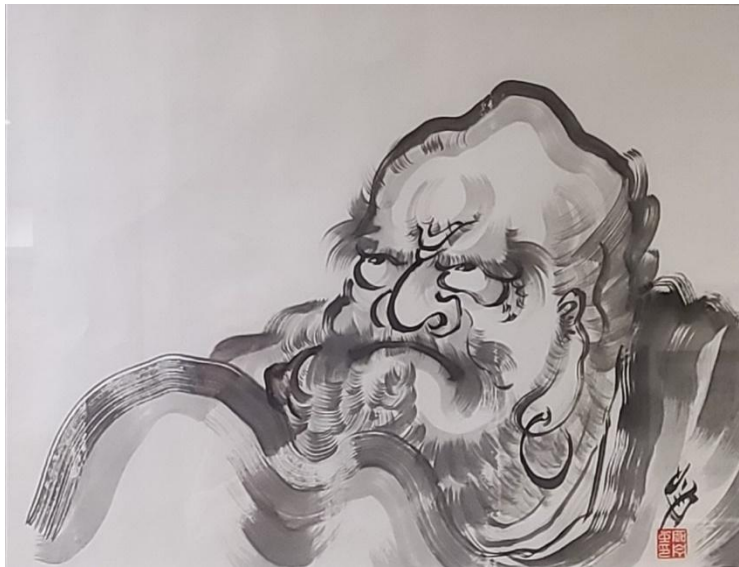
The three scenes are located near Mount Fuji in an area called Fujisan, a sacred place and source of artistic inspiration. The information beside each print explains the print and the reason it was included in the gift.



The prints that were given to the Town are artwork by Yukimasa Sugii, a member of the 2007 Delegation.

A member: Chairperson of Niimi Art Association  
**Yukimasa Sugii**





**#1 Daruma Japanese for Bodhi Dharma**

**Credited with founding Chan (Zen) Buddhism**

**Lived in 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century**

*Symbolizes good luck, happiness, and endurance*



**#2 Mount Fuji**

**Active Volcano, Tallest peak, Most sacred mountain**

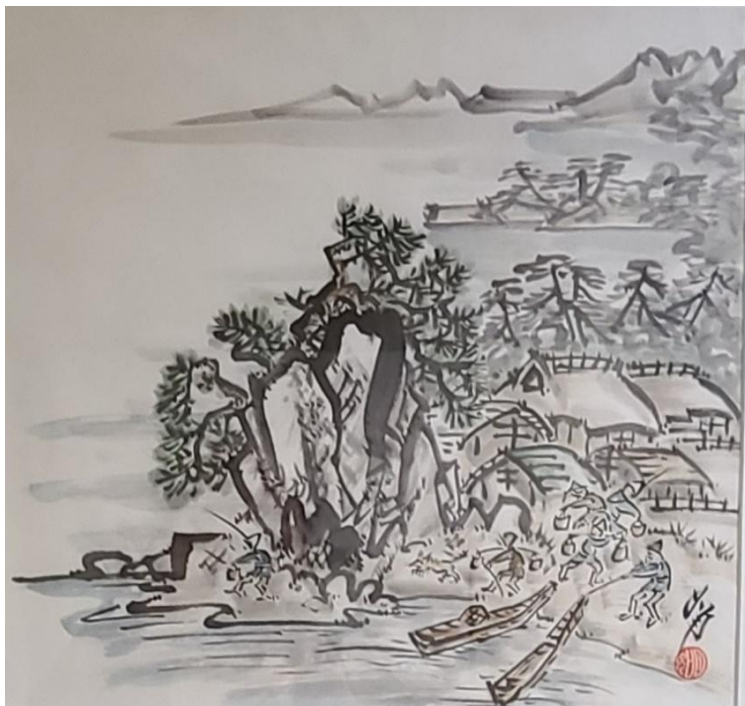
*The 8 cranes, or tsurus, are a symbol of good luck and longevity*





**#3 Lake Shoji**

**Most beautiful lake in Fuji**  
**Borders Aokigahara Forest**  
*National park in Okayama renowned for its healing properties, clean air, mountain views and healthy environment*



**#4 Oshinohakkai**

**Oshino Village Springs**  
**Most Famous Village Near Mount Fuji**  
*Typical fishing village by the ocean, the house has a new straw roof to support silk worm farming*

