

## 2020-2021 Rainy River Seniors Depot during the covid times...

The year 2020 started out the ways years around here start. Conversations start and end with the state of the weather. After a short break for the Christmas season, Betty and her helpers take the decorations off the tree and drag it to the back room. **Card groups** start to play on Tuesday and Friday afternoons, and the **Wednesday drop-in** opens up. Soon the **red valentine** decorations come out and later taken down again to make room in March for St. Patrick's Day greenery. We planned a **St. Patrick's Day luncheon**. The tables were prepared for the big event.

Then **COVID** struck its miserable face into our lives and a closed sign was stuck on our door. We kept the decorations up hoping things would go back to normal soon, after all, Canada had chased SARS out of the country without much disruption to everyday life.

**We opened the door again** in August, laughed at the St. Patrick's Day decorations and debated whether we should just leave them up. We began to play cards again and we opened on Wednesdays for drop in. One of us would arrive 30 minutes early to sanitize the tables and chairs and to start the coffee. Everyone arrived in their colourful homemade masks and pumped sanitizer on hands before signing in. We'd stand 6 feet from our good friends and make hugging motions. Not the perfect scenario but it would have to do. It was great to see each other again and soon it was like we'd never been apart. That's what good friendships are like.

By December Betty and Linda had dragged the tree back in place and the Christmas decorations appeared. We were having our **annual Christmas dinner** again on December 6th, but as a take out. The response was terrific and no-one seemed to mind that their dinner came in a brown paper bag. On the 11<sup>th</sup> we played cards. On the 14<sup>th</sup> someone felt sick and we immediately put the closed sign back up. People began to get tested and quarantine began. By Boxing Day the province was **in lock-down**. We began programs in February only to be in **Code Red by the middle of March**. Although we had no cases in our town, the major hospitals in NW Ontario were full and we could not afford to risk illness of any kind.

This lockdown began on March 15<sup>th</sup> and will affect a major plan in the works, but we have jumped a lot of hurdles over the past year and we will make this work too. In August of 2020 **we applied for a grant** from the **Ontario Government**. We felt there was a real need for our seniors to get some **basic training** on computers and cell phones. There were stories about the electronic gifts seniors were getting from their kids and they were afraid to touch them because they didn't know how to use them. Most of our seniors never worked with anything more sophisticated than a typewriter, if that!

Our grant application requested funds to cover some equipment for the depot as well as wages for instructors to hold **classes for any local senior who wants to learn**. We were so happy to learn that we qualified for a **\$25,000 grant**. The first installment finally came at the end of February. This did not give us time to put the plan into action, as the deadline was March 31! We requested and were approved an extension to the end of June. Equipment has been ordered, Instructors hired and **we plan to start classes** on April 6...under any COVID restrictions. Masks are required to be worn by all.

**The course is free to anyone over 55 years of age**, but a membership in the depot (\$20) is required. Your membership is good for any activities that we put on. There may be an extra charge for some programs to cover costs.

Rebecca Wood

March 15, 2021