



VITAL CAFE

Aging Well in Whistler: In the light of the pandemic, can it be done?

September 22, 2021 from 9am to 11am on Zoom with the Whistler Public Library

Event Snapshot

This summary's goal is to provide a snapshot of the panellist's presentations, the main room and breakout room conversations. Our goal was to discuss the question whether Whistler is currently supportive of an aging population and if seniors and Elders are able to age in place. In light of the pandemic, we also wanted to discover if the experience for our seniors had changed in the past 18 months. We examined the topic through the lens of three of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We invited community members onto the panel to represent these SDGs through the lens of their lived experience and work.

We were also joined by Courtney Beaubien and Philip Gibbons who are professional community planners with the Policy Branch of the Resort Municipality of Whistler's (RMOW) Planning Department. They are currently managing the Whistler Age-friendly Assessment and Action Plan Project.

Thank You to Vital Cafe Sponsors

We are grateful for support from the Whistler Public Library and the funding for the event and this summary from the Real Estate Association of Whistler.

Please visit our website whistlerfoundation.com for more information about Whistler Community Foundation and other Vital Signs initiatives. The COVID-19 Impact Snapshot will be available soon.

Panel Members

Each of our panelists supplied local context for one of the 3 SDGs chosen for the event.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



#3 - Good Health and Wellbeing

This encompasses both hospice and respite care as well as accessibility to a wide range of medical and homecare, mental health and affiliated care services. It also refers to the sense of belonging, being connected and to have barrier free access to activities.

Family Physician, Dr. Karin Kausky

Dr. Kausky has practiced in full service, longitudinal family practice in Whistler since 1993. Longitudinal, means care across the spectrum of ages including seniors. Karin is co-chair of the Sea to Sky division of family practice and physician lead on the whistler primary care task force.

Seniors' Advocate, Sue Lawther

Sue and her husband Les have lived in Whistler full time since the early '90's. Sue volunteers with a number of local organizations and is the Board Chair of the Whistler Community Foundation.

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



#10 - Reduced Inequalities

This refers to housing that is inclusive, affordable and accessible. It also applies to the inclusion, celebration of, and value of our minority populations. As well as availability of affordable services and non-active activities for all seniors.

Whistler Community Services (WCSS) Executive Director Jackie Dickinson

Jackie joined WCSS in 2009 and has worked in a variety of roles for over 12 years and currently is the Executive Director. Jackie has developed many programs and services that reflect her advocacy for community well-being, mental health, food security, and harm reduction initiatives.

**11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES
AND COMMUNITIES**



#11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

This is where there is dedicated community senior's space, and housing that is available, affordable, inclusive, and accessible. It encompasses access for people with reduced mobility to transit and buildings.

RMOW Councillor Cathy Jewett

Cathy arrived in Whistler at age 19 for a season and stayed a lifetime. She worked for over 40 years, mostly as a ski patroller on the mountain starting with the Garibaldi Lift Co. and retiring from Vail. She is on the current RMOW Council and serves on the Age Friendly Working Group.

Mature Action Community (MAC) Board member, Peter Dagg

Peter and his wife Pat have been living in Whistler for 13 years. He is a retired realtor and is fairly active biking and skiing. He currently works as a ski instructor but has also worked on the ski patrol and with mountain safety. Peter sits on the membership committee of the MAC Board. He feels that as the community ages, it is important to have a strong voice for seniors who want to stay in Whistler and not be forced to move as their needs change.

Question and Answer Presentations

Each panellist was asked to respond to a question in view of their particular Sustainable Development Goal. Their answers reflect their thoughts, opinions and knowledge based on their lived and work experiences. This section was to inform the audience and inspire discussion in our breakout room conversations.

Cathy Jewett on Sustainable Cities and Communities

Host: Cathy, my question is twofold. The Municipality and the Whistler Housing Authority have worked over the years to provide housing for our workforce. How do we ensure the continuity of housing for our seniors and moving forward, how do we assure that housing is sustainable for our current families who are our future seniors?

Cathy: They all tie together! Seniors who are currently in WHA housing, it will be hard for them to downsize or move. That are ageing and also, we need to consider those coming up behind them. Most of the three bedroom have couples in the three bedrooms, where there are families in need. When we talk about seniors, there is a theme of accessibility, many are



not designed for 65-, 85- or 95-year-old. Those people in these places are going to find it hard to age there. Stairs are the main barrier when it comes to groceries and care.

Seniors need to be connected with transportation. The highway gives us flow but it can be a barrier for some people. With the instability of market housing, it is very difficult for Municipality to build their way out, to build residents housing to replace the 'lost' housing (when a home is sold and renters displaced). We have a changing population, people are moving here to retire, we need to think about supportive housing and women's shelter, amenities that our neighbouring communities have. Now, we see people leaving to receive care or for accessible inclusive housing. Can the neighbouring communities absorb us or can we build them? Cooperative housing is another avenue of research. This community-based neighbourhood model could fill the loss of family connections as many residents don't have family member to help support.

Karin Kausky on Good Health and Wellbeing

Host: Karin, you have been part of the health services community here in Whistler since 1993. Can you speak to how the care and health needs for seniors has changed over that time? Also, as a health professional, what do you see as the biggest assets and the biggest challenges for seniors.

Karin: Senior's health and wellbeing is similar to the rest for the community, the single most important thing of the community thing for us to have a thriving robust primary care system. Full services with practitioners that will model longitudinal relationship-based care across the spectrum of the people lives. The capacity to attach people to a physician, to see them in a timely manner. That system needs to be intimately connected to and supported by community.

Money is important, but support for primary care is much broader and goes beyond that. Our community needs to provide advocacy and governance for primary care, the community needs to be part of the local governance so we can advocate for our needs. So, if our seniors population needs are growing, we need advocates to call for that. We have lots of expertise in our community to increase this capacity and provide care and guidance and innovative ways to. We have many clever smart people to help!

Jackie Dickinson on Reduced Inequalities

Host: Jackie, during this past 18 months, the fallout from the Covid pandemic has kept you and your staff very busy. Whistler Community Services rose to the challenges of food insecurity, job loss, stress and mental health issues that faced our community.



Thinking about the seniors you assisted during this time, can you tell us WCSS's response and observations? Can you please tell us about the senior's experience?

Jackie: One observation from WCSS is the important of belonging. The pandemic proved to us that more than ever, and WCSS needed to figure what it meant and why belonging was so important. What we needed to do was to take that notion of belonging and pull it apart and put it the pieces into action. We noticed that people didn't know where to go and so the all stakeholders worked to stress the importance that every door that someone's enters is the right door, it is key, someone is here to guide them, to point them in the right direction. The person needs to let them know they can be helped, connected to the next step. That first touch point when someone is in need is vital for getting that person to the next step.

WCSS learned that the social determinants to health were more of an indication and were more important than ever. Their income, access to education, technology, health. All these things were compromised. WCSS worked with Dr. Karin Kausky on the power of the social prescription, that housing is healthcare. Food and access to nutrient dense food is healthcare. Where these groups work together on a team-based approach there is equity and inclusion, driven by the community. People need a place, to connect and feel safe, with seniors it may look and feel and sound a little different, we need to be guided by seniors to see what this looks like.

The WCSS' Electronic Community Assistance Program helped people in downloading apps, activating their Vaccination Passport, Health Gateway and Life Labs for Covid results. Gizem Kaya heads the food security team, which provided food delivery for seniors, immune compromised, ill and the injured, of all ages. WCSS thinks that seniors need a resource guide on services and how to access them.

Sue Lawther on Good Health and Wellbeing

Host: Sue, you have been an advocate for seniors in Whistler for many years. This work has had its successes and challenges. Can you tell us what you see as the biggest need or needs, pertaining to wellness for seniors that they face in Whistler today?

Sue: Health and Wellbeing as seen through an SDG lens is; access to hospice, respite care, accessibility to a wide range of healthcare services, home care, mental health and access of affiliated care services are the indicators within the community. Also, access to a healthy lifestyle. The World Health Organization's statistics show that 80% of deaths in seniors are due to heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes, and so access to healthy diet and exercise is important. The International Council on Active Ageing speaks about 7 dimensions of healthy



ageing for wellness. They are: emotional, physical, financial, intellectual, environmental, spiritual, social and professional health.

The top four areas of opportunity in Whistler to ensure the health and wellness of our seniors are:

- Create awareness of the Health and Wellness assistance and resources already available. The pandemic accentuated the fact that people do not know where to seek help.
- To create opportunities for visibility of seniors of all levels. We are outdoor very sport-focused culture but there is less acceptance of aging in the community, you don't see them in the community. It doesn't fit the Disneyland-image of the resort. In larger centres we see people of all ages, all abilities, all cultures, all walks of life. There is an opportunity to create this visibility
- Sustainable transportation. We are a small community and our tax dollars are finite, what can we explore to resolve this? Possibly a volunteer driver for a Handy Dart type of service.
- Creating non-active opportunities for older adults. We need a senior social hub for learning, health and recreational opportunities.

Peter Dagg on Sustainable Cities and Communities

Host: Peter, with your experience in the real estate market here in Whistler and with your time with the Mature Action Community, how would rate Whistler as a welcoming place for retirees? Secondly, you have been and still are very active in outdoor activities, what are your thoughts on the future of living here, when this may not be possible for people like yourself?

Peter: Being in the real estate business of over 30 years, I was surprised at the cost of housing that doubled or even tripled since moving here 13 years ago. It is hard for new seniors to find an affordable property in Whistler but if someone currently owns market property and wishes to downsize, they have an advantage due to current market pricing. That being said, the choice of homes may not be accessible for someone aging in place. Moving into Whistler is difficult and WHA provides a welcome affordable housing but we are lacking assisted living or supportive housing. Seniors who have spent many years here are having to move away. We need to be planning seniors housing now, for those who have worked here for a long time or have just moved here. We need to look forward, beyond the active years. MAC has 290 members out of more than 2,000 seniors in Whistler and we need



seniors to rally and join MAC to have a united voice that can advocate for their needs going forward.

Final Snapshot: Overarching Takeaways from All Breakout Rooms

As our population ages, there are specific needs that are currently missing from our community. Participants were unaware of how many seniors were already in need prior to Covid but agreed that the resulting isolation, loss of connection and compromised health issues, highlighted the needs of seniors. Those who already had multiple community connections with family, friends, and groups and were able to adapt to an online presence, were less isolated. It was agreed that seniors can be an invisible demographic and it was felt that their perspective should be considered across all planning: recreation, new builds, health care needs, social services, education, employment and volunteer opportunities.

The main themes that emerged were:

- health and wellness
- housing
- dedicated seniors' space
- work

Health And Wellness

The following points about health and wellness were made by participants in the breakout sessions:

- Food insecurity was cited as a problem for some seniors during Covid. Some seniors lost their jobs, and combined with reduced incomes and fear of going out, led to an increased feeling of isolation, as well as physical and mental health issues. Seniors appreciated being able to shop early, felt safer and less at-risk of contracting Covid. WCSS was seen as an essential resource for many.
- There is a good base of health and wellness services in Whistler but often caregiving and daily chores falls on a spouse. If single, people often rely on friends but there are barriers. Private services were seen as expensive, such as assistance with laundry, meals, outside work and housekeeping and is cost prohibitive for many. Better at Home is seen as an excellent resource for light duties needs and visits from volunteers. It was also cited that there are gaps in senior specific services, such as mental health, physical therapy and geriatric services.



- There are very few extended families in Whistler as many young families and seniors have moved away from their support network. Both sectors are in need. This can lead to isolation, stress, loneliness and mental health challenges. The inclusion of seniors in the schools, to connection with young people was seen as important for health of all the community.
- The preliminary RMOW's Age-Friendly taskforce survey sees that on the whole Whistler seniors enjoy good health with low numbers of chronic diseases.
- Looking at what we could do and that has come out of the preliminary finding of the Age-Friendly survey was the wish for: an information hub.
- The advantage of multi-generational housing was seen as a benefit to health and wellness is for all ages. Creating neighbourhood 'care' groups where people get to know their elders and their needs, perhaps through community small grants?
- Covid has increased the isolation for seniors and their loss of social connections. The Whistler Public Library, Arts Whistler, the RMOW Parks and Recreation and the Whistler Writers Festival, were seen to have assisted by placing their programs online. Many become comfortable with this virtual world, others did not and were in fact more isolated.
- Health and Wellness was also described as the ability to be independently mobile but when bussing or driving is not an option, a reliable lower-mobility transportation is essential.

Housing

The following points about housing were made by participants in the breakout sessions:

- Concerns from long-term locals that they will need to leave the community without accessible housing. There was discussion that younger people (our future seniors), should be encouraged to be involved and to advocate for seniors.
- 8-80 Creating Cities for All. The premise is if a city plans for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old then the city will fill the needs of all ages and all abilities.
- This is a unique time in Whistler, homeowners with the real estate can afford to buy into a smaller home locally but these are often not accessible. Barriers such as multiple stairs inside and outside the building and open-air parking.
- Cooperative housing where owners purchase collectively and employ a caretaker to live onsite was suggested. This community-based neighbourhood focuses on relationships and connection, governed by a sociocracy model of equality of voice



and trust. These all-ages neighbourhoods are where people own their own space and share ownership of amenities, promoting a sharing responsibility.

Dedicated Seniors' Space

The following points about a dedicated seniors' space were made by participants in the breakout sessions:

- A centrally located senior's hub that employs a seniors' programmer for day programs was proposed. There was the suggestion that the 'Tennis Lands' (4500 Northlands Boulevard), would be ideal for this facility.
- Alongside this day programming area, the provision for limited care and independent living for seniors was a top priority.
- A transit van catering to those with limited mobility would take people to the facility with undercover drop off and pickup.
- This dedicated space would allow for; a community kitchen and gardens, meeting and learning room, physical therapy/health room. This provision would allow all seniors from our diverse population to stay connected. All diversities would be reflected in the programming.
- As much as a dedicated space was suggested, so was the idea that there could be a mixed element of participants and activities. This would create a natural blend of community, where all ages could intermingle at times.
- Technology was a challenge for many during Covid, as was access to a computer or smart phone. The space would have technology items on loan and learning programs managed by a satellite of the Whistler Public Library.

Work

The following points about a dedicated seniors' space were made by participants in the breakout sessions:

- The suggestion that seniors may fill some of the job postings in the community was discussed. There is a need now due to the lack of workers but would be valuable long-term. This was seen as beneficial as it would: replace lost income, give an outlet with purpose, provide the sharing of expertise, possibility to mentor youth and the advantage of a relationships with youth and youth with seniors.



2030 Realization of all SDGs

If Whistler were to achieve all of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals in terms of seniors, what would our community look like?

Briefly, we would be a community where advocacy and governance from all-aged residents had resulted in a more robust health care offering, graduated care, and affordable, accessible housing. There would be a community run senior's hub with learning opportunities and non-active programming. There would be alternate, needs-specific transit. Seniors from all diversities would provide experience to the business community and non-profit organizations by working or volunteering and would enjoy the enhanced health and wellness that connection and sense belonging provide.

SDG #1 No Poverty

- housing is accessible, inclusive and affordable
- more food is sourced locally and grown sustainably
- food co-op established, where seniors, other individuals and families and individuals share expenses on bulk buying,
- stigma is taken away from needed assistance
- Seniors who wish to, would be an active part of the economic landscape. They would be paid a 'living wage' that would supplement any pension benefits.
- recognition that we are all part of the solution

SDG #2 No Hunger

- there is no need for a food bank. See above*.
- access to communal or community kitchens where food can be prepared and shared

SDG #3 Good Health and Wellbeing

- everyone has access to a family physician who provide longitudinal care (cradle to grave) and follows the resident throughout their life
- mental health access will be low barrier, where people are triaged and urgent cases are given immediate priority. Stigma is reduced, the idea of a healthy mental state is acknowledged and embraced. A recognition of senior mental health needs. There is enough service staff to provide easy access and very reasonable wait time
- access to outdoors is accessible to all members of community. Barriers are reduced in relation to the cost of equipment, passes, etc. for those that require assistance



- we would have learned from and integrated indigenous perspectives on health into the wider health system
- we have learned from elders towards building community through social, emotional and spiritual health
- we would have learned and acknowledged other cultures customs and practices toward health. There would be an intertwining of western, traditional and holistic health care
- we make and keep connections across the ages, bringing together youth and seniors
- we have found healthy coping mechanisms for stress, reducing the consumption of alcohol and drugs
- wrap-around support for seniors when they are injured or ill. There would be a hospice and community support for chronically ill seniors
- there would be alternate housing to provide independent, supported and assisted living. Cohousing would be an affordable option for all residents
- we have a dedicated Seniors Needs Action Planner who coordinates the needs of seniors

SDG #4 Quality Education

- education looks at the whole person, where seniors are involved in traditional and non-traditional forms of teaching and learning
- alternate education that pairs retirees with young people with a view that retirees have time and experience, possibly wisdom to mentor

SDG #5 Gender Equality

- people of all genders are treated with respect and equality
- no stigma or wage discrimination to any one gender
- It would be taught and accepted in schools.
- inclusivity would be the norm for all aspects of life

SDG #6 Clean water and sanitation

- we have a high quality of water and sanitation

SDG #7 Affordable and clean energy

- individual houses, businesses, strata and hotels will have access to charge electric vehicles and use alternate forms of energy



- all business and housing are using clean energy, and this is the only option for purchase
- Whistler is a leader in resort sustainable energy

SDG #8 Decent work and economic growth

- Seniors who wish to work, would be an active part of the economic landscape. They would be paid a 'living wage' that would supplement any pension benefits.
- there is room for advancement and education in Whistler for all ages
- our economy has been diversified and is sustainable

SDG #9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure

- Whistler is a leader in eco design, industry and innovation in regard to utilizing existing bricks and mortar.
- Whistler is a leader in the resort industry for this goal.
- cohousing is a success for all ages
- integrated design of seniors' community space with health care, meeting, recreational and learning space

SDG #10 Reduced Inequalities

- connection between permanent and seasonal community
- ages, cultures, indigenous peoples and diversity of all sorts will be celebrated.
- no need to think about inclusivity as would happening in all elements of community life
- people will find their 'family' in youth, in seniors, neighbours, workmates. These would be made up of all diversities
- People from all cultures and ages will be represented on committees, boards, groups and government. They will be included in discussion and decision making.

SDG #11 Sustainable Cities and Communities

- affordable, accessible and inclusive and safe seniors housing is in place.
- heritage from our indigenous community is known, included and respected.
- transit is readily available and runs on clean energy
- pathways are lit for safer walking and where possible, free of ice and snow
- there are walkable neighbourhoods where grocery stores and other services are close



- the need for a personal vehicle is lessened and there is provision for a 'Handy Dart'-like service for people of all ages with lessened mobility.
- we would celebrate the diversity within the community.

SDG #12 Responsible Consumption and Production

- practising a goal of zero waste and low consumption, with products sourced from local manufacturers and producers.
- using substantiable, compostable and recyclable products.

SDG# 13 Climate Action

- single vehicle use would be lower, and the vast majority of personal vehicles would be electric with widespread charging stations
- electric/propane buses for local and regional transport.
- energy-efficient upgrades in homes and businesses are supported by grants and subsidies.

SDG #14 Life Below Water

- no pollutants are entering our rivers and lake systems; no invasive species are introduced to lakes and rivers.
- we have a healthy stock of aquatic life.

SDG#15 Life on Land

- invasive species of plants are a thing of the past
- our local wildlife is safe from human attractants
- forests, lakes and rivers are enjoyed and supported by eco-tourism
- all life is respected and sustainable

SDG #16 Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

- that after the global effect of the pandemic, Whistler has recovered and rebuilt with human rights as the centre of this recovery.
- that the justice system treats no one, an individual, race or gender, as unequal.
- language services are provided for all that need them
- affordable access to legal and justice services for all sectors of the community
- provision for safe housing
- provision for safe, supervised space for those who are temporally apprehended



SDG #17 Partnerships to Achieve the Goals

- we have collaborated with our populations, individuals, cultural communities, organizations and groups in the Sea to Sky Corridor on all the goals and paved the way to share resources to attain all 16 goals.

Local Resources for Information and Opportunities to Get Involved

Visit whistlerfoundation.com/vital-signs to find this document and live links to the resources.

[880 Cites: Creating Cites for All](#)

[Audain Art Museum](#)

[Better at Home](#)

[Better at Home: Final Report-Squamish, Whistler, Pemberton 2013](#)

[Council for Senior Citizens of BC](#)

[Health Link BC](#)

[Howe Sound Women's Centre Society](#)

[International Council on Active Ageing](#)

[Mature Action Community \(MAC\)](#)

[Whistler Medical Clinic](#)

[Town Plaza Medical Clinic](#)

[Whistler Virtual Walk-In Clinic](#)

[Mental Health and Substance Use Support Services in Whistler](#)

[Nurse Next Door \(Sea to Sky\)](#)

[The Mountain Village: Community Based Neighbourhoods](#)

[Meadow Park Sports and Recreational Facility](#)

[RMOW Links to Senior's Services](#)

[RMOW Recreation Guide](#)

[RMOW: Volunteer Opportunities](#)

[Savvy Whistler Guide: For the 50+ Crowd 2013-2014](#)

[Sea To Sky Safety Net](#)

[Seniors Services Society of BC](#)

[Senior Ski Team](#)

[Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre](#)

[Vancouver Coastal Health](#)

[Whistler Vital Signs: An Initiative of the Whistler Community Foundation](#)

[Whistler Accessibility Services](#)

[Whistler Blackcomb: Volunteer Opportunities](#)

[Whistler Community Services Society](#)

[The Whistler Housing Authority](#)

[Whistler Institute: learning and leadership opportunities](#)

[Whistler Museum](#)

[Whistler Olympic Park: Volunteer opportunities](#)

[Whistler Personnel Solutions](#)

[Whistler Public Library](#)

[Whistler Rotary Club](#)