



The volunteers at the Campbell River Seniors' Centre have been waiting seven months to welcome people back to the facility, and are happy to have all the necessary safety precautions in place to do so, including a sign-in booth at the entrance for contact tracing requirements. Photo by Mike Davies/Campbell River Mirror

Seniors' Centre re-opens

MIKE DAVIES
Campbell River Mirror

We're all feeling a bit isolated and separated these days but no one more so than our community's senior population.

When businesses and community facilities started shutting down to keep our most vulnerable safe back in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic, nobody knew how long it was going to last.

For the 386 members of the Campbell River Seniors' Centre, it turned into almost seven months and they've had very few opportunities during that period to spend time with their friends.

But through diligent work by dedicated volunteers to bring the facility in Campbell River Common in line with provincial health guidelines and protocols, the Seniors' Centre is officially ready to reconnect those friends with each other.

The current hours of operation are Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and the number of activities on offer are slowly increasing as the seniors

trickle back in.

"We're doing a soft opening for right now," says board member Rick Hine, "and the kitchen is now open for soup and sandwiches – today we have a chilli – and we're starting line dancing next week to go along with the cards and the pool tables that have been open for a week or so now, as well as the craft room."

Obviously, some changes have been made to the way things work at the centre but it's the organization's hope that people come back and see what measures have been put in place so they can feel secure in the fact that all precautions have been taken.

"I know people are scared," Hine says, "but we're confident that we're doing everything we can."

New protocols include a sign-in booth at the door in case there needs to be contact tracing done, everything is a bit further apart, extra sanitization needs to be done by both volunteers and members – such as cleaning and sanitizing your chair and table when you're done using it so it's clean for the next person. There's a limit on the

number of people who can be in any room at a given time. There are also marks on the floor to encourage physical distancing and a mandatory mask policy for anyone not currently eating.

"What people need to know is that they need to come to the centre," says board chair Linda Tucker. "Otherwise we can't continue to operate. We still have expenses, whether people come or not – whether we're open or not. We need people to come back so we don't have to close the centre. If we close it again, it's possible it won't ever re-open, and the community needs this facility."

"We fought for so long to have this place," Tucker continues. "Let's not lose it."

The centre is only open for members at this time, Tucker says.

Membership is only \$25 per year (and only \$20 next year, in fact), which gets you access to all of the activities and events.

Find out more about the centre and their new protocols by dropping in calling 250-914-4401.