



London Ontario Malayalee Association

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020

February 21, 2021

London Ontario Malayalee Association – Annual Report 2019-2020

London Ontario Malayalee Association (LOMA) was established with the aim of bringing together all the Malayalees of London and surrounding areas in the province of Ontario Canada to foster contacts, friendship, and understanding the extent possible for the wellbeing of the Malayali community.

Through Meticulously organized cultural, social, educational, and sporting activities LOMA adds value to society thereby achieving a high level of social interaction and social awareness in the community.

For the younger generation, we pass on the cultural heritage, tradition, the cherished legacy and values while they are integrating into the Canadian culture.

We celebrate traditional social and religious festivals to keep alive our strong bond with Kerala while hoping that the celebrations help us to link to the people, life, and culture of Canada, the beautiful country which we call home now.

Vision

To be the torchbearer for the Malayalee community, to promote the rich traditions and cultural values of Kerala among our friends, families, and younger generations, to meet their needs, advance their interests and develop partnerships with other organizations and agencies in pursuit of a cohesive, confident, and a prosperous community and we achieve social recognition.

Mission

- To enhance, engage and represent our community by facilitating strong partnerships, providing programs and services to engage our community members of all ages that promote our rich traditions, heritage, and culture.
- To establish a strong community network to provide support for the needy locally or globally, create avenues to form leaders for the betterment of the community they live in.
- To pursue all opportunities to participate and join local communities and thereby assimilate into the local culture and traditions.
- To provide respectful leadership to the community.

Our Values

- Respect: We are considerate and treat others with care and respect.
- Integrity: We are honest in everything we do.
- Diversity: We strive to engage all members of our community irrespective of gender, beliefs, caste, or political views.
- Compassion: We are genuinely concerned for the sufferings of others and take action to help.
- Pride: We are proud of our heritage, language, and our successes.

- Accountability: We are accountable to the community and are responsible for doing what we say we will do.

The executive committee has organized various cultural, social, educational, and sporting activities during the reporting year of 2019-20 in order to add value to our society and also to facilitate the relationship and social interaction. This year Association has been instrumental in supporting our community when COVID 19 pandemic has invaded our social lives. This report emphasizes the major activities that Association had this year.

2020 was not a regular year for anyone. In addition to the fact that we had to overcome the restrictions placed on us by the pandemic, we did not want the current unpredictability prolonging the AGM as we have some very important decisions to make regarding the future of LOMA and how we conduct business for the benefit of our future.

With great pride, I would like to announce that LOMA had a highly successful 2020. The Executive Committee thanks all the members and friends of the Association for making 2020 an enjoyable year.

For the year the report is presented for, below are the office bearers

Board of Directors

1. Thomas Joseph
2. Mariamma Mathai (Chair)
3. Yasodharan Govindan

Executive Committee

1. Joji Thomas (President)
2. Jaison Joseph (Vice-President)
3. Rajesh Jose (Secretary)
4. Jimmy Nedumpurath (Treasurer)
5. Dilna Martin (Program Coordinator)
6. Shaimy T Kallumadyil (Program Coordinator)
7. Amith Sekher (Program Coordinator)

We are also Immensely thankful to the Board of Directors, Mr. Thomas Joseph, Mr.Yasodharan Goviindan, and Mrs.Mariamma Mathai for the guidance and support you have extended all through the times. You have blessed us with your unconditional support and guidance all through the times.

The report covers all the important works and activities of the Association carried by the Executive Committee, during the year 2019-20. For ease of reporting, I have classified the accomplishments under the Organizational, Cultural and Social, Sports, Charity, and Member Services sections.

organizational

General Body.

For the first time in the history of LOMA, a General Body meeting on its own was held. The General Body was met on November 27 to review the financial statement of LOMA for the year 2018-2019. The General Body decided to conduct the audit and took the following decisions.

1. The General Body decided to conduct an audit of the accounts for 2018-2019.
2. General Body decided to form an audit committee to coordinate the audit.
 - i. Audit committee members
 - a. Joseph Job
 - b. Somon Zacharia
3. The mandate of the audit committee includes
 - a. Coordinate with all the five members of the previous committee.
 - b. Contact a CPA and report back to the board of directors the possible date of the completion of the audit within Dec 15.
 - c. Assist the previous committee during auditing.
 - d. Report to the general body if there is any noncooperation among the previous committee members.
4. The accounts will be transferred to the new committee effective immediately, but the committee cannot access the building account fund.
5. The signing authority of the account will now be President, Secretary, and Treasurer. At least two signatures are required to release the funds
6. The ex-secretary will be requested to present the report during the Christmas celebration on Dec 21.
7. The new committee assured the General Body a by-law for LOMA by April 2020.
8. Any by-law changes can only be made by the approval of the General Body.
9. The platforms available for LOMA should be used to promote the opportunities for cultural participation and create awareness of traditional language and training.

Constitution.

1. An official constitution/by-law was drafted for the association according to the NPO guidelines. All efforts have been taken to create a very comprehensive by-law taking into account major/majority topics raised by the members. After the review and discussions, it is up to the General Body to ratify the constitution/by-law.

Process improvements

The Executive committee of LOMA is proud that we were able to implement process improvement changes, so we are more transparent and committed to keeping the house clean.

1. The Executive committee decided to make it mandatory to get Quotes invited for all services availed by LOMA during our tenure.
2. The accounts of the events were reviewed within one of the month of each event.
3. A receipt was issued for all the money paid to the Association.
4. A voucher was issued for all payments made by the Association.
5. All sponsorship requests are posted online.

6. Launched members-only social media platform for quicker communication.

Website Redesign

The existing website of LOMA was a static one, had old style and required the developer itself to make any updates and changes. This was causing hardships as we had to wait for the developer to make updates, and if there are correction that could even cause more delay.

Recognizing the need for change the need as well for the ability for a non-paid person to make the changes locally, we have decided to go for website redesign. The new website will be ready soon.

Cultural

1. Christmas 2019.

Christmas was celebrated by the Association Members members on 21st December 2019 at Sir Frederick Banting Secondary School. Variety entertainment programs performed by members exemplified LOMA's gloriously higher standards. Rev Fr Martin Augustine delivered the Christmas message. The program ended with a delicious Christmas Dinner. Our heartfelt thanks to all members who have dedicated their valuable time to come here and made this day great.

2. Vismayathumbathu.

LOMA was happy to organize a Ulsavaravu, a much-awaited program of Prof.Gopinath Muthukad on April 26, 2020 at Saunders Secondary School, London. But due to the pandemic, we could not conduct the event.

3. STAY SAFE & SHOW TALENT

LOMA recognized the importance of emotional well-being during the lockdown period when our community members had to remain within their bubble. STAY SAFE & SHOW TALENT was an online response by LOMA to alleviate the pressure and anxiety that may have arisen from not being able to go out freely and engage with friends and families due to the lockdown restrictions. STAY SAFE & SHOW TALENT turned out to be one of our highlight events during the period. The STAY SAFE & SHOW TALENT consisted of 5 different contests namely Poem, Short Story, Pencil Drawing, Cookery, and TikTok video contest. The contests were based on the Covid theme. All the events were successful and in terms of participation and the quality of the entries. This not only allowed our community to be entertained and relaxed but also for the participants to showcase their gifted talents.

The events created a social media buzz and recognizing the interest it generated among the members of the community, **LOMA was featured on the CBC Radio morning show.**

4. Fishing Contest

London has many hot fishing spots and many of our community members frequently go fishing with family and enjoy the fun. To further augment the experience of fishing LOMA

conducted a fishing contest for its members on July 12, 2020. The winners went home with their catch and handsome reward.

5. Onam

Each Malayali is proud of the color, food, exclusive arts, and cultural heritage that he/she carries in mind and takes to wherever they go but the pandemic has forced us to do many things that we would not have done normally. One of them was the LOMA Onam celebration. Due to the restrictions in place, we could not conduct regular Onam festivities. Instead, we had the Thiruvathira and Athapookkalam contest. The Thiruvathira contest was held on August 23 2020 at Eastern Star Temple. The Pokkalam contest was held on August 29, 2022. We had a judge's panel for both the contests and who evaluated the contestants based on the rules and selected the winners. Both the contests drew a lot of enthusiasm and participation. **Our Social Media engagement on social media was at an all-time high for those events and that roughly translated to more than 30000 views on Facebook.**

6. Christmas 2020.

The holidays are a magical time, especially for kids. But this year, the pandemic forced families to rethink strategies to make that magic happen. LOMA launched Christmas events to keep the families safe from COVID-19 while still making this year special. The Christmas Family Photo contest and the Gingerbread House competition (for three different age groups) were a runaway hit and we had many entries to select the winners. Like all other online programs that the Association organized, this also coincided with a huge outpour of community participation. The photos of the winners were widely applauded by the judges of this contest as well as the community members.

Social Responsibility

COVID-19 Support Platform

During the lockdown, it was recognized that in general the members in our community especially International Students have been impacted heavily- many of them became jobless or their work hours have been cut short. We realized the international students were struggling financially during the lockdown period. **Recognizing the struggles and based on our commitment to responsibility LOMA joined with Kalikoottam Cultural Club, Lions Social Club and Tatvamasi launched a COVID-19 Support Platform to help ease the struggles of the community members.** With the help of numerous generous sponsors, we were able to supply more than 400 food kits to the needy. We arranged a contactless pickup or delivery with the help of many volunteers. The volunteers even traveled as far as Sarnia to deliver the food to the International students there. The food kits were even supplied to the needy of Chatham Kent. This initiative was fully organized by the leaders from the Kalikoottam Cultural Club, Lions Social Club, Tatvamasi, and LOMA. On behalf of the LOMA, I wholeheartedly acknowledge the contribution of each sponsor and volunteers who made the effort a remarkable achievement.

International Students Support

The Executive Committee is committed to providing respectful leadership to the community and its needs. The university and community college has many international students from Kerala. The office-bearers of LOMA quickly and effectively responded to the many situations involving students. We have received numerous calls from our community members during the lockdown- inquiring on different matters ranging from visa-related matters to financial or other issues. We worked our level best to help them in our capacity or redirect those inquiries to the best place that they can be resolved or addressed. We have followed up on each of these queries and made sure that they have the answers they were looking for.

In addition to the queries and help requests from students, there were multiple instances of getting SOS calls from the parents and family members of students from Kerala. In all the cases LOMA was in forefront of helping the students and their family members and worked with different levels of Government here. LOMA was also sent an appreciation letter from the Consulate General of India Toronto in this regard. The office-bearers of LOMA worked with them to help a student in distress to get united with family in India.

In addition to the support and help of the students who live here, LOMA also worked with St.Mary's Syro Malabar Church London to repatriate the body of Dennies Sebastian, an International student who died tragically in an accident recently.

In the last year, there were many examples of how a community organization can make a positive impact and we assure you all that we have taken all responsibilities seriously.

LOMA Christmas Food Drive

We know there are many in London who depend on the London Food Bank. Many are not as fortunate as we are and many sleeps hungry and this dependence on the Food bank skyrocketed due to the pandemic. The Executive Committee recognized the need to act on this and launched a LOAM Christmas Food Drive.

With the generous help of all those who have contributed, we were able to raise a total of 220lbs of food donations. The amazing response and willingness to give as the part of the community food drive is very telling of the generous spirit of our members that we hold dear. We are also extremely thankful to the Malayalee establishments who have accepted our request to keep the food donation boxes.

Charity

In keeping with our tradition of extending a helping hand to the needy, LOMA responded to many requests for help and one of the charity initiatives was for Joseph Thomas, an International Student who was involved in a tragic car crash. The family of Joseph Thomas and the friends requested fundraising on the GoFundMe platform. Through the campaigns a total of - \$18, 181.00 was raised. \$17, 529.13 was deposited to the account of Joseph Thomas. The campaign was set up with the beneficiary as Joseph Thomas himself and hence the amount was directly deposited into his account. We hope the fund raised will help him through the tough times and wish him a speedy recovery.

In addition to the GoFundMe campaign organized by LOMA, we supported many GoFundMe initiatives of other similar community organizations. We think it is best to help and support each other in times of need.

Sports

It's a matter of gratification for the Executive Committee that for the first time we were able to offer badminton sessions for ladies of our community. We received requests from many regarding the need for offering a platform for the ladies. Under the leadership of our Executive Committee member Shaimy Thomas, we delivered the promise of getting the facility available for the games. As the pandemic spread, the facility was closed, and they were not able to continue the game.

We also supported the activities for the London Sports club but the activities did not take off fully due to the pandemic.

Member Services

As part of our initiative to provide useful information and helpful support in establishing your life in Canada to the members of our community, LOMA offered two free information sessions on February 27, 2020.

Newcomer Information session

A Newcomer Information session was conducted in collaboration with the three best-known organizations (AccessCentre, WIL, and immploy) in London who work in the newcomer support sphere.

Tax Planning session

The tax Planning session was also organized to help the members in financial affairs and tax planning. The session was handled by Joseph Mukkada CPA.

Official platform

Even though LOMA has multiple social media accounts, none of them are members only. The email groups and the FB sites are a public communication method, but we felt the lack of a member-only communication platform.

Everyone is mobile and we realized Whatsapp is the best communication tool that can help us to reach members quickly, hence LOMA launched an official WhatsApp group. Since we have more than 250 members, we have formed two groups. The groups are named LOMA Official Group-1 and LOMA Official Group-2. The aim is to provide members updates about LOMA activities and other information that benefits Malayalees.

Membership

The Executive Committee and the Board decided to extend the membership of annual members to the year 2020 without any additional cost as there were no avenues of holding events or organizing in-person programs as we do normally; however, the

decision regarding the membership for the year 2021 should be taken by the General Body.

Calendar

The Executive Committee launched a calendar for the Association this year. The calendar was ready by Dec 1st week, one of the first to be distributed in London. We hand delivered the calendar to many households as well as distribute through the Malayalee shops in London. The calendar turned out to be hot one and all copies were picked up fast. Another initiative which we achieved success!!

General

Apart from the scheduled activities that I emphasized above, every year Association gets a lot of inquiries from Kerala and in Canada in terms of higher education opportunities, job opportunities, visa-related matters, accommodation, and travel-related matters so on. This year we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of inquiries coming to us, and we worked extremely hard to live up with those who have contacted the office-bearers. We were also involved in helping some of our community members who unexpectedly lost their loved ones Also many updates were posted on the LOMA FB group/page, email as well as Whatsapp group. Hope many of our community members were benefitted from the information shared in these groups.

Condolences

COVID 19 pandemic and lockdown have left many of our community members in great sorrow and misery as they did not get a chance to bid adieu to their loved ones when they passed away. There were families in our community, who lost their family members when they were visiting them in Canada and finally rested in Canada due to the border restrictions. We also lost a few of our members in the last year too. On behalf of LOMA, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the families who lost their loved ones during the reporting year.

Acknowledgments

Without the hard work of many of our community members, we would not be able to function so well this year. LOMA is not all about its members. Our members, supporters, well-wishers—all have a role to play in the functioning of the Association. Even though this year has been a setback for many of the businesses in our community, they were generous in helping LOMA with advertisements and sponsorship. Our sincere thanks to all the sponsors and advertisers; without their support, we would not able to accomplish many of the activities we undertook during the reporting year. Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the support from the family members of the executive committee who patiently supported their spouses while they were concentrated on the activities of the association.

Conclusion

This year has brought a lot of challenges to the way a community organization usually functions, more explicitly the way we serve our community. COVID 19 pandemic has rewritten our conventional way of engaging our members as many of our programs got canceled due to the lockdown restrictions. We decided that the obstacles should not stop us from what we should be doing out in the community. At the same time, we need to put the health, safety, and well-being of our community members as a top priority. This unprecedented and unconventional situation has triggered us to implement more programs and activities through online platforms. LOMA has been successful in organizing several events online during the reporting year, and we have witnessed overwhelming participation from our community members.

The dedicated work, selfless service, and leadership of the Executive committee, the wholehearted support of the Board of Directors, and the cooperation of all members have played an important role in the success of every program. I truly believe that our office has worked hard to achieve the objectives of LOMA and also hope that we served our community very well.

It was my great honor and privilege to serve our community as the Secretary of the London Ontario Malayalee Association and I express my indebtedness to the Malayalee community for this opportunity. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Board, the President, the Executive Committee for their strong support and motivation. As the Secretary of the London Ontario Malayalee Association, I Rajesh Jose, submit this report to the Annual General Body of the London Ontario Malayalee Association and seek your approval.

Rajesh Jose
Secretary
London Ontario Malayalee Association