

Vancouver Retired Teachers' Association NOVEMBER 2020 Newsletter



JOIN OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY

PLEASE JOIN US for our FREE Christmas Party on Tuesday Dec. 8 ONLINE via ZOOM. Put on your Christmas finery or bling or most outrageous Christmas sweater. Guest speakers include VRTA 2018 Scholarship winner Mariko Sakomoto who will speak on the Value of a Scholarship with today's Tuition Fees and describe some of her personal experiences as a COVID contact tracer. BCRTA Past President Gerry Tiede will present slides, Travels in Africa. There will be Breakout Rooms for small group meet-ups; individual

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Mariko Sakomoto, R.N. and VRTA scholarship recipient will speak Dec. 8

Christmas ZOOM Party TUESDAY DECEMBER 8

At 10:00 AM via your Desktop, laptop, iPad or Cell phone This is a Virtual Meeting

REGISTER with the Online Host by **TUESDAY Dec. 1** using EMAIL and send to: **Anastasia Mirras, HOST of VRTA ZOOM VRTA.president@gmail.com OR PHONE Register with 604 872-1859 Winola**

For Party Contributions & Song suggestions Email Party Organizer editortabloid@gmail.com

talent contributions and a group singalong of favourite Christmas carols and songs. Tell us your favourite seasonal song ahead of time so we can get the lyrics . Do you want to share a song, instrumental solo, story or poem? Let the Organizer **editorabloid@gmail.com** know. A Door Prize will be drawn, including one for Best Christmas Sweater!

Pre-register by Dec. 1 at vrta.president@gmail.com. If you are unable to use the Internet, then you can join by phone and register with Winola, 604 872-1859

INSIDE this issue...

- Page 2 President's Greetings/ VRTA Clubs & contact Info/ Calendar
- Page 3 VRTA AGM/Editorial
- Page 4—What Item to save from Burning home?
- Page 5 -BCRTA AGM & Conference

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- Page 6 Why Join VRTA?/ Tips to master ZOOM/Address changes/
- Page 7-Live Stage/Musicals/Quiz/ New Theme
- Page 8– Friends of VRTA Fund needs a Boost/Donation Info

President's Greetings



Dear members,

As this shattering year slowly draws to a close, never have I felt such a deep sense of gratitude. While that state-



sense of gratitude. While that statement may sound awkward, the events of this year also brought to light all of the things that are positive in our lives — perhaps things that some of us might take for granted. I, for one, am grateful for health; I am grateful for

family; I am grateful for friends; and, I am grateful for community. Although this year has deeply impacted us, we must remain mindful of all the beautiful things we have in our lives. As we now begin to set course beyond 2020 — far away from our pre-Covid-19 lives — I look forward to the day when we can once again see each other face-to-face. In the meantime, we will continue our virtual approach to all VRTA affairs. In order to ensure our mutual well-being, we must continue our emphasis of staying in touch with one-another, something I have found to be tremendously helpful and uplifting. Your VRTA Executive is prioritizing online get-togethers into 2021, with regular workshops being developed.

In order to serve you better, your Executive would like to know a few things about your interests. Would you like us to share information from some of the organizations we are members of, notably COSCO and the National Pensioners Federation? What resources and information would you like us to add to our website? Are there any topic-related interest groups you would like your VRTA to form? Would you like a member of your Executive to contact you, even for a guick hello? Please email your thoughts and guestions either to Denis Ottewell (dennyottewell@outlook.com or call and leave him a message at 604-526-7561) or to me directly at VRTApresident@gmail.com Your VRTA is here to serve you - and we are honoured to do so. Please let us know what we can be doing to better your lives! I wish you all a cozy and enjoyable holiday season, and a very prosperous 2021. - Anastasia Mirras

LEADERS for Activities

VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB: Diane Smith frandia@shaw.ca—3rd Wed at 2 pm -*Contact vrta.president@gmail.com to start Second Book Club

NEWSFLASH: UNDER PANDEMIC RULES NO ACTIVITIES CAN MEET IN GROUPS Until Dec. 7* then Check www.bccdc.ca

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING: Edie Wood –edithwood@gmail.com— Most weekdays at 10 am as pre-arranged with TWO DAYS notice STROLLERS: Norma Westrom normawestrom@hotmail.com–Wed 10:45 am

WALKERS: Margaret Yoshida margyoshi@gmail.com—Wed 10:00 am

Vancouver

Tabloid

A publication of the Vancouver Branch of the British Columbia Retired Teachers' Association

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VRTA EXECUTIVE 2019-2020

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TABLOID-eDistribution— Elaine Anderson 604 929-3306 VancouverTabloid@gmail.com

Members at Large Barb Mikulec, Sheila Pither, Ali Pollard, Les Rowe, David Smith, Diane Smith, Norma Westrom

<u>Volunteers</u> Lil Cumberbirch, Ora Fraser WEBSITE: www.vrta.ca

Calendar

*Please feel free to join us -*Notify vrta.president@gmail.com

NOTE: All events VIRTUAL for now Dec. 8 Tue. –Xmas Social Jan. 5 Tue. Exec. Meeting Feb 9 Tue. Valentine Happiness Social Feb 16 Tue. –Workshop (TBC) Mar 30 Tue. Exec. (TBC) May 4 Tue. Exec. (TBC)

2020 Annual General Meeting

Zoom AGM attracts 26 members

The VRTA held its first ZOOM AGM on Tuesday September 8 and 26 people attended, including one by phone. The guest speaker, Arnie Lambert, BCRTA Director and former VRTA executive member, gave a full update on BCRTA matters, including our pensions, the state of BCRTA and its branches during COVID (there are NO in-person meetings, even for Staff), the BCRTA Advantage program and preparing for the Virtual BCRTA Conference and AGM.

All the committee reports were submitted in time for the AUGUST 2020 TABLOID, and can be viewed on our website www.vrta.ca In essence, the business of the meeting decided that our branch fee of \$12 remains the same for 2021 year and a new executive was elected.

We missed the members who resigned from the executive, as well as Art Rempel, who died at age 103 on August 27. We welcome new members David Smith, former Hamber teacher, and Marilyn Rushton, former itinerant VSB teacher.

2020-21 Executive for 2020-21

PresidentAnastasia MirrasFirst VP*Marilyn RushtonSecond VPEdie WoodTreasurerDave EllisSecretaryDenis Ottewell

Editor, Website Ros Kellett Membership *Elaine Anderson Past President Winola Chu

*NOTE: Elected at Sept 22 Executive meeting



Arnie Lambert, BCRTA Second VP, answered many questions. Later at the BCRTA Conference he was elected First VP.

Members at Large: Barb Mikulec Sheila Pither Ali Pollard Les Rowe David Smith Diane Smith Norma Westrom

SO IT'S DARK and rainy outside and you are feeling sorry for yourself. In wartime many hugged the parent who promised to be home by Christmas. Some never returned. Fortunately, my Dad, came home after four years. I reflect on the courage of those soldiers as we, too, face uncertainty with a second (or is it a third?) wave of this nasty virus. In this time of crisis, we must "pivot" our fears and seek new outlets for our energy and thoughts.

Human companionship is fundamental—we must connect. So I go for walks and talk to people, and put on my mask when I want to chat a bit longer. I phone my

Editorial

friends and other neighbours more. We must also take care of ourselves: read a good book; play puzzles; learn a new instrument or language; attend online concerts and webinars. Loneliness can destroy the soul.

I urge you to LEARN how to videoconference. Learn how to use ZOOM. Reach out and encourage your closest friend to learn as well or contact myself or any executive member to learn ZOOM skills. We would love to see you all at our December 8th Social party and learn how you are doing. If you have a Seasonal story or poem you would like to share or special Christmas song you would like to perform, please contact the Organizer (editortabloid@gmail.com) ahead of time so we can build the Party program together! Season's greetings to you all! **—Ros**

I attended the BCRTA AGM as an Alternate and was delighted to still be included as a recipient of the delegate's bling and scarf mailed out ahead of time.



What one item should I save from my Burning House?

After people and pets, what is really valuable to you?

In this time of a world-wide Pandemic and Public health imposed isolation procedures, as well as the devastating summer fires in Australia and California, we take time to value what really matters in our lives. Four weeks ago I awoke around 3 am and smelled smoke. Had we left a pot on the stove? No, the source was outside the house, a mere three blocks away where four large fire engines were dousing buildings near the King Edward Canada Line Station. I had not heard any sirens! It got me thinking: what one item would a person retrieve if they knew all the living beings were out of the building and safe yet they had a few minutes to get one item ? READ on to get others' perspectives.

f your house goes ON FIRE, SAVE those important PAPERS! I would bring my wallet and my Indispensable Binder. This big binder has all my personal stuff in categories; My family and Me, The people in my life, My home, My financial stuff, My travel stuff, My medical stuff, My legal agreements of care and My on-line life. My binder was purchased from Diana Cruchley (dianacruchley.com); she created this binder after her husband went unconscious one night and she realized she didn't know enough to keep the house running. Then her father died and she was the executor. It's not IF an emergency will happen to you or your loved ones it's WHEN. Having eve-



rything important in one binder makes it so much easier in the future for myself or my loved ones at a very stressful time. You could use Diana's template or make your own. - Edie Wood

his is tough. If husband and goldfish were safe, I would try for three items; shoulder bag with wallet and cell phone in it and backup hard-drives for our two computers. Our wills and important documents are already in a fireproof locked box. Our photographs of our own childhood and our own children are in "hardcopy" albums: we would lose them in a fire. But our current photographs and some of the special older ones are stored "in the Google photo cloud". Much would be lost! - Ros Kellett

My iPhone. I love browsing through photos of my three grandchildren...plus having readily available contact information for friends and family. I'd really miss my iPhone. But then a colleague pointed out to me that what's on my phone is easily retrievable. OK... then: My mother's heirloom diamond earrings? I never wear them...or any of the other "valuable" jewellery I own...so jewellery wouldn't be missed. Ah...my old photo albums? Nope. I haven't taken them out of their storage spot

and looked at them in years. Besides...they're too big and bulky for a last-minute grab as I flee the flames. Surely there's something I'd want to save? Was nothing in my home of any great significance to me? I was shocked at what I'd discovered about myself. My dear friend, Diane Smith, revealed that she had come to the same conclusion as me. As long as husband Frank was OK...there was nothing else to save. Is this part of aging? Have we learned that "stuff"...no matter how valuable...is no longer of any importance to us? Health and the health and happiness of our family and friends is all that re-- Ali Pollard ally matters.

f my house was on fire and I could only take one object with me, it would be my guide dog's harness. With her harness on (photo below), Misty and I would have a vastly increased chance of getting out safely and helping others to do the same. I have often thought of this very scenario over the years, so it feels good to put my decision in writing.

-Marilyn Rushton and guide dog



BCRTA 2020 AGM & Conference Presentation Reports



Barb Mikulec, wearing scarf gifted to delegates by Johnson, was elected a BCRTA Director.

This year's Conference and AGM were both held virtually, October 2 and 3. The upside of this was that the Key speakers were recorded so you can hear them yourself by clicking on their image on the Home page of the website: bcrta.ca One can also see snapshots of participants on that site – two of our delegates display their purple scarves! Arnie Lambert hosted the Conference in lively friendly manner, even giving us coffee breaks.

The virtual AGM meeting started on time with only one or two delegates having trouble connecting online. Chairperson Pat Brady explained the rules and how to vote using the screen symbols to Vote Yes or No; only pre-registered delegates could vote. The meeting included elections. Congratulations to Barb Mikulec for winning a Director position and to former VRTA executive member, Arnie Lambert, acclaimed First Vice-President.

The BCRTA is in good hands!

PHARMACARE

Dr. Steve Morgan stated that Canada is the only high-income country without a universal public drug plan (Pharmacare). Dr. Morgan compared Canada with Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the U.K., which all have a universal prescription drug plan. Canada has Medicare, but not Pharmacare. 2/3 of Canadians have drug insurance plans. In 2019 on average Canadians spent \$900/person on prescription drugs, compared with \$450/person average spent on prescription drugs in the other countries being compared with Canada. Dr. Morgan believes strongly that with Pharmacare both Canadians and the Canadian government would save money. His presentation was loaded with



charts and statistics yet very well explained. Check out that presentation on the BCRTA website.

-Dave Ellis

OLDER ADULTS DURING COVID-19

Dr. Roger Wong from UBC took us through the steps that he and other experts took to begin to understand this virus. Now the world has entered a particularly difficult stage. People on the front lines of understanding are saying, "We don't know what we don't know." Predictions about when the fight to tame this ghastly plague will be won are impossible to make. I felt that Dr. Wong understands not only the physical devastation that this virus can inflict but also the mental and emotional anguish that many people have had to endure as they cope with isolation and loss. **-Sheila Pither and Norma Westrom**

RR SMITH MEMORIAL FUND FOUNDATION

The AGM of the foundation led off the day on Saturday October 3rd. Our own Barbara Mikulec continues for a second year as President, as does Sheila Pither as board member. The charity has been giving almost \$40,000 each year to deserving individuals and groups, locally and internationally. More details are available at www.rrsmith.ca *-Ros Kellett*

LONG TERM CARE

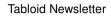
Isobel Mackenzie, Senior Advocate of BC, started the Friday session describing Long Term Care homes. She described the issues wrought by COVID-19 on some seniors: decrease in their investments; increased costs for food, medication, transportation and telecommunication and decreased opportunities for socialization.

Some allied health concerns were noted: less contact with physicians, wait lists for surgery, only one person designated to visit at long term facilities, and a decrease in respite care causing some burnout of caregivers. Urgent questions are: how to support seniors with home care services, and to enable socialization safely to combat isolation for all seniors. **-Barb Mikulec**

and Anastasia Mirras

Grace Wilson of Nelson was elected BCRTA president by acclamation during the AGM;





Vancouver Retired Teachers' Association NOVEMBER 2020 Page 5

Why I joined the BCRTA?



Marilyn Rushton became First VP of the VRTA at the September executive meeting.

-Interview with MARILYN RUSHTON

I wanted to maintain connections with some of my teaching colleagues once I retired and I had already met some VRTA friends at my DKG meetings. I look forward to making new friends in the VRTA and to give back to the community. I also like to keep busy.

For fun, I am fortunate my husband Ken is a wonderful partner and we do lots together! I was born blind but I never let that stop me. We hike, use the gym, tandem bike-ride, cook, read stories together

and we both love singing and performing. I also have two sons who live outside BC and they each have children so I am a busy grandmother as well.

Being on the VRTA, I would like to use what I learned from my 14 years of teaching K-12 blind and visually impaired students in the Vancouver public schools and my years as a Burnaby school board trustee to help others to understand how to handle blindness and what digital devices we use to communicate with. I also want to sing with you all! -Ros Kellett

TIPS for Using ZOOM

- Setup Ahead of time: Download the Zoom App from website zoom.us/download ahead of time on to your electronic device. Arrange your camera on your computer or Ipad so it is aimed at your face, with your nose in the centre of the screen, Click on Video and on Audio once the meeting starts.
- Arrange the Room Lighting: Make sure light is placed in front of you so that people can see your face. Avoid sitting with a window or light shining directly behind you.
- Enable good sound reception. Having a headset with audio input and output (mic and speaker) can help others to hear you and vice versa while sitting back comfortably in your chair. Otherwise, ensure that you are close enough to the screen to be heard and to hear.
- When connecting (Joining the meeting), make sure that the volume control on your computer is turned on before you join the meeting.
- Once connected, focus on the person speaking or those in attendance. Mute yourself if you are not directly speaking and to avoid background noises interrupting the meeting.
- Overall just Be Yourself and Have fun! For Further tips, contact Ros at editortabloid@gmail.com

ANNOUNCEMENT

Tue. Dec. 8 -VRTA Social Party; Register by Tue. Dec. 1 –see page1



Did you know that your non-teaching spouse can



spouse can join the BCRTA?

If you are an active member of the BCRTA then your spouse can join as an associate member. The spouse is then eligible for any of the member benefits, such as *MEDOC, *Johnson Prestige Insurance and other Member Advantage programs. (*Dual membership is not required in these and some other programs).



Send letters, advice or news items to roskellett@gmail.com 604-873-0568. Add name, email address & phone number. Keep under 150 words; they may be edited for length and clarity.

HAS YOUR POSTAL OR EMAIL ADDRESS CHANGED?

Laurie Boyd of the BCRTA prefers that you contact her directly using the new ONLINE Form. https:// bcrta.ca/update-member-info/ Please also NOTIFY VRTA membership chairperson ebanderson@shaw.ca

Live Stage Offerings

November to December—2020

This Fall the Arts Club has put together a Theatre Trio of oneperson shows to excite and entertain us. Their first play, No Child, is over but the second play, Buffoon, by Vancouver playwright and author Anosh Irani runs until Nov. 22nd at Granville Island Stage. *Buffoon* is a tragicomedy about a clown named Felix. The third play, *The Twelve Days of Christmas,* a tale of finding love in unlikely places, runs from Nov. 19th to Dec. 20th at the BMO Theatre Centre, Information can be found at artsclub.com or phone hired to teach a woman to play 604-687-1644. Please note that a digital recording of the plays is also available online.

The Firehall likewise welcomes limited audiences to its theatre for a socially distanced Fall season. From Nov. 12th to Nov.22nd The Amaryllis will be presented. The play written by Michele Riml and directed by Mindy Parfitt, stars Jillian Fargery and Shawn Macdonald as a Vancouver artist, her troubled agent and an amaryllis. From Dec. 10th to Dec. 12th and



Dec. 17th to 19th the third annual Solstice Greetings returns to The Firehall with stories, songs and seasonal greetings to celebrate the return of the light. For more information contact firehallartscentre.ca or phone 604-689-0926.

United Players of Vancouver presents The Red Priest (Eight Ways to Say Goodbye) from

Nov.12th to Dec. 6th. The play, directed by Keltie Forsyth, is set in the year 1740. The story revolves around Vivaldi who was violin before the King of France. The play runs Thursdays through Saturdays at 8 p.m. Sunday matinees (Nov., 15, 22, 29 and Dec. 6th) are at 2 p.m. Runtime is 80 mins, with no intermission. Because of limited numbers early booking is encouraged. Also, United Players offers people the option to enjoy the performance online. For more information contact unitedplayers.com or phone 604-224-8007.

- Ora Fraser

THEME & DEADLINE for the NEXT ISSUE - Friday **January 8 2020**

Which mask is your favourite to wear? Photo required. About 50 words.





-from the Internet

Guess the word or phrase for these abbreviations or descriptions—can you get 10/10?

- 1. WHO
- 2. BCCDC

3. Going into an epidemic lockdown

4. Gaining weight during a pandemic

5. Machine that helps a person breathe

6. PAPR (worn by a surgeon)

7. Strict isolation coming from overseas

8. Maintaining a distance of 2 metres

9. Crowded indoor setting

10. Cloud-based video call

.Answers

1. World Health Organization

2. BC Centre for Disease Control

- 3. Flattening the curve
- 4. Fattening the curve
- 5. Ventilator

6. Powered air-purifying respirator

- 7. Quarantine
- 8. Social distancing
- 9. Congregate setting
- 10. Zooming

Your contribution of jokes or witticisms welcome; please send to: editortabloid@gmail.com

VRTA Scholarship needs a Boost!



Over the long existence of the VRTA its members have always taken time to pool money together to give to a



charity or to a student to go into Education. Starting in 2012 the VRTA provided funds each year for a student to enroll in the UBC Education program. Then in 2014 a second bursary was given to a UBC student entering the Nursing geriatrics program. Later two more bursaries were added, for SFU students, one in the Education program and the other in the Department of Gerontology. But in 2017 new tax laws restricted the VRTA from making donations; we were to be a member based service organization only. In June 2018 the AGM formed a separate non-profit organization, the *Friends of the VRTA (FoV)* to raise money for these bursaries. In order to boost this fund the VRTA agreed to pay for the costs of the September luncheon (a service to members) in exchange for a donation by the member and his/her guests to this Scholarship Fund equal to or MORE than the price of the meal. Alas, from the graph you can see that, due to COVID restrictions, the FoV funds have plateaued this year, hampering our ability to start giving out bursaries again. Can you help us with a financial boost before the end of 2020? All donations are income tax receipt-able. We hope you appreciate this initiative and will be generous.

Elaine Anderson, Director on - Elaine Anderson & Ros Kellett, on behalf of the Board, Friends of the VRTA Board of the Friends of the VRTA Scholarship committee.

HOW TO DONATE ONLINE:

Go to Van City Foundation http:// www.vancitycommunityfoundation.ca, Click "Funds" at the top of home page, Type R.R. Smith in the "Search" area, Click on R.R. Smith Community Fund", then Click on "Give to this Fund" and Fill in details. Designate the funds by typing Friends of VRTA in "Leave a comment" space. Donations over \$20 get a tax receipt immediately. Then notify Dave Ellis dellis7734@gmail.com of your name.



The graph shows how the Friends of VRTA scholarship fund increased significantly after every in-person September Welcome Back lunch. This was cancelled in 2020.

HOW TO WRITE A PAPER CHEQUE:		
PAYABLE TO: R.R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation		
In the Memo line: Friends of VRTA –Scholarship & Bursary Fund		
Name (PRINT)	Amount of Donation: (cheque/cash/credit card)	
Mailing Address:	City:	Postal Code:
NOTE: Don't forget your name and address so we can send out a charitable tax donation receipt!		
MAIL TO: Friends of VRTA, c/o Dave Ellis, 2086 Newport Avenue, Vancouver, BC. V5P 2H8		

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