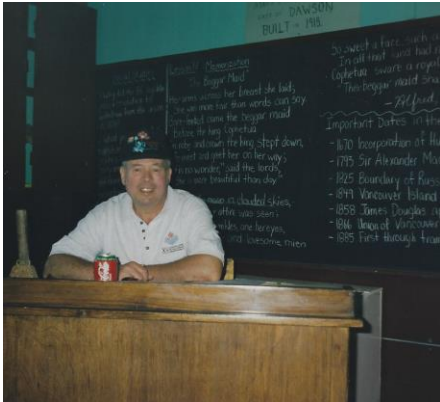


Peace River South Branch (Dawson Creek) by Cathy McKibben, Heritage Coordinator Oct.2020

South Peace Retired Teachers' Association was established in June 1996 by Gerry Clare, with 20 members. There are now 65 members, although a few live elsewhere.



1998—President Gerry Clare sitting in the Pouce Coupe Central School in Pioneer Village in Dawson Creek. (Laurel David by the sign). Over the years, we have collected old books, readers, textbooks, furniture, and artifacts for this original schoolhouse. During the summer, some of us sit in the school to talk to tourists who love to reminisce about their experiences in a one-room school.

Since 2001, a group of us have taught lessons to classes of all grades in the schoolhouse. As well, we give the classes a tour of the Pioneer Village, followed by an information scavenger hunt. Over the years, we have had 12 to 25 classes each June.

Our teaching is very strict—ring the bell and line up to come in, boys remove caps, no talking, etc. We sing God Save the King, check for dirty hands and fingernails, then have Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic, a short spelling bee, and an outside game if time permits. The children love reading from the old readers. From time-to-time, a yardstick is whacked on a pupil's desk!



We have received many thank-you notes and pictures. Here are some quotes-- “Pioneer School was very interesting to me because it was very different and a lot of different rules.” “I really liked when Johnnie kept getting in trouble.” “I really enjoyed the school, but I would not like to sit on my butt all day. That would be kind of boring.”

In 2017, we were told we could finally “turn” the barber shop back into a teacherage, which is attached to the schoolhouse. We were so excited. With some furniture stored at Pioneer Village and donations from some of us, we were able to transform the room.

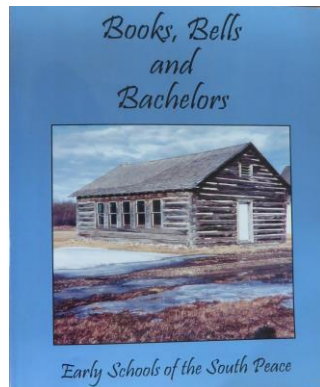
Now we could actually show the students what the teacher's “home” in the school looked like, instead of just asking them to use their imaginations. Of course, we also told them that some schools had separate teacherages, and many had none. Those teachers would board with local residents, often in the home of some of their students!



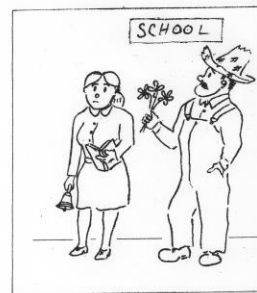
Cathy McKibben's parents' trunk and grandmother's nightdress, Connie Clark's wardrobe, Jan Hansen's mother's chenille bedspread, Marg Slowinski's rug-beater and broom.

In 2004, a group of us decided to gather together information on the old one-room schools of the area. Our plan was to make about five copies of the information to keep in the archives. However, the more we delved into the archival materials, and the more we talked to former students and teachers, the more interesting the project became, until, someone said, “You should publish this”! I was quite taken aback as I knew nothing about publishing, and neither did anyone else in our organization.

But, I'm proud to say, after overcoming many challenges with my computer, I was finally able to send a disk containing our efforts to a publisher, and miraculously, a good-looking book resulted. We had several printings, selling 760 books, with very positive feedback!



Books, Bells, and Bachelors



Early Schools of the South Peace

With the profits we made selling our book, we were able to donate \$1000 to Plan Canada and \$1000 to the R.R. Smith Foundation..

Over the years, we have had many interesting and informative meetings/get-togethers, usually six a year. One of our favourites is the annual “To Hell with the Bell” brunch, to which we invite newly retired teachers.



A large group of retired teachers gathered for breakfast on September 8, 1998, in the back yard of Walter and Ellen Schoen in Dawson Creek to celebrate their retirement from teaching in School District 59. This annual event is held to help dispel feelings of regret which may be held on that first day of school. (Photo by Patsy Nagel)

**Retired teachers say
‘To Hell with the Bell’**

Newspaper article 1998



“To Hell with the Bell” 2007

Another favourite activity is the scrumptious multi-course lunch or dinner provided by cooking students at the College.

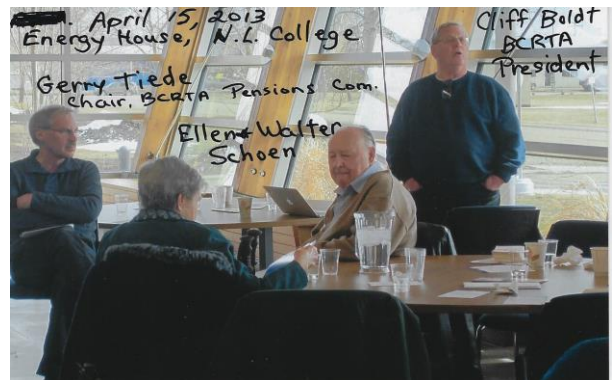


Demonstrating how to make flambe dessert

We were so pleased to be visited by BCRTA presidents Sheila Pither (2009) and Cliff Boldt, and Pensions Committee Chair, Gerry Tiede. (2013)



Sheila Pither, BCRTA President, Leah-Faye Abel, Fort St. John President, Cathy McKibben, Dawson Creek Pres, Joan Lowe, Past Pres. FSJ



Gerry Tiede, Pensions Chair, Cliff Boldt, BCRTA President, Ellen & Walter Schoen. original members

Over the years, we have had many very enjoyable lunches, presentations, and activities. Two of the more unusual activities were guided tours of the Chetwynd chain-saw carvings and the Bear Mountain Wind Park.

People come from all over the world to compete in the annual chain-saw carving competitions, and the wind park delivers enough electricity to power much of BC's South Peace region.



In 2018, we were proud to win a bottle of champagne for the highest percentage of new members.

And lastly, we are very proud of long-time member, Margaret Sutton, who received the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award for her volunteer work in Dawson Creek.



Margaret Sutton, Past President and BCRTA Director for 2 years, Connie Clark, President



Margaret Lieutenant Governor Judith Guichon
2014