

THE BRIDGE

KTRTA NEWSLETTER Editor: Donna Sharpe onlineoffice.ktrta@gmail.com



Rainbow Range, B.C. Vibrant colours are from mineralization. See reference to Rainbow Summit in Karla's story in Travel.
Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons. Rainbow_Range_Colors.jpg

THE BRIDGE

*Bridges provide a link
Bringing people closer,
Filling the space with new possibilities.
Let's bridge age, status, race, differences
With uncommon humanity.
Let's bridge the gaps that chain us,
Unlocking our grandest vision for today.
By Barb Stankiewicz*

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Where did all the time go? Only days ago, I wished you all a Happy New Year. Now I am too late to wish you a Happy Easter. At any rate, I hope you had a happy time over the Easter weekend. This newsletter is coming out earlier than usual to accommodate our newsletter committee's travel plans in May, June, and July.

Our *Lunch & Learn* sessions for January, February, and March were well attended, and we were happy that the Covid-19 safety guidelines have been somewhat relaxed. Masks are optional now, not mandatory. Covid-19 is still with us, but without the severity, because so many of us are fully vaccinated. Of course, we ask that you only attend if you are feeling well.

At our January luncheon, we had Lisa Hansen, a representative from Johnson Insurance. She gave us a good overview of the offerings from Johnson. In February, two presenters from the Kamloops Wildlife Park enthusiastically told us about Raptors. Unfortunately, I could not attend, but Suzanne has some photos and a short write-up of their presentation. Our annual fundraiser, the Silent Auction, was much fun in March! The silent auction is a significant funding source for our Retired Teachers TRU Bursaries for Faculty of Education students and other charitable giving. Pat Petley, KTRT Club president, provides a detailed report on this year's Silent Auction in this issue. Our April luncheon will be our last one for the 2022-23 season, and we look forward to a presentation about caring for orchids from Kirsten McDougall.

You would most likely be ecstatic if you discovered you had won a brand new house in a lottery. Likewise, the many winners over the years since the Y Dream Home Lottery began have likely been excited and thankful for the opportunity. However, one of our members did just that, and he was less enthusiastic than I had expected by the time it was over. Read Frank's detailed story about his experience winning the Y Dream Home Lottery and how his life has unfolded.

I have been dealing with osteoarthritis for several years and was referred to an Orthopaedic surgeon in Vernon. He introduced me to a kinesiologist who works in his clinic, and she has given me exercises to strengthen the muscles in my knees and legs. I have included these exercises because I am not alone in this problem. The activities are helping me, and I hope you find them helpful too.

Thank you to all of the contributors to *THE BRIDGE*. With our member's input, we have this bi-annual newsletter. As you read this issue, please consider what kind of story/article you might send me for the Fall Winter 2023-24 issue.

Yours truly, Donna Sharpe, Editor

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Thanks to our writers for this Spring Summer issue 2023 of THE BRIDGE newsletter: Donna Sharpe (Editor), Marney Bethell, Karla Bradshaw, Noeleen Bunney, Suzanne Legault, Barb Mulhern, José Mendez, Sheila Park, Pat Petley, Meagan Steeves, Frank Veszely.

MEMBERS' MUSINGS

The "Dream Home" Lottery

by Frank Veszely

The Kamloops YMCA/YWCA contracts the Kamloops Builders' Association annually to build a "Dream Home," the big prize for their annual fundraising event. A limited number of tickets are sold at \$100 a ticket. Buy four, and the fifth one is free. A good friend and golfing buddy, Barry Brown, always the spendthrift, looked to save twenty bucks by getting the deal of buying four tickets to get the fifth one free. He wanted one ticket only, but he felt he would have no difficulty getting his golf buddies to buy the other four at the discount price of \$80. He was right. For my part, I never buy lottery tickets of any sort, but I never failed to help a friend either. I considered the Y a worthy charity, so I bought in. Always fair-minded, Barry then had us draw a number to determine who would get a particular ticket. I drew Number 1 and received the first ticket Barry had bought. I suggested we split the prize, but Barry was adamant: whoever wins, wins. I put the ticket in my wallet and forgot about it.

Each golf club in town holds a men's night and a ladies' night competition where the best prizes, ranging from golf balls to a set of irons, are given out. The significance of each Thursday's Men's Night cannot be overestimated. Whether it was the weekly bonding or the great dinners, its hold was such that I always attended. This particular Thursday must have been a holiday because I spent all morning running errands and clearing the deck so that I could go to Men's Night. Coming home, I just had time for a quick bite, and I was just on my way when Mary asked me, "Did you buy a ticket for the Y Dream Home?"

"Come to think of it, I did."



Y Dream Home Photo Credit: Frank Veszely

"Do you have the ticket?"

"Err, err, yes! It should still be in my wallet!"

"Let's see it!"

Before I could reach for my wallet, the phone rang. I picked up the phone. It was one of the radio stations on the line: I had won the Y Dream Home! We were now on the air, with thousands listening.

"Will I have won it tomorrow as well?" I asked.

"Yes."

"I'll see you tomorrow then," I said. "Because it's Thursday, and I am off to Men's Night right now!"

For every thousand friends I made (Here is a guy who

knows his priorities!), two thousand must have thought me an ass. For they would have known what I did not even think of due to my singular focus on Men's Night: I had stood up the CEOs of the Y and the Builders' Association along with the TV crew and a small crowd who were waiting at the Y Dream Home for me to show up to claim the coveted prize, only for me to stand up all. They got even with me the following day, though, because when they found out that we hadn't yet seen the house, they made us wait for the better part of an hour outside of the house for the film crew to arrive to film our reaction to seeing the inside of the house for the first time. I think Mary may have given the TV crew what they wanted, and I obliged them, too, by praising the Y. The Builders' Association was something else. Thanks to them, in part, moving into the dream home resembled more of a nightmare than a dream.

I had been listening to Mary complain about our old house for years. We had bought it new, but Mary often commented, "It is falling apart. It's getting too hard to clean. How nice it would be to spend our final years in a nice new place!" So it seemed a no-brainer that we should move in.

What followed would provide material for a tragicomedy in three Acts. Mary, the young dreamer at seventy-nine, turned out to be just eighty at eighty. Following three weeks of euphoria, during which she told everyone that she was excited, invigorated and energized by the win, she started to behave differently. She became reluctant to move before she had even moved. She became disorientated, depressed, and later physically ill.

**"...moving
into the
dream home
resembled
more of a
nightmare
than a
dream."**

In the tragicomedy Act 1, although the first thing I did was to sign over half the house to her, Mary kept referring to our dream home as "your house." The house that had been falling apart was now "just fine." Mary was not interested in moving and focussed on the garden and began canning in earnest. The task of moving was daunting.

Mary may have been born a genuine pack rat, but she was a very well-organized one. Our basement held innumerable boxes that covered nearly all the floor space, waist high, with maze-like pathways between larger islands of boxes. There once was a ping-pong table there, but now it was hidden with boxes on it and under it.

Mary knew the location and the content of every box.

Before I won the Y Dream Home, our nephew, Gary, framed our basement walls, and Randy, Revelstoke realtor/jack of all trades, drywalled the place. All our boxes had to be moved four times, and the only place to move them was to the space previously held by the maze of pathways between them. When the drywalling job was done, God could not tell which box contained what, never mind

“I was a very happy camper being reunited with all of my books.”

Mary. The only clue to go by was the weight. The heavy boxes most likely contained my books. So we started our move to our new home by moving the books. Randy would drive up from Revelstoke with our daughter, Laurel, take a couple of loads of boxes to our new home and leave. I would have a week of assembling new bookshelves and emptying the contents of each box in an organized way onto them. I was a very happy camper being reunited with all my books.

The dream house was displayed as fully furnished, but the furnishings did not come with the house, only the option to buy. Various outfitters had supplied various parts of the furnishing. All asked prohibitive prices. I bought a reclining chair for three thousand dollars and the media room system for six, thinking it to be state-of-the-art, which it was not -- only the price! Other than that, I bought a few vases and mementos from the original display. This meant we needed to furnish this much larger house anew other than a couple of pieces we kept from the old house.

Perhaps I should have quit there and then, but I held out the hope that once we were settled, Mary would appreciate the many benefits, which she eventually did. But first, there was hell to pay.

I would do the legwork of visiting stores and choose three-four items I could live with, leaving the final choice to Mary. My experience was that separating Mary from her focus on gardening and canning was no easy task. When the day arrived that finally, she agreed to come with me, she walked by my recommendations without as much as looking at them, and it would take several visits to stores before each purchase could be decided upon.

Invariably, the new furnishings came in huge boxes, unassembled. More often than not, the instructions were generic to a few different models, and I discovered I lacked the genius required. As a result, I had to rely on my golfing buddies to help assemble many items. I got some relief from the shame of my inadequacy when one of them, who had a handyman business, was sweating as much as I was.

I aimed to set up the place for Mary. She was a capable seamstress and a landscape painter artist in her own right, so I set up one of the rooms as a sewing room, complete with a brand new sewing machine, and the big bright rumpus room as a studio for her to paint. But, alas, Mary announced that she did not want to paint anymore. It would take several years before she was tempted to paint again when she had already lost her fine motor ability with the brush. However, she still had her exceptional sense of colour and produced a remarkable flower. Mary did not want to sew anymore,

either, she said, making me return the sewing machine. Eventually, she came around, and we furnished our new home with the furniture we both liked.

It took six months for us to complete moving into our new house, where Act II of the tragicomedy took place. The dream home did not stand up to Mary's scrutiny. The view was nice, but the kitchen cupboards were too high, and the kitchen was too black. She wanted white. The brand-new appliances were exasperatingly challenging to operate. She had my sympathy there, for I did not know how to operate the furnace. The thermostat at the old place had a simple lever; here, there was a device that required multiple buttons to push. I had to go online to find the 36-page owners' manual. It only increased the complexity of the task, so I called the furnace guy and watched him struggle with it, too. "There are just too many models," was all he said by way of explanation.

"Then the dream home itself started to give me nightmares."

Then the dream home itself started to give me nightmares. Half the town had walked through the house when it was open to view for the public, so when Randy and the building contractor walked through the house to check for it, some damage was to be expected. But thirty-six? Then I got a call from my neighbour: the heat pump outside was leaking. I had to have him explain to me what the heat pump was before I called the company.

Next, the guy I called to install the indoor vacuum system explained that it was not working "because the ducts are not connected." I had to feel sorry for the contractor who had to figure out which ducts were connected when all the ducts were already behind the finished walls. Then, in a flash of understanding, I knew why he was bald. He turned on the furnace fan high and started walking all over the house, listening. Finally, he said, "I think the leak is by the furnace," and left. He returned with a very short, skinny guy who squirmed through the tiny place between the furnace and the gas pipes covering the wall, and he assured me that he had properly connected the vacuum ducts. Shortly after he left, though, I had to call 911 and rush to open all the windows because the place reeked of gas.

Another fiasco concerned the outside stairs. There were none. The house was built on a steep slope that cried out for stairs even in summertime and winter was approaching. The Builders' Association was pleading poverty. They were a volunteer organization with no money to spend on extras. Moreover, the stairs were not in their contract.

I called the CEO of the Y. He agreed that the stairs were needed and said he would see what he could do to help. He eventually mediated a deal between the Builders' Association, according to which I would pay half. The guy who did the landscaping was re-engaged and began to build the stairs that reached 2/3 of the way and looked misaligned. Then he dissolved his company and walked away, leaving a mess. Finally, a friend of the Builders' Association came over, and he started from scratch. He built a very nice staircase. I paid half.

A partial set of stairs was also needed on the other side of the house because a water tap and all the meters were on that side. I contracted my handyman golfing buddy, and he and I built that one. I thought my troubles were over when my neighbour on the other side called to tell me that the tiles were falling off the side of the house. It turned out that the tiles, manufactured and used in Florida, were gifted to the Builders' Association, and they used those tiles to cover the dream home. Florida, get it? The land of Paradise! A dream place! The trouble was that this was Kamloops, not Florida. The material was not exposed to large temperature changes there like it was here, where it expanded and shrunk, loosening up the staples with which they were attached to the walls. It took some months, but the Builders' Association came through and replaced the tiles on the bottom half of the house, leaving me the upper half to redo.

Meanwhile, Mary began to appreciate the place, and the day came when she felt at home. I knew it one fine morning when she looked up at the living room's vaulted ceiling, measured its thirty feet, and said: "My God, how will I keep this huge house clean?" Feebly, I suggested we engage a housecleaning service. As I well knew, Mary would not hear of such extravagance. That's when I

stepped forward and said, "Don't worry, Dear, I will be your butler!" And so it came to pass that the Y Dream Home became the residence of the Butler and the Maid. It took a couple of years, but Act II was played to a modicum of applause.

**"...the Y
Dream
Home
became the
residence of
the Butler
and the
Maid."**

The high drama took place in Act III. Mary had a minor stroke, which caused her to develop a fixation on pinworms. Negative test after negative test came in. A fumigator was called in. "Ma'am, I have been in this business for forty years; we have never fumigated for pinworms." We called in a second one. He listened to Mary attentively, then said: "Ma'am, what medication are you on?" Doctors and fumigators failing, we turned to self-medication. The over-the-counter medication prescribed taking so many pills according to weight. Mary took a few pills, but I had to take the whole box. Then came Mary's major stroke. I was in the media room downstairs with Mary watching soap operas upstairs when I heard the thud. Running up, I found Mary sprawled on the white rug between the chesterfield and the spilled

blueberry pie, moaning. We were in the hospital in half an hour, but the clot-busting drug was not administered until Mary visibly worsened an hour and a half later. The doctor explained that he had to administer it as a last resort only because it had the potential to kill her. By this time, Mary was paralyzed to her left side and is still paralyzed. She was treated in the hospital from July 27 to September 15. From September 15 to January 7, 2016, she was in the hospital, waiting for space in a care facility. From that day to the present, she has been living at Ridgeview Lodge in Kamloops.

I have described our situation in a poem.

TO MARY AGAIN

by Frank Veszely, 2018

I lived with you for fifty years,
as you have lived with me,
now each of us must live alone,
play out a tragedy.

You live in a facility,
and try to make it home;
I live where both our homes should be,
but there I'm all alone.

Kind caregivers do what they can,
and try to lift you up,
fellow patients are company
—but never quite enough.

Maintain I try our lovely home,
and give it what it's due;
a useless task because,
alas, it's empty without you.

Children, musicians, volunteers,
petting dogs and a cat
—chance after chance to sing and play:
all there where you are at!

Neighbours and friends knock on
my door,
provide some sanity,
All help, but I am living through
our shared calamity.

New patients come into the Lodge,
rooms fill with other guests,
but gone are those you got to know,
who are remembered best.

Likewise, for me, new friends emerge,
others remain, are lost;
it seems my ship is sailing on
with just enough ballast.

Now both our lives seem to have shrunk
down to a few visits:
an hour here, an hour there,
measured in few digits.

Sunday dinners I cook for you
are treasured more and more,
as are our sitting side by side
anywhere outdoors.

These are the last Suns of our lives.
We still do share some joy.
On timeless seas, we sail along.
Eternity ahoy!



Photo Credit: Jim and Mary Lynn Fornelli

TRAVEL

Road trip from Kitimat to Prince Rupert

by Karla Bradshaw

Travelling from Kitimat to Prince Rupert is not a long journey but is very picturesque. The main part of the trip is along the Yellowhead Highway, following the Skeena River, where you find wonderful opportunities to view and photograph the majestic mountains on both sides of the highway. Driving up in early spring, we had rain, sun and even snow along our route. The Rainbow Summit was a little tricky to navigate, and our driving was much slower due to the slush and ice on the road. However, the snowplow we eventually caught up with goes up and down the Pass regularly, making sure the road is kept as clear as possible for drivers. Sunny breaks gave us some excellent photo opportunities on our way to Prince Rupert, but with sunshine all the way home the next day, it was just a click! click! click! with our cameras. Wow, how gorgeous those snow-capped peaks looked with so much sunlight brightening them.



Photo Credit: Karla Bradshaw

On our way, we took a 20-minute side trip into Port Edward; it's just 10 km south of Rupert, and since we were so close, we decided to go to say we visited. So we drove down to the North Pacific Cannery Historic Site. Unfortunately, it was closed (open just May-Sept.), so we took pictures and continued our journey to Prince Rupert.



Photo Credit: Karla Bradshaw



Photo Credit: Karla Bradshaw

HOBBIES

The Orchid Lady

by Noeleen Bunney

Former SD 73 board office staff member, Kirsten McDougall, delights in caring for her many orchids. She has been growing orchids for about 30 years and is sometimes fondly referred to as the *Orchid Lady*. She was the McQueen Lake contact person in the 1970s, and following that, she was the payroll administrator for SD 73 for many years before she retired from that position.

Many of us have received an orchid as a gift or purchased one on a whim; it is impressive when they continue to bloom for many weeks and sometimes months. It's even more remarkable when, after resting, the orchid blooms again! Like Kirsten, Jim and Mary Lynn Fornelli have also discovered the joy of growing orchids. You can too! What a wonderful hobby!



Kirsten McDougall's Orchids
Photo Credit: Sheila Park

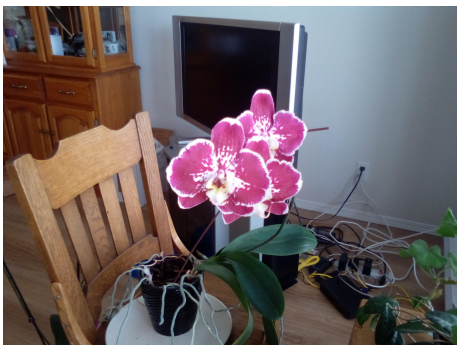


Photo Credit: Jim and Mary Lynn Fornelli



Kirsten McDougall with her orchids in full bloom.
Photo Credit: Sheila Park

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Take Care of Your Hips and Knees

by Donna Sharpe

My orthopaedic surgeon is Dr. Sernik in Vernon. His kinesiologist is Meagan Steeves, and she works out of the same office. When I had my appointment with him, he asked Meagan to sit in on the consultation. After Dr. Sernik was finished, Meagan asked me if I would like to be part of a Zoom class with other people with knee problems.

So, I attended the Zoom, which was most informative about the knee and hip joints, and then she emailed me the following exercises with permission to share them with our members via this newsletter.

Every time I am waiting for something, coffee, microwave, etc. I do one of the exercises. They don't take long, about a minute or two each. By the end of the day, I have usually done them all once or twice.

Exercises for Hips and Knees

by Meagan Steeves, B.Sc. Kin

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis in Canada, affecting approximately one in six people. One of the essential aspects of managing OA is regular exercise.

The team has put together this series of therapeutic exercises that can help stretch and strengthen the specific muscles of the knees and hips. If you would benefit from further information regarding OA and the management of your OA, experienced Physiotherapists and Kinesiologists can work with you on your journey to a more active and mobile life.

Progression Muscle, Bone & Joint Clinic in Vernon offers a series of educational sessions that can teach you about what OA is, the factors that influence it, and all the treatment options for when you have it.

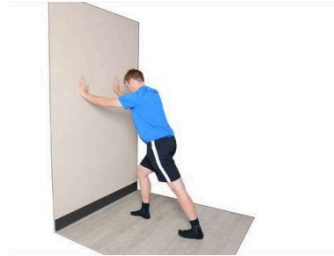
Here are eight exercises for managing OA:

1. Gastrocs Stretch (Wall)**Reps:** 3-4 | **Hold:** 10secs**Preparation:**

- Stand in front of a wall with one leg forward and one leg back

Execution:

- Keeping your back leg straight and heel on the ground, lean forwards, bending your front knee



Lean forward, back knee locked,
heel on ground

2. Hamstrings Stretch**Reps:** 3-4 | **Hold:** 10 sces | **Frequency:** x2 daily**Preparation:**

- Lie flat on your back

Execution:

- Lift your leg up and straighten your knee as much as you can
- Position your hands on the sides and back of your knee to help support your leg



Start Position



Straighten Knee

3. Quadriceps Stretch (Chair)**Reps:** 3-4 | **Hold:** 10 sces | **Frequency:** x2 daily**Preparation:**

- Stand tall with foot on the seat of a chair

Execution:

- Push your hip forwards and feel a stretch in the front of your thigh



Push your hip forward
and avoid arching
through lower back



Maintain straight
alignment, thighs are
parallel

4. Knee Extension Concentric (Roll)**Reps:** 10 | **Hold:** 5 secs**Preparation:**

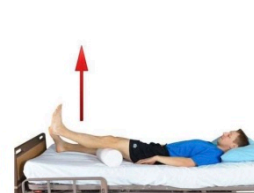
- Place a roll underneath your knee as shown

Execution:

- Straighten your knee
- Relax your knee back down to the start position



Knee supported



Straighten knee

5. Partial Squat**Sets: 3 | Reps: 8****Preparation:**

- Stand with feet shoulder width apart

Execution:

- Perform a squatting motion initiating by bending at the hip
- Only bend knees slightly, do not bend knees beyond 45 degrees
- Rise up by straightening at the hip



Start Position



Squat to 45°



Start Position



Finish Position

6. Calf Raise | Hand Support (Countertop)**Sets: 3 | Reps: 8****Preparation:**

- Standing in front of a countertop
- Place your hands on the countertop

Execution:

- Stand on your tip toes, lifting your heels as high as you can



Holding countertop for support



Lift heels



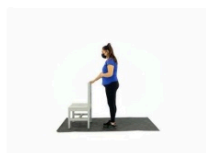
Standing on tip toes, Lower back down with control

7. Knee Flexion AROM**Sets: 3 | Reps: 8****Preparation:**

- Stand tall

Execution:

- Bend one knee, drawing your heel back and up toward your buttock
- Lower the foot slowly to the floor



Stand with good posture



Lift foot off the ground



Bend knee as far as you are able

8. Step Up | Gluteal Focus**Sets: 3 | Reps: 8****Preparation:**

- Stand in front of a step

Execution:

- Place foot on step
- Lean forward, keep chest up
- Step tall, driving with the midfoot
- Keep your knee aligned over your foot



Lean forward, keep chest up



Step tall, driving with the midfoot



Knee aligned over foot

RECIPE

Refreshing Watermelon Salad

by Donna Sharpe

My sister told me one day that she was making a watermelon salad for a potluck luncheon. I had never heard of making a salad from watermelon, so I looked it up on the internet. There were many recipes to be found, and I read through them. Then, as usual, I made the salad with what I had on hand. Of course, I had watermelon. Since then, I have made it a few times and like it! It is even better on the second day as the flavours have a chance to blend. And there is no lettuce to get wilted. I don't have exact measurements. Use your judgment. It makes a difference if you are making it just for yourself or your family or if you are making it for a large group.

Main Ingredients:

Watermelon - cut into bite-size cubes; remove the seeds if there are any.

Red onion - white will work too, cut into thin strips, about 1 1/2 inches in length.

Cucumber - avoid the seed part, if necessary.

Feta Cheese - crumbled or cubed

Garden herbs - Choose either mint, basil, parsley, or tarragon.

These herbs all work equally well; choose an herb you enjoy.
(Don't put them all in!)

Dressing:

Lemon or lime juice - (Optional zest of lemon or lime!)

Olive oil

Blue agave or honey (sugar would work, too)

Pinch of salt



KAMLOOPS RETIRED TEACHERS' CLUB

José Mendez-One of our TRU Bursary Recipients says, "Thanks!"

by José Mendez



Dear Kamloops Retired Teachers, Firstly, thank you from the bottom of my heart for your support. Your generosity and kindness will not be forgotten. Secondly, to fully convey my gratitude for your support, I want to share my story with you. So buckle up, it is a bit long, but I promise it has a happy ending!

I was born in Mexico City, Mexico, in 1991. I lived my first few years in Mexico surrounded by my extended family. In the autumn of 1998, my father and mother decided that the time was right to leave Mexico City. My father was held at gunpoint outside my family's home by an assailant demanding that he unlock the door for him. Knowing my mom, younger brother, and I were inside, he refused. Thankfully a car drove by the house with its high beams on, and the assailant was scared away, thus saving my father. It became too unsafe for us to live in Mexico City. My parents applied to immigrate to Canada, Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, knowing that my brother and I would have a better future outside our native homeland. The first embassy of these countries to get back to my parents was Canada - we were approved! We immigrated to Canada in May 1999.

As we landed in Toronto, I asked my father, "Dad, what does potential mean?" He said, "Potential is something that you could be but does not yet exist. You must actively bring it into existence, and the right conditions need to exist to allow you to fulfill your potential."

We lived in Toronto for two years, facing the struggle I am sure many immigrant families are forced to confront when they first arrive in Canada. Although my parents attended university in Mexico and worked as professionals—my father was a software engineer, and my mother was a lawyer—Canada would not recognize their foreign credentials, so they were forced to take any and all jobs so they could make ends meet for our family. My parents would take turns having dinner each night, ensuring their children ate first because we did not have the resources to feed all four of us all the time. My mother recounts working on recess duty at my school in a suburb of Toronto and seeing children throw perfectly good sandwiches into the garbage bin. Sometimes she confessed that her hunger was so great that she would pick the sandwich from the garbage and consume it. Our luck as a family started to change when my father was offered a job in Vancouver Island, B.C. writing computer codes for a company. His work screen often looks like something out of The Matrix to me. Coding is the same language in Spanish and English, but it all seemed alien to me! As children on

Vancouver Island, my brother and I performed terribly in school. My parents thought it must be because of the language barrier, so they decided to place us in late French Immersion. The gap between Spanish and French is far smaller than between Spanish and English - or so my parents' reasoning went. It turns out they were right! My brother and I started performing much better in late French Immersion school than in the English school.

Although our grades improved, our behaviour in School District #61 schools became increasingly problematic. At the end of grade 8, I was expelled for selling alcohol to other students—more than once. My brother ended up following in my footsteps, although he was expelled from middle school at the beginning of his grade 8 year, instead of at the end, for similar reasons. The only high school that would take us in the region was Catholic School. "They'll take anybody," my parent's friends told my parents, who were unsure of what to do with their badly behaved children. We stayed in the Catholic school system until grade 12 and eventually graduated with Dogwood diplomas.

What would you think an ELL (English Language Learner/ formally called ESL - English as a Second Language) student, whose parents went through such hardship and who had been expelled from a public school, could amount to and accomplish? What about his brother, who could not finish the terminal year of middle school? Not very much.

Well, what if I told you that my brother is a lawyer who completed his Bachelor of Science (Honours) degree in Economics and Political science from the University of Victoria, then went on to complete his Juris Doctorate at the University of British Columbia, and now works in real estate law? And what if I told you that I completed a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from the University of Victoria, then a Masters of Science degree from the University of Toronto, and am now about to finish my Bachelor of Education (STEM designation) degree from TRU?

We were just a couple of expelled ELL students, probably written off as nothing more than street fodder for roaming gangs. You would probably think something to the effect of, "Did the water you drink change? Maybe it was a different shampoo you were using that somehow diffused into your brain and cleansed you from such bad habits. Was there some magic formula you ingested?" But, dear friends, it was none of those things. What changed my and my brother's trajectory was far more simple, beautiful, and inspiring. What changed our lives were good, kind, generous, and unbelievably supportive teachers who never gave up on us.

I initially wanted to be a scientific researcher, and as part of my graduate program at the University of Toronto, I had to teach some undergraduate laboratories. I ended up teaching third-year biochemistry and microbiology, second-year organic chemistry, and first-year organic chemistry. At first, I saw these teaching assignments as distractions from my research. However, as time went on, I started to increasingly enjoy teaching. Eventually, I looked forward to my teaching assignments more than my research in the lab! My love of teaching has superseded my affinity for research. After finishing my graduate degree at U of T, I married a wonderful lady whom I met while a UVIC student. We decided to find jobs teaching at colleges or universities. I landed a teaching appointment at a local university in their chemistry department. I taught second and third-year organic chemistry and

first-year general chemistry. It was during this time that our first daughter was born. During my time at this university, I decided to become a fully licensed B.C. educator. I knew I wanted to dedicate my career to the betterment of students, even before they attended university. With introspection, I realized that teachers had made a tremendous difference in my brother's and my life. It was because teachers in high school supported me and formed relationships with me that I became who I am. Their classrooms made me feel safe and provided a sense of belonging. They helped me see that I mattered and that my learning mattered.

Thanks to the mentorship of our secondary teachers, my brother and I are fulfilling the potential that my father and I spoke of years earlier during our flight to Toronto. My wife and I chose the TRU program because of the STEM specialization and because all her family resides in Kamloops. Her two sisters and brother-in-law are paramedics serving the needs of the city of Kamloops.

As part of my B.Ed. program, I have completed two practicums in Kamloops. My first one in September was at Westsyde Secondary School. My second practicum was at Valleyview Secondary School. Currently, I am doing my certification practicum at Oak Bay High School in SD 61 in Victoria. My teaching load includes Chemistry 11, Chemistry 12, and Science 9. I am scheduled to finish my practicum on May 5th. Afterwards, I have six weeks left of classes and will graduate with a B.Ed. at the end of June.

The TRU B.Ed. program has been fantastic! My favourite parts about the program are the wonderful peers and instructors, each so unbelievably competent, caring, and compelling. My wife and I are expecting our second child—a boy! The instructors, faculty mentors, and staff at TRU have all been unbelievably helpful and supportive. Their generosity of heart inspires me to be the best educator and, quite simply, the best person I can be. After I graduate, I am looking to apply for a few different districts. Firstly, I plan to apply for SD 73 in Kamloops, close to my wife's family. Secondly, SD 61 and SD 63 in Victoria and Saanich, respectively, since my own family resides there. Thirdly, I plan to apply for SD 35 in Langley since my wife, and I have connections in that community. Lastly, I plan to apply for SD 81 schools in Fort Nelson. As fate would have it, one of my old high school teachers is now in a position of influence at SD 81.

I trust that the opportunities will present themselves as my B.Ed. program ends. Knowing that the TRU Faculty of Education has my back is a great relief! Let me end with this parting thought: through your generous donation to support my studies, the Kamloops Retired Teachers are helping me fulfill my potential. I often think about the question I asked my father when I was a boy, "Dad, what is potential?"

**“What
changed our
lives were
good, kind,
generous,
and
unbelievably
supportive
teachers who
never gave
up on us.”**

Potential is the possibility of a better life. Potential is the possibility that tomorrow can be better than today. Potential is the good that can be. It's the role of the teacher - to help students reach their potential, regardless of their background. What more noble and honourable aim could exist? Thank you for your time!

Respectfully yours, José Mendez

KTRT Club Bursaries and Charitable Giving

by Pat Petley, KTRTA Club President

The Kamloops Thompson Retired Teachers' Club (KTRT Club) was established in 2018 for charitable giving; this goal is near and dear to the hearts of many KTRTA members, and we are gratified to provide a way for retired teachers to give to the Thompson Rivers University (TRU) Foundation, the Canadian Harambee Education Society (CHES) and more.

Donations to the TRU Foundation support bursaries for two Faculty of Education students. Donations to CHES assist impoverished students attending school in Tanzania and Kenya. We are proud of our Kamloops Retired Teachers' long-standing tradition of giving!

LUNCH & LEARN GET-TOGETHERS

January's Lunch & Learn: Johnson Insurance

by Noeleen Bunney

Over fifty members attended this Lunch & Learn! Our guest speaker was Lisa Hansen, Senior Consultant, Group Benefits, Western Region for Johnson Insurance, our BCRTA Group Insurance partner. Lisa came from the lower mainland to be with us in Kamloops and explained the benefits and reasons to have the BCRTA Group Insurance for your home, extended health/dental, travel and more. In addition, she shared her knowledge to compare insurance and answered our questions as a group and individually.

Do not hesitate to connect with Lisa to discuss your BCRTA insurance questions.

Lisa Hansen's contact information:

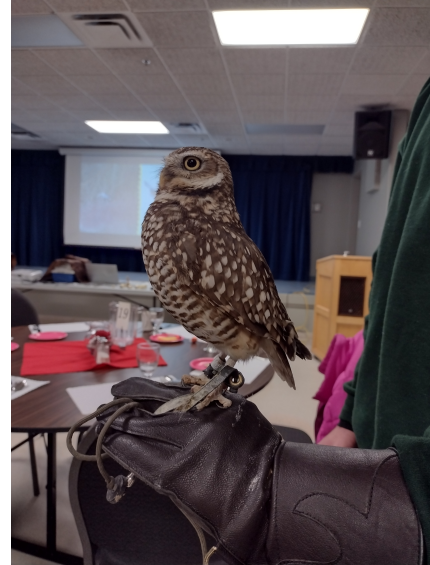
1-866-440-8300 Extension: 67163 lisa.hansen@intact.net www.johnson.ca

February's Lunch & Learn: All About Raptors

by Suzanne Legault



Ambassador Owl Gandalf
Photo Credit: Suzanne Legault



Ambassador Owl Ninem
Photo Credit: Suzanne Legault

On February 24th, Tim and Sylvie presented the Raptor Researcher Program. The white-coloured burrowing owl that is partially blind and deaf due to a genetic mutation is named Gandalf. The other burrowing owl used in that presentation is named Ninem. The power point presentation showed the distinction between eagles, hawks and falcons. They passed around samples of eggs, bone skeletons and talons. This was followed by a lively discussion and question period.



Photo Credit: Suzanne Legault

A personal experience that relates somewhat to our February presentation about raptors is as follows: My daughter, Andrea, and my grandchildren, Sage and Kestrel, attended the Raptor demonstration at the B.C. Wildlife Park. The presenter placed a kestrel on Sage's head as part of the presentation. He had been selected, as he was wearing a bandana. My granddaughter, Kestrel, about four years of age, was most annoyed.

With hands on her hips, she began to call out, "But my name is Kestrel! My name is Kestrel!" After the demonstration, Andrea explained to the presenter why her child was so upset. The presenter asked us to attend the next show, ensuring Kestrel wore a bandana. So, here is the photo of a kestrel on top of a Kestrel. One happy child!

March's Lunch & Learn - The KTRT Club's Annual Silent Auction

by Pat Petley, KTRT Club President

Wow! Our March get-together was an astounding fundraising success! The Kamloops Thompson Retired Teachers' Association is a very generous and kind group. Our recent Silent Auction was on March 31st, and we raised \$1032! In addition, cheques to TRU bursaries of \$630 and the Canadian Harambee Education Society of \$275 bring the truly grand total to \$1937!

Thank you to the crafters, bakers, special event organizers, everyone who donated to the auction, those who so generously purchased each other's items, and those who wrote special cheques!

As a group of retired educators, we are making a difference in the lives of others, as evidenced by the thoughtful words from the Bursary students and our other recipients.

Thank you to the KTRT Club Board of Directors and Members-At-Large, who helped organize and facilitate this important fundraising event. The KTRT Club Executive Committee will meet in the summer to make our recommendations for using the monies raised. We will then bring those recommendations to the group in September. Our current mandate is to contribute to the Thompson Rivers Retired Teachers' Bursary Fund at TRU, the RR Smith Bursary Fund at BCRTA, the Canadian Harambee Education Society for a secondary student in Tanzania, the McQueen Lake Fund, and other charitable organizations in our community. Most of our donations are related to education.

If you have an idea of an organization that would benefit from a donation, please let me know, in writing (paper or e-mail), with some background and contact information. That information will be shared with the KTRT Club Executive before our summer meeting and will receive consideration when our group meets. Thank you so much to everyone! I'm full of gratitude!

April's Lunch & Learn - Caring For Orchids and AGMs

by Noeleen Bunney



Photo Credit: Public Domain, Wikimedia

Our guest speaker was Kirsten McDougall. She shared a great deal of information about caring for orchids to encourage those lacking a green thumb to try it! Refer to page ten for more information about orchids. [In addition, here's a link to tips and a video about orchids.](#)

Our annual AGMs elected an enthusiastic new executive team to volunteer for our local retired teachers' association, the KTRTA, and our charitable group, the KTRT Club, for 2023-24.

PEACE WALK

My Passion for The Kamloops Walk For Peace

by Sheila Park

Serving on the Council of Canadians Peace Walk Planning Committee is something I have done for quite a few years. I confess that I no longer do the walk due to health issues, but I am one of the people at the Council of Canadians information table. I have not been to all 47 walks, but I have been to many of them. Why?

I was born in Britain just after WWII. My father had been in the British Air Force through the war. When we immigrated to Canada, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force. Our family spent three years in France at Air Division Headquarters. I was 11 when we moved there. Even though I was very young, I could not miss the bullet holes in the buildings. I got to tour bunkers with my Girl Guide Troupe, and we heard about concentration camps. My parents would not take me to tour those; they felt I was too young. But I gained some knowledge of the history of World War II and Hitler.

I have always remembered that at 12, I asked my mom, "Why didn't you do something?" "About what?" my mom asked. "About Hitler!" I said. "I was just 14 at that time," she replied. "I went into nursing training when I was 17." The war ended before my mother finished her training, but I know that in her training, and after, she nursed wounded soldiers. So she had done something. I now see that helping support the Peace Walk is my small "something."

We see the wars on the news every night on TV. Some people tell me that they do not watch the news. But I say watch. We are not living it, so the least we can do is see what people living or dying in it are going through. Supporting the Peace Walk is our outward sign of supporting the people being bombed and driven from their homes. We can also donate to organizations like Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, Kamloops Immigrant Services Society and other organizations working in war zones or supporting people displaced by war.

So on Saturday, May 6th, I hope to see you at the Farmers' Market. There will be speeches, music, children's activities and the Walk For Peace as we show solidarity with the people affected by war.

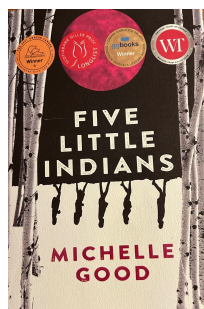


Olive Branches Photo credit: Public Domain Wikimedia Commons

Books of Note

Five Little Indians by Michelle Good

by Barb Mulhern



This book was a finalist in the *Canada Reads* competition last year or the year before. I highly recommend it for any discussion. It makes people look at how residential schools affected children. When presented to our book club, it started a huge discussion that branched into many topics.

The story is a follow-up of five Residential School survivors. They were released from the school without any support or money. After their childhood had been locked away for years, where they suffered unimaginable horrors, they made their way to the downtown east side of Vancouver, and they tried to support each other.

As we go through the story, we see how each one tries to reinvent him/herself, some more successfully than others. It is an easy thought-provoking book. Sometimes it is heartbreaking. I highly recommend *Five Little Indians* by Michelle Good.

MESSAGE FROM KTRTA PRESIDENT

Arnie Lambert, BCRTA President, hosted for dinner on April 24

by Marney Bethell, KTRTA President

We recently hosted our provincial association president, Arnie Lambert, with a potluck dinner in his honour. Arnie was in Kamloops to present to SD73 teachers at their KTTA Professional Day on Monday, April 24th. He enjoyed meeting the many executive members who attended our dinner. We provided our Kamloops Thompson perspective and liked hearing about some of the provincial initiatives from BCRTA's broader perspective.

We wish you a good summer and look forward to seeing you at our Lunch & Learn in September.

- The Bridge newsletter does not dispense legal, medical or financial advice. Opinions presented are always those of the writers.
- We acknowledge that we live, work and play on Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory within the unceded ancestral lands of the Secwépemc Nation.
- Please submit your articles (max.1500 words) and photos to Donna Sharpe at onlineoffice.ktrta@gmail.com. Submissions on various topics, such as travel, good books, writing, poetry, hobbies and sports welcomed. Authors agree that their submissions may be edited.