

# PostScript

WINTER 2022



THE MAGAZINE FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS



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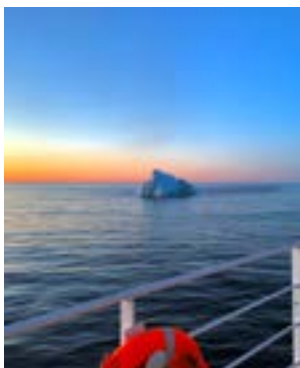


**BCRTA**  
BC Retired Teachers' Association



# PostScript

WINTER 2022



Cover: Photo by BCRTA member Marian Dodds  
"Off the coast of Newfoundland"

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100-550 W. 6th Avenue • Vancouver BC • V5Z 4P2  
Phone 604.871.2260 Toll Free 1.877.683.2243  
Fax: 604.871.2265

## EDITORIAL TEAM

Tim Anderson, Editor  
K.G.P. Cooper, Assistant Editor  
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Like the traditional tale of making "stone soup", each issue of PostScript proves that when we are sharing we are also best nourished. So in that spirit, here is our Winter issue, filled up with morsels of goodness from many friends, ready to warm you and bring you a smile.

**Marian Dodds** found that it was in retirement that she experienced the *Best Field Trip Ever* and hearing her story, who can disagree? On another continent, **Penny Milbrandt's** field trip is on sand dunes where she makes a new acquaintance, a perhaps too-friendly Amorous Camel. Meanwhile, in another desert, **Victor Neuman's** adventures in Death Valley are hardly serene. Deserts too hot? Maybe a walk in Scotland or ski in Norway is more your speed. Or perchance you'd rather glide silently into the future in a shiny new electric vehicle. Read on, all these adventures are on offer in these pages.

Many a meal has been improved with fresh local mushrooms, but **Rheta Steer's** camera proves that fungi can provide a visual feast, too.

We also have a chance to recap the eventful and informative **BCRTA 2022 Conference** with a look back at the presenters and we hear some of the comments of participants. Presentations from the conference are available at our website, or on our YouTube channel. Just search for "BCRTA conference".

The celebrations at Conference 2022 included PostScript's **Excellence Awards**. Hearty congratulations to **Eileen Hayes**, **Helene McGall** and **Dutchie Mathison** for their well-deserved awards. You can see interviews with these fascinating winners on our website.

Our letter bag has been a great source of pleasure this issue. It's great to have a rewarding conversation with you about the articles that inform and move you. Thanks to all those who send us a note with their comments. We read your feedback carefully and it helps us make each issue the best it can be.

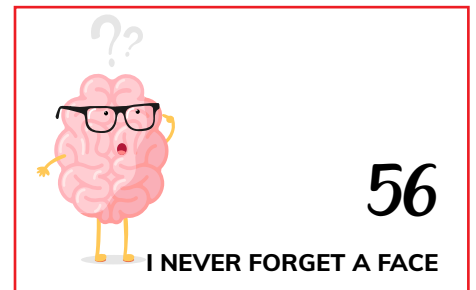
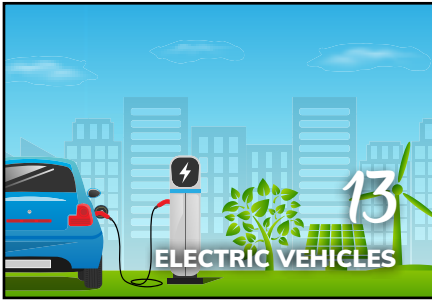
So please consider this little package as our gift to you. Once you have opened your greeting cards and put them on the mantle, settle in with this issue and accept our best wishes for the season.

Yours truly,

*The Editor*  
[postscrip@bcrt.ca](mailto:postscrip@bcrt.ca)

# contents

POSTSCRIPT MAGAZINE | WINTER 2022



- 4 EDITOR'S NOTE
- 6 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 8 PUBLIC SECTOR RETIREES SUMMIT
- 10 LETTERS
- 16 WALKING WOMEN
- 18 PHOTO BY PENNY PITCHER
- 19 IMPORTANT DATES
- 20 AMOROUS CAMEL
- 32 LESSONS FROM MY STUDENTS
- 36 ELK VALLEY HERITAGE PROJECT
- 39 PAINTING BY LEONARD SHANE

- 45 PLEASE, MADAM, WHAT IS A DIET?
- 46 BOOKS OF NOTE
- 48 BCRTA LONG STAYS: PORTUGAL & CROATIA
- 50 TECH FOR RETIREES
- 53 AGING AND LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC
- 58 DR. ROGER WONG
- 60 CLASSIFIEDS
- 62 CROSSWORD
- 63 SUDOKU
- 66 IN MEMORIAM
- 68 BCRTA'S 2022 CONFERENCE



### **THE GROWING SENIOR POPULATION: PROMISES MADE, BUT ARE THEY KEPT?**

A recent Vancouver Sun article stated that in the Parksville/Qualicum area where I live, 47% of residents are seniors age 65 and over! I knew that my community was looking a little grey, but this number is astounding. Additionally, five other BC communities have senior populations over 30%. As retirees, readers of *PostScript Magazine* are part of the fastest growing group in Canada, while at the same time the percentage of population in the under-15 age group continues to decline.



*Baby boomers are retirement age, and the percentage of Canada's population over 65 is rising quickly.*

What does all of this have to do with the BCRTA? How do these demographics impact our members, and our organization? There will be more retirees and, potentially, fewer workers. Canada must meet the challenge of finding workers to provide the services we all need.

In the Fall 2022 issue of *PostScript* Grace Wilson noted the need for all seniors to have access to the High-Dose quadrivalent flu vaccine; the argument being that a better-protected senior population will be less likely to become ill and drive up the costs of health care. But the high-dose quadrivalent continues to only be available to those who are willing to pay for it. (The quadrivalent option is provided for free to a smaller number of at-risk seniors.) Meanwhile, an improved trivalent vaccine is also available this year, and the messaging from Immunize BC (online at [immunizebc.ca](https://immunizebc.ca)) states that “either of these enhanced influenza vaccines is recommended for this age group. There is not enough evidence to show that one of these enhanced vaccines is better than the other.” Time may show this to be true, but for now I hope that you have all had at least the trivalent vaccine, and a Covid booster as well.

Recent positive news items that have relevance to our population are the two breakthrough agreements the BC Government has reached with teachers and doctors. (*Editor's note: Neither agreement had been ratified at the time of printing.*)

The teacher agreement will provide a good boost to the salaries of beginning teachers, and this in turn will attract more young people to the profession. The increase in salaries for experienced teachers will work toward retention. Having more teachers earning better salaries helps support stability for teachers' pensions.

The doctor agreement was characterized by Premier Horgan as “a new payment model that makes B.C. a province that attracts, retains and supports family doctors, and ensures they can focus on what matters most – providing care to patients when they need it.” Dr. Ramneek Dosanjh, president of the Doctors of BC noted that “everyone deserves a family doctor, and this new option is a major step toward making that goal a reality.”





*Access to a family doctor is a cornerstone to effective healthcare for seniors.*

My wife and I can attest to the fact that the lack of doctors, and the waiting time to get one, are big issues. After re-locating to the island, we had to return to our Vancouver doctors for three years before connecting with a local Nurse Practitioner for our care. While our experience with the Nurse Practitioner has been terrific, ensuring that many more people in BC have a family doctor will be a good step to protect the health of seniors and everyone else, too.



*Where is the  
Pharmacare  
program that has  
been promised to  
Canadians for the  
last three elections?*

One other major issue that is on our mind: Pharmacare. As an organization we have long been advocates for our members and seniors in general, and we have to keep up the pressure on the different levels of government to deliver this program. Despite the use of the present tense in the title, the Liberal and NDP's *Delivering For Canadians Now, A Confidence and Supply Agreement* has yet to actually provide anything "now" concerning Pharmacare. A dental program is reportedly coming, but where is the Pharmacare program that has been promised to Canadians for the last three elections?

Watch for news from us soon regarding a letter campaign in which you can truly help shape society by giving parliamentarians the necessary "kick in the butt" to get the job done.

Meanwhile, as you prepare for a season of festivities and renewed togetherness, sit by the fire with a good book, or do some snowshoeing in the hills, we wish you well. •

**ARNIE LAMBERT** is President of the BCRTA

# BC Public Sector Retirees Working Together

## BC'S FOUR PUBLIC SECTOR RETIREE ASSOCIATIONS

In November 2022, leaders of BC's four major public sector retiree associations held a summit in Vancouver. With our many shared concerns for our members' well-being, the four member-led organizations regularly connect to find ways to better serve our retirees. Topics of discussion include best practices in member service, protecting the rights of retirees and their representative associations, and the future of services for our members.

Representation for your rights is just as critical in retirement as during your working years. But membership in retiree associations is voluntary and many are not aware of the benefits. BCRTA enjoys a significant number of our eligible retired teachers as members - nearly 50%. But many more could join BCRTA - we hope they do!

Who is eligible to join these associations?

***BC Government Retired Employees' Association*** represents retirees from 80 different employers connected with the provincial government and collecting a BC Public Service Plan pension.

***Municipal Pension Retirees' Association*** is open to all those collecting a pension from the Municipal Pension Plan of BC, including firefighters, police, civic workers and many other public sector organizations.



*Leaders of the four major public sector retiree associations at the November 2022 Summit.*

*(L-R): Arnie Lambert, President BCRTA; Brian Green, President BCGREA; Mary Griffin, President CCPR; and Terry Erskine, President MPRA.*

The ***College Pension Plan Retirees of BC*** are open to those receiving a pension from BC's College Pension Plan, such as retired college instructors.

In total, our four organizations have nearly 40,000 members and speak up for the rights of over 200,000 public sector retirees in BC.

BCRTA is committed to working cooperatively with our sister organizations for the betterment of all our retirees.

If you know someone retired from public service who is not yet a member of their association, please encourage them to look into joining.



BC Retired Teachers'  
Association  
[www.bcrt.ca](http://www.bcrt.ca)



Municipal Pension Retirees'  
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[www.mpra.ca](http://www.mpra.ca)



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PostScript Magazine

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# PostScript Letters

## Puzzle Community

I knew Dave Squance quite well from my time at Fernie Secondary. A wise and valuable member of staff, well-liked and respected by all.

Gary Mitchell  
Cranbrook/Fernie

Puzzles are hard work! Enjoyable activity however.

Rosemary McDowell  
Summerland

I love the magazine, especially the Sudoku. Thanks.

Ilona Eberle  
Coquitlam

I don't do difficult crossword puzzles. I'm 93 years old and words escape me. But I do Sudoku puzzles every day!

Dorothy Sleight  
Vancouver

What a surprise to be declared a puzzle winner! I always enjoy the puzzles.

Susan Clement  
Castlegar

## PostScript Party

I have recently moved from BC to Alberta to be closer to family in my doddering years. I would like to continue receiving PostScript. I really appreciate receiving this magazine. I find it informative, topical, and thoroughly enjoyable. Please keep up the great work.

Barry Sale  
Strathmore, AB (from  
Williams Lake)

Thanks for the great magazine!

Barb Stebbings  
Surrey

PostScript is good! So good I have to read it cover to cover. Thank you.

Trish Rankin  
Duncan

I do enjoy PostScript, especially the pictures. You have an excellent printer!

Thank you for all you do for retired teachers.

Margaret Titmuss  
Westbank

Keep up the great work. Your efforts are much appreciated.

Lois Marleau  
Kitimat

From the colourful cover to the final article, PostScript exudes excellence: a plethora of articulate features with a wide diversity. There is something for everyone's palate. Kudos to you!

Barrie Street

## Memories of Reading with Arthur

Hi Tim and PostScript

It was bittersweet receiving my PostScript this fall. Arthur and I always enjoyed reading the articles (having contributed a few myself). We often discussed them and shared ideas about what was written. Arthur always looked in the obituaries to see if any former colleagues had passed away. He would then reminisce about them.

This issue his name was on the list and it brought to mind so many memories of our shared enjoyment of this magazine.

Thank you for the memories!

Cheryl Halstead  
Wine Country RTA

## Reflections on Retirement

Dear Postscript,

As someone who retired three and half years ago. I read with amusement Paul Demer's "A Different View."

I never started out in life to be a teacher but my path led me there. It was both my vocation and my job depending on which part of my career you examined. At times I was last car out of the parking lot some evenings after arriving amongst the first.

Write us at [postscript@bcrrta.ca](mailto:postscript@bcrrta.ca)



But as a man who had a child late in life and ran into daycare issues and left almost everyday by 3:30 for a few months, I agree there can be a frowning upon by some. On the other hand, as one of my female colleagues pointed out, there is a double standard between men and women in that regard. Women leaving quickly at the end of the day because of daycare issues is accepted, whereas, it is felt a man should figure it out somehow.

As for those being lionized for making teaching the centre of their lives, why not? I gave a lot more by coaching and participating in other events. I did less at certain times and as my career went on. I admire those who gave so much their entire careers, but I always kept my life outside of school separate.

In retirement, the only contact I have with school is my son's middle school. I finally visited the school where I spent the last fifteen years of my career last June for a retirement, not sooner because of Covid. I have no desire to teach and have almost no contact with my former colleagues. I taught elementary school because I loved the interaction with children. That part of life is now over and I am happy to move on. I don't feel a need to reinvent myself, rather the desire to improve my health and explore my interests. I was a teacher, it was my vocation and calling, but it isn't what defines me. Teachers' lives are spent in service and when you are ready to move on, do so. You gave and should have no regrets.

Paul Black

### **Van Sounds Familiar to Me:**

I would like to thank Paul Swennumson for his nice article entitled "Miss Van".

I was immediately grabbed by the title as I was a primary teacher for many years and my name is Mrs. Van. As most women know, "Mrs" usually gets shortened to "Miss" so that was what I was called most of the time.

Imagine my interest when I read further and found that her real, full, name was "Vanvolkenburg"! This was my husband's family name but several generations back it had been shortened to "Van". The family originated in an area of Holland called Volkenburg. The addition of "van" simply means "comes from". The family left Holland in the 1600's, shortly after the Mayflower had landed to live in New Amsterdam, now New York. From there, they came to Canada because they were loyalists. Gradually the family moved westward and ended up in BC.

There are now hundreds of thousands of descendants from that one family in North America with many variations of the name, some of which are Falkenburg, Volkenburg, and of course, simply Van.

It was a most interesting read for me.

Judy Van

### **We Danced in a Small Space**

On this rainy evening I read for the third time, with laughter, sadness and understanding Leslie Davidson's article 'Dancing In Small Spaces'. My husband also had Lewy's Body Dementia and despite being a stranger in a stranger land I too grabbed every moment I could when we were 'together'. One of my happiest memories is of our last New Year. A band had come to his facility to entertain the residents and families. We sang and then, with the help of an aide to steady him, 'danced' to some favourite music played by the band. Those moments were a priceless gift, a treasured memory.

Thank you, Leslie, for sharing your story and bringing this little known form of dementia into the light.

Carol Baird-Krul  
NLRTA

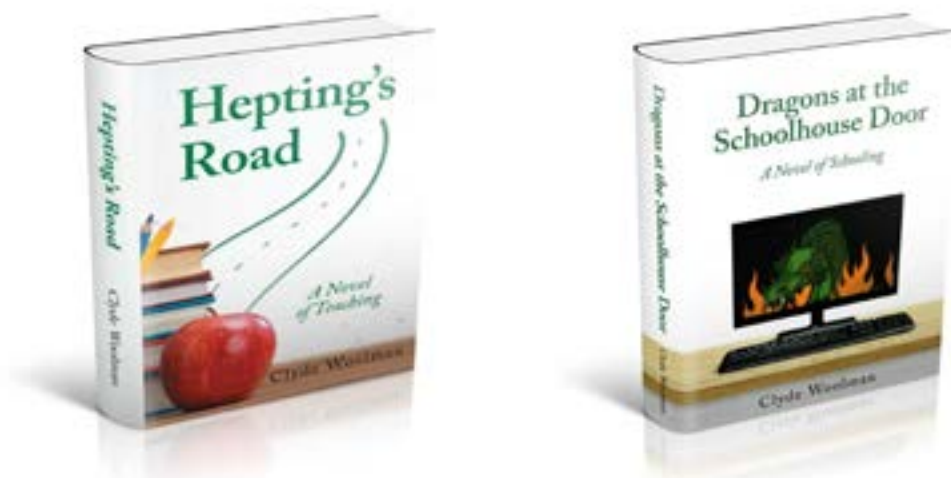


*Opa's Last Dance.*

## HOMAGE TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

"I loved Hepting's Road and Dragons at the Schoolhouse Door. Both are engaging, gripping and hilarious. Woolman understands the 'system' from top to bottom and the nature of everyone who works in it. I highly recommend both — and I don't usually promote 'Management'!"

**Geoff Peters**, retired Director of Communications - BCTF



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# YOUR GUIDE TO ELECTRIC VEHICLES

Here's what you need to know about what may be your next car

BY OLEV EDUR

Are you among those Canadians thinking about an electric vehicle (EV) as their next set of wheels? After all, the Government of Canada announced in March 2022 a commitment to 100 per cent of new car sales being EVs by 2035. EVs are simply better for the environment. According to a US Environmental Protection Agency report, the life-cycle greenhouse gas emissions from an EV are typically less than half those of a gas-powered car.

EVs are also less expensive to operate. For starters, no more gas pumps and soaring fuel prices—all you need for go power is an electrical outlet (although, as discussed below, the reality is a bit more complicated than that). And as for maintenance, electric motors have only one moving part, so there's no need for tune-ups, oil changes, or many of the other tasks involved in keeping a gas engine in top shape.

Most importantly, EV prices have come down to the point where, after harnessing federal and provincial incentives (see page 15), they're getting closer to those of their gasoline counterparts. In fact, a 2021 report by the International Energy Agency found that, as a result of price declines and government incentives in many countries besides Canada, there were more than 10 million EVs (including hybrids) on the road globally as of 2020.

As a bonus, EVs have phenomenal acceleration. A fact sheet about EVs on the UK-based Young People's Trust for the Environment (YPTE) website notes that "electric cars produce maximum torque at zero revolutions per minute (rpm) and can continue this pretty much through their rev range.

It's what enables the large seven-seat Tesla P90D to surge to 60 miles per hour in just 2.6 seconds when it's set in 'Ludicrous' mode! And in June 2016, a team of 30 students from Switzerland created the world's fastest accelerating electric car, which rocketed from 0–60 in just 1.513 seconds!"



Nevertheless, there are still a few stumbling blocks when it comes to switching to an EV, and, depending on your circumstances and driving needs, it may be best to hang onto your gas guzzler for at least the time being. The following are some factors that you need to consider.

## DRIVING RANGE

First, EVs need to be charged pretty much daily, so if, for example, you happen to live in a condo or an apartment that doesn't have charging facilities, an EV may not be an option. In addition, depending on the sort of driving you do, range may remain a drawback, despite the producers of many of the newer EV models now claiming they can go 500 kilometres or more on a single charge. That's far, but if you want to drive long distances, perhaps to visit the kids, hit the cottage, or take off on the occasional road trip, then the lack of a comprehensive coast-to-coast recharging network, while improving, remains a major impediment.

Furthermore, recharging an EV can take a half-hour or more, even with a so-called “high-capacity” charger, as compared to mere minutes for a gas-up; a regular 110-volt charger would take several hours. This may be okay at home, where you can plug in overnight. But on the road, do you want to be hanging around a charging station—if you can find one—for a half-hour or more every time you need power?

And, while that 500-kilometre range is an ideal, there are several real-world factors that will reduce the distance you can go on a charge. “Using the heater or air conditioning in an electric will have an impact on its range, and batteries hold less charge when it’s cold,” says the YPTE website.

Indeed, a 2019 American Automobile Association (AAA) study found that EV range was 12 per cent lower when the ambient temperature was 20°F (-7°C) than when it was 75°F (24°C) and four per cent lower at 95°F (35°C). The study also found that using air conditioning could mean further “significant reductions,” resulting in as much as a combined 41 per cent mileage drop. So in hot weather with the a/c on, that 500 kilometres can quickly become 300.

## BATTERY CONCERNS

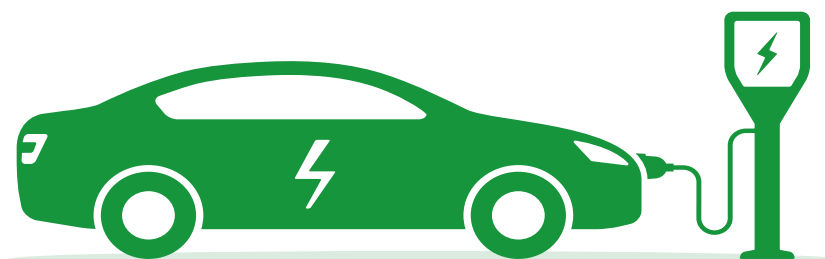
While weather and air conditioners can reduce range temporarily, all batteries will wear down over time, losing some of their original capacity. In an October 2021 article on the Quebec-based website hotcars.com, Samuel Balasz noted that: “Lithium-ion batteries are rather finicky pieces of equipment... The truth is that lithium-ion batteries require highly specialized equipment to charge, work best in a given temperature range, and wear down rather quickly.

Admittedly, there are differences from company to company, with some batteries being better than others, but the truth is that all lithium-ion batteries experience these weaknesses due to their construction.” And cars.com states bluntly that “it’s inevitable that a battery’s capacity—meaning the car’s range—will diminish over time.” Furthermore, while high-capacity chargers may be convenient, frequent use of these can accelerate that deterioration. Testing has shown that normal deterioration is only a few per cent a year and may even level off over time, but that’s on top of any range reductions stemming from use.

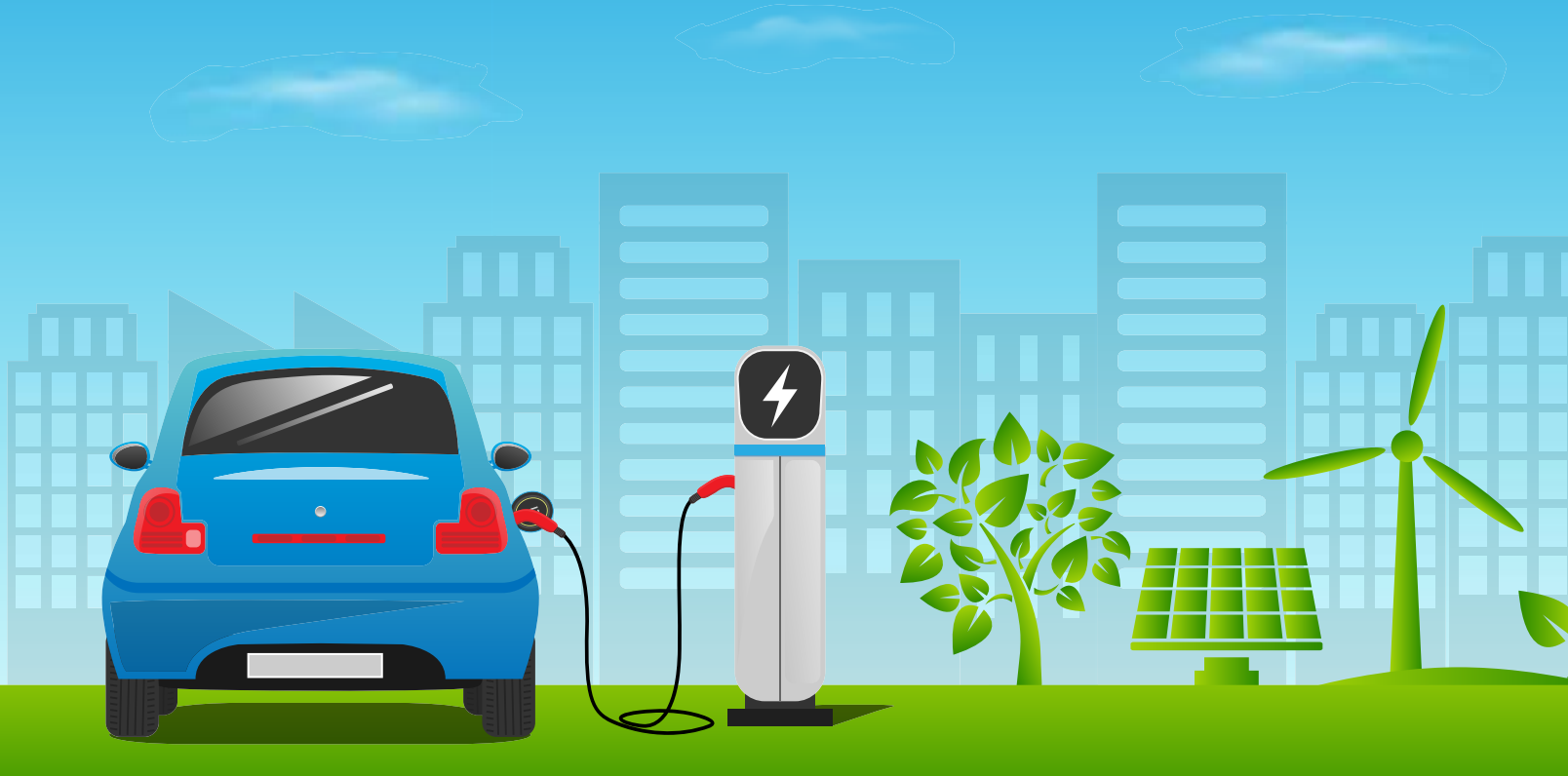
How much would a replacement battery cost? Prices have been falling rapidly over the past few years and can vary enormously depending on size and make, but batteries are still worth a small fortune. A survey of several US vendor websites, for example, found prices ranging from as little as US \$3,000 (about \$4,000 at press-time conversion rates) to as much as US \$20,000 (\$26,666), and installation costs may be on top of that.

On the plus side, the YPTE website notes, “The most expensive part of an electric car—its battery—tends now to be highly reliable and is covered by a long warranty.” And cars.com notes: “Complete battery pack failure is rare. Further, electric cars have powertrain warranties amounting to at least 100,000 miles or eight years, as required by [US] law, so in the event of failure, the battery should be covered for the original owner.”

You might be able to save a lot of money by buying a used EV, particularly an older model, because they tend to depreciate much more quickly than comparable gas models. But be aware that older models generally have far less range than newer models.







And even with newer models, mileage will be reduced because of battery degradation. At the very least, make sure the battery warranty is transferable and read the terms carefully.

For now, EVs should generally be considered only for relatively localized transport. They may be great for shopping trips and other urban/suburban/exurban jaunts, but if you also need an all-around vehicle to drive long distances or if you live in a remote area, an EV is probably not a good idea—yet. On the other hand, prices will continue to fall, ranges will continue to increase, and more and more companies are committing to building charging infrastructure.

So maybe by the time you're ready, your car will be ready, too.

*This article originally appeared in Good Times Magazine – [goodtimes.ca](http://goodtimes.ca). Reprinted with permission.*

### FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL INCENTIVES FOR EV BUYERS

The following is a list of the incentives offered by the federal government and the provinces for buying or leasing an electric vehicle. In addition, many jurisdictions offer incentives for the purchase of EV charging stations for your home or business as well as further incentives when you scrap your existing gas guzzler. Provincial incentives are on top of federal ones.

Program details may change from time to time, as may the lists of qualifying vehicles, so always double-check how much is available and for what in your jurisdiction.

- **Canada's iZEV** program provides up to \$5,000 towards the purchase of an EV or plug-in (hybrid) vehicle, with the amount depending on the type of vehicle. It applies in all provinces and territories and is added to any available provincial or territorial rebates.
- **British Columbia's CleanBC Go Electric** program provides rebates of up to \$4,000 for the purchase or lease of a fully electric vehicle and up to \$2,000 for the purchase/lease of a plug-in hybrid vehicle.



(photo by iStockphoto)

# Walking Women

When my sister retired from classroom teaching ten years ago, her first impulse was to travel and explore. Laurie had been to Europe just once in her life, so for her first adventure she signed up for Walking Women's Turkey cruise. Walking Women provided her with a safe, interesting, and inspiring first adventure.

She returned to BC with stories of languid shoreline hikes, daily swims in the Mediterranean, great food and wonderful company. Although she'd signed up solo, she said she never felt alone. Recently Laurie reminded me that her second Walking Women holiday was a consequence of friends she'd made while on the Turkey cruise. "I'd never planned to go to Ireland, but combining the Walking Women holiday there with a visit to see my new friends worked out perfectly." Since then, Laurie has been on two more WalkingWomen holidays and I've been on two.

My first hike was in Mull, Scotland. I'm a retired teacher, too, and I went with Laurie and an old school friend. Among the highlights of that trip was the company of the other women — I needn't have worried that we three Canadians would isolate ourselves. Although it was a comfort to be with them, getting to know the other women was a joy.



*Walking sisters Anne and Laurie.*



My next WalkingWomen holiday was a solo trip - I joined a group of women from the U.K. in Norway to learn, if at 70, I would still enjoy cross-country skiing after a 40-year gap. I got all the help I needed from Ginny at WalkingWomen to rendezvous with the others in Oslo and to travel to and from our gorgeous ski home. As we did following our Mull holiday, I stayed to explore parts of the rest of the country following my week in the snow (and the pool, and the hot tub, and the dining room!).

Being outdoors in these various locations, walking, breathing, immersing ourselves in new and beautiful environments has been consistently exhilarating. Unfortunately, Laurie is now in need of a hip replacement - we've all heard stories about those frustrations. Although tour providers Ginny and Sara have kindly offered to customize a tour for Laurie before surgery, she's decided to wait, returning again and again to Walking Women's website as inspiration. As for me... there's so much to choose from, and I am confident each holiday will be affordable, well-organized and fun - like the best of the classroom, good for the body, mind and heart. •

**ANNE SCHOLEFIELD** is a retired BC teacher.



*Getting back on skis after 40 years.*

## LINKS

[www.walkingwomen.com](http://www.walkingwomen.com)

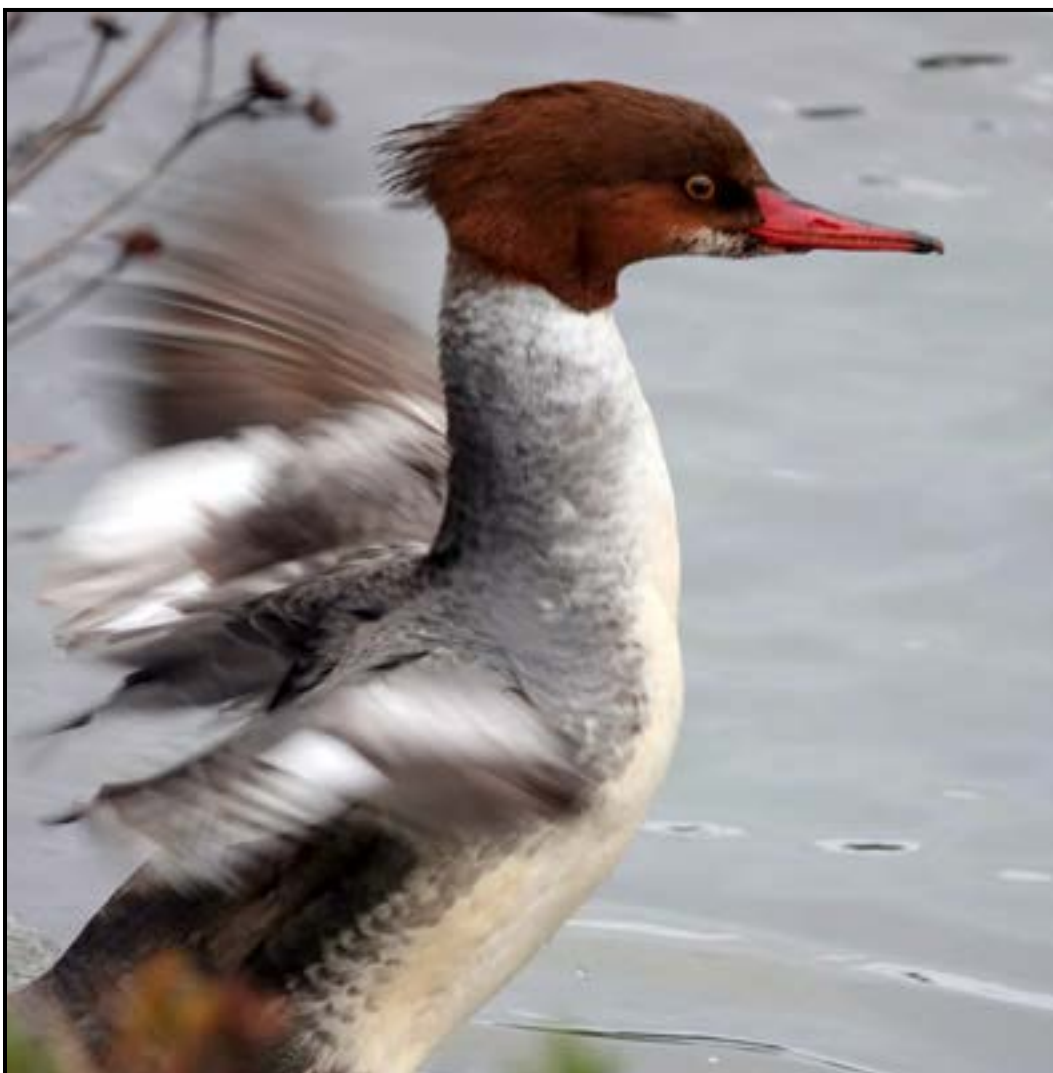
[www.walkingwomen.com/ww-holidays/the-magic-of-norway-cross-country-skiing/](http://www.walkingwomen.com/ww-holidays/the-magic-of-norway-cross-country-skiing/)

<https://www.walkingwomen.com/ww-holidays/turkey-autumn-cruise/>

To hear a podcast interview with Anne and Ginny, search Google for the Samantha Grierson podcast on Walking Women

*Scotland is a favoured location for tours by WalkingWomen.  
(photo by iStockphoto)*





## **FEMALE COMMON MERGANSER**

**PHOTO BY PENNY PITCHER, VICTORIA**



# important dates

## Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security

Includes the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) retirement pension and disability, children's and survivor benefits.

### Upcoming payment dates

#### 2022

- December 21

#### 2023

- January 27, 2023
- February 24, 2023
- March 29, 2023
- April 26, 2023
- May 29, 2023
- June 28, 2023
- July 27, 2023
- August 29, 2023
- September 27, 2023
- October 27, 2023
- November 28, 2023
- December 20, 2023

## Teachers' Pension Plan

Here are upcoming dates that pension payments are directly deposited to accounts.

### Upcoming payment dates

#### 2022

- December 22

#### 2023 (projected, not yet confirmed by TPP)

- January 30, 2023
- February 27, 2023
- March 30, 2023
- April 27, 2023
- May 30, 2023
- June 29, 2023
- July 28, 2023
- August 30, 2023
- September 28, 2023
- October 30, 2023
- November 29, 2023
- December 21, 2023



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# AN AMOUREUS Camel

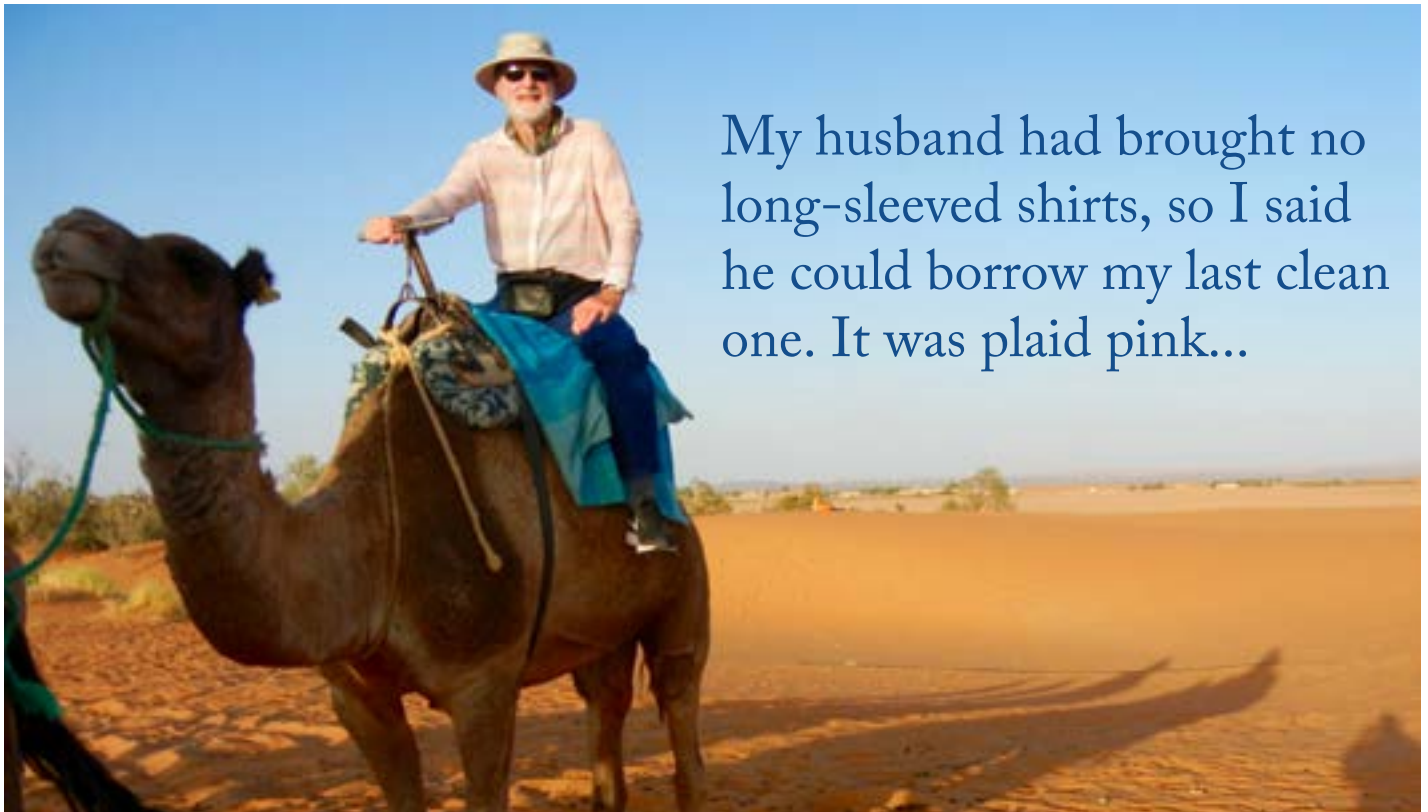
BY PENNY MILBRANDT

A tour with animals? Count me in for this bucket list adventure!

My husband Ted and I joined a small-group, eighteen-day cultural tour of Morocco in October, 2019. Three-quarters of the way through this incredible excursion, we arrived at a glamping hotel several kilometers into the Sahara Desert. My jaw dropped to see all the camels in their brightly hued blankets walking blithely by our spacious tent. Our group was advised that seeing the sunset atop one of the tallest Saharan dunes was an absolute must.

Since flies were often a problem at dusk, we were told to wear long-sleeved shirts. Due to the thirty-degree Celsius temperatures, my husband had brought no long-sleeved shirts, so I said he could borrow my last clean one. It was pink plaid and when he put it on, he could scarcely bend his elbows. Way back on the largest camel, his arms outstretched in an awkward position, a grim look pasted on his face, he was definitely out of his comfort zone.

First lesson: How to mount a camel. I had visions of my head, neck, and shoulders fully buried in the sand and



My husband had brought no long-sleeved shirts, so I said he could borrow my last clean one. It was plaid pink...



## Left in a valley with twelve unattended camels, reins drooping in the sand, things got interesting...

my legs sticking up like sign posts in the Sahara. But getting on ended up being the easy part.

After forty-five minutes of climbing sand dunes on our sturdy camels, plodding very close to deep drop-offs, we arrived at our sunset rendezvous. Our tour guide, Lahcen, who was in training for a marathon, ran effortlessly the whole way up and down the dunes. The camels, happily splaying their wide toes, stopped for their rest.

Our excited group began dismounting, immediately sinking to their knees in sand. We were told the last fifty meters - straight uphill - had to be taken on foot. I had a wonky knee. I saw the writing "in the sand", and knew I couldn't do it, so I waved everyone on as they struggled uphill in the deep sand. I prepared to wait on my camel, for what I presumed (ha!) would be the fifteen to twenty minutes until the sunset.

Early on, left in a valley with twelve unattended camels, reins drooping in the sand, things got interesting. All the camels, including mine, kneeled to rest. But my poor camel, realizing he wasn't getting rid of his "load," started complaining to the rest of his mates. He let out occasional moans and fidgeted, sometimes swiveling his head around to give me the stink eye. I'd been told that their barn was seventeen kilometers away, so I became a bit nervous about his intentions!

As I was contemplating this fact, I felt the sand shift on my left side. On its knees, the camel behind me had started to inch its way forward next to me. All of a

sudden, its large head, with heavily lidded soulful brown eyes, and sporting gnarly yellow teeth, was grinning a few inches from my eyes. Its huge tongue protruded and eagerly licked my face from chin to forehead in greenie, yellow slobber. I stayed absolutely still, hands in my lap. Seconds later his head disappeared and the ever-present, long, sandpapery tongue started slathering my left leg from my ankle to my hips and down again twice over until my jeans were soaked with slimy camel spittle.

Meanwhile, I was getting painfully saddle sore. The group, including my husband, absently waved to me from above. I could hear their joyful hoots and hollers as the red sun dipped exotically behind the last dune. They were up there one long hour. By this time my amorous camel had dropped his heavy head on top of my trapped foot, still in the stirrup, about a foot off the sand.

As the group returned to their camels, I wondered if I'd make it back without moaning. Three hours on a poorly padded saddle was nothing to brag about. About an hour later, after passing a dozen purple and pink shadowed dunes, we made it "home." My husband had survived in his pink plaid "straight jacket"; not one fly was seen.

At last, with my left leg straightened out like a weather vane, I slid indelicately off the neck of the camel, then walked with a decidedly bowlegged gait to our tent for a warm shower and badly needed change of clothes.

Now that's a bucket list memory! •

**PENNY MILBRANDT** lives in Campbell River.



# BIKING DEATH VALLEY PART 2: LOSING IT

A photograph of a bicycle with two large panniers, one yellow and one blue, parked on a flat, sandy desert floor. The background shows a vast, open landscape under a clear blue sky with distant mountains.

BY VICTOR NEUMAN

*In the Summer 2022 issue of PostScript, Victor's article "Dry Run" shared the story of his first day of cycling Death Valley. This is what happened next.*

## APRIL 18 - SHOSHONE TO FURNACE CREEK

I gave some thought to the previous day. Because of difficulties on Ibex Pass, I had taken 11 hours to go 60 miles. There were important things to be learned. First, I had to do my hardest riding before noon; temperatures after noon were in the high nineties and I wasn't in the baking lowlands yet. Second, I needed more conditioning for the ride ahead. Doing a desert mountain pass on the first day of my ride had not been a good idea. Third, there was worse to come. On my map of Death Valley, I saw other passes higher than Ibex. Towne Pass was still ahead of me at 4,956 feet, and it rose from west of Death Valley, which was mostly below sea level. The climb would be over 5,000 feet, more than double what I had done the previous day. Names in the area were an added discouragement: Funeral Mountains, Badwater Basin, Furnace Creek, Greenwater Valley, Hell's Gate, Devil's Golf Course and so on. Ingenious ways of saying "You're going to die!"

I decided to break things up by taking a different road. I'd head along route 127 to Death Valley Junction, spend the night, and then make my way to Furnace Creek the next day. It would be a flatter, shorter route and a chance to improve my conditioning before tackling anything too challenging. To be safe, I phoned ahead to the Junction and booked a room in their only motel.

There was also a trick I had learned from the Bedouin I met in Israel when I was doing archaeology in the Negev. They would offer me a drink from a clay jug that had been sitting in the shade. Magically the water was deliciously cool. Water in the jug sweated through porous pottery and evaporated on the outside surface of the jug, keeping the contents cool all day. I "liberated" a face cloth and a couple of rubber bands from the motel and wrapped the wet cloth around my water bottle. That kept my water cool for a couple of hours. After that, I sacrificed some of the water in my bottle to

wet the cloth again. There was less water in the bottle, but it was drinkable.

About a mile out of Shoshone, I paused at the crossroads. Then I saw the sign on the route straight into Death Valley: "Next Services 72 Miles." I quickly headed the other way to Death Valley Junction – with services a scant 28 miles away.

Ibex Pass had been a nasty experience, but I was learning.

The road was flat and I was in Death Valley Junction by 10:30 AM. The thought of cooling my heels in a one-horse way-station all day and into the evening was unbearable. Dying of thirst was better than dying of boredom, so I loaded up with water, cancelled my motel booking and headed on to Furnace Creek – 40 miles away, where I had now booked a room.

The first 16 miles consisted of a long grade upward to an elevation of 3,040 feet. The weather helped. The sky had hazed over around noon, so the temperatures were warm but reasonable for pedalling. I saw the first cyclists I had seen since the start of my ride. None of them had any gear weighing them down because they were closely followed by a support vehicle that had all their supplies. I was envious of all that lightness and freedom. At the same time, I felt smugly superior for doing this on my own. Wisely, they didn't stop long enough to be abused by me.



*"Next Services 72 Miles"*

Before long, I was over the hump and coasting down the long, steep grade into the Valley. Descending, I could feel the temperatures rise by the minute. Just before the valley bottom is Zabriskie Point, with a wonderful vantage point to admire the beautiful desolation of Death Valley. I was in awe and daunted at the same time. The sky had cleared and the sun was kicking temperatures into the high nineties and I wasn't even at the valley bottom.

A tour bus pulled up with a contingent of French tourists. A few older folks sampled the heat and went straight back into their air-conditioned bus. One group eyeballed me instead of the scenery. I wasn't sure if I was imagining this until one came over and asked if I was touring Death Valley on my bicycle. I thought that was self-evident, but I readily confirmed it. He expressed his opinion that I had "beaucoup de courage" and asked if he could take my picture. I said sure, and he snapped a photo. Then he asked one of his friends to take a picture of both of us.

After that I became a celebrity. All kinds of tourists wanted a picture of themselves with the crazy old bastard who was biking Death Valley. It was fun for a while, but then I saw another tour bus pull in and decided that, despite my many fans, I had no more time for this. I hopped on my bike and continued the descent to the valley bottom and a sweltering resort called, appropriately, Furnace Creek Ranch.

It was late afternoon, bloody hot, and I was thankful I had booked ahead to smooth the process of getting me to my air-conditioned room. As I wheeled my bike and gear down the hall, a lady paused at the door to her room to look me over.

"Boy! You are really hard core!"

I've had a lot of comments travelling by bike, but hers was the one I liked most. I went to bed feeling good about how the day went. The long descent into the valley meant there'd be a long grind getting out. But, then, why would I worry? I was hard core.

#### **APRIL 19 - FURNACE CREEK TO BADWATER BASIN**

Death Valley is known as the hottest, driest place in North America. One cause is its low elevation, and another is that it traps heat and recirculates the hot air. The Amargosa Range flanks the east side of the valley. The Panamint Mountains are



*The celebrity cyclist with “beaucoup de courage.”*

on the west. The western slope of the Panamint range wrings almost every drop of water out of the air before passing it on to Death Valley. Mid-summer temperatures routinely reach 120 F. One memorable day in July of 1913, the temperature went up to 134 F (56 C). On that day, people in the Valley saw swallows fall dead out of the sky. So in April I was better off than I would have been in a month's time.

Speaking of dead birds, I decided to kill a couple of them with one stone. I wanted to acclimatize myself a little more before continuing my trip and I wanted to tour a part of the valley I had missed by coming in via Death Valley Junction. Eighteen miles to the south, along the road not taken, was Badwater Basin—the lowest point in North America at 282 feet below sea level. It would be an easy 36-mile round trip, provided I could get it done before noon. The plan was to spend a second night at Furnace Creek Ranch.

To improve my chances of making the trip in good time, I stripped my bike down to the bare necessities. No saddle bags, no bike lock, no repair tools, no spare parts—just me, Moby (my bike), and two bottles of water wrapped in wet terry cloth. I was out the door at six in the morning and racing the sun to Badwater Basin. Helping my focus was a very graphic representation of how I was doing. As the sun rose over the Amargosa range, the mountains cast a sharp-edged shadow on the far side of the valley. That shadow was the one protecting me. But the edge crept down the Panamint mountains and into the valley, getting closer and closer as I went. Once its line crossed onto the road, I would be in direct sun.

For a change all went as I had hoped. I made Badwater Basin just as the shadow edge crossed the valley and was breaking onto the road. The Basin viewpoint is tight against the mountain slope, so it remained in shadow long enough for me to spend some time reading all the information about the area before heading back. The ride back was warm but I returned to Furnace Creek by 10:45 am. Before noon I was enjoying an ice cream on the shady porch of the Furnace Creek Ranch General Store.

With time to kill, I wandered about the resort. There was not a lot going on. The golf course was sweltering and deserted. I don't think even the grass wanted to be there.

Only the pool had traffic, and it was packed with everybody not hiding out in the sanctuary of air-conditioned rooms. I joined the pool crowd for a couple of hours. Then I bought sandwiches and some other snacks that were suitably unhealthy and retired to my room to eat, sit out the heat, and ponder the fun times ahead climbing the long grade to Towne Pass.

The golf course was sweltering and deserted.  
I don't think even the grass wanted to be there...



## **APRIL 20 - FURNACE CREEK TO EMIGRANT CAMPGROUND**

Towne Pass was a 5,000-foot climb that would be brutal to do in one go, so before leaving Vancouver, I made a plan to stop over at Emigrant campground, which lay prior to the pass at an elevation of around 2,000 feet. This was the reason I was laden down with a sleeping bag, air mattress, and other camping gear.

The other part of the plan was to start super early and not get caught in the heat. I left Furnace Creek at first light, around 5:30 am. All my flashers were on to warn off any early traffic, and there was just enough light to see the road ahead. I covered the 28 miles to Stovepipe Wells in around two and a half hours of flat, cool riding. On arrival, I topped up on water and snacks and girded my loins for the grind ahead, a steady eight-mile climb of 2,000 feet to Emigrant. I was saying to myself that this might be the hardest day of my trip. I didn't know the half of it.

I was now climbing the Panamint mountains on the west side of the valley, so the sun hit my route early. The heat and the grade soon got to me, and I stopped to rest at frequent intervals—even within the first three miles of the ascent. The small bushes by the roadside offered shade enough in the early part of the day, so I left my bike parked by the road and traipsed off to the side to find a shady bush where I could lie down and recover. I took off my helmet and used it for a pillow. I also pulled off my riding gloves and my fanny pack, so that I could rest unencumbered.

Somewhat later in the climb, I suddenly realized how unencumbered I was. My fanny pack was missing and, with it, my wallet, camera, phone, and passport. Until then I had been feeling the fatigue of the ride. Realizing I had lost my fanny pack knocked the piss out of every bit of fatigue. A cat flushing out a mouse could not have been wider awake and more alert than I was at that moment. Until then Death Valley had been a place of desolate beauty. Now I was panic-stricken at the thought of being broke and incommunicado in this god-forsaken, arid, overheated wilderness.

I left my bike where it was and went on foot, rushing back down the road. Riding my bike to search was not an option because my rest stops had been well off to the side of the road. Adding to the difficulty,

my fanny pack was black and would be obscure among the thousands of identical bushes and their shadows. I had no luck in my first search a couple hundred metres down the hill from my bike.

I needed to keep my bike close and to make my search more methodical. If I was sloppy, I would carry on down the road and never find it. It was an unbearable thought. If just asking for water made me feel like a needy screw-up, then I could imagine how I'd feel begging for water, food, cash and the use of a phone. The method I settled on was to park my bike, search in a zig-zag pattern through the roadside bushes for 100 metres down the road, put a stone on the paved shoulder at that point and retrieve my bike. Then, after bringing my bike to the stone marker, I repeated the pattern for another 100 metres.

This had gone on for around a mile when I finally saw a shadow that looked a little different. I tried not to get my hopes up as I walked toward it. I started talking to myself. "Looks like something." I kept walking toward it. "Looks a little like a fanny pack. Still looks like a fanny pack. Looking more like a fanny pack. It is my fanny pack!"

Back at my bike, I decided it was late, my morale was shot, and I wanted to go back to Stovepipe Wells to spend the night before trying this again. It felt godawful losing all that gain in elevation, but I had to let it go mentally. In 20 minutes, I sped down the mountain and arrived at Stovepipe Wells for the second time. I headed straight for the only motel in town and spoke to the guy at the desk. It was around two in the afternoon.

"I'd like a room for tonight. Just myself."

"Sorry, friend. We're booked up."

"Yeah, right."

"No, I mean it. We have no vacancies for tonight." It had never occurred to me that anybody but me and a cactus would find Stovepipe Wells a good place to spend the night.

"Is there some kind of campground here?"

"Yup." He perked up at the thought of being helpful. "There's a great campground at Emigrant just up the way. You have to go..."

"That's OK. I know where it is."

"It's just a short drive."

"I'm on a bicycle."

"Can't you just throw it in the back of your car?"

Sometimes there aren't words.

Decision time. Kill several hours in Stovepipe Wells and pull up some dirt to sleep on or...?

I got back on my bike and started out for Emigrant again. I never thought anything would make me nostalgic for Ibex Pass, but this experience was coming close. I might have been depressed, but it was hard to tell because my mind had gone numb. I made headway by pretending my body was just a piece of machinery detached from my brain. Passing cars weren't buying it, and quite a number pulled over to offer assistance. One young couple seemed particularly concerned as they stopped to ask if I needed anything. I took a couple of bottled waters from them and thanked them for stopping. Then I told them that was all I needed, and they drove off. Then I saw them turn around, come back and pull over to talk to me.

"Are you sure you don't want a lift or something?" the guy said, "We could hang your bike out of the trunk and drop you off at Emigrant."

"Thanks, but I'm fine."

They drove off again and came back again. "How about if we carry your gear to Emigrant and leave it in the campground for you? Then you wouldn't have so much weight to haul."

It was tempting but, after the ordeal of losing my fanny pack, I couldn't stomach the idea of separating from any of my gear. My stuff and I were finally in the same place, and I wanted to keep it that way. I thanked them and they drove off, for good this time.

Further up the grade, I was passed by a biker gang on Harleys. "Gang" might be a bit harsh. They were middle-aged men, banded together to enjoy the freedom of motorcycling and camping. They were all guys except for one lady on the back seat of what might have been her partner's bike. They looked me over and waved as they went by.

Thoroughly whipped, I finally rolled into Emigrant campground in the early evening. The bikers were there with a fire going. As I rolled past them, I could hear snippets of conversation about me.

"I told you he'd make it. You owe me."

I went to the far end of the campground to be someplace quiet. It was a good spot. There were no nearby tents, and it had a picnic table and washrooms nearby. There was no shower, so I did the best I could at the communal water faucet. There was little to set up. I had no tent - just a sleeping bag and an air mattress full of springy rubber cells that self-inflated when you opened the valve.

The lady from the Harley group wandered over to my site and asked me if I wanted a beer or some food. I declined but she persisted. I had the feeling she needed some time away from the testosterone fest. She would offer me some food or drink. I would answer that I was good, and then she would just stand there trying to think of more to say or offer. The next time she asked me why I didn't want anything, I levelled with her.

"I just like to feel I can handle things myself. People helping me makes me feel like I can't take care of myself, like I'm some kind of baby."

My honesty struck a chord. "That's exactly how I feel!" She sat down at my table and introduced herself as Sandra. We talked up a storm, covered everything from beer brands to ponderings about what we wanted out of life. When we started the

I went to bed with visions of scorpions and lizards  
crawling over my face all night...



*"There was little to set up."*

conversation, there was still light in the sky. By the end of it, I could hardly make out her face across the table. She grew uncomfortable.

"This is getting weird. My husband must be wondering about me. I should be getting back." I didn't try to keep her. I was thinking it would be

good to get some sleep. But she kept sitting there and repeating how weird it was. Eventually, it became too weird even for her. She asked me if I was sure I didn't want a beer. I declined yet again and finally she was gone.

This was going to be my first experience sleeping without a tent, and I went to bed with visions of scorpions and lizards crawling over my face all night. None of that happened. There was not a critter around, and my biggest impediment to sleep was the incredible star-studded sky. I tried to keep my eyes closed, but they kept wanting to open and look at the firmament one more time to be sure it was real.

I hardly slept that night and didn't regret it for a second.

**VICTOR NEUMAN** received an MA in literature from UBC, where he taught English. He later went on to have a career in engineering, designing highways.

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# BEST FIELD TRIP EVER



BY MARIAN DODDS



July 2022: After two housebound years, it feels a miracle to be standing on the deck of the Ocean Endeavor with 175 other passengers, gliding through the Narrows of St. John's Harbour under a pinkish sky while passing the iconic 'jelly bean' houses perched beneath Signal Hill. A near-full moon over Cape Spear beckons to open ocean. Our eleven-day small-ship expedition to circumnavigate Newfoundland is underway!

Bobbing through swells in Zodiacs next day, and keeping a respectful distance, we circle bird nesting areas around the Wadham Islands, marveling upward at swirling kittiwakes, gannets, gulls, and murre. Puffins careen like wind-up toys beneath sundogs and cirrus clouds.

That night in traditional "kitchen party" style, two musicians share ballads celebrating their idyllic childhoods in the tiny community of Little Bay Islands and the sad inevitability of youth forced away for opportunities elsewhere. One of the performers, unable to hold back tears, recounts the collapse of his family's business, built over generations, and their unsuccessful attempt to convince the government to transform it into a living museum. Next morning these same men guide us around their abandoned outpost village, bringing home the impact of the 1992 cod moratorium that put 30,000 fishers out of work and necessitated a resettlement process that reverberates still.

Sailing north, we disembark near L'anse aux Meadows, the iconic Norse village made famous by Newfoundland and Labrador Tourism ads. Interpreters lead us past grassy indentations where the original settlement was excavated and reburied. Inside the replicated sod and timber village, costumed guides take us back a thousand years. Wind on my cheeks, peering out to sea, I visualize European adventurers, sheep and all, making perilous journeys to this new world.

Further along we visit Saint Anthony ("Snant-ney" to locals) to tour a museum and view a video lauding the legacy of Sir Wilfred Grenfell, a British doctor and missionary who dedicated his life to the peoples of Labrador, establishing hospitals, orphanages, schools and handicraft enterprises in the first half of the 20th century. In the gift shop afterward, fingering bolts of tightly woven cotton twill Grenfell cloth, I remember it as the wind-resistant covering for the warm duffel cloth parka I wore as a child in the Arctic. I also recall the 2017 apology from the Canadian government for the abuse, and the loss of language and culture, of thousands



*All photos by the author.*

of Indigenous children removed from their communities between 1949 and 1979 to attend residential schools run by the International Grenfell Association or Moravians.

Crossing the Strait of Belle Isle to Labrador we reach Red Bay, a whaling station from 1550 to early 1700, where Basque whalers harpooned, flensed, and rendered whale blubber into oil, until North Atlantic right whales and humpbacks neared extinction. Our Parks Canada interpreter brandishes jars of raw and refined whale oil, describing the stench; we unanimously decline a sniff. Viewing a chalupa, a four-hundred-year-old boat used to harpoon whales, then walking the length of a right whale skeleton, makes the endeavour seem impossible; no wonder the waters were littered with shipwrecks and corpses. Wandering alone on the land, I happen upon a patch of Labrador tea and impulsively lie down, gazing up at pure blue sky, stirring sensory memories from my Kuujuaq childhood in similar sub-arctic tundra.

Look - capelin! Should see whales now! Someone spots swirls of tiny fish under the dock at Woody Point in

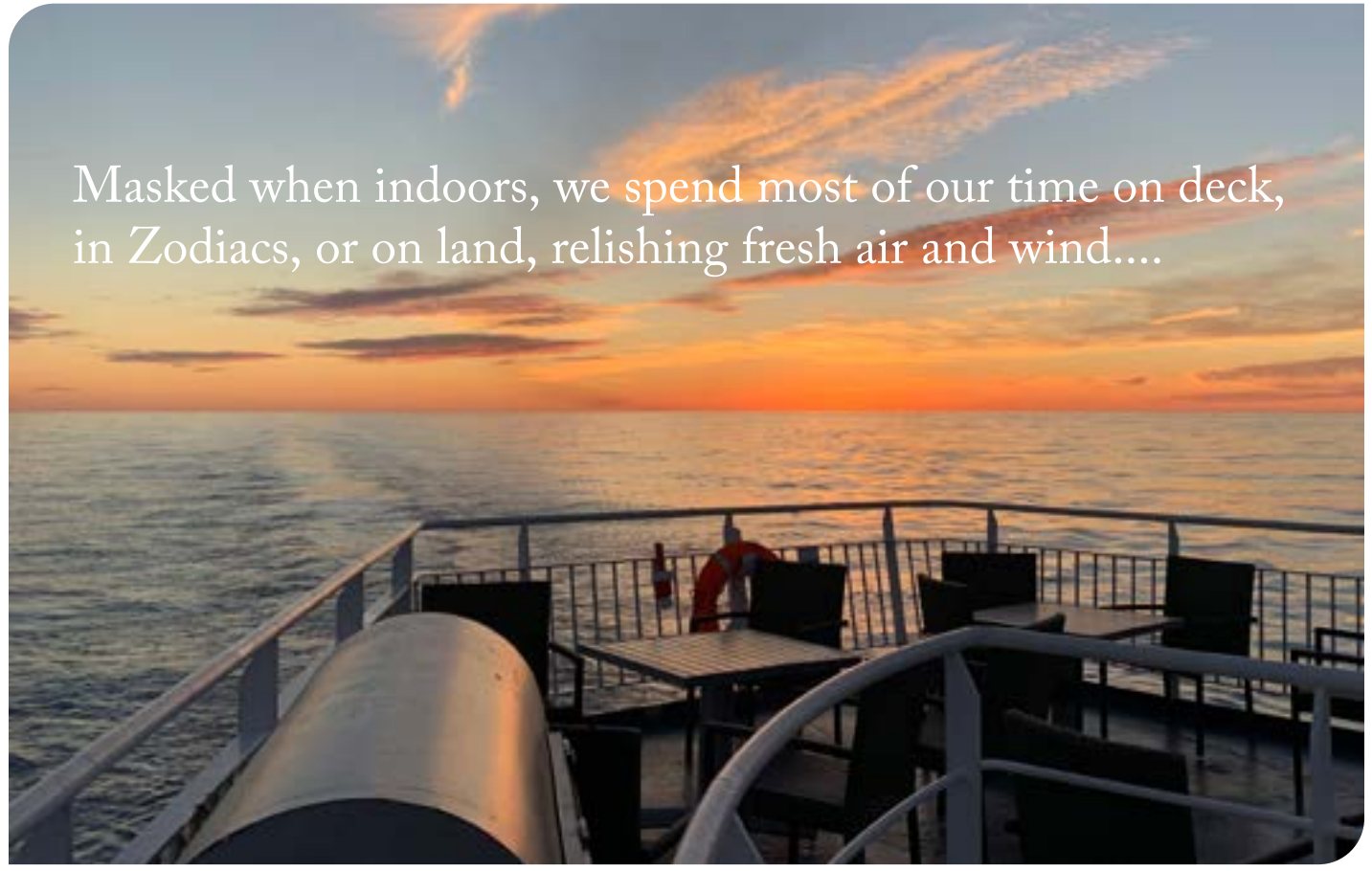
the heart of Gros Morne Park. But we're here to collect bagged lunches (moose sandwiches!) and hike with our parks guide through orange rocks laced with serpentine in the barren Tablelands, a massive piece of earth's mantle thrust above earth's crust half a billion years ago when continents collided.

As we bounce back to the ship, a frisson of danger. Waves wash over the sides and splash our rain pants. Taste of place, we joke, licking our salty lips, trusting we're in capable hands. Safety first, though; afternoon Zodiac rides are in fact cancelled due to the increasing swells. Instead, a seamless transition to onboard offerings by staff experts ranging from knot tying, marine navigation, marine mammals, geology, and photography to regenerative tourism.

A night of rocking and rolling at sea, waves calmed enough by morning for a leisurely wander around Woody Point to sip a cappuccino and chat with artisans about traditional hand-knit mittens and socks, quilts and hooked rugs. Then afternoon cruises in a protected fjord to admire the cliffs, with surprise attacks by pirates bearing cocoa and Baileys.

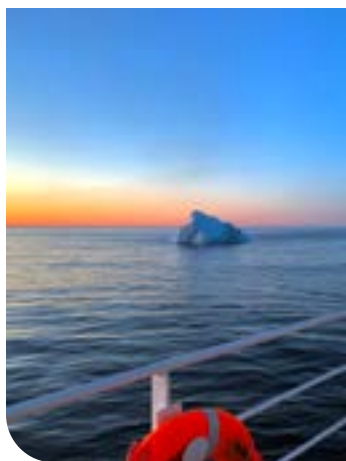
An unanticipated benefit of Covid restrictions—being assigned to Table 83. Sharing stories in a companionable bubble of four women and one man becomes our touchstone three meals a day. Tastes of lobster, moose bolognaise, halibut potato casserole, cod and chips on the buffet. Captivated by icebergs in sunset pinks, blues, and mauves, Glen vows to add an iceberg carving by a St. John's street artist to his collection. Ruthanne is delighted to add greater shearwaters to her birder's list. Jean's sharp eyes alert us to whales and dolphins. A photo of Alison's spontaneous head-dip under an icy waterfall is shared at our evening debrief.

Masked when indoors, we spend most of our time on deck, in Zodiacs, or on land, relishing fresh air and wind. A Zodiac cruise in mauzy morning mist to explore rocky shorelines remains a highlight. Peering down through water like clear tea. Profusions of berries and miniature flowers nestle low to ground, hidden treasures to observant eyes. Imagining glaciers millions of years ago sculpting this land into dramatic formations of volcanic rock, limestone, and shale striated with pinks, blacks, and greens—the Appalachian Shield. Look, there's a bald eagle—see the white spot up that tree at six



Masked when indoors, we spend most of our time on deck, in Zodiacs, or on land, relishing fresh air and wind....





*Scenes from the best field trip ever.*

o'clock? Ah yes, now I've got it. Walkie-talkie crackle from another driver alerts us to a mother bear with three cubs atop the cliff. Fragrant spruce and fir trees cling to inhospitable rock, survivors just like the Norse, Irish, Scots, British, French, Spanish and Portuguese sailors who journeyed seasonally to these wild shores to harvest fish, whales and lumber, and were followed in the early 1600's by British and French settlers who soon feuded over land taken without permission from the Indigenous inhabitants.

Music and singing, storytelling and silliness, including games like Newfoundland bluff for those so inclined, fill evenings on board. Writer Kevin Major overviews the history of Newfoundland and Labrador using highlights from his non-fiction epic *As Close to Heaven as Sea*. One evening, after screening an adaptation of his novel *Hold Fast*, we're treated to film set anecdotes. Later, he reads from his newest mystery, due for release this fall, which is set on Fogo Island, and possibly involves a quilting needle as weapon.

On National Indigenous People's Day, in preparation for our visit to the Miawpukek First Nation at Conne River, Saqamaw (Chief) Misel Joe comes aboard and joins our Inuk cultural interpreter Randy Edmunds to share perspectives on truth and reconciliation. At their Powwow Grounds, self-assured youth drum and dance, women offer tastes of moose, fried cod and eel, bannock and partridgeberry jam. We all join hands for a final circle dance. Exploring the grounds, I find three gleeful little boys chasing each other inside a giant teepee,

the white canvas made brilliant by filtered sunlight. A wander past their new school makes me, for one brief moment, imagine myself inside, teaching again. Later, our on-board auction raises thousands for school sports equipment.

Next morning we dock at Saint Pierre, stepping foot in France, serenaded by accordion players and a sign: *Welcome - it's been too long*. I find a boulangerie, order café au lait and a sable (not that I needed it) and become seized with wanderlust for all things French. Maybe, just maybe, European travel will again be possible. On deck that evening, pure magic: refreshing breezes on my cheeks, a spectacular slow motion sunset tints feathery clouds pink then mauve then apricot until the sun is swallowed into the calm silver sea.

At sunrise, we early risers are treated to humpback whales blowing and breaching as the ship glides toward the Narrows and St. John's harbor, a fitting finale to a restorative, uplifting tour of Newfoundland—the best field trip ever!

*\* You can learn more about Adventure Canada expeditions at [www.adventurecanada.com](http://www.adventurecanada.com). •*

**MARIAN DODDS** says she has retired three times: BCTF staff 2008, Cuso International 2013, BCTF Teacher Magazine editor 2018. She is completing a memoir about working in Ethiopia from 2010-2013, and she plans to turn her focus to her Arctic childhood in the new year.

# LESSONS FROM MY STUDENTS

BY DALE LEOPKY



Between 1960 and 1986, Dale Leopkey held teaching and administrative positions in schools in New Brunswick, Ontario, London (England), and here in BC. After retiring, he was an Instructor in the Education Program at Malaspina College. His major focus throughout was working with and improving services to children with special needs.

In 2003, and 2006, Dale travelled to Kenya as a volunteer Field Agent with Canadian Harambee Education Society (CHES). When his fellow Field Agent fell ill, his wife Mary Lou joined him to help. His responsibilities included selecting the rural girls who would receive scholarships to attend secondary school in the towns, monitoring and aiding their progress, and giving workshops to the girls on everything from study skills to AIDS prevention. The work entailed travel by car, bicycle, and transit into rural areas.

These excerpts are from a memoir he has been compiling as part of a Community Memoir Writing Group, established by the Powell River public library. Members are coached by a professional writer and then continue meeting as they develop their projects.

## **SPORTS DAY AT SUNSHINE DRIVE SCHOOL**

A day filled with excitement and apprehension for all! The sports field was set up for many jumping, running, and throwing events. Sunshine Drive School for special needs children was built by the Province and administered by the Chilliwack Society for Community Living.

I could tell Michelle, one of my sixteen-year-old students, was very nervous about the obstacle course. Despite my “pep talk” to build up her confidence, Michelle balked at the first hurdle, a foot-high rope stretched across the track. I encouraged Michelle with much verbal chatter to make the jump, and was soon joined in this verbal barrage of reassurance by other students and sideline spectators. But Michelle froze--she could not move despite the crowd’s encouragement.

At this crucial moment, an older lady rushed out of the crowd, hoisted her skirt with one hand, and took Michelle by the other. Both jumped the rope together, completing the obstacle course in style, hand-in-hand, smiles on their faces and eyes gleaming with achievement. The on-lookers went wild with applause!

### ***WHAT DID I LEARN?***

I learned from Michelle and an elderly lady that sometimes you have to do more than tell people what to do - you actually have to take them by the hand and go with them along the way.

**Michelle balked  
at the first hurdle,  
a foot-high rope  
stretched across  
the track.**





## A PROBLEM AT THE HOSTEL

We had a problem at the hostel attached to Sunshine Drive School - local Sardis neighborhood kids were climbing the chain-link fence at night, sneaking into the grounds, and using the swimming pool. How dare they!

The Sunshine Board of Directors met and decided to add night lights around the pool. The problem persisted, however, and successive meetings added six feet in height to the fence. Then a night-watchman was hired. Anger and conflict mounted between the school and the village community with one person observing that Sunshine Drive School and the hostel were beginning to look like a “prison compound”.

At last someone suggested, “Why don’t we take down the fences, remove the guard, and invite the Sardis kids to join with the Sunshine Drive kids in using the pool and the school facilities?” It was the beginnings of a great relationship.

### WHAT DID I LEARN?

I learned that, despite its sometimes noble intent to protect the less-abled, segregation is not effective and is often destructive.

*Why don't we  
take down the  
fences?*



*Violet Ayuma*

*(Images courtesy of the author)*

## TWO AFRICAN VIOLETS

In 2003 and 2006 my wife Mary Lou and I lived in Kenya, where I worked as a CHES Field Agent.

### *Violet 1*

I first met Violet Ayuma when she came to my door in tears. She was a student, about 14 years of age, and had been orphaned at age 12 when her parents were both killed in a road accident. For the previous two years she had been supported by and living with a teacher. However, the teacher was being transferred and Violet was now homeless and without school fees.

At first I was quite skeptical; numerous girls had come to my door with similar stories. Violet addressed this skepticism in her most determined 14-year-old voice, “I am a proud Lluya woman and I know how to work hard!” I was swayed and we decided to personally help Violet. I have never regretted it!

Nearby was an orphanage for infants. In exchange for cleaning and caring for the babies at night, Violet was allowed to live at the orphanage and attend school during the day. School fees were paid by Marzie and Pops, as they called us.

When a wild dog attacked a child in the school yard, it was Violet who rushed to drive the dog away and then attended to the child's serious wounds. In recognition of her actions, the school sponsored Violet to attend a First-Aid training course. Upon her completion, she was assigned as the school First-Aid attendant. In a school of 500 students and staff, she was the only one with any medical training at all.

She graduated in 2006 with excellent marks and wanted to become "a business lady". From Marzie and Pops, she received a business loan of 20 Canadian dollars with which she opened a stall in the Kakamega Public Market where she sold mangoes. Violet had no home, so she slept in her market stall at night at great personal risk.

She accumulated enough money to take the public bus to Nairobi where she purchased 3 bags of mangoes and became a "wholesaler" selling to other stall owners in the market.

As her business expanded she took in an orphan girl named Abrina to help. They both slept in the stall at night. Violet also paid Abrina's school fees, becoming the youngest known person in CHES to sponsor a girl in the Kenyan school system, thereby giving another girl the same chance she had.

### **WHAT DID WE LEARN?**

We should never underestimate the young or the disadvantaged.

#### **LEARN MORE**

Canadian Harambee Education Society (CHES)

<https://canadianharambee.ca/>

Chilliwack Society for Community Living (ran the Sunshine Drive School for the BC Ministry of Education)

<https://cscl.org/about-us/our-history/>

*Violet Amunga*



### **Violet 2**

Violet Amunga's father had died 15 years earlier leaving a significant number of children amongst his three wives. Beatrice, a third wife, had low status in the clan and struggled to raise her five daughters, one of whom was Violet.

Violet and two of her sisters had moved into the nearby town, Kakamega, to earn money for their family. There, employed by CHES as a "garden lady", she made 30 cents an hour digging the garden, and watering and nurturing 3,000 seedlings.

Violet also adopted two elderly Canadian strangers, inviting us often into her modest home. She taught us how to plant a garden and gave us lessons on Lluya language and culture including singing and hand dancing. Cooking lessons included "uji" (millet porridge) and "sukuma wiki" (literally "to stretch the week"), a dish with collard greens. She served us a goat stew that we shared with her sisters in their tiny home, and were even invited to her mother's clan compound to take part in her sister Truphena's wedding.

### **WHAT DID WE LEARN?**

That true friendship is readily available - even in faraway places. •

**DALE LEOPKEY** wrote his memoirs for the benefit of family, who encouraged him to share some of them with PostScript. He has been retired for 27 years and resides in Gillies Bay on Texada Island.

# EXPLORING ELK VALLEY'S HISTORY: RESOURCES FOR YOUNG LEARNERS

## ELK VALLEY RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Teachers know how plans and projects can grow and morph as we work on them, which is exactly what happened with our BCRTA Heritage Grant project in 2021.

The first project, “Hands on the Past”, was born when the local Fernie & District Historical Society asked if I would like to chair a new subcommittee of its Programs and Exhibits Committee. The subcommittee’s role would be to support the Fernie Museum’s educational programming. I took on the job, of course; I was recently retired and hadn’t yet discovered that it can be normal to not be constantly busy.



*The display at the Fernie Museum Chautauqua.*



*Children experienced historical teaching practice, using chalk and slates.*

Another retired teacher, Margaret Hinton, and I began by poking around the basement of the local Catholic Church where the Historical Society stores its artifacts. Lindsay Vallance, in charge of Museum Collections, showed me approximately 60 bank boxes full of items to be de-accessioned or donated to other museums. These items were mainly duplicates—how many jelly moulds from the '30s does a museum need?—or they were not from or related to our area, so the Society couldn’t afford them space.

Margaret had the idea to make kits of artifacts for loaning to schools or other local organizations. So began the long process of going through each box and re-sorting the items into themes: cooking, cleaning and ironing, grooming, communications, shop tools, mining, and so on. We used our grant money to buy large plastic bins for storage and smaller ones to send out to borrowers.

Then we paid for the collections manager to photograph and properly identify each of the hundreds of items we selected. She set up an accessible, searchable digital collection that teachers and community members could access to list the items they wanted to use. The Fernie Museum staff would then put the listed items into one of our bins for pick up. The bins were stored in the Museum basement in order to be handy.



This project is almost complete, and the program is already in use. This year Pro-D chairpersons at our local schools may request that we speak to school staff about the Hands on the Past program.

But...remember the morphing and growing part? We had grant money left over, so a new project was born: "Ghost Schools of Michel-Natal." Just east of Sparwood up the Elk Valley from Fernie, the two mining towns of Michel and Natal, and a small residential area between them known as Middletown, thrived for about 70 years. In the late 60s, the BC government closed the towns, for what it deemed environmental reasons, and moved the citizens to the smaller lumber town of Sparwood several miles west.

Hundreds of homes and businesses were moved, demolished, or burned. There is an excellent, though somewhat heartbreaking, NFB film about this titled "That's the Price". Three schools were also destroyed and students were relocated to new schools in Sparwood. In addition, three nearby one-room school houses had already been closed in the area, making a total of six ghost schools within living memory.

The Fernie Museum was kicking off its annual Chautauqua, a fall culture fair, with an art exhibit called Women of Michel-Natal featuring the work of four artists, women who grew up in the lost towns. We decided to supplement that theme by creating a display in one of the fair tents to share the history of the schools from those towns. It began with an excellent resource book, *Remembering When* (based on interviews with former Michel-Natal residents), and discussions with one of its editors, Monica Berenak, and the Sparwood museum staff.



From that museum's collection of over 350 photographs, we chose a few dozen images of schools, student activities, and graduations. Then we began interviews with local people who had attended the schools or had stories to tell about their former teachers. Lori Bradish, for example, was able to help with information about her father, Max Turyk, after whom a Fernie school is named. He attended Michel-Natal Central school, and began his teaching career in one of the tiny rural schools nearby, both ghost schools now. Meeting people who remain very fond of their lost towns and schools was delightful and rewarding.

We selected and sorted photos and anecdotes to create six vinyl banners of education history for the tent display. We borrowed two rows of antique primary desks from the church basement, bought slates and chalk for each desk so children at the fair could experience an historic instructional practice, and displayed a collection of vintage school books.

The display was very successful. Little children warmed the seats of those old desks all day, adults revisited memories and learned local history, and more than one young teacher attending commented on how lucky they were to be teaching nowadays. Some of the retired teachers present took a broader view, happy as the display led them to recall with real fondness their own careers in the classroom as both students and teachers.

If you'd like to see the collection of digitized items, visit <https://ehive.com/> and search for *Fernie Museum Education Collection*.

**KATE NOAKES** is Treasurer of the Elk Valley Retired Teachers' Association.

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**PAINTING BY LEONARD SHANE**





# MUSHROOMS

PHOTOS BY RHETA STEER









*Previous page: Short-stemmed Russula.*

*Clockwise from top left: Common Field Cap mushroom; Common Field Cap; Coral mushrooms; Deer mushroom.*

My daughter-in-law, Sonsee, is from Thailand, where mushrooms are used medicinally, as much or more than in cooking. That is how she uses and markets them, though she is still in many ways a beginner. I go along with her as a second pair of eyes and ears for security in the forest, and to catch it all on camera.

Myself, I prefer to eat mushrooms—fried with onions!







*Clockwise from top left: Turkey Tail mushrooms; Unknown; Unknown; Lactarius.*





*Clockwise from top left: Fluted Black Helvella; Western Vanished Conk; Western Amethyst Laccaria; Oyster mushrooms (grow your own!); Woolly Chanterelle.*

A note about the oyster mushrooms growing in the buckets: The substrate inside the bucket is straw. The mushroom spore is put in the straw and left to incubate. Eventually a colony of mushrooms grows. The only moisture added is a misting of water around the holes as the mushrooms appear.

**RHEETA STEER** is a BCRTA member. She took these photos in Sooke, Metchosin, and other areas around Vancouver Island.

# PLEASE, MADAM, WHAT IS A DIET?

*An excerpt from the book Red Dust and Cicada Songs describing the experience of teaching in Africa.*

BY MARY BOMFORD



As we settled into the routines of the school year, my life had moments of uncertainty, some pleasant, some disturbing. Moments when things were not what they appeared, and assumptions were upended. Moments when I sensed the world was more various, beautiful or strange than I had imagined. It was as if I had opened a door and found new rooms in my home, spacious and airy, filled with hints of divergent futures, incomprehensible puzzles, and new ways of seeing.

Our students craved sweets. They got a few teaspoons of sugar in the morning to sweeten their breakfast nshima but depended on the small shops in town to provide technicolour hard candies—fuchsia, lime and yellow—in exchange for their pocket money. My students’ English essays were full of the raptures of sugar and honey, with expressions like “Too, too sweet,” and “So sweet.” In their stories, love was always sweet.

In the first year, when we still depended on British-based texts, I taught standard comprehension lessons. The students read an essay, followed by the five Ws: “Who, What, When, Where, and Why?” One story was about a man in London who went to his doctor with knee pains and was told to go on a diet to relieve the pressure in his joints. Waysi put up his hand, pushed back his metal-legged chair, then stood by his desk and asked respectfully, “Please Madam, what is a diet?”

“When you are on a diet you must not eat too much food, especially sugar.” I almost said, “No

doughnuts or ice cream,” but I quickly stopped myself. I had not seen doughnuts or ice cream since we arrived in Lundazi. Waysi looked at me with incomprehension and sat down, unsatisfied. Other hands went up. Davison shouted out, disbelieving, “Please, Madam, how could anyone have too much food? It is not possible.”

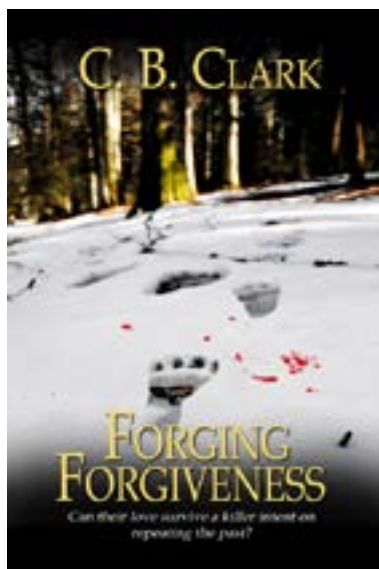
My words began to sound nonsensical and my mouth went dry. I could not begin to explain the abundance of food in Canada, the plates of half-eaten French fries left on A&W trays, nor the heaped plates of spaghetti and meatballs unfinished. Every student in front of me was wiry and slender. They would look scrawny standing beside a Canadian teenager. I couldn’t think of a single overweight kid among the eight hundred students. The only round person was the boarding master, Joel, who shovelled sugar to the point of saturation into his recess coffee.

They looked at me sideways and broke into incredulous comments among themselves. I ended the lesson early and dismissed them. I had no idea what to say. •

**MARY BOMFORD** has written a series of family histories including *Lou Hamel: CPR Telegrapher*, held in the Camrose Railway Museum. Mary has volunteered for Amnesty International and raised funds for African AIDS Angels. She worked in Special Education for most of her teaching career.



# books OF NOTE



## **Forging Forgiveness** by C.B. Clark

When small-town college instructor Candace Cooper discovers bloody, bare footprints in the snow while running in a state park deep in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, it brings back the horrific nightmare of her past.

Detective Aiden Farrell is determined to redeem himself in his new position in Colorado, even if that means ignoring his growing feelings for the beautiful professor he meets during an investigation. His fear that the footprints she saw are connected to a recent spate of missing teens intensifies when Candace is assaulted on campus. As they start unraveling the truth, they get closer to each other—and to a killer who'll stop at nothing to achieve his nefarious goal.

Caught between duty and love, Aiden fights in a race against time to save the woman he loves.

Ebook or paperback, available at all major online retailers.

## **What Happened Next Changed Many Lives** by Lenora Klappe

High school sweethearts Brad Andrews and Monika Johnson are about to have a baby. On top of planning for their graduation ceremony, they must now plan a wedding and prepare for a child. They both had university scholarships but have given them up to take over the Andrews family business. It's not the life they dreamed of, but it's one they can be happy with.

Five years later, Monika is found dead, and her young son is missing. While the town has suspicions about Brad, the police have no evidence to suggest foul play was involved. As the small town grapples with this tragedy, they must also process another: a car crash that leaves a young mother without her husband and son. After recovering from her injuries and a strange encounter with the owner of a local auto wreckage business, the woman leaves Deer Lake and never looks back. She has made a decision that has given her a new life.

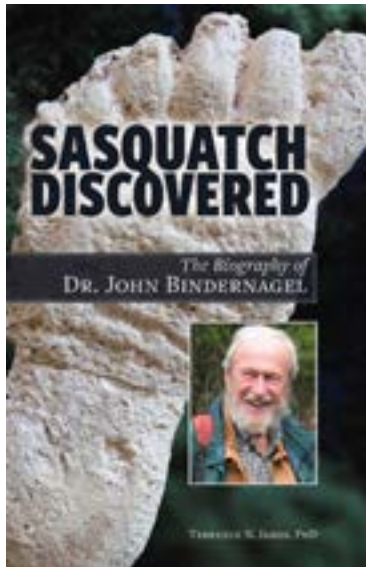
Lenora Klappe is a former teacher of students with special needs. She currently lives in Penticton BC.

Available from Friesen Press, Amazon and local bookstores



Books of Note features publications by BCRTA members.  
To have your book included, send the details to [postscript@bcrt.ca](mailto:postscript@bcrt.ca)

# books OF NOTE



## Sasquatch Discovered by Terrance James

Sasquatch Discovered is the biography of Dr. John Bindernagel, for years a respected international consultant wildlife biologist with the UNFAO. After his foreign career he chose to live in the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island, close to prime sasquatch habitat, where he pursued research on this elusive animal. He became the Canadian news media “go-to guy” for sasquatch information. This book is a tribute to an upstanding scientist who championed the unfolding story of the discovery of the sasquatch at great personal and professional expense.

Published by Hancock House Publishers in December 2022

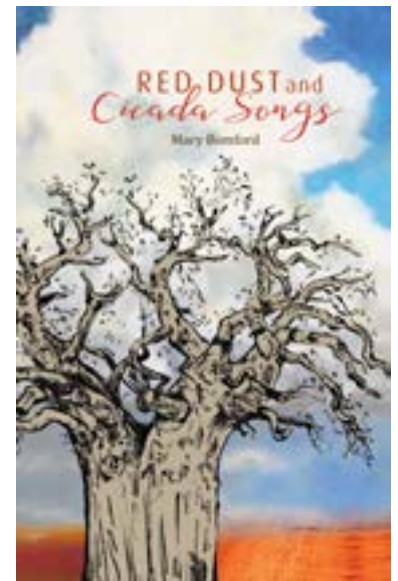
## Red Dust & Cicada Songs by Mary Bomford

At the age of twenty-one, Canadian teacher Mary Bomford and her husband of just eight weeks embarked on a journey that would alter their careers, their marriage and their family. That journey would trace an invisible but palpable thread through the rest of their lives.

Enticed by dreams of adventure, in 1969 Mary and her husband Larry moved to Lundazi, a town near the eastern border of Zambia to work as CUSO volunteers in a secondary school. The newly independent nation was looking for volunteers to fill the teacher shortage until enough young Zambians had completed their teacher training. New to marriage, teaching and Zambia, Mary and her husband embarked on a profound journey. Zambia became a second home, filled with moments of delight in the beauty of the landscape and the culture of the Zambian people.

*Red Dust & Cicada Songs* is an exploration of the deep and lasting connection she still feels for her time in Zambia.

To be released in February 2023 - available for preorder from online retailers.



# BCRTA Long Stay in Portugal: February 1 to 26, 2023



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# BCRTA Long Stay in Croatia: March 30th – April 22nd, 2023



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**Join Gerry Tiede, former President of BCRTA, next March on a Croatia Long Stay in the remarkable city of Dubrovnik, Croatia. Gerry and his wife, Jeanie, led the first and very successful BCRTA group trips to Morocco and the long-stay in Portugal.**

\*Friends and family of registered BCRTA travelers are welcome to join our group trips at any time. After one month of the trip announcement, if there are still spaces available, the trip is open to any friends and family of BCRTA members even without the BCRTA member traveling



#### 22 Rooms Total

**Classic Park View No Balcony – 10 Rooms**

**Classic Park View with Balcony – 5 Rooms**

**Classic Sea Side View with Balcony – 7 Rooms**



Trip start date in Dubrovnik is March 31st, 2023. Flights depart Vancouver on March 30th, 2023.

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# COMPARING APPLES TO ANDROIDS

**Operating systems control the hardware that runs the modern world. When buying a new device, take a moment to consider what operating system is running your life. It may be time for a change.**

When go to buy a new mobile device the first question you are asked is, *Which operating system do you use?* There are only two operating systems (OS) used by over 99 percent of new mobile devices sold: Apple iOS and Android OS. Both are excellent, but they are quite different.

To find out which one is right for you, let's start with a few questions:

*What other computers or mobile devices do you have? What operating systems do they use?*

*Do you like using these devices? If not, why not?*

*What devices do your family and friends use?*

## NOW CONSIDER THIS

If you have a PC computer and are looking for a tablet or smartphone, you could go either way—Apple or Android.

If you have an Android smartphone, and love it, get a tablet by the same manufacturer. Not in love? Ask yourself why.

If you have an Apple computer and are in the market for a tablet or smartphone, get an iPad or iPhone. No question.

## HOW WILL YOU LEARN?

An important consideration is how you will learn to use your new device. Sharing digital skills knowledge pushes us up the learning curve, and it's a fun way to connect. If you hang out with Android people, get an Android device. If they are Apple people, get an Apple device.

## DO FAMILIES NEED TO USE THE SAME OPERATING SYSTEM?

Get the OS the people you see regularly are using. If your family is not able to give you timely guidance, then don't automatically get the same OS. You will have questions. You will want to get tips on how to use your device. It can be challenging for Android people to help Apple people, and vice versa.

Don't worry if you turn out to be an Apple person in an Android family, or vice versa. Most popular apps run on both operating systems. You will all still be able to video call, email, text, play games, and share photos—the things modern families do.

# SMARTPHONE OR TABLET?

**For the first time in history, we now use mobile devices more than computers to access the internet. But a smartphone is not always the smartest way to connect.**

Gluu People often hear, “Mom, you need a new phone.” Or “What! You’re still using a flip phone?” Today, a mobile device is almost required if you want to be part of the modern world. When (younger) people think mobile, they automatically think smartphone. But smartphones are not the only mobile device. Tablets are mobile devices, too.

It is expected that almost 19% of the people in the world will use a tablet by the end of this year—that’s 1.28 billion tablets. According to GlobalStats, 56.31% of tablets today are Apple iPads, 43.56% are Android, and only .09% are Windows.

If you want a bigger screen, a faster device, the latest security features, consider a tablet. It can do most of what a smartphone and computer can do and has loads of added benefits for older adults. See sidebar article.

A tablet runs the apps that run our world and can successfully replace an aging computer. Using a tablet, you can send video calls, voice calls, text, email, shop, play games, watch TV, and get on the internet wherever you are — in the simplest way possible.

Maybe that smartphone upgrade can wait.

## 3 REASONS TO CONSIDER A TABLET

### #1 LESS EXPENSIVE

Tablets are less expensive than most high-end smartphones and computers, yet they are often packed with similar features. Plus, they don’t need an expensive cellular data plan, as they can use Wi-Fi to access the Internet.

### #2 BIGGER SCREEN

Size matters when it comes to screens. The beautiful big tablet screen makes reading newspapers, magazines, and books a joy. Reading, even on the largest smartphone, can be difficult for older eyes. Tablets are also great for watching TV and movies. Almost 30% of people use tablets and smartphones to watch Netflix.

### #3 GOES EVERYWHERE

A tablet can be used from a chair, bed, or anywhere you want to go. It can replace a computer and does much of what a smartphone does. Some say that they are the future of computing.

### WITH A NEWER TABLET, YOU CAN:

- Use apps
- Make Wi-Fi audio calls and video calls
- Email and send text messages
- Access the Internet and websites
- Take pictures and shoot videos
- Watch news, TV, sports, and movies
- Read ebooks, newspapers & magazines
- Listen to music, audiobooks, podcasts
- Write letters or create spreadsheets
- Print whatever is on your screen
- Use a keyboard or mouse on some models



## THE RESULTS TELL THE STORY

BCRTA MEMBERS' EXTENDED HEALTH CARE INSURANCE

# Satisfaction Survey

Green Shield  
Plan Users

BCRTA Johnson  
Prestige Users

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND  
YOUR CURRENT EHC PLAN?

35.2%

88.9%



# OF CATEGORIES  
WITH THE HIGHEST RATING

1

21



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# AGING AND LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC



## INTRODUCTION BY BILL MEEKER

The last two and half years have brought all different types of challenges. It is safe to say that everyone has been impacted by COVID-19 – some individuals and groups much more so than others. There is no doubt in my mind that the people at the margins have been impacted the most. Sadly, this is nothing new in our country and the wider world. When disaster strikes – whether it be economic, natural, conflict, or a pandemic, those with the least resources or the greatest systemic barriers suffer the most.

I certainly hope that one of the outcomes from the COVID-19 pandemic is a spotlight on the needs of our senior population and a more fulsome discussion on whether it is appropriate to have a privately funded and governed long-term care industry. Beyond the loss and suffering in Long Term Care facilities, the overall healthcare system appears to be largely overwhelmed. According to Nurse Practitioner Sam Dalby, access to Long-Term Care and home care services are under severe pressure. The level of care within the facilities is under pressure due to a lack of resources, most importantly

registered health care professionals like Registered Nurses and Registered Practical Nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Physicians, as well as the availability of beds. Rather than just hope for better access and resources, we all need to reach out to our [local politicians] and let them know how important this issue is to us. The Baby Boomers have already begun to require home care and fill up these facilities. By the time the end of the Boomer cycle gets there, there may not be any spaces available, particularly for those who don't have the economic resources to pay for more expensive options.

The question becomes what to do to protect your own future, or those of an aging parent or grandparent. Sue Lantz is the author of "Options Open: The Guide for Mapping your Best Aging Journey". Sue leads her own consulting firm, called "Collaborative Aging". Sue has led several creative policy and service delivery improvement projects over the years. Options Open is a practical guide aimed at helping seniors and their caregivers think through the aging journey proactively, as though they were planning a vacation.

The question becomes what to do to protect your own future, or those of an aging parent or grandparent...

The five key elements to consider in planning are:

1) Your Health; 2) Your Home; 3) Your Social Network; 4) Your Caregiving Team; and 5) Your Resources.

Each of these sections has a “Self-Reflection” tool to work through, to determine how well prepared you are in each of these key areas of your life. In this way, Sue provides a framework for planning and preparing for aging-related transitions.

I recently had a chance to discuss the book with Sue. Here are the highlights of that conversation:

**Q: Do you remember a single incident or thought that led you to the decision to make a career out of exploring how to manage the aging process?**

A: In hindsight, I now see that my special relationship with my own paternal grandparents and my active role as a primary caregiver led me to my career in the field of aging. They modelled empowered aging in place, with foresight and a fierce connectedness to their family, friends, and neighbours. I realized that they offered a practical and holistic model that all of us can apply to our lives. In fact, the Options Open guide is dedicated to the legacy of my grandparents, Judy and Floyd Lantz.

**Q: What was the driving factor for you to write this book?**

A: I began to feel so frustrated and concerned about the hardships older adults and their caregivers were experiencing – I saw people who could not return home from hospital after an illness or injury because their homes were not accessible. I saw families in crisis trying to find adequate home care, often creating family conflict. I saw caregivers burning out from juggling their own life and work, and caring for their parent, spouse, or friend. I saw people very surprised about the cost of home care when they started to need it on an ongoing basis. They were shocked to learn how limited home care support was under our universal health care system. Then COVID hit, and the number of preventable deaths in long-term care homes, and the caregiver devastation, really broke my heart. I knew from my professional experience, research evidence, and my own family experience, that so many of

the hardships and serious risks were preventable. Witnessing this suffering galvanized me to finish the guide, and try and reach my peers before they hit similar crisis points in their own lives.

**Q: Has anything surprised you on your journey?**

A: Through my various projects, I have learned that we can make things harder for ourselves (and our caregivers) when we resist change or the help we may need. Our fear of aging or “losing independence” gets in the way of accepting help in our home or in the community. Yet, receiving the right type of help, at the right time, can be the most protective action we can take to remain in charge of our lives. For those of us who have been parents, we know that accepting help from others and sharing the load (e.g., childcare, car pooling, neighbourly supports) were vital to successful parenting. So, why do we resist this kind of help to be successful in our later lives?

**Q: What is the most common mistake you see people make in planning their aging journey?**

A: The two main mistakes I see are:

- 1) The public are not informed about how important the right housing choice is to your ability to remain safe and a part of the community, particularly if you reach a point where you cannot drive. People don't see the risks in their homes until it is too late, for example, the stairs to their front door, or lack

Our fear of aging or  
“losing independence”  
gets in the way of  
accepting help in  
our home or in the  
community...



of bathroom on their main floor. And only a small number of housing developers and renovators recognize how essential it is for older adults to live in housing with basic universal design, adaptability, and other safety features. Often, newly built housing lacks the key features that help people stay in their homes for as long as they choose.

- 2) I notice that many of my peers (and their families) have the false belief that the government resources will cover all of the care they need in later life. Yet actually, most of the ongoing care in the home and the community are not funded or regulated by government. Government funded home care is more medically oriented, and gives priority to people who are very sick, recovering from surgery, or at the end of their lives. So, most of the ongoing supportive services to “aging in place” are actually costly, and primarily a personal responsibility. In this sense, one needs to be prepared to navigate this unregulated marketplace, and many people are not ready for this.

**Q: Can you offer one last thought to help guide people reading this to help them develop a quality plan?**

A: I recommend that you start earlier (e.g., in your 60s or early 70s) to envision ideas about where you will live and how you will receive help during your later life. Use the lead time you have wisely; be curious and start navigating your aging related choices and plans. When you start with this attitude, you can lead the important conversations and decisions in your own way, over time. This informed approach will certainly increase your ability to achieve your own aging vision within your resources, while including the people you are asking to be your caregivers. •



**Sue Lantz** is best known to BCRTA members as a keynote speaker at our 2022 Conference. She is an expert in the field of aging in place including healthcare, housing and caregiving, and creative solutions. She has extensive healthcare policy planning and change implementation experience, within a range of contexts, such as home care, rehabilitation, clinics, long-term care, public health, community services and hospice palliative care. Sue is the author of the guidebook “OPTIONS OPEN: The Guide for Mapping Your Best Aging Journey”. This user-friendly guide helps people in their 60s and 70s to think ahead to plan and arrange a more empowered, healthy and connected aging experience.

To buy the guide or arrange an Options Open Workshop, visit: <https://optionsopen.org>.

*Content reprinted with permission of the Trent Hills Tribune - <http://trenthillstribune.ca/>*

## LINKS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Learn more about the guidebook and see what Sue is up to at Collaborative Aging:

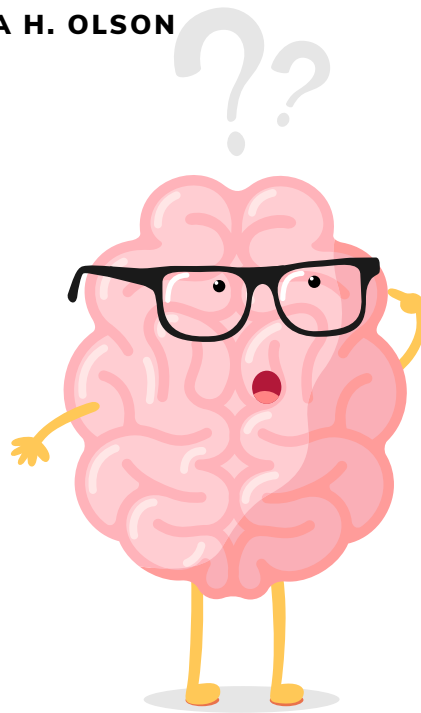
Web: [www.collaborativeaging.com](http://www.collaborativeaging.com)

<https://collaborativeaging.com/designs-for-health-2/> has a link to the Guidebook

On social media: Instagram #optionsopenguide or Twitter at: Sue\_Lantz.

# I NEVER Forget A Face

BY SYLVIA H. OLSON



Are you ever chatting to the person next to you at a party, and realize you can't remember their name? This has certainly happened to me! By the time I remember a name, the party is often over.

It's still true that I never forget a face, but names? Not so clear anymore. In my past life, I was good at remembering all the kids' names but now I sometimes can't recall former colleagues' names at all. Or sometimes the name is just partially there in the back of my mind but refuses to come forward.

At times, I have side-stepped this embarrassing issue by using generic greetings like, "Howdy stranger, long time no see." Or "Hey girlfriend how are you?" When I know the person really well, with

say, an ex-husband, I've even said, "How've you been, you old dog?"

The problem becomes worse when someone comes up and asks about the person you are chatting with, "Who is your friend?" At this point, I know it's best to acknowledge a failing memory, but I'll admit I sometimes develop a sudden emergency which necessitates a quick getaway!

An even more embarrassing situation arises when, five minutes after being introduced to someone, you've already forgotten their name. No one wants to admit to memory loss; we dread the potential for comments like, "Poor old Helen, she has a memory like a sieve!" Quoting Daniel Defoe,

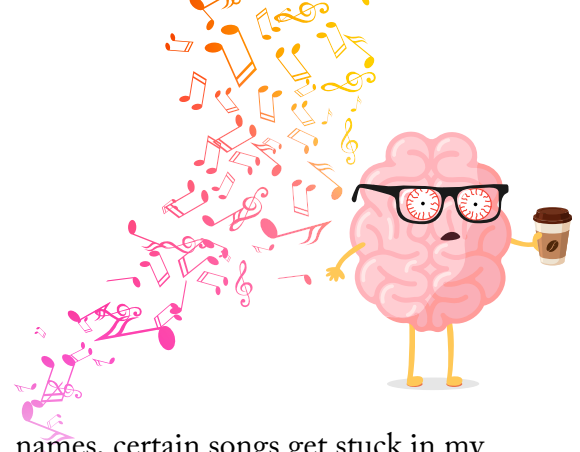
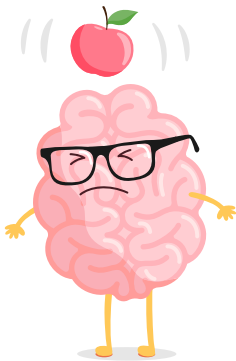
Moses Znaimer (executive director of the Canadian Association for Retired People) once said, “We all want to live long, but no one wants to be old.”

The reverse can also happen, being in a conversation and realizing that the other person doesn’t remember my name. How can I casually mention my name without sounding like an egomaniac, or without letting on that I know they don’t know my name? Awkward!

Forgetting names can happen even when we are younger. Years ago, some of us teachers were in the staff room discussing curriculum changes when the conversation turned to a film we all remembered, 1999’s *A Blast from the Past*, with actor Brendan Fraser. No one could recall the name of the actor who played the father. The bell rang and we dispersed to our classrooms. A few moments later one of the teachers burst into my classroom and, in a flourish of excitement, said, “Christopher Walken!”

“That’s it!” I replied, equally excited to put a name to the face floating around in my head.

At which point, one of my grade 3 students chimed in with, “He’s not in this class.”



Unlike with names, certain songs get stuck in my brain and I can’t seem to forget them no matter how hard I try. This is particularly true of catchy melodies. When I hear a song on the radio and then hear it again and again, I’ll find myself humming it without even realizing that it has wormed its way into my brain. Eventually, I would like to forget I ever heard this “earworm”, yet it continues to loop around my brain until some equally catchy melody displaces it. It’s hard to reconcile the fact that both forgetting names and being unable to forget a song can happen in my brain at the same time.

Maybe I would remember names better if they were set to music, but that would require carrying a ukulele everywhere.

I’m a big fan of name tags now—more places should use them—but there is no chance of that happening at my aquafit class at the pool. Still, there may be a high-tech solution. With one app that fascinates me, I can point my phone toward a piece of music, and the app will recognize the piece after “hearing” even a short section. Some phones and computers already have facial recognition technology. With a little tweaking I think this could work for peoples’ names too. Why not? After all, if we can put a man on the moon then surely the next phone can put a name to a face.

**SYLVIA H. OLSON** is a BCRTA member who retired from the Kamloops School District.

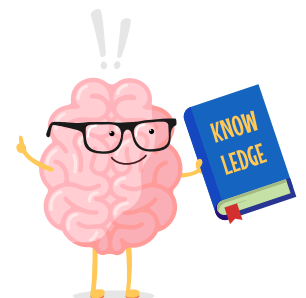
Why names in particular become harder to remember with age:

<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/ask-the-brains-why-does-memory-for-names-deteriorate-with-age/>

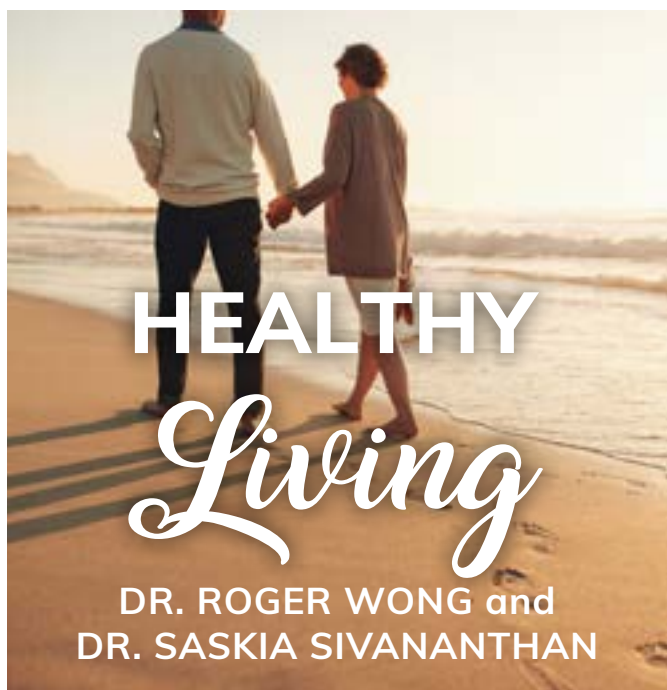
Earworms: explanations and advice: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/why-you-cant-get-a-song-out-of-your-head-and-what-to-do-about-it-2017100412490>

It can be helpful to know when to worry and when not to worry about age-related memory loss:

<https://alzheimer.ca/en/about-dementia/do-i-have-dementia/differences-between-normal-aging-dementia>







Adapted from a recent article published by the online journal **The Conversation** - [theconversation.com](http://theconversation.com). This article was jointly authored by Dr. Wong and Dr. Saskia Sivananthan, Affiliate Professor, Department of Family Medicine, McGill University

## CANADIAN DIVERSITY AND DEMENTIA CARE

Recent data from Statistics Canada on our country's demographic shift to an aging population highlights Canada's evolving future. How we respond to these changes will determine our long-term success as a nation, especially for future generations of older individuals. As our population continues to age, more people will be affected by age-related health conditions, including dementia. More than 500,000 Canadians are living with dementia and this number is forecast to at least double over the next two decades. These figures do not include potential cases of young onset dementia, which is not tracked for people who are diagnosed under the age of 65, an omission that should be rectified immediately.

Canada's multicultural population, which has been fuelled by successive waves of immigrants since the 1960s, means a much larger percentage of people living with dementia in the future will be those from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Recent research

from the United Kingdom shows a sharp surge in the number of racialized people with dementia based on changing demographics. This presents a unique challenge for those involved in dementia research. Much of this work has not included individuals from underrepresented groups, such as those from ethnically diverse populations. Studies that are used to make important policy, clinical and investment decisions in dementia lack the appropriate data representing a diverse Canadian population, leading to a one-size-fits-all approach that, in the end, serves no one well. This drawback has significant consequences in the future, as research from other countries has shown underrepresented groups are often at increased risk, tend to experience dementia differently, often with poorer quality of care, later diagnoses and at possibly higher rates than the general population. We have already witnessed the challenge arising from the absence of this type of data during the COVID-19 pandemic as individuals from underrepresented groups who live with dementia are disproportionately and adversely affected by the pandemic.

### CULTURALLY SENSITIVE CARE

But it doesn't have to be this way. Canada's national dementia strategy contains two key principles we must embrace: respecting the diversity of those living with dementia to meet their distinct needs, while also supporting their basic human right to autonomy and dignity. Efforts to provide culturally sensitive and diverse educational materials on dementia and its effects on individuals of all ages and their families must be increased. This will support Canadians who are affected by dementia to make informed choices on care plans and treatment options, which in turn can encourage participation in research to transform care. The Alzheimer Society of Canada and its provincial partners have already begun to make materials available in various languages, such as Hindi, Spanish and Chinese that

A one-size-fits-all  
approach serves no  
one well...



also take a culture-first approach. This important work should be supported, amplified and resourced by the federal and provincial governments.

## INTERVENTIONS AND REPRESENTATION

Community-based interventions are urgently needed. While many people with dementia can live long and fulfilling lives after their initial diagnosis, as the disease progresses, some will lose their grasp of English or French if those are not their first language. For those people, the presence of experienced individuals living in the community who can address them in their native language or who are sensitive to their specific needs will help break cultural barriers and barriers to accessing services.

There also needs to be more dialogue with Canada's underrepresented populations on how to best provide services and how to engage them in research.

DR. ROGER WONG

Recognizing the expertise within local communities and co-designing programs with and for people living with dementia will result in the best possible design, outcomes and buy-in. We firmly believe that empathy, better representation and a broader set of data will help us care for all Canadians living with dementia. As our population ages, providing the best quality of life possible for all older adults living with dementia should be prioritized as an important national strategic goal. •

**DR. ROGER WONG** is Vice Dean (Education) in the Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, a geriatrics specialist doctor, clinical professor of geriatric medicine, the 13th President of the Canadian Geriatrics Society, and a TEDx speaker. He tweets at @RogerWong10.

*The content of this article is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your doctor or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.*

# CLASSIFIEDS

## ELDER DOG

ElderDog Canada supports seniors in the care of canine companions. Volunteers help with dog care activities like dog walking, basic grooming, feeding, administering medication, and transportation to and from the vet or groomer. We provide foster care when a senior is temporarily unable to care for their dog and re-homing. Vancouver Pawd provides services to the Lower Mainland at no charge.

Phone 1.855.336.4226 or visit [www.elderdog.ca](http://www.elderdog.ca)

## PRODUCTS

Anyone that uses a microwave needs a FingerSaver™.

Have you ever burned your fingers when taking a hot bowl of soup/chili/porridge out of the microwave?

It will never happen again if you use a FingerSaver, a fabric bowl that holds your food. It also acts as a tea-cozy to keep the food warm at the table.

Visit [www.spotnots.com](http://www.spotnots.com) and see the FingerSaver information after the underwear information.

## CRRTA PUBLICATION

To celebrate the 75th anniversary of the BCRTA, the Campbell River RTA is publishing a photo journal of the early School District 72 schools (1893-1993). Included are photos, anecdotes from the first teachers and students and stories of our own retired teachers, elders of the three native reserves and their early schools.

The history encompasses the Discovery Islands, Phillips Arm, Sayward, Oyster River, Strathcona Park and Campbell River. Fifty contributors with 100 pictures from the archives of the Campbell River Museum, and the Cortes Island Museum.

To purchase contact Bonni Roset, CRRTA President: [cratapresident@gmail.com](mailto:cratapresident@gmail.com)

## NUTRITION BOOK

BCRTA CONFERENCE SPEAKER James McCormack has released his book "The Nutrition Proposition". Available as a paperback or Kindle e-book on Amazon, or visit [nutritionproposition.com](http://nutritionproposition.com)

## Events and Features

**WRITER'S WORKSHOP WAS HELD JUNE 22, VIA ZOOM**

View it at [bcрта.ca/writers](http://bcрта.ca/writers)

**BCRTA CONFERENCE SEPT 30**

Keynote speakers:

Sue Lantz and Noel Bentley

VIEW PRESENTATIONS AT [BCRTA.CA](http://BCRTA.CA)



# CLASSIFIEDS

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## QUESNEL FRENCH IMMERSION

Research Project – History of French Immersion in Quesnel BC in 1980's – seeks input from teachers, parents and other people who helped establish French Immersion programs in Quesnel. Short survey. Please contact Erin de Zwart at [erindezwart@hotmail.com](mailto:erindezwart@hotmail.com) if you fit into one of the categories. She may be texted at 778-990-3200.

## VOLUNTEER

Roedde House Museum is looking for volunteer docents to help guide school groups, grades 4 - 6, as they visit this heritage house in Vancouver's West End. If interested in this rewarding activity or for more information, please contact the Manager at Roedde House Museum, 604 684 7040 or [manager@roeddehouse.org](mailto:manager@roeddehouse.org)

## 50th ANNIVERSARY UVIC

Did you graduate from University of Victoria in 1973 from the Physical Education program (5 year secondary)? We are trying to locate grads for our 50th anniversary! If you are a grad, or know of one, please contact me either by email [judygartrell7@gmail.com](mailto:judygartrell7@gmail.com) or phone 250-492-7316. (maiden name Judy Pearson)

## ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

Heritage house in Alsace-France, Vosges Mountains, three bedrooms, modern kitchen, wifi, located on wine route, close to Germany (Freiburg ) and Switzerland (Basel). Partial cleaning included, CA\$900 per week. [mano936@gmail.com](mailto:mano936@gmail.com)

## ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

For rent: One bedroom suite available in Maui, Kihei, 2 consecutive weeks. Dates below.

First week: Saturday Feb 25, 2023 to Saturday March 4.

Second week: March 4 to March 11, 2023.

Price per week: \$1200. USD Maui Schooner Resort in Kihei. <https://www.mauischooner.com>

Contact: [lavoiealine@shaw.ca](mailto:lavoiealine@shaw.ca)

BIG ISLAND HAWAII Available January-April 2023.

Kona Coast Resort, Kona, Hawaii

7 nights \$2450.00

Paniolo Greens Resort, Waikoloa, Hawaii

7 nights \$2000.00

Contact [sbava@shaw.ca](mailto:sbava@shaw.ca) for availability & resort(s) details.

## MUSIC TOUR

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**Berlin, Dresden, Prague and Vienna May 3 - 14.**

Guided tours highlight the beauty of these cities. Opera performances include: Tannhauser and La Traviata (Staatsoper, Berlin), Die Meistersinger (Dresden), The Bartered Bride and Don Giovanni (Prague) and Tosca and Manon (Vienna)

**Opera in Santa Fe August 6 - 13, 2023.**

Tour includes accommodation, sightseeing and five operas (Tosca, Rusalka, Pelleas et Melisande, the Flying Dutchman and Orfeo).

For more information contact Great Expeditions  
604 257 2040 or toll free 1 800 663 3364

[www.vancouveroperaguild.com](http://www.vancouveroperaguild.com)

## HELP WANTED

WANTED: Editor for Vancouver RTA Newsletter. The newsletter is published four times a year and covers members' news and events, contributions on a theme, reports and other items of interest to retirees. An honorarium is provided. If interested, contact [vrtapresident.e@gmail.com](mailto:vrtapresident.e@gmail.com). More details available on VRTA website <https://vrta.ca>

# crossword

## Coastal Vibes

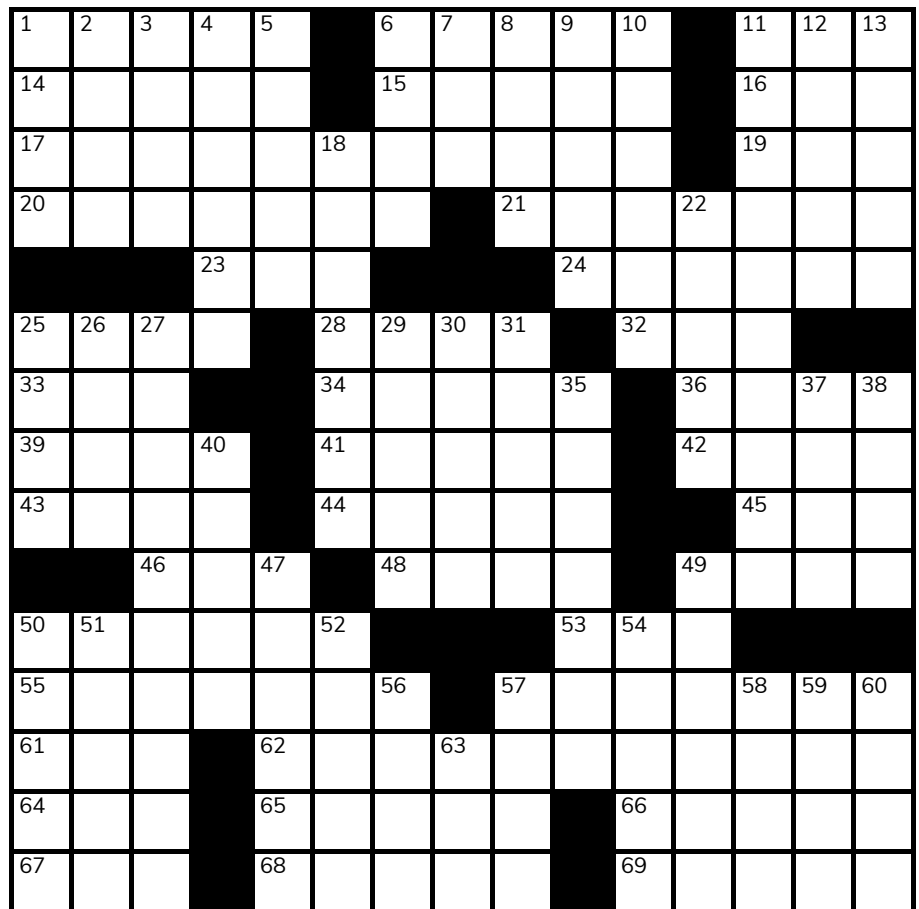
By Lynn Hembree

Editor's note: We're excited to introduce the work of our new crossword master, Lynn Hembree, who will continue the PostScript tradition of unique puzzle-making.

Email: [crossword@bcrt.ca](mailto:crossword@bcrt.ca)

### ACROSS

1. Brine-cured cheeses
6. Lion cries
11. Porcine flesh
14. I \_\_\_ of the luckiest people! (2 wds)
15. Circle of motion
16. A pint, maybe
17. Large coniferous evergreen (2 wds)
19. Driver's lic. and others
20. Cable car
21. Angry outbursts
23. "C'\_\_\_ la vie!"
24. \_\_\_ public
25. Benign growth
28. Nicholas II
32. Stand on one
33. Cut off
34. Ordered thinking
36. "Come from \_\_\_"
39. "La donna e mobile", e.g.
41. Carry away, in a way
42. Defensive spray
43. "Lively" shampoo
44. BC's dark trickster
45. Gershwin brother
46. "\_\_\_ alive!"
48. Chill out
49. Level
50. Field of vision?
53. "\_\_\_ we having fun yet?"
55. Elusive felines
57. Actively wear out
61. Wooly momma
62. Wet woodlands
64. Salish, e.g.
65. Cool demeanor
66. Consumed (2 wds)
67. "To \_\_\_ is human..."
68. Pliable
69. Booksmart & socially inept desc.



### DOWN

1. Hunger protest
2. Arabic for "commander"
3. Dorothy's furry friend
4. Short sock
5. Harbour \_\_\_
6. Like some muscles
7. NHLer, Bobby \_\_\_
8. Touch
9. Poison from Breaking Bad
10. An alcohol found in animal and plant lipids
11. BC Archipelago (2 wds)
12. Birch relative
13. Chaotic desk
18. Colonizer
22. Top squad
25. Applaud
26. In days of \_\_\_
27. Elusive BC bruin (2 wds)
29. Power source
30. Mojave plant
31. Last ceremonies given
35. Change in Chihuahua
37. "God's Little \_\_\_"
38. Timespan for our # 15 across
40. Heirloom location
47. Sacred beetle of ancient Egypt
49. A shape like a seedpod
50. BMI over 30
51. Despot's desire
52. After best before date
54. They raced again
56. "The Da Vinci Code" priory
57. Hockey starts with face-\_\_\_
58. \_\_\_-friendly
59. Equine dad
60. Catch a glimpse of
63. Affirmative head motion

See the crossword solution at [bcrt.ca/crossword](http://bcrt.ca/crossword) AFTER OCTOBER 15

# Sudoku

1					8			7
			9	5		4	8	
					6	5		
7		1	8	6		9		
	9		4		7		3	
		2		9	5	7		8
		3	5					
	8	7		1	9			
9			6					4

9		6	5					
					3	9	1	4
				9	8			
	3			7			2	
6		4				7		9
	8			5			4	
			4	6				
5	6	3	8					
					5	2		8

## TO SOLVE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

## SEND COMPLETED PUZZLES TO:

100 – 550 West 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue,  
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2

## FOR MORE ONLINE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

[www.websudoku.com/](http://www.websudoku.com/)

## DEADLINE FOR SUDOKU AND CROSSWORD SUBMISSION IS:

JAN 31, 2023

**Congratulations to the winners of the last issue. Your cheques are in the mail!**

## Crossword:

Roger Delage, Surrey  
Doug Hillson, Abbotsford  
Alexia Turner, Castlegar

## Sudoku:

Gigi Obradovic, Lacombe AB (Nanaimo)  
Susan McCartney, North Vancouver  
Elizabeth Hadley, White Rock

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## FALL 2022 CROSSWORD SOLUTION

1	L	A	M	A		5	S	T	A	T	E		10	D	I	N	O	
14	A	B	E	L		15	M	A	N	I	C		16	E	N	O	W	
17	M	O	R	I		18	E	N	T	E	R		19	N	A	V	E	
20	B	U	D	G	21	I	E			22	R	I	23	C	E			
24	S	T	E	N	O		25	P	M		27	R	A	B	28	29	30	T
						31	U	N	L	A	C	E	S		34	U	S	E
35	C	L	A	P		39	A	U	R	A		40	T	E	R	S	E	
42	H	A	M	S	T	43	E	R		44	N	O	S	T	R	U	M	
46	A	N	I	T	A		47	A	H	A	B		49	H	O	E	S	
50	I	C	E			51	M	A	L	A	R	I	53	A				
54	R	E	L	A	P	S		56	B	Y		57	D	O	U	B	T	
						62	N	A	S	A		64	M	O	N	K	E	Y
65	R	O	C	K		68	E	N	S	U	E		71	S	A	L	E	
72	O	V	A	L		73	T	E	A	S	E		74	E	S	T	E	
75	B	A	R	E		76	S	W	E	A	T		77	T	E	S	S	





# 50 YEARS ON

## PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON TEACHERS' ROLE IN THE '72 BC ELECTION

BY KEN NOVAKOWSKI

*"I was in my first year of teaching and very into what was happening..."*

The dramatic New Democratic Party provincial election victory on August 30, 1972 was a major historical event. For the first time ever, BC would experience being governed by a truly progressive, left-wing political party. The NDP had broken the hold on power held by coalitions of the right since BC's inception.

This election also marked the first time that teachers and the BC Teachers' Federation played an active and significant role in the election campaign itself; they were committed to the defeat of the incumbent government.

The BCTF had taken a first step towards political involvement during the 1969 election when they ran the "Apple" campaign, an attempt to get candidates to endorse different positions the BCTF advocated on educational issues.

Grievances held by the BCTF against the government grew. The BCTF had sought improvements to their pension plan and although some changes were made, the pensions being paid to retired teachers remained unchanged. And they were totally inadequate, forcing many retired teachers to live in near-poverty conditions. Teachers would not accept this and voted 88% in favour of taking a one-day strike on March 19, 1971 to demand support for their retired colleagues. It was the first-ever province wide job action by teachers. But the government did nothing, and there were other issues.

The government had introduced legislation that restricted school districts' abilities to raise the necessary revenue to keep up with growth and needed improvements in the education system. For years, they had also been chipping away at teacher tenure rights. The government, unhappy with the BCTF's increasingly activist stance, eliminated the statutory provision that had been in place since 1948 that required all BC teachers to be members of the BCTF. The BCTF responded by voluntarily signing up all but 69 of the more than 22,000 teachers in the province. But the most significant act against the BCTF came with Bill 3, legislation which arbitrarily imposed a ceiling on teacher settlements, effectively destroying what free collective bargaining teachers had at that time. BCTF president Adam Robertson declared "we will not live with it."

At the 1972 BCTF AGM held April 3-5, delegates approved a motion to levy a day's salary of all members to be used for "publicity and political action related to BCTF opposition to Bill 3". A recorded vote tally had 495 yes and 84 no, an overwhelming call to action. The teacher grievance list was long and the BCTF was gearing up to take on the government in the coming election. They would support opposition incumbents and candidates that appeared able to defeat sitting Social Credit MLAs. This, of course, would substantially benefit the NDP, the official opposition and only party poised to replace Social Credit government.

This was dramatic: the levy would raise over a million dollars for their political action fund; it would be a game changer. The levy was implemented forthwith and the funds began to roll in. In several districts, funds had already been passed on to opposition campaigns.

However, two Victoria teachers, Barker and Hall, who were openly members of the Social Credit Party, took the matter to the BC Supreme Court seeking an injunction against the levy claiming it was a violation of the BCTF's own constitution and by-laws. The BC Supreme Court granted the injunction and the BCTF was no longer able to distribute any funds collected by the levy to any campaigns they were supporting.

Upon hearing of the injunction, BCTF leaders, staff and activists, acting as individuals, formed the Teachers' Political Action Committee (TPAC) and asked teachers to donate to the organization so they could continue to carry on the fight to defeat the Social Credit government. TPAC raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to allocate to riding campaigns, and thousands of teachers volunteered, many for the first time, to help in the campaign. The 1972 election turned out to be a watershed event for teachers and the BCTF, who went all-out for the election of a new government.

I had moved to BC from Alberta in the summer of 1971 to take on a teaching job at Langley Secondary School in Langley. Politically I was focused on securing the NDP federal nomination in Burnaby-Richmond-Delta, in anticipation of a federal election in 1972. So even though I was a teacher and aware of what the BCTF was up to, I was not directly involved in all the political developments in the BCTF that lead to its active role in the 1972 provincial election.

One event I do recall occurred on the evening of July 12. NDP leader Dave Barrett spoke at Harold Steves nomination meeting in Richmond. As the meeting ended, Jim MacFarlan, First Vice-President of the BCTF, and a couple of BCTF executive members approached Barrett and asked if he would meet with them briefly outside the hall. Harold and I, both teachers, joined the meeting. Jim expressed the concern that the NDP was not highlighting the education issue and that this would make it harder to get teachers to work for the NDP. Barrett agreed that if they drafted a leaflet on education that met with the approval of the party, then they could have it printed and distributed for use by NDP candidates. 150,000 copies were printed and distributed around the province.

I canvassed full-time for Harold Steves in that election campaign. I remember getting \$100.00 from TPAC to do so. I would have done so in any event because as the Federal candidate in what was likely to be a fall election, it gave me a great chance to meet Richmond voters. I was excited by the feedback I was getting as I canvassed in every part of Richmond. I was convinced we were going to win. And we did.

Most teachers, like many British Columbians were ecstatic with the election results that rolled out on August 30, 1972 electing BC's first NDP government. Teachers soon had their bargaining rights restored with the removal of the legislated ceiling on settlements. And the BCTF had their statutory membership requirement restored. Pensions were improved. Legislation removed the restrictions placed on school districts' ability to raise revenues and the existing tenure rights of teachers remained unfettered. So it had been a big win for the NDP, but also for teachers and the BCTF.

But there were concerns that education spending was not keeping up with demands caused by growth in the school population and the increasing need for better teaching and learning conditions. On February 15, 1974, over a thousand Surrey teachers amassed on the lawns of the Legislature demanding action on the large class sizes in Surrey and around the province. It was a dramatic action by a large local in a fast-growing area of the Lower Mainland and it got the attention of government.

Dave Barrett and his Education Minister Eileen Dailly met with BCTF President Jim MacFarlan while the protest was underway and negotiated a three-year program of class size reduction that would have a dramatic effect on improving teaching and learning conditions in BC classrooms. Central to the negotiations that Barrett and MacFarlan undertook that afternoon was the NDP leaflet that came about as a result of the earlier meeting between Barrett and MacFarlan in Richmond on July 12. MacFarlan used the leaflet to draw attention to the NDP promise to implement "A planned program to reduce class size". Their deal resulted in 4,000 additional teachers hired over the next three years and in markedly improved class sizes in all parts of the province. My teaching became more effective and more enjoyable. And my students were the major beneficiaries of the changes. And I knew this was happening in all classrooms across the province.

**KEN NOVAKOWSKI** is a former President of the BCTF and former Chair of the BC Labour Heritage Centre.

# Obituaries

Location listed is the area given as "last taught"



Allen, A. Rosemary	Prince George	French, Patrick	Coquitlam
Ballance, Karoline	North Vancouver	Funk, Harold D.	Boundary
Bidgood, Wendy	Surrey	Gannon, Lorraine	Burnaby
Blackham, Irene	Cowichan	Gillis, Donald W.	Chilliwack
Bowcott, Betty J.	Coquitlam	Graves, E. F. Kathryn	Burnaby
Bower, Albert F.	Delta	Greer, Robert	Penticton
Brown, Wilfred	Abbotsford	Hague, Philip	Delta
Byron, Beverly R.	Gulf Islands	Harte, Pamela L	Saanich
Carelse, George E	Coquitlam	Harvey, Kenneth Palmer	Vancouver
Collins, Sandra	Kamloops	Hee, Bev	Saanich
Cox, Jean D.	Delta	Henderson, David	North Vancouver
Crawford, Gary B.	Burnaby	Hill, Laurie	Prince George
Crimp, Norma C.	Nanaimo/Ladysmith	Horner, Norna North	Vancouver
Croockewit, Lucy	Vancouver	Hutchinson, Margaret H.	Kamloops
Davis, Raymond G.	Nanaimo/Ladysmith	Ikuta, Makoto	Vancouver
De Cotiis, Velia	North Vancouver	Jackson, Judith M. North	Vancouver
Dickson, Viola E.	Burnaby	Johnson, Lee-evelyn	Delta
Enns, Ruth M.	Vancouver	Kennett, Ellen Beneficiary	Surrey
Esralsen, Lloyd	Burnaby	Kent, J. William	Vancouver
Finley, Barbara Joan	Vancouver	Kuhlmann, Lorna	Surrey



Kushniruk, Barbara	Cranbrook	Reeve, Alex	Sooke
Langdon, Jacqueline V.	Campbell River	Scott, Donald Alan	Revelstoke
Laws, M. Helen	Nanaimo/Ladysmith	Seddon, Henry A	Burnaby
Lemley, Ned	Victoria	Shore, Don J. B.	Nanaimo/Ladysmith
Lesik, Margaret A. M.	Richmond	Sihota, Dedar S.	Surrey
Lindsay, Terry Alan	Okanagan-Skaha	Smith, Douglas R. G.	Surrey
Liversidge, William W.	Coquitlam	Smyth, Donald R.	Victoria
Londry, Neil	Delta	Soares, Lucia C.	Langley
Mah, Art	Abbotsford	Stibbs, W. Ian	Abbotsford
McGavin, Marian	North Vancouver	Streich, Allan	Kimberley
McGavin, Sharon	West Vancouver	Sullivan, Ronald William	Shuswap
Melville, Terence R.	Saanich	Tjorhom, Arnold B.	Nanaimo/Ladysmith
Mulligan, Graham	Surrey	Townsend, Renice	Kootenay-Columbia
Nakashima, Luke A.	Vancouver	Townsend, Richard E.	Vancouver
Naylor, Steve	Shuswap	Vigar, Lynn Jo-ann	Central Okanagan
Pazurik, Lois	Kootenay-Columbia	Watson, Kay	New Westminster
Peneff, Penio	Delta	Webb, Lorie L.	Nanaimo/Ladysmith
Perry, Wendy Ann	Delta	Wentland, Blanche Y	Surrey
Pither, Sheila M.	Vancouver	Williams, Elizabeth W.	North Vancouver
Puder, Gary W.	Vancouver	Wolfenden, Raymond	Beneficiary Vernon
Purves, Peter E.	Shuswap		

# BCRTA 2022

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM

### VIEW THE PRESENTATIONS AT [BCRTA.CA](https://bcрта.ca)

Delegates from BCRTA's 48 branches met on September 30 for our annual conference. It proved to be a day of useful presentations, each packed with useful and inspiring information. Here are some snapshots, along with comments we received from delegates.

**Thanks to all our presenters and participants!**



#### WHAT RECONCILIATION MEANS TO ME

On the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, Burnaby teacher **Shishona Austin** presided over the traditional land acknowledgement and gave some personal reflections.

"Shishona Austin was very inspiring and her story thought-provoking and positive... to walk together towards understanding."

"Shishona's presentation was outstanding."

#### PRIZE WINNERS



*Prize winners - L to R: Ryan Mikucki of Trip Merchant presents Lori Rendell of Prince George with a \$500 gift certificate. Lisa Hansen of Johnson Insurance gives a new iPad to a delighted Louisa Sanchez of Prince Rupert. Mark Costales of Johnson presents an iPad to Janis Nairne of Port Alberni, with Lisa Hansen.*

# BCRTA2022

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM

“A wonderful day, well spent. As a first time delegate, I’m impressed!”



## SUE LANTZ

In her presentation “Five Practical Strategies for Aging in Place”, Sue emphasized the need for seniors to plan proactively.



## NOEL BENTLEY

Inviting audience participation, Noel explored the power and necessity of “Telling Your Story.”

“Sue Lantz was excellent.”

“Very worthwhile conference.”

“Very good overall. I felt validated as a retired teacher.”

“Fabulous.”

“I think it was very well planned and well paced. I’ve really enjoyed the whole event.”

“Very informative.”

“Great content.”

“Well-organized and executed. We are so fortunate to have such great staff and volunteer team spirit with our Executive and committees!”

“Very impressive speakers – all were fabulous.”



*The 2022 Conference was broadcast live to members around BC. Presentations are on YouTube and our website.*



*Membership chair Dave Scott shares a light moment with Susan McKenzie of Abbotsford.*



# BCRTA2022

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM



“So inspiring – loved the award recipients’ videos.”

“PostScript Awards are a highlight and inspiration.”

“Very inspiring presentations! My absolute favourite was the PostScript Awards.”



**BEST PERSONAL ARTICLE**  
(*The Sheila Gair Award*)

“*Silk Sisters*”  
EILEEN HAYES



**BEST TRAVEL ARTICLE**

“*My China*”  
HELENE MCGALL



**BEST PHOTO OR ART**

“*Wild Roses*”  
DUTHIE MATHISON

## BCRTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023



BCRTA's Annual General Meeting was held on the day after the conference on October 1. The board elected for 2022-2023 are (L to R): Linda Watson, Rosalind Kellett, David Denyer, Dave Scott, Caroline Malm, Arnie Lambert, Stephanie Koropatnick, Steve Bailey, Margaret Sutton, Pat Thiesen, Barb Mikulec. Also on the board: Gerry Tiede.



The R. R. Smith Memorial Foundation held their AGM recently. All funds from your \$2 donation yearly go to the projects to improve literacy in BC and in developing countries.

If you wish to make a donation, send your cheque to the BCRTA office, and tax receipts will be sent to you.

Grant recipients report on results. Below are highlights from ***One Girl Can's Unique Conference in Nairobi.***

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