

PostScript

FALL 2023



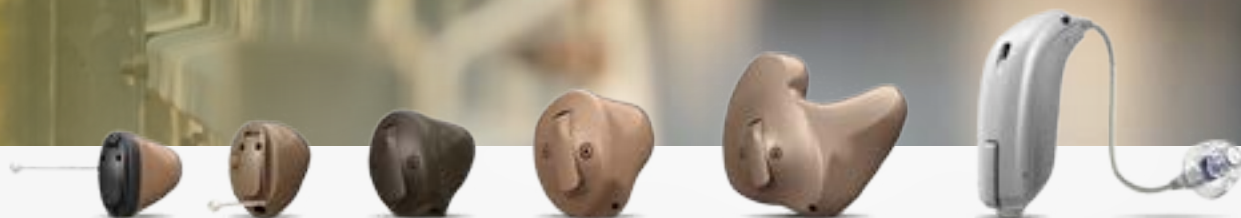
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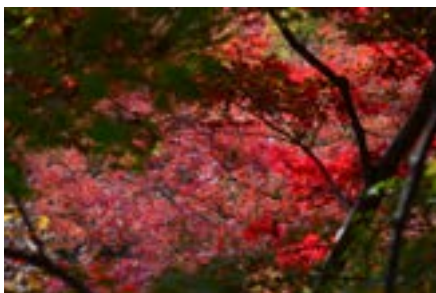
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FALL 2023



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Any day we hear from **Masako Fukawa** is a good day. When contemplating the significance of a colleague who recently passed away, Masako was moved to look through some of her scrapbooks. What emerged was a comical memoir of the complications of running a school replete with wayward students, “colourful” parents and other daily entanglements. And then, on reflection, the difference that kindness and a sense of humour can make. Masako’s tribute to cartoonist and educator **Florence Brookes** is a treat.

A persistent signal that PostScript receives from our readers is the desire for the vicarious thrills delivered by our travel articles. Well, brace yourself. In this issue we feature a comical cruise from **Sylvia Olson**, a Southern California swoon from **Tom Skinner**, the exotic Gálapagos via the pen and camera of **Julie Jeanneau**, and a remarkable Norwegian birthday adventure from **Marlene LeGates**. After all that excitement, be sure to check out BCRTA’s group departure to Newfoundland, to take place next year (page 29).

The **BCRTA 2023 Health and Community Survey** featured in our last issue was a resounding success in building a picture from members on how life is going, your experience with the public health care system and your hopes for the future. Be sure to check out the summary of results on page 50, and learn how your association is working to address all these needs.

A priority identified in our survey was our members’ desire for reliable, actionable health information. This issue of PostScript certainly tackles that need head on, with our **Fascinating Facts** column, one man’s journey with prostate cancer, information on how you might better manage your maintenance prescriptions, and some provocative encouragement on healthy ageing from a fit octogenarian, **Barrie Street**.

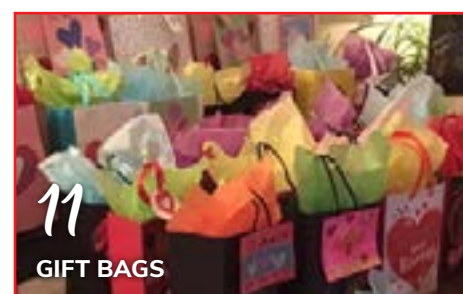
Sadly, due to a labour dispute at the venue, BCRTA will be unable to have an in-person conference this year. But we’re good at technology and are very pleased to invite all of you to view this year’s conference live online. We will have terrific talks on the management of our pension plan’s investments, ageing in place, volunteering, housing and of course all things BCRTA. See page 30 for details. It’s 100% free, so please join us live at bcрта.ca on September 29, starting at 9AM.

Yours truly,

The Editor
postscript@bcрта.ca

contents

POSTSCRIPT MAGAZINE | FALL 2023



- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| 4 | EDITOR'S NOTE | 58 | MY JOURNEY WITH CANCER |
| 6 | PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE | 60 | AGEING: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES |
| 8 | LETTERS | 63 | EXPRESS SCRIPTS |
| 19 | FINDING A NEW NICHE | 65 | HEALTH NEWS |
| 22 | IMPORTANT DATES | 66 | BOOKS OF NOTE |
| 29 | BCRTA GROUP DEPARTURE: NEWFOUNDLAND | 67 | AN AUTHOR RECONNECTS |
| 30 | BCRTA 2023 CONFERENCE SEPT 29 | 69 | CLASSIFIEDS |
| 38 | REVERIE - TOKYO OPERA | 71 | BCRTA AGM |
| 42 | PHOTO FILE | 74 | CROSSWORD |
| 44 | CATALINA | 75 | SUDOKU |
| 54 | KITCHEN TABLE ACTIVISTS | 76 | IN MEMORIAM |
| 56 | HEALTH FACTS | 79 | RR SMITH |



The *Health and Community Survey 2023* report, also in this issue, notes that “connection to family and friends is critical for emotional health.”

This summer, Bonnie and I spent a lovely week at a friend’s house in Summerland, while she was travelling with family in Europe. Summerland was our home for 25 years; me teaching, Bonnie working at the hospital, and the kids growing up so quickly. Although a lot has changed since we left, going back has that comfortable feeling of familiarity. Our friend’s home has been in the family for many years, and has a wonderful unobstructed view of Okanagan Lake. An added bonus for us was that

our daughter and son-in-law were also staying, so we had lots of time to share with them; visiting wineries and friends, swimming in the lake, eating out, and just relaxing on the deck. With family close, time to be nostalgic, to visit friends, and tour old haunts, we got an emotional boost.

Within a few days, however, we witnessed a harbinger of things to come. Smoke began creeping up the valley from the Eagle Bluff fire in Osoyoos. Warm mountain air drifting down to the lake created a southerly breeze later in the day, which helped to keep the smoke away. We headed home, happy for the visit, but in just a matter of days, we began to hear news reports of fires farther up the valley. More fires at one time than you would think possible: West Kelowna, the Shuswap, and then Pemberton and Lillooet! A week after we returned to the Island, the son of our Summerland hostess had to evacuate his family from their home on the Westside Road up near Fintry. There is some irony in the fact that they went to the Summerland home we had just left.

Earlier in the year, while visiting the Peace River North and South Peace Branches, I had driven through air thick with smoke from the fire north of Fort St. John, and visited with members concerned for the safety of their families, friends and homes. That was in May, and now in August my thoughts turned to the many more RTA members who were going to be affected by the fires.





Image by iStockPhoto

North of Summerland in the Shuswap resides one of our Postscript authors (see Summer 2020). I called Duncan, a friend and colleague from old teacher activist days, and he told me that he and his wife are some distance from the fires, and that they were safe at the moment. Cathy Mutter, President of the Shuswap and District Branch sent me the following update from Salmon Arm.

The information about displacements (lots of members are evacuees) and losses (unknown right now) is beginning to trickle in. We are saying prayers that all our members are able to return to their homes in the coming days. Others have taken in evacuees and are helping by providing shelter. We heard from several members to say they expect to be away from their homes for the foreseeable future and therefore unable to attend our first event. . . but they didn't provide any details. As a result of their calls, however; the Exec decided to cancel our 'To Hell with the Bells' Brunch on Sept 5th.

From Kelowna, Charlene Hodgson, a member of the BCRTA Board let us know that "I have people here who were evacuated. Lots of smoke, but no fire in my part of town."

So what do these devastating events mean for the BCRTA? In 2021, after the extreme rain and flooding, we established grants to Branches for activities that supported members affected by the flooding. I am pleased to add that similar grants are now available for Branch activities that support members affected by the fires. I believe that we will have quite a few more applications than before, and if members feel more supported and secure, then we will have done a bit to help, and to increase their well-being.

Please stay safe out there, and in the words of Tim Anderson, our Executive Director, may you continue "living well and feeling good," as has been confirmed by your responses to our *Health and Community Survey*.

I will close with a big "Thank You" to all of the first responders, and to BC Wildfire Service employees.

ARNIE LAMBERT is President of BCRTA

PostScript Letters

Important Work

The BCRTA is a very effective, and needed, organization. I am constantly amazed by the quality of the stories told, the articles written and the “reaching out” which is the solid basis of our profession. Students learn to follow their own directions as a result of a teacher who gave them snippets of various disciplines and awakened an interest in something that became a life-long journey.

Following these pathways after retirement is an expected and delightful progression that satisfies the need those teachers created in themselves, the desire to explore, to investigate, to discover.

The BCRTA supports that need by preserving our pensions, strengthening our health programs and giving those who choose to be public servants a strong goal to achieve on our behalf.

Endless gratitude to the BCRTA and similar organizations. Keeping our communications channels together strengthens us all. Well done!

Greg Murray
President
North Island RTA

PostScript Recalls Memories

Waiting to get a test done in the hospital I had plenty of time to read our latest issue of Postscript. Certainly a great read.

But what really resonated with me was the reminiscing article “Days of Magic” by Christina Schenkel-Goldt. I, too, learned wonderful handwriting while attending school in Kaiserswerth, 20 minutes by tram from Düsseldorf. Our family lived in a tiny refugee shelter by the Rhine meadows as we were displaced people. After fleeing near the end of WWII we lived in Insel near Stendahl in former East Germany and then were able to come to Düsseldorf to join my mother’s sister and family.

When our family arrived in Oliver, BC I was enrolled back into grade 4. A frustrating memory is that I had to stay after school to practice writing the “correct” way of making the letter “r”! Imagine! Now most children don’t even know how to write cursive.

Thank you for triggering memories.

Lennox Stieda
Central Saanich

Safety Considerations

In the article “Kayak Manoeuvres” Sylvia Olson makes light of the possibility of falling out of her kayak in the middle of a lake (or out on the ocean). In fact this is a real possibility that should be planned for. To say, “...this has never happened,” is akin to saying I’ve never had a car accident so I don’t need to wear a seatbelt.

Among the kayaking community to which I belong, it is recognized that wet exits, assisted and unassisted re-entry of one’s boat should be practiced at least once a year. And before I hear cries that such practices might be okay for the young, I should add that I am 73 years old, suffer from mild arthritis and I practice my rescue techniques at least once a year. The median age of members of our club is around 60 years of age. Several members of our kayaking club, including myself, have been required to help rescue overturned kayakers while we were enjoying a day out on the water.

Safe boating practices are not a joke but serious business. Drowning and hypothermia are very real results of an accidental exit from a kayak or other water craft. As the saying goes, “Be prepared.”

Jennifer Davidson
Nanaimo, BC

Write us at postscript@bcrt.ca

Whoops

On p. 67 of the current (Summer of 2023) PostScript, Michele Le Noble mentions Claire Kinsella as the author of *Foster*, upon which *The Quiet Girl* film is based. The author is actually Claire Keegan who also wrote *Small Things Like These*, also excellent. Members might like to read or listen to both of them. I'm glad *The Quiet Girl* was featured in this review.

Lois Lawrence

Rodeo Images Redux

I appreciated the article "Charreada" by Tom Skinner in the Summer issue.

A few years back I attended the National Charro Championships at a huge rodeo facility east of Puerto Vallarta. Having been a local rodeo photographer I found the Mexican rodeo culture and events fascinating. It was a multi-day event with teams from across Mexico and the southern USA competing.

What impressed me most were the ladies' equestrian drill teams. The young women rode side saddle. This was done by attachments to a regular saddle to form a leg support for the side saddle, hidden by a full skirt. The intricate drill pattern was ridden at a full gallop. I had never seen anything like it before.

I took images of the various events which can be viewed at www.okanaganhistorygallery.com. Click on the women riders in the yellow skirts. The historical highlights of various communities in the Okanagan, and elsewhere, are also on the site. The extensive historical photo archive has been donated to UBC Okanagan.

Thank you.

Doug Cox
Penticton

Have Ideas, Will Travel

PostScript contributors are a rich resource for travel experiences and many of us are looking for more local alternatives to overseas destinations. Considering that your readers are uniquely positioned, can you encourage them to share hidden vacation or adventure opportunities in British Columbia?

Janet Amsden
Port Moody

Editor: That sounds like a great idea, Janet. So PostScript readers, what are the greatest treasures to be found in your region of BC? Let us know by writing or email to postscript@bcrta.ca.

We will publish as many as we can!

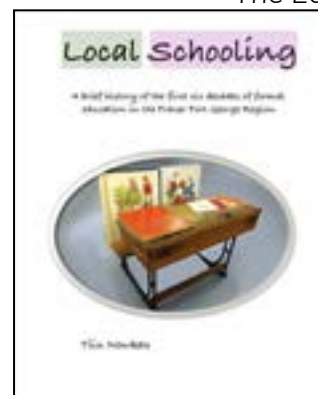
Correction

In our last issue we inadvertently featured an incorrect cover when referring to the book **Local Schooling** by Tiiu Noukas.

Readers can find Noukas' book at <https://unbc.arcabc.ca/islandora> and searching for "Local Schooling". See the correct cover, below.

Our apologies for the error.

The Editor



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UNEXPECTED Gifts

On a Tuesday afternoon, a group of us gathered in my front room to debrief that morning's activities; some were silent, some had tears in their eyes, and everyone felt a sense of joy and accomplishment. What had we done to experience such strong emotions? We had just finished delivering gift bags to seniors who live alone in Nelson, BC.

Most of the volunteers had heard about the isolation and loneliness of many seniors who live alone, but this was their first face-to-face encounter. The gratefulness of the seniors had overwhelmed them. These short, on-the-doorstep visits and gift bags that cost a few dollars had made a profound impact on both the seniors and the volunteers.

The *Gift Bags for Seniors Who Live Alone* initiative began as one of those defining moments in life. In December of 2021, when personal visits by a local agency had been suspended due to the pandemic, I helped assemble massive Christmas hampers for *Adopt a Senior Nelson*, a group whose goal is to provide gifts to seniors to show that their community honours and cares about them. I overheard another volunteer comment that a senior had told her, "I'm so glad to see you. I haven't seen or talked to anyone in two weeks." I was stunned.

I asked what *Adopt a Senior Nelson* did for the other holidays. When they told me their focus was Christmas I asked if I could have the rest of the year.

When I got home, I wondered, "What have I just done?" I didn't know how I would show support to seniors in need. I didn't know any seniors that might be socially isolated. I didn't know where I would get the money for little gifts. But I had





good friends! I think I phoned and emailed all of them and by the second day I had \$800. I contacted an agency that worked with seniors and, after I underwent a criminal record check and signed a plethora of confidentiality forms, they provided me with a confidential list of seniors' names and addresses. I was on my way, and in 2022 thirty-six seniors received a grocery gift card and a carnation for Valentine's Day. I posted pictures of the carnations and a brief write-up on my Facebook page.

Since then, former students, friends, and my cherished classmates from fifty-plus years ago have sustained this initiative for the first two years while local businesses, organizations, and the citizens of Nelson have come on board with financial and volunteer support. We now have over forty dedicated volunteers and twelve vetted drivers who deliver gift bags to a hundred seniors who live alone. In addition, various groups like the Kootenay Quilters make regular contributions of items.

Each gift bag event has a theme. A Valentine Tea Party includes a mug, tea, coffee, cookies, a carnation, and always a small chocolate treat! Easter might be a fruit basket and September a veggie box. We try very hard to avoid "clutter" and focus on useful items such as socks, activity books, hand knitted toques, scarves, mittens, jigsaw puzzles, magnifying glasses, and note pads. Seniors have told us that fruit is now a luxury, so fruit is included in every bag. Cards made by elementary school students touch the seniors deeply.



I didn't know where I would get the money for little gifts. But I had good friends... by the second day I had \$800.

Cards made by elementary school students touch the seniors deeply...



We deliver gift bags four or five times a year depending on our finances. We are totally dependent on donations of cash and/or items from individuals, local businesses, and organizations such as service clubs and the Nelson Kootenay Seniors Projects Society. Each gift bag now costs thirteen dollars, or \$1,300 for each event. I am currently able to plan two events ahead but the future of *Gift Bags for Seniors Who Live Alone* is never a certainty.

Making and delivering these gift bags provides a wonderful connection between our community as a whole and our seniors, who may be experiencing loneliness and social isolation. The seniors feel seen and honoured and the rest of us feel honoured to be a small part of their lives.

PAM HUCAL is a retired teacher/counsellor living in Nelson. For the past 3 years she has been working with 40+ volunteers and the community to create Gift Bags for Seniors who live alone.



MUSIC IN THE MORNING

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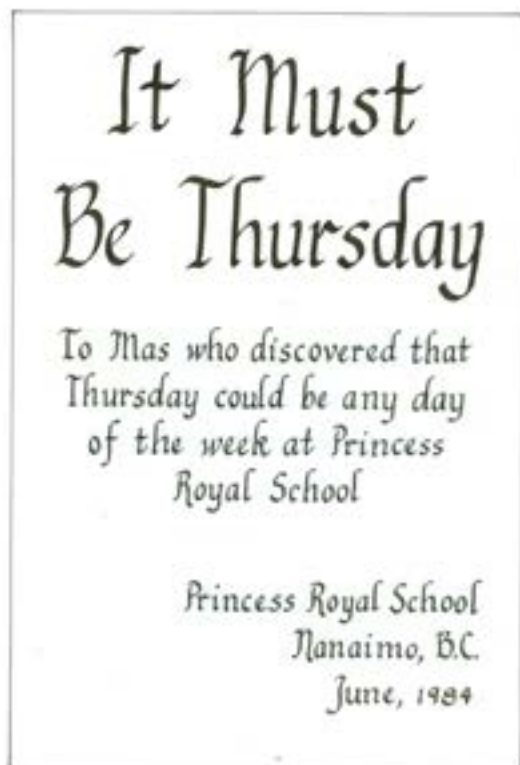
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It Must Be Thursday

MEMORIES OF FLORENCE BROOKES

TEXT BY MASAKO FUKAWA
CARTOONS BY FLORENCE BROOKES



Every school needs a Florence Brookes on staff.

She was perceptive and independent with an inner drive to live with meaning, joy, and fulfilment. She was creative with a wicked sense of humour and artistic talents. She found humour in the everyday events teachers face and lifted our spirits with the cartoons she created.

Florence enjoyed celebrating special occasions. On Victoria Day she was the Queen dressed for tea – looking solemn under her floral hat. At Hallowe'en she was Garfield the cat – naughty and mischievous with a broad grin. She helped us look at life through another pair of lenses.

Florence loathed bullying of any kind, from superiors or between students. She showed her displeasure in her face and her whole body. She showed kindness through words and action in school and out. She was especially caring of students new to Canada. They benefited from her mentoring in making a smoother transition to a new life in Canada.

Every institution seems to have a rhythm to their week. For us, everything seemed to peak on Thursday. Florence noticed it too and so if anything “unusual” happened, we used to joke, “It must be Thursday!” After a stressful event, we would be beguiled with an illustration depicting the event pinned on the staff room wall. A few of them are shown here.

The parents have come with
tales of woe,
It makes you happy to see
them go.



It must be Thursday.

The cop is here with another
kid
And a tale to tell of what
he did.



It must be Thursday.

The kids are having another
fight
And you must decide which
one is right.



It must be Thursday.

The furnace decided to send up
no heat
So you're frozen right through
from your head to your feet.



It must be Thursday.

A series of events led to one memorable cartoon. It started one morning when a student in primary brought a much beloved plant and presented it to his teacher as a parting gift at the end of the school year. The plant was carefully cared for and treasured by his mother and father. The pupil was excited. He was presenting his teacher with a precious gift. He expected a big smile and a hug. Instead, he witnessed the horrified look on his teacher's face.

She recognized the plant immediately, brought it to my office, planted it on the edge of my desk and silently scurried away. I was puzzled. The leaves looked somewhat like a tomato plant but not really. What is it?

Soon after, another teacher came by my office, saw the plant on the side of my desk and commented as he exited. "Cool. A principal with pot." Naïve me. I'd never seen a live pot plant!

What to do? Several scenarios crossed my mind.

If the child or I returned the plant to the parents, the child would be in trouble.

If I reported it to the superintendent, he would

be duty bound to report it to the police. The consequence likely being that the parents were charged with a criminal offence and the child would certainly be in deep trouble at home.

If I took it home, I might be stopped by police on my homeward journey. I imagined the headline in the morning paper, "Police Seize Principal's Pot." An investigation would follow and the whole school would be under suspicion. Worst of all, the child would also be in deep trouble.

So I took a pair of scissors out of my desk drawer and cut the plant into small pieces which I threw into the toilet. I pushed down the handle and waited for all the pieces to disappear. They did, but the water in the bowl kept rising. Lo and behold, the toilet was hopelessly clogged. There was no getting around it - I had to call school maintenance.

The plumber came and plunged and plunged while I stood by looking sheepish.

When the toilet was finally unplugged, he winked at me as he left the school. His parting words: "Did you know the plumbing had gone to pot?"





Florence's obituary quoted comments from a colleague, found in her retirement scrapbook.

"Garfield symbolizes Florence's attitude towards life and children. She enjoys its naughtiness, independence and high spirits. She has this great gift of perceiving, savouring and appreciating the joy and the fun that lies all around us in our everyday lives. That's why she will be missed by everyone."



FLORENCE BROOKES (1934-2023) was a much beloved teacher and colleague who devoted her retirement to volunteering for the local theatre, SPCA, and other causes. She liked to dress up.

MASAKO FUKAWA lives in Burnaby. She retired from SD 68 where she served as Principal and experienced more than a few Thursdays. She was recently awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree by Vancouver Island University. See that story at bcrta.ca/masako.



FINDING A NEW NICHE

BY BEVERLY HAMM

After 23 years teaching in the district, I thought my December 2011 retirement would be a lovely Christmas present to myself! But by January, I felt totally lost and knew I hadn't prepared myself adequately for this new phase in my life. I soon managed to fill my time with volunteer work, but I did not feel fulfilled.

In 2013, I joined a trip to Zambia to work at an orphanage for children who are infected with or affected by HIV, run by Seeds of Hope Children's Ministry. There I helped mentor the teachers (who had only Zambian Grade 12 training) in a school attached to the orphanage compound. In 2016, I made a second trip to Zambia, working in the Grade 1 class and again supporting the teachers. This exciting work stirred up the desire to do something in the education field that would not just keep me adequately busy, but also be fulfilling.

I soon found an ad for a Teacher Liaison to work with the non-profit organization Learning Buddies Network (LBN), a registered charity that provides free one-to-one mentoring in reading and math to at-risk elementary school students. The programs are run in public schools in Vancouver, Richmond, Burnaby, and Surrey, supervised by BC Teachers and volunteer coordinators. This sounded right up my alley!



I met with the founder, Dr. Alisa Lipson (a Vancouver pediatrician), who was looking for an elementary teacher to fill the role of Teacher Liaison, going to the school sites, making sure the volunteers felt supported in their roles, and aiding them as needed. I became the first person to fill this newly-created position.

I was excited to be back in the schools, attending the in-person sites at David Lloyd George, Henderson, Trudeau, and Moberly in Vancouver, Holly in Surrey, and Cook and Kingswood in Richmond. Going to David Lloyd George, the elementary school I attended as a student more years ago than I care to count, was a special privilege for me. Working in my own former grade 5 and 6 classrooms brought back many memories, though the physical classrooms seemed

much smaller, and the original teachers' parking lot was now a neighborhood playground.

I had also been a long-term substitute teacher at Trudeau School when it was called Moberly Annex. When I entered Trudeau for my first time in my new role, I noticed a picture of my dear friend Susie Sandhu hung inside the front door, a lovely tribute to her many years of teaching in this school. I had attended UBC with Susie, who passed away from ALS in August 2018. It seemed that all signs—finding the LBN, working in some of my old schools, and Susie's picture in its place of honor—were affirming this new niche in answer to my search for fulfilling education work.

I was duly impressed with the technical abilities of our young volunteers...

Then we were hit with COVID-19. No longer able to meet in person, the LBN staff and volunteers worked diligently to adapt the program and materials for use on Zoom. This entailed a very steep learning curve for me, so I was duly impressed with the technical abilities of our young volunteers. As difficult as it was for everyone facing the pandemic, there was a silver lining; LBN was able to grow faster and expand its reach farther than otherwise would have been possible, including to the Heiltsuk community in remote Bella Bella, where programs are now offered both in-person and online.

I see three specific ways the program helps the participating elementary students who, for various reasons, such as cost of a tutor or a lack of English language proficiency, may not receive the extra support they need outside of school hours. First, emotionally. As the mentors take the time to work one-on-one with each little buddy, the children feel an increased sense of self-worth. Feeling cared for and important is integral in building self-esteem.

Second, the program helps the students socially. The program is basically designed to offer individual support, but at times the whole group works together to play a game at break time. Though the time dedicated to whole group activities is small, I notice the students learning how to take turns and show respect to their peers.

Third, and most obviously, the program helps the students academically. The systematic academic assessment given to each participant at the beginning of the program shows the mentors where each student has learning gaps or needs extra support. In Reading sessions, increasing vocabulary, making predictions, blending sounds, and even simply recognizing letters and sounds are addressed as needed. The Math sessions help students recognize the meaning of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and how to apply these concepts to word problems.



Photos courtesy of Learning Buddies Network.

I continue to be a lifelong learner, mastering Moodle, for example, in order to be a consultant for our mentor training. I love seeing the dedication, and growth in leadership skills of volunteer high school and university students (an age group I had never worked with before). While I am no longer able to visit the in-person sites due to health reasons, I continue to look forward to the days I spend online with buddies and mentors. I have made many new acquaintances and friends. I feel heard and appreciated by the LBN staff.

With a new purpose and so many positive experiences, I am busy, fulfilled, and grateful to have finally found my new niche in retirement! •

TO LEARN MORE

www.learningbuddiesnetwork.com

YouTube: @learningbuddiesnetwork1180

Owen Fan, Executive Director
778.706.6936

BEVERLY HAMM is a Program Director at Learning Buddies Network. She was hired in 2019 as LBN's first-ever Teacher Liaison.

important dates

Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security

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

Payment dates 2023

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.

Payment dates 2023

2023

- 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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A BIRTHDAY TRIP TO NORWAY



The author atop Mt. Himakânã.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MARLENE LEGATES

Sometimes it seems like old age is a matter of giving up one enjoyable activity after another. In my case, the first to go was horseback riding. During a lovely gallop along the beach in Iceland on an Icelandic pony, my backside landed where it apparently shouldn't have. On a subsequent ride (my last!) I had to keep my spirited horse to a walk because I couldn't bear any jolt. To echo a friend, "I don't bounce as much anymore as I used to."

Bike riding was next. A fall from my bike resulted in a torn ACL and now my bike languishes in the garage. My partner and I still take long walks most mornings on the beach, but hiking is a different kettle of fish. We were so exhausted after hiking in the Dolomites last fall that even when the exhaustion proved rather more persistent, we didn't realize we had caught COVID.

Nonetheless, Norway, with its spectacular scenery, seemed a reasonable choice to mark an 80th birthday: dramatic peaks rising alongside blue-green fjords, alternating with picturesque villages and lush meadows. The first half of our trip was off



Above: The backside descent.

Below: Further west, over Haukeliseter Pass. That's ice in the lake.





Above: Låtefossen Waterfall (actually twin waterfalls), which inspired too many shots (but how can you resist waterfalls?).

the tourist trail, but the views were more accessible and just as stunning as the more famous ones.

Hiking trails are part of urban life here. For example, it's said that you can do two weeks of different day hikes from Bergen, Norway's second largest city. We landed in Oslo, so on our second day in the country, when we should have been resting up from our flight, we hiked Mt. Skaugumsåsen, just a few minutes from our accommodation just outside the city. The view from the top took in the entire city and much of its fjord. AllTrails.com called this hike "moderately challenging" and estimated the time as just under 3 hours. Translated into senior-speak, that's "steep and hard" and more like five hours. Some sections were so steep that I had to descend on my backside.

Speaking of steep, I use a walking stick for difficult sections, both up and down. I usually pack it in my carry-on in order to pass through security easily. But at YVR it was targeted and, when asked, I accurately but foolishly described it as a hiking stick. Apparently, you're not allowed to take a hiking stick in your carry-on and they demanded that it be checked. Eventually they relented, but from now on I and my "mobility device" will approach security hand-in-hand.

After Mt. Skaugumsåsen, we should have learned our lesson, but couldn't resist Mt. Himakånå, described by a Norwegian website as "moderate," an estimated 2 hours--well, 2 hours up and 2 hours down. True, it wasn't as hard because you walked on a gravel path all the way, but it was unrelentingly steep (357 meters). Still, the view at the top was

to die for; you'd never know the difference between it and the better-known (and very crowded) Pulpit Rock.

On our third major hike, what was supposed to be an easy two to three hours with an elevation change of less than 200 meters somehow turned into another five-hour marathon with an elevation change of 500 meters! We're still mystified as to how we could have gone so wrong, following the signs carefully as we did. Still, we had magnificent views and a refreshing dip in the fjord afterwards.

The time estimated for the Buer Glacier hike, near the town of Odda, is "2 hours, 3 hours, 4 hours," presumably based on how far you go, not on how old you are. We knew the last part involved ropes and ladders, but we thought we could perhaps get

to that point. Well, one hour in and we had to admit it was too steep, too muddy, too wet, and too slippery for us. We wisely retreated to lunch in an elegant restaurant at the trail head and compensated that afternoon with a shorter hike to a different viewpoint instead. For the remainder of our trip, we treated ourselves to more sedate walks in dense river valleys, alongside glacial streams, on ridges overlooking lakes and fjords, or alongside farms and pastures.

For older travellers, especially those like us who travel independently, there are other obstacles than the merely physical. The technology involved in renting an electric car proved as challenging as some of our harder hikes! The Europcar rep who encouraged us to select one assured us that it was very easy to charge and even recommended

Clockwise: At the top of Mt. Skaugumsåsen with its view of Oslo; The 13th-century Heddal Stave Church, the largest of Norway's stave churches (all wooden, designed to be easy to dis- and reassemble); another stave church at Røldal, also 13th century, with its miracle-working crucifix.



an app that had “the most charging stations in Norway.” Not! That app can be used only in and around Oslo (how many tourists rent cars to use in Oslo?!) and we ended up downloading five different apps. There were many stressful moments until we found the one credit card that would send the security code to our email rather than to our home phone in Vancouver. At one point we found ourselves hours away from our destination with only 15% battery left and no station in sight that would accept our cards. Fortunately, we were rescued by another tourist who put our charge on his account. We were able to repay him with the American cash we had brought along for just such emergencies.

On the plus side, going cashless made everything so much easier. I have no idea what Norwegian currency even looks like. We prepared to be shocked when the invoice for tolls and ferry crossings arrived after we got home, but for our 3-week trip it was only \$50, aided no doubt by the discount given electric cars (80% of new cars sold in Norway are electric, the highest in the world). Curiously, while “green” transport is popular, organic produce seems to be virtually non-existent and smoking is allowed on outdoor patios.

Worthy of note is the lack of visual pollution (no roadside advertising to spoil the views) and noise pollution (all our accommodations were very quiet) and we loved watching the robotic lawn mowers go about their work silently and efficiently. On the other hand, due most likely to the abundance of wood for construction and the severe climate, Norway lacks the older historical architecture of other European countries. The 13th-century stave (all-wooden) churches are an exception, as are some 19th-century monuments. Other exceptions are Bergen’s Bryggen district, a warren of beautiful 18th-century (reconstructed) buildings testifying to its Hanseatic past, and Vigeland Park in Oslo, a collection of Gustav Vigeland’s statues that shocked contemporaries in the 1940s with their celebration of naked human bodies.

Is Norway expensive? Accommodation (mostly Airbnb, and mostly wonderful) ranged from \$125 to \$225. We enjoyed yogurt and fruit breakfasts in our accommodations, with our own home-made granola; lunches were simple sandwiches, and we often cooked dinners. Restaurant food was a delicious treat and cost a bit more than in Vancouver (we share meals, which helps enormously). Specialties we



Panoramic view from our green roof cottage.



particularly enjoyed were reindeer stew, smoked salmon, gravlax, cod cheeks, and the organic, traditional cider of the Ulvik region. Not so much the reindeer hotdog with lingonberry sauce.

Would we return to Norway? We're already thinking about going to the Lofoten Islands in the north, rated by some as the most beautiful place in the country. But, since all the hikes there are rated "hard," perhaps we'll wait until hiking goes the way of horseback riding and cycling and prepare to enjoy the scenery from ground level. •

MARLENE LEGATES taught History and Women's Studies at Capilano University until her retirement in 2008. Since then, she balances travel with teaching in the SFU Liberal Arts and +55 Program.



Top: Bryggen, the medieval district of Bergen, with buildings from its Hanseatic past.

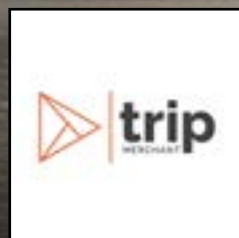
Bottom: Ulver is cider country, with the obligatory visit to a cidery and tasting. Delicious!

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Rob Field
BC INVESTMENT CORPORATION

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VP Stakeholder Engagement
BC Housing

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RUM RUNNERS

OF THE CARIBBEAN

BY SYLVIA OLSON

Recently, I was out for Sunday brunch with girlfriends when the conversation turned to travel. Since COVID, my desire to travel has evaporated; too many problems at airports these days take the fun out of travel. My friends, though, are still keen – some had already booked an autumn cruise, citing the fact that the cruise industry seemed to have recovered from its COVID fiasco. While cruising can be fun, I mentioned, it can also be stressful.

I had discovered this fact on my first Caribbean cruise, in my younger years. Two girlfriends and I had flown to Miami and boarded our ship for a carefree adventure. We had packed and re-packed for weeks, adding the recommended evening attire for dinners at the Captain's table. We wanted to make a good impression.

The first day on board was fabulous. We enjoyed the Bahama Mama drinks while relaxing on the lido deck next to the pool. The steel drum band created a party atmosphere and my cares floated out to sea on every happy musical note.

Our first port of call was Nassau, in the Bahamas, where we shopped at the Straw Market, many small tables outdoors on the street, shaded by colourful umbrellas, and with many more items displayed on blankets on the pavement. The items ranged from straw hats to sandals and everything in-between. After a long walk through the town of pink houses, we decided to return to the ship early and go for a dip in the pool.

Back on board, though, we met passengers who informed us of the duty-free liquor store at the end of the pier, where the prices were unbelievably cheap. Naturally, we had to go check it out.

After purchasing all the Bacardi rum we could carry, we headed back to the ship. To our shock, we saw that it was setting sail! The gangplank was already stowed away, and the mooring ropes had been removed from the pier stanchions. We ran in a panic yelling, "Wait, wait!" A vision flashed through my head—us spending the night on some park bench, offering to share our rum with random passersby.

The crew waved and shouted, “Jump! Jump!” from the open cargo hold...

The crew waved and shouted, “Jump! Jump!” from the open cargo hold at the bottom of the ship. The ship was about three feet away from the pier and moving fast. I realized it was now or never—I had to jump. I dropped all my rum, took a big leap, and landed face first on the deck. The crew cheered! It



was then that I realized all three of us had made it on board. But not one rum bottle survived, explaining the broken glass all around us. Landing on the cargo hold floor left us with black streaks in our hair and on our clothes. This was mixed with blood dripping from all our various cuts and scrapes. We were the center of attention and we never looked worse. Not the kind of impression we had in mind.

The most direct way back to the passenger deck turned out to be up some back stairs through the Purser’s office. The Purser looked shocked when he saw us come through the door, three dirty, blood-stained young ladies in ripped clothes, reeking of rum. “Where the hell did you guys come from?” he asked. “Canada,” I said.

We told our story as the nurse patched us up. The Purser confessed that he thought we were stow-aways, maybe shipwrecked, or worse yet, abducted and held prisoners below deck. After he checked the passenger list for our names we were allowed to go.

Walking back to our cabin we got some strange looks, and one lady asked, “What happened to you guys?”

The next morning, we were awakened by a loud announcement.

“This is the Purser’s office wishing you a good day, and, ladies, please don’t jump ship today.” •

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

GALÁPAGOS

Adventure

BY JULIE JEANNEAU

Above: Bartolomé Island. (photo by author) Below: Swing over Quito (iStock)

After years of imagining, our dream adventure to the Galápagos finally came to fruition in March of 2023. Six high school friends plus two other old friends arrived in Quito five days ahead of our tour and spent those days exploring some of this sprawling 2900-metre-high city and the surrounding area. Riding the teleférico (cable car) up the side of the Pichincha Volcano to over 4000 metres gave us our first taste of a higher altitude. Breathing in less oxygen forced us to walk at a slower pace, which allowed for an appreciation of the expansive views and for welcome stops for photo ops. Up in the clouds, we took turns on a crudely fashioned rope swing with a wooden seat that allowed us to seemingly float over those clouds at the cliff edge. Various viewpoints as high as 4500 metres provided sweeping views of Quito as the clouds rolled in and out.

A day-long exploration of the city on the Hop-On-Hop-Off bus took us through the busy, noisy streets of Quito. A trip to Intiñan, an Indigenous Museum, allowed us our first, of five crossings of the Equator. One afternoon, one friend, wanting to practice his Spanish, spoke with a young woman outside her

family's restaurant. She, in turn, was interested in trying out her English. This led to an invitation to their restaurant for dinner that evening. The mother and two daughters were welcoming hosts, and we had a festive evening sampling the delicious local cuisine.

Previously, we had noted that, despite the abundance of fruit and vegetables available in tiny markets and street vendors, all the meals we ate



were curiously lacking both. When we decided to return later in the week, our friend asked them to surprise us with a meal selection and also asked that cooked vegetables be included. Perhaps it was a communication issue, but when we returned we had to laugh--the requested vegetables were french fries!

Despite hearing that the streets of Quito could be unsafe, we were struck by the helpfulness and friendliness of many people we encountered as we tried to communicate in our broken Spanish.

We then moved west 1,000 kilometres to explore the Galápagos. The flight offered views of massive Andean peaks jutting out from the clouds, an active volcano, and shrimp farms bordering the Pacific Ocean in Guayaquil. We arrived in hot and sunny Baltra, a welcome change from the overcast skies of Quito. A quick bus ride to the dock and transfer via zodiac brought us aboard our floating home in the Galápagos for nine days, a well-equipped boat with eight staterooms, a dining area, and places to lounge with our fellow adventurers. Delicious meals and snacks were created in a tiny galley, no small feat.

Below: Heading back to our ship by dinghy. (photo by author)



Above: Volcano viewed from above. (photo by author)

We visited the north, west, and central islands, crossing the Equator four more times. There was an ever-present sense of being a mere speck in this vast ocean. We became awkwardly adept at moving on and off the zodiac from the beach, the ocean, and other balance-challenging points. Our twice-daily walks on these volcanic islands offered some challenges, whether from uphill climbs, rocky steps, or uneven footing on lava flows, but spectacular scenery was the reward. We learned to manage the constant presence of the equatorial sun with well-organized breaks for photo ops, shade, and hydration. Our guide used the stops to inform us of the storied past of the Galápagos which included Charles Darwin, buccaneers, and the many sailors that passed through the area. After our morning and afternoon outings, the galley crew greeted us with delicious brews of teas, juices, and treats, a welcome respite.

We discovered firsthand the incredible diversity of the landscape through the flora and fauna on and around the islands we visited. Wherever we travelled, the wildlife were curious, entertaining, and unafraid as we ventured into their environment. Among the many spectacular species we saw, the highlights for me were the blue-footed boobies, and snorkelling with turtles, sea lions, manta rays,



Above: Galápagos Land Iguana, Isabela Island

Below: Blue-footed Boobies, near Bartolomé Island (photos by author)

white-tipped sharks, marine iguanas, and the incredibly speedy penguins. Our two daily snorkels were a cooperative affair as masked heads popped out of the water to share shouts of “Octopus!” “Shark!” “Manta!” and “Penguiiiiin!” (trying to pinpoint its location as it zoomed past). Other memorable moments included dolphins leaping alongside our boat, a Bryde whale making a brief appearance beside us, and a pair of flamingos circling over our zodiac as we approached the shore. The flamingos were a welcome sight to our naturalist, who told us they had only recently returned to this lagoon now that rats, introduced to the island years ago, have now been eradicated.





Above: Marine Iguanas warming themselves, Fernandina Island

Left: Sally Lightfoot Crab, Santa Cruz Island (photos by author)

Sea lions, a sight we are used to on the west coast of BC, still never disappointed in their aggressive territorial displays or their ability to lounge on the beach, a cliff-edge shelf, or surprisingly, on a large tree branch in the mangroves. One large male, after enjoying a snooze on the sand, decided to roll himself down the slope into the water instead of walking with his flippers--a comical show. When snorkelling, if you made bubbles in the water, you could sometimes attract a curious sea lion up close and personal.

The marine iguanas were graceful and distinctive as we watched them underwater feeding on algae on the rocks, but warming themselves on land, piled on and next to each other, they gave a truly prehistoric vibe. Land iguanas offered odd smiles as they lounged in the brush along the path. Watching a giant female land tortoise moving painstakingly forward made me feel the strain of carrying around 100+ kilograms. My knees ached for her.

I was surprised at the number of bird species we saw on our travels. They seemed an ever-present part of our day, often travelling alongside our boat. Once, while climbing up the ladder to the top deck to hang some laundry, I found a huge pelican was sitting on the deck a few feet away, watching me intently. More than once, we became unwitting voyeurs to the bizarre mating ritual of the frigatebirds. Gathered in groups in the low, mostly leafless bushes near the beach, and oblivious to our group, the males carried on with their show, inflating their large, bright red throat pouches, bobbing, and flapping to attract the attention of the nearby females flying above looking for a suitable mate. We never lacked something remarkable to see and appreciate and went to bed each night anticipating the next day's adventures.

Our naturalist guide escorted us to all the islands, imparting engaging facts and stories with obvious pride in his homeland and all it has to offer. All the naturalists hired on the ships sailing in the Galápagos must be native to the area. They, in turn, return to the schools to inspire the next generation to follow in their footsteps, a plan, he told us, that is working well. Thankfully, much of the Galápagos Archipelago has been protected by the 133,000-square-kilometre National Marine Reserve since 1986. The sheer uniqueness and biodiversity of the landscape and animals we encountered were a privilege to witness. After all our dreaming, this trip exceeded all of our expectations.

Over a period of 25 years **JULIE JEANNEAU** taught intermediate grades (4-7) and in Learning Services in SD 43 (Coquitlam). She retired at the start of the pandemic and is looking forward to more travel.

A wide-angle photograph of the interior of the New National Theatre Tokyo. The view is from the audience's perspective, looking towards the stage. The theater features a curved wooden ceiling and walls, with multiple tiers of wooden seating. The stage is covered by a large, closed red curtain. The lighting is warm and focused on the stage area.

Reverie

RIFFS ON HOME
FROM TOKYO
OPERA CITY

BY LYND A GRACE PHILIPPS EN

Photo by New National Theatre Tokyo

Surreptitiously, I pull out my phone. It's already muted. Of course, photos are not allowed, but the majestic red curtain hanging before me prompts me to sneak a quick shot—evidence that I am seated in the second row about to enjoy *Der Rosenkavalier* performed in German by the New National Theatre Tokyo. So long as the singers' diction is precise, I have enough remnants of that language lodged in some cerebral cortex from German church services, as well as various oratorios, cantatas, and Lieder I've performed. I won't need the surtitles.

Earlier, while sipping a generous flute of Veuve Clicquot in the lobby—part of a fundraising effort I couldn't resist—I had noted a mere handful of other European-looking individuals with hair in various shades of blonde among a mass of somber black elegance. Now in the hall, however, any awareness of the audience behind me evaporates. The Japanese surtitles running vertically on the marquees at both sides of the stage are the single remaining indicator that I am a long way from home.

I've seen the opera before and have reviewed the libretto in both English and German online where I can also search individual artist profiles later, so I slide the Japanese program notes into my bag. Closing my eyes, I use the moment to meditate as various strings saw on A440, the winds trill through tricky passages, and the timpanist makes minute adjustments to the skins.



As always, anticipation builds as the pit orchestra thrums like a beehive through its preliminary warm-up. Lulled by the soundscape, I ease into a light trance and am startled by the applause greeting the conductor as the houselights dim. For a moment I don't know where I am, except that it's familiar enough to call home.

Born into a Mennonite family, I grew up immersed in music. With capable musicians on both sides of the family, fine acapella singing was not only integral to worship but also entertainment at home. When supper was finished, we would sing. Participation in choirs, quartets, trios—all were integral to my family and community life. I've never forgotten my maternal grandmother's gorgeous alto resonating distinctively during congregational singing.

Above: Lynda singing with her family as a child.

Right: View of the Opera Palace lobby, Tokyo Opera City (photo courtesy of NNTT).



My paternal grandfather was especially fond of opera, a liking only my aunt and I shared. He often told the story that before the Revolution, while he was a student in Moscow, he attended the opera every night for two weeks. This seemed scandalous; it had been drummed into me since birth that any form of theatre—along with movies, television, smoking, drinking, and dancing—was sin and against church rules. Of course, Grandpa's wickedness occurred long before he repented and joined the church.

Even so, before I knew what opera was, it seemed the sort of sin that I might truly enjoy. I could put off joining the church until I could find out for myself, especially since my uncle, who was on church council, could regularly conduct operettas as a high school music teacher, and students with fine voices from our church choir often took lead roles or sang in the chorus with impunity. Somehow Gilbert and Sullivan were deemed wholesome—the transparent imperialistic and racist overtones (of which I was not yet aware) notwithstanding. Years before I had the wherewithal to properly argue the issue, the logic of it failed me.

Another rather malleable definition of sin arose when the BC Lions made the 1963 Grey Cup Championship. My father and his peers on church council declared that watching football on television was not more wicked than going to a game in person, which of course, none of them could afford to do. Before long almost every family in the church had a TV.

Although I dismissed my religious indoctrination after leaving home, my early grounding in music has remained a constant joy and has never failed to nurture my soul. This is most especially true when the power of the human voice is brought to enthralling stories in folk songs, madrigals, motets, oratorios, or operas.

As I searched for various activities I might enjoy outside of classes during my first three months of Sogetsu Ikebana studies, I discovered to my delight that *Der Rosenkavalier* would be performed at Tokyo Opera City. With its 54-storey tower, this cultural complex is home to numerous venues—the Opera Palace in which I now sit, the magnificent Concert Hall ranked 6th in the world for its acoustics, a playhouse, an art gallery, restaurants,



He often told the story that before the Revolution, while he was a student in Moscow, he attended the opera every night for two weeks. This seemed scandalous...

and more. Recognizing the opportunity as too sweet to miss, I procured a ticket. Now, as the curtain opens, I float to 18th century Vienna on the notes of the overture. The story opens on the Marschallin, Princess Marie Thérèse, an aristocrat in a dalliance with the much younger Count Octavian. Sadly, as all things do—but most especially for the soprano in opera—this must end. Happily, the Marschallin is one of a very few who does not die. Nevertheless, the inevitable is the inevitable, and it comes much sooner than she expects, after a petty quarrel and without a proper goodbye.

To make a four-hour opera and all its innumerable machinations short, Octavian is smitten by someone younger, and that's the end of that. Though she still adores him, the Marschallin gives him up. Because she is by nature noble and magnanimous—as well as married—she does so with a grace in what probably goes down as one of the most elegant and wrenching heartbreaks in all of opera.

In contrast, the Marschallin's cousin, Baron Ochs (meaning Ox), a vulgar lecher well past his prime, imagines he still has what fetching young women want. His cringe-worthy drunken antics are sometimes cited as the reason this opera is long. However, on this night the bass gives the role an endearing comedic touch that makes every minute of his stage presence a joy and the entire performance seems too short. By the opera's end—after two champagne-fueled intermissions—I quite forget the romantic hero, Octavian. Give me Ochs. Please.

Composer Richard Strauss and librettist Hugo von Hofmannsthal manage to capture both the bawdy and the holy thing that is love. Perhaps nowhere is the latter more poignantly played out than in the love triangle tangled through the famous Trio of the final act before the lovers—two of them, at least—get their happy ending.

Inevitably, we lose what we love. After that the excruciating continuum of letting go begins. Here in the dark hall after the principal singers have left the stage, the orchestra sustains its long diminuendo. Losses, some long consigned to memory's dustbins, circle back to mind. Somewhat like a comet suspended in the night sky—exquisite, unreachable stardust returned home.



Program Cover by NNTT

Although it's still many weeks off, I know that all too soon I must relinquish everything I love about my life and studies in this city and return to another home that is in many ways—though not all—less. My grandfather never enjoyed his two unforgettable Moscow weeks again; he was reduced to Saturday afternoon broadcasts on CBC from a tube radio. I am mindful of the parallels.

Not about to permit distant realities to taint a magical evening, as the final note lingers, I try to make the moment last and commit it to memory. Applause shatters the air. The ovation continues as the principals are called back over and over. Eventually the house lights brighten, and I head out into the night for my train.

Walking down the slope from the station toward my apartment, the night bright with the glow of distant towers in Roppongi Hills, I notice Sirius suspended like a benediction between the two towers on the corner. Every cell of my being smiles as I recall a line from Rumi: *If light is in your heart, you will find your way home.* •

Though it wasn't part of the original plan, writer **LYNDA GRACE PHILIPPSEN** twice returned to her other home in Tokyo to further her Sogetsu Ikebana [Japanese flower arranging] studies. At present she continues coursework from her Victoria home via Zoom. You can find her on Instagram @lyndawow.

PHOTO FILE



AUTUMN RIVER FISHING
BY LON SMITH

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Catalina

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TOM SKINNER

*Twenty-six miles across the sea
Santa Catalina is a-waitin' for me,
Santa Catalina, the island of romance...*

If you listened to popular music in the 1960's, you're probably familiar with these lyrics. Made famous by The Four Preps, "26 Miles" has a unique story to mesh with the history of this popular Southern California destination. Belland, who lived in Chicago as a youngster, moved to Hollywood in 1950 and started a high-school group which intertwined with Ricky Nelson and other like-minded entertainers. While recuperating from a broken ankle, Bruce Belland began learning the ukulele, and his first four chords became the opening to "26 Miles". He then wrote the remainder of the song with bandmate Glen Larson,

and it became an instant hit when released in 1958. You don't want to be like Belland, however—it took him five more years before his first visit to Catalina in 1962.

My wife and I joined other Canadian snowbirds to travel from Palm Springs to Santa Catalina Island via Cardiff Tours. With over one million visitors per year, the island is a very popular tourist destination for native Californians and Canadian snowbirds alike. It is the eastern-most of the Californian Channel Islands, 22 miles in length and 8 miles across at its widest point. It's also not 26 miles from the coast - more like twenty-two-and-a-half. On the Catalina Express from Long Beach, the trip will take you about an hour. Begun in 1981 by Doug Bombard, his son Greg, and their friend Tom Rutter, the ferry originally brought tourists only to Two Harbors. Expanding from a single



Above, clockwise: Catalina Express; It does rain in Southern California; One of many pubs.

Facing page: Harbour view of Avalon, Catalina Island

redesigned sport fishing boat to eight modern craft, the service now operates from three mainland locations and two island ports. We arrived at Avalon, the major hub on the island.

Once you've walked up the 407-foot Green Pier, it's an easy task to rent a golf cart for a self-guided tour, the option most tourists take since few vehicles are allowed on the Island. Or you can head for a restaurant for a bite to eat before you head out to one of the many restaurants and pubs in Avalon.

When you plan your cart tour, be sure to include the Casino, built under the direction of William Wrigley Junior, of Spearmint, Doublemint, and Juicy Fruit Gum fame. A large circular building at one end of Avalon Bay, it shouldn't be missed. It was designed by prominent architects Sumner A. Spaulding and Walter Webber and opened on May 29, 1929. An Avalon icon, it houses a circular ballroom on one floor, was the site of an early movie theatre, and has become a host and supporter of many of Avalon's major events. You will also save some money as it has never been a "Casino" for gambling, but rather was named from the Spanish casino, "social club" or "gathering place".



Above, clockwise: Green Wharf, Avalon; Golf cart view above Avalon; Cactus and flowers.

Facing page: Avalon Casino



This same Wrigley family owned the Chicago Cubs, who held their spring training on Catalina between 1921 and 1951. During World War II, the Cubs did not train on Catalina and the Island became a lookout and training station for the military. Meanwhile, the entire production of Wrigley's chewing gum was dedicated solely to the US Armed Forces during the war.

After our lunch and island tour via golf cart, I enjoyed a glass-bottomed boat tour, which provided lots of opportunity for photographing sea life and sea birds. There are a few more options you might consider, including biking, but relaxing, eating, boating, hiking, and touring the island will make a full day's experience.

Though according to another song, "It Never Rains in Southern California," the photos of our group on the pier show a different truth. Nevertheless, it never rained inside the pub, nor inside the restaurant, and it did stop raining when we were ready to start the golf cart tour.

A few items we missed on this visit were the Wrigley Memorial Botanic Gardens, operated by the Catalina Island Conservancy, found at the gateway to the popular hike "The Garden's Sky Trail", and the Nature Center, established by the Conservancy to protect and restore native flora and fauna.

But not to worry, since if you visit Catalina once, you will, like us, surely want to visit again! •

TOM SKINNER and his wife Myna are both retired educators. He is a frequent contributor to PostScript and other publications.

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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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THE RESULTS ARE IN!

BCRTA's Executive Director and PostScript Editor Tim Anderson outlines the insights provided by our recent Health and Community Survey. A special thanks goes to BCRTA staff member Amberly Tse who transcribed the comments of hundreds of paper submissions into our reporting database.

OUR BIGGEST SURVEY RESPONSE EVER

Response to our 2023 survey has been wonderful, with about 1,900 respondents giving us an insight into their current situation. A review of the data supports BCRTA's continuing concern about some aspects of health care in BC, highlights some of the factors that affect retirees' sense of well-being and gives something of a picture of what factors weigh most in terms of life satisfaction.

LIFE AT HOME

Almost all of our members are in a one- or two-person household. 33% live alone and 61% live with one other person, leaving just 6% in a household with more than two people. 10.5% of respondents care for someone else in their home, while under 4% report receiving care from another person in the household. Those most in need of care may not have the energy or wherewithal to respond to the survey, so we expect that the balance may be over-reported towards caregivers.

Most respondents have significant ties to their neighborhoods and wish to stay in their homes as they age...

A very substantial 88% report that they wish to continue living where they are as they age. It appears that many of our members have deep roots in their community. Some 70% report knowing most of their neighbours (in major North American cities this number is as low as 9%). A contributing factor to this stability is that well over 90% own their homes – just 6.6% report that they are renters.

Two thirds (66%) report that their housing situation is not too expensive for them. A major cost of home ownership is the annual property tax bill, and 42% report property tax as a significant concern yet only 15% of respondents have deferred those taxes, which seems to indicate that there is enough cash to pay the tax, but people don't enjoy it much. Deferring taxes is a wise choice for many – the interest on the amount owing is low and the owed amounts are only settled upon sale of the residence. However, for many it feels like going into debt and there is reluctance to take this option.





Nearly a third continue to provide financial support to family members outside of their household...

FINANCES

While just 16% report that rising interest rates affect them (most retirees do not have a mortgage), the debt situation of relatives may have an impact. Nearly a third of respondents (30%) indicated that they continue to provide financial support to family members outside of their household. Only 2% of retirees report that they receive financial support from family, meaning that a third of this generation of retirees is carrying the financial burden of extended family. Despite the fact that most own their homes, nearly 40% report that housing costs are a concern to them – a concern that may be as much for loved ones as for themselves.

Fully 60% consider themselves better off than most seniors, and for those collecting a full pension this is undoubtedly true. According to Statistics Canada, in 2021 the median Canadian senior income from all sources was \$33,000 per year, and BCRTA estimates that the average retired BC Teacher had a total income (including CPP and OAS) of \$46,000.

But those retirees who had fewer years of service will have lower incomes, and perhaps that is a contributing factor for those 37% who report that they plan their finances extremely carefully. About 13% of members reported that they had a part-time job.

DAILY LIFE

Most responders find daily life is going well, with just 16% indicating that daily cooking and cleaning can sometimes be too much. Smaller sub-groups showed more impairment, with 7% finding communication by telephone difficult, 11% struggling on their computers, and a very significant 30% finding keeping up their financial paperwork (and all those taxes) to be too much to handle. Over 90% feel comfortable buying their own groceries, however.

In terms of family connections, nearly half (46%) report that distance from loved ones is a concern, likely reflecting the trend for younger generations to move to more affordable locations to establish their own households. Connection to family and friends is critical for emotional health, so a number of questions zeroed in on this aspect of daily life. While 91% of people feel safe in their neighborhood, only 61% reported participating in a community event (RTA meeting, club, or church) in the last year. Broadly speaking, Canadians' participation in neighbourhood clubs, faith groups, and associations has seen steep declines in recent years, meaning that most of us have fewer interactions with a wider social circle than was the case a generation ago. A majority (71%) had attended a concert or other cultural event this past year. Some 75% could think of a time when they had hosted coffee or dinner with a friend, while 25% could not recall that occurring in the past 12 months, indicating for those persons a much greater likelihood of isolation.

Added to this trend towards smaller social circles, the last three years have seen a significant rise of hostile rhetoric in the areas of politics and health care policy, and sharp divides amongst the public. When we polled our members, nearly 20% indicated that relationships with family members had deteriorated during this time, and a whopping 44% indicated that their social networks have become smaller. More than a third (35%) indicated that they could use more time with close friends. About one quarter (24%) continue to have significant concerns about gathering in groups – and COVID infections do continue to pose a level of risk. We did not ask about the vaccination status of members, but public health statistics show a very high percentage of seniors have been vaccinated

against COVID, and vaccination has been shown to greatly reduce the risk of severe disease and death. There are also a number of simple measures that can be taken to improve air quality and make gathering in groups safer.

In terms of physical activity, over 90% of respondents enjoyed walking in the community, with 54% adding cycling or swimming to their activities. 40% were able to get out for a longer nature walk or camping expedition. The limits of age do show for a number of retirees, with 36% indicating that walking could sometimes be difficult, and nearly two thirds (63%) indicating that strenuous sports would be too much for them.

PLAN, WHAT PLAN?

Despite significant concerns about the ability to stay in their own homes and manage the financial costs of additional care, it appears that most retirees have not yet done their homework on these topics. Just 8% have a plan for housing changes required during a medical emergency, and only a slightly larger group (12.6%) have researched in-home support services that would allow them to continue to live at home longer. A few more (17%) have looked into what independent living facilities are available for seniors in their community. Less than a third have had a discussion with their families about what their wishes and plan are for housing in their final years. This lines up with the comments of a number of respondents who have found their own senior years made much more challenging by having to arrange for the care of their own parents or older siblings. Retirees may acknowledge the importance of planning for potential care needs, but most are not doing it.

Much higher percentages of respondents (91%) report that they have drafted a current will, and nearly three quarters (73%) have a Power of Attorney arrangement set up already. Nearly a quarter have already made funeral arrangements for themselves. While not wanting to be maudlin, we note that many retirees are more prepared for their final departure than they are for a period of declining health when they may require more support. All planning is good, but there is a significant deficit in terms of awareness and planning for the needs of later years in life.

HEALTH CARE

Retirees report a high level of confidence in their physicians as individuals, with two-thirds giving high marks (4 or 5 out of 5) for proactively addressing their health needs. The vast majority continue to receive care from a family doctor (or nurse practitioner), but comments indicate that many of those have been forced to keep a relationship with a physician in their previous community, after not being able to find one in their new home. A number of commenters indicated that their doctor was soon to retire, with no replacement on the horizon.

Confidence in the local hospital was not as high as confidence in physicians – with nearly 50% of respondents indicating low or moderate (1 to 3 out of 5) confidence that their hospital would help them adequately in the event of a health crisis. Things are even more dire in terms of the view of the administration of health care by government and health regions. A mere 4% find that government officials and administrators are completely accountable for the state of health care, and 33% believe that there is no accountability at all.

If governments believe that they have made seniors' health issues a priority, they have some work to do to reconcile that with the views of seniors. Only 1.1% gave the government top marks on this topic, with more than half giving them a failing grade (a rating of 1 or 2 out of 5).

UNDERSTANDING BENEFIT PLANS

Most respondents are not overly concerned about the cost of prescription medications, though a significant number of comments would like larger coverage amounts from the two main EHC plan providers, Green Shield and BCRTA's Johnson Prestige EHC and Travel. Still, about one third of respondents noted a high degree of concern in this area, and the comments indicated that for those who rely on drugs not covered by the BC Pharmacare plan, monthly costs can be significant. There seems to be a need for greater education on the structure of retiree EHC benefit plans, with some expressing surprise that benefits are not as generous as when they were working, or stating that they were "at the mercy" of insurance



companies. Retiree benefit plans are funded entirely by the contributions of those enrolled, and there is no employer paying the majority of the premiums, as is the case with working teachers. So, any increase in benefits to the few will entail a premium increase for all the other people in the plan. Asking for more benefits is basically asking for all subscribers to pay a higher monthly premium.

OUR ASSOCIATION'S DIRECTION

In terms of priorities for our association, the clear number one position was held by pension security, a theme that has been noted on previous surveys. One or two commenters complained that their pension was not keeping pace with inflation, but the majority seemed to understand that in fact BC retired teachers enjoy the most secure, well-funded educator pension in Canada. Full adjustment for inflation has been received in the past several years, and this is a trend for which BCRTA will continue to advocate.

The second highest priority for our readers was access to good health information, where BCRTA is viewed as a credible source with the well-being of our members being our only agenda.

The third highest rated priority was the continued production of PostScript Magazine, which members value as a key vehicle for information on both pensions and health, while also indicating in the comments a strong interest in stories from their colleagues on themes of teaching and travel.

Member valued email communications from BCRTA. Travel opportunities and other money

saving offers are an important benefit to most, especially having access to the insurance options offered by BCRTA membership. A significant number of comments pointed to a need to see more-direct comparisons of the two main EHC plans offered to retirees. To see that comparison, visit bcрта.ca/ehcplancomparison. Advocacy for public education (a fundamental value of BCRTA) was not as prominent as the other priorities but still registered as significant for more than half of respondents.

SATISFACTION WITH BCRTA

One of the most gratifying aspects of compiling the survey results was the strong affirmation that participants gave to BCRTA and its role in their life. A significant number of comments praised BCRTA's strong advocacy for the needs of retirees, noted a warm and helpful experience when contacting the office for support, and lauded PostScript magazine as a hub of learning and adventure. Expressions of gratitude for the magazine's contributors and for the association's volunteer leaders were very much in evidence.

LIVING WELL, FEELING GOOD

Because the first purpose of BCRTA is the well-being of our members, we should close this report with a look at how respondents are feeling about life.

One notable theme in the comments was the emotional dislocation that occurs when losing a spouse. This event was cited as very traumatic by a number of people and was often accompanied by comments about relying on family and friends to deal with the ensuing changes. Joint life pension choices kick in after the loss of a partner, and a few regretted not taking a higher percentage in that formula.

More than half of all respondents (63%) described their emotional state as positive. But digging into the data a little further we can see a divide. Of those who reported that their social networks were getting smaller, just 44% had a positive emotional state, compared to 66% of those who had no change in their community connections. We are best when we are not alone – we need meaningful connections with others to lead happy lives. •

KITCHEN TABLE

Activists

BY JAMES CHAMBERLAIN

During my career as a primary teacher, social justice union activist and school principal, I learned a lot from my mentors. One of the things that rang true for me was the power and energy of people brainstorming about systemic change around a kitchen table.

That's how my social justice trajectory began as a young teacher. In the early 1990s, I joined an organization called Gay and Lesbian Educators of BC (GALE-BC) which later became Pride Education Network in 2010. That organization ran for thirty years which culminated in the SOGI work of thousands of teachers and school administrators across the province today.

Essentially, GALE-BC began with a small group of teachers from different school districts who saw a desperate need for the BCTF, school system and society to embrace, protect and support students from LGBTQ headed families as well as those students who self identified in the 2SLGBTQIA+ spectrum.

Our shared vision and goals were simple:

- 1) For every student to be able to feel safe at school, be welcomed and accepted.

- 2) For 2SLGBTQIA+ and questioning students to be able to learn to their full potential.

- 3) To be able to see their authentic, lived realities positively reflected within the curriculum.

What was more challenging than this vision was how to navigate the political bureaucracy inside and outside of schools to make this happen. We worked collaboratively with our feminist colleagues and other teacher allies. Parents and students became powerful voices who championed the need for the school system to change in visible and tangible ways. We drew analogies between anti-racist education and women's issues to demonstrate how our struggles for full equality were similar, but unique.

In our first decade of social justice activism, we rattled the BCTF and Ministry of Education from the outside. This involved grassroots activism balancing public criticism and professional support. Over time, we began to work within those systems to create systemic change. GALE members developed professional development workshops. We also wrote resource guides and lesson plans to accompany the existing curriculum. Eventually,

We rattled the BCTF and Ministry of Education from the outside...

*We helped students craft their speaking points
and develop the courage to speak out...*

these became the backbone of the BCTF's system of support for teachers in their own learning journeys on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues.

Collectively, we lobbied school trustees and worked within our local teacher associations and union to push for LGBT and SOGI policies (as they were called then) to be developed board by board. Behind the scenes, we helped students craft their speaking points and develop the courage to speak out. In those early years, we stood shoulder to shoulder with openly queer students at school board meetings to help convince fearful school trustees or school administrators of their need to act and lead responsibly with integrity. One by one, school boards passed policies to protect and support 2SLGBTQIA+ students and families. That challenge took two decades. Every school district in BC now has a discrete policy. Despite those significant wins, incongruent implementation of some policies remains a concern today. The recent pushback on trans issues and drag storytime shows us that we cannot take hard-earned equality rights or school board policies for granted. There is still much work to do within schools on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues.

Fast forward now to our retirement years...

With full, robust teaching careers behind us a few of us wanted to still contribute. Hence, another kitchen table conversation began. As islanders now, we clearly identified a disconnect between the ability of 2SLGBTQIA+ projects and organizations to be adequately funded on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands in comparison to the mainland. Hence, we incorporated a nonprofit society called Island Queers and Allies Who Care to help address that gap.

The logistics are simple. We raise funds for 2SLGBTQIA+ projects or organizations to start, grow and thrive on Vancouver Island or the Gulf

Islands. Anyone in BC can join us as a member. We have included allies, as we recognize their critical role and assistance in helping to shift societal attitudes on 2SLGBTQIA+ issues over the decades. Together, we are changing hearts, minds and individual actions for the better. Therefore, allies are most welcome!

Applicants from Vancouver Island or the Gulf Islands apply online for funding. In doing so, they describe how they want to have systemic impact upon the lives of the people they support and serve. Our application form is low barrier, a simple one pager. Any small group of people, a project or organization can apply. We do not privilege organizations who have charitable status.

Donors give on a one-time basis or quarterly. Anyone in BC can donate. Donors vote between three finalists each quarter to choose the successful recipient. We cover all overhead costs so 100% of funds donated directly help others. Furthermore, an anonymous donor will match donations up to \$2,000 per quarter in 2023 and 2024 to have even greater impact.

We began raising money in July 2022. In our first year, we have donated almost \$15,000 to projects in Victoria, Salt Spring Island, Cumberland, Nanaimo and Comox. Those are listed on our website under the recipient's tab. You can read about what they are doing with the funds there. You can also join as a member for \$10. Our goal is to apply for charitable status later this year. We welcome you to check out our website at www.islandqueers.ca or follow us on Instagram at [#islandqueersandallieswhocare](https://www.instagram.com/islandqueersandallieswhocare). We have a brand new Facebook page as well. Feel free to reach out! •

JAMES CHAMBERLAIN lives on the unceded land of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

DID YOU KNOW?

FASCINATING HEALTH FACTS

BY PAT THIESEN

BCRTA WELL-BEING COMMITTEE

YOU SNOOZE YOU LOSE

Alarm Clock makers obviously thought that having a “snooze” bar on the clock was a good idea, but sleep experts have been warning us about the negative effects of repeated use of that tool.

In sleep, we follow a pattern, moving through light sleep, deep sleep, and Rapid Eye Movement (REM) sleep phases multiple times. Our alarm usually goes off when we are in a REM cycle. Getting enough of this highly restorative period of sleep is essential to feeling sharp, focussed, and productive throughout the day. If we are awakened while in REM sleep, we are especially prone to “sleep inertia” and grogginess. If we hit “snooze”, we send ourselves back into REM sleep, but when the alarm sounds again, it wakes us in the middle of another REM cycle.

Even if you are hitting “snooze” because you know you didn’t get enough sleep, you are still confusing your biological clock, with implications not only for your sleep cycles going forward, but for other important biological processes. As Dr. Aarthi Ram puts it, “The 10 more minutes of sleep you’re granting yourself over and over and over isn’t productive sleep. If anything, all of that interrupted sleep will make you feel more groggy.”

Fortunately, there are well-researched approaches to helping you get out of the “Snooze Cycle”; see the link below for some of these.



<https://www.houstonmethodist.org/blog/articles/2021/dec/does-hitting-the-snooze-button-help-or-hurt/>



NEW DEFINITION FOR SUCCESSFUL AGING

As Mabel Ho, a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto's Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work and the Institute of Life Course and Aging, has pointed out, "Previous definitions of successful aging were very narrow and required that older adults were free of all diseases — very few people met that definition."

Instead, by "adopting a broader perspective", a recent study led by Ho identified a set of attributes among those who "age optimally", with or without the chronic diseases that tend to arise for older adults.

- the ability to accomplish activities of daily living (basic self-care tasks such as showering, dressing, etc.)
- the ability to accomplish instrumental activities of daily living (more-complex tasks requiring thinking and planning, such as shopping, paying bills, etc.)
- freedom from mental illness and memory problems
- freedom from disabling chronic pain
- self-reported perceptions of happiness and physical health
- adequate social support



<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/study-identifies-attributes-linked-to-healthy-optimal-aging>

NEW NATIONAL POISON CONTROL NUMBER

"Each year in Canada, over 1,500 people lose their lives and nearly 8,000 are hospitalized due to unintentional poisoning from medications, cleaners, cannabis products, and many other household items." (Health Canada)



Children under the age of six are the most likely to suffer poisoning, so if you have young children who visit, you might want to post this number near your phone: **1-844-POISON-X** (1-844-764-7669). Launched by Health Canada, this new number will connect callers with their nearest poison control centre for expert medical advice.

www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2023/03/canada-launches-new-toll-free-1-844-poison-x-number-for-poison-centres.html

For more information about poisoning, including prevention tips:
<https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/poisoning>

MY JOURNEY WITH CANCER



BY VICTOR NEUMAN

Some of you will have read the PostScript articles about my bicycle ride through Death Valley and may have wondered what insanity led a retiree to go nuts and do that trip. Strangely, it all started with a visit to my doctor.

“So, what do you want to do?”

It’s not normally a question that gives me much pause but, in this case, it did. It wasn’t from a server asking me if I wanted fries with my burger. It was from my doctor asking me how I (age 66) wanted to go about saving my life. He had just given me the diagnosis that I had prostate cancer. That was scary enough. Now, on top of that, the guy with all the medical knowledge was asking me what to do. My gut reaction was, “How the hell should I know? You’re the %&*#^ doctor!”

But with prostate cancer it doesn’t work that way. Some prostate cancers are fast-growing. Some are slow-growing. A lot of men have the good fortune (?) to die of other causes before their prostate cancer can kill them. So, considering possible side effects that can result from prostate removal, including incontinence and impotence, it is legitimate to consider doing nothing at all about an early-stage cancer.

The options the doctor gave me were:

- a) Do nothing and hope for the best.
- b) Plant radioactive seeds in the prostate to try to kill or control the cancer.
- c) Closely monitor the cancer.

I’ve got to explain option (c) because it seems so benign on the surface. It would be nice to imagine that it involves some kind of magical, non-invasive scan. It doesn’t. Every few months they will poke some freezing in your rear, stick a gizmo up your bum, and fire needles into your prostate via your rectum. They then retrieve the needles and biopsy their contents to see where your cancer is at. Think of it as a delightful fishing trip except you are the fish, and they are using harpoons. If you are unlucky in the watch-and-wait mode, your cancer spills beyond the margin of your prostate, spreads to the rest of your body, and you have just wasted that two-year subscription to Popular Mechanics.

And then there was, finally, the last option,

- d) Remove the prostate.

Doctors are ethically required to describe all the options. Prostate cancers, depending on the stage

and how aggressive they are, can be unpredictable, and at this point he had no solid clinical reason to favour one option over another. I tried to read my doctor's face for a hint toward the right choice, but he wasn't giving much away. He did seem a little tense waiting for my answer, but I was a little tense myself, so we were both in that boat. I decided that my plan was to live a long life without wondering about my prostate every step of the way. I would roll the dice on the incontinence and sex stuff.

"Let's just take it out," I said.

The doctor looked visibly relieved. "Well yes.... that is still the gold standard for treatment." He was becoming downright cheerful. "We'll set up a date for the operation...say around the end of summer?"

But I wasn't done yet. "Will you be performing the surgery?"

"Yes."

"Have you done a lot of these?" He was a fairly young doctor.

"Yes. I've done this same surgery around 40 times."

"Um...were there any...umm.... did you...?"

"No...I didn't screw any up."

"Then we have a deal."

Why am I telling you all this? Because it gave me the idea for my next bike ride, and it was a question that had been rattling around in my head since a ride to California the previous year. The Alaska Highway was the front runner for a time. It seemed logical to head south one year and then north the next. But another ride was calling me. I had cancer, and I was facing an operation that would remove my prostate, biopsy it, and find out conclusively if the cancer had spread beyond the margin of my prostate. If that was the case, it could be lethal. All those thoughts made my next choice fittingly obvious; I had to bike Death Valley. What can I say? I have a morbid turn of mind.

Later that year, after my Death Valley ride, came my prostate surgery. It went well. My young doctor kept his perfect record intact. In fact, he did even better by saving the nerves that are attached to

the outside of the prostate. It's an option when the cancer is caught early and remains within the margins of the prostate. Thanks to that, sex was still on the table. A friend's rude comment was: "Isn't that hard on the knees?"

And neither did I have to go shopping for Depends. The only side effect was that the sperm production factory was gone. I would never have another child, but I was 66 years old and already had four sons, so fatherhood was a ship that had sailed long ago. Sailed? Hell! That ship had sunk!

All that mattered was that I had survived my prostate cancer. My trip to Death Valley had been symbolic, but not prophetic.

The Death Valley ride was in 2012 and my prostate operation was in the fall of that same year. Since then, I've had annual Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood tests. High PSA levels are a concern but not a sure indicator of something dire. Rapidly rising PSA levels, on the other hand, get oncologists excited, and not in a good way.

In my case, PSA levels have been next to nothing for these past eleven years and counting. Much to the disgust of those writing my pension cheques, it looks like I'll be a burden to society for many years to come. Much to the delight of my wife, she still has somebody around to take a plunger to the toilet. I have other functions for her, but none as valued. •



The year after his Death Valley ride, **VICTOR NEUMAN** cycled the 6,500 km from Vancouver to Halifax.

LEARN MORE

The *Canadian Cancer Society's* website has excellent information about prostate cancer, treatments and outcomes. Visit www.cancer.ca and search for "understanding prostate cancer".

If I Were Tom: <https://ifiweretom.ca>

Prostate Cancer Foundation BC: www.prostatecancerbc.ca

AGEING: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BY BARRIE STREET

“There is a fountain of youth: it is your mind, your talents, the creativity you bring to your life and the lives of people you love. When you learn to tap this source, you will truly have defeated age.”

Attributed to Sophia Loren

My fellow teachers,

I have a question for you: Can you prevent the ageing process? My answer (from the exalted age of 87) is, “No, but you can make choices that improve your ability to maintain an active lifestyle and do the things you enjoy.”

While we may lament that we cannot perform in certain ways at the same level as we once did, we can certainly “influence” certain aspects of ageing and of our responses to it. The second half of our life can bring some of our most rewarding decades. As we grow, we can become wiser, more patient, and more confident than our younger selves. We have the opportunity to be the best versions of ourselves at any age level.

My purpose here is to mention some of the best-researched aspects of healthy ageing and to suggest approaches that could help us function more effectively and grow older with grace.

CANADIANS ARE LIVING LONGER

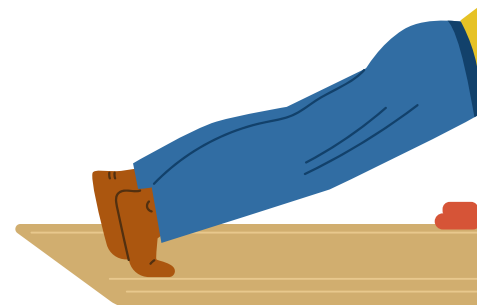
Statistics Canada reported in 2022 that there were 7.3 million Canadians 65 or over. By 2030 – less than a decade – this will soar to 9.5 million, an astonishing leap of 30%. This longevity is due to better nutrition, improved hygiene, improvements in modern medicine, and more access to health care. You may have to re-invent yourself as your lifespan continues to expand.

LIVING LONGER WITH A FULFILLING LIFESTYLE

A round-up of crucial avenues to living well while managing our longer lives.

Exercise regularly

Regular exercise can improve physical, mental, and emotional functions immensely. Walking, ordinary household tasks, and gardening, as well as more-aerobic options such as swimming and running all count. Strength, flexibility, and balance work are also valuable for seniors. Novel activities can give you a new impetus toward exercise: pickle ball, lawn bowling, dancing, water aerobics, indoor bike



spinning, Nordic walking, setting up a home gym. Consider classes at your local community centre, online videos, or classes available free via the B. C. Brain Wellness Program. Eventually, you will find an exercise routine with your name stamped on it!

Home workout exercise tips--Start Small!
(NPR)-- <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2021/10/16/1034201715/home-workout-exercise-tips>

Getting Started with Exercise (National Institute on Aging):
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/how-older-adults-can-get-started-exercise>

BC Brain Wellness Program: <https://www.bcbrianwellness.ca/>

Coach Kozak: Search on “Coach Kozak Senior Workout” to see excellent standing and chair workouts of various lengths.

Search youtube.com for the 15-minute senior workout

Search youtube.com for the 30-minute standing or seated exercise

Eat well

Our nutritional needs change as we grow older. Two well-researched diets that work well for older adults are the DASH diet and the MIND diet, providing clear improvements in not just longevity and vitality, but in cognition as well, even when begun in later life.

DASH diet: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/education/dash-eating-plan>

MIND diet: <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-weight/diet-reviews/mind-diet/>



Try new educational experiences

There is no reason ever to stop learning. Learn a musical instrument, studying a new language, gourmet cooking, joining a book club, online courses, Sudoku, crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles. Strong research supports that challenging ourselves with new learning improves our moods and sense of meaning and helps support cognitive health.

Volunteer in your neighbourhood

Not only will you be expanding your social network, but by volunteering you will be fulfilling much-needed services to others. Volunteering can help you gain new skills, make friends, and add to your wellbeing.

Volunteering and Its Surprising Benefits: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/healthy-living/volunteering-and-its-surprising-benefits.htm>

Search on www.gov.bc.ca for “healthy aging volunteering”

Strengthen your social ties, and create new ones

Many studies reveal that “social fitness” not only makes us happier, it keeps us healthier. But like physical fitness, it can require focus and commitment. The good news is that even a few short phone calls per week reduce depression and increase the sense of well-being. Try the “8-minute phone call” approach to stay in touch with family and old friends. Talking to strangers has known benefits as well and is a first step toward new friendships. Consider using one of the group opportunities above to meet new friends in a more casual environment, or find a group of like-minded folks who knit, or sing, or do an activity you already enjoy.

Social Fitness and the 8-minute phone call (MSNBC): <https://www.msnbc.com/morning-joe/watch/miss-an-old-friend-try-an-8-minute-phone-call-with-them-15926227547>

Making new friends as you age: <https://www.harrogatelifecare.org/news/how-to-build-relationships-as-you-age/>

Get a good night's sleep

Good sleep quality aligns with creativity, better decision-making, and better blood sugar levels. Poor sleep is linked to irritability, depression, and forgetfulness. People who get inadequate sleep are more prone to falls and other accidents and tend to develop dementia earlier. Insomnia is common in older adults. As a result, we can tend to think that poor sleep is a natural side effect of ageing, but in fact, there's a lot we can do toward getting good sleep. If your sleep is poor and not improving, be sure to see your doctor to discuss possible approaches.

Deep Breathing & Meditation

Research supports that deep breathing and meditation can improve cardio-vascular outcomes, reduce stress and anxiety, and help with chronic pain. Growing evidence suggests many other health benefits, including impacts on sleep, digestion, and our immune system. I have recently begun a daily deep breathing practice, with good effect.

Mayo Clinic “Mindful Breathing”—a page of different exercises, including “The 10-Breath Practice”: <https://www.mayo.edu/research/labs/mindful-breathing/videos>

Health examinations

Schedule regular checkups with your family doctor, dentist, optometrist, and hearing specialist, and be sure to raise any and all concerns you have about ageing and your health in general. If you tend to be anxious about health visits, or even about your doctor's time, consider making a list and bringing a trusted friend or loved one with you.



Building New Habits

For any new, desired behaviour, the science of habit formation says it is important to replace the “all-or-nothing” mentality with an “anything-is-better-than-nothing” one. Start with 10 deep breaths, or a ten-minute workout, or one 8-minute phone call. Focus on feeling good about any, even small, steps toward living better as we age—that sense of success in small things can build long-term commitment and success in our new habits.

Don't just live long, live well.

I would be delighted to hear any suggestions you have, and answer any of your questions at **Over50andfit.ca**

Yours in fitness,

Barrie Street

MORE RESOURCES FOR HEALTHY AGING

McMaster University Optimal Aging Portal

<https://www.mcmasteroptimalaging.org/age-well>

National Institute on Aging

What do we know about healthy aging?: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-do-we-know-about-healthy-aging>

Healthy Aging Resources (WebMD)

<https://www.webmd.com/healthy-aging/default.htm>

EXPRESS SCRIPTS

A NEW OPTION FOR FILLING PRESCRIPTIONS



BY GERRY TIEDE

When I filled a prescription at my local Safeway store 6 months ago, I wondered why my bill was so high. I've been promoting our Johnson insurance benefits to BCRTA members for years, so I know it pays 80% of both the prescription and dispensing fees. But my bill showed I was paying way more than 20% of the total. I called Johnson's, was connected to an actual person in less than a minute, and was reminded that our insurance plan, like most insurance plans available to retirees, covers a maximum \$10 dispensing fee and an 8% markup on the medication. I learned that my pharmacy was charging more than an 8% markup, so I was paying the additional amount.

VERY DIFFERENT PRICES FOR THE SAME PRESCRIPTIONS

The Pharmacy Compass website provided by Pacific Blue Cross allows you to enter the name or Drug Identification Number (DIN) of your prescription drug, then shows you what the pharmacies in your neighbourhood are charging per pill as well as the dispensing fees. I was surprised at the range of prices for my prescription here in White Rock, which ranged from 16¢ to 25¢ per pill. I have been taking this prescription for 20 years and hope to continue for at least another 20, so I don't want to overpay. Let's look at the annual costs at two extremes.

PHARMACY A	PHARMACY B
365 DAYS X 16¢/PILL = \$58.40	365 DAYS X 25¢/PILL = \$91.52
INSURANCE PAYS 80% = \$46.72	INSURANCE PAYS 80% ON JUST \$46.72
I PAY 20% = \$11.68	I PAY THE REST = \$44.53

Compared to the higher-cost pharmacy, buying from the lower-cost pharmacy saves \$44.53/year.

COMPARING DISPENSING FEES

Dispensing fees shown in the Pharmacy Compass website ranged from \$4.49 (Costco) to \$11.50 (Pharmasave) per script. Unlike some competitors who do not pay dispensing fees, our Johnson plans pay 80% for a maximum \$10.00 dispensing fee; so, they will pay a maximum of \$8.00. Using my White Rock experience, a customer's co-pay for the dispensing fee would be \$3.50 per script at Pharmasave, \$2.00 at Safeway, and \$.90 at Costco.

Canadians over 65 carry an average of three on-going 90-day prescriptions, for a total of 12 refills per year. Saving a dollar each refill would save \$12 a year and saving \$5 each refill would save \$60 a year, just in dispensing costs.

A NEW AND CONVENIENT OPTION

Convenience is important, and now that I could no longer stand the 20-minute line-up in the pharmacy department at Costco, I wanted options.

Johnson Insurance has recently helped make available to all BCRTA-Johnson Prestige EHC clients an on-line pharmacy called *Express Scripts Canada Pharmacy*. It sounded newfangled and I have to confess it was with not much confidence that I initially phoned them to confirm Express Scripts' 8% mark-up and \$8.99 dispensing fee and to be sure that the prescriptions would be delivered securely at no additional cost. I learned that Express Scripts Canada Pharmacy is a separate entity from the US company and my data never leaves Canada.

The next step was to register on-line. A couple of days later, a pharmacist phoned me to discuss

my prescriptions and we arranged for them to be transferred from my local Safeway pharmacy. A few more days and a postman knocked on my door and handed me the pills. I got the bill by mail and paid on-line using my credit card. Very convenient!

A couple of weeks ago I got a phone call from Express Scripts Canada Pharmacy reminding me to make an appointment with my doctor since the refills had run out. I had a phone appointment and gave my doctor the Express Scripts fax number. That same day, Express Scripts phoned to confirm when I wanted the prescriptions filled and to see if I had any questions. And they provided an estimated delivery day. Again, super convenient and gas-saving! I never left my house.

This service is only appropriate for maintenance medications. If you get an infection and need antibiotics, for example, you will get the prescription filled on your way home and begin the treatment immediately, rather than waiting a few days.

I now have my prescription history on my laptop and just this week downloaded the Express Scripts app. Express Scripts is quick to respond on the phone and they have a pharmacist to answer any of my questions 24/7. They'll also provide enhanced packaging if I ever get to the point of multiple prescriptions and a hard-to-manage pill schedule.

Despite my initial misgivings, I'm now a big fan of Express Scripts. It's ultra-convenient to start and refill prescriptions without leaving home. My experience with service and quality of care have improved--talking privately on the phone with a pharmacist beats shouting through a hole in the plexiglass at my noisy local pharmacy. Both I and my insurance company save a few bucks. Our group plan premiums are based on our group expenses, so keeping costs low benefits us all. •

GERRY TIEDE was President of BCRTA from 2018 to 2020. He is currently serving as the Chair of BCRTA's Health Benefits Committee.

LEARN MORE

BLUE CROSS PHARMACY COMPASS

www.pac.bluecross.ca/pharmacycompass

EXPRESS SCRIPTS CANADA PHARMACY

<https://pharmacy.express-scripts.ca>

1 855 550-MEDS (6337)

Use this QR code to download the Express Scripts app



HEALTH NEWS



The Health Equipment Loan Program (HELP) offers mobility, independence and safety to people recovering from illness or surgery or wishing to spend their final days in their own homes.

The HELP Client Services Volunteer provides administrative support like answering the phone and coordinating health equipment loans and returns. The HELP program is looking for volunteers. The hours may vary but are generally 3-4 hours per week. A minimum commitment of 6 months is required and full training is provided.

BC/Yukon locations looking for volunteers for the HELP Program:

- **Coastal Region:** Campbell River, Courtenay, Duncan, Ladysmith, Lake Cowichan, Nanaimo, Port Alberni, Port Alice, Port Hardy, Powell River, Salt Spring Island, Victoria
- **Lower Mainland:** Chilliwack, Abbotsford, Maple Ridge, Langley, Surrey, Burnaby, Port Coquitlam, Vancouver, North Vancouver, Richmond, Squamish, White Rock
- **Southern BC:** 100 Mile House, Ashcroft, Castlegar, Cawston, Clearwater, Cranbrook, Edgewood, Elkford, Creston, Enderby, Fernie, Grand Forks, Invermere, Kamloops, Kaslo, Kelowna, Lake Country, Lillooet, Merritt, Nelson, Oliver, Penticton, Princeton, Revelstoke, Salmon Arm, Trail, West Kelowna, Vernon
- **Northern BC and Yukon:** Chetwynd, Dawson Creek, Fort Nelson, Fort St. John, Kitimat, Mackenzie, Prince George, Prince Rupert, Quesnel, Smithers, Terrace, Williams Lake, White Horse (YK)

For additional program information, please follow the link:

www.redcross.ca/bchelp



The Canadian Standards Association (CSA Group) is developing a new National Standard of Canada (NSC), Mental Health and Well-Being in Long-term Care and Assisted Living Settings (CSA Z2004). Topics include guiding principles, organizational commitments, quality improvement, workforce, design, therapeutic recreational programs, relationship building, critical incident management, support for residents with mental health conditions, and considerations for younger residents. Dr. Julia Kirkham, a geriatric psychiatrist, is the Technical Subcommittee Chair and leads the standard development work for CSA Group.

Virtual consultation and public review information sessions to help inform the content of the standard and to explain the public review process are scheduled for the following dates:

Friday, September 22nd, 2023 (1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST)
Session for workers and management. Registration deadline: September 20th, 2023.

Friday, October 13th, 2023 (1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST)
Session for residents of long-term care or assisted living settings, as well as their families and care partners. Registration deadline: October 11th, 2023.

Friday, October 20th, 2023 (1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST)
Session for members of Indigenous Communities Registration deadline: October 18th, 2023.

Friday, October 27th, 2023 (1:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST)
Session for residents aged 18-64 who live in a long-term care, as well as their families and care partners. Registration deadline: October 25th, 2023.

To register, please visit
<https://promo.csagroup.org/l/463802/2023-08-16/j3r42>

For more info contact annemarie.martel@csagroup.org.

books OF NOTE

A BC ISLAND ANIMAL DREAM by Elizabeth Eakin

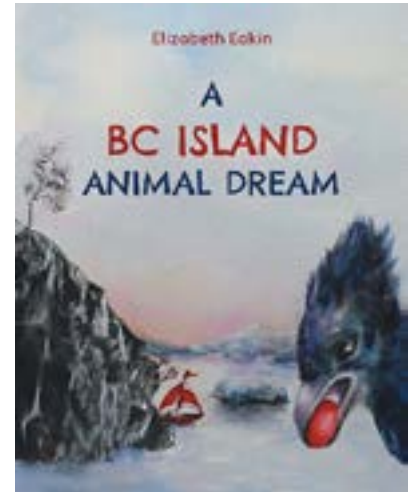
A dreaming child sails into a magical realm where capricious animals are munching on crunchy snacks and tasty treats. This charming alphabet book uses haiku to paint funny, quirky and beautiful pictures of what each letter of the alphabet is up to on its corresponding BC island.

Other than the obvious letter-sound correlation, the book can be a springboard for older children to falling down delightful rabbit holes of research using the internet:

- Relating foods to their natural climate zones: pineapples growing on Pender would be wonderful, but...
- Learning some of the obscure facts of BC Island history: one of the islands was a leper colony for afflicted Chinese Immigrants; what was their story?
- Using Google Earth to find and fly over the BC islands, and “Hey! Isn’t that one a lake?”
- Writing haiku poetry: seventeen syllables in three lines, no exceptions!
- Discerning reality from imagination: do dragons really eat dates?

Written with visions of snuggling together while perusing the images, debating facts, and searching the BC map, each letter story balances on the fantasy/reality divide, leaving questions and answers to the readers to discuss and resolve.

Available from Friesen Press and all major booksellers.



Books of Note features publications by BCRTA members.
To have your book included, send the details to postscript@bcrt.ca

An Author Reconnects

“Did you teach in Winnipeg in the early 1970’s?” asked Diana Brodowski, a mid-60’ish lady who was waiting for her newly-purchased books to be signed. “You were my favourite teacher at Gordon Bell High School.” She produced a 50-year-old photo of a 15-year-old girl standing next to an early-career teacher. “You were cool.”

Thus began a string of unanticipated (but very-much-welcomed) reconnections with people I had known over the years.

By the 90’s, my wife and I had lived in Whitehorse for close to twenty years, and it was time for someplace different; I started teaching at a high school in Chilliwack in the fall of 1992. I wrote a Christmas story for my children that year, and reading it with my family, now including grandchildren, has been a Christmas Eve tradition ever since.

My kids had been encouraging me to have it published, and so finally, thirty years after its initial appearance, and fifteen years after I had retired as a teacher, I located a publisher, set things up with an illustrator, and bingo! In 2022, *The Grod Family’s Christmas Lights* joined the august body of Canadian children’s literature.



Diana Brodowski with author Gord Yakimow at December Chilliwack book-signing. Inset: Diana with her teacher in 1973.

The editor of the Chilliwack Progress was kind enough to run a feature article when the book came out, and the manager of the Indigo bookstore in the Cottonwood Mall set me up for a “Meet-the-Author” book-signing session.

“You taught both me and my sister in Whitehorse in the 1980’s,” explained Kathy Vanderbyl, several signed copies of my book now tucked into her shopping bag. “I saw the Progress article on Facebook, and I just had to drive out from Vancouver and buy your book and re-connect.” In Whitehorse with a book tour two weeks earlier, I had also re-connected with old friends, colleagues, and former students, two of whom who had been baby-sitters for my children, so Kathy and I fitted in a fair bit of reminiscing.

“In Grade 9, I was one of the student delegates at the Chilliwack Young Authors’ Conference which you organized every year,” recalled Tara Cummings. “I was in a group with WP Kinsella. Two years later I was in your Creative Writing class at Chilliwack Senior, and once again was selected as a delegate.”



Left: Tara Cummings as a student delegate at the "Chilliwack Young Authors' Conference" 1995.

Right: Tara and her daughters Angelina and Teja visit Gord.



"My son Brendon was in the Kinsella group," added former Chilliwack Senior Secondary colleague Aiden McAleer when he called to re-connect. "The two seemed to make a special bond. Brendon now makes his living as a writer, penning articles about automobiles for both newspapers and magazines. He still remembers the inspirational boost he got from the Young Authors' Conference."

A few weeks later an autobiography arrived by mail. In the 1960's, Rosemary Jenson of Victoria (back then an adventurous, newly-graduated, auburn-

haired nurse whom I immediately christened "Red") and I had linked up through Spain and France and Italy for a couple of months, before going our separate ways. In her book she devoted a few paragraphs to our time together. Now living in Castlegar, Rosemary had seen an article about my book and decided it was time to get in touch... after 55 years!

Connecting with all those folks from the past was wonderful. Even a couple of guys that I had played old-timers hockey also stopped by.

The sales were good, too (as have been the reviews). The Coles/Indigo manager told me that they sold more books in the two-hour signing-session than they had sold with any previous author. Special!

GORD YAKIMOW has previously written articles for PostScript and other publications. He has been involved with the annual BC Ukrainian Cultural Festival since its inception 26 years ago.



Yakimow with celebrated Canadian author WP Kinsella, guest author at the "Chilliwack Young Authors' Conference" in 1994.

CLASSIFIEDS

TRAVEL

CUBA1TOURS of Courtenay BC continues to offer the best small group tours to Cuba. All tours are safe and worry-free with Cuban guides and transportation in a comfortable, air conditioned bus.

Tours offered are cycle tours, culture/history/discovery tours, garden tours and birdwatching tours.

All tour details for 2023-2024 can be found at

www.cuba1tours.com

ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

BIG ISLAND HAWAII

Kona Coast Resort. Phase II, Kona, Hawaii. 1 bedroom, fully equipped and furnished villa. 7 nights - \$2500.00

Paniolo Greens Resort, Waikoloa, Hawaii. 2 bedroom fully equipped & furnished condo. 7 nights - \$2250.00

Contact sbava@shaw.ca for availability & resort details.

Lovely bedroom with double bed, private bath, own sundeck, morning breakfast, in condo by the Fraser River. A guest may stay for up to one week. Reasonable costs. Lovely quayside walk along river. 778 792 9427

BAJA CASITA RENTAL reasonable for 2024 April-November. Fully equipped with air conditioner, internet, salt water pool. Canadian caretaker on Site. Hike beaches, mountain bike, shop, volunteer, Music Central. No vehicle needed. Email micallef197@yahoo.ca

Enjoy VICTORIA this winter in our 1600 sq ft rancher. 1 bedroom, 2 baths, modern kitchen, family room with sofa bed, LR, DR. 3 sun decks under the Garry Oaks. Near transportation and trails. November-March. 4500 per month. Contact Shirley at rfay@shaw.ca

ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

Fall get-away. Waterfront cottage at Deep Bay, Vancouver Island, overlooking Denman and Hornby Islands. 2 BR. Internet; cable TV. Available October, \$875/week. Photos and more information available. Call 604-939-0121 or joyce.buckham@shaw.ca

POINT GREY HS '73 REUNION

Point Grey High School 1973 Graduation Class 50th year reunion is September 16, 2023 at Seymour Golf and Country Club, North Vancouver. We invite teachers who taught at PG between 1968 to 1973 interested in attending to contact Alison (Meeres) Richardson at alisonhrichardson@gmail.com or 604 763-2792.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



Canadian Blood Services needs volunteers!

Volunteers are vital to supporting Canada's Lifeline and building connections between donors and recipients. What you do makes all the difference.

Visit blood.ca/volunteering to learn more.

Or contact: volunteer.bc@blood.ca

(include BCRTA in the subject line)

CLASSIFIEDS

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



Open a world of reading to a child and become a volunteer tutor! ONE TO ONE Literacy is looking for enthusiastic, compassionate, and open-minded individuals to share the joy of reading by becoming a volunteer tutor. Vancouver and Lower Mainland locations.

Please visit one-to-one.ca

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY



The Literacy Circle is seeking certified teachers to teach English and computer literacy skills to Indigenous adults at various school levels. We also seek a Learners' Advocate, please see our website.

Classes in Nanaimo, soon Victoria and Penticton!

For more information and to apply, visit us at

www.theliteracycircle.ca

NOTICE OF 2023 AGM

78th BCRTA Annual General Meeting (9:30 AM)
called for Saturday, September 30, 2023

BCRTA Positions for Election

President - 1 year term

1st VP - 1 year term

2nd VP - 1 year term

ACER-CART Representative - 2 year term

2 Directors (2 yrs) and 1 Director (1 yr) from outside the Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley

2 Directors (2 yrs) from inside the Lower Mainland & Fraser Valley

21st Annual General Meeting of the RR Smith Memorial Fund Foundation
(9:00 AM) called for Saturday, September 30, 2023

RR Smith Positions for Election

8 Directors - 1 year terms

This meeting will be held online.

Delegates will receive instructions on how to log in via Zoom.

NOMINATION FORM FOR 2023-2024 BCRTA DIRECTOR POSITIONS (SEPTEMBER 30, 2023 AGM ELECTIONS)

Note that the President and the two Vice-President positions have one-year terms. All other directors have two-year terms.

Information about directors' nomination and election procedures is summarized below, along with a guide to related information contained in the BCRTA Handbook (www.bcrta.ca) - look under the "About Us" heading.

Nominators: (Two required. Must be Active or Life BCRTA members in good standing. Signatures on the same form are not necessary - it is acceptable for nominators to endorse the nomination of a candidate by email to kristi@bcrta.ca)

Name: _____ Sign: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Sign: _____ Phone: _____

We nominate (please print clearly): _____

(Nominee must be an Active or Life BCRTA member in good standing)
for the position of (circle):

President 1st Vice-President 2nd Vice-President

Director (Lower Mainland) Director (outside Lower Mainland) ACER-CART Representative

By signing here I affirm that I accept this nomination: _____

Nominee, please fill in the blanks below and **attach item #4** to this form.

1. Address: _____

2. Phone: _____ Email: _____
3. Branch membership (if applicable): _____
4. A curriculum vitae, preferably in item form - not to exceed 200 words - for publication in the Summary of Reports booklet (**publication submission deadline July 15th**).
Summarize educator positions held, experience on executive and other committees, and why you would like to serve on the BCRTA Board of Directors.

Please note: Candidates do not have their expenses paid to attend the AGM unless they are elected by their branches as delegates. There are not usually any candidates' speeches at the AGM.

Acknowledgment of receipt of your nomination will be forwarded to you as soon as possible.

Return this form by July 15th to:

Grace Wilson, Nominations Chair,
c/o BCRTA, 100-550 W. 6th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 4P2,
or fax to (604) 871-2265, or email a scanned attachment to [<kristi@bcrta.ca>](mailto:kristi@bcrta.ca)

NOMINATION AND ELECTION RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR BCRTA DIRECTOR POSITIONS

There are usually five 3-day (Mon.-Wed.) meetings of the Board of Directors each year. Most directors are asked to chair a BCRTA committee, and there is usually homework. Travel, accommodation and meal expenses are reimbursed by the BCRTA.

In summary, you may be nominated:

- a. by completing the nomination form and your c.v., and submitting them to the office by July 15th. Your c.v. will be published in the Summary of Reports booklet; **OR**
- b. by completing the nomination form and your c.v., and submitting them to BCRTA staff after July 15th but before the day of the AGM. Your c.v. will then be distributed to the AGM delegates; **OR**
- c. by being nominated from the floor of the AGM -- whereupon you and all the other candidates for that particular position will be given two minutes to introduce yourselves.

The following refer to sections in the BCRTA Handbook, located on the BCRTA website at www.bcrta.ca

Handbook Section B. Bylaws:

- | | |
|------|--|
| 2.16 | Member not in good standing |
| 2.7 | Rights of Active and Life Members |
| 6.1 | Number of directors |
| 6.2 | Eligibility to become a director |
| 6.3 | Election of directors |
| 6.9 | Limits on directors' terms in office |
| 6.10 | Board of Directors Meetings |
| 6.11 | Powers and Responsibilities of Directors |

Handbook Section C. Procedures:

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 4.6.2 | Pre-AGM nomination procedures for Director positions |
| 5. | Duties of Directors |

Handbook Section E. Rules of Order:

- | | |
|-------|----------------------------|
| 8.4 | Nominations from the floor |
| 8.5.3 | Voting in elections |
| 8.5.4 | Order of the elections |
| 8.5.5 | Balloting rules |

BCRTA DELEGATES TO THE 2024 BCTF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOMINATION FORM

The BC Teachers' Federation holds its AGM each year during the March spring break. A block of time during the AGM is normally set aside for debating recommendations and resolutions relating to pensions. The BCRTA sends a number of delegates to participate and vote in the "in-committee" consideration of those motions. Our delegation consists of BCRTA directors and BCRTA members elected at the BCRTA Annual General Meeting—to be held online on September 30, 2023.

To be elected as a BCRTA delegate to the BCTF AGM, you must be an **active or life member of the BCRTA, and a member or honorary associate member of the BCTF**. If you were a BCTF member when you retired, you are almost certainly an honorary associate BCTF member now. If you are unsure, you should contact the BCTF to check. (Google "BCTF" to get phone nos. etc.)

A background of past membership on a BCTF or local association Pensions Committee is a requirement, and experience on BCRTA or Branch executive or other committees would also be helpful. If elected you may be asked to attend a pre-AGM session to become familiar with the issues. You should be prepared to go to a microphone at the BCTF AGM to speak for or against a motion if the opportunity presents itself and to stay until the end of the Pensions section of the BCTF AGM agenda.

Filling in and submitting this form will result in your name being added to the list of candidates on the **BCRTA Delegates to the BCTF AGM ballot** used in the elections at our BCRTA AGM, scheduled for September 30, 2023. Nominees do not have their expenses paid to attend our BCRTA AGM unless they are delegates. You will be notified after our AGM if you are elected. If elected, your expenses will be paid to attend the **BCTF AGM**.



BCRTA DELEGATES TO THE MARCH 2024 BCTF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NOMINATION FORM

Must be in the hands of BCRTA staff by 5 p.m. on September 29, 2023.

Name (please print clearly): _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____ Email: _____

Branch (if any): _____

Signed: _____

Nominated by 2 BCRTA members (email notice of your nomination from nominator to kristi@bcrt.ca is also acceptable):

Nominator (please print): _____ Signed: _____

Nominator (please print): _____ Signed: _____

If you are applying see note above and outline your pensions experience through positions you have held and/or work you have done in the BCTF and/or BCRTA:

Mail this form to: BCRTA, 100 – 550 W 6th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V5Z 4P2, or email scanned copy to kristi@bcrt.ca

2023-2024 BCRTA COMMITTEES - APPLICATION FORM

DEADLINE for receipt of applications: September 30, 2023

BCRTA committees meet 5 times a year during a 2-day period prior to each Board of Directors meeting. Some meetings are held electronically and in-person meetings are held in Vancouver. Appointments are made at a post-AGM Board of Directors meeting, and terms are two years. Members may serve on any one committee for up to a maximum of 4 consecutive years (i.e., two 2-year terms). Travel, accommodation and meal expenses are reimbursed.

To learn more, see a description of BCRTA Committee activities and responsibilities www.bcrta.ca/committee-profiles

Members are expected to sit on one or two committees, as selected by the committee chairs. For further information see the **Handbook** on our website (www.bcrta.ca), and look in "Section C-Procedures", parts 7 and 8.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Postal Code: _____ Email: _____

Branch, if any: _____ Signed: _____

Nominated by two BCRTA members in good standing: (email notice from nominator to kristi@bcrta.ca is acceptable)

Nominator (please print): _____ Signed: _____

Nominator (please print): _____ Signed: _____

The BCRTA Committees are:

COMMUNICATIONS EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC EDUCATION HERITAGE MEMBERSHIP

PENSIONS & BENEFITS (A pensions background, e.g., in the BCTF or a local, is **required**.)

WELL-BEING [The FINANCE, ADVOCACY and PERSONNEL Committees are Directors only]

Please list in order of preference:

Committee Applying for: #1 _____

Why would you be a good choice for this committee? _____

Committee Applying for: #2 _____

Why would you be a good choice for this committee? _____

Committee Applying for: #3 _____

Why would you be a good choice for this committee? _____

Outline positions held and/or the work you have done in your branch: _____

Note: All applicants will be informed of the Directors' decisions concerning appointments.

Mail to BCRTA, 100 – 550 W 6th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V5Z 4P2, or email to kristi@bcrta.ca

crossword

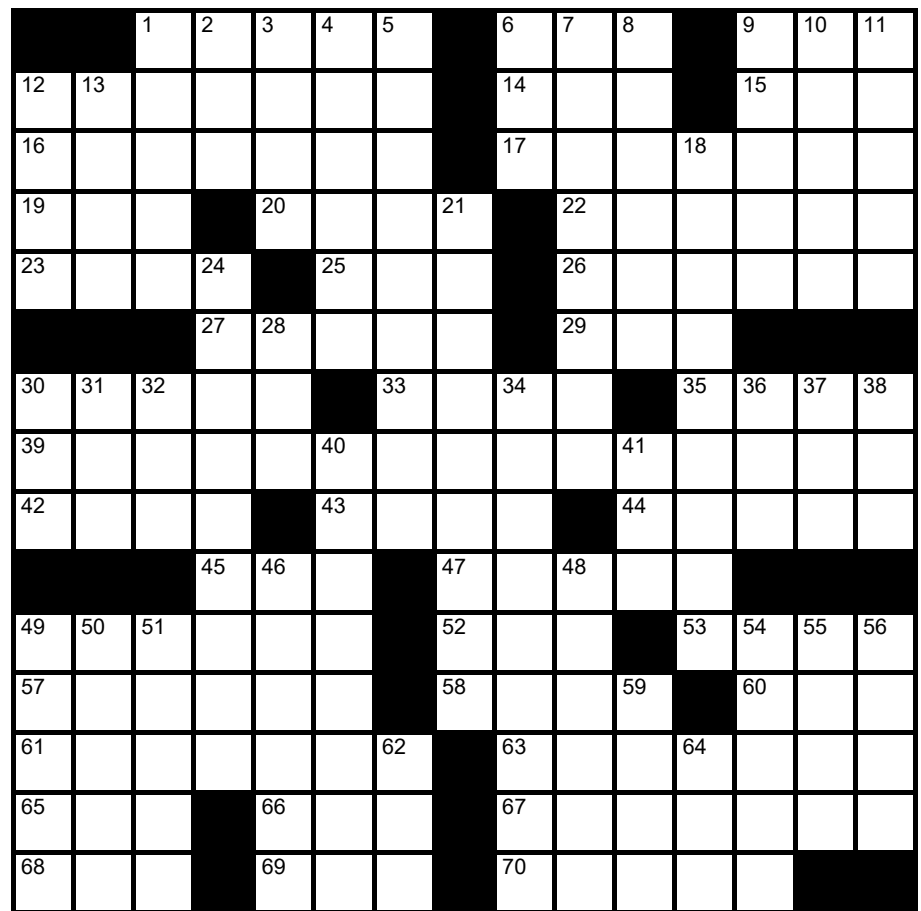
Novel Ideas

By Lynn Hembree

Email: crossword@bcrt.ca

ACROSS

1. Bait
6. ___ out (chill)
9. First of five W's
12. Tutankhamen was Egypt's youngest
14. Type of beer
15. ___ party (in Britain)
16. Flowery cake decoration
17. They may tear or rupture
19. Sight palindrome
20. Boor's lack
22. Brosnan, the 5th Bond
23. Even golf scores?
25. "Be quiet!"
26. Shakespeare's ghostly tragedy
27. Small salmon (var.)
29. He suffered a big loss to Frazier
30. Coach
33. Medical imaging
35. 50 grams in China (anagram of late)
39. Hemingway's 1929 wartime story (4wds)
42. Brood
43. Cuckoos
44. Pretentious type
45. Ripoff
47. "E's" on compasses and maps
49. On the train
52. Ultimate degree
53. Austen's 1815 Rom/Com
57. King's 1974 horror story set in Maine
58. City in central Israel
60. Propeller, in a way
61. Dealers
63. Hailey's 1968 snowstorm drama
65. Ash holder
66. It comes before -lithic and -natal
67. Adversaries
68. Margaret, for short
69. "Don't give up!"
70. Alternative to Zoom



DOWN

1. It projects farther than a stun gun
2. "We'll teach you to drink deep ___ you depart"
3. Damon of "Good Will Hunting"
4. Fertilizer ingredient
5. Chaim Potok's 1967 book (2 wds)
6. Big wine container
7. It never packs its trunk?
8. Agreeable
9. Circle in a fingerprint
10. Beginning of a conclusion
11. Attack
12. Get ready, for short
13. Shade-loving tropical plant
18. Espresso cup
21. Grisham's 1993 legal thriller (2 wds)
24. It keeps track of 18 holes
28. Bauxite, e.g.
30. Highlander hat
31. Unbelievable sight, maybe (acronym)
32. Bug
34. German Shepherds
36. "___ we having fun yet?"
37. Flightless Australian bird
38. "Acid" (acronym)
40. Odysseus was one
41. Decide to leave, with "out"
46. Christie's 1948 mystery, "Murder on the ___ Express"
48. Haunting noise
49. Carry on
50. Type of ballet workout
51. Borneo ape, briefly
54. Numeroff's 1991 book, "If You Give a ___ a Muffin"
55. Filly's mother
56. Song and dance, e.g.
59. With navy, an iconic 1919 Vancouver store
62. ___ sauce
64. Vigor

See the crossword solution at bcrt.ca/crossword AFTER October 15

Sudoku

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

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

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 6th Avenue,
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2

FOR MORE ONLINE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

www.websudoku.com/

DEADLINE FOR SUDOKU AND CROSSWORD SUBMISSION IS:

OCT 31, 2023

Congratulations to last issue's puzzle winners. Your cheques are in the mail!

Crossword:

Paula Fralick, Hagensborg
Irene Furey, Castlegar
Carol Kennedy, White Rock

Sudoku:

Laurel A Johnson, Delta
Beverly Ready, Campbell River
Richard Springer, Thornhill

SUMMER 2023 CROSSWORD SOLUTION

S	C	A	M		M	O	L	E		S	C	R	A	P
T	O	L	E		A	R	I	D		P	R	I	C	E
I	B	I	S		R	I	N	G		L	I	A	N	A
F	R	E	S	H	V	E	G	E	T	A	B	L	E	S
F	A	N		E	E	L			A	S				
			E	S	L		L	A	S	H		M	A	W
E	D	O	C	S		F	A	C	T		S	U	C	H
E	A	T	H	E	A	R	T	H	E	A	L	T	H	Y
K	L	I	O		M	A	T	E		D	I	E	T	S
S	I	S		B	I	T	E		O	D	D			
			B	A	S			U	L	T		U	F	O
F	R	U	I	T	S	T	A	N	D	O	R	D	E	R
E	A	R	T	H		A	R	A	B		I	D	E	A
S	T	A	T	E		N	E	R	O		P	E	L	T
S	E	L	E	S		G	A	M	Y		E	R	S	E

Like and share BCRTA
News and links relevant to you.



facebook.com/BCRTA



twitter.com/bcrtat1

Obituaries

Location listed is the area given as "last taught"



Abrahamson, Meriel	Delta	Daniels, Evelyn	Richmond
Andrews, Connie	Vernon	Davis, Ann E.	Nechako Lakes
Ashworth, Karen	Lower Van. Island	Davis, Georgia	Surrey
Atkinson, Betty-Dawn	Cowichan	Dyck, Clarence	Vernon
Axelson, Judy	North Coast	Fabri, Ray M. Central	Okanagan
Bando, Mas	Cariboo-Chilcotin	Fiddes, Kenneth James	Coquitlam
Barber, Chris	Surrey	Fisher, David	Cowichan
Bareham, Peggy	Vancouver	Gates, Blanche K.	Nanaimo
Blasner, Ronald	Lower Van. Island	Giesbrecht, Elma	Shuswap
Bourne, Karen Lynn	Vancouver	Green, Mariam	Vancouver
Bruhn, Frederick	Mission	Greenhough, Beth	Summerland
Bugara, Henryk A.	Prince George	Greenwell, Jack	Lower Van. Island
Bunn, David A.	Vernon	Gregory, Eleanor E. A.	Coquitlam
Burden, B. Marley	Surrey	Grimston, Evelyn	Burnaby
Burman, B. Eveline	Surrey	Hansen, Janice	S. Peace River
Carter-Boppart, Elisabeth	North Vancouver	Holoiday, Michael	Shuswap
Chapman, Donald J.	Quesnel	Hughes, Ray	SE Kootenay
Churchill, Margaret May	South Cariboo	Hurley, Joseph W.	Vancouver
Clark, Arlene	Burnaby	Jensen, Rita	Cariboo-Chilcotin
Copson, Valerie	Vancouver	Jordan, Harold	Sooke
Craig, Andrew	Central Okanagan	Keddie, Marlo L.	Vancouver
Currie, Donald W.	Coquitlam	Kemp, Agatha	Surrey

Kennedy, Colleen S.	Langley	Roberts, Malcolm	Vernon
Kowalenko, Conrad D.	Prince George	Rounsville, Catherine	Cranbrook
Kynaston, Dennis	Richmond	Sasges, Marise Renee	Vancouver
Ling, Roberta	Courtenay	Shand, Linda Evelyn	Boundary
Lukey, Iris	Delta	Shelley, Susan	North Van. Island
MacDonald, Maureen L.	Vancouver	Shirley, Elaine R.	Lower Van. Island
Martens, Janet	Langley	Siemens, Kathy	Vancouver
McIlvenna, M. Ruth	Trail and District	Skailes, Eleanor	SE Kootenay
Monsen, Robert	Vancouver	Smith, Gary W.	Peace River North
Morrow, Betsy	Richmond	Stark, Helen	Nanaimo-Ladysmith
Murphy, Elaine A.	Nanaimo-Ladysmith	Taylor, William H.	Cowichan
Murray, Hugh	North Vancouver	Thuncher, Elaine E.	Cariboo-Chilcotin
Murray, Lilly	Prince George	Toth, Christine E. M.	Langley
Newell, Keith	Lower Van. Island	Turner, Lynn	Coast Mountains
Nicoll, James R.	Lower Van. Island	Upton, Katherine Yoshika	Vernon
O'Connor, John R.	Vancouver	Vowles, D.M. Jean	Chilliwack
Parke, Albert A.L.	Burnaby	Webster, Jacqueline	Vernon
Petoussis, Evangelia	Vancouver	Wilkinson, Fredrick	Richmond
Pohn, Manfred H.	Surrey	Yawney, Edward E.	Quesnel
Raham, Austin M.	Central Okanagan		
Rexin, Ann	Boundary		
Ritchie, Don J.	Central Okanagan		

NOTICE TO GREEN SHIELD USERS

FROM BC PENSION CORPORATION

Complete a survey to help shape the future of the Teachers' Pension Plan retirement health coverage

The Teachers' Pension Board of Trustees is currently reviewing the plan's retirement health coverage (Green Shield). Your voice is important to the board as it completes this review.

All retired plan members are invited to participate in an online survey to share feedback on the plan's retirement health coverage program. The survey will open on September 18, 2023, and will close October 10, 2023. Visit tpp.pensionsbc.ca for more information.

Watch a webinar to learn more about current health coverage with Green Shield

Are you confused about co-insurance? In the dark about deductibles? Visit tpp.pensionsbc.ca to sign up to attend a live webinar with a benefits expert and learn more about the current Green Shield health coverage available through your pension plan.

If you can't attend the webinar live, you can watch a recording of it, which will be available on the plan website. We encourage all members to watch the webinar before completing the survey.

Modernizing retirement health coverage

Retirement group health benefits are optional and funded by members. The board reviews the plan's retirement health coverage periodically to ensure the benefits and premiums provide the best value for members.

The costs of providing the current program are increasing, particularly for prescription drugs. Members are taking more medications, and most new drugs coming to market are more costly than current drugs that treat the same condition.

The board's focus in 2023 is to gather feedback on options for potential changes to the retirement health coverage program. The board will consider member feedback as well as other factors in its decision making.

The board will keep you informed throughout the process. If the board decides to move ahead with changes to retirement health coverage, it will announce that by fall 2024. The board expects any changes would be effective January 1, 2025, at the earliest.

Learn more

For more information, including links to register for the webinar or take the online survey, visit

tpp.pensionsbc.ca/modernizing-retirement-health-coverage

or follow the plan on Twitter @BCTeachersPlan.

DISCLAIMER: The Green Shield EHC Plan (GSC) is sponsored by the Teachers' Pension Plan and BC Pension Corporation. BCRTA is providing this information free of charge as a courtesy to Green Shield users and is not responsible for the design or administration of the GSC plan. BC Retired Teachers' Association provides an alternative EHC and Travel plan with Johnson Insurance. To learn about the differences between the plans visit www.bcrt.ca



President's Letter 2023

The Board concludes another wonderful year. We appreciate the diligent contributions of time and energy of the Board members. We acknowledge with sincere gratitude the contribution of Board member Lynne Farquharson, who passed away recently and will be deeply missed.

The Board members met in person to discuss the issues for our charitable registered program, providing urgently needed funds in many developing countries and in BC. We ensure that all donations and the yearly contribution from members is spent wisely, ensuring transparency in the granting of funds, although we had many more requests for funds than we were able to support.

Careful management of the donations are held through the Vancity Community/R.R. Smith fund with their office sending receipts promptly if donated on-line, and at year-end if donated by cheque. This year grants totaled over \$40,000 which enable the continuation of programs helping registered charitable groups operating in BC and in developing countries with their diverse programs. The list of recipients was published in an earlier PostScript.



We discussed our need to use our funds using the updated criteria and application forms on the website www.rrsmith.ca. Thanks especially to our treasurer Dave Carter for keeping our charitable status up to date with the government.

We continue to receive letters of appreciation from fund recipients from university students who benefit from the R. R. Smith bursaries administered through six universities, including UBC, SFU, UNBC, University of Victoria, Vancouver Island University and Thompson Rivers University. The Board discussed making contributions to the six universities R. R. Smith bursaries, but decided to instead focus on our charitable work under our criteria/application model as the bursaries were set up through a different source of funding after a strike action. Students apply directly to the universities, and through careful management the funds continue to grow.

The Board consults with our lawyer Anders Ourom about legal issues which could affect our charitable status, ensuring we follow the guidelines as a Canadian charitable entity. He consults with us as a pro bono initiative which is greatly appreciated. His mother was a teacher librarian in the Vancouver school district.

Thanks to each of the members of our Board for sharing their skills: Dave Carter, Gail Chaddock-Costello, Karen Kilbride, Sarah Joyce, Steve Bailey, and our BCRTA representatives Caroline Malm and Linda Watson. We appreciate Tim Anderson's skill with the website. Special thanks to Kristi and Laurie at the BCRTA office.

Barb Mikulec
President

Learn more at www.rrsmith.ca



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for group
members.**



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BCRTA
BC Retired Teachers' Association

JOHNSON 

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