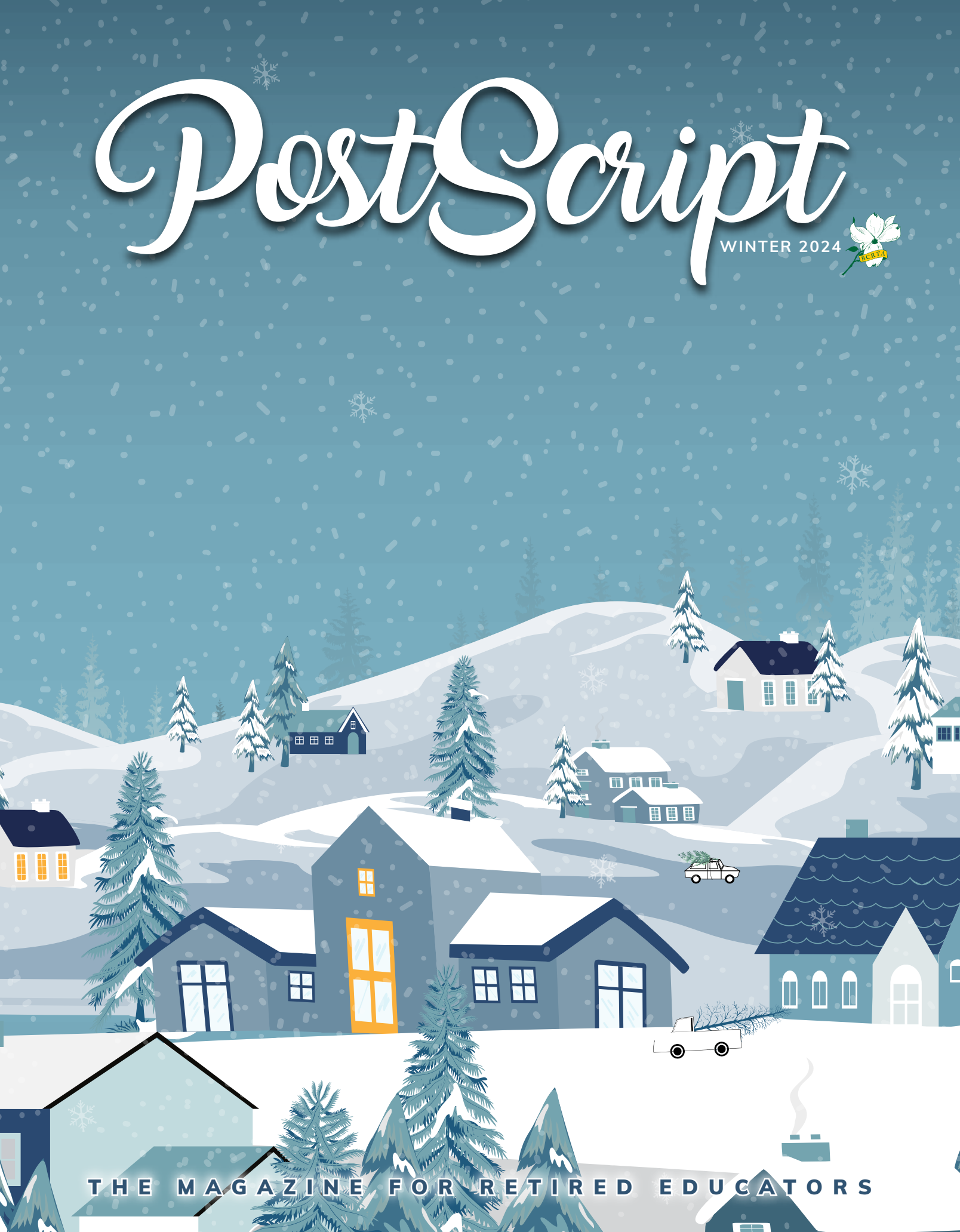


PostScript

WINTER 2024



THE MAGAZINE FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS



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PostScript

WINTER 2024



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BCRTA – HEAD OFFICE

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

EDITORIAL TEAM

Tim Anderson, Editor
K.G.P. Cooper, Assistant Editor
Arnie Lambert, Communications Chair
Kristi Josephson, Administration



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Learned helplessness is the phenomenon of absorbing so much bad news that we give up trying to respond. Thank goodness that there are those who refuse to succumb to those feelings, and instead choose to act. Sometimes those actions look rather small, but the effect, especially working together, can be immense. We are celebrating one of those good news stories at BCRTA through our support of **Classrooms Without Walls**, which was featured in an article in the Fall issue. At the recent **BCRTA 2024 Conference** we heard from retired BC teacher **David Falconer**, the Founder of CWW, and from three students from conflict zones around the world. Now you can see and hear how retired teachers are taking a few hours a month to transform the lives of kids who have often been driven from their homes and denied access to education. Visit bcrta.ca/classrooms-without-walls.

We are also uniting with our sister organizations in other provinces to defend our organizations against corporate interests, preserving our voices and role as advocates for BC retirees. BCRTA President **Caroline Malm** highlights this issue and how the strengths of BCRTA ensure that our legacy of defending and championing your best interest continues unabated.

Thank goodness, too, for **Doug MacLeod**, who, fresh off his win of a PostScript Excellence Award, offers a thoughtful and informative exploration of what it takes to adapt to hearing loss, a common challenge for retirees. And check out his award video - it's good.

Our letters section is particularly lively this issue, with updates on previous articles, connections between retired teachers who were students of retired teachers, and evidence that BCRTA publications are read and valued by our colleagues across Canada.

For some reason a crop of great travel-themed articles crossed our transom recently. A few of them appear here. Want to get on the water in the most calm way possible? Float down Canada's most famous canal with **Arlene Blundell** and her BFF. Of course some might like to turn it up a notch, or two, or a thousand, and for those hardy souls **Doreen and John Berg** tackle the mountains of Kyrgystan. In their eighties!

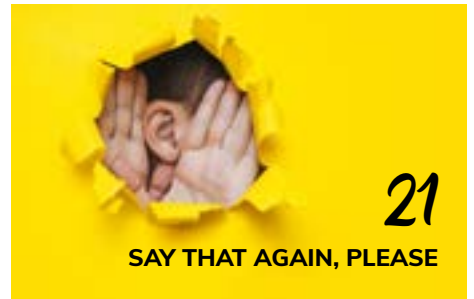
We turn on bright lights for the season, thanks to the words and giant electricity bill of **Ken Berry** in Kelowna. PostScript Excellence winner **Lynda Grace Phillipsen** has a shining account of a Christmas overseas, too.

Learned helplessness? Heck, no! What we do here at BCRTA is actively learn how to help! We will never retreat but instead will celebrate one another as we make a difference here and around the world. Cheers!

The Editor
postscript@bcrta.ca

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Notes

FROM PRESIDENT
CAROLINE MALM

THREE PESKY QUESTIONS, ONE WONDERFUL ANSWER

Aren't you supposed to be retired? Why do you want to go to all those meetings? What does a retired teachers' organization do, anyway?

I have been asked these three questions many times since I retired in 2012 and joined BCRTA and my local Branch. There are lots of reasons why I choose to be involved with BCRTA but the plum in the pudding is the people. In our Branches, at the provincial table and as affiliates of other like-minded organizations, we engage with others to advocate for ourselves and other seniors on important issues such as Pharmacare, pension security and ageing in the right place provisions. We also gather to socialize, to learn and to travel – that rocking chair on the front porch will have to wait a bit longer for me!

It's encouraging to witness the strength of connection and collaboration that brings us all together. It was great to see delegates from BCRTA Branches at our recent AGM, representing Members from every corner of our province—from Dawson Creek, Prince George and Terrace to Nelson, Kamloops and Kelowna to Langley, Coquitlam and North Vancouver to Cowichan, Nanaimo and Parksville, and many places in between.

This sense of togetherness is what makes our BCRTA community so special, and it is the foundation upon which we continue to build.

Whether you're a long-standing member or a new voice, each contribution is important and every idea is valued. We hear voices from across the province collaborating for the common good. It's an impressive thing to view all that BCRTA is doing.

The BCRTA Board comes together to work on behalf of all BCRTA Members and to demonstrate the power of collaboration, respect, and shared purpose. Our focus is on improving the lives of our Members through our programs, advocacy and information. BCRTA was instrumental in founding our national affiliate ACER-CART (Canadian Association of Retired Teachers), and we collaborate closely with our sister provincial associations of retired teachers. These connections have been very important recently as your Board is taking action, alongside ACER-CART and the retiree associations across Canada, to ensure that our Members' best interests are protected from ongoing predatory actions of the corporation formerly known as the Retired Teachers of Ontario. See the news item in this issue of PostScript. (To be clear the threat to provincial associations is not the fault of the individual retirees from Ontario, who are generally unaware of the effects of that corporation's push for financial gain.)

Teachers in BC are fortunate to hold a unique and important position as the only province in Canada with a joint trusteeship of our pension plan. Through plan partner BCTF, BCRTA is granted the right to nominate one of the trustees, placing a retiree voice on the Teachers' Pension Plan board. This is a responsibility we take seriously, and retiree representation has helped to ensure that our Members belong to the best-managed pension plan in Canada. We are proud of this record and will continue to work diligently to safeguard the interests of our Members.

In addition to our pension plan, we sponsor a variety of benefits programs designed specifically for BCRTA Members, including Extended Health Care (EHC), travel, and home insurance plans. These programs were created for Members, by Members, ensuring that they meet the needs of those who matter most to us. We monitor user experience very closely. This year, our Membership Committee will also be reviewing our Advantage

*One of the greatest gifts
we can give each other is
the time and attention to
truly listen...*

Partner relationships, using a “what works best for members” approach to ensure we’re sponsoring offers with the best possible value and service.

Our Excellence in Public Education Committee continues its important work that includes promoting and recognizing outstanding ‘Golden Star’ programs that encourage collaboration between students and seniors. These public school programs provide opportunities for both generations to learn and grow together—an experience that enriches everyone involved.

The Heritage Committee remains dedicated to preserving the educational history of our province, providing funding for projects that highlight the places and events that shaped our shared past. This is important work that ensures the stories of those who came before us continue to inspire future generations.

Our Communications Committee works to ensure that Members receive timely, accurate and high-quality information, whether through print or electronic means.

The Well-Being Committee plays a crucial role in supporting the wellness of our Members. From up-to-date health tips to wellness resources, this committee ensures that we have the tools we need to live healthy and fulfilling lives.

The Pensions Committee provides excellent oversight of our pension plan, also offering workshops and guidance to those preparing for retirement. This proactive approach provides Members with the knowledge they need to navigate this important stage of life.

Our Health Benefits Committee continues to oversee the insurance plans available to Members and is exploring the exciting possibility of BCRTA-owned insurance products that could further enhance the benefits we offer.

The Finance Committee works behind the scenes to ensure that the funds entrusted to us by Members are managed with care, responsibility, and foresight. Their efforts ensure that BCRTA will remain strong and sustainable for years to come.

Our staff, now five strong, provide the best possible service to Members, always available to answer Members’ questions while maintaining the day-to-day operations of our organization. We all benefit from their supportive expertise.

As we look ahead to 2025, I am reminded of a simple truth: every voice counts. One of the greatest gifts we can give each other is the time and attention to truly listen. Listening is not just about hearing words; it’s about making space for understanding, building trust, and creating a sense of belonging. When we listen with an open mind, we hear the words and also the underlying emotions, concerns, and hopes.

As we enter the New Year, let’s approach each day with the same energy and commitment that has brought us so far. Together, we will continue to enjoy a BCRTA filled with purpose, advocacy, and collaboration. Finally, in response to the three questions posed at the beginning of this note, I can say that it is an honour to engage with over 17,000 Members and others who work to make the world a better place. I look forward to all that we will accomplish together in the days ahead! •

CAROLINE MALM is President of BCRTA

PostScript Letters

Helmut Lemke, PostScript Superstar

We want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to reprint in our newsletter the article "Preparations and Transitions" by Helmut Lemke from your PostScript Magazine. (QPARSE News, Autumn 2024) A very interesting article. We are so impressed that the author is 97 and going strong, it's encouraging for all of us! Have an awesome day, and best wishes to your members who we consider part of our retirees' network and a valuable sister organization.

Theresa and Marzia
QPARSE – Québec
Provincial Association of
Retired School Educators

Can you pass this photo along to Helmut. I was a student of his back in 1966 at Burnaby South!

Peter Scurr
Delta

Editor's Note: The image below is the back page of the March 2024 issue of BCTF's Teacher Magazine - retiree Peter Scurr helping a new generation of artists, just as his art teacher, Helmut Lemke, helped him. It seems that some artists know how to make a perfect circle after all...



Anonymous Complaints from Close Friends

Dear PostScripters

A whole lot of tired teachers are gonna sing AMEN to my lament. You're sendin' us too many overly difficult SUDOKUS! Those ones should be ruled DISILLEGAL. All we can do is get discouraged and RE-tired!

Now my good friend Rose L. (prize winner) will have to take me out for coffee 'n' biscuits so I can lick my wounds. But I know she'll pay up...

Editor's Note: No printed name was provided, but the signature looks suspiciously like P. Swennumson's. What say you? Are the Sudoku puzzles too tough or does P.S. have to pull up his socks?

Teacher Investment and Housing Coop Distress

We were somewhat taken aback by the TIHC article! (Letters From Alma) My wife and I had both invested our monies-the few extra dollars we had- back when the Co-op became an entity. We contributed continuously thru its existence! We suffered a major loss financially and emotionally when we heard the demise of the Co-Op! It was our only savings method thru those lean years! We were flabbergasted to find mention in the article... 'depositors awarded compensation of 80 cents on the dollar!' WE WERE NEVER CONTACTED in this regard/received not a penny! It was a major trauma adding to the loss of our twin sons thru this period! And because we'd heard about the demise of the Co-op we got rid of any records in that regard... it would be so very helpful to get 'our just due' and the return that so many others seemed to have rec'd... Anything that can be done to assist us in this regard would be most helpful as we are now in our mid-eighties!

Carol and Gerald C.

I read the article "Letters From Alma" in the Fall edition of Postscript with interest as I was one of the teachers who had invested all my 'substitute' pay from January 1964 until I was given a full term position with Delta School Board in 1974.

It was a time when one had to teach ten consecutive days for the same teacher in order to receive pay according to scale (at that time, I was PC). Many times teachers would return 7 or 8 or 9 days which would mean I would receive a

Write us at postscript@bcrrta.ca

much lower rate of pay. In spite of this, I was able to deposit about \$20,000 in the Teachers' Co-op, having had no reason to believe it was unsafe.

Then we read in the Vancouver Sun that the money deposited here was not secured! This caused a panic and many of the larger holders pulled out their savings, leaving the rest of us with no protection. Our money was simply gone with no means of recovery.

Imagine my surprise to read the LETTERS TO ALMA talking about how she was able to get an out of court settlement, awarding compensation of 80 cents on the dollar. Hmm... wonder why I received nothing! No notification of an appeal... nothing...

I imagine I am not the only one who had invested in the BCTF at that time. That \$20,000 would be worth substantially more today.

Patricia R.

Editor's Note: We're so very sorry to hear what happened in your cases, Patricia, Carol and Gerald. We should emphasize that the settlement outlined in the story was not an out-of-court agreement that applied to just Alma, but in fact was a court-ordered dissolution of the fund which was intended to return any residual funds to all of the TIHC investors. From the stories we are hearing from you and others, it appears that some investors missed out on this compensation. Also, while the TIHC was **not** legally connected to the BC Teachers' Federation, it was administered by teachers and many felt secure because the co-op had the word "Teacher" in its name. Since nearly 40 years have passed since the TIHC was wound up, re-opening the question of compensation would appear doubtful. However, BCRTA is making inquiries as to what recourse may be available to those investors who were did not receive any of their money back.

More Exchange Teacher Memories and an Update

Re: the Summer issue of Postscript and specifically, the article about teacher exchanges.

I was on exchange to Australia in 1978. My wife and two children ages 9 and 12 and I really enjoyed the experience. We are probably not on the official list as my exchange was arranged privately by the principal who had been on exchange in Cloverdale Elementary. I was warmly received by the staff at Scullin Primary in Canberra and was treated to many perks such as field trips with other classes and an extra week of vacation time in winter. I kept a journal while we were there and have referred to it often in the past. Our boys still mention it from time to time with pleasant memories.

Seeing the photo of Dave Ellis brought back many pleasant memories of cross-country ski trips with other exchange teachers.

Lyle Phillips

Hello David Denyer, I too am a David, also a Limey from way back when. We live in Sidney, and have been in Victoria since 1975 - from Yorkshire - arrived in Toronto 1968...

David B.
Sidney

Editor's Note: We have connected the two Davids.

In the Summer 2024 edition of Postscript, Larry Kuehn, of the RTA's Heritage Committee wrote an article titled, "Education History in Search of a Home" which spoke of the work being done on a history of the BC Exchange Teachers Association, and the need for a permanent home for these records. After the article was published, Larry continued using his vast experience to "find a home" for the history of the BCETA. We now have that!

Ms. Salrin, archivist at SFU's "Special Collections and Rare Books" department, will be receiving the boxes of materials which hold the history of the BCETA! Without Mr. Kuehn this would not have been possible. I also wish to thank Dave Ellis, a former president of BCETA, for his help working on the history of this organization.

Rosemary Swinton

Editor's Note: Warm congratulations to Rosemary and thanks again to Larry and all the exchange teachers who have shared their stories.

A Perspective of Gratitude and Preparation

I am always looking forward to reading our teachers' retirement magazine. The statistics of the number of our teachers over hundred is so inspiring. I think it attests to our lifestyle and contributions to the world. But not all of us are able to live so long.

I am so grateful and thankful for my career with the Vancouver School Board. But now after a short bout of cancer, I am facing the end of my life. I have no regrets and am ready for hospice and being cared for by others. With my dear husband of over 60 years, son and family, we have prepared for this journey.

I want to share the importance of preparation. Although we hope to live long lives things happen and I want people to think about the importance of preparing for the future. A will and decisions that we want for end of life are really important.

Anne Melul

Editor's Note: Our thanks to Anne for this. A very helpful 2024 BCRTA Conference presentation on caring for these details is on our website. The presenter is Notary Public Hilde Deprez, who is a true expert.



ACER-CART UNITES

NATIONAL BODY OF RETIRED TEACHERS STANDS UP FOR PROVINCIAL ASSOCIATIONS

One would expect that, with our common goals, retiree organizations would have an easy time getting along, and for the most part that has been true – BCRTA has very positive working relationships with all the public sector retiree organizations in BC and numerous other BC organizations such as the Council of Senior Citizens’ Organizations (COSCO). That same cooperative spirit is also found at the national level, as BCRTA works alongside a number of organizations such as the National Pensioners Federation (NPF) and especially as a founding member of the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers (ACER-CART), which has traditionally had representation from all Canadian provinces.

However, the world of retired teachers has been disrupted over recent months by the departure from ACER-CART of one provincial body, which has strategically transformed itself from a provincially-registered member association to a federal corporation. RTOERO, formerly known as the Retired Teachers of Ontario, recently withdrew its participation in ACER-CART and has openly declared itself as the new national representative of all retired teachers, and anyone else who worked

in the field of education. Of course this has the other provincial organizations scratching our heads, since no one in the rest of Canada asked to be represented by a corporation from Toronto. In fact, BCRTA has been the voice of retired teachers in BC since 1945. Other provincial associations across Canada have also been representing their retirees for a long time: many for fifty years and more.

But will new retirees understand all this history and the importance of real local representation? Perhaps not, and that’s a shame.

At the heart of the motivation for a new strategy from RTOERO is - your probably guessed it - money. They offer an extended health plan, like other provincial organizations, but have been losing large amounts of their market share to the Ontario Teachers’ Insurance Plan. With enrolment numbers faltering, they are looking to make up their losses elsewhere. Hence a big marketing effort is now underway. How big? According to the budgeted marketing wages and large ad spends shown in their Fall Forum circular, RTOERO is set to spend millions of dollars of Ontario members’ money over the coming years in an effort to take members away from other provincial organizations.

To do this, RTOERO has developed some polished marketing for their products, but a side-by-side comparison with the plans offered by other provinces reveals no real advantage for most people to choose the plan from Toronto.

So who cares? Well we all should. Because retirees are likely to only join one organization, and those who do sign up for the offer from Toronto will lose meaningful local representation: their voice on provincial issues like their BC pensions, BC health care and the cause of public education in this province. BCRTA has a recognized role in the formation of the BC Teachers' Pension Plan Board of Trustees, and also has representatives that sit on the Teachers' Pension Plan Advisory Committee, as well as sending representatives to the annual BC Pension Conference. Our own EHC offerings are designed for the BC environment and have unique, hard-won features that members love. We also consistently speak up for those who use the TPP-sponsored Green Shield EHC, because all our members' well-being matters to us. Awareness of the BC context is very important. Many of you will recall being helped by our pre-retirement workshops, led by facilitators with years of experience with the BC Teachers' Pension Plan and the policies of various BC school districts - important details for those going through the retirement process.

So the possibility, however remote, that a product-centered national corporation could start to erode involvement in our provincial associations poses a significant threat to the long-term well-

being of retirees in BC, and indeed all our regional voices across Canada, and through the weakening of their provincial groups, all retired teachers.

However, the plan may be faltering even as it starts, as two recent events indicate. The first is that the corporate leadership of RTOERO recently withdrew a plan to vote on renaming their organization with the brand name of their commercial product (Entente) after facing opposition from their own district leaders. Secondly, the threat to the existence of all the other provincial associations has drawn the active participants of ACER-CART even more closely together. In October all ten provincial associations united to jointly issue an open letter to retired teachers in Ontario. Why was the letter addressed to the average Ontario retiree? Because those individuals are almost certainly unaware of the effects that the actions of the corporation could have on other retirees across Canada. ACER-CART believes that as individuals most retired teachers from Ontario have the same cooperative and community-minded attitude that we do. We hope that they speak up and encourage the organization that used to be focused on them to return to its roots and to its better nature.

You can view the open letter at ACER-CART's website acer-cart.org or on our website at:

bcrt.ca/an-open-letter-to-members-of-retired-teachers-of-ontario-rtoero/

And here's hoping for more respect and cooperation in the days ahead. •



ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS RETRAITÉS
CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED TEACHERS

Alberta Retired Teachers' Association
arta.net

Quebec Provincial Association of Retired
School Teachers
qpars-apperq.org

Prince Edward Island Retired Teachers' Association
peirta.com

BC Retired Teachers' Association
bcrt.ca

New Brunswick Society of Retired Teachers
nbsrt.ca

Retired Teachers Organization of the Nova Scotia
Teachers' Union
rto.nstu.ca

Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan
sts.sk.ca

Société des enseignantes et enseignants retraités
francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick
serfnb.org

Retired Teachers Association of Newfoundland and
Labrador
nlta.nl.ca/rtanl



Good Lights

OUR CHRISTMAS TRADITION



BY KEN BERRY

It started harmlessly with our family; Julia, Ken, Kate, and Geoff decided to put more Christmas Lights up in our front yard in Williams Lake, BC. We got the idea of making log reindeer from a magazine and my son and I started finding logs, sticks, and branches for the parts. As each year came, we added more and more items and characters, which we dreamed up and then made from wood and anything else that could be adapted to Christmas light fun.

Once our son and daughter had grown up and gone, we realized that this project was becoming a challenge, and the display kept on growing. We needed a purpose for all this effort. We decided to put out a little wooden bird house to collect change from anyone who came by and donate the proceeds to the Global Telethon.

We hoped to raise \$100, but it turned out to be \$780. We were hooked. Over 16 years, \$23,000 was raised in Williams Lake. After my son and I made a 2-D Penguin Ice Hockey team for the front yard, kids from my school would bring me stuffed penguins as a Christmas gift. We incorporated them everywhere in the display and the “Penguin House” was born.



*We hoped to raise \$100,
but it turned out to be \$780.
We were hooked.*

Our daughter now lived in Kelowna and our son in Cranbrook, so we made the decision to move to Kelowna. We sold most of our lights and sleighs and hockey characters with the proceeds going to the local Child Development Centre. We thought, “That’s it; we are done!” My daughter asked for the log reindeer and sleigh so she could put them on their front lawn. She later confided that she took it because she knew I would have to put up “something” in our new home in Kelowna.

She was right. Moving to Kelowna opened up access to 6+ Thrift Shops that were calling our names with the draw of Christmas decorations at wonderfully inexpensive prices, so the challenge was on. We usually “adapted” any items. This time we decided to put up a fund raiser for the Salvation Army because of all they do in so many communities. They embraced our suggestion and provided us with an “official red kettle” to collect donations at the curb.

The kettle worked fine but getting the word out was not as easy in a large city. In Williams Lake, our project was supported by the two local newspapers (we were front page news!), and the local Shaw Cable. Even BCTV Kamloops came down to do videos for their local broadcasts.

Luckily, we found out about the local Castanet “Parade of Lights”. We posted our picture and



summary, and people began to come, just like in the past. We reached out to the local Global Okanagan and sure enough we were broadcast locally, provincially, and then throughout Alberta! Things were going very well. Then COVID 19 hit.

We talked to the Salvation Army personnel about the problem; no one was visiting the display! They came up with a great idea - put up a Facebook site and raise funds online. So “875 Theodora Road Christmas Light Display” was born. We posted daily as different scenes were completed with the reminder that this was a fund raiser for the Salvation Army and the public could donate locally to: **Kelownasalvationarmy.ca/donations**. Things improved greatly and donations began coming to Sally Ann online.

Since Facebook posts are visible anywhere, people were soon asking where they could donate to the Sally Ann in other cities and provinces. Again,

Since Facebook posts are visible anywhere, people were asking where they could donate to the Sally Ann in other cities and provinces...

we went back to the Salvation Army folks, and they came up with another site, even better than the one above: **salvationarmy.ca/donations** was the ticket! This site takes donations and sends those donations to the area closest to the donor’s address throughout Canada. Now, folks can donate knowing their good will can be of help in their particular city or province.

With no golf in Kelowna from November to late March, we have added lots of new venues for the display. We have so many now that some only come out every other year. When people visit, we talk to the kids and ask them if they have any ideas for next year. We are never disappointed with their responses and thoughts. We have raised approximately \$8,000 at the curb over the past 8 years. Our site donations are numbered in the 100’s over the past 5 years.

Here are some of the venues that will be coming out this year at the curb and on the Facebook site of “875 Theodora Road Christmas Light Display”:

- A penguin hockey game featuring stuffed penguins playing on an old-fashioned hockey rink





- A penguin light trail lighting penguins pushing small sleighs full of Christmas lights from the “Northern Lights Mine” to the curb.
- Some log reindeer pulling Santa and his sleigh, including Rudolf and his nose so bright.
- A 3-D train of 28 cars and “Engine 875” and a caboose full of stuffed penguins.
- A full sized one-horse open sleigh carrying lighted presents for Santa
- Santa on the pergola (not allowed on the roof anymore) with lighted presents full of chaser lights.
- Various lighted grapevine reindeer & a “dogloo” painted with lights
- Three Swiss wooden sleighs donated by good friends.
- Lighted candy canes everywhere, in bushes, milk cans, on the train.
- Red and green lights on the house and along the fencing.
- Lighted garland around the garage door, picture window & pergola.
- A wall of twinkling super mini lights forming a curtain ... that looks like the old Woodward’s Christmas Window (yes, we are that old).
- Penguins fishing in a kiddy’s pool full of stuffed fish.
- Each train car has a name of a child who has visited the display for a personalized tour inside the fence.

- A LED “light fence” that surrounds the display to ensure no-one trips over extension cords
- programmed lighted silhouettes hanging in the sky
- a family of stuffed beavers gnawing down a lighted Christmas tree.
- Miniature stuffed penguins stuffing Christmas Lights into boxes for sale at the curb (not really for sale though).
- 100’s of stuffed penguins everywhere around the display.

There may be more to come; it depends on how tired we get doing this. The Facebook postings begin on November 12th. The display proper will light up from Friday, November 29th to January 5th. Lights go on from about 5:00 pm to 10:30 pm nightly. I hope to see you there. Love the comments we receive on the post, ideas too. Facebook used to let us know how many donations we received online (100+ two years ago) but they do not report back on donations now. If you did donate please let us know (we don’t need to know how much). Knowing that folks are enjoying the fruits of our labour just keeps us wanting to do more.

Merry Christmas To All and to all some Good Lights! •

KEN BERRY last taught in Williams Lake and remains a member of BCRTA’s Cariboo-Chilcotin branch. The Berry family Christmas display is regularly listed among “best festive lights lists” in BC.



A scenic view of a dam on a river. The dam is a concrete structure with water cascading over it. The background is filled with dense trees in various shades of green, yellow, and red, indicating autumn. The sky is clear and blue. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the surrounding trees and sky.

CRUISIN' THE CANAL

TWO FRIENDS ON THE RIDEAU

BY ARLENE BLUNDELL

Photo by Arlene Blundell

In our early 20's, my BFF Nancy, and I took a 'gap year' and hitchhiked around Europe. Fabulous experience! We returned to our careers (she was an RN, and I was a teacher), marriage, and raising children for the next 18 years. After our children flew the coop, we started taking annual 1-to-2-week vacations, travelling mostly outside Canada. Now, at age 83, we looked for a holiday that didn't involve much walking, cycling, or driving. We thought a cruise might be good and I had always been curious about canal locks and how they worked. We considered Panama but Nancy's daughter suggested that we Google cruises along the Rideau Canal. Travel by boat, itchy feet satisfied, curiosity about canals addressed, and right here in Canada! Perfect! We contacted Ontario Waterway Cruises about a cruise from Ottawa to Kingston. All cruises for the summer were fully booked, so we went on standby. Luckily, they had a cancellation in September, so off we went!

After a delightful overnight at the Australis B&B in Ottawa, we taxied to the dock at the head of the Rideau River and, along with 43 other passengers settled into our tiny 2 person bunks aboard the Kawartha Voyageur. The cruise ship has a bottom deck for individual bunks and four showers, an upper deck with kitchen, dining room, and lounge, and a top deck for outdoor open-air seating. That evening, we met the crew of 12, had some appies, and got details on the journey. A very warm welcome for everyone!

*My BFF Nancy, and I...
at age 83, we looked for
a holiday that didn't
involve much walking,
cycling, or driving...*

Next morning we woke to beautiful sunshine peeking through the trees as we headed for the first lock. Under bright sunshine every day throughout the trip, we sat on the top deck, revelled in the gorgeous scenery, made new friends, played board games, or read of the canal's history in the personal guide book provided for us.

The Rideau ('curtain' in French) Canal is the oldest continuously operating canal in North America! Of the 126 miles from Ottawa to Kingston, there are 45 locks which make up only 16.5 miles of man-made channels or canals. They raise the boats 83 metres from the Ottawa River to the Rideau Lakes, and then drop 50 metres to the Cataraqui River to Kingston. A jewel in the heartland of Canada, its construction is one of Canada's greatest achievements!

In 1826, Colonel John By was tasked with constructing a safe passage from Ottawa to the Kingston military base, which had been essential in the defense of Canada from the United States during the War of 1812. By settled at a townsite which everyone soon called Bytown. Contracts were given to hundreds of people, mostly Irish immigrants, to excavate and construct the canal. Skilled tradesmen came from the British Isles, while canoemen and axemen were usually French settlers. Many died from sicknesses and accidents. Over the six years of construction, more than 500 died from malaria alone, the greatest threat at the time. By completed the locks in 1832 but received little or





Photo by Arlene Blundell

no commendation for his incredible engineering masterpiece. His design was criticized by British engineers who knew very little of the terrain and in fact rebuked him for overspending his budget. He was basically fired. In 1836, By suffered a stroke and died, disillusioned and disappointed. This work became his legacy, and fortunately he left behind careful records. In 1854 Bytown was renamed Ottawa after the Algonquin tribe of the Outaouais living in that area.

As we journeyed up the river and approached the locks, we could see the waterfalls, the dams, and shallow rapids which once rendered this part of the waterway impassable. If we wanted to, we were able to disembark from the Kawartha and walk alongside the locks to inspect them. One young worker explained it to me: “The boat moves into the chamber (lock), then we close the gates behind, then we close the sluices (the sliding gates to restrain the flow of water) so that this chamber is plugged. Then we go up to the top and we open the sluices so the water can come down and can level

the boat in the chamber. Once it’s level with the water above, we open the doors at the top, the boat goes through, and we close the doors behind. Now you’re in the second chamber. Then we close the sluices to plug you in the back, then we open them on top and let the water in. We repeat the process until you’re all the way up to the top level. It takes four of us on the winches, One winch on each side to push and pull the doors, then the other winch on each side does the sluices.” To descend, just reverse the procedure!

Since 1832, all locks have been hand-operated except three sets that are now electrically handled. In 1969, the Department of Transport wanted to modernize the system and installed hydraulic cylinders in those three locks. When Parks Canada took over in 1972, they put a halt to any more modernization and had the entire system declared a Heritage Canal, which was chosen in 2007 as Ontario’s one and only UNESCO Heritage site. Over one million visitors come to the lock stations annually.



Photos by Arlene Blundell

The locks are 108 feet in length, but our ship was 121 feet, so the owners had designed an open-hinged bow which they could raise so we were able to just barely snuggle into any lock. We could see other boats, from kayaks to large yachts, waiting their turn to enter a lock, and sometimes two boats or more would sit together in one lock as they ascended or descended, making me think of boats in elevators!

No need to plan or make meals! Food and drink were always available on board (you paid for alcohol). I so enjoyed the jingle of the bell announcing 8:00 breakfast, 12:00 lunch, and 6:00 supper. Two young, fabulous cooks presented us with a variety of nutritious, attractive, and tasty dishes--different menus daily, but we could always choose oatmeal from among the other selections! Sitting with new friends and learning about other parts of Canada (most passengers were Canadian) made every meal another treat.

As we travelled, we passed a variety of Canadiana: small villages, impressive mansions (summer homes!), small cottages, farmlands, beautifully landscaped cliff homes, and manicured lawns bordering the locks. We quietly slipped by a bevy of swans, crept through narrow streams bordered by huge deciduous trees in the process of changing color, and witnessed pleasure boats edging their way past us with a friendly wave.

We had to sneak under some bridges. As Captain Mark described them 'sit-down bridges' were so low, that to get under them, we had to lower the top deck awning and the captain's

wheelhouse and everyone had to be seated. As we scooted under the bridge, I could reach up and touch the underside of the bridge! A 'stand-up bridge' meant it was OK to stay standing, but I could still reach up to the underside of the bridge. Some bridges were swing bridges which meant one of the lock staff had to manually push a large lever in the middle of the bridge to turn the cogs below, swinging the bridge parallel to the waterway.

Walking tours were available and when docked overnight at a lock, we could walk into one of the small historic towns to enjoy museums, gardens, or ruins of old mills. While tied up at one lock, I had a refreshing swim in the canal! No big floor shows at night, but guest speakers and documentary films made for interesting evenings. One night, we had a bocce ball competition! Each day had something to look forward to: Karaoke, crew entertainment, and a final night dance party!

When we got to our final destination, Kingston, we were told this was to be the last time to dock at the Kingston pier. The city had decided to install a low permanent bridge across the pier opening, which means the Kawartha would have to make other arrangements. But that day, we did get through. The Kawartha crew assembled their own drawbridge from our vessel to the pier so all passengers could disembark safely and quickly. Goodbye hugs were given to the crew and friends and we dispersed with memories of another fantastic holiday! •

ARLENE BLUNDELL is a BCRTA member and a member of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith branch.

important dates

CPP and OAS

Payment Dates

- December 20, 2024
- January 29, 2025
- February 26, 2025
- March 27, 2025
- April 28, 2025
- May 28, 2025
- June 26, 2025
- July 29, 2025
- August 27, 2025
- September 25, 2025
- October 29, 2025
- November 26, 2025
- December 22, 2025

Teachers' Pension

Payment Dates

- December 23, 2024
- January 30, 2025
- February 27, 2025
- March 28, 2025
- April 29, 2025
- May 29, 2025
- June 27, 2025
- July 30, 2025
- August 28, 2025
- September 26, 2025
- October 29, 2025
- November 27, 2025
- December 23, 2025

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Say That Again, Please!

Living With Hearing Loss

BY DOUG MACLEOD

“YOU NEED A HEARING AID.” Dr. Jamieson pointed to an audiogram and delivered the message in a sharp professional tone. “You have a progressive hearing loss. It will get worse.” The diagnosis felt like a punch in the gut. My head and shoulders drooped. “Right now, somewhere, someone is being told he has terminal cancer,” Dr. Jamieson continued. “I bet that person would be happy to trade places with you.”

It was August 1977. I was twenty-six years old. I played hockey, fished, hiked, skied, and canoed. My first year of teaching was behind me and I expected

a long, satisfying career ahead. I didn’t want to look on the sunny side. Leave me to wallow in my misery. A life sentence of hearing loss was unfair. Where was the Court of Appeal?

Fifty years ago, I was forced to come to terms with hearing loss. Now in my seventies, I see many of my peers struggle to communicate because of deteriorating hearing. For many, the first defense is to ignore the tell-tale signs: straining to hear conversations, confusion in noisy situations and constant requests to turn up the TV. If they do not take steps to address these issues, they will slowly

slide into social isolation, one denial at a time.

“Hello Doug.” No low talker, Sam belted out a greeting at full volume. He’s short, with a strong wiry frame and worked with heavy machinery before retirement. When I spoke, Sam cocked his head and turned an ear towards me, his face strained in concentration.

Sam has an obvious hearing loss. If I recall, he owns a pair of hearing aids but, like many men of his age, he doesn’t use them. I imagine him saying, “I hate ‘em. They’re in a drawer somewhere at home.” It will take time for Sam to adjust to wearing hearing aids but when he accepts them, he will be rewarded with relaxed communication.

Another friend, Bob, recently acquired hearing aids. A lifelong sailor, he has cruised from Vancouver to the South Pacific and recently returned from Alaska. In the past, I remember him entertaining groups of fascinated sailors with tales of adventure. I noticed him at a recent sailing club reception, standing alone in a quiet corner, away from the party’s noisy, exuberant crowd. I joined him, turning so he could see my face. I slowed down and, increased the volume of my speech slightly, making sure each word was pronounced separately, with crisp endings. He relaxed and we enjoyed a pleasant one-on-one conversation. Bob needs to work with his hearing aid professional to ensure that he has the appropriate devices and that they are adjusted to meet his specific needs.

When I first faced hearing loss, I felt the world closing in on me. But assistive technology, increased accessibility, and support organizations have opened many doors.



Hearing technology has advanced since the time of Beethoven.

TECHNOLOGY

Recently, my wife and I enjoyed an anniversary dinner at our favourite seafood restaurant in Lower Lonsdale. It’s always packed, with noise levels through the roof. I had almost given up on dinners in noisy restaurants. Missing chunks of conversation and frequently asking for repetition was stressful and fatiguing. But technology has rescued me. Now, I place my *Roger On* microphone in the middle of the table. The shape and about twice the size of a USB stick, it connects with my hearing aids using wireless technology. The microphone is so advanced that when we dine with others, the system tunes into the dominant voice at the table and mutes background sounds. The joy of dinner out with my wife and friends has returned.

Modern technology has allowed me to function normally. I wear a small control device around my neck, the size of a pendant with a wireless connection to my hearing aids. I can turn down background noise and tune in the voice of the person I am speaking with. I answer my mobile phone with one touch on the controller, then carry on a conversation without taking it out of my pocket. The controller also connects me with the television using Bluetooth technology. When the speakers on the TV are turned off, I still hear the broadcast. It makes for some amusing moments



*Closed captioning devices are available at movie theatres.
(Image: Cineplex.com)*

Anyone's mobile phone can be a communication aid...

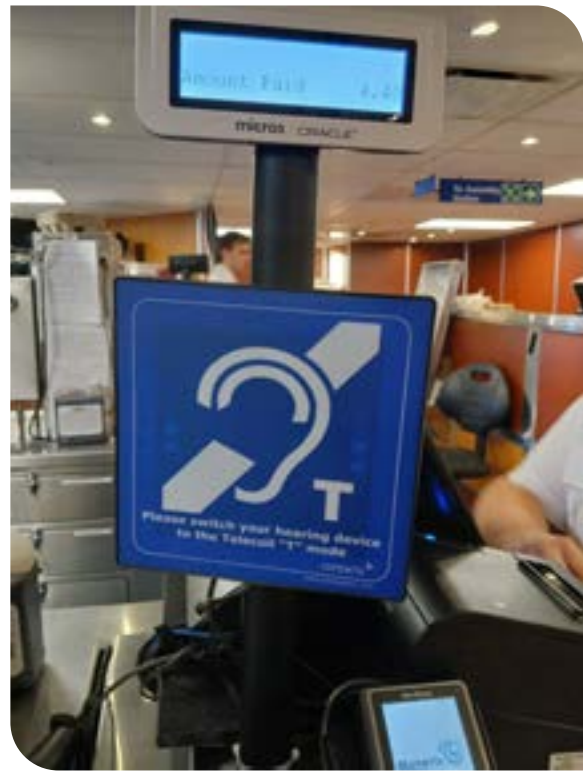
when I'm watching a hockey game alone and the Canucks score. I shout in celebration in an otherwise silent room. Many hearing aids now come with apps which can perform many of these functions, as well.

Anyone's mobile phone can be a communication aid. *Gallaudet University for the Deaf* developed an app called *Live Transcribe*. Using the latest in voice recognition technology it displays full conversations between people. It's a lifesaver when a hard of hearing person needs to communicate in awkward settings like with a bank teller or at the counter of a fast-food outlet. Best of all, it's free.

ACCESSIBILITY

On a recent BC ferry trip to the Sunshine Coast, I waited at the cafeteria cashier to purchase my lunch and noticed a blue and white poster illustrating the profile of an ear with a line running from bottom left to top right, the international symbol for hearing loss. As directed by accompanying printed instructions, I switched to the "T" (T-coil) setting on my hearing aids and accessed a hearing loop. The technology muted the cafeteria noise and amplified the cashier's voice. I did not strain to hear the price or request repetition as I usually do. Hard of hearing people need to remember that businesses and community services want to communicate with us and often provide accessible technology. Movie theatres and some live theatres have hearing loop systems so that hard of hearing people can access high-quality sound. You need to have a hearing aid with a "T" setting. When I go to the movies, I always request a closed caption device. It's attached to a long flexible arm that fits in the chair's cup holder and can be adjusted to a height below the viewing angle of the movie screen.

Bard On the Beach uses a Wi-fi system called *Better Ear*. After downloading the app onto my mobile phone, I accessed a website, and clear sound was then relayed from my phone to my hearing aids via Bluetooth. This summer, I enjoyed a wonderful production of *Twelfth Night*. Our church has an excellent hearing system that broadcasts sound on VHF radio. I pick up a small receiver at the entrance, attach it to my belt, place a loop around my neck and enjoy the service. The church installed the system at my request, but soon discovered that many additional parishioners needed the extra auditory boost.



*Accessibility sign at cafeteria on a BC ferry.
(Photo by author)*

If you are at the airport, drop by the customer service desk and pick up a *Daisy Lanyard*, signifying an invisible disability. Airport announcements rarely reach hard of hearing people, creating confusion and anxiety. Staff have been trained to notice the Daisy Lanyard and provide extra assistance when needed. I have a badge with the symbol for hearing loss attached to the lanyard.

SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

Several hard of hearing organizations are a deep source of information and support. *The Canadian Hard of Hearing Association* (CHHA) is a remarkable organization that advocates for the needs of hard of hearing people. CHHA has an excellent website, with lots of information on hearing loss. They distribute regular email bulletins and publish a quarterly magazine. CHHA provides kids’ camps for hard of hearing children and organizes activities like workshops, webinars and fundraisers. There are branches in communities throughout British Columbia. My North Vancouver branch organizes bi-monthly meetings involving guest speakers and provides *Sound Advice* sessions where people new to hearing loss can bring their questions and receive information on assistive technology.

At a meeting, I was approached during the break by a woman who had left the room early. She had recently been fitted with hearing aids. “Everything was too loud. I couldn’t stand it,” she explained. She looked distressed and disappointed. At first the sound produced by hearing aids seems loud and unnatural. Be patient and take time to adapt. You may need to start wearing aids in quiet settings, like your home, and later expand your level of comfort by moving to public places.

Your hearing aid professional can work with you during the adjustment period and can start your hearing aids at a lower setting, if needed, then increase the settings over time. Over the years, I’ve developed an appreciation of their professionalism. They will work with you to select an aid that matches your loss and follow up to ensure everything is working well. Most hearing aid professionals are hearing aid practitioners. If your loss is severe or complicated, I recommend requesting an audiologist with a master’s degree. Choosing the right hearing aid and adjusting it to match your needs is the most important step in living successfully with hearing loss.

The *Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility* is a wonderful resource for hard of hearing people. Previously called the *Western*

Accessibility Symbols for people with hearing loss



International
Symbol for Hearing
Accessibility



Assistive
Listening
Devices



Telephone
Typewriter



Volume
Control
Telephone



Sign Language
Interpretation
Provided



Closed
Captioning



Open
Captioning



Above: "shake awake" alarm.

Right: Roger On microphone.



Institute for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, this organization provides a range of services, including advocacy, support, audiology, and education. Wavefront stocks a variety of practical devices such as my alarm clock that vibrates under the mattress and sets off a pulsating red light. It's a shocking way to wake up but it gets me out of bed in the morning.

Last fall and winter, I took two Zoom courses from *Vancouver Community College, Living with Hearing Loss*, Level One and Two. It is not an exaggeration to say these courses were transformative. Most of the classes were devoted to speech reading instruction and practice. That wasn't all. We studied such things as communication strategies in challenging settings, repair techniques when conversations go wrong, and how to address our needs assertively without being aggressive. We learned about the many assistive devices available, like the *Roger On*, microphone described earlier. I especially enjoyed meeting other hard of hearing people, hearing their stories, and feeling encouraged by their successes.

As a young man, I hated my first hearing aid. The sound was harsh, and I did not want to be seen as a hard of hearing person. But I came to a truce with my fate and understood that through technology, accessibility, and support organizations, I could live successfully with hearing loss. •

The microphone is so advanced that when we dine with others, the system tunes into the dominant voice at the table and mutes background sounds...

DOUG MACLEOD is a retired teacher who taught first in a regular high school classroom in Hazelton and later at The Provincial Resource Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Langley. Doug won the 2024 PostScript Excellence Award for Best Travel Article, and an engaging interview with him is available on the BCRTA website.

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The Silk Road: Exploring Kyrgystan

BY MARY DOREEN MILDRED BERG



Central Mosque of Imam Sarakhsi, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan (iStockphoto)

Years ago, when my husband wanted to visit the “Stans”,* I was fearful of that area of Asia. Now, as two seniors in our eighties we decided we’d better do the Stans before we found it too difficult to hike hills and to keep pace with younger explorers. We decided to book a 26-day tour of all five of the Silk Road Stans with G Adventures.

The most difficult part of our tour was the initial planning to avoid any glitches. Making sure the necessary paperwork was complete, determining how we would charge our electrical devices, considering the long flight times to arrange comfortable flights and connections, were a few of our planning concerns. Further tasks were required. We booked a hotel a few days before our tour in Bishkek. We had to get a visa for Turkmenistan through G Adventures. We also booked an arrival transfer from Manas Airport in Kyrgyzstan to the Grand Hotel in Bishkek. We checked what specific documents were required for each Stan. We were told that we needed Covid tests when crossing the border in Turkmenistan and it would cost \$32.00 US each. It was mandatory that we take new US bills for additional local tourist costs. Nothing was left to chance.

G Adventures was very helpful in following up tasks to be done. Their communications were excellent, so we didn’t feel we were alone in arranging things.

* *The Stans: Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan*

We arrived in Bishkek at 9:00 AM via London and a turbulent flight from Istanbul and headed for Costa Coffee where we met our hotel driver.

At Navat Restaurant for dinner, we found homemade noodles covered in vegetables, chicken, and peppers, then returned to our hotel for a good night’s rest. The next day we walked down Manas Street and saw street cars but also modern buses. No dogs or cats were apparent on the streets, not even squirrels or rabbits in the park-like setting. Before arriving here, we had thought this was a third-world country, but Kyrgyzstan was beautiful and modern beyond our expectations. Also, there was no graffiti, a welcome change from some Canadian cities.

DAY 1

We met G Adventure CEO Anarabek, who suggested we call him “Bek”. With his guidance we set out to find the exchange shops, where unlike with banks, no passport was required, to exchange US dollars for *som* and *tenge* (for Kazakhstan).

At 6:00 PM in the lobby, we met the rest of the group, sixteen people representing ten different countries (Australia, Austria, Canada, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, and Switzerland) with ages ranging from mid-twenties to eighties. After meeting with Bek, who outlined procedures for the tour, we walked to Navat Restaurant again to have a first-rate meal and develop friendships with other tour members. They were a fun group, and we blended well.

DAY 2

At nine, after a hearty breakfast, we loaded into vans. Bek moved from one van to the other over the day to keep us informed. He talked about the history of Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan, telling us of revolutions and of presidents ousted from government who were now living in Russia. These countries have had their independence only since 1991, but Russia still has influence, especially on the older people who liked the communist style of living.

Kyrgyzstan has gold mines but imports oil and gas from Russia. Schools enrol pupils age seven



Song Kul - high alpine lake, Kyrgyzstan (iStockphoto)

to eighteen for Grades 1-11, followed by free university. Russian and Kyrgyz languages are used, and in international schools they also use English. Eighty percent of Kyrgyzstan is mountainous. In the twenty percent that is arable land, they grow wheat, vegetables, and fruit.

We drove to the Chong-Kemin Valley, about 80 km from Bishkek, to see the Burana Tower, one of Kyrgyzstan's oldest structures. Built in the late 10th century for a Muslim legislator, it has narrow steps to the top and was once 40 metres tall.

Lunch was in a private home with bowls of seasoned vegetables and plates of watermelon on the tables. Individual bowls of noodles were brought to each guest and then we piled on the vegetables, followed by tea and sweet rolls.

We bought two-gallon containers of water at a supermarket which proved very useful as we refilled our smaller water bottles over several days. We continued to Ashuu village and the lovely Kemin Guesthouse. Concerns we'd had about guesthouses proved unfounded as we all had two-person rooms with ensembles. Supper was a delicious mix of various

salads, chicken soup, large plates of rice, and heavily buttered corn.

DAY 3

The two vans twisted and turned as we drove over gravel roads up through the mountain pass to an altitude of 3,050 metres (nearly 10,000 feet). At the extremely cold and windy top we held on to our hats to prevent them from flying over the cliff.

We saw Song Kul Lake where we finally arrived at our yurts to stay overnight. Off from the yurts were four very clean flush toilets and sinks, a luxury. Years before we had stayed in yurts in Mongolia, which we thoroughly enjoyed, but we used drop toilets and a pitcher of water for cleansing. Though there were whitecaps on the lake, four of our group went for a very brief cold dip!

The supper of lentil soup and meat dumplings was served in a warm dining yurt. Bek told us stories of the kidnapping of young girls for marriage, a tradition in this culture, though I'm not sure how much this custom is practiced today.

“Concerns we’d had about guesthouses proved unfounded...”



Above: With our hosts at Anyutaika guesthouse.

Below: A carpet-making shop in Kochkor. (photos by author)

DAY 4

In the night the wind blew so hard it rattled the yurt. We had heavy quilts, but I was still *COLD!* With a hike after breakfast, we registered 18,000 steps in 24 hours.

We visited wool felt-making and carpet-making shops in Kochkor. To make felt, they would beat the unwashed wool to knock out the dirt. Small pieces of felt were made by placing different wool colours on a piece of cotton cloth then rolling the wool in a bamboo mat and stamping on it many times. After pouring boiling water over the design, they rolled it up again to squeeze out the water. Then they rubbed the design with a bar of soap, to hold it together and later wash it.

Next was Issyk-Kul Lake, the world’s second largest alpine lake, with very deep thermal activity and such high salinity that it doesn’t freeze. Then on to the town of Karakol, the fourth-largest city in Kyrgyzstan, at the far end of the lake. We stayed in Anyutaika Guesthouse which was run by a lovely Russian couple who greeted us on arrival. The grounds were amazing with swings, hammocks, pathways to different garden sections to relax, and very comfortable accommodations.



DAY 5

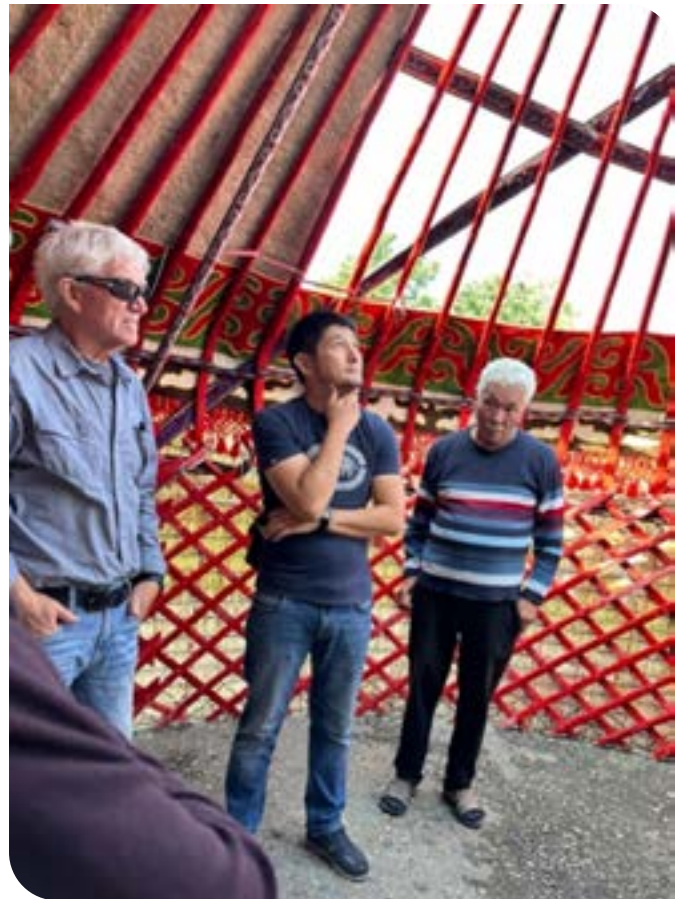
After breakfast we drove to Ak-Orgo Workshop to observe how yurts are built. We were able to help put the long poles in place and attach them to the center wooden circle, then add felt around the sides of the circular yurt.

The owner of this workshop was extremely talented. He has invented machinery to increase the production of patterned weaving. He entertained us with some fine instrumental music and singing while we ate a delicious lunch of large chunks of potatoes and carrots plus one large piece of meat in a clear soup. Spring rolls, aubergines, tomatoes, and cucumbers were followed by bread, sweets, candy, and tea. A feast fit for royalty!

In Karakol we visited the Russian Orthodox Church and a pagoda-style Dungan Mosque where the women in our group quickly donned scarves to cover their heads.

The local Sanatorium was used by Soviet cosmonauts to relax and recover from their space flights. The 1930's complex is still used today and about 5,000 clients receive treatment after their illness has been diagnosed by a doctor. It's free for the military, but civilians pay.

Following our day's tour John was able to get his hair cut for 500 *som*, less than \$5.00!



Inspecting the yurts (photo by author).



The animal market (photo by author).

DAY 6

By this point, up early had become our morning pattern, and it was an early departure to visit the Przhevalsky Museum. Przhevalsky was a fascinating and well-known Russian geographer of Polish descent who revealed the flora and fauna of Central and East Asia. He revealed areas of northern Tibet and parts of China and central Siberia which had not been known in the West. He also documented unknown animals - the Bactrian camel, which is now an endangered species, and both Przewalski's Horse and Przewalski's Gazelle were named after him.

The Sunday animal market was a chaotic scene of animals, vehicles, and people, all crowded together. Sheep were roped to vehicle bumpers, other animals were pulled by motorcycles; men loaded livestock into trucks; a fellow was throwing a bale of hay in the back of



Left: Red Rock Formations in Terskey Ala-Too Mountain Range (photo by author)



Right: The Seven Bulls rock formation (iStockphoto)

a car. It was much like a tailgate party but with animals being sold from the backs of the trucks!

In the afternoon we saw red rock formations called “Broken Heart” and “Seven Bulls” in the Kyzylkum Desert. This beautiful landscape mesmerized us as we explored the red sand topography.

Then we began our most challenging hike yet on narrow, rough mountain paths to a 40-metre-high waterfall called “Girl’s Braids”. John was very relieved that we could rent horses which enabled us to comfortably ascend, otherwise the challenging hike probably would have been too difficult for us. We dismounted, walked up a bit, and ate our lunch with the group on the edge of the mountain path. A short distance ahead was the waterfall, a majestic view as we gazed at the water flowing down like maiden’s tears.

However, I was feeling the effects of the altitude and felt dizzy walking on the narrow mountain path. I decided I should get down the mountain to a lower altitude. I told another person to tell my husband I was going back. As I staggered along alone, I was keeping to the inside of the path and frequently reaching for the

bank to stabilize myself. Realizing I was too far from the group to go back to them, I continued on alone. Fortunately, a helpful and sweet young French couple came along and assisted me - holding my arm until we got to the horses, less than 10 minutes away.

While we love to hike, hiking issues proved one of the most challenging parts of the trip. We hiked every day, and I had to stop before the end of one hike when my heart rate rose too high, after which John stayed with me for the remainder of the hikes we did. We had concerns about maintaining a hiking pace which might lead to individuals being annoyed with having to wait or slow down. However, with horses and other adjustments we were largely able to avoid delaying our group.

I was very moved when we said our goodbyes to our CEO leader, Anarabek (Bek). He gave each of us a hug at the Manas Airport before we entered security. An excellent and dedicated leader, Bek waited for over two hours, communicating with us by phone while making sure every one of us boarded the plane.

What an experience! •

DOREEN BERG and her husband John live in Powell River. Their journey continued across five of “the Stans”.



AN EX-PAT CHRISTMAS

BY LYNDA GRACE PHILIPSEN

'TIS THE SEASON

Before I pull the blackout curtains across the balcony door and flip the light switch, I wonder whether this will work out as imagined. Bingo! Instantly, sixteen spidery strings of fairy lights float in the darkness and transform my tiny Tokyo bed-sit into a glimmering wonderland. As the air gets crisper day by day, that child-like tingle of anticipation which has never left me builds.

I celebrate Christmas in a secular way, observing elements of my cultural heritage without the

religious conviction that my Anabaptist ancestors held. Always, by First Advent Sunday, four weeks ahead of Christmas Day, I've decked my halls to ward off the deepening darkness as the winter solstice approaches.

This Christmas, the first I will spend alone in a foreign country where I don't speak the language, is the second following the death of my mother. Consequently, I'm *en garde*; if I'm not proactive, I could flounder. One way I've learned to sit with sorrow is to recognize that comfort and joy



The Advent Wreath (photo by author).

are rarely spontaneous eruptions; rather, they are created. Therefore, to counter heartache, I'll preserve beloved traditions, but encouraged by the magical effect of the fairy lights, I'll ignore the extra extravagance of buying any other decorations, goodies, and libations this year.

Frankly, it's cheaper—and more gratifying—than therapy.

THE ADVENT WREATH

Our family didn't have an actual wreath. Rather, at Mom's request, Dad fashioned a rustic candle holder by drilling holes into a short, split log culled from the woodpile. This she filled with red candles, added cedar greens from the yard and a bit of ribbon. After First Advent Sunday *Faspa*, we turned out the lights, lit a single candle and sang carols as it burned. On following Sundays two, then three, then four candles flickered on the breath of our songs. Thus, Christmas remains imprinted in my psyche as an elemental mystery of fire and music as we defied the deepening darkness one flame at a time, and waited for the miracle, the gifts, and the feasts.

I usually order a wreath of fresh boughs from a florist, varying its design year to year. However,

in Tokyo a little shop around the corner offers an artificial option that suits the limited space in the apartment. The first burning candle adds a magical touch to the fairy lights as *Procession with Carols on Advent Sunday* fills the air, compliments of King's College Choir, Cambridge.

On the second Advent Sunday, while I'm lost in deep reverie augmented by the glow of two flames after a week fraught with multiple things gone wrong, the second candle sputters like a firecracker and explodes. Oddly, the table is wet. Not willing to disrupt the mood just to fix another problem, I remove the candle, leave it in the sink and light one of the remaining two.

As the candles burn, I am struck by how much lovelier the wreath appears with three tapers instead of four. Close now to completing Level One of the Sogetsu *ikebana* curriculum, I realize I have quite unconsciously internalized the asymmetry so deeply valued in *ikebana* as more beautiful.

O TANNENBAUM

We Mennonite children didn't do Santa Claus. Our parents insisted that only Jesus was real, and people who didn't have Jesus made up Santa for fun. Fortunately, however, our family wasn't part of a super-strict sect which forbade all celebrations with pagan origins including a Christmas tree. Since ancient times, long before Christianity hijacked the tradition, various Northern peoples have attributed powerful symbolism to evergreens, whether burned in the hearth or used to festoon their homes throughout the days surrounding the winter solstice.

In keeping with Germanic tradition, we had a tree that Dad selected a week or two before Christmas. In addition to choir practices and program rehearsals, baking and preparations for relatives who might stay with us, decorating the tree was up to Mom and me. The year he cut down a splendid blue spruce, Mom broke out in a painful rash while stringing the lights, and I was left to finish the job. After that, given that I excelled at the task, the tree became mine.

I must have inherited my deep love of Christmas trees from my paternal grandmother

who, born in Russia under the Julian calendar, insisted on keeping hers up until Orthodox Christmas in January. Long after the rest of the fastidious womenfolk had boxed all the baubles and swept up the needles, the magic continued at her house. Of course, conscious of fire, Grandma turned the lights on only while she stood by keeping careful watch and never for long.

Perhaps because Mennonites eschewed excessive display of any kind, the enchantment wrought by glimmering lights, long tinsel strings and shining ornaments left an indelible impression on my young brain. Throughout my life other charms have faded, lost to ennui and disenchantment. Not the tree. Its splendor never fails to lift my spirits and console as the days dip into deeper darkness.

Without knowing where to start looking, finding a tree that doesn't cost a fortune or put out a Charlie Brown vibe seems a daunting task. However, Tokyo is a shopper's paradise on steroids, and tenacity is my strong suit. Before long a one-meter wonder from a kit, complete with ornaments, lights, and a star, graces my little home.



Tree for an ex-pat. (photo by author).

TOKYO EMBASSY CHOIR

The sanctuary is crowded and warm. How delightful, the program lists a range of carols including an unexpected 20th-century American composer Alfred S. Burt. Long ago, in another life I often sang that carol in church choir. Now the chatter quiets as the choir settles on the risers. Not knowing what to expect, I close my eyes and wait.

Ding-dong merrily on high! In heav'n the bells are ringing; ding-dong verily the sky is riv'n with angel singing. The crystalline sopranos dance through the run on the lengthy open 'o.' *Gloria!* As the notes soar toward the ceiling, I smile. *Hosanna in excelsis!*

A few weeks earlier a poster advertising a charity carol concert had piqued my interest. I had thought I'd have to give Christmas concerts—a perennial favourite—a miss this year. Fortunately, not. If the singing proved subpar, I could endure an hour for a good cause. However, within the first few bars, this fine performance by the Tokyo Embassy Choir takes me home. These harmonies of classic a cappella and liturgical music are a touchstone that awakens devotion even though I've abandoned any literal interpretation of the texts.

Throughout the evening, I am deeply touched. Unexpected goosebumps. Welling eyes. A little zap running down the spine. After the applause fades, I rise and shuffle toward the exit with the crowd. Back on the Omotesando sidewalk, clear lights glow in the branches of the Zelkova trees lining the avenue leading to the Meiji Shrine and reflect from every shiny surface. Floating ten centimetres above the pavement, I turn toward home, my heart alive with singing.



Christmas Eve in Tokyo. (photo by author).

As Christmas Day falls on a Sunday during my stay, many people have the day off. Therefore, evening trains are packed to near rush-hour levels when I venture out, but I don't have far to go and don't mind. After a deeply satisfying Christmas brunch at a nearby restaurant and a traditional post-prandial nap back in my *apato*, I am bound for the *Megurogawa Minna no Illumination*. For two kilometers between Gotanda and Osaki Stations, *sakura* trees along both banks of the Meguro River have been strung with more than 400,000 pink lights which glow overhead and glimmer again in the black water.

Based on the congested train car, I expect crowds. To my surprise the walkway is deserted. Perhaps the night is too cold for the locals. For a Canadian, ten degrees is no hardship, and I'm content to have the river-walk largely to myself. Soon lost in reflection, I realize that it's still yesterday, still Christmas Eve in Canada. *Heiligabend*. Holy Evening. Quietly humming German carols I learned in childhood, I reminisce.

O MAGNUM MYSTERIUM

While New Year is the main event for which Tokyo essentially shuts down as families visit temples and gather to celebrate in their ancestral homes, the Japanese have also embraced the brilliant commercial opportunity Western Christmas affords, albeit in rebranded fashion.

Christmas Eve is an important date-night for couples, and Christmas Day is a workday not a holiday. It's marked not with turkey, but with buckets of KFC due to brilliant marketing on the part of Japan's first Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant manager.

Dessert is a sponge cake that is stale the next day, and the origin of the insult *Kurisumasu-kēki* for single women older than twenty-five—no one wants cake after the twenty-fifth.



Tokyo Christmas display. (photo by author).



Some of the 400.000 lights (photo by author).

Memories of Christmases past and loved ones lost gather into the rose-coloured reverie. Somehow, I contain both here and there as well as then and now in the same moment. *O magnum mysterium.*

My childhood Christmas Eve always included a church service. At its conclusion all children received a small gift from their Sunday school teacher as well as a paper bag full of nuts, candies and a single Japanese orange. Back at our house, our bedtime pushed back, this was followed by refreshments: my mother's beautiful, braided nut-bread, iced and sprinkled with walnuts; bowls of nuts, candies, chocolates and always (but only once a year) one heaped with more Japanese oranges. Sometimes we sang again, the tree presiding fragrant and resplendent in the room. After we were thoroughly stuffed and abed, carolers arrived to serenade us in the darkness.

As the lighted river-walk approaches Osaki Station, I don't wish to lose the mood by catching the train home. Instead, I turn, cross the bridge and retrace my steps to Gotanda Station on the opposite bank. In keeping with my own long-held traditions, waiting at home is a small spread reminiscent of those bygone days—including a Sweet Thea fruit cake I had the foresight to bring with me. Flowers and green branches brought home from the year's final classes add a festive touch. One marked difference however, this year I have bought farm-fresh mandarins. Another is the chilled half-bottle of champagne. No Mennonite tradition that, but a benediction, nonetheless. The fairy lights and tree glow as candles flicker. My laptop screen stands in for a crackling fireplace, and ancient carols burned into a flash drive serenade me as I nibble and sip. *In dulce jubilo, nun singet und seid froh.* •

Adapted from **LYNDA GRACE PHILIPPSEN'S** forthcoming book **Tokyo Reverie** (current working title), a memoir based on her experiences while living and studying ikebana in Tokyo.

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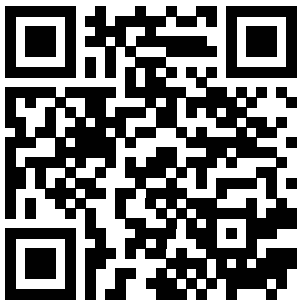
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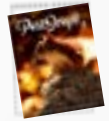
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POSTCARDS FROM BCRTA MEMBERS



So much fun camping at Manning Provincial Park! Pristine lakes, sub-alpine meadows, a colony of wild rhododendrons and local wildlife. Come check it out! It's very close to the Lower Mainland - it's just off the Hope-Princeton Highway. Open year-round: hike, canoe, ski, swim, breathe mountain air. P.S. they also have a hotel, cabins, chalets and restaurants!

Louise Herle



Editor, PostScript Magazine

100 - 550 West 6th Ave

Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2

POSTCARD

Hello from the luckiest place on the west coast. with views to Mt. Baker in the USA and the famous White Rock - come see it at the White Rock beach.

Cheers.

Tom Hastie



Editor, PostScript

Wish You Were Here

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COWICHAN SCHOOLS

BY CAROLYN PRELLWITZ

The Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society was formed in 2007 by retired teachers and school district staff with three purposes:

- To research all the available information about schools in the Valley.
- To collect historical documentation and ensure it is stored in an appropriate facility, so it is safe and available to other researchers in the future; and
- To inform the public about the importance of educational history here in the Valley.

Since 2007, the Society has made good progress in meeting its purposes. Members have documented over 200 former schools--both public and private--within the borders of the current School District

No. 79 (Cowichan Valley). Many of these former schoolhouses are no longer in existence. Some deteriorated, some were moved to new locations, some were dismantled, some burned completely to the ground, and some are still with us today but in a new format (private home, community hall, childcare centre, etc.). The earliest school, circa 1849, was Green Point Indian School at the southern tip of Mount Tzouhalem and was taught by Father Lamphrier.

The oldest school still standing in the Valley is that of the 2nd Cowichan Station School, also known as Koksilah School, built in 1885 for \$385 on Koksilah Road on property belonging to pioneer James Mearns. It closed in 1895, and the land reverted to the original homestead with the schoolhouse used as a home for the farm manager.



Oyster School, c. 1906 (later called Saltair School, then Mount Brenton School)

In 1977 the schoolhouse building was moved to its current site beside the Fairbridge Farm Chapel on Fairbridge Drive, Duncan.

We have collected hundreds of archival records in the form of schoolhouse photos, school class photos, school registers, school newspapers, school yearbooks, as well as newspaper clippings detailing events and activities at each of the schools we have uncovered. All of these items have been transferred to the Cowichan Valley Museum Archives to a specific fonds (collection) labelled in the name of the Society. This fonds is now available for review by other school researchers via an appointment with the Archives staff.

Lastly, many articles on our discoveries and research have been published in the former Cowichan Leader and the current Cowichan Valley Citizen newspapers, as well as the Cowichan Valley Voice magazine, South Cowichan Life magazine, BC History magazine, and the BCRTA Postscript magazine. Copies of many of these articles, together with both schoolhouse and student class photos, can be viewed on our public website: www.cowichanvalleyschoolsheritagesociety.com.

In 2012 our Society made the decision to honour former schools with signage placed as close as possible to the original site of the former school. We felt the signage should feature two items which, even in this era of digitization and technology, are still recognized symbols of a school, the old hand-held school bell and the red-coloured one-room schoolhouse.

We first had to choose which of the former schools should have signage. The former Duncan High School was a definite choice. We knew exactly where the school had stood, and we knew there were still many in the community alive today who attended this school before it burned to the ground in March 1946. The same rationale applied to the former Lake Cowichan Superior, Mount Brenton Elementary, Bayview Primary, and Cobble Hill II Schools.

Other schools were so remote that we thought that very few community members would actually see the signage. We worried, too, that some would use the signage as great for target practice. Mount Sicker School, for example, operated between 1901



Kokuliah School, c. 1960



Queen Margaret's School, 1921

and 1910 at the Mount Sicker townsite, the fourth largest townsite on Vancouver Island in 1901. Today, any visible traces of that former townsite and school on Mount Sicker have been erased by salvage, vandalism, weather, logging, and natural forest regrowth, so this school was not chosen for signage.

We also needed confirmation that our locations for former schools were correct. This was not always easy, particularly with those schools attached to temporary logging or sawmill camps. We have yet to find traces of Lakeshaw School which operated 1930-1932 at mile 53.9 on the E & N railway between Kinsol and Deerholme, as well as Benallack School which operated 1925-1934 at mile



65.4 on the CNR railway track between Duncan and Lake Cowichan, so neither of these schools was chosen for our signage project.

And lastly, we needed to work with local government authorities for permission to put up some of the signs, as well as get signed agreements with current owners of the properties where the former schools once stood. Where permission was unobtainable, those schools were not chosen. It was all a very time-consuming person-to-person process, and through the COVID years as well!

It has taken us 12 years, but we have been successful in having our school-bell-shaped signs placed at the sites of 61 former schools.

Our signage now appears to be an important part of Cowichan Valley history. More and more persons are discovering these signs on their own and asking about the schools named in the signs. Our website is much used for information and local community members have recalled schools and commented positively on the signage on Facebook. All this has been gratifying to current members of the Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society. It confirms our suspicions that community members do not want former schools in the Valley forgotten.

The cooperation and assistance of the maintenance department of School District 79 (Cowichan Valley) has been much valued.

We are also very grateful to the BCRTA Heritage Committee for the heritage grant monies which allowed us to carry out our signage project over that past 12 years. Thank you.

To conclude our signage project, a printed booklet was compiled, featuring the 61 former schools that have signage, as well as listing all the schools without signage. Copies of the booklet were given to the local school district, the BCRTA Heritage Committee, every museum, archives, and local government in the Cowichan Valley, and to each property owner where a former school was once sited.

CAROLYN PRELLWITZ serves on the BCRTA Pensions & Benefits Committee and is a presenter at our Pre-Retirement Pensions and Benefits Workshops. She lives in the Cowichan Valley. Photos provided by author and CVSHS.

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POLYPHARMACY

Taking Too Many Medications Can Pose Health Risks. Here's How to Avoid Them.

BY CAROLINE SIROIS



When we see an older family member handling a bulky box of medications sorted by day of the week, we might stop and wonder, is it too much? How do all those pills interact?

The fact is, as we get older we are more likely to develop different chronic illnesses that require us to take several different medications. This is known as polypharmacy. The concept applies to people taking five or more medications, but there are all

sorts of definitions with different thresholds (for example, four, 10 or 15 medicines).

I'm a pharmacist and pharmacoepidemiologist interested in polypharmacy and its impact on the population. The research I carry out with my team at the Faculty of Pharmacy at Université Laval focuses on the appropriate use of medication by older family members. We have published this study on the perceptions of older adults, family carers and clinicians on the use of medication among persons over 65.

POLYPHARMACY AMONG OLDER ADULTS

Polypharmacy is very common among older adults. In 2021, a quarter of persons over 65 in Canada were prescribed more than ten different classes of medication. In Québec, persons over 65 used an average of 8.7 different drugs in 2016, the latest year available for statistics.

Is it a good idea to take so many drugs?

According to our study, the vast majority of seniors and family caregivers would be willing to stop taking one or more medications if the doctor said it was possible, even though most are satisfied with their treatments, have confidence in their doctors and feel that their doctors are taking care of them to the best of their ability.

In the majority of cases, medicine prescribers are helping the person they are treating. Medications have a positive impact on health and are essential in many cases. But while the treatment of individual illnesses is often adequate, the whole package can sometimes become problematic.

THE RISKS OF POLYPHARMACY: 5 POINTS TO CONSIDER

When we evaluate cases of polypharmacy, we find that the quality of treatment is often compromised when many medications are being taken.

1. Drug interactions: polypharmacy increases the risk of drugs interacting, which can lead to undesirable effects or reduce the effectiveness of treatments.
2. A drug that has a positive effect on one illness may have a negative effect on another: what should you do if someone has both illnesses?
3. The greater the number of drugs taken, the greater the risk of undesirable effects: for adults over 65, for example, there is an increased risk of confusion or falls, which have significant consequences.
4. The more medications a person takes, the more likely they are to take a potentially inappropriate medication. For seniors, these drugs generally carry more risks than benefits.



While the treatment of individual illnesses is often adequate, the whole package can sometimes become problematic...

For example, benzodiazepines, medicine for anxiety or sleep, are the most frequently used class of medications. We want to reduce their use as much as possible to avoid negative impacts such as confusion and increased risk of falls and car accidents, not to mention the risk of dependence and death.

5. Finally, polypharmacy is associated with various adverse health effects, such as an increase in frailty, hospital admissions and emergency room visits. However, studies conducted to date have not always succeeded in isolating the effects specific to polypharmacy. As polypharmacy is more common among people with multiple illnesses, these illnesses may also contribute to the observed risks.

Polypharmacy is also a combination of medicines. There are almost as many as there are people. The risks of these different combinations can vary. For example, the risks associated with a

Every medication we take must have direct or future benefits that outweigh the risks associated with them.

combination of five potentially inappropriate drugs would certainly be different from those associated with blood pressure medication and vitamin supplements.

Polypharmacy is therefore complex. Our studies attempt to use artificial intelligence to manage this complexity and identify combinations associated with negative impacts. There is still a lot to learn about polypharmacy and its impact on health.

3 TIPS TO AVOID THE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH POLYPHARMACY

What can we do as a patient, or as a caregiver?

1. Ask questions: when you or someone close to you is prescribed a new treatment, be curious. What are the benefits of the medication? What are the possible side effects? Does this fit in with my treatment goals and values? How long should this treatment last? Are there any circumstances in which discontinuing it should be considered?
2. Keep your medicines up to date: make sure they are all still useful. Are there still any benefits to taking them? Are there any side effects? Are there any drug interactions? Would another treatment be better? Should the dose be reduced?

3. Think about de-prescribing: this is an increasingly common clinical practice that involves stopping or reducing the dose of an inappropriate drug after consulting a health-care professional. It is a shared decision-making process that involves the patient, their family and health-care professionals. The Canadian Medication Appropriateness and Deprescribing Network is a world leader in this practice. It has compiled a number of tools for patients and clinicians. You can find them on their website and subscribe to the newsletter.

BENEFITS SHOULD OUTWEIGH THE RISKS

Medications are very useful for staying healthy. It's not uncommon for us to have to take more medications as we age, but this shouldn't be seen as a foregone conclusion.

Every medication we take must have direct or future benefits that outweigh the risks associated with them. As with many other issues, when it comes to polypharmacy, the saying, "everything in moderation," frequently applies. •

CAROLINE SIROIS is a pharmacist and pharmacoepidemiologist at the Faculty of Pharmacy at Université Laval.

This article first appeared in **Good Times Magazine** - reprinted with permission.

RESOURCES

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EMERGENCIES HAPPEN



PREPARATION IS SOMETHING WE CAN ALL DO

BY DEBBIE PAGE

Many residents of the province have felt the effects of natural disasters over the last few years. Wildfires impact different areas in the province every summer; 2023 was BC's worst fire season on record, and 2024 the 3rd or 4th worst. I don't think I'll soon forget the shock of going into a grocery store in Prince George in November, 2021 and seeing virtually nothing in the fresh foods departments. Floods in the Fraser River Valley had cut off major supply chains.

Added to these ever-more-frequent weather-related disasters is the risk of a major earthquake with attendant tsunamis. Until the 1980's, scientists thought earthquakes in our area were always small to moderate, with earthquakes causing structural damage about every decade or so. Then they

discovered that very severe earthquakes with attendant tsunamis, called megathrust events, occur about every 350-600 years. The last one was in 1700.

Less-serious events can also threaten our safety. As our weather becomes more extreme, longer power outages become more likely, which can lead to health- or life-threatening cold or heat, depending on where we live.

We clearly need to have plans in place to deal with emergencies. There is no 'one size fits all solution' for every home in the province, however there are two categories of emergencies. One involves being in your own home without services. The other involves needing to leave your home because of an evacuation order, or because of severe damage.

DEBBIE PAGE is a member of the BCRTA Communications and Well-being Committees and Past President of the Prince George branch.

SURVIVAL

Ask yourself how you would survive without electricity (no heat or air-conditioning), water, or fuel for extended periods in your own home. Evacuation orders can come quickly and create an air of panic and indecision. Being prepared with a grab-and-go bag can reduce the stress of an evacuation order considerably. Do you have copies of all your essential documents in one place, perhaps a binder? Do you have a plan for where to go for help in the event of a disaster. Many communities have “muster centres” or “disaster support hubs”—do you and your family members know where your closest one is? What about disabled members in your building or neighbourhood—do you know who will need help? Are you disabled? If so, have you arranged support in the case of an emergency? Have you thought about your pets or livestock?

TAKING ACTION

At this point, you may feel overwhelmed. There’s no need to panic—help is at hand! To take one example, the City of Vancouver identifies five steps to take in order:

- Know Your Hazards
- Make Your Plan
- Gather Your Supplies
- Stay Informed
- Get to Know Your Neighbours

The Province of British Columbia has very detailed guides for emergency preparedness, and many cities and areas also have their own plans in place, so you can consult the Provincial guidelines through the links here, and can look at your local guides as well.

Consider getting together with friends or family to begin this process. Any plan is better than no plan, and you can start with small choices right now, building toward preparedness and peace of mind. •



RESOURCES

PreparedBC offers downloadable guides and fill-in-the-blank plans to help you prepare for emergencies. There are 14 guides for everything from making an emergency plan, to preparing for your pets, to working with your neighbours. This is the place to start, with links to many aspects of disaster preparedness.

Search “preparedBC” for general information and the guides

During an emergency, the government of BC will have updates at:

<https://www.emergencyinfbc.gov.bc.ca/>

Your local town or city may have a Disaster Hub information page on its website. Bookmark it on your browser.

Real-time Emergency Alerts may also be sent to your smart phone by government agencies.



DID YOU KNOW?

FASCINATING HEALTH FACTS

BY PAT THIESEN

BCRTA WELL-BEING COMMITTEE

SPLISH, SPLASH I'M TAKING ... ZZZZ

Baths and showers before bed can help you sleep. Researchers in Texas discovered that a hot bath 1-2 hours before bedtime helped people fall asleep more easily, especially with lower light. Surprisingly, cold water can help, too. One suggestion is to take a quick, cold shower after a hot bath, because “Heat followed by cold causes a kind of shiver that the brain perceives as fatigue.” Finally, showers before bed, especially with calming herbs like eucalyptus hanging in the steam (not in the water), can help reset your circadian rhythm.

Search on: “Good Times Bath and Bed”

<https://goodtimes.ca/bath-and-bed/>

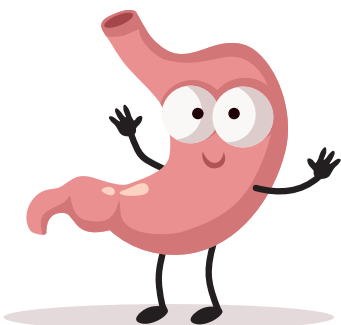


HAPPY BUGS, HAPPY TUMMY!

Happy microorganisms that live in your digestive tract are vital to gut health. Probiotics, the “good” bacteria and yeasts in your gut microbiome, come with significant health benefits such as helping to prevent antibiotic-associated diarrhea, soothing symptoms of IBS (irritable bowel syndrome) and colitis, boosting your immune system, and reducing irritation and allergies. A probiotic-rich diet (which helps produce lower levels of LDL, or the “bad” cholesterol in the body) will also help lower blood pressure and body fat. Because antibiotics kill off both “good” and “bad” bacteria while fighting infection, taking probiotics in capsule form during and after antibiotic treatment can help to keep more of the “good” ones in the digestive tract. Foods rich in probiotics include yogurt, kosher pickled veggies and sauerkraut, miso, and kimchi.

Search on: “Mayo Clinic Introduction to Probiotics”

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/an-introduction-to-probiotics>



TARGETING ALZHEIMER'S

Alzheimer's disease treatment has been marked by several drugs that have failed clinical trials but in July 2023 the FDA granted full approval for a new drug called Leqembi. Manufactured by the pharmaceutical companies Eisai and Biogen, it is the first drug that has shown to slow cognitive decline in early Alzheimer's patients. Leqembi works by targeting amyloid beta, the main component of the amyloid plaques found in the brains of Alzheimer's patients. It marks the plaques for clearance by the body's immune system, thereby slowing cognitive decline.



Search on: "ABC news Alzheimer's Lecanemab "

<https://abcnews.go.com/Health/new-data-shows-alzheimers-drug-slow-cognitive-decline/story?id=94167945>



PROTON BEAM THERAPY FOR CANCER

Most radiation-based cancer treatment is delivered via x-rays. However, x-rays can affect otherwise healthy organs and tissues. Proton Beam Therapy (PBT) reduces the radiation exposure to non-cancerous tissues. PBT is available widely in the USA and increasing European and other countries. For now, Canadians need to travel for this therapy. Some provinces will pay for this treatment for certain patients. However, costs would be lower with a Canadian facility. Currently, plans are in the works for such a facility in Ontario.

Search on: "Good Times Proton Beam Therapy"

<https://goodtimes.ca/proton-beam-therapy-a-modern-treatment-for-cancer-but-not-in-canada-yet/>

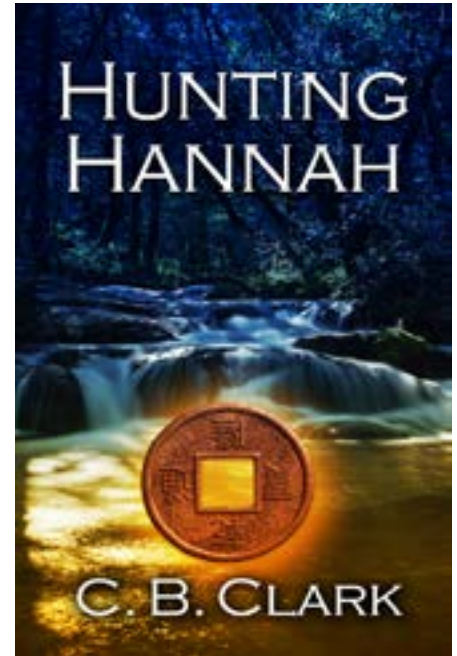
books OF NOTE

HUNTING HANNAH

by C.B. Clark

When investigative journalist Hannah Marchand is assigned a story twelve hundred kilometers north at a remote archaeological site, she's less than thrilled. A story on an excavation in northern BC won't garner her the coveted front page, though it will get her away from the ex-boyfriend who's stalking her. Indigenous archaeologist Roman Patrick's career was nearly destroyed. It's taken him five years to rebuild his reputation and be entrusted with running another excavation. Despite the handsome archaeologist's animosity toward reporters, unbridled attraction flares. But Hannah suspects her stalker has followed her, determined to seek revenge.

Available from Amazon for Kindle and in paperback



JOHN HENRY'S GUIDE TO BACKCOUNTRY ADVENTURE IN CATHEDRAL PARK

by John Henry

If you're planning a visit to Cathedral Park in BC, chances are you already know of its rich biodiversity, breathtaking alpine vistas, and clear, cold lakes. But whether you're a seasoned outdoorsperson familiar with the area or a beginner camper looking to check a new park off your list, there is no better manual than *John Henry's Guide to Backcountry Adventure in Cathedral Park*. Mr. Henry's own experiences in the park help bolster the useful advice and expansive information presented here about one of the greatest natural treasures of the Southern Interior of British Columbia. Concise, thorough, and organized, this carry-along guide is sure to prove indispensable to visitors to Cathedral Park, current or aspiring.

Published by Friesen Press



BLACK SUNFLOWERS by Cynthia LeBrun

Inspired by a real-life story, *Black Sunflowers* illuminates one of the darkest times in Ukrainian history: the Holodomor or “death by hunger.” The book begins in 1928, in Soviet-occupied Ukraine, where Veronika and her family live on their farm in the close-knit village of Kuzmin. Life is good, despite the Soviet occupation, but soon everything they have known and loved is not just altered, but demolished. Told in two voices, Veronika’s and her father, Janek’s, *Black Sunflowers* is a vivid account of the brutal realities of life in Ukraine under Stalin. Veronika and Janek’s story is a haunting, yet uplifting, testimony to the strength and humanity of the people of Ukraine that will stay with you long after you’ve turned the last page.

Cynthia LeBrun, a retired teacher from Campbell River School District, is now a full-time historical fiction writer. This award-winning book is based on the life of Cynthia’s mother-in-law, Veronika and twenty years of academic research of both Soviet and Nazi German-occupied Ukraine.

Available from Amazon and your local bookstore

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

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PostScript

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Print Releaf sponsors reforestation and carbon storage projects around the world, including the BC's Cariboo, where they are currently reforesting areas with native species like Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir, and Spruce.



CLASSIFIEDS

TRAVEL

CUBA1TOURS of Courtenay, BC invites you to join one of the several different Cuba tours to different areas of the island. All tours are fully escorted and travel is in a spacious, air conditioned bus.

All accommodations are at good hotels and resorts and most meals are included. All tour details for 2024/25 can be found at - www.cuba1tours.com

Tours are run through Square1travel of Courtenay, a full service BC registered agency.

www.cuba1tours.com

DID YOU KNOW? With Trip Merchant, BCRTA members get special offers on group departures to amazing destinations. To see the full list, visit:

bcrta.tripmerchant.ca

If you book a tour with "Enjoy the Journey" and mention the RR Smith Foundation or the BCRTA, you will automatically donate \$10 to RR Smith for a day tour and \$50 for a multi-day tour.

See the "Enjoy the Journey" website and tour catalogue at enjoythejourney.ca.

ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

Character home in Commercial Drive area of Vancouver. Available to rent for the month of February 2025. Two queen bedrooms, two double bedrooms, and one single. Wood burning fireplace. Beautifully renovated kitchen and main bathroom. Media room with 75" TV. Outdoor hot tub. \$6000/month including utilities. Contact dgojevic@yahoo.ca

Heritage house in Alsace-France, Heritage house in Alsace-France, Vosges Mountains, three bedrooms, modern kitchen, wifi, located on wine route, close to Germany (Freiburg) and Switzerland (Basel). Partial cleaning included. CA\$850 per week. Contact mano936@gmail.com

ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

Tri Palms Resort, Palm Desert CA - March 29 to April 30, 2025 . 2-bedroom. 55+ golf resort. Clubhouse, restaurant, pool table, library, card room, pools, hot tubs, tennis, pickleball and shuffleboard. \$1,800/month or \$500/week. Nonsmoking and no pets. Email barbara_grundy@yahoo.com or call 604 855 5536.

OPERA TOURS

The Vancouver Opera Guild invites you to join them on a tour of the English countryside June 11 -23 , 2025.

The 12 day tour starts in London, then Windsor (5 days) with performances at Garsington on the Wormsley Estate (L'Elisir d'Amore-Donizetti, and Queen of Spades- Tchaikovsky) and a performance at Grange Park Opera of Mazeppa-Tchaikovsky. The tour moves to Brighton (5 days) with performances at Glyndebourne, (Parsifal - Wagner and Il Barbiere di Siviglia - Rossini). Performances include dinner or picnic.

Excursions include a tour of the State Apartments at Windsor Castle, a day travelling through the Cotswolds and a visit to Sudeley Castle, the RHS gardens at Wisley en route to Brighton, a journey along the south coast to Hastings and Battle Abbey and a visit to Leeds Castle.

Great Expeditions 604 267 2040 for more details.

www.vancouveroperaguild.com

VOLUNTEER

The Literacy Circle is seeking certified teachers to teach English literacy skills to Indigenous adults at various school levels. We also seek a Learners' Advocate, please see our website for more information about this position. Classes continue in Victoria and Nanaimo, with expansion plans for Vancouver Island, including Cowichan!

For more information and to apply, visit us at www.theliteracycircle.ca

BCRTA MEMBER DISCOUNTS

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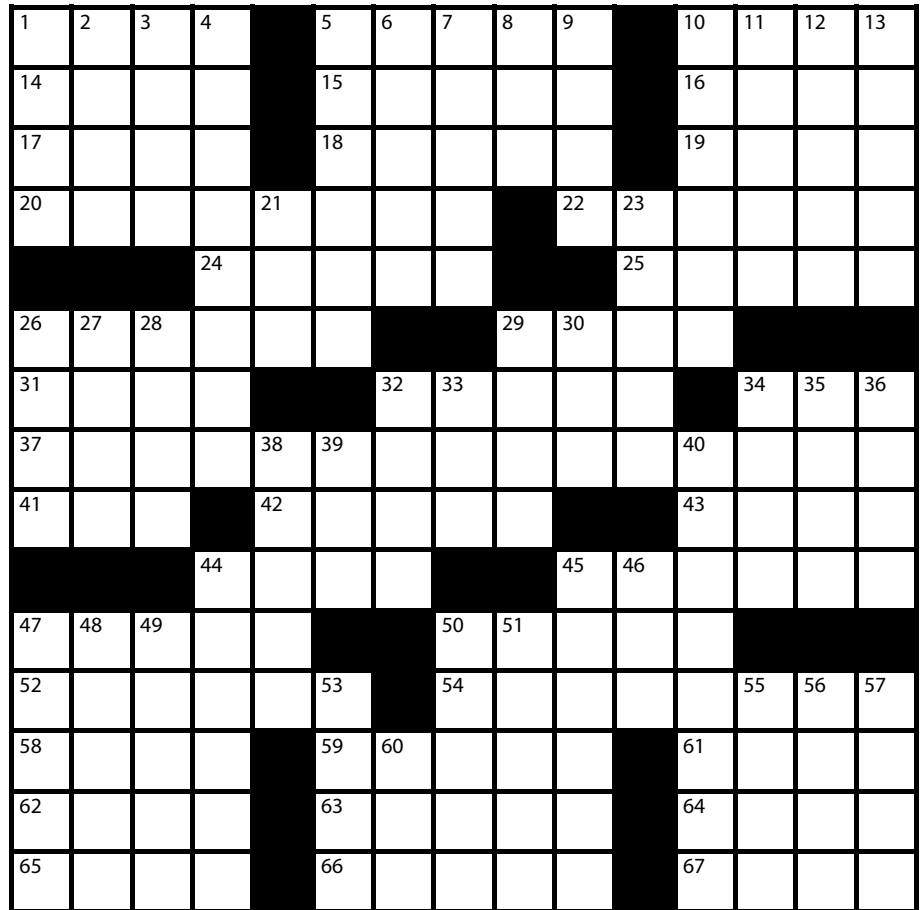
To get the ESM Mobile App on your smart phone, download from Apple App Store (iPhone) or Google Play (Android). You will be asked for the BCRTA "Organization Code". It is "bcrta".

crossword

Let it Slip

By Lynn Hembree

Email: crossword@bcrrta.ca



ACROSS

1. Recipe abbr.
5. Tuna or dynamite rolls
10. Spill or overflow, as a pail
14. Seed known as canola in Canada
15. Mr. Quinn may be best known "___"
(2 wds)
16. Nickname for Theresa
17. On the safe side
18. Edible dog
19. Drops from the sky
20. Walleye
22. Small upright piano
24. One European thrush (2 wds)
25. Foreword, for short
26. Chinese cafe in Richmond
29. Belted out a tune
31. Hodgepodge
32. Draft holder
34. ___ Beta Kappa
37. Reunited (2 wds)
41. "If I Ruled the World" rapper
42. Emitted sunbeams?
43. ___-Canadian
44. Arid
45. Lab burner?
47. Steady for a fall
50. Complaints
52. Voice box
54. Course taker
58. Passage to an underground mine
59. "Are you ___ to go, yet?"
61. Bit
62. Hard hit to the head, in London
63. Cancel
64. Vancouver stadium, familiarly
65. "Trick" joint
66. Affirmatives
67. Buzzing pest

DOWN

1. Catch
2. "___ Ha"i"
3. Particular, for short
4. Game that makes a baby giggle?
5. Like some cows
6. One who puts you in your place
7. Oil accident
8. ___ 9000, "2001" AI
9. "How sweet ___!" (2 wds)
10. Type of 50-down
11. Inclined, in the UK
12. Uncommon surname in Netherlands
or France
13. Type of 50-down
21. Australian runner
23. Auricle (see 39-down)
26. Coloured, like 13-down?
27. "Enchanted" girl in a 2004 film
28. Counterparts of dahs
29. Pit
30. Balloon necessity
32. Eye affliction
33. Not just "a"
34. Pots'n'___
35. Conceal
36. Knowing, as a secret (2 wds)
38. Type of 50-down
39. Ring bearer, maybe
40. Singapore cocktail (2 wds)
44. Farm tool
45. Emerald and aquamarine
46. Amateur video subject, perhaps
47. Type of 50-down
48. Danger in a uranium mine
49. Come to light
50. End of saying, with 7-down and
33-down,
51. Invest, formally
53. Inside shot?
55. Advance
56. ___ James, jazz/gospel singer
57. ___Enders, BBC soap since 1985
60. Sechelt from Nanaimo dir.

See the crossword solution at bcrrta.ca/crossword AFTER Jan 31

Sudoku

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

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

TO SOLVE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

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

SEND COMPLETED PUZZLES TO:

100 – 550 West 6th Avenue,
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2

FOR MORE ONLINE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

www.websudoku.com/

DEADLINE FOR SUDOKU AND CROSSWORD SUBMISSION IS:

January 31, 2025

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

Crossword:

Doug Hillson, Langley
Susan Dickson, Vancouver
Leona Skovgaard, Burnaby

Sudoku:

Sharon Clement, Kootenay/Columbia
Deborah Nicholson, Central Okanagan
Doris Hewitson, Central Okanagan

SUMMER 2024 CROSSWORD SOLUTION

1	C	2	O	3	C	4	A		5	P	6	I	7	L	8	E	9	D		10	Y	11	E	12	T	13	I	
14	U	P	O	N					15	T	W	I	C	E						16	A	M	E	N				
17	B	A	C	K		18	G	A	M	M	O	N							19	M	I	S	T					
20	A	L	O	H	A					21	A	T	O		22	A	S	T	T	O								
						23	G		24	L	25	A		26	A	M	P											
						27	B	R	A	I	N	E	X	E	R	30	C	I	S	E								
34	S	L	O	E					36	F	O	X			37	I	L	L	E	R								
38	L	O	U	D					39	T	A	C	I	T					42	A	L	L	O					
43	A	T	R	I	A				44					45	E	T	H		46	N	B	A	S					
47	M	I	N	D	C		48	H	49	A	L	L	E	N	50	G	E											
									51	M	A	R			52	L	E	I										
53	L	I	S	T	E	R	I	A						58	S	A	G	A	S									
63	I	D	E	A					64	A	S	C	E	T	I	C	I	S	M									
67	F	L	A	B					68	S	T	E	E	R				69	T	R	I	O						
70	E	E	L	S					71	S	O	R	R	Y				72	S	L	A	G						

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Obituaries

Location listed is the area given as "last taught"



Archibald, Lynda	Cariboo-Chilcotin	Gardner, Wilda	Kindersley SK
Aspinall , David M.	Central Okanagan	Gibson, Corinne	Nanaimo
Bahrey, David	Richmond	Gilpin, Allan	Vancouver
Baldwin, Maria	Greater Victoria	Gowan, Julia	Gold Trail
Beaver, Donald	Central Okanagan	Harper, Irene	Powell River
Beck, Memory	Greater Victoria	Harris, Brigitte	Powell River
Beckwith, April	Coquitlam	Horner, R. William	N. Okanagan-Shuswap
Boardman, Basil J.	Greater Victoria	Janzen, Victor Henry	Chilliwack
Boyte, Gwendolyn H.	Sunshine Coast	Johnstad, Sandra	Campbell River
Burgess , Tami Jean	Vernon	Kristiansen, Elaine	Mission
Bussanich, Anthony Robert	Coast Mountain	Langton, Kenneth	Surrey
Button, Christine Alexis	Campbell River	Lapadat, Sharleen	Nanaimo
Caron, Marilyn Jane	Quesnel	Lehan, Barbara	Vancouver
Carradice, I.M. Rene	Chilliwack	Lewis, Blaine	Maple Ridge/Pitt M.
Cliffe, James A.	Surrey	Lewis, Catherine	Richmond
Comerford, Lois	Langley	Martin, Huia	Stikine
Comfort, David	Coast Mountain	Mason, Shirley	Burnaby
Conroy, Donald	Maple Ridge/Pitt M.	McCuaig, Ralph Scott	Delta
De Bruin , Lyvonne	Quesnel	Mori, Diane Harumi	Prince George
Dhur, Zoe	Greater Victoria	Morrison, Hugh	Abbotsford
Dupre, Glen	Fraser-Cascade	Muir, Agnes G.	Vancouver
Erdmann, Marilyn	Vernon	Murray, Norman Brian	Sooke
Francis, Philip G.	Langley	Muter, Robert Ian	Delta

Newman, John Ward	Nanaimo	Taylor, Robert W.	Richmond
Nielsen, Jorgen	Burnaby	The, Janis	Richmond
Odin, Douglas	Delta	Traboulay, Joanne	Beneficiary
Orsetti, Marion	Delta	Travers, Linda	Greater Victoria
Park, Sheila	Kamloops	Tribe, Christine	Coquitlam
Parker, Douglas V.	Greater Victoria	Trotman, Gail	Surrey
Pastro, Kenneth R.	Abbotsford	Urquhart, Donald	Langley
Pettovello, Sestilia Jean	Surrey	Verma, Des	Kamloops
Pousett, Joyce	Surrey	Wall, Susan	Cent. Okanagan
Proctor, Karen	Nanaimo	Winkenhower, Robert J.	Sooke
Robertson, Keith	Cowichan Valley	Wood, Mignonne	Burnaby
Rogers, Homer John	Revelstoke	Worley, Raymond J.	Vernon
Rogers, Matthew	Delta		
Ross, Michael Laurence	Coquitlam		
Sakiyama, Noboru	Delta		
Scharf, Brian H.	Vancouver		
Schmidt, Howard	Cowichan Valley		
Smith, Felicity	Parksville-Qualicum		
Smith, Rose	Vancouver		
Somerville, Sharron	Cowichan Valley		
St. Clair, Pauline E.	Greater Victoria		
Stratholt, Leo M.	Greater Victoria		
Sunnus, Joan	Surrey		
Swanson, Sandra	Campbell River		

Cartoon Corner

BY MERV MAGUS



I WONDERED HOW THE SCHOOL DISTRICT WOULD MAKE UP THE BUDGET SHORTFALL.



This car is so "high tech", that I had to take a computer course to figure out how to drive it.



I needed some help, so I took a number. But before the teacher got to me, the ticket expired.



Spelling mistakes? It's the pen's fault! It doesn't have a "spell check" installed.

MERV MAGUS is a retired teacher from SD 41 Burnaby and a free-lance cartoonist.



RR SMITH GRANTS SUPPORT TIDEPOLS AQUARIUM (FORMERLY THE NICHOLAS SONTAG MARINE EDUCATION CENTRE) GIBSONS, BC

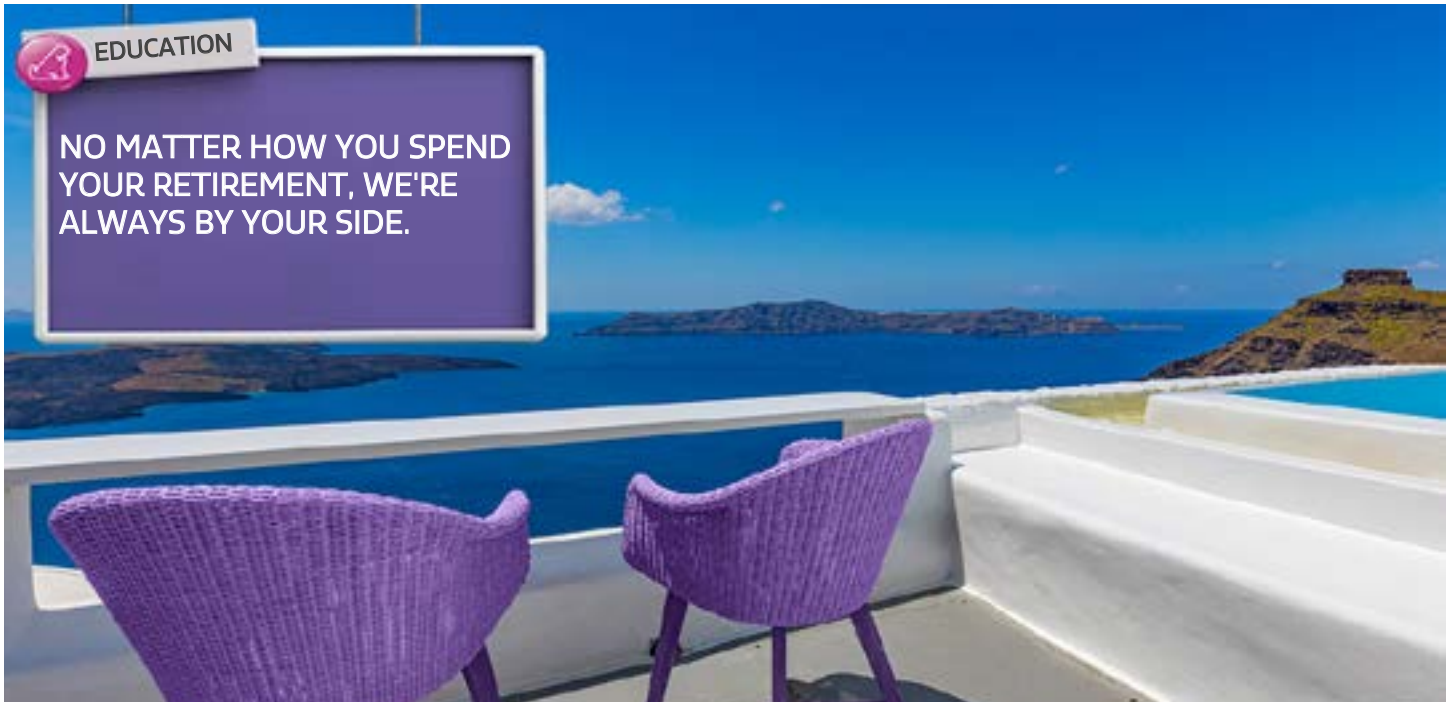


"I am reaching out to let you know that funds from our RR Smith grant were used to help purchase equipment for our new educational listening station at Tidepools Aquarium. The equipment was unveiled on Saturday World Oceans Day and it enables visitors to listen to the sounds in our ocean both natural and man made such as from ships and barges. We are very excited to have this listening station at our aquarium. Soon Raincoast will open a listening station on the Sunshine Coast so we will be listening to sounds from our local waters."

Pam Robertson – on behalf of Tidepools Aquarium, Gibsons, BC, June, 2024

Several 'fish plaques' at the Tidepools Aquarium publicly acknowledge the contribution of the RR Smith Charitable Foundation to the extensive youth education programme of this much valued Sunshine Coast facility.

Learn more at www.rrsmith.ca



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