

# THE GOOD LIFE

The Newsletter of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Retired Teachers' Association November 2011

## NLRTA 2011-2012 Executive

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Health & Housing .. Leah Bradford  
Heritage ..... Vicki Harrison  
Media ..... Deryck Cowling  
Membership ..... Jim Young  
Newsletter Editor ..... Les Ellis  
Social ..... Pat Hogue  
Sunshine ..... Cheryle Sosnowski



## President's Message

Fall is officially here, but I hope that despite the less than spectacular weather you were able to enjoy the summer months.

This year's AGM in June saw most of the previous Executive remaining at their posts and although there were a couple of changes in position and one resignation I think you will find your new Executive ready, willing and able to make the coming year as successful as the last one. The position of Second Vice-President has been taken over by one of our new members Marianne Clarkson, while Cheryle Sosnowski has taken over from our long time Sunshine Man, Ed Sandland.

In many different ways our members continue to help kids, through donations of money and time. As we have throughout our history, three awards were presented to graduating students in the Nanaimo-Ladysmith School District, who are going on to post secondary studies and as we usually do we received a personal thank you from each. Just prior to the beginning of the new school year several of our members volunteered to put school supplies from Staples into backpacks for the Stock the Lockers campaign of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith Schools Foundation. Other members helped on the Foundation's Mini-O program for disabled students in June. As well, there are four members who sit on the current Board of the Foundation.

Three Executive members worked at putting together a package of pertinent information about our organization that was given to this year's retirees when Pat Hogue and I, as your reps had the pleasure of attending the NDTA Retirement Dinner in June. We enjoyed visiting each of the tables, meeting the retirees and inviting them to come to the 'To Hell with the Bell' Breakfast. A good number of them did take us up on either their personal invitation, or the written one that is sent out later in the summer. Those who did attend the Breakfast were treated to an absolutely delicious meal especially prepared for them by our wonderful 'The Good Cooking Guys'.

On another note, when you are considering your charitable donations I hope you will consider giving some of it to support either the Skipsey Educational Collection or the awards that we give to graduating students. It is a simple process, because all you have to do is make a donation of at least \$20, either in cash or by cheque and give it to our Treasurer Linda Willis at a lunch, or drop it off at the NDTA office for her. Just make sure you indicate whether you are donating to the Skipsey Collection or the awards and Linda will make sure that you receive your tax receipt.

Finally, I'd like to say that I look forward to seeing you at our lunches, as well as, any other RTA events that might come up during the year. Enjoy the 'new' year.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any comments, questions or concerns.

Carol Baird-Krul – President

**RTA Annual Conference - September 22nd – 24th, 2011**

**Delegates:** Carol Baird-Krul, Les Ellis, Linda Willis

After opening remarks, Gerry Tiede gave us an informative presentation of the TPP and its challenges and successes. The main problem facing teachers is the ratio of 1 of us to 1.5 active teachers. They have to take the brunt of any increases when we have or will have a shortfall. The Pensions Committee and the BCTF work closely together if increases are needed. Otherwise, we are in as good a position as possible.

Doug Edgar reviewed the BCRTA and Shelia Pither went over the BCRTA financial situation. Our budget this year ended \$13,000 in the black.

Annette O'Conner spoke at length on our new benefits and our pension. If you want to know if they have you registered phone 1-888-275-4672. As the deadline for registration was September 30th, this will be only for information.

There was a lengthy oral and Power Point presentation on RTA members who volunteer. A booklet was also printed and our secretary, Colleen Dewhurst will have a copy or two if you are interested. This group was giving \$2,400.00 to carry on next year.

After lunch there was a presentation by UBC's Dr. Paul Kershaw. He spoke on a new deal for young families (day care, cheaper housing, etc.) that will help the economy and all of us in the end. Currently 5% of seniors live under the poverty line but 39% of children are entering Kindergarten not prepared. A great many of these families are living under the poverty level and do not have proper housing. Check out his blog:  
[blogs.ubc.ca/newdealsforfamilies](http://blogs.ubc.ca/newdealsforfamilies)

Judy DeVries presented membership success awards. Three new branches were inaugurated: 48 –Columbia Valley (Inverness), 49 – Buckley Valley (Smithers) and 50 – Vancouver Island North. Winner for new members in a small local was Prince Rupert, for a medium size local Prince George won and for locals over 500 members Coquitlam won. We received a cheque for \$90.00 which came to \$5.00 for every new member.

Carolyn Prellivitz announced the Golden Star Awards of \$1,000.00 each for four schools. These awards are given to individual classes that work with elders in some meaningful way. We must encourage our schools to enter.

The BC Historical Association gave the BCRTA an Historical Award Certificate for the work we all do in Heritage collections.

Saturday morning began with the RR Smith Memorial Fund Foundation AGM. There was a controversial vote on removing the \$1.00 levy from our fees that goes to this fund. Like the HST it was the process that was questioned as many wish to decide for themselves which charity to support. The motion was defeated. The \$1.00 will automatically be donated each year from you BCRTA dues. This group does fabulous work and that was never in question.

Next, the BCRTA elections. Your new and/or returning executive is as follows: President – Douglas Edgar, 1st Vice-president – Cliff Boldt , 2nd Vice-president – Bob Taverner and Treasurer – C. Tom Brunkner were in by acclimation as were directors of lower mainland and Fraser Valley -Judy De Vries and Sylvia Macleay. Regina Day and Carolyn Prellwitz were elected to represent areas outside of the lower mainland and Fraser Valley. We then proceeded to vote for 15 people to attend the BCTF General Meeting. The executive and the directors automatically attend.

The budget was discussed and a new amount of \$37,000.00 was included so that the executive, the directors and one member from each local could attend the COSCO Conference. The budget passed.

Please see Carol, Les or myself if you have any further questions.

Linda Willis

## BCRTA Annual General Meeting - Elk Valley Motion

At the 2010 AGM the motion that caused the most controversy was the Elk Valley motion to change the inflation adjustment of teachers' pensions to be a uniform dollar amount for everyone, rather than the present system of everyone getting a varying amount based on a percentage of their present pension income. The motion was referred to the Pensions and Benefits Committee to see if this was possible or not.

This motion was presented in all of our newsletters last year and was voted on at our AGM last June.

Included with everyone's summer edition of Postscript was the 2011 Summary of all the BCRTA Committee reports. This included the Pensions and Benefits Committee. Their report turned down the Elk Valley proposal with the following reasoning: 1. to change the payout method would require changing the rules of the plan, which would require legislation; 2. although a person may receive a small teacher's pension, there is no way to know what other income they may derive; 3. teachers already retired could ask that the new system apply only to new retirees, thereby creating a need for two formulas and two sets of calculations, which would increase administration costs; 4. some pensions are as low as \$20 a year, should they get a \$200 a year (1000 per cent) increase; 5. inflation adjustments are designed to protect the purchasing power of all initial pensions.

At this year's AGM a motion was made that all the reports in the booklet were accepted as read. This blanket motion passed and no discussion of the Elk Valley proposal or the Committee's response was heard.

## Yes, Barbara. There is Life after Teaching

Barbara Cowling has been a Life Member of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith RTA for 14 years and has been retired from teaching for over 33 years. Recently she celebrated her 99th birthday at a gathering of family and friends at the Wexford Care Home in Chase River. The day was even more special for her with news of the arrival of her fourth great-grandchild, Zoe.

Barb was born in Wimbledon, England in 1912 but emigrated with her family at an early age to Nova Scotia. She received her teaching certificate from Truro Normal College and began her teaching career at Five Islands in a one-room school housing 29 pupils in grades one through eleven. She joined the Royal Canadian Air Force during WWII and served "overseas" in Newfoundland. After the War she married and began a new life in our West settling in Nanaimo in 1946 where she raised a family of three children, Deryck, Catherine (Kate), and Douglas. She lived in the same family home in Chase River for nearly sixty years only recently moving into Wexford in 2010.

In 1965 Barb returned to teaching by substituting locally, upgrading her qualifications at the University of Victoria, and eventually gaining a full-time teaching position at Chase River Elementary where she taught from 1966 to 1978. Many local teachers—mostly retired now—have fond memories of "winding down" at Barb's place after school on Fridays—a tradition that lasted well into her retirement years. Her home was frequently visited by former pupils as well as they came back to share a cup of tea and fond memories of their time at Chase River Elementary.

Over the years, Barb was active in a number of community organizations including the Chase River PTA, the Chase River and Cedar United churches, the 7-10 Club, the Nanaimo Historical Society and the Nanaimo and District Museum where she is also a Life Member. In 1992 she received the Canada 125th Centennial Medal for her service to Canada.

Always a "lifetime learner", Barbara and some of her senior colleagues enjoyed taking college courses in philosophy, religion and linguistics well into their eighties. One of the family's favourite stories is the time she had to use the PTA funds to post bail after one of Father's up-coast acquaintances ended up in jail after a night on the town.

She now resides at Wexford and continues to enjoy relatively good health, visiting with family and friends, correcting her children's grammar, and delighting them with her keen wit, irreverent poetry and sense of humour.

Deryck Cowling

## Health and Housing

This is a quote from Sylvia MacLeay ( President of the Council of Senior Citizens Organization) on the lobby for Action to scrap Medical Services Plan premiums for Seniors:

*"COSCO and the BCRTA obtained the names and addresses of the 160 Mayors or district leaders in B.C. Each mayor received a personal letter from COSCO written on letterhead paper and signed with pen and ink asking that they vote to remove MSP premiums for seniors.*

*The mayors also received a different, but similar letter from the BCRTA. Although no reply was expected a number of replies were received. So far every letter states that their municipality will support the elimination of MSP premiums for seniors."*

It is now up to you to contact your Mayor or others to give your opinion.

Leah Bradford



## Heritage Committee

We have a remarkable collection!

To date the committee members have pretty much completed the processing and cataloguing of the texts and are working on the memorabilia. In the last year, we opened the collection to the public one afternoon each month, advising the public in the Community News section of the Daily News. While there wasn't a huge response, the enthusiasm when people visited and saw our room was great.

This year we hope to develop our outreach program by finding different ways to bring our unique collection to the community. To do this we need your help in planning such things as school visits, museum program, library displays, lessons on MacLean's writing and any other ideas that you might have to publicly share the collection.

We do have some volunteers ready to help, but need more, so please consider helping us work on this new project.

If you decide to help and we hope you will.....the amount of time you commit to it will be solely up to you.

Please contact Vicki Harrison at 250 754 4981 or email [vharrison55@shaw.ca](mailto:vharrison55@shaw.ca)

## Health and Housing Follow-up, September 2011:

MSP committee Co-Chairs Kube & Lauber are pleased to announce "mission accomplished".

Yesterday the UBCM (Union of BC Municipalities) convention voted to approve North Vancouver's motion to eliminate MSP premiums for British Columbians.

You may remember that the Vancouver motion specified the direction of the funds saved, as far as we know at this point, that motion has been referred for further study.

### In Memoriam: Helen Hedberg

When my husband and I first arrived in Nanaimo in 1958, Helen and Cecil were among the first people we met. As members of St. Andrews United Church and as fellow teachers at Nanaimo District Secondary School, we became good friends and were made to feel welcome in our new home. They introduced us to the unfamiliar tastes of turkey and popcorn, both of which we shared many times with them.

Over the course of 53 years we kept in touch and in 2009 and 2010 attended together the 50 year graduation reunions of our former classes.

With her interest and skill in counseling young people and her involvement in politics and the church, she made many friends and was always a source of wise advice and sympathetic understanding. I have lost a good friend.

- Isabel Hightet

## On Old Age

Those who say old men can do nothing useful completely miss the point - like those who think the pilot has no part in the sailing of the ship. He sits quietly in the stern, merely holding the tiller, while other men are climbing the masts, running about the gangways or manning the pumps. He may not be doing the work of young but what he does is more important. The big things are not done by muscle or speed or physical dexterity but by careful thought, force of character and sound judgment. In these qualities old age is usually not only not lacking but even better equipped.

Life's course is fixed. Nature has but one simple path and that path is run but once. To every part of life is given that which is fitting; and thus the weakness of the little child, the untamed courage of the young man, the seriousness of middle life and the maturity of old age all bear some of Nature's fruit, which must be garnered in its own season.

Cicero



## Bears and Beams Program

The Bears/Beams Program is designed to match volunteer "buddies" with elementary school children who require some extra help with their reading or math skills. The program is not a substitute for teaching assistants or aides.

The 2011/12 program is in the process of being set up and I have had several requests from schools for volunteers.

Most schools are located in South/Central Nanaimo. The time commitment is different for each school, but is normally 2-4 hours per week. We require that each volunteer fill out an application and have a criminal record check (\$10 reimbursed with receipt after 3 months of volunteering). The forms can be picked up at Literacy Central Vancouver Island at 19 Commercial Street, Nanaimo.

If you are interested or require any further information please contact me by e-mail or 250-754-8988 (Tues/Thurs).

Best regards.

Rhondda Hinch

Co-ordinator Bears and Beams Program

## Why Did I Join Facebook?

When I bought my Blackberry, I thought about the 30-year business I ran with 1800 employees, all without a cell phone that plays music, takes videos, pictures and communicates with Facebook and Twitter. I signed up under duress for Twitter and Facebook, so my seven kids, their spouses, 13 grand kids and 2 great grandkids could communicate with me in the modern way. I figured I could handle something as simple as Twitter with only 140 characters of space.

That was before one of my grandkids hooked me up for Tweeter, Tweetree, Twirl, Twitterfon, Tweetie and Twittererific Tweetdeck, Twitpix and something that sends every message to my cell phone and every other program within the texting world.

My phone was beeping every three minutes with the details of everything except the bowel movements of the entire next generation. I am not ready to live like this. I keep my cell phone in the garage in my golf bag.

The kids bought me a GPS for my last birthday because they say I get lost every now and then going over to the grocery store or library. I keep that in a box under my tool bench with the Blue Tooth [it's red] phone that I am supposed to use when I drive. I wore it once and was standing in line at Barnes and Noble talking to my wife and everyone in the nearest 50 yards was glaring at me. I had to take my hearing aid out to use it, and I got a little loud.

I mean the GPS looked pretty smart on my dash board, but the lady inside that gadget was the most annoying, rudest person I had run into in a long time. Every 10 minutes, she would sarcastically say, "Re-calc-u-lating." You would think that she could be nicer. It was like she could barely tolerate me. She would let go with a deep sigh and then tell me to make a U-turn at the next light. Then if I made a right turn instead. Well, it was not a good relationship. When I get really lost now, I call my wife and tell her the name of the cross streets and while she is starting to develop the same tone as Gypsy, the GPS lady, at least she loves me.

To be perfectly frank, I am still trying to learn how to use the cordless phones in our house. We have had them for 4 years, but I still haven't figured out how I can lose three phones all at once and have to run around digging under chair cushions and checking bathrooms and the dirty laundry baskets when the phone rings.

The world is just getting too complex for me. They even mess me up every time I go to the grocery store. You would think they could settle on something themselves but this sudden "Paper or Plastic?" every time I check out just knocks me for a loop. I bought some of those cloth reusable bags to avoid looking confused, but I never remember to take them in with me.

Now I toss it back to them. When they ask me, "Paper or Plastic?" I just say, "Doesn't matter to me. I am bi-saksual." Then it's their turn to stare at me with a blank look. I was recently asked if I tweet. I answered, "No, but I do toot a lot."

Senior citizens don't need any more gadgets. The tv remote and the garage door remote are about all we can handle.

