



# CHRONICLES & CAPERS

BC Retired Principals' &  
Vice-Principals' Association

Issue 61 • September 2014

## Musings from the President by Vivian Rynnestad

### Learning . . .



Vivian, you need to write the article called “Musings from the President” . . . and you need a picture. I searched through the few recent ones I had. Can’t use an old one because that’s false advertising, can’t use this one because the sunglasses make me look as though I’m avoiding something and so it went.

One morning I was ready to go to the gym and took a “selfie”. No, that’s too close a close up. How about a selfie of me reflected off a mirror? It worked. This picture represents me learning something new. Learning to take a selfie? Not a major skill, but one that is fun. Now if only I had longer arms . . . .

Learning. As a teacher and administrator I came to believe in life-long learning, devoted a lot of time to professional development (mine and for others), and realized that it certainly doesn’t stop when one retires. It seems that almost all the retirees I’ve met are still learning in various aspects of their lives. As we navigate our retirement years, we go through changes and face challenges that often involve learning new skills, gaining new perspectives, gaining new insights, making new friends, and learning new ways to add to our enjoyment of life. Opportunities for learning are everywhere.

As I begin my term as your president, I have already learned so much from our members. I thank past president Gerald Soon for his guidance and wisdom, and I very much look forward to working with our capable and enthusiastic executive. I look forward to the year ahead and look forward to meeting you at our meetings and/or through emails, phone calls, and our listserv.

The start of this school year is a challenging one for principals and vice principals in BC schools. While we may be thankful we are retired, our thoughts often go to them in support. I have received requests from some of our members to take a public stance in support of students and teachers. Elsewhere in this newsletter, past president Gerald has written a thoughtful article that explains the stance of the BCRPVA as guided by our Constitution. As always, individuals are able to offer support through conversations and actions within their own communities. Once students and teachers are back in schools, it will be the task of principals and vice principals to once again establish a culture of teamwork, community, and learning for students, teachers, and parents.

Thank you to all who responded to our annual survey. The results will be discussed at our next executive and general meetings and will be used to guide future activities. A reminder too that our May 2014 AGM passed a motion stating that newsletters will be sent out to all members through email. Newsletters will be mailed only to those requesting paper copies.

I hope you enjoyed our summer, and like me, you are looking forward to a new year. 🐾

## A Thousands Hills to Trekk by Joy Ruffeski

Rwanda – a land of a thousand hills and almost one million deaths in just 100 days in 1994. Having read Romeo d’Allaire’s first-hand account of the horrors of the genocide, *Shake Hands With the Devil*, and having personally sat through many graphic days of testimony at the International Tribunal on Rwanda, I was not prepared for the reality of this country 20 years later. The people were friendly and talked openly about the horrors and shame of that time. I came away thinking it was as if they had had to go through the genocide to become the unified nation they are today.



Flying into Kigali airport was an experience as the plane had to wind its way through the mountains to land on a short runway on the seemingly only flat area in the region. The country was lush, and the shades of green on the terraced land used for cultivating were captivating as we drove

from the airport up to Musanze in the northwestern part of Rwanda. After many hours of driving up and down the rolling hills, we arrived at our lodge; and, as is often typical in rural Africa, the power was out. However, immediately upon going into the Gorilla Mountain View Lodge we were welcomed and served hot tea; a roaring fire in the gigantic fireplace took the chill off the dampness there that pervades everything.

For the next two days we trekked, with park rangers, up into the Virunga mountains of the Parc des Volcans to see the golden monkeys and mountain gorillas that this region is known for. Groups have a maximum of 8 visitors per golden monkey or gorilla family and the trek you are assigned to varies in length and steepness. Permits for trekking must be obtained months in advance and are costly as you pay for each day you trek. Depending on the time of year it can be very muddy. We traversed through wet thick undergrowth



covered with stinging nettles, so wearing hiking boots, long pants, jackets, and gloves was a necessity. However, nothing prepared us for our encounter with a fully-grown silverback gorilla or the 6-month old member of his group. Even though you are supposed to stay 7 metres from the gorillas, these animals don’t follow the “rules” and often will brush by you as you stand quietly viewing their activities. These gentle giants were magnificent to watch. and the hour’s viewing of their group went by far too quickly.



The following day we drove to Lake Kivu, just 2 kilometres from the Democratic Republic of Congo’s border. The entry into the hotel’s grounds was interesting as we went through a series of gates, and had mirrors check under our Land Rover for bombs. Our luggage went through more thorough screening and searches than any airport security official ever had! After a couple of days of relaxation, we drove back to Kigali where we visited the Gisozi Genocide museum and memorial, a powerfully moving experience.

It was with sadness that we left Rwanda as this country is exceptionally clean, the people work hard, and the government seems to put the welfare of its people first.

I certainly recommend a visit to Rwanda, and if you wish to see the Umubano Group with Charles their silverback leader that I was fortunate enough to spend time with, there is a YouTube video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-OkubZ9XtU> you may enjoy! The YouTube video of a different group shows

clearly just how close you sometimes are to the gorillas as they don’t know anything about “personal” space. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q43OxGY55ag> 🐼

## The BCPVPA's Voice

In June 2014, the current labour dispute between BC's Provincial government and the BC Teachers' Federation reached a peak when teachers were partially locked out from their classrooms, and their pay was reduced by 10%.

The media and social networks have been utilized to convey both sides of the labour issue. So where has the BCRPVPA been? Why the silence?

The constitution of the BCRPVPA has an article regarding political action:

*The Association will normally not take a political position on issues. However, on occasion, the association may choose to make a statement addressing a current issue when it believes such action is in the best interests of the overwhelming majority of its members. Such action will normally not occur without the assent of a meeting of the BCRPVPA or, preferably, the assent of a significant majority of members.*

In the case that action is taken, the association will maintain a position of independence from specific political party affiliations and will work within the system to influence decisions affecting members.

Would speaking out on the current labour dispute benefit the interests of our members? As our meetings are held in the Lower Mainland, would the assent of members at that meeting to make a statement reflect the significant majority of members? How would we know? Our listserv does not include all members, and our email list still does not include every person. We would need to canvass the other members via mail for their opinion. Would any statement that we make in public contribute to encouraging the parties to bargain together in good faith?

Another issue to consider: Is every member of the same opinion regarding the labour dispute? Of course, each person has his or her own thoughts and is free to voice his or her opinion regarding the labour issue. Personally, I have spoken out numerous times regarding the issue to my contacts on social networking and to those individuals who have tried to understand the issues of both sides of the dispute.

Hopefully there will be a resolution soon, and the children of BC can return to school.

by Gerald Soon, Past President 🐾

## Our Dental Plan

At our AGM on May 7, our guest speaker was Annie Ni from Pacific Blue Cross. She gave a brief presentation explaining our voluntary dental plan.

### Participation

There are two choices of plans, and participation in the dental plan is optional. Full premiums are paid by the retiree and are deducted from your pension directly through Pacific Blue Cross. There is an enrolment restriction for new retirees of 60 days from the date of retirement. If you are already retired and covered by another plan and wish to change to the PBC plan, you must do so within 60 days of the cancellation of your previous plan.

### The Essential Plan

Basic dentistry services are reimbursed at 70% and the annual maximum is \$1,000 per person. These basic preventative and restorative benefits include:

- recall exams, polishing and fluoride – once a year
- fillings, x-rays, denture repairs, root canal treatment, extractions
- deep cleaning (scaling, root planing, gingival curettage)

### The Enhanced Plan

All essential plan benefits are included along with major restorative services at 70% reimbursement for an annual maximum of \$2,000 per person. Major restorative services include:

- porcelain and gold crowns
- bridgework
- partial and full dentures

To upgrade to the enhanced plan you must have been on the essential plan for 24 months.

### How to Claim Dental Benefits

You may pay the dentist or dental mechanic directly and forward the detailed receipt to Pacific Blue Cross, or your dentist may supply services and materials and submit claims to PBC on your behalf. Any unpaid balance not eligible under the plan is paid by the patient. Claims for dental expenses must be received by PBC within 12 months of the date the service is completed.

If you have any questions about the plan, don't hesitate to call the Pacific Blue Cross Dental Plan number:

- (604) 419-2300 (Vancouver area)
- 1-888-275-4672 (other BC areas)

Website: [www.pac.bluecross.ca](http://www.pac.bluecross.ca) 🐾

## Learning in Lesotho by Pat MacKenzie

One of the most validating experiences of my life as an educator occurred two years ago in a small nation tens of thousands of kilometres away. Two fellow Rotarians and I travelled to Lesotho, the country within a country, in South Africa. This was to be the third and final year of our club's involvement in a farming project in the Malealea Valley in the central part of this small and impoverished nation.

Our journey included a side-trip to the SOS Village AIDS orphanage and primary school in Maseru. Our sojourn of three days at the orphanage enabled us to round up materials for the farm project, renew contacts, plan excursions into nearby neighbourhoods to distribute quilts and seeds to grandmothers who supported their deceased offspring's children, and lead evening study sessions with the high school students.

Those three days were full but the highlight of the time was the study sessions. I had been asked to teach the librarian some strategies that would engage students in learning. "Easy," I thought. What I discovered right away was that the students were engaged. They were very quiet. They appeared to be on-task. There was no chatter. I don't recall any whispering. But were they learning and if so, what were they learning?

I started with a brief assessment of what they were learning by walking around the room and quietly asking each one what they were studying. Most were intimidated by this close and personal approach as this method was most foreign to them. Few spoke but all showed me what they were working on. Subjects ranged from accounting, business, computer studies, writing, reading, poetry, to science. When I asked them questions about what they were studying, few would answer. Did they understand what they were reading? Every subject, of course, was in English. Lesotho was, and still is, a British Protectorate. The two hours of the first session flew by.

The next day I was ready to model new and exciting teaching strategies for the librarian. Students were broken into groups. There was a group for the students who were studying poetry, one for those studying science, and another for those for whom the nature of their subject required that they work independently.

However, there was one boy, named Phitise (his Basotho name) or Alfred (his English name), who gripped my attention. I sat with him for a while asking questions about his writing but he was reluctant to speak. Sensing that it would be best to let him think about what he wanted to write, I told him I would be back at the end of the class to see what he had written - explaining that I could not help him if I did not know how well he could write. Two hours disappeared quickly.

As I said good-bye and thank you to each student leaving the library, I was conscious that I had promised to return to Alfred to see how he had done. However, when finally I had dismissed each student I realized he was no longer there. "Students are not so different here," I thought. I vowed to connect with him the next day.

The final evening will remain with me forever.

There was a tangible excitement in the room. The space was filled with a quiet thrum of whispered chatter as they entered. Students moved quickly to find their usual space. It was clear that they were eager to engage and motivated to learn. My colleagues pitched in leading study groups. The teenage daughters of one of the leaders helped with the math and literature groups. One of my colleagues helped a handful of students with science. Alfred had brought his written assignment so I gave him feedback on how to improve his writing with suggestions around grammar, idioms, and clarity. Together we honed his composition. It was important to hear his "voice" as well as to acknowledge that the English they were learning was perhaps old or dated.



When it was the end of our last session, I asked each student to tell us what they thought of what we had done together. Speaking honestly and openly was allowed and, indeed, encouraged. I answered the questions, acknowledged their observations, and applauded their risk taking. Alfred remained quiet; he did not volunteer a response yet he was most attentive. However, I felt strongly that Alfred's voice needed to be heard. With his permission I shared with the class what he had written.

*It has always been boring and exhausting in the library. Some of us sometimes sleep or chat with friends on the Internet. But yesterday no one was being extorted to do anything. The atmosphere in the library was delightful. I could see a smile on each of the students' faces. About three tutors were pacing around the library helping each and every one of us. All students were fixing their eyes in their books. I now know how fun learning really is. This is the complete contrary of the evening study we used to have. I actually think that it should be done more often.*

The memories gained in Lesotho repaid our volunteer efforts tenfold. This interaction with Alfred was certainly a highlight of my time there even though there were so many more memorable moments --grateful grandmothers draped in homemade Canadian quilts; grandmothers crying tears of joy when presented with bean, tomato, cucumber and squash seeds; orphans hugging us until we could barely stand; and huge smiles from happy high school students.

*Pat MacKenzie retired from SD 48, Sea to Sky. She currently serves as a school trustee in that school district. 🐾*

## Benefits You May Need

Chiropractic treatments are covered by the TPP Extended Health Plan to a maximum of \$1000 per person per calendar year for all types of Practitioner Services (acupuncture, chiropractic, counseling, massage therapy, naturopath, nursing services, physiotherapy, podiatry). Chiropractic doctors deal with the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of mechanical disorders of the musculoskeletal system. When the 24 bones that protect the spinal cord lose their normal position or motion, delicate nerve tissue can be choked or irritated. Comparing the statistics, chiropractic adjustments are about 100 times safer than taking an over-the-counter pain reliever.

The treatment of choice for many top athletes is the Active Release Technique (ART) as it focuses on the breaking down and elimination of scar tissue. When scar tissue is present, it binds and ties down tissue that needs to move freely. When you have scar tissue present, you have shorter and weaker muscles, decreased range of motion, and even pain. Due to the lack of flexibility and possible pressure on structures near the scar tissue, nerve entrapment may occur resulting in "tingling", numbness, or even weakness in your arms or legs. ART deals with these problems within muscles, tendons, ligaments, fascia, and nerves. Since this treatment is non-invasive, it is very safe and consistently produces excellent results. It has been found especially effective for such conditions as neck pain, mid and low back pain/injuries, sciatica, muscle strains and pulls, carpal tunnel syndrome, arm and shoulder injuries, headaches, running injuries, and repetitive stress injuries.

Should you encounter such problems, you may want to explore ART with your chiropractor.

*by Dr. Colin McKay (Precision Health offices in White Rock, Richmond, and Haida Gwaii), a former vp of the BC Chiropractic Assoc. 🐾*

## Keeping Your Brain Active

Online Courses are attracting a new group of students and changing teaching methods at many universities. There is no fee to audit any course and you still have complete access to all the course materials, tests, and the online discussion forum.

People from all over the world are signing up for non-credit university level courses that are available to anyone with an internet connection and are part of most universities' commitment to a more flexible approach to learning. Courses consist of video lectures, written material, exercises, activities, and group discussion forums.

This is all done through the MOOC platform and can be accessed through a website that hosts free non-credit courses from such universities as UBC, Harvard, MIT, UC (Berkeley), and McGill. If this interests you, check out [www.edx.org](http://www.edx.org) for links to various universities and the offerings at each. 🐾



## Finding Health Through Tai Chi

Even though you are now retired, do you still find you have stress in your life?

I've found that Taoist Tai Chi is a wonderful form of exercise that promotes health and has relieved a considerable amount of stress in my life. Even though the movements of tai chi seem slow, this exercise form is all about gentle turning and stretching. It has contributed to my having better balance and posture, increased circulation, strength and flexibility, and calmness since my retirement. As all instructors are volunteers, the cost is minimal compared to the overall benefits. No special clothing is necessary, but loose pants and flat-soled shoes do help you move more comfortably.

As a person who was definitely not well coordinated, learning the moves did not come easy during the 4 months I attended



a Beginner's class. Once I learned the set, I have constantly worked at improving the moves and developed balance and coordination through Continuing classes and workshops. After

12 years it has become an essential part of my life; and, even when travelling, I set aside a few minutes daily to do my toryus and donyus when doing a set is not possible. It is fun in an airport to do some stretches or even part of the set while waiting hours between international flights; you meet a lot of interesting people that way. I've even connected with fellow tai chi participants from other countries in international airports and have done a set with them to pass the time.

An added benefit to improving your health and wellbeing is that tai chi also promotes brain health. Neurological research has found that tai chi is an excellent way to help prevent dementia and Alzheimer's. In addition, researchers have found that regular practice of tai chi helps to improve such conditions as high blood pressure, arthritis, back pain, joint immobility, respiratory problems, digestive disorders, Parkinson's disease, multiple sclerosis, consequences of trauma or stroke, and fibromyalgia. I have seen phenomenal results in the improvement of many of these conditions as I teach a Taoist Tai Chi Health Recovery class attended by many individuals with chronic health conditions.

If you are interested in trying out the Taoist form of tai chi, check out [www.taoist.org](http://www.taoist.org) and click on the link "find a class near you". Taoist Tai Chi is practiced in 26 countries, and it's great fun to visit locations around the world and meet others and enjoy this most beneficial exercise with them.

*Joy Ruffeski is a retired administrator from Coquitlam who volunteers with and teaches the Taoist Tai Chi arts in Langley where she lives.* 🐼

## Need an Answer? Have an Idea?

If you want an answer to a burning question try the BCRPVPA listserv.

It may be a question about the best hotel in Madrid. It may be a question about deducting Pacific Blue Cross premiums on income tax. Or it may be asking about senior home care for your aging parent.

It is simple to do.

- In the email address type [bcrpvpa@googlegroups.com](mailto:bcrpvpa@googlegroups.com)
- In the subject type in your topic or question e.g. Tax Deduction Blue Cross
- Click on send
- Wait for responses
- Remember when you reply it goes back to the whole list so please don't tell us where your tattoo is

Please remember no matter how passionate you are about your questions and ideas others have their opinion so don't "flame" them for a response you don't agree with. Flaming is an email term equating to shooting down in flames. On the other hand please initiate and respond to conversations with equal diplomacy when you don't agree. Sometimes it may be best to say nothing at all. There is still no such thing as private email.

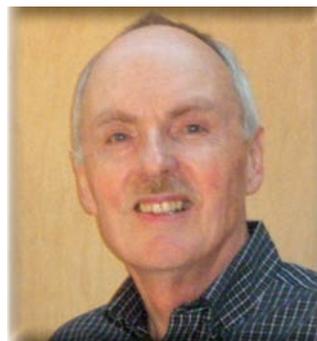
We currently have 226 members on the listserv and our membership total is 657. Not a bad representation.

A listserv is an excellent communications tool. It is simple and easy. There is probably no faster way of sharing people's information and opinions across the great divide.

It is a great way to build relationships with membership spread out around the province and even the globe. Not all of us get to go to conferences and meet peers face-to-face. Many of us use listservs to expand our networks without having to budget for the expense. It can expose you to opportunities you otherwise might have missed.

If you wish to be part of the listserv please send an email to [bcrpvpa@gmail.com](mailto:bcrpvpa@gmail.com) and in the subject type "Listserv request to join". That's it. You will receive a message from Google Groups when we have added your name. 🐼

## BCRPVPA Executive Addition



A special welcome to Pete Kosonen. Pete will join Joy Ruffeski as co-editor of the BCRPVPA newsletter as Doreen Graham is currently working in China. 🐼

## Cruising Advice by Gerald Soon

I always thought that it would be fun to be on a cruise. Perhaps it was a result of watching all those years of “Loveboat” that piqued my interest or the whole idea of unpacking once and floating in your hotel from location to location. One of the wonderful things about retirement is planning holidays when you want to take them, not when the school calendar allows you to travel.

Our first cruise was to celebrate my retirement and my wife and I took our girls to the Eastern Caribbean. One sail and I was hooked! This fall, we are embarking on our 7th cruise to Mediterranean ports. We have sailed the Mexican Riviera, Western Caribbean, the Baltics, down the west coast of North America, and around the Hawaiian Islands.

If you have not planned a cruise before, here are some tips for you. Do your research. Check out a website such as Cruise Critic [www.cruisecritic.com](http://www.cruisecritic.com) where you can read general reviews of companies, ships, ports of call, and specific reviews that people have written about their cruises. You will find articles on cruising in general, advice for first time cruisers, information on all types of cruises, and other useful information.

Once you decide on a cruise line, destination, time of year that you will travel, and have booked, you can join one of cruise critics message boards for a specific cruise. We have done this each time and have obtained many answers to questions we had about ports or excursions.

Shore excursions offered by the ship can be expensive, and there are alternatives to explore. The only thing to be aware of is that if you are on a ship-sanctioned shore excursion, and there is some unexpected delay while you are away, the ship must wait for you. If you are off the ship on a private excursion and you miss the boat, well, you have missed the boat and must find your way to the next port of call to re-board. Having said that, I organized a private excursion for St. Petersburg amongst travellers before we sailed in the Baltics, and we had an excellent day with far fewer people in our group and easy access to the various sites of interest. On



top of that, we became good friends with some folks from around the world that we still contact today.

Back to preparation for this fall’s Mediterranean trip: we have read our ship’s shore excursion offerings for each of the ports on our 12-day cruise, and at this point of our preparation, have booked two private excursions. We are reading about each of the ports of call: Barcelona, Spain; Rome, Italy; Salerno and the Amalfi coast; Santorini, Greece; Ephesus, Turkey; Mykonos and Piraeus, Greece; and Valetta, Malta.

Preparation is half the fun! Choosing which places to visit, and researching the sites and history of the various stops will not only prepare you, but increase the anticipation of viewing some of the most beautiful places in the world. The luxury of the ship and being pampered for a short while are an added bonus! Happy travelling. 🐼

### What’s Next on your Bucket List?

**Panama, Brazil, Peru, Antarctica, Australia, Japan, Tahiti, Europe, or ?**

With the luxury of being retired and able to travel during low season times, you can knock off visiting a lot of places on your bucket list. If you haven’t considered cruise travel to do this, it is a perfect way to travel. You unpack/pack ONCE, you get fed fantastic meals whenever you want, you have all the amenities of a hotel and spa available, you have evening entertainment, AND you get to see parts of the world you’d never be able to drive to . . . all this for less than \$200/day! Sound interesting? Let me find the perfect cruise for you! Just send me an email at:

[kchong@cruiseshipcenters.com](mailto:kchong@cruiseshipcenters.com)

or check out my website at:

[www.cruiseshipcenters.com/KarenChong](http://www.cruiseshipcenters.com/KarenChong)

and you can enter a free draw for a free cruise and sign up for newsletters with Expedia exclusives.

Not into cruising? I can also help with booking all-inclusive resorts, adventure tours, and other land options. Let’s TALK!!

*(Paid advertisement)*

# BCRPVPA Bulletin Board

## Help Spread the Sunshine

The BCRPVPA wants to acknowledge good things about our members and recognize when things are not going so well for them and their families. Consequently, we need your input to be able to do so. Please e-mail Christine Johnson at [cajbarrett@eastlink.ca](mailto:cajbarrett@eastlink.ca) or phone her at 604-591-9794 to tell her of any congratulatory events, e.g. awards, new positions, or any news for which condolences are applicable. Thanks for your help.

## Please Let us Know

Please ensure that we have your current email address. A reminder that as of July 1, 2014, members receive the Chronicles and Capers and the web link for it via email unless they have notified the BCRPVPA otherwise. eBulletins are sent out on an as-needed basis. Please make sure that you also add [bcrpvpa@gmail.com](mailto:bcrpvpa@gmail.com) and [vrygnestad@gmail.com](mailto:vrygnestad@gmail.com) to your address book so your internet provider accepts the e-mail and doesn't reject it as spam.

If you have changed your mailing address please email [jennifer@bcpvpa.bc.ca](mailto:jennifer@bcpvpa.bc.ca) so you can continue to receive newsletters and any other mailed items.

## Check out our Website

Don't forget to regularly check out our website for names and contact information for your executive, copies of our newsletter, membership forms, information on Affinity programs, minutes of meetings, scholarship application forms, and other such items. Information may be found at [www.bcrpvpa.ca](http://www.bcrpvpa.ca)

## The newsletter is only as good as your contributions

We ask you to consider writing an article for our newsletter. Please send your submissions to Joy Ruffeski [ruffeski@telus.net](mailto:ruffeski@telus.net) or Pete Kosonen [pete@rdk.ca](mailto:pete@rdk.ca)

You do not need to wait until the submission deadlines -- we accept them at any time and store them up for coming newsletters.

## Dates for 2014-2015

### General Meetings

Tues., October 22, 2014 - BCPVPA office

Wed., January 14, 2015 - BCPVPA office

Tues., March 3, 2015 - TBA

Wed., May 6, 2015 - AGM, BCPVPA office

Live outside the Lower Mainland? Add these date to your calendar so that you can plan any visits and appointments in Vancouver and take in a BCRPVPA meeting at the same time. All members are always welcome.

The program for our October general meeting will focus on Maintaining Health Throughout Retirement.

### Newsletter Submissions.

Articles are welcome at any time. The newsletter is only as good as what is contributed by the members so please send in your submissions to [ruffeski@telus.net](mailto:ruffeski@telus.net) or [pete@rdk.ca](mailto:pete@rdk.ca) Deadline dates for upcoming newsletters are:

Tues., Jan. 6, 2015

Tues., Feb. 24, 2015

Mon., May 11, 2015

## JUST KIDDING

