



CHRONICLES & CAPERS

BC Retired Principals' &
Vice-Principals' Association

Issue 62 • January 2015

Musings from the President by Vivian Rynestad



Retirement Thoughts

I've just finished a run/walk (I call it that because I don't run the whole time) along the dikes near my home in Richmond. I'm not the only one enjoying the early morning; there are walkers, cyclists, and runners, and we greet each other with silent nods, smiles, or quiet "good mornings". The mountains are obscured but the water is peaceful, disturbed only by ducks and the intrepid rowers from the UBC Boathouse.

I had a wonderful conversation with a newly retired colleague and we laughed as we talked of the joys of retirement: spending all day reading a good fiction book, short or day trips at whim, mostly "doing what you want when you want", having time to reflect, and smiling smugly and staying in bed a little longer when the morning weather report calls for snow.

Retirement is leisurely breakfasts – the kind where you eat and read and sit and sip for as long as you want. My quiet breakfast this morning was broken by a cacophony of sounds. Almost simultaneously, noisy crows descended on a backyard tree, the microwave beeped, the toaster popped, and my iPad and iPhone each produced a variety of sounds.

In another conversation with a retired colleague, we agreed that what we miss most about not being in school is "the kids". But then we realized that we still enjoy learning about what's happening in education

and leadership. We now have time to read, discuss, and reflect. We can take our curiosity into any aspect of education locally or worldwide that we choose. Are you still interested in educational issues? Or have you moved on completely to other interests?

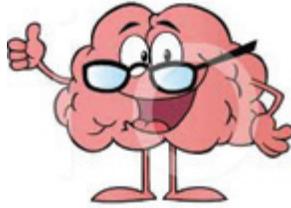
Other interests . . . just before I retired, I was talking with my Superintendent and he asked what I intended to do. "Use your influence" was his advice to me. His words still resonate with me. As retired educators, we have strong skills, experience, and knowledge. How do you use your influence?

I volunteer as a Greencoat at the YVR airport. I thoroughly enjoy my weekly shifts interacting with passengers, airport staff, and other Greencoats. I've been posted into every area of the airport and have assisted passengers with a wide variety of issues. Use my influence? I've helped with 400 passengers whose flight to Europe was cancelled. I've helped a woman who got lost in the airport and missed a connecting flight. With my limited Japanese, and her almost nonexistent English we did fine. I've helped a mother deal with her anxious 10 year son who was refusing to get on his flight. I've worked with the airport and the Canucks Autism Network where families with autistic children were able to recreate a travel experience that included going through security, finding their gate, boarding an airplane, being served snacks on the plane, and then disembarking.

Happy New Year! I look forward to your comments, questions, or stories at meetings, or through email and our listserve. 🐼

Benefits of Pursuing an Active Life Style

At our October 2014 general meeting, we had a very informative presentation by Deb Harsant, Business Development Manager of PARC Retirement Living. Gerald Soon, past-president of the BCRPVPA, has kindly summarized the information for members who were unable to attend the meeting.



Whether you call it aging, or “mellowing,” our bodies are changing – this includes our mental processes. Beginning in our 40s, we start to lose 5% of our brain volume every decade. However, there is hope! Scientists now know that a sedentary lifestyle contributes to the loss of brain volume. Our brains have plasticity and are able to change. Through mental activities, social activities, or new activities, our brains are stimulated and new neural connections forged, thickening the gray matter in our brain. By stimulating our brain, we keep our working memory longer. In other words, our working memory gets us through the day.

The brain stays malleable until our later years as long as we keep stimulating it. Instead of the old saying of “use it or lose it,” a good term to think of is “use it and keep it longer”. After all, brain transplants are not an option. When our brain cells are stimulated, they grow more dendrites, which allow us to retain and retrieve more information. Synapses that fire together wire together!

There are three tenets of successful aging: stay mentally active, stay physically active, and maintain self efficacy (that is, maintaining control over one’s life).

To stay mentally active you should turn off the television as TV puts us into a vegetative, passive state, and numbs the brain. If you turn off your television at least 20% more (approximately 3 hours a week) and do something else to actively engage your brain, most people can reduce their chances of developing Alzheimer’s disease by almost 33%.

It is important to change your routine and to continually strive to learn something new. Our brains crave challenges. Often the fear of failure stops people from learning something new but we should always remember that no one is always right!

Good nutrition contributes to good brain health as well. As we age, we have changing needs: digestion, dehydration, decreased glucose tolerance, and dentition.

Our metabolism slows down. Although fewer calories are needed, more nutrients are needed.

One important factor to remember is that protein is a critical essential at breakfast. Studies have shown that those who have protein at breakfast consume fewer calories and snack less during the day as one’s metabolism is jump started. It is better to have a balanced protein distribution over a day rather than to

have the majority of protein at dinnertime. At least 90g of protein are required daily by seniors.

Phytochemicals are chemicals that plants produce naturally to prevent themselves from getting disease. These also help prevent disease in people. Items high in phytochemicals include red grapes, citrus fruits, berries, tomatoes, Japanese green tea, cruciferous vegetables (cabbage, kale, broccoli), garlic, tumeric, and dark chocolate (at least 70% cocoa mass). However, a balance of all of these is needed in meals.

Dr. Robert Butler, who was the first director of the National Institute on Aging, said that if exercise could be packed into a pill, it would be the single most widely prescribed and beneficial medicine in the nation. There are cognitive benefits of exercise. The direct effect is that the “feel good chemicals” endorphins and monoamines are released in the brain. A UBC study found that moderate resistance training helps to reverse cognitive decline and improve executive cognitive function. There was improved selective attention and associative memory.

Brain health is the weakest link. Staying physically active keeps your body strong; but because physical exercise actually affects our brains, it is paramount to keep exercising.

Stress affects brain health. Stress and high levels of cortisol affect the hippocampus, the area of the brain that is the first to be affected by Alzheimer’s disease. Long lasting stress can shrink the hippocampus, and can also lead to depressive disorders. You can minimize and manage stress through exercise.

Ms. Harsant concluded her talk with the advice that it is important to maintain social ties as these stimulate the brain. Loneliness can contribute to memory problems. If we use our brains, we will keep them longer! 🧠

Travels in Vietnam and Cambodia by Olga Woodland

This past August and September saw my husband and I reconnect with long-time Vancouver Island, Whistler, and Vancouver chef Monika Czerveniak, for a food-inspired tour of Vietnam <http://chowdownvietnam.com>. Her next trip is March 2015 and I highly



recommend it to you. Our group consisted of a mix of current and ex-Vancouver Islanders: two ex-pat Brits; a couple of Aussies;

Austrians, Polish individuals, and Portuguese. Half were travellers and half were 6 to 12-month yearly residents of Hoi An. The group spoke fluent food, beer, wine, and fun.

The trip in Vietnam was divided roughly into thirds, beginning in the north at Hanoi, with a side trip to Halong Bay. The second leg involved flying through Da Nang airport to historic Hoi An on the Central Coast. Finally, we explored Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) in the south.



Our exploration of Hanoi began with light rain. There was the adventure of crossing non-stop traffic filled streets, food markets, and an overnight trip to Halong Bay. As all coast scenery lovers have experienced, the landscape can and did materialize from the mist in ethereal fashion just as we arrived. However, as coastal folk also know, patience and the passage of time allows

the weather to clear and the sun to shine down. Hanoi itself was amazing and we were able to go kayaking amongst the 2000 islands of Halong Bay.



Street vendors displayed the freshest of ingredients, which we later cooked and ate. Three Vietnamese cooking schools and a “Fearless Cooking” class

were part of our travel itinerary. The food was definitely nothing like what we were used to at home! Duck leg with vegetables in coconut milk and just-a-hint-of-curry broth was truly one of the highlight meals. A delight to see throughout the city were the local florists – carts on the back of bicycles loaded with an extravaganza of lush plants and flowers.

Hoi An is a delightful, historic fishing village and UNESCO World Heritage site, nestled between two rivers and the warmest ocean you can imagine. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H%E1%BB%99i_An



When the Portuguese arrived in 1512, the Chinese already managed a bustling sea port there. Today it is a mecca for foodies, with real organic growing the norm. Rice is grown here and both husband and wife work together in the rice fields. After the rice is harvested and the grains separated from the stalks, the separated grains are laid out along the bike paths and trails, and you are expected to ride through to assist in breaking up the husks as the rice dries in the sun. Cycling always leads to lunch; fresh greens, simple sauces, and no preservatives of any kind were so welcome and delicious.

In addition, the beaches in this region are outstanding.



There are a number of resorts and hotels available and when the sun finally set each evening, it was wondrous to behold.

Saigon, called Ho Chi Minh City by the locals, was our final destination in Vietnam. The Saigon Post Office is actually a destination location due in part to the wonderful architecture of its designer: Gustave Eiffel. My husband is a philatelist and he stated that the post office is undoubtedly one of a kind. It is located with the Notre Dame Basilica, and was very close to the Canadian Consulate and our hotel. The French definitely left their best influences in Vietnam: colonial buildings, strong coffee, and a variety of breads; as worthy tourists, we enjoyed them all.



After filming “Wild Hogs II: Middle-Aged on Mopeds” (actually <http://vietnamvespaadventures.com>), we bid adieu to Vietnam and our tour mates.

Tim and I headed for Angkor Wat in Siem Riep, Cambodia, with another couple. Angkor Wat is a must see when you are in South East Asia so, if Vietnam is on your “bucket list”, be sure to add Angkor Wat as well. 🐼

The executive recognizes that not all members can attend and take part in meetings in the Lower Mainland. After each meeting, a draw for a \$20 gift card to Chapters/Indigo is made. Congratulations to Sharell Carney of Vernon, our October meeting recipient!

2014 Survey: Demographics and Desires

A reality is that the beautiful geography of BC is as challenging as it is invigorating. During our careers, living in the urban area provided one with all the opportunities for ongoing professional development while what occurred in rural areas was career opportunity at a young age with less experience. There was some sort of balance; so it is today. Each person continues using his or her strengths where needed and where he or she has a particular interest or talent. Bringing those stories together through surveys helps the BCRPVPA better understand and deliver. The September 2014 survey told us the following.

We had 385 responses this year. Most came in the first week. Reminders produced some more results. Perhaps increased membership is one reason for increased response and another may be the timing of the survey just before the end of August.

Seventy percent of members still live in the district or region they worked while 30% do not. Sixty five percent live within the same city they worked while 35% do not. The main regions of response, from most members to least, are the Vancouver metropolitan areas, Vancouver Island and Coast/Victoria, Thompson /Okanagan, Kootenay, Cariboo, Nechako, North Coast and Northeast. Over 42% live in Vancouver and the metropolitan area, while just fewer than 2% represent Nechako, North Coast, and Northeast.

By age, most members are 65 to 74 followed by half at the 55 to 64 range and one quarter at the 75 to 84 range. A small but blessed group is in the 85 to 94 range.

Most people like to travel with a partner and budget for cruising, home exchanges, and tours. Favoured destinations (in order of preference) are Europe, North America, Canada, South America, and Asia.

At this stage of life people are worried about investments, wills, executor duties, representation agreements, and probate.

When it comes to volunteering, members most overwhelmingly volunteer locally, followed by international, then regional and provincial.

As far as remaining healthy, members like regular exercise, diet and nutrition, mental wellness, physical wellness, and managing stress.

Food for thought as usual. 🐼

Walking: An Easy New Year's Resolution

by Ted St. Pierre



Want to do something for 30 minutes a day that can dramatically improve your physical, emotional, and mental health? Walking is not a gimmick, not a pill,

doesn't need a gym pass or expensive equipment. It is a physical activity that can be done on our own time, in rain or snow, on flat surfaces or hills, alone or with friends and family.

Dr. Mike Evans www.evanshealth.com reviewed the impact of walking on overall health, and found some interesting positive effects:

- Walking reduces progression of dementia, depression, and anxiety by 47%;
- It is actually a treatment for fatigue;
- People who walk more than 20 minutes a day experience a 29% reduction in rates of high blood pressure and hypertension;
- 30 minutes of walking every day further decreases high blood pressure by an additional 12%;
- People who watch 6 hours of TV per day live 5 years less than those who do not have a sedentary lifestyle.

The good news is that walking is much easier to fit into our daily life than many other expensive forms of physical activity. Here are some suggested tips based on the research:

- Make a habit or resolution to take a 30 minute walk every day either alone or with a partner;
- Invest in very good walking shoes and dress in layers (a small backpack can hold extra clothing, energy bars, water);
- Avoid excuses why today is not a good time to walk. A nearby mall is great for those of us who do not like rain or snow that much;
- Invite family members or friends who live close by to accompany us (a great opportunity to chat as we get fitter);
- Get off the bus a few stops earlier and walk the rest of the way;
- Take the dog out for a brisk walk;
- Increase the speed of walking as our body gets fitter.

Walking is a moderate physical activity. Done for 30 minutes a day, it can have a big impact on the quality of your life, body, mind, and spirit. One Step At A Time. One Day At A Time. 🐾

Ted is a Group fitness Instructor at several Vancouver YMCA Facilities & coaches novice curling teams at Vancouver Curling Club.

BC Wheelchair Sports Association Seeks Volunteers

Since 1971, the BC Wheelchair Sports Association has provided wheelchair sports programs and services to people with physical disabilities across the province from the junior, to the recreational, right up to the Paralympic level. Our core sports include wheelchair athletics (track and field), wheelchair basketball (through BC Wheelchair Basketball Society), wheelchair tennis, and wheelchair rugby. We support athletes through sports programs, wheelchair loans, peer mentorship, introductory programs like Bridging the Gap, rehab hospital visits, and much more.

You can help by:

Coaching. We're always looking for experienced coaches. If you have coaching experience in the able-bodied equivalents of our sports (i.e. basketball, rugby, athletics), we can teach you how to coach someone with a disability.

Volunteer to Help Out With a Tournament: Each year, BCWSA hosts several tournaments. We're always looking for friendly volunteers to assist with transportation, serve food, solicit prizes for silent auctions, and much more.

Share Your Unique Talents: Got a unique talent or skill that you think would benefit our organization? Let us know! Maybe you make beautiful quilts that could be donated for a silent auction prize. Maybe you are mechanically inclined and could help us repair broken wheelchairs.

Want to get involved? Fill in the form <http://bcwheelchairsports.com/get-involved/get-involved-signup-form> or contact Lisa Myers at lisa@bcwheelchairsports.com; 604-333-3520 ext 209. You can learn more about BC Wheelchair Sports by visiting our website at www.bcwheelchairsports.com 🐾

Education in Finland: Some Anecdotes and Attributions

by Pete Kosonen

It is 2015, and there is snow in Coquitlam. I am reminded of elementary school years growing up in Finland where winters included skiing to school. The roads were often impassable before the bell rang for class.

All over the globe, Finland's public education system is an object of curiosity for its stellar student achievements. We know The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) tests and that Finland's scores in reading, mathematics, and science are at the top of all countries participating. We also know that other countries, South Korea and Poland, are at the top; however, their kids finished close to last among developed countries in OECD's happiness studies. Finland's are close to the top in these satisfaction indices.

A million more in population and one-third the size of BC, Finland maintains a long-standing tradition of high marks in literacy of all kinds. Why? What makes it tick? How can we attribute these results? First, I'll reminisce a bit about my life-long personal interactions with the Finnish public education system; then, I'll try to connect the dots. It's a big topic, but let's try to make some sense of it in a brief newsletter article.

As a child, there were the four years I experienced in Finnish schools after completing Grade 2 in Toronto. My first snowbound country school was in a brand new building. It had two married teachers who resided in the school building. It had two multi-age classrooms, primary and intermediate. It also had a large gym, a woodworking shop, and an arts/crafts/textiles classroom.

Expectations for were high. In Grade 2, cursive writing was done with a dip pen on beautiful, new birch desks with inkwells. Skiing was part of the school day. Once, during boys' PE, we were at the top of a ski-jump with the teacher. Everyone went down the tracks and jumped on cross-country skis.

The woodworking shop's child-sized workbenches, complete with well-sharpened tools, yielded some surprising results: Laminated hockey sticks and skis, folding wooden lawn chairs, bookcases. Of course, getting such tangible products required more than learning to execute physical actions with the tools: Planning, note-taking, designing, drawing,

measuring. The class was held every Wednesday afternoon after lunch for 3 hours, so we had extended time. Kids could schedule supervised time after school to work on their projects. We were 8 and 9 year-olds, and our parents were very impressed with their Christmas gifts.

After Toronto, I was not ready for the school's academic expectations for Grades 2 and 3. I was fortunate to have parents who helped with the nightly homework. Catching up, especially in Mathematics, took a while, but my dad seemed pretty good at it. The teacher was very helpful and patient, although I still slightly resent the inclusively well-meant prize of a new pencil for coming in last in my first

cross-country ski race. Much later, as a secondary school principal in Burnaby, I mentioned during a staff meeting that teachers in Finland are commonly referred to as "Kansan Kynttilät", the Nation's Candles. They bring light to the world. I sure felt that way about my first teachers there.

During one of many visits back over the years, a relative told me a story about a famous Finnish NHL star, now retired.

Apparently, as a young man, he held strong aspirations to become a primary teacher; but, in the eyes of some of his contemporaries, just settled for a career in hockey. Luckily, his brother, who was also an outstanding hockey player, achieved the coveted credentials of a teacher and later became a school principal. The family is proud of both boys.

My cousin's daughter, Hanna, after spending a summer with us in Vancouver, was in Grade 9 when she wrote letters to one of my daughters who was the same age. The letters were written in English and occasionally shared with us as parents.

As a former secondary English teacher, I was impressed by her writing skills. Hanna, who was also fluent in Finnish and Swedish and currently in Spanish plus two or three other languages, announced in Grade 9 that she would learn enough conversational Japanese by the following summer to work at the amusement park called Muumi World in Naantali so that she could talk with tourists from Japan. She did. In Finland, learning several languages is a school requirement.

While working at SFU, I had occasion to visit professors in the university town of Joensuu near Finland's border with Russia. They were all keenly interested in those North American schools where students were achieving



well, and they wanted to incorporate anything that worked well instructionally into Finnish schools. I learned quickly that the research-based cooperation between schools and universities in Finland was taken for granted. Teachers were well educated and academically inclined to adopt researched practices.

These University of Joensuu professors kindly arranged for a tour in a nearby elementary school. The school's principal, Pekka, walked with me through the building. The same type of impressive gym I had experienced in childhood; the same well-equipped woodworking/arts/crafts/textiles



classrooms were evident. There was a cafeteria, found in Finnish schools, where healthy meals were served. In my own youth, lunch at school was

served on white tablecloths, in porcelain dishes, restaurant-style, by kitchen staff. It was the same meal for everyone in the school on a given day. But, we all looked forward to it and felt fortified for afternoon classes. The principle of respecting students with a nourishing mid-day lunch is still a prevalent practice.

As Pekka and I walked along a hallway near the school's office, I was struck by a display. In it, each staff member had been professionally photographed and had an abbreviated version of their CV below their picture. It described the teacher's current academic interests, experience, and education. This was an elementary school, and Pekka told me that parents and students were very interested in who each person was because they were interested in the quality of instruction. He added that the staff members were proud of their ongoing professional development and periodically added such experiences to their displayed CVs.

Later, on another trip, I had occasion to visit Porvoo, a city near Helsinki, where I met with school district officials. After we compared information on budgets and ministry financing, they kindly allowed me to spend an afternoon with the principal of a small secondary school. She walked me through the historic, original buildings and described how the school had undergone major renovations. What I saw was a beautifully designed and crafted facility: Extensive music and theatre spaces; an attractive cafeteria with a teaching kitchen; up-to-date information technology and industrial arts centres. Regular classrooms had the furniture-

quality tables and chairs. Colours were subdued, but not institutional. A sense of pride and respect for the buildings' occupants was evident everywhere.

In 2014, I again visited with relatives and talked with educators. I asked a young, aspiring secondary physics and mathematics teacher, who was only a year away from finishing his practicum and thesis, what he thinks Finland's secret to success is. He attributed the country's success to multiple factors, but chose to comment on one. He talked about the strong belief system among students that their schooling is relevant to their lives. Students trust that success in school will translate into future successes in the 'real world'. They also feel that what they're learning daily is connected to their current understandings of the world around them. This, he said, is largely attributable to teaching style. Embedding real-life examples, implementing collective problem-solving activities, and trying to achieve relevance by integrating curriculum are all important aspects of teacher training. He described how families and communities maintain that belief in the relevance of schooling as part of Finland's culture. But, he also reminded me that expectations were very high for teacher performance and told me he hoped he was up for the challenge. He said that achieving the mission was a constant struggle in schools, but that schools were given the autonomy to do it. I was floored by his choice of the one explanation for Finland's success. It resonates so well with the best of our own North American findings.

Amanda Ripley in her 2013 book, *The Smartest Kids in the World*, talks about interviewing students from the USA who had spent time as exchange students in high achieving countries, including Finland. One of the students, Kim, age 15 from Oklahoma, said her Finnish classmates held this surprising belief about the relevance of what they were doing in class. She contrasted that belief with her own experiences in American schools where many students just didn't make the connection.

I was reminded of Theodore Sizer's large-scale research with secondary students. Sizer, dean of The Harvard Graduate School of Education, found that students' belief in relevance was a key predictor of success and that expectations for all kids needed to be high. He also found that when kids were held accountable for learning, they liked it. They complained, but liked they it. Accountability only ascribed a greater relevance to the knowledge and skills learned. Sizer said attendance rates increase, discipline rates decrease, and dropout rates diminish when schools focus on relevance. He talked about the need to learn in authentic contexts and the need to witness exhibitions of mastery.

I was reminded of my own early experiences in that small

Finnish school. The bar was set high, and we reached it with the help of wonderfully inventive, patient, intelligent teachers. Kim from Oklahoma, attended a secondary school in the small town of Pietasaari that is unlike any of the beautiful schools I toured or attended as a child. Her school had older desks in rows and chalkboards. No iPads were in sight. But, what Kim found was a faculty of accomplished, highly educated teachers who loved their work.

In Finland, only top university students, the best and brightest, are admitted to teacher training. The work is well paid and greatly respected. Teachers have much autonomy to design learning experiences and to choose curriculum materials. Students are challenged and engaged because teachers are challenged and engaged. As most of us know, teaching is the most fulfilling and rewarding work imaginable when key decisions are made at the school level.

So, what do you think makes Finland's education system tick? Why those incredible PISA results, especially in a country where standardized tests are generally rejected as measures of aggregate achievement? Here's what I think:

1. *Expectations*

When primary-aged kids walk into school on the first day of their school careers, they're very interested in what is expected of them. All of us who have spent many years in elementary schools know how smart and capable kids are. For instance, that's why multi-age primary classes can work so well; there is always something for everyone. Students can meet high expectations, with outstanding teaching. I think that among Finland's educators, we'll find fewer adherents to Piaget's stage theories and more believers in Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. Skeptics about what young children can achieve also should read about Marva Collins and her school in Chicago's Garfield Park neighbourhood.

2. *Teaching Excellence*

We know about the magic of exceptional teachers. We've occasionally timetabled specific kids into their classes because . . . well, you know. What if almost all teachers had the magic, and the most capable wanted to work with primary kids to get them well on their way in the system? What if this included a lot of young men interested in working in elementary schools who could provide additional perceived equity? What if these very highly qualified teachers worked as an accountable team in planning research-based instruction to meet the goals prescribed by society? What if schools focused completely on student excellence in academics and on the complementary areas of languages, music, art, physical fitness and good nutrition? I think we all know how great teaching and focused priorities are characteristics of our best schools.

3. *Respect*

Teachers and school leaders in Finland are well paid and

highly respected. Teaching in a public school is one of the most coveted and hard-to-attain jobs in Finland. Only the best are admitted. Teachers are seen as instructional experts and are accorded the autonomy and accountability that goes with it. Young people are respected too. They are expected to do well and are given learning environments to promote academic achievement. Children are a priority in Finnish culture. Parents are respected. They're not only fundraisers and monthly advisors in PAC group meetings. They are expected to be involved in supporting homework and maintaining some ongoing understanding of what their kids are learning at school.

4. *Relevance*

Obviously, high expectations, teaching excellence, and respect are supportive of a widespread perception of relevance. We know how critical student perceptions can be. When kids see how exciting and challenging both teachers and parents think their schooling is, how can they not get drawn in? When kids see the connectedness to their futures, how can they not try? There's a self-fulfilling prophecy at work here.

So, how does all this play out in Finland's adult world? Here are a few interesting facts:

Democratic Values: Finland is a long-standing democracy. For instance, it was the first European country to grant universal suffrage in 1907. The UK did so in 1928, France in 1944, Switzerland in 1971. In British Columbia, we granted women voting rights in 1917. The USA did so in 1928.

Business Competitiveness: Recently, Finland was ranked 3rd in the world on the Business Competitiveness Index.

Societal Values: Finland is ranked the least corrupted country in the world on The Corruptions Perceptions Index.

I think the public education system may have something to do with these rankings. Incidentally, only 3% of students there attend private schools, mainly for language reasons. Swedish is Finland's officially second language.

Finally, if your appetite is whetted for further exploring the Finnish education system, there are good resources. Thanks to Vivian Rygnestad, our BCRPVPA President, for the following examples: Janet English moved to Finland in 2013 on a Fulbright Award to learn the "secrets" of Finnish education. She wrote a free e-book, "The Finnish Way" to Optimize Student Learning. In it, she describes how teachers incorporate problem solving into almost every lesson, how education is designed, how equity is addressed, and how the system evolves to improve itself. The work of Pasi Sahlberg from Harvard is seminal to any study of Finland's educational system. An interesting article can be found at <http://theatlntc/1A1PV4o> 

Pete joined the BCRPVPA Executive in 2014. He retired after working in elementary and secondary schools, as well as school district central offices, in Coquitlam and Burnaby. After retiring from public education, he worked with governments and business to assist individuals in career development.

The 2014 Scholarship Winners

In spite of the labour dispute and strike in June and September that prevented graduating students from meeting the application deadlines for many scholarships, the BCRPVPA still had an amazing group of students to choose from. All candidates were very involved in both their school and community, and were honour students at their respective schools.

Amy Du: Amy graduated from Vancouver Technical School and was recognized for being a “born leader with an authoritative, confident, and endlessly positive presence”. At UBC, Amy intends to excel, but, more importantly, wants her endeavors to have a positive influence on others.

Serinda Kong: Serinda graduated from Gladstone Sec. School in Vancouver and currently is attending UBC. Having volunteered with the Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House and the Canucks Autism Network, her goal is to acquire the necessary skills to one day create such an organization to support all children with special needs.

Vanessa Mok: Vanessa graduated in the IB programme from Churchill Secondary School in Vancouver. Known as an “avid volunteer” while in secondary school, she dedicated her time and effort towards building a positive environment for both her school and the greater community. She now attends UBC and her goal is a career in Pharmacy or Medicine.

Sarah Quinn: Sarah graduated from Langley Fine Arts School. She was involved in making the video, How to Help: A Youth Perspective on Bullying, which is now a government-recommended resource. Sarah is attending Kwantlen Polytechnic University where she is pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Voice. Her further goal is to obtain a masters degree in Speech Pathology. 🐾



Teachers' Pension Plan Website



The Teachers' Pension Plan website, at http://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pen_corp_home/tpp_home_page/tpp_retired_members/ is a wealth of information for retirees. If you

have not yet investigated this website, you will be surprised at all of the information that can be at your fingertips!

On the left you will see links to click, and on the main page, you will see articles of pertinent timely information. For example, the “News” highlight is a link to view and print copies of your tax slip through “My Account.”

If you have not registered yet for “My Account” online, go to <https://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/Login/LOGON>. Once you have signed on, and signed in, you will have access to your personal pension information.

It is on the Teachers' Pension Plan website that you can find out when your pension payments will be made to you in 2015, links to publications that may be of interest to you, health benefit information, and documents such as: “How a separation or divorce affects your pension”, “New – Protecting your Pension Benefit: A Guide for Nominating Beneficiaries when Retiring”, “Re-employment of a retired member”, and “What you need to know in the event of a death.” Previous “After Class and Pension News” documents are accessible on the publications page.

The “Resources” page has information with links to Retirement Associations, Pension division upon marital breakdown, and advice on when to contact Teachers' Pensions Services in writing or via telephone, email, fax, or by Canada Post mail services. 🐾

Information above provided by Gerald Soon, Past-president

Photo (left to right): Vivian Rygnestad, Sarah Quinn, Vanessa Mok, Serinda Kong, Eileen Phillips. (Missing from photo: Amy Du).

BCRPVPA Bulletin Board

Please Let us Know

Please ensure that we have your current email address. eBulletins are sent out on an as-needed basis. Please make sure that you also add bcrpvpa@gmail.com and 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@bcrpvpa.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, and other such items. Information may be found at www.bcrpvpa.ca

2015 Cost of Living Adjustment Announcement

A 2 % Cost of Living Adjustment will affect your pension this year. Click on the link https://www.pensionsbc.ca/portal/page/portal/pencorcontent/rmpage/publications/pensionernews/tpp_ac_winter_2015.pdf to see if you qualify for the adjustment. You must be 56 years of age or older. If you retired this year, your adjustment will be pro-rated.

Remember that Cost of Living adjustments are not a guaranteed benefit. Read the document linked above for the full explanation.

Membership

New members are always welcome. Share this edition with your newly retired colleagues and have them join you. Check our web site www.bcrpvpa.ca for membership forms and more information.

Meeting Dates for 2015

General Meetings

Tuesday, March 3 - BCRPVPA office

Wednesday, May 6 - BCPVPA office (AGM)

Live outside the Lower Mainland? Add these dates 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.

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 or pete@rdk.ca

Deadline dates for upcoming newsletters are Tuesday, Feb. 24 and Monday, May 11.

Sunshine

Any sunshine needs or events, please e-mail Christine Johnson at cajbarrett@eastlink.ca or by phone at 604-591-9794.

JUST KIDDING

