

Chronicles & Capers

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE (May 2019)

by Ted St. Pierre

Our Association focuses on obtaining the best efforts for all members of the BC Retired Principals & Vice-Principals. The ‘never tiring’ Executive members spend a minimum of 8 meetings per year in enhancing benefits for our 740 members.

The BCPVPA is starting its 3rd year of the Mentorship Program this Fall. The aim of this program is to cultivate a network of support and partnership engaging retired principals as mentors with newly appointed colleagues in districts different to their own. Retired school principals are very much needed as mentors.

Please use the link below for the application form to be a mentor as well as more information about the success of this program.

<https://bcpvpa.bc.ca/mentorship/>

Benefits of being a member of the BCRPVPA through our Affinity programs are given elsewhere in the newsletter.

GOODBYE AND GOOD LUCK

by Eileen Phillips

Saying goodbye to people who have meant so much in a part of your life is hard to do. Being on the executive of the BCRPVPA is one of the several chapters of my life and I am lucky to have been mentored by some incredible people among whom are the three who are “retiring” from the Executive: Graham Mulligan (Technology and Communications); Vivian Rygnestad (Archives and Past President); and Gerald Soon (Pensions, Affinity, and Past President).

We say goodbye to three of the best and wish them well in their plans which include more travel and time spent with family, especially grandchildren. We look forward to seeing them at General Meetings and Social Events.

PLEASE RESERVE THESE DATES

BCRPVPA GENERAL MEETINGS. These are held at the BCPVPA Offices unless otherwise announced.

Social: 9:30 a.m.; Meeting: 9:45 a.m. Program/Speaker: 11:00 a.m. A No-Host lunch follows at a nearby local restaurant.

Thursday, October 17, 2019

Wednesday, January 22, 2020

Tuesday, March 31, 2020

AGM Wednesday, May13, 2020

THE 2019-2020 BCRPVPA EXECUTIVE

by Eileen Phillips

The following members were elected for positions on the 2019 - 2020 BCRPVPA Executive.

Named Positions:

President: Ted St. Pierre, Year 2 of a 2-year term

Vice-President: Christine Johnson, Year 2 of a 2-year term

Past President: Eileen Phillips, Year 2 of a 2-year term

Treasurer: Lanny Young

Secretary: Celina Mau

Members at Large: Allan Buggie, Jeff Larcombe, Bonnie Deren, Gerry Tiede (advisory role to pensions and liaison with RTA); Marsha Arnold, Geoff Straker

Members at Large roles include:

- Membership & Sunshine
- Program Topics & Speakers
- Scholarships
- Pension & Affinity
- Communications / Technology
- Social/Refreshments
- Archives

Needed on the BCRPVPA executive is a member-at-large who is willing to do the newsletter (four times yearly). Familiarity with the InDesign program from Adobe is an asset but the program can be learned.

Duties would also include ensuring that such items as minutes of meetings and the newsletters are added to the website. If you are interested, please contact Eileen Phillips ephillips555@gmail.com



ICELAND – LAND OF MAGICAL SCENERY

by Joy Ruffeski

Iceland has become one of the premier travel destinations. After a recent visit there I certainly know why!

Although there are many commercial tours you can take of Iceland, we chose to drive around the country ourselves. Trips of various lengths, depending on the amount of time you wish to spend and where you choose to go are easily arranged through Iceland Tours www.icelandtours.is All are very economical. This company provides you with the car of your choice and pre-books all the hotels along the route. All you need to do is be at your accommodation location each night but the choice of where you stop along your route is yours.

Our 10-day stay started with our early arrival at Keflavik airport. After purchasing wine at the Duty-Free shop we picked up our rental vehicle right in the terminal. It is highly recommended that if you wish any liquor to drink in Iceland that you purchase it at the airport as basically this is the only place, besides restaurants, where you can do so outside of Reykjavik. The cost at the duty-free is also considerably less than stores in town. Our first stop was the Bridge Between Two Continents before heading for the Blue Lagoon and a lazy afternoon luxuriating in the thermal waters and an amazing in-water massage! After checking into our hotel in Reykjavik we explored the downtown area of the city on foot. If you have an extra day in town, taking the Hop-on, Hop-off bus is a good way to see the main attractions outside the city centre.

Before leaving Reykjavik, we went “shopping” and picked up food for our daily lunches. We had brought several collapsible coolers and ice packs as well as a thermos that served us well when driving the vast distances. There are very few restaurants outside of the city – picnic lunches really are the norm. Many

individuals pick up sandwiches in the petrol stations but we preferred something much more gourmet and with myself being gluten-intolerant, sandwiches were not an option. Each night our hotels readily refroze our ice packs. Breakfasts and most dinners are provided by the lodging places and included in the cost of your lodging. Many individuals complain that food is outrageously priced in Iceland but we did not find it so and portions are huge (sharing a meal is easily possible). What is very expensive is buying alcoholic drinks and a very small cup of coffee costs around \$5 a cup (and no refills either). Purchasing the alcohol ahead of time and all foodstuffs (cheese, cold cuts, fruit, fresh vegetables, etc.) in the city works well.



The Golden Circle route took us to Pingvellir National Park, an easy area to walk in to see enjoy the scenery. Geysir, and the geothermal fields along with the Gullfoss waterfall are a definite must-do, even if you are only in Iceland for a couple of days. Mountains, craters, waterfalls, and glaciers bordered the road. If you continue along the highway of the southern route there are several glaciers, waterfalls, the Dyrholaey Promontory, the famous Black Sand Beach, and the extensive Eldhraun lava field to explore. A stop at the Fjallsarlon Lagoon is a nice place to stretch your legs but a much more exciting time is had just down the road at the Jokulsarlon Glacier Lagoon where you can take a Zodiac ride right to the edge of the glacier and drift through the gigantic incredibly shaped icebergs. The nearby Diamond Beach is another sight – but don’t get too close to the water as there are “sneaker waves” and people have actually been dragged out to sea by them!



The East Fjords is an area not as well travelled by most visitors to Iceland but it is interesting as well. Once again there are a myriad of waterfalls along the highway and a visit to the port village of Djopivogur to see the harbour and the sculptures of 34 eggs of the area's nesting birds is a lot of fun. Driving along the sheer cliffs and looking down at the crashing waves in the ocean below is exhilarating.

Once one leaves the town of Egilsstadir and after spending the morning hiking into Iceland's tallest waterfall, Hengifoss, you'll discover that the landscape of Iceland's north is vastly different than other areas of the country.



The northern area is truly reminiscent of a barren lunar landscape – but with a view of the glacial cap always in the distance. The Dettifoss and Selfoss Waterfalls in Jökulsarglíufur National Park are pleasant walking breaks. Because this area is so very remote and there are few villages, at night it is a good place to see the northern lights in late September. During the summer, with more than 22 hours of daylight, it is not possible to see them though.



Lake Myvatn is magical and a wonderful place to hike, explore, and see lots of birds. However, be prepared for the small midges that, although they don't bite, are most annoying. The Krafla Lava Fields and Namafjall Geothermal Area are worth exploring. A hike around the Viti Crater presents a stunning view of the valley. The restaurant in this area not to be missed is the Vogafjós Cowshed Café. The food is outstanding and the desserts are more than decadent. Just behind the restaurant's glass walls are cows in the barn on a rainy day or outside in the nearby field when the sun shines! In the restaurant there is a great gift shop with unique items at reasonable prices.



Godafoss Waterfall is another breathtaking waterfall. It is broad and easily accessible even for those with mobility issues. Akureyri, the “capital of the north” is well worth a visit and an overnight stay. Laufas, an ancient farm estate, with turf-covered houses, dating



back to the 18th and 19th Century, is amazing. The buildings look small from the outside but inside they are huge, two stories, and are furnished as they were over a century ago. Lovely local handicrafts are a bargain here. The area around Skagafjörður is known for horse breeding and no trip to Iceland would be complete without seeing these magnificent creatures.

If you aren't afraid of going into a cave, Viogelmir, the largest lava cave in Iceland allows you to explore beautiful ice formations, stalactites, and stalagmites on a guided tour of a lava tube with a most knowledgeable and personable geologist. The raised walkway in this lava cave is well lit and you will be able to see amazing colours and rock formations. If you are interested in this experience though you must book ahead as only a small number of individuals are allowed on each tour.

Borgarnes is a delightful small town with excellent restaurants and a museum. It serves as the entrance to the Snaefellsnes Peninsula, a charming area to visit with its fertile farmlands, lava field, the nearby ocean, and towering mountains. Kirkjufell is one of Iceland's most impressive mountains and one seen regularly in photos. For those followers of Game of Thrones, this mountain was used for the filming of Seasons 6 and 7. Returning to Reykjavik we used the 5 km long Hvalfjörður Tunnel rather than the highway route as it cut off an additional 45 km of driving. This amazing tunnel was built in 1998 and drops 165 meters below sea level – such a structure would definitely be possible here in the Lower Mainland under the Fraser River or Vancouver Harbour!



For those of you who would like to have a peek at what Iceland has to offer, if you fly with Iceland Air to Europe from Vancouver, they offer a stopover for up to 7 days for you to explore Iceland at no additional airfare charges. Perhaps time to change your preferred airline and travel with Iceland Air!

GRADUATING STUDENT BURSARY/ SCHOLARSHIPS

by Jeff Larcombe

If you have a grandchild graduating this year, encourage him/her to apply for our Association's \$1000 student bursary/scholarship. Perhaps you know a neighbour or have friends with a graduating student this year. Do encourage them to apply. Past students who have received a bursary or scholarship from our Association have written back to express their appreciation and explain how it has helped with their education.

It's easy!

Go on to the BCRPVPA website www.bcrpvpa.ca

As soon as you do you will find "Membership Information".

Then click on "Scholarship Information" and all the information a student needs to apply is clearly laid out including specific requirements for application and deadline for applying.

There is also the *BCRPVPA Bursary/Scholarship Application Form* to go along with the application.

If you know any active principals presently in the school system. feel free to pass this information onto them as a "gentle reminder"!



BCRPVPA Annual Book Donation

Accepting books now in **BCPVPA office** (525 W. 10th Avenue Bikeway
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1K9 Telephone: 604-689-3399)



Are you a recent retiree?

Do you have any professional resources
or books lying around at home?

Are your resources published after 2010?

Are you ready to part with your collection?

If you say **YES** to all the above, then please bring them to the BCPVPA office Mondays - Fridays from 8:30am to 4:30pm between now and June 28, 2019.

So Why the Book Sale? Annually, for many years now, we run a One Day Book Sale during the BCPVPA Short Course on Thursdays in early July at UBC. This is our SERVICE to our newly appointed BCPVPA members! The money raised at the Book Sale will go towards our BCRPVPA Scholarship Fund. We contribute five \$1,000 scholarships to our senior high school students. Last July, we raised approximately \$600.

When is this year's Book Sale? All day Thursday, July 4, 2109

THANK YOU in advance for your professional book contribution and support to our newly appointed BCPVPA members!





PERSON ID??? Did you know?

by Gerald Soon

The Pensions Corp now communicates with the BCRPVPA using your PERSON ID from Pensions BC. This past month I have been working with the BCPVPA support staff and representatives from Pensions BC, who contacted the BCRPVPA, and told us we needed to change our Membership application form. Pensions BC no longer uses Social Insurance Numbers.

A bit of background

When you joined the BCRPVPA, you consented to have our dues taken from your pension payment once a year. The BCPVPA supports us in that their employees manage our budgets and payment of our fees from Pension BC. They also maintain our membership list which we consider to be confidential.

The process we have been working on meant the Member Services employee at the BCPVPA would do the normal run of sending our membership list to Pensions BC and payment of dues is made to us.

What Pensions BC required was the sending of the list with Social Insurance numbers. Pensions BC then would replace each of the Social Insurance Numbers with the Person ID that has been assigned to each member, and the list would be sent back to the BCPVPA, with the promise that all Social Insurance Numbers on file would be destroyed.

So where will you find your Person ID? If you look at the last Teacher Pension Plan statement, you will see PERSON ID: with an 8 digit number.

Do you need to do anything? No! Simply enjoy being a member of the BCRPVPA! Only newly retired members who are seeking to join our association have to put the number down on the new form.

So . . . if you know of anyone newly retired, have them fill out one of our new membership forms (attached), and send in a cheque for \$20.

PRESENTATIONS AND SPEAKERS

by Eileen Phillips

This year the whole executive took responsibility for the speakers and presentations offered at our General Meetings and AGM. We have had a year of diverse topics and excellent presenters. In order to make our programs available to our whole membership, highlights of most presentations have been posted on our website and Yammer.

Thanks to the executive for all their efforts in providing these excellent speakers and topics:

- October 23, 2018: Diana Cruchley gave us a 3-hour presentation on preparing the “Indispensable Binder” as one way to be ready for difficult health and wellness situations as well as for end of life.
- January 17, 2019: Kris Taylor presented “Investment Fees and You” that focused on ways to avoid hidden and supplementary banking and investment costs.
- March 19, 2019: Paul Berry spoke to us about Search and Rescue Services throughout the province of BC. We learned about preventing emergency situations as well as how to be prepared for difficult situations that might arise when out in the wilderness or even out for a walk.
- AGM - May 7, 2019: Jeff Larcombe shared his gardening expertise with us. His talk focused on successful vegetable growing in the lower mainland and he highlighted his talk with photos and stories from his own personal experience.

For 2019-2020, we look forward to talks on:

- October 17, 2019: extended health and travel insurance options presentation by Mark or Lisa from Johnson Inc.
- January 22, 2020: retaining the power of memory - a 3-hour presentation by Graham Best
- March 31, 2020: nutrition for seniors - and anyone else by Maria, dietician at Surrey Memorial Hospital
- May 13, 2020: travel and volunteering - Nepal: one day at a time - given by Patti Lefkos



WHO INSPIRED YOU?

by Gerald Soon

Is there one person that you can identify who ignited the spark that put you on the path to become an educator? For me, it is clearly Mae Fung, my Grade 5 teacher at Renfrew School in Vancouver. The school year was 1961 - 1962, and this wonderful teacher touched my life. I remember her first words to us . . . “If you fail . . . then I have failed . . .” It was during that year that I decided I wanted to do what she was doing.

What was it about Miss Fung (who would later become Mae Dang) that would have such an effect on me?



I have always believed that it is relationship with students that can make a difference. As a school administrator I could always sense what was happening that made a classroom a joy to be in, or a place where one could feel the tension in the air. Miss Fung clearly connected with her students and was an example of an educator that I wanted to be like.

Sadly, Miss Fung would be afflicted with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis – also known as Lou Gehrig’s Disease, and her husband Joe Dang and their two sons would be her caregivers on her journey. Eventually Mae would be hospitalized and while I was teaching overseas with DND in Germany, I discovered a fund raiser that was being held for Mae. Though she was paralyzed for the most part, she could communicate with her eyes, blinks, and she could move her finger.

Using that finger, she wrote an essay, called “Flight to Freedom.”

Now that I am retired, I have time to reflect, and I decided to look up Joe Dang. Thanks to LinkedIn, I was able to contact him, and we reconnected this past year. Joe gave me a book that he wrote about his journey with Mae, and I was able to meet Mae’s sister and tell her what an inspiration Mae was to me.

So . . . who was it that sparked your interest in being an educator? I would encourage you to look them up . . . thank them. I know that if in some way I helped to inspire someone, I would appreciate knowing.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - *Wondering what to do with your spare time now that you are retired?*

The Canadian Harambee Education Society is a non-profit organization without affiliation to government or religious organizations whose mission is to improve the quality of life of women and their communities in Kenya and Tanzania by providing secondary education scholarships for bright girls with no means of paying secondary fees. www.canadianharambee.ca Directors of CHES in Canada are all volunteers who receive no payment from CHES.

We are desperately in need of several volunteers with the following talents:

- Accounting skills: Ability to issue receipts, enter data using the Simply Accounting program, work with spread sheets and maintain balances. Time commitment is estimated at half a day every two weeks in our office located in Surrey
- Maintain our website www.canadianharambee.ca Post and update material as and when received using “Word Press”. Time commitment 1 hour a week and *from anywhere with wifi.*
- Facebook editor. If you are an enthusiastic Facebook user we’d appreciate you volunteering to help us out as a Facebook editor for our page. Short blurbs would be sent to you weekly for posting to our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/CanadianHarambee.ca/> Time commitment no more than 1 hour a week and *from anywhere with wifi.*

If interested please contact Joy at 778-565-5261 or ches@canadianharambee.ca



A RENEWED PASSION

by Joy Ruffeski

The BCRPVPA has had the pleasure of having Dennis Ducklow, a retired administrator from Delta, speak to the group twice in the past few years about photography www.doubleexposure.ca

Having always enjoyed photography I had become “lazy” in the last decade and just used the automatic settings on my camera as going into the menu on that particular brand of camera was just too frustrating and time consuming. After speaking to Dennis, I decided to buy one of the new mirrorless cameras on the market – one in which all the settings were right at my fingertips like the “old fashioned” DSLR I had once used and loved.

Dennis teaches several courses in photography in the Surrey/Langley area and I took his *Introductory Photography* Course in the fall. Although I knew about shooting manual, not having done so for many years was a good refresher.

- aperture and controlling the depth of field
- shutter speed
- ISO (new one as before I just bought film with a larger ISO when shooting in low light settings or

where I needed a faster shutter speed)

- exposure compensation, white balance, spot metering, histogram

were just a few of the topics we covered. Practice was a big component of the course with the advice to take at least 100 photos a day! This may sound like a lot but if there are one or two from the 100 that are worthy of keeping, it is a good “shoot” for a photographer (and certainly for me personally).

However, what really has made a difference to the quality of my photographs is the understanding of the elements and principles of composition and image design that make for an excellent picture – lines, shapes, patterns, texture. When should one use the “Rule of Thirds” and when to ignore that principle was a new concept. How lighting is used to create the effect that the photographer wishes for is so important. I’ve never been much of a portrait taker but that was probably because I never knew how to do so effectively. After discovering how to place a subject in a frame, choose a background to enhance the subject, and choose good light, now, when I place people in my photos the pictures actually look good. Wow – who knew there was so much to learn!

This spring I just finished Dennis’ *Intermediate Photography* Course and feel I’ve just scratched the surface in learning about photography. This is definitely a work in progress and one that will fill my retirement days with much joy.





AFFINITY REPORT 2019

by Gerald Soon

Our Affinity program should be vibrant and appealing as it is one way to attract new members and retain current ones. The BCRPVPA is continuing to look for ways to benefit our members. Watch Yammer for updates! As this is my last year on the executive, I hope that our Affinity Program will continue to seek more benefits for our members.

This year, once again, members have been offered discounts or offers for discounts through:

- *Perkopolis* – which presents special offers to members on a regular basis. Members need to sign up with Perkopolis, using the code BCRPVPA. Most recently offers were for discounts on a wide variety of offerings: trips, car rentals, merchandise such as shoes, special events, etc. Monthly updates with new offerings continue to make this site attractive for BCRPVPA members.
- *Enterprise/National Car/ and Alamo car rental* companies are all under ownership of Enterprise International. Members are offered free membership in the Emerald program.
- *Travel benefits for BCRPVPA members* The BC Retired Principals & Vice-Principals Association was pleased to partner with Travel Agency Tribes to offer our members a new Affinity benefit. The beauty of our new partnership with Travel Agency Tribes is that it is at no cost to members. It is up to members to register for the monthly newsletter if they want to be kept apprised of new travel benefits. The affinity benefit can be found at: bcrpvpa.mytravelbenefit.com. To register for the monthly newsletter, members click on the box located at the bottom right of the website. Be assured that one's personal information is not shared and one won't be inundated with unwanted emails! Currently 126 of your colleagues have signed up for savings! Travel Agency Tribes has told us a number of our colleagues have already taken advantage of their expertise. Whether it is cruising, adventure holidays, all-inclusive packages, traveling solo, or if one is thinking of

a multigenerational trip, these are some of the offerings on the initial website. You can also directly ask a question about what type of travel you would like to do, and you will receive a response in a timely manner. By the way, note that if you do take advantage of one of the offers being made to our association members, that accompanying folks on your trip receive the same benefit too – they don't have to be retired administrators! Travel Agency Tribes will also set up a group travel event for you. If you have a destination or specific trip that you would like and have not seen on the website, call, and they will do all the work for you.

- *Johnson Inc. Insurance.* The BC Retired Teachers Association and the BCRPVPA entered an agreement with Johnson Inc. a few years ago to offer members of both associations an alternative Extended Health and Travel insurance plan as an alternative choice plan that they may have through the Pension Corporation with Green Shield. The Prestige extended health care program includes a multi trip travel insurance plan (up to a maximum of 62 days per trip). As the BCRTA has a greater number of members compared to the BCRPVPA, the plan is under the BCRTA name. However, all BCRPVPA members are eligible to enrol in the plan. Spouses or partners of members are eligible as well, and if they are not retired administrators and become widowed, they are eligible to continue coverage if they become an associate member of our association. One of the best advantages for a member is that with Prestige, there is a no stability clause. With Medoc, there is a 90 day stability clause for pre-existing medical conditions. This means one must have no new treatment, or new medication, no new symptoms, or change in frequency of symptoms, no hospitalization or referral to a specialist for the 90 days prior to travel. The Prestige plan is less restrictive and covers sudden and unforeseen medical emergencies. Also, unlike Medoc, there is no \$200 per person deductible at the beginning of each year. And, if you choose to change to Prestige, be aware that the lifetime maximum amount of coverage would reset to zero! The Johnson Prestige plan aims to improve coverage for members each year. For example, when negotiating the details



of the plan, I urged that Clinical Counselling be included as an eligible expense. The rationale was that if an administrator or teacher were receiving counselling before they retired, the need for further counselling would likely still be needed after retiring as well. Initially it was NOT included, but this year it HAS been added as an improvement to the plan. There is no obligation for a member to take advantage of this option for their health and travel insurance needs. The BCRVPA is endorsing it as an affinity benefit, and advises members to consider whether the Prestige program fits the need for their personal circumstances. Should a member decide to move from Green Shield, it is a process that is straight forward and easy to do. There even is an agreement with Medoc, that if a member is moving to Prestige, Medoc will allow the cancellation of the existing coverage.

Steps to take to change:

- Make an appointment with Johnson, Inc. in Langley to do the paperwork.
 Lisa Hanson
 Walnut Grove Commerce Centre
 9440 202nd St, Suite 110 | Langley, BC | V1M 4A6
 t. 604.881.8915
 c. 778.835.4647
lhansen@johnson.ca
www.johnson.ca
- Call Pharmacare and get your Fair Pharmacare number (it was one number for myself and my wife) To contact Pharmacare, From the Lower Mainland, call 604.683.7151 From the rest of B.C., call toll-free 1.800.663.7100.
- Bring in a void cheque to set up the automatic payment from your bank account.
- If you have Johnson Medoc travel insurance, bring in your Certificate number.
- Sign the forms that Johnson provides. Coverage begins the beginning of the next month.
- Call the Teacher Pension Corp. and cancel the Extended Health Plan effective the day before your new coverage begins.

Remember that once a change in coverage is made with the Teacher Pension Corp., should a member decide to return to their Green Shield coverage, it is possible if they give a 90 day in advance application.

- *Carter Auto Group* Purchase ANY make or model of a brand new vehicle at a reduced price! One of the best Affinity benefits, is the Carter Auto Group offer for our members. Do your own research and decide on the make and model of the car you would like to consider purchasing. (You can even ask for the price on two different vehicles!) Know the colour choice and options you want. Then, contact LYNDEN BEST, Account manager. He can be reached at lynden.best@carterauto.com or by calling his Cell: 604-916-2378, Direct: 604-292-2107, or Toll-free: 1-877-311-2266
- *The Canadian Public Employee Acquisition Club (CPEAC) Cellular plans* If you join CPEAC as a member, you will secure discounts on a number of goods and services. The CPEAC is The Canadian Public Employee Acquisition Club. Open to all retired public and register. It is free. Go to <http://cpeac.org>. If you go to this link you will find where you sign up. <http://cpeac.org/register>. Currently there is a link to Rogers where you can secure a cellular phone and other services at 30% off. Why pay by the minute when you can pay by the second! 30% PLAN FEE DISCOUNT
 FREE Cellular devices
 FREE Call display
 FREE Voicemail
 FREE Evenings and weekends from 6 PM
 I have contacted Rogers, and the CPEAC discount is the highest discount that they offer.

BCRPVPA members may choose to add an app: *Endless Savings & More (ESM)* to their smart phone to save! Download a BCRPVPA version of the ESM App to save on every day purchases from hundreds of businesses including national chain retailers, service, and travel providers. Also, save hundreds per year on your smart phone plan with public sector pricing. For complete details and to get the ESM App, view the BCRPVPA Welcome Letter on our website.



GROUND SEARCH & RESCUE - UNPAID PROFESSIONALS AT WORK AROUND THE CLOCK

by Vivian Rygnestad

At our March General meeting we were fortunate to have fellow BCRPVPA member Paul Barry speak to us about Ground Search and Rescue (SAR) in B.C. He is a retired principal, and for over 20 years continues as a volunteer for the Comox SAR team. In his retirement, he assists school districts throughout BC in emergency management planning, and is an integral part of BC's forest fire management team - last summer Paul lived in Williams Lake for 6 weeks managing the forest fire situations. Paul is also an instructor at the Justice Institute of BC in search management, lost person's behaviour, and Incident Command Systems. Needless to say he is one of the most knowledgeable and influential in search and rescue and emergency management.

BC's SAR program consists of 2,500 highly trained volunteers in 80 communities who are on-call day and night, 365 days a year. These team members come from all walks of life and are committed to saving lives and bringing support and closure to families in their darkest hours. SAR teams are an integral part of emergency response management in BC. For example, there are no paramedics or ambulances in our mountains or wilderness areas.

Concerns are growing about social media enticing increasing numbers of inexperienced people to go further afield - people who are unprepared for the conditions they may encounter.

Besides wilderness, rural, and urban rescues, SAR members are specially trained and certified in areas of medical management, swift water rescues, rope rescues, helicopter/hoist/long-line rescues, and avalanche rescues. There are also highly trained teams of volunteers and their dogs.

The breadth of search and rescue work has expanded to include the management of floods, fires, earthquakes, and forest fires. While BC's terrain is picturesque and diverse, it often makes for complex rescues.

SAR volunteers are increasing in their professionalism and must re-certify annually. Their mandatory weekly training consists of constant reviewing of the basics in addition to updating learning in first aid, tracking, search tactics, radio and satellite communications, interviewing, investigating, documenting to police standards, lost person's behaviour, wilderness survival, medical evacuations, and navigating with maps, compasses, and GPS





devices. Members also receive training in Critical Incident Responses - how to help and care for fellow members during and after difficult situations.

There is a science behind searching that includes interviews, tracking, and coordinating team members. SAR teams often coordinate with other emergency responders such as fire fighters, paramedics, and police. Paul likens the patterns of searches to mystery novels: the beginning (“it was a dark and stormy night” and often with little information); a middle with characters (the subject and family members), the setting (often spectacular but dangerous), and the plot (with twists and turns). As in a novel, the ending/conclusion can be either tragic or happy.

Are you interested in volunteering with a SAR team? Retirees are welcome to assist in maintaining equipment, mapping, and record keeping in areas such as statistics and training records.

Did you know that SAR teams rely on fund raising? In the latest budget our provincial government allotted a sum of money to go to all SAR teams in the province; but what is needed is stable, long-term funding to enable SAR teams to plan and to manage the significant costs for training and equipment. Helicopter costs for rescues are borne by the province, but when used for training purposes, the SAR teams pay.

To become more knowledgeable about the outdoors in all seasons, Paul highly recommends the Canadian Adventure Smart programs adventuresmart.ca. This website offers programs for all ages including the popular “Hug a Tree” and “Survive Outside”. The “3 Ts” of safety are included: leaving a “trip plan” that includes telling someone; “train”; and “take the essentials”. Use Adventure Smart’s app to send your trip plan to your family and friends. There are tips for proper clothing, footwear, and other gear, and tips on signalling for help. The simplest is a whistle and for areas without cell coverage, the use of personal locator beacons such as “InReach” and “Spot” is recommended.

We thank Paul for his time and for sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm, and a big thank you to Paul and all search and rescue volunteers throughout BC for their hours and hours of commitment each year to our safety and well-being. They truly are professionals “at work around the clock”.

OBITUARY FOR RON BAIN

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Ron Bain on May 1, 2019. He is survived by his wife Lucy.

There were 11 retired administrators that met to investigate forming a retired BC administrator’s organization on November 20, 1996. Ron and Lucy attended this meeting, and later both were involved at the executive level: Ron as president from 1998 to 2000, and Lucy as Membership, Social (with Ron), and Program as well as Sunshine for many years..

Throughout the years he continued to guide the BCRPVPA and helped formulate the purposes of our group. Ron had a deep interest in the people that he met and made them feel important and welcome. He will be missed by all who had the pleasure of knowing and working with him.

The BCRPVPA sends its deepest condolences to Lucy and her family.



EXTENDED HEALTH COVERAGE - Have you considered switching to Johnson Prestige?

by Gerald Soon

When the BCRPVPA and BCRTA met with Johnson Inc. planning a new alternative to the Extended Health Benefits plan offered to retired teachers and administrators in BC, it promised to be an excellent alternative to the provincial plan that the Pension Corporation offered through Pacific Blue Cross.

There were some fine differences between the two plans, and members needed to really examine their choice – stay with the plan offered through Pacific Blue Cross, and purchase your own travel and cancellation insurance, or select the new Johnson Prestige Plan, which included insurance for travel and cancellation.

At the time, I looked at what was offered and did a cost analysis for my wife and myself. Beside the increase in cost, we also didn't like being away from our grandchildren for more than 32 days. It seemed like we wouldn't need the 62 days of coverage at a time being offered by Prestige.

The Teachers Pension Plan Corporation then switched the provider of our Extended Health and Dental to Green Shield, without even consulting the BC Retired Teachers Association or the BC Retired Principals & Vice-Principals Association. What was supposed to be seamless had quite a few wrinkles, and the executives of both associations received many complaints.

I examined our coverage once again. I realized that our travel insurance through Medoc had a 90 day stability clause. Since we have a European journey planned this Spring, both my wife and I had to have a clear record of not even seeing our physician to change prescriptions or get new medication should we need it! Well, with hay fever's onset and the need for a new stronger prescription to help, our 90 day window was broken!

So I called Lisa Hansen of Johnson, Inc. in Langley. Beyond the benefits of switching (there is no medical questionnaire causing me to have a higher premium, our lifetime spending record for coverage would be re-set to zero, and there would be no \$200 deductible

before our medical coverage is 80% paid – that meant \$400 annually for my wife and I). She advised me to check the Pharmacare Formulary (the drugs authorized and paid for by Pharmacare) and see if what my doctor usually prescribed for me was on the list.

A price comparison I was going to pay more if I switched over to Prestige, but balancing the amount with the deductible we had with Green Shield, the greater amount was \$8 a year!

It was an easy decision to make. We decided to switch the Extended Health portion of our coverage. Green Shield's Dental coverage still seemed better than Prestige, and so we chose to keep that coverage intact.

Members may decide to make a similar switch, and should be aware that with whatever travel and cancellation insurance they have they should be aware whether or not there is a 90 day Stability Clause. It could mean that you would have to travel and not have your medical claims accepted.

Steps to take to change:

1. Make an appointment with Johnson, Inc. in Langley to do the paperwork. Their telephone number is 604.881.8840. Out of town members can call their toll free number at 1.866.799.0000.
2. Call Pharmacare and get your Fair Pharmacare number (it was one number for myself and my wife) To contact Pharmacare, From the Lower Mainland, call 604.683.7151 From the rest of B.C., call toll-free 1.800.663.7100.
3. Bring in a void cheque to set up the automatic payment from your bank account.
4. If you have Johnson Medoc travel insurance, bring in your Certificate number.
5. Sign the forms that Johnson provides. Coverage begins the beginning of the next month.
6. Call the Teacher Pension Corp. at 1.866.876.8877 and tell them you want to cancel the Extended Health Plan effective the day before your new coverage begins. Have your person ID number on hand when you call. They will direct you to email Retired@pensionsbc.ca, giving your full name, person ID number, birthdate and directions to cancel your Extended Health Benefit and the effective date (the day before your new coverage begins)



Note again that you have to decide for yourself if you are going to change the dental coverage if you are with Green Shield or another provider. We chose to stay because the coverage is slightly better.

Note: one of the factors that made us hesitate to change was that the travel/cancellation was part of the extended health care. We were thinking: how long are we going to travel? What would happen if we were not able to travel in the future. There is an option when you sign up with Prestige to accept the travel package. If at a future date you choose NOT to have the travel coverage, you merely cancel that portion.

Another thing to note! Medoc has an agreement with Johnson Prestige that if a member chooses to change mid- year as we did, there is no penalty. We are receiving a refund for the portion of the yearly fee for the months that will not be covered by Medoc.

Each year Prestige improves what it has been offering to our members. And remember, at the beginning we pressed for coverage for a surviving partner or spouse so that they won't be caught without coverage when widowed. If they are not a member of our association, they simply need to apply for Associate membership, and then they are eligible to still apply for extended health, dental and travel insurance coverage.

ARE YOU CONSIDERING SWITCHING TO PRESTIGE? DATES TO CONSIDER

by Gerald Soon

Recently, Gerry Tiede, President of the BC Retired Teachers Association contacted me as the Member at Large (Pensions) for BCRPVPA. He explained that the underwriter of Johnston Prestige was concerned about BCRPVPA members being insured under Prestige.

When I as President of BCRPVPA met with the BC Retired Teachers Association and Lisa Hansen of Johnston, Inc. to discuss a new alternate Extended Health Care plan that could be offered to retired teachers and administrators of BC, it was explained that the BCRPVPA could not have a policy of its own. At that time our membership was under 400, and the underwriter required at least 1000 members who

would sign on to make the insurance viable.

The BCRTA kindly agreed to allow our members to “piggyback” onto their insurance plan. So up to this point, BCRPVPA members merely needed to identify themselves as one of our members, and they would be allowed to have Johnston Prestige without being a member of the BCRTA.

The problem the underwriter had, was that there was no way that the BCRTA, as “owner” of the Prestige Extended Health and Travel Insurance policy could know whether or not BCRPVPA members had maintained their membership in OUR association. In reality, the BCRTA has had members join their association to have access to Prestige, and then they have let their membership drop. The BCRTA has told those members to rejoin, or they have been told as non-members they are no longer eligible to have Prestige insurance.

The BCRPVPA has no idea how many of our members have taken advantage of Prestige, and the BCRTA is willing to “grandfather” any of our members who have taken advantage of joining Prestige up to August 31, 2019.

However, as of SEPTEMBER 1, 2019, any BCRPVPA members who wish to join Prestige as NEW policy holders **MUST** join the BC Retired Teachers Association in order to be part of the plan.

- BCRPVPA member has joined Prestige BEFORE September 1, 2019 - *is eligible to continue membership in Prestige without RTA membership (grandfathered)*
- BCRPVPA member wishes to newly join Prestige BY August 31 2019 - *Join RTA – they have a one year free membership. Then the member is grandfathered and qualifies to continue Prestige as BCRPVPA members*
- BCRPVPA member wishes to join Prestige AFTER Sept. 1, 2019 - *Must join RTA as a continuing member with annual dues payable to RTA.*