



THE RETIRED TEACHERS OF ONTARIO
LES ENSEIGNANTES ET ENSEIGNANTS
RETRAITÉS DE L'ONTARIO

**THE ISLAND
CONNECTION
DISTRICT 47
VANCOUVER ISLAND**

SPRING 2014



Darrell Grande
District President

RTO District 47 President's Message

This past October, I attended the RTO/ERO Fall Senate in Toronto. **(My report about the highlights of that meeting is posted on the District 47 web site.)** As has happened at other RTO/ERO meetings, it was inevitable that someone, seeing my name tag, would ask me, "If you're from **British Columbia**, what are you doing at a meeting of the Retired Teachers of **Ontario**?"

For the over 425 RTO members from District 47—and over 350 members who belong to Mainland B.C.'s District 42—such a question may be amusing. After all, even though we live our retirement years in British Columbia, we know that we were **teachers** whose careers were in **Ontario**. Or were we?

In 1968, when the *Superannuated Teachers of Ontario* was formed, its mandate was indeed to serve retired members of The Ontario Teachers' Federation. The name change to the *Retired Teachers of Ontario* in 1998 initially continued that mandate. However, in recent years, there has been a realization that service in Education is provided in a variety of ways beyond teaching. As a result, the position of "Associate Member" was created.

Associate membership in RTO/ERO now encompasses twelve distinct categories. Our members include educational support staff (e.g. psychologists, administrative assistants, secretaries, caretakers, board-employed bus drivers, etc.), university and college faculty, and teachers from private schools. They include those who taught or worked as support staff in provinces other than Ontario. (Over the past few years, I've been pleased to welcome into the membership of District 47, colleagues who spent their entire careers in the educational systems of Alberta and British Columbia.) They include spouses of members of

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RTO/ERO, who may or may not have had a career in the educational system.

We belong to a growing, vibrant organization of over 70,000 members. The vast majority of us joined for one reason: RTO/ERO provides its members with one of the best health plans in Canada. However, membership in the Retired Teachers of Ontario also offers us the opportunity to participate in a variety of social events. ("THWTB" and the Christmas luncheons sponsored by each of the District 47 units were very well attended this past year.)

For those who want to "get involved", there's always the option of volunteering to fill one of the many positions on the District and Unit executives. There's a perennial need for revitalizing our Executives, and we welcome new ideas. The time commitment isn't too demanding, and those who serve on our Executives have the satisfaction of knowing that their efforts are helping to provide better services for our members. If you would like to join one of our Executives, let us know.

On May 7, District 47 will be hosting its annual Spring Gathering and AGM at the Cowichan Golf Club. RTO/ERO Provincial President, Norbert Boudreau, will be joining us at this event. (If you've attended our Spring Gatherings in the past, you know that the Agenda is short on "business" and long on "social". I hope to see you there.

Darrell Grande
President, District 47

The Importance of Pre-Planning: Things You Should Know

Pre-planning for your own passing can save your survivors a lot of stress, and can insure that your spouse quickly receives their Survivor's Pension and RTO/ERO Medical Benefits.

Upon retirement, designate a beneficiary for your pension.

Let your survivors know that they need to contact RTO/ERO Provincial Office (1-800-361-9888, the Teacher's Pension Plan (1-800-668-0813) and the Government of Canada (1-877-277-9914) to set in motion the necessary changes to insure the continuation of Pension and Medical Benefits. We cannot do it at the local level.

**District Executive
2013-2015**

President:

Darrell Grande
(250-760-0201)

Past President:

Barbara Strachan
(250-383-3195)

Vice-President:

Gloria Humphrey
(250-658-0725)

Secretary:

Penny Stowell-Smith
(250-760-0095)

Treasurer:

Rex Sharman
(250-294-6304)

Victoria Unit President's Designate:

Bill Huzar
(250-995-3154)

Mid/Upper Island President:

Willie Odendaal
(250-752-4350)

Mid/Upper Island Unit Rep:

Jim Ross
(250-756-4794)

Victoria Unit Rep:

Irene McDonald
(250-477-0009)

**SPRING GATHERING
WED. MAY 7, 2014
COWICHAN GOLF
AND COUNTRY CLUB**

Agenda:

10:00 a.m.: Register & Socialize

10:30: Business Meeting

**11:30: Guest Speaker: Steve
Wallace (Hints for Senior Drivers)
Special Guest: Norbert Boudreau,
President, RTO/ERO**

Noon: Fabulous Buffet Menu

**Cost: \$25 to members and guests
(partially subsidized by District)**

**Spring Gathering coupon
available on page 5.**

**Directions: From the South
Take Island Hwy/Trans-Canada
Hwy 1 north toward Duncan
(Golf Club is about 5 Km south of
Duncan). Turn *Right* onto Bench
Rd. (traffic lights), then turn left
onto Golfers Dr.**

**Directions: From the North
Take Island Hwy/Trans-Canada
Hwy 1 south from Duncan (Golf
Club is about 5 Km south of
Duncan). Turn *Left* onto Bench Rd.
(traffic lights), then turn left onto
Golfers Dr.**

Before a trip to an 'unusual' part of the world, consider calling Allianz Assistance to confirm emergency services

Contact: Allianz Global Assistance

Canada/U.S. @1-800-2496556

Mexico @00-1-800-5143702

Dominican @1-888-7514403

Other Countries: Toll Free @800-92219221

RTO/ERO

The Retired Teachers of Ontario is a provincial organization of retired teachers, administrators and others receiving pensions and allowances under the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board.

RTO/ERO is the best organizational friend a retired teacher can have. Formed in 1968, RTO/ERO is dedicated to the needs of Ontario's retired educators and is their official voice, promoting and protecting their interests, particularly in the area of pensions, health care and insurance.

RTO/ERO has maintained this unwavering commitment for over 30 years.

HERE FOR YOU NOW...

HERE FOR YOUR FUTURE

Good Questions and Answers

Thanks to Dan & Doreen Hall

Climb the Walls

"Oh, I sure am happy to see you," the little boy said to his grandmother on his mother's side.

"Now maybe daddy will do the trick he has been promising us."

The grandmother was curious. "WHAT TRICK IS THAT?" she asked.

"I HEARD HIM TELL MOMMY THAT HE WOULD CLIMB THE WALLS IF YOU CAME TO VISIT," the little boy answered.

Life after Death

"DO YOU BELIEVE IN LIFE AFTER DEATH?" the boss asked one of his employees.

"Yes, sir," the new employee replied.

"WELL, THEN, THAT MAKES EVERYTHING JUST FINE," the boss went on. "AFTER YOU LEFT EARLY YESTERDAY TO GO TO YOUR GRANDMOTHER'S FUNERAL, SHE STOPPED IN TO SEE YOU!"

Support a Family

The prospective Father-in-law asked, "YOUNG MAN, CAN YOU SUPPORT A FAMILY?"

The surprised groom-to-be replied, "WELL, NO I WAS JUST PLANNING TO SUPPORT YOUR DAUGHTER. THE REST OF YOU WILL HAVE TO FEND FOR YOURSELVES."

Grandma's Age

Little Johnny asked his grandma how old she was.

Grandma answered, "39 AND HOLDING."

Johnny thought for a moment and then said, "AND HOW OLD WOULD YOU BE IF YOU LET GO?"

Upcoming Social Events for Unit 47-2. Any member of District 47 is welcome to participate in our Units activities, and the members of Unit 42 can attend any events held by Unit 41/ Victoria

Please attend as many activities as possible as they are only successful if well attended.

HAVA JAVA

At this time we meet at Serious Coffee on Hammond Bay Road, at Pipers Pub location.

We meet on the last Monday of the month at 10 a.m. Please join us for your favourite brew and some friendly conversation.

February 20, 2014

Drop In Lunch at the Black Goose in Parksville.

We will meet at the Pub at 11:30. We will order individually from the Menu. This Drop In has been well attended and enjoyed by our members. Please let Penny Stowell-Smith know at 250-760-0095 or stowellsmith@shaw.ca by February 17 if you plan on coming so that she can let the Black Goose know how many to expect. The Black Goose is located just off Resort Drive in Parksville.

The following are the Social Events for the next few months:

At the time of printing of this newsletter definite dates had not been confirmed; but there are plans to do the following:

April: We will return to the Longwood Brew Pub for a tour of their brewing facility, and stay for lunch afterwards

May: We have our SPRING GATHERING on May 7. See details elsewhere in this newsletter. Coupon found below.

June: We are planning a tour of the Little Qualicum Cheeseworks and Mooberry Winery.

Please watch for further details via email.

(coupon for Spring Gathering)

Please complete and return this form by Apr. 28 to:

**Rex Sharman
516 Harbinger Ave.
Victoria, BC
V8V 4J1**

Name(s): (Print)

Phone/email:

**Number: _____ @ \$25.00 = _____
Cheques only please, payable to
RTO District 47**

NOT A CRUISE! A Members Personal Experience

By: Phil Little

Member R.T.O. Mid-Upper Island, District 47

One of the perks of retirement is the freedom to set our own agenda. Our years of work in education enable us to live our "golden" years with some security while being able to do things that were put off until later. Travel is one of those "things" and often when we gather, the topic turns to where we have been and what did we see.

The end of 2013 gave me a travel opportunity that was quite different. With permission from my wife, Anne Marie, I took a five airport trip to northern Honduras to spend some time with a friend. Honduras is the original "banana republic", the second poorest country in the Americas (only Haiti is poorer), and now it has the reputation as the "murder capital of the world" beating out Ciudad Juarez in Mexico for this dubious distinction.

My friend is a Jesuit priest, Fr. Ismael (Melo) Moreno, who is Honduran by birth and currently he is the director of two Jesuit apostolates: Radio Progreso – an independent radio station (103.3 fm) and E.R.I.C. (Reflection, Investigation and Communication Teams) – a human rights center. In the past three years 35 journalists have been assassinated, and in 2009 after a military coup the Radio Station was shut down after soldiers entered the station and smashed the equipment. Melo himself has received in the past credible death threats. While the country is traditionally Catholic, that has not protected clergy who advocate for the poor or human rights. Over the past few years, a group from the USA, Witness for Peace, has provided "accompaniment" teams who have shadowed Melo for periods of time to give him some international presence. The theory is that while the assassination of a Honduran priest might not even make the news in the north, the murder of internationalists could cause greater problems for the government. Anyway – that is the theory.

I was speaking to Melo last April when he traveled to southern Oregon to speak to church groups and elected officials about his work and the problems in Honduras. I asked Melo how I could support him and his answer was quite simple "acompañame" – accompany me. Melo has been a dear friend of our family for almost 30 years. It seemed to me that was the least I could offer.

So for 5 weeks I shadowed Melo, all the while trying to learn as much as possible about his work and his country. At the end of my visit I was asked if perhaps I had traveled to Copan, the famous Mayan ruins which are a major tourist destination. I had to reply that while I did not get to Copan, I did make two visits to the penitentiary near the city of La Ceiba to visit with a political prisoner, Chabelo Morales. He has been in prison for 5 ½ years for a crime he did not commit. The basis of the conflict is that a group of powerful and connected persons are trying to evict a community of poor peasant farmers from their community and their land. Chabelo faces possible assassination even while he is in prison.

I met many wonderful and courageous persons – it requires courage just to try to live a normal life. Violence is a fact of life. Honduras is a country that suffers from an abundance of weapons. Some are left over from the Contra Wars of the 1980's, many are new weapons provided by the US, Canada and other countries to the army and the police. The police are totally corrupt and they share their weapons with the narco-gangs such as the Maras (MS) who are literally a plague throughout the US and Central America. Over 80% of the cocaine that comes from Peru and Columbia before entering the USA, passes through Honduras where the drug is refined and packaged for shipment. The gangs are also into some typical sidelines such as kidnapping and extortion. A contract to kill a rival or enemy in Honduras will cost only \$50.

Almost everyone I met, workers at the radio station or E.R.I.C., friends or family of Melo, persons from different churches I visited, had at some time been robbed. Most people know someone – family, neighbor or friend – who has died violently. Three years ago, Ana was shopping with her husband, an agronomist, one Saturday and putting groceries in their car when an assailant came up to them on a bicycle and demanded their money. The husband resisted and was shot three times. Ana phoned Melo who came with his truck and he took his friend to the hospital where he died. There was no investigation by the police. In the small city of El Progreso (population 100,000), about the size of Nanaimo, there was, in 2013, an average of one murder per day, which apparently was an improvement over the previous year. There are on average 20 murders per day in Honduras (population 8 million).

Who does the killing? The narco gangs do their share of the killings, usually targeting rival gangs or persons who refuse to pay protection money. The police do some of the killing. Sometimes they will go out at night looking for young persons in the streets and will simply murder them. The unemployment

rate among the young is very high and youth are feared by the establishment. The military have special units that operate always wearing balaclavas and without any identification. Persons they arrest often simply disappear permanently. As well, there are nine times more private security agents than state police, all heavily armed, and who enjoy impunity. Such private police target community leaders or environmentalists who oppose some of the international projects such as mines (i.e. Canadian Goldcorp), or trade unionists trying to organize the maquilas (sweatshops). And then there are just the average unemployed delinquents with guns, often illiterate, who have nothing to lose and will kill if they feel threatened or slighted.

There were a few days when Melo told me to stay home as he would be in meetings all day long. I thought I might just go for a walk around the neighborhood, but when I mentioned that possibility Melo was horrified and instructed me on no account to leave the house alone for safety reasons. Most days I accompanied Melo wherever he went. Often he was working with community groups or meeting foreign delegations of international observers during the time of presidential elections. Often in the evenings I would participate in a radio program called "America Libre" hosted by Melo.

I could not avoid going to church more often than normal, after all I was shadowing a priest. Melo introduced me to the congregation of a parish he assists with a Sunday evening mass. Almost the entire congregation came to me after the mass to give me a hug and wish me a pleasant visit. The Honduran people are exceptionally warm and inviting. Several times we were invited to homes to share the family meal. Almost every meal includes tortillas, black beans and sometimes fried banana.

My last evening was somewhat typical. One of the young workers at the radio station was seen leaving rapidly and crying. I asked what was wrong and was told that she had just received a telephone call that her young niece, 5 years old, had been kidnapped. In Honduras this can lead to two common ends – the child is sold on the market or the child's body is found with organs removed (for private transplant clinics who serve northern customers unwilling to wait). Immediately Melo notified all radio and television stations and there was an immediate response that proved successful. The child was found three hours later unharmed 1 ½ hours away in a gang controlled neighborhood. It is thought that the child became too hot to use with such immediate information on the airways.

I returned to Canada on December 18, but not quite ready for the Christmas celebrations. There is a sharp contrast in almost everything. I can eat my evening meal and not hear gunfire nearby. I can drive by a police car without fear. I can walk to the store without the likelihood of being assaulted. I can write a letter of complaint to my local politician without expecting retribution.

We do live in a blessed country, don't we?

Consider watching the video interview of Fr. Melo when he was in Ashland, Oregon in 2013. "Padre Melo, Crisis and Hope in Honduras"

<http://dennisremickmedia.wordpress.com/2013/07/23/padre-melo-testament-honduras/>

Revised Add No 1



remember this?

If you do we want to remember you.

SEND US YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS.

OPS(M)TF Alumni Reunion Committee • louiseaewing@bell.net

Report of Political Advocacy Rep Political Advocacy Committee Workshop September 15-16 Toronto

It was my pleasure to attend this meeting of Political Advocacy Representatives, in a workshop titled "Building Relationships". Some speakers were brought in – and some small group work followed.

There was an emphasis that R.T.O. is a non-partisan organization that does not identify with nor promote any one political party. At the same time it was recognized that advocacy moves into the "political sphere". As different units gave reports, it was obvious that in some units, the political concerns were more easily defined by local concerns. However there are some common concerns that would seem to be obvious for all: for example "support for a publicly funded public school system".

Much of what was said at the workshop, by the speakers and the group work, was more applicable to the Ontario scene. By sheer numbers R.T.O. members can exercise some influence in local affairs. The first keynote speaker was former NDP leader Howard Hampton. He emphasised that governments want and need public input far more than they are willing to admit. He was obviously very teacher friendly, and he said that groups like R.T.O. have an "obligation" to try to influence government. He spoke of the "cumulative experience" and wisdom that R.T.O. possesses. He compared R.T.O. to the nurses organization R.N.O. that spends minimally on such things as political fundraisers but is very active in advocacy in areas of their expertise in areas such as public health, poverty, chronic diseases, etc.

The advice of Hampton was to spend time deciding what issues are important to R.T.O. members, such as protecting pensions but going even further as the pension issue will be more critical to the younger generations. He suggested that the issue of "extracurricular" activity in public schools needs a good debate, as he fears that extracurriculars are in danger. He admitted that he got into education originally with an agreement to coach sports. Hampton said that R.T.O. needs to do the research and distill the message into "2 sentence bites". He suggested that when a group representing R.T.O. asks to meet with local M.L.A.'s they have to pay attention, even if they don't agree, because groups like R.T.O. by their past service and their numbers do have a "political weight" that must be considered. In meeting with politicians it is important that R.T.O. does its homework on whatever issue is to be discussed, and that it be focused on that issue. He also suggested that R.T.O. needs to engage the media, to write letters and to organize in ways that the media takes notice. He suggested that from a politicians point of view, a group such as R.T.O. functions like a "focus group".

My comment: District 47 is in a very different reality than the units in Ontario. We do not have the numbers and we are scattered over a large area. I certainly think we can be more active in defining issues and speaking out on common issues that our members could support: public education, health care, child poverty. Perhaps on Vancouver Island, we might need to work in alliance with other groups to help give them the political weight of our support.

Quote: "Change occurs when the pain of doing nothing exceeds the pain of doing something."

On the second day of the workshop two former senior bureaucrats were brought in as

speakers: they were supposed to be experts in working with politicians, but came across somewhat as motivational speakers.

Suggestions when meeting with local politicians:

Clearly establish meeting time and place.

Only a few R.T.O. members should attend – one conversationalist and one listener plus 1.

Pre-establish the “attitude” of R.T.O. towards the issue to be discussed, almost rehearse the meeting so that the chosen speaker clearly identifies the purpose of the meeting and the issue to be discussed.

In meeting with politicians it is good to ask for advice or even ask “what should we do ...”, to help establish a feeling of rapport. Over the years it is important to develop a relationship with local politicians so that they know who they are dealing with. Politicians are weary of “negativity”, so advocacy should be positive – what we define as common good.

Before meeting a politician it is sometimes useful to submit some briefing material ahead of time.

Follow-up: letter of gratitude, phone call, part of developing a relationship

It was suggested that the district could provide its members with a list of local politicians and their phone/email directions.

Other R.T.O. districts provided reports that showed the diversity of areas of concern such as:

- Long term health Care
- Residential Care Availability
- Environment – dealing with pollution
- Social Media: there was a strong emphasis on the need to be aware of and to use social media as a form of communication.

Each participant received a very well organized “Political Advocacy Resources Manual” which may be helpful to the Unit in organizing some effective advocacy work in the form of lobbying, developing alliances, and pre-election strategies.

Phil Little, Political Advocacy Rep, Mid-Upper Island R.T.O. District 47

Shingles Vaccine

Almost nothing can be as painful as shingles. A vaccine is available. Speak with your doctor to see if this vaccine is appropriate for you. Contact Johnson Insurance or consult the newest Health Care Booklet (green cover) as you may be eligible for partial reimbursement.

Highlights of HSIC Meeting December 2013

1. The preparation of the Group Benefits Booklets is on time with mailing due with Renaissance throughout mid to late January.
2. Now that plan enhancements have been announced in the Group Plans Update, the Health Plans Strengths Flyer (presented at Senate) will be updated and distributed to District Presidents/Health Representatives, Provincial Executive members and Provincial Chairs.
3. There were 1,925,824 claims in the Benefit Program during the 2013 year up to October, an increase of 8% over last year.
4. The OTPP report, presented by Michael McAllister, indicated that during the month of December \$423 M in pensions will be paid out of a total of \$5 B for the year. The current fund stands at \$120 B. A projected 4,500 persons are expected to retire in 2014. Of those persons who have a deduction for Health Benefit purposes, 83.3% are with RTO/ERO.
5. Plans for the 2014 DHR/UHR June Workshop are well under way with the program following the carousel approach that was popular in the 2013 workshop.
6. The Participants Report indicated that as of Oct. 2013 we have 86,338 insured lives in the Health Plans. Only 36.4% of Late Applicants' Report (requiring medical evidence of insurability) are approved for entrance into our Group Benefits Program. This strongly supports the importance of prospective members applying for participation in the Semi-Private/Convalescent Home Care or Extended Health Care Plans within the 60 day of expiration of their board plan, spouse's group plan or any other group plan. District Presidents and DHR/UHR's are asked to ensure that prospective members are aware of this information.

Submitted by Val Alcock

BEARS AND BEAMS PROGRAM

This Math and Reading program run in cooperation with many schools in S.D.#68 (Nanaimo/Ladysmith) is looking for volunteers. The Bears and Beams program, which operates through Literacy Central Vancouver Island, was first introduced in 1989 and is designed to match volunteer buddies with elementary school students who need extra support with their reading and math skills. If you have some free time, this program has proven to be a very rewarding experience for both student and "buddy" alike. There will be no charge for the normal background check. If interested or for more information contact:

Bobbi Bogle
Bears & Beams Coordinator
19 Commercial St.
Nanaimo, B.C.
V9R 5G3
PH. 250-754-8988
Email: bearsandbeams@LiteracyCentralVI.org

Looking For Your Most Teachable Moment

Upon reflection, I'm sure many of our members have a "Teachable Moment"— that time when the lesson, while not what you may have planned, just happened. It's that opportunity to instill in our students an idea, thought or learning that they will always remember, even years later, that we're looking for.

If you have such an experience we'd love to hear about it and share it with others in future editions of "The Island Connection".

Send your memories to W.J. Ross, 5812 Ralston Dr., Nanaimo, BC, V9T6C5 or email wjross2001@shaw.ca (in Word document form).

Contribute to the Connection!

The next issue of the Island Connection will be **August 2014**. You can:

- Share a line with our readers and let them know what you are up to.
- Send a letter to the Editor on any topic that concerns you.
- Write an article on any topic that may interest your colleagues.
- Share a funny story or a personal experience with our readers.
- Send a photo.

Send your article, photo or correspondence to the Editor, Jim Ross, by email: wjross2001@shaw.ca, by mail to 5812 Ralston Dr. Nanaimo, V9T6C5 or phone 250-756-4794. Deadline for submissions is **July 14, 2014**.

Leave a Legacy

To leave a legacy behind- isn't that what we all wish for?

When you actively work on your own happiness and role in this world, people will remember you as one who led a good life and will use you as an example. By fulfilling your own dreams, you have not only taken—you have also given something back.

People remember those who make them feel good. And not only make them feel good—but also teach them how they can make themselves feel good.

New District Website

Check out our new District 47 Website at **District 47.rto-ero.org**.

Thanks to Bill Huzar for setting up our new website. Be sure to check it out.

This Publication is distributed to all members of RTO/ERO District 47 British Columbia.

Editor: Jim Ross

Articles of interest are most welcome. Insertion of articles will be at the discretion of the Editor and/or District Executive.

Submission Standards: Electronic TXT file preferred, (or Word DOC file) emailed to the editor at wjross2001@shaw.ca

Typed or hand-printed submissions are accepted. Send snail mail to:

W. J. Ross, 5812 Ralston Dr., Nanaimo, BC, V9T 6C5

Moving?

Update your mailing and email address with the membership department at membership@rto-ero.org or by calling 1-800-361-9888.