

District 42 Mainland Matters



Osprey Lake, Princeton, BC by Shannon Redmond

District 42 Team Building Barbeque by Shannon Redmond and Sarah Bandiera

A wonderful time was had by all twelve district 42 executive members who gathered together “in person” outside on Friday afternoon July 8, 2022. The sun was shining, and the weather was warm. It was held in the stunning garden of our faithful president Janice Wasik with her husband Ron.

Up to this point, we only have had zoom meetings so this “in person” event was extremely welcomed. The social

event was a huge thank you for all the volunteer hours and hard work the executive members have provided over the last year.



Burgers and salads with a lovely fruit filled whipped cream cake made the afternoon very special--and filling. Thanks again Janice and Ron for your hospitality, and it was wonderful to meet your grandsons. They were very helpful.

Language: A Precious Tool That We Often Take for Granted

by Monique Bournot-Trites

When I immigrated to Canada, I had no idea how much language would determine my life. Being bilingual or multilingual is thought to give advantages by most people, especially in Canada where a variety of languages are learned and spoken by our diverse population. However, language is more than a tool of communication, it is linked to our identity and can be used to open doors or prevent others from entering. My story illustrates this quite well.

I grew up in a very small farming village in France with no diversity at all besides some people with physical or mental handicaps. When I say small, it was really small: no library, no stores, no café, no public transportation, no running water, only a small one-room school for everyone four to sixteen years old. Of course, there was a church with a nice red steeple and bells that rang for mass, weddings, and funerals. About ten farming families lived there without television, fridges, washing machines or other commodities and everyone seemed happy, although quite poor. The price for the privilege of attending secondary school was to be sent at age ten to a strict boarding school along with my brother and sister, 50 km from the village. I was allowed to go home for the weekends twice a month. Unfortunately, those weekends were no holiday. As soon as our suitcases hit the floor, my mother listed off the tasks she had lined up for each of us. We had to help! This is how I learned that education would be my only salvation. I studied hard and learned Latin, German (I was told it would be useful if there was another war), and English for a few years only, without ever meeting a German or

an English person. Although, I loved the French language, French literature, and French words, these foreign languages were an abstract notion, something that everyone learned in secondary school with little motivation. At that time, I was totally unaware how language would shape my future life.

By age 23, I was married, had a child and was working for “l’Institut National des Statistiques et des Études Économiques” (the equivalent of Statistics Canada) and my now ex-husband went to study at McGill which led me to immigrate to Canada. Although Quebec is French-speaking, many people also spoke English. I started to learn about diversity, different accents, and different cultures. For the first time, I met real English speakers and some French speakers who spoke a different French than mine. Culturally, everything was different from what I had known in my small village in France.

Six years later, I moved to Vancouver with a new husband. Remembering that education was salvation, I applied to the University of British Columbia to start a Bachelor of Arts degree—which was followed by a Bachelor of Education, a Master of Education and a Ph.D.—while raising two sons. The biggest challenge I quickly discovered after being accepted was that all of my courses were in English when I could not speak a word of it and understood very little. I sat in the first row and wrote everything phonetically during the day, then spent my nights reconciling my notes with my textbooks to make sense of my notes. This is how I learned English. Fortunately, I encountered a few professors that were like lighthouses to

guide my path and help me over and above their duty. I discovered that language was power. My French seemed to have no value at the time, but I could see that learning English was the means to participate in discussions with students and professors and empower my voice. I was even speaking English with my children!



Monique and her husband, Andrew

Today, I am a professor at the same university that educated me—and I teach courses in English as well as in French. I reached my goal of being fluent in English. I understood that language was also an asset, a sort of capital. During my studies, I was pleasantly surprised to see the multiple ways in which French came back in my life, and the ways in which it was valued in British Columbia. I found myself in a classroom as a French immersion teacher inspiring anglophone students with my passion for the French language and showing them the doors, it could open. I was part of the first cohort of future French teachers in British Columbia during my Bachelor of Education degree (where mercifully all my courses

were in French). What a relief after suffering so much to learn English!

My research in both my graduate degrees had to do with French as an additional language—as were the jobs I took on to support French at UBC. When the professor in charge of the French education program became very sick, I volunteered to take over his tasks. I felt a passion for French, and that it was my responsibility to promote it. Suddenly, like never before, I realized that French was really a big part of my identity. I eventually became Director of the French programs and taught many students who are now French teachers all across British Columbia. Meanwhile, I developed and oversaw a test to assess the language competency of students seeking to enter the French education programs at UBC and SFU. I believed that French teachers were models for the students and had to have a high language competence to teach.

Later, I was hired as a faculty member in UBC's Department of Language and Literacy Education to teach and conduct research related to French immersion. I also created an online French Master of Education for French teachers who lived outside of Vancouver (due perhaps to the lack of opportunities I encountered during my youth). I am particularly proud that the eighth cohort of master students is going to start this year with teachers from all over Canada. Online courses were not the norm when I started this in 2008, and it was challenging to organize this program.

Language is a tool of power and legitimacy. When I taught English at UBC, many of my students—future English teachers—were non-native anglophone

students and experienced difficulties, and some were marginalized because of their non-native competence in English—as I once was. If language is power, the other side of that coin is discrimination. I often shared my story with those students giving them aspiration, encouragement, and self-confidence.

Like those students who learn English, many French Immersion teachers have learned French as a second language and often have doubts about their competency to teach French language and culture. As a way to empower them, I coordinated a Canada-Europe student mobility program between 2005 and 2007 that gave French as a second-language teachers the opportunity to spend four months in France where their second language was their pupils' mother tongue. For the teacher participants, the true test of their legitimacy was to be able to teach successfully in their second language to native speakers of that language. Teaching abroad positively impacted their professional identity and feelings of legitimacy.

Language also gives the opportunity to share and participate in the activities and associations of language communities. French gave me the opportunity to co-found the “Centre de la Francophonie de UBC.” Over its more than ten years of existence, this centre has consistently served as a social and cultural hub for UBC's Francophone and Francophile community. Through the organization of events and workshops, it showcases the linguistic, artistic, and cultural wealth of the French-speaking community all around the globe. I also served as Vice-President and Treasurer of the Alliance Française, as well as Director and executive committee member of the Canadian

Association of Applied Linguistics and the Centre for Intercultural Language Studies of UBC. More recently, I became a board member of the Canadian Language Benchmarks and wrote the theoretical framework for French and English language standards needed for immigration.

Little did I know that my love for language, and the large part that French has played in my identity in Canada was noted in France. To my great honour, the French government recognized my activities and contributions to the French language by awarding me earlier this year with the insignia of Knight in the Order of the Academic Palms. The Order of the Academic Palms is a French decoration created by Napoleon to honour outstanding educators.



Insignia of the Knight of the Order of the Academic Palms

Language is often taken for granted. However, it is an important tool. Language is a capital, and it is power and a

source of legitimacy. As the English novelist and journalist Angela Carter said, "Language is power, life and the instrument of culture, the instrument of domination and liberation." Language is an asset that we can use for our own benefit, but also the benefit of others. It gives us

the opportunity to participate and be part of our communities, and make sure the minorities are not left in the margins. I look forward to bringing my experiences and knowledge to support RTOERO.

RTOERO Insurance Claims Information

by Audrey Osborne and Shannon Redmond

Attention District 42 members!

Hope everyone enjoyed our lovely summer! Aren't you glad we aren't working anymore!

We are here giving you the latest news about submitting insurance claims and getting reimbursed. It is EASY!

Right now, the deadline to submit an insurance claim is the end of the **next** calendar year after the date in which you incurred the expense. For example, 2021 receipts can be submitted until Dec. 31, 2022.

Here is the NEW and EASY part:

Starting **Jan. 1, 2023**, the RTOERO policy will require you to submit your claims within **six months** from the date the expense was incurred. For example, if you had a massage on Jan. 7, 2023, you have until July 6, 2023 to submit your claim. Or, if you had a dentist appointment on March 1, you have until Aug. 31.

- Expenses incurred on and before **Dec. 31, 2022** must be received by **June 30, 2023**.
- For items such as eyeglasses or orthotics, the incurred date is the date the item was paid in full.
- For services such as massage or physiotherapy, the incurred date is the date the service was rendered.

Thanks for submitting your claims as soon as you can, which makes it faster for all members to get reimbursed. Submitting your claims soon after the service is received (massage, dentist etc) prevents a backlog of claims at certain times of the year. We are so lucky to enjoy the array of services our benefits provide with RTOERO.

Audrey Osborne
Shannon Redmond
District 42 Health Representatives at your service.

Our Memorable Visit with the Himbas

by Daphne Roberts



It is only now, several days later, that I can sit down to write and reflect on our visit of two Himba villages of the Kaokoveld region. What an uplifting and humbling experience it was! Harvey and I both agree that it has been the highlight of this Southern African adventure so far.

In fact, we made a detour of nearly 500 km off our itinerary to see this particular tribe, and we have not an ounce of regret! We were told that a visit to a local tribal community requires careful preparation. You cannot just show up. People who have done this and tried to take pictures have learned their lesson. They have had stones thrown at them and at their vehicles.

In Opuwo, the main city of the Kaokoveld, we found a guide named Tjingit, who is a Himba himself. First, he took us to the supermarket to buy food for the villagers. You would never dream of arriving empty

handed. Our shopping cart was overflowing! We got huge sacks of maize, bottles of cooking oil, many bags of sugar, bread, milk etc. I was unsure about the sugar because I had read somewhere that the Himba made liquor with it and because it might not be so good for their teeth. Most of them will never see a dentist during their lives. When I raised a tentative objection and suggested to buy fresh fruit instead, Tjingit laughed heartily and assured me that they used sugar only in their morning porridge. I of course did not insist and took his word for it. After all, what do I know?

So off we went, 60 kilometres north of Opuwo on a bumpy unpaved road. At one point, we veered to the side to follow unmarked tracks to reach the first village. Harvey and I were at the same time quite excited and a little apprehensive, but Tjingit's smiling presence was reassuring; he had given us a lot of background

information while we were driving.



The children were the first to greet us, squealing with glee. They were all over us, touching us, hugging us, grabbing our hands, caressing our arms. They had no fear and were amazingly affectionate. We went all around the village, stopped at all the huts to say hello. A typical Himba hamlet is circular and fenced with an okuruwo, a sacred ancestral fire, in the middle. This fire is lit twice a day in the morning and at night. Like other African tribes, the Himba venerate the dead and the fire represents ancestral protection. The dead help the living communicate with God whom they call Mukuru. They are monotheist. We had to be careful in the way we walked across the village in relation to the sacred fire in order not to offend.

Several villagers were away tending to the goats. Some women were cooking a sort of white semolina that the whole family was dipping into and eating with their hands. One lady was braiding the hair of a young girl and coating each braid with what looked like red mud. Others were nursing a baby while carrying on with their chores, laughing and talking animatedly. They all looked so relaxed and happy, like one big family. I was fascinated.

Everyone was genuinely friendly and curious. Having Tjingit by our side who spoke their language really helped as he was translating in English nonstop. In one hut, there was an elderly man who was crippled by arthritis. One of his legs was particularly bad. He could not move it because he was in such pain. He asked me if I had anything that would help. I gave him the two anti-inflammatory pills that I always carry with me explaining to him with much regret that they would only reduce the pain for a few hours. Tjingit told us that no doctors or nurses ever come to the isolated villages, not even to vaccinate the children. The Himba will try traditional medicine mostly based on the use of local plants before going to a far away clinic. And they will only go if they can afford the long trip and the expenses for the treatment, which in many cases is unlikely. There was also a very pretty young woman who asked me if I had drops because she had an eye infection. I felt so bad about not having thought of putting together a basic first aid kit before coming to the village. Otherwise, all the other adults and children seemed in glowing health.

Then we were introduced to the chief of the village who looked regal in his hat. Plump and on the elderly side, he had cataracts in both eyes. He greeted us politely and inquired where we were from. When we said "Canada", he demanded to see some pictures and spent a good ten minutes looking at shots of BC, with my iPad practically touching his nose. He asked many questions and was amazed at how tall and green the trees were. He also marvelled at the lakes, at the mountains covered in snow, and when we told him that in our city, Vancouver, it rains a lot, he could not believe his ears. He said

that we were indeed very lucky. No kidding! Namibia has been suffering from a horrible drought for the last five years. Tjingit commented that because of the drought the Himba currently have to use plastic instead of leaves to cover their roofs.

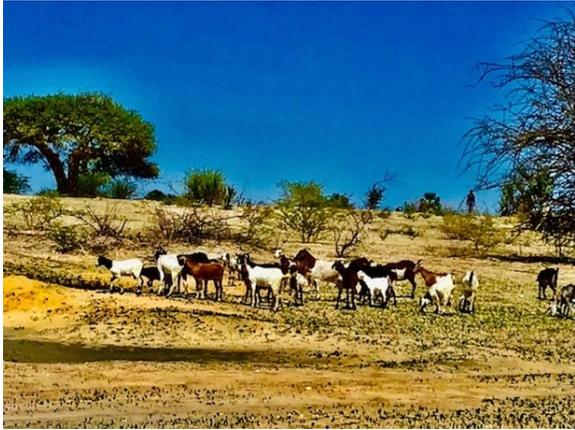
Tjingit also explained that the chief and the other men of the community were polygamists. They could marry several wives, as long as they were able to provide for them and their offspring. For example, in this village lived the chief's whole family. Each wife had her own hut and from what I had seen, all the women seemed to get on handsomely! Unlike the Mbunzus, whom we had visited earlier on this trip, Himba women are considered the "weaker" or should I say "inferior sex", destined primarily to procreate and to perform--ironically enough--hard jobs like carrying water, collecting firewood, or plastering the homes with a mixture of red clay soil and cattle manure. The responsibilities of the men are herding, animal slaughtering, and holding council with other tribal chiefs. The relation that I witnessed between the sexes in the village was free and easy. Everyone had their well-defined role and lived a hard and simple life but seemed to have a grand old time interacting with the rest of the community. Is that what real happiness might be all about, I wondered? Then we said our goodbyes, some of the older children came to collect the gifts from the car and we were off to the second village, that of the Ovahimba, a very similar group.

Even though the next villagers belong to the same tribe, it felt like a different experience because this time we were in a "living" museum. This means that it is a



real village where the Himba community, apart from getting on with their daily lives, occasionally show other Namibians and foreigners their way of life, their rituals, their dances in return for a fee used for the benefit of the community and the preservation of their culture. We learned and saw a lot. The Himba are in fact the last semi nomadic tribe of the country. They go where they can feed their cattle. They still wear traditional clothing and sometimes put sandals on. Interestingly, the women's sandals are made of cow skin while the men's are made of old car tires! Their concept of physical decency is distinct. The women do not think twice about baring their breasts, but would cringe at exhibiting their collarbones, their wrists and their ankles which they cover with gorgeous metallic woven jewelry. After puberty, the women stop bathing in part because of the water scarcity. They cover themselves with a cosmetic mixture of red pigment and butter fat, which acts as a cleanser, a moisturizer, and an insect repellent. In fact, their skin looks shiny clean and very healthy. They also showed us how they perfume themselves with the fragrant resin of a local shrub called omozumba. All these mixtures give their hair and skin a rich copper

colour--the Himba epitome of feminine beauty.

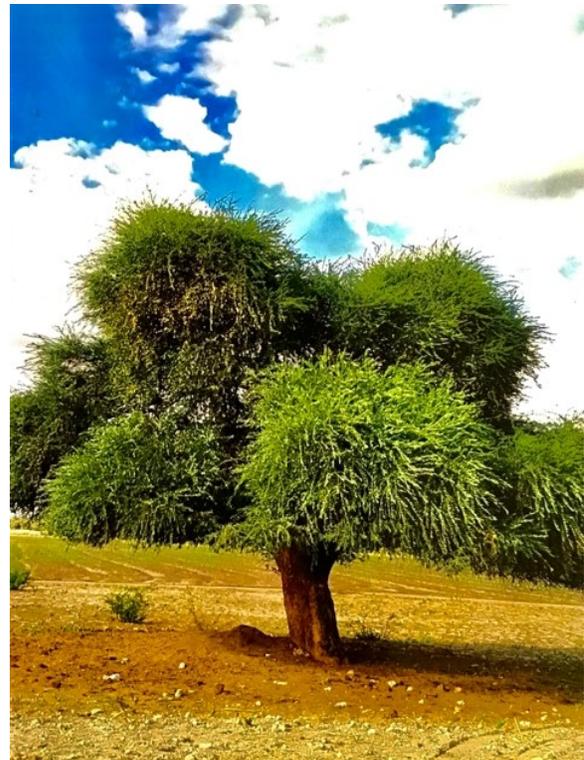


At one point during this second visit, as we were walking around, I started to feel really faint in the midday temperature hovering around 38 degrees. Harvey, who was wearing no hat and drinking less water than I, seemed infuriatingly stoic! The guide seeing that I was slowly deflating suggested that we go into the big ceremonial tent where it was refreshingly cool. I gladly accepted and the whole village piled up in there along with a few baby goats. This was one of the best moments because we really broke the ice in this more intimate setting. The Himba showered us with questions. How did we get to their village from Canada? They told us that they had never seen a plane! They had a hard time picturing us traveling in a big "bird" for nearly one day and one night to get to Namibia. Did we really eat and sleep in the big bird? They also had a hard time understanding why we were not with our family. There was lots of laughing. They were all joking around, the men as well as the women while hugging the children. They all seemed so comfortable, so relaxed, so completely content.

Then came the time to dance and sing.

They did so with so much gusto and enthusiasm that I could not resist and jumped in their midst to dance as well. Harvey, of course, filmed the whole thing and said that somehow, I looked like I was wearing too many clothes.

This day spent with the Himba really got us thinking about what a happy life might really be all about. The spirit of community, the importance of belonging and sharing, the collective care for the very young and the elderly, the contentment brought by a simple life in synch with nature and by knowing one's place and role within the community seem to be values that we have lost somewhere along the way.



PS Did a bit of research after the visits. Himba children rarely attend schools. In fact, the Himba complain that the current education system is not serving the 7 needs of their community because it does not aim at honouring and protecting their culture. An interesting concept

which confirms the importance of preserving a language to maintain a culture as illustrated by the Tibetan community living in India, for example. The Himba are also currently protesting the potential building of a dam in the Kunene River and the increasing mining activities on their ancestral territory. Does this idea sound familiar, Canadian readers? Lastly, they have been repeatedly

demonstrating against the violations of human rights that they claim they have been enduring on the part of the Namibian government. I personally find their sense of social justice and their determination to preserve their heritage quite commendable. But I wonder ... can they win the fight against globalization, greed, and technology?

In Pursuit of Wisdom by Kate Yoshitomi and Kathy Bell

What is wisdom? How is wisdom gained? When is someone recognized as being wise? Does wisdom come with age? These are some of the questions that Kathy Bell, who is presently completing her Ph.D. in Human Development at Fielding Graduate University at Santa Barbara, CA contemplates every day.

Kathy is a graduate of University of British Columbia, and the University of Toronto's Ontario Institutes for Studies in Education (OISE). During her career teaching English as a Second Language, she noticed that immigrants, especially refugees, are often marginalized. The knowledge and wisdom they bring to Canada is sadly frequently overlooked. Kathy noticed parallels in how some older adults are treated, and she switched her academic focus over to gerontology and human development. Her Ph.D. focus is on wisdom and Elderhood. Why the capital E? Elderhood is a status ascribed to people by their community. It involves trust, insight, and respect for the person's knowledge. Not everyone becomes a capital-E Elder, nor is it necessarily associated with a particular age.

There are many definitions of wisdom. Kathy believes that wisdom is rooted in the combination of life experience and conscious self-reflection. Wise people can recognize patterns that come from society, the environment, or even dreams. They see the interconnectedness of people and nature, and not only explore available sources of knowledge, but act upon their wisdom. Wise people tend to be humble, and ironically are the ones who usually claim to be unwise. Wise people, Kathy noted, know there is so much to know.



Some wisdom researchers believe that wisdom contributes to making decisions that lead to emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being, especially when there is intergenerational and community connectedness. However, sadly, isolation, both physical and emotional, cuts wise people off, and individuals, families, and communities suffer.

o support her research, Kathy has been awarded a scholarship by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), and a Social Innovation Scholarship from Fielding Graduate University. In October, Kathy will be traveling to Washington, DC to give a presentation on Group Wisdom: Wisdom in the Workplace, at the International Leadership Association's annual conference.

So, what lies ahead for Kathy after she finished her Ph.D.? She has several

goals. She would like to investigate ways to improve Elders' well-being through encouraging and facilitating greater social engagement, and support those who are looking to put their wisdom into action. She'd like to find ways to break down the barriers, like ageism, that keep many older adults isolated. Kathy will be keeping busy, putting lifelong learning into practice, with future workshops and books.

Peaceworks

by Linda Simpson

In October of 2000, a rather unassuming activity book changed my career and inspires everything I do in my writing life to this day.



Photo by [CDC](#) on [Unsplash](#)

My sister returned from meetings at the United Nations with a book she thought would be useful in my grade 3 class. It was The Peaceworks Program from The Peace Education Foundation (<http://www.peaceeducation.org>). The lessons were geared toward building character, including values instruction, anger management, and conflict resolution.

As educators, we can tell within the first few pages of a book whether it will be a

useful classroom instructional tool. The handbook was a bonanza for this harried classroom teacher. The lessons were clever, clearly laid out, and just 'add water and stir' in design. It was grade specific for my Grade 3 class and there was a complete lesson plan for each week of the year with clear, achievable goals and objectives. It also included an engaging activity. Each lesson took about twenty-five minutes, and I soon discovered they were well worth finding the time to work into the week.

My students were enthusiastic. The lessons made sense to them, and light bulbs went off all over the class.

The Peaceworks Program is based on social emotional learning principles or SEL as it is known. I often describe SEL as the periodic table of pro-social skills. And pro-social skills are the roadmap to a positive life. My students were learning the meaning behind words like empathy, compassion, and respect. We hope our children will be empathetic and compassionate, but what do those words mean? Peaceworks provided the answers.

And it worked. As time went on, I saw the change in classroom behaviour. One of the core Peaceworks principles is the notion that in conflict, we attack the problem and not the person. They learned to separate the problem from the person.

They learned about the importance of giving honest compliments and the power of the apology. Each week, the lessons followed systematically on the previous week and brought clarity to many social skills issues.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Peaceworks is that there are grade specific curricula that build on the previous year. This, in turn, produces a consistency across the school. The Peace Education Foundation has ample research proving that a school wide program makes a difference in reducing conflict.



Photo by [Kenny Eliason](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Peaceworks, in my classroom, was so effective I wanted to learn more about the organization.

In an unprecedented agreement for a classroom teacher, my school board gave me approval to attend a weeklong session to become a certified trainer at The Peace Education Foundation in Mi-

ami Florida in January of 2001. Try explaining that to your colleagues during a cold Ontario winter.

That training opened my mind and the door to a decade of board wide initiatives. It began in my school with Peaceworks in every classroom. A peer mediation program provided peer mediators on the schoolyard during recess. I led parenting workshops based on a program in the Peaceworks catalogue. I discovered that even good parents doubt themselves and are eager to learn. For several years I was a guest lecturer for The Faculty of Education at SUNY Potsdam.

When I retired, it was time to focus on my writing life. Social-emotional learning forms the basis of my varied writing projects. School Rubric is a US based international educational site connecting educators around the world. Here I write SEL curriculum articles. For several years I reached parents globally as a contributor to Huffington Post Canada. My divorce support advice column for The Divorce Magazine U.K. offers guidance to people embarking on a new chapter in life. Everything I write begins with the five principles of social-emotional learning. All my work has its roots in that first Peaceworks activity book I received over twenty years ago.

Linda has provided the following contact information (control and click for link):

[Divorce Magazine UK](#)

[Letters to Linda](#)

[Huffington Post Canada](#)

[Twitter @LinSimpson66](#)

[Amazon.ca: Commonsense Tips for 21C Parents](#)



Peaceworks Poster

Call for Newsletter Submissions from our RTOERO Members!

We're excited to be in the planning stage for our **December 2022** issue of the RTOERO District 42 newsletter! The Newsletter Committee is looking for submissions from our membership to enrich our newsletter and engage our members.

We'd love to get a submission from you! It'd be great to see a picture and/or a paragraph (approx 350-500 words) about:

- an experience in education you had when you were working (for example, a student you remember, a program you were involved in, an award you won, etc.)

- a travel experience you had or are planning. Include pictures if possible.
- a milestone you are working towards or have completed (for example, a skill you are learning, a personal achievement of some kind, an anniversary, etc.)
- a hobby or interest you are passionate about (for example, kayaking, bird watching, scuba diving, music, cycling, cooking, furniture making, hiking, volunteering, etc.)
- If not a written article, then how about a picture you've taken that you'd like to share with other members? Be sure to let us know where and when it was taken.

Are you willing to be interviewed for our "Member Spotlight" section? Or do you know of an RTOERO member who might be? Please email me with this information. We're searching for our next interviewee!

Send your submission to me, Kate Yoshitomi, at rtodistrict42@gmail.com by **November 4, 2022**. Please add "Newsletter Submission" in the subject line. If you're submitting an article, please indicate if you're willing to include your email address in the submission so that members can get in touch with you if they would like more information about your topic. Pictures add great visual appeal, so send in those shots with your submission!

Looking forward to hearing from our members!