

District 42

Mainland Matters



Meeting the Dalai Lama for the First Time

By Daphne Roberts

From 2013 to 2016, I worked as a Faculty Associate in the department of Education at Simon Fraser University. I was responsible for one of the international modules called ITEM India.

Every fall for four consecutive years, after facilitating a few weeks of pedagogical seminars on the Burnaby campus, I would take my 16 student teachers to Dharamsala, Northern India, to work with the Tibetan community in exile. My Canadian student teachers would do their first practicum in the local schools. Teaching and learning in a context where values like compassion, altruism and peace were deeply embedded into the school curriculum proved to be an immensely humbling and rewarding experience for all of us.

The second year, my Tibetan colleagues secured an audience for my group with His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama. What a memorable and exhilarating experience! All my 16 students attended, brimming with anticipation. As a sign of respect, they had dressed in the traditional Tibetan outfit called *chupa* that they were normally wearing when teaching in the local schools. My two colleagues from the Sambotha School District, K and L came along with us, magnificent in their ceremonial robes. They were just as nervous as we were. Each of us had



brought a special scarf of the finest quality, called *khata* to give to His Holiness on this unique occasion.

We met His Holiness in the gardens of his private residence for a few unforgettable moments. He was an amazing, charismatic man who gives you his whole attention in a very sincere way. He greeted each of us warmly with a kind word or inquiry, a twinkle in his eyes and a very hearty handshake. When my turn came, he asked me how long I had been teaching at SFU and if the Tibetan children

were behaving with my student teachers. Then he burst into giggles in his own inimitable way and his whole face crinkled beautifully. Behind me in the line, stood L, my Tibetan colleague, who with his eyes looking down was in such emotional turmoil for being in the presence of the Dalai Lama that he too held out his hand for a handshake! His Holiness, somewhat surprised at being greeted the western way by a fellow Tibetan said something in Tibetan to him while breaking into peels of irrepressible laughter and slapping him affectionately on the back. My colleague turned crimson for his faux-pas and bowed so low that he almost touched the ground!

To conclude this special moment, a number of group photos were taken. His Holiness happened to be right by my side. He grabbed my hand and squeezed it tight while saying “cheese” along with

everybody else. That night in my weekly journal to my friends and family, I wrote, “Those of you who have read about the Dalai Lama or read his books or know how revered he is all over the world for his genuine, compassionate and peace-loving ways, can easily imagine how my students and I felt today. I am still feeling strangely elated even a few hours later.”

The next day, when I arrived at one of the schools to observe some of my student teachers’ lessons, it was recess and the whole school was out in the yard. When the children spotted me, they all ran to me asking me about his Holiness. They had seen the pictures. My Tibetan colleagues were also full of pressing questions and one of them who was very pregnant grabbed my hand that His Holiness had squeezed and put it on her belly for good luck!

RTOERO Scholarships

By Teresa Petrick

Each year the RTOERO national office awards 20 scholarships to post-secondary students enrolled in programs that lead to careers in a variety of disciplines including seniors’ health and wellbeing, education, environmental stewardship, and commitment to diversity, equity and/or inclusion. This year, two applications endorsed by RTOERO District 42 members were successful in receiving \$3000.00 each.

Nicole Fradette is a Registered Nurse currently in the Master of Nursing, Nurse Practitioner stream at Athabasca University and works at the Whitehorse General Hospital.



Were there any life or career experiences that influenced your choice of program?

There were two pivotal factors that influenced my choice to become a primary care practitioner.

I work in the Visiting Specialists Clinic at Whitehorse General Hospital and have noticed an increasing trend of patients being unable to find a primary care practitioner that is accepting new patients. Many seniors are having to access the Emergency Room at the local hospital for services that would be better provided by a family physician or nurse practitioner who is familiar with their health history.



For those lucky enough to have a family physician, it is often difficult to get a timely appointment due to large case-loads. Many long-time Yukoners have

found themselves without a family physician after theirs has retired and has been unable to find a replacement. Nurse practitioners have been identified as one of the strategies that can help fill this growing gap in our healthcare system.

In 2022, I attended a large North American healthcare conference and saw the role that nurse practitioners were playing in developing and delivering quality healthcare to patients. I was impressed by the NPs knowledge, skill in education, involvement in research, and their respected place within the healthcare team. This experience inspired me to accept a greater role and responsibility in the care that I provide.

Describe your career path prior to starting your graduate studies.

One of the amazing things about living in the North is the opportunity to provide nursing services in a wide variety of settings. I moved to the Yukon shortly after completing my bachelor's in nursing at the University of Calgary. Since I arrived here in 2005, most of my time has been spent delivering direct patient care to acutely ill patients in various departments at Whitehorse General Hospital. I have worked in the Emergency, Intensive Care, Medical, Surgical, Post-anesthetic Recovery Room, Chemotherapy, Medical Daycare, and Specialist Clinic departments. I have also taught lecture courses on Nursing Theory at Yukon College, supervised LPN students during clinical rotations, provided harm reduction services through an Outreach Program and been invited into people's homes as a home-care nurse.

Why did you choose this program?

This program will allow me to provide primary care services to Yukoners as an ad-

vanced practice nurse. Athabasca University is an amazing fit because I can continue to work throughout my education and complete clinical rotations close to where I live.

Recognizing that one of RTOERO's values is supporting the well-being of seniors in their healthy, active retirement journey, how will seniors be served with the knowledge and experience you gain in your graduate studies?

After graduation, I hope to continue working through the Specialists Clinic and provide primary care services to patients while they are waiting to be matched with a permanent physician or nurse practitioner. Most of the patients that are referred to the Specialists Clinic are seniors being investigated for or living with complicated diagnoses. They may see a specialist who travels up from BC or Alberta once a year but have no one to follow their care locally or during the long stretches of time when the specialist is not in the territory. Service of this kind would decrease the number of emergency room visits and wait time for practitioner appointments and assessment, increase continuity of care, and accessibility to preventative services.

Where do you see yourself in 3–5 years?

I hope to still be living in the Yukon and providing care in my community. The Yukon is currently transitioning into a health authority model of care delivery, and I believe this represents a unique opportunity to re-evaluate the systems and processes that are no longer serving Yukoners and explore how we can do things better. I will continue to serve on committees that are dedicated to advancing nursing practice in the Yukon. As a nurse practitioner, I will also be able to help

train the next generation of advanced practice nurses. Hopefully, by offering educational opportunities in the North, I can contribute to the longevity of the local healthcare system.

Jeanine Wasik is currently enrolled in the Master of Leadership in Educational Leadership at Vancouver Island University. She is an elementary school teacher and the mother of two sons ages 7 and 9. Jeanine and her family love to hike, paddleboard, and give back to the community through charitable initiatives such as Union Gospel Mission, Compassion Canada, the annual *Stocking Stuffers for Seniors* program, and the *Journey Home* organization for refugees.

Were there any life or career experiences that influenced your choice of program? Describe your career path prior to starting your graduate studies.

One of my inspirations is my extraordinary mother-in-law and RTOERO member, Janice Wasik, who served her community as a teacher for over thirty years. She witnessed some incredible changes in the nature of education, yet she was always at the forefront of valuing inclusion, diversity, and universal respect for others. Her commitment to teacher-training and curriculum development, as well as her grace and dedication to the service of others, has positively impacted countless lives. Following in her footsteps, I am committed to nurturing my students' compassion, igniting their curiosity, and fostering their capacity to work together to persevere and address the complex issues that they will face beyond my classroom. As a child, I dreamed of becoming a teacher.

Prior to meeting my husband and his incredible family, my own mother set an ex-

ample of what it meant to be a hard-working business owner and caring leader. I remember what it felt like to be seen, heard, and valued in a classroom and to know that there was someone in my corner who believed in me. I wanted to help others overcome barriers, conquer their fears, and know that they are inherently worthy of love and belonging.

Describe your research interests associated with the program.

I am examining the benefits of supportive learning networks and how fostering social-emotional learning and mental health literacy provides learners with the fundamental problem-solving, relational, and self-regulation skills that help improve academics and interpersonal relationships. As an educator, I view the children in my classroom as our future leaders, global citizens, collaborative problem-solvers, innovators, and change-makers. I chose this program because research shows that the development of mindful self-compassion is positively associated with greater resilience, curiosity, and exploration, as well as reduced fear of failure and enhanced emotional well-being.

In addition to supporting the social-emotional skill development of my own students, my scholarly activity has enabled me to provide leadership for other educators through professional development and consultation opportunities so that these benefits can have far-reaching positive impacts.

Recognizing that one of RTOERO's values is supporting the well-being of seniors in their healthy, active retirement journey, how will seniors be served with the knowledge / experience you gain in your graduate studies?

From interviewing diverse Indigenous, youth, and civil rights heroes to brainstorming and spearheading social justice and climate action projects to ensure an equitable and sustainable future, my students and I focus on serving others and giving back to our communities. Through experiential learning opportunities, we've learned to recognize our interconnectedness, to be respectful environmental stewards, and to include and value the unique contributions that everyone brings. As an educator, researcher, and a mother, I believe social engagement and advocacy is an essential civic responsibility that can help ensure an equitable, just, and sustainable future that includes a multigenerational approach.

My research shows that social support helps us adapt to difficult situations and handle stress more positively. Furthermore, self-compassionate individuals are highly resilient, as well as more comfortable taking risks and reaching out for help. Practicing mindful self-compassion not only helps us sustain the act of caring for others, but also supports the development of healthy, lifelong behaviours.

Where do you see yourself in 3 – 5 years?

In the coming years, I hope to continue to put my academic research into practice, both in my professional and personal spheres. By further developing my learning and mindful self-compassion training, my ideal path would include offering additional consultation opportunities to support students and educators. I look forward to continuing this important work as I endeavor to contribute to the educational field and provide resources and leadership to others in the future.

Second Annual Team Building

By Shannon Redmond



On June 21, 2023, our District 42 President Janice Wasik and her husband (and RTOERO member) Ron hosted our second annual team building event in their gorgeous garden of their South Delta home. What a lovely peaceful venue. We sat among the shady green grapevines overlooking their beautiful flowering gardens with a soothing water feature. Inside, Janice and Ron have a games room with a ping pong table, shuffleboard, and other fun games. I had two ping pong games with the realization that I need to play more often if I was to improve my skill level.

Executive members present with their spouses were: Janice Wasik, Shannon Redmond, Rhona Charron, Elaine Marentette, Susan Pottery, Kathleen Cheng, Audrey Osborne, Imants Straumers, Sarah Bandiera, Shauneen Kellner, Susan Weber, and Daphne Roberts.

The team building event was created to give heartfelt appreciation to out-going executive members and to thoroughly welcome our fabulous new team members. We are so lucky to have an amazing team that provides leadership to various committees such as Social, Goodwill, Membership, Grants and Scholarships, Communications (our newsletter, Facebook and website), Benefits, Awards, Travel, Phone, Photography,



and our French speaking group. Our District has lots to offer!

Everyone enjoyed the wonderful lunch which was a selection of tasty sandwiches, vegetable and fruit platters as well as delicious and tempting deserts. Our social committee chair, Elaine Marentette facilitated a “Get to know you” game called “Two truths and a lie”. It was great fun. Who doesn’t like to fib! The winner with the most convincing lie was Membership Chair Kathleen Cheng.

All in all, it was a wonderful event. Thanks again Janice and Ron for sharing your beautiful home.

Shannon Redmond VP
Health Representative



Working with Children: An Innovative Program

by Helenmaria Darker

Before there were Co-op programs in the high schools, the Ontario Studies in Education approached the principal of Kitchener Waterloo Collegiate and Vocational School (known more as KCI) to see if it had a class that could work with young children about to start kindergarten who could use some preparation help.

KCI was the first one in Waterloo County to be on a semester system, so it was a possibility. The school had only an 18 minute period with no classes, so an announcement asked for any grade 13 students who were going to take Family Studies the next year and wanted to work with young children to come to my classroom. We got enough for a class.



For the second half of the semester, my students worked with pre-schoolers at the elementary school just down the

block. A former kindergarten teacher taught my students what they were to do. There was much learning by everyone!

There were so many wonderful students in those classes over the years. One I particularly remember was a male student who came to KCI for a semester to finish grade 13--a common occurrence in the days before other schools had the semester system. He was the first boy to take the class and said he wanted to be a minister and needed to know something about children. Of course, he was a real hit with the young ones.

Years later when I went to a small church in the "village" of Germania north of Oril-

lia for their yearly service and was surprised to see he was the minister who came to do it!

I taught in Waterloo County as Helenmaria Ruge, then married my teenage sweetheart, retired, and moved to Simcoe County as Helenmaria Darker. We are now living in Vancouver.

The photo has me in the front along with Carol Rhodenize, the teacher for my students and Liz Witmer, head of the Board of Trustees at the time.

helenmaria@shaw.ca

RTOERO Health News for Members!

By Shannon Redmond and Audrey Osborne

As Health representatives, we attended the health workshop held in Toronto, Ontario, June 4-5, 2023, and learned about a few wonderful changes to assist our RTOERO members.

By now you all will have received the Renaissance magazine together with an insurance booklet with the name Entente on it.

Entente

What does that mean? Entente is defined as a "formal alliance between groups and is used mostly in political spheres", however Entente as defined by RTOERO, refers to the name of our insurance program. The name has been changed because it offers other benefits to members besides insurance and many prospective members confuse our plan with others and unsuspectingly join the incorrect plan. The plan remains the same just the name has changed, and a new insurance card is not needed.

Global XL– GEM travel aid app

The actual app looks like a round globe with grey and turquoise squares inside. It is called Global XL– GEM travel aid and very helpful.

Through the app, you can:

1. access medical services
2. submit a claim
3. submit documents
4. check the status of a claim
5. contact Global XL-GEM
6. find a doctor
7. dial 911 internationally
8. access travel tips, and an extensive travel advisory list.

Cloud MD

An online access to a medical second opinion. Covers a broad spectrum of

care pathways from treatment and surgery to specialist advice for complex medical needs.



Audrey Osborne and Shannon Redmond

There are three ways to access this service:

1. Go to RTOERO member page and fill out an online referral form.
2. <https://mso.kiihealth.ca/rtoero/>
3. Call 1-866-814-0018 or 1-800-661-8193
4. Send an email to: mso@kiihealth.ca

The nurse care coordinator will connect with you within one business day to get started.

All of these are positive improvements to support our health plans for our RTOERO members!

Making All Schools Effective, Equitable, and Inclusive: Our Children Cannot Wait.

By Dr. Avis Glaze

Congratulations on your stellar work as educators and school staff during the last few years of disruption and uncertainty. The times certainly tested your resolve, as you demonstrated immense fortitude, tenacity, and resilience. You built alliances to support student success and created new opportunities to ensure that learning continued throughout the pandemic.

This article will affirm much of what you are already doing. It seeks to raise questions, challenge current thinking, and push the boundaries of educational discourse. It invites you to reflect, critique and examine some of our cherished ideas and practices, and re-envision success for **all** students as we work towards closing achievement gaps and achieving equitable learning outcomes.



Our children cannot wait any longer for us to make **every** school an effective, equitable and inclusive school--with a sense of urgency. This is a long-standing challenge that our generation must resolve. We have the skills and the research knowledge of what works. The question we must ask ourselves is, do we have the will?

To address the characteristics of effective, equitable and inclusive schools, I am proposing seven components with a few key actions:

- Values and Beliefs
- Curriculum and Placement
- Educators as Changemakers and Solutions Finders
- School Culture
- Community Development and Partnerships
- The Role of Post-Secondary Institutions, and
- School Leadership

Values and Beliefs

Education is key to individual and societal prosperity. When educating children to realize their potential, it is important to include the moral, economic, demographic, community health and social justice, among other imperatives. Student needs, well-being, and the input of those who educate our children must be at the center of all decision making.

Excellence and equity go hand-in-hand and are inextricably linked. No limitations should be placed on students based on race, gender, socio-economic status, or other factors. School achievement data must be disaggregated. Our graduating classes must reflect the diversity of the school.

Quotes for Reflection, Analysis and Stimulus for Action

“If schools were equal, we would not care what schools our children go to. But oh, we do care what schools our students go to because schools are not equal.” Angelo, R. D., (2013)

“Schools pay for years of special education and remedial instruction for failing to ensure that students succeed in the early years.” Slavin, R. E., (1990)

“High expectations and early intervention are essential.” OFSTED, (2009)

“If you can find an effective school without a good principal, please call me collect.” Lazotte, L., (2006)

“We can judge how well we are doing by the levels of success being achieved by our most vulnerable students.” Glaze and Mattingley (2012)

“The new mission of schools is to achieve 100% success and to have specific explanations and strategies for addressing any figure that falls short of full success.” Fullan (2015)

Values-driven schools utilize research on cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains of learning, and share the understanding that equity does not mean equal treatment. Rather, equity is about the accommodations individual students need to be successful. Leaders of equitable and inclusive schools demonstrate an abiding respect and advocacy for students and staff who fall under all the grounds included in human rights codes.

Curriculum and Placement

In inclusive schools, curriculum materials are reviewed consistently for bias. For example, history and literature books are

selected based on inclusivity, representation, accessibility, and currency. The curriculum does not exclude or alienate students; rather, students see themselves and their cultures reflected in the curriculum content.

Cultural and class biases in standardized tests do not influence evaluation and decision-making in program and placement. Inclusive schools are mindful of labels that often determine and result from placement in special education programs. Adults often share the resulting lifelong impacts of some of the labels and designations.

Policies, programs, and school cultures are designed to enhance life chances, future career possibilities and responsible citizenship. Staff members develop the human relations skills - including collaboration, influencing, networking and coalition building which are endemic in equitable and inclusive schools.

Staff members teach and demonstrate character attributes such as respect, responsibility, justice, empathy, perseverance, and optimism. These “soft skills” are important for students to develop as they transition from school to post-secondary institutions and the world of work.

Educators as Trendsetters and Solutions Finders

In equitable and inclusive schools, the demographics of the staff and administrators mirror the larger community. Staff members can recognize and address prejudice in themselves and students. They challenge systemic barriers impacting students and utilize inclusive teaching and classroom strategies. They have high expectations for **all** students regardless of their background circumstances and disseminate this belief throughout the school community.

Educators have always been trendsetters and solutions finders. They often underestimate their ingenuity and the many innovations that they have implemented in recent years the years. It is true that there are early and late adopters, believers and cynics. Nonetheless, I agree with the saying that if you scratch the surface of a cynic, you will find a frustrated idealist. If enthusiasm wanes, I encourage educators to revisit their first year in teaching to recapture their idealism and sense of mission.

School Culture

In equitable and inclusive schools, leaders develop policies to address racism, sexism, and other human rights infringements. The school culture includes beliefs and values that contribute to student and staff feelings of safety, acceptance, well-being, and achievement.

Regular equity and culture audits are conducted to determine the climate and effectiveness, and improvement steps. Indeed, an ethos of good-will permeates the ideology and functioning of the school and district. Toxic, disrespectful, and unethical behaviors are not permitted. Research-informed findings on strategies to improve school culture are embedded in the culture to improve school effectiveness.

Community Development and Partnerships

Community building is the cornerstone of school improvement efforts, as writers like Thomas Sergiovanni have long asserted. This creates space for parents to engage directly in their children’s education. Outreach and engagement also extend to other communities and to the large number of individuals who do not have children in school so that they can

learn about the excellent work that is happening in schools. A test that I used as a director of education was to ask people in stores or supermarkets what the priorities were in their local school.

In inclusive schools, community and industry partners are engaged and play a pivotal role in the educational process. This facilitates new mentorship, experiential learning and career development opportunities supported by the alliances among the school, community, and industry partners. Career education must become an equity imperative.

The Role of Post-Secondary Institutions

Post-secondary institutions are key to developing quality curriculum, facilitating mentorship and seamless transitions, and providing diverse role models through experiential learning opportunities. Through these alliances, institutions can disseminate career pathway information, facilitate course selection and transition-to-work programs. They are vital in breaking down gender, race and other barriers and the stigma that is still associated with career pathways in the trades. Often, there is also a lack of diversity in these areas.

School Leadership

Leadership means taking actions to achieve organizational goals. It's about removing barriers to student success and school effectiveness and ensuring that excellence and equity co-exist. Leaders are responsible for creating school environments that enhance life chances so all students can attain their goals and achieve success.

By consistently soliciting input to support improvement efforts, leaders ensure that management practices in their school are bias-free. They apply school policies consistently and fairly. They understand the impact of traditional discipline approaches have on student achievement, and monitor attendance, suspension, and expulsion rates to ensure that students, especially those from low-income homes are not disproportionately affected. Schools must, through education, help to extricate children from a life of poverty.

In conclusion, I am convinced that this is the Golden Age of Education. The opportunities to make a difference continue to be boundless. Despite recent challenges and setbacks, you have all become stronger educators, administrators and staff members who are strategically placed to build upon current successes, close achievement gaps, and achieve equitable outcomes for **all** students.

Both individual and societal prosperity depend on education. We chose a noble enterprise and are engaged in meaningful work. Our resilience, determination and sense of agency are strong. Achievements during the pandemic are a testament to your resolve. We must continue to be relentless in our school improvement efforts, ensuring that **all** schools become even more effective, equitable and inclusive.

Our children cannot wait.

Dr. Avis Glaze
International Education Adviser and
Former Ontario Education Commissioner.

Website: <https://avisglaze.ca/>

The Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute Society

The Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute Society-COSCO, is a Canadian registered charity (#801649062 RR0001) and a B.C. non-profit society (#S 0056866).

Beginning in 2007 with a single workshop, the Institute has grown to our current offer of 47 free health and wellness workshops for seniors across British Columbia. As of December 2022, almost 3200 workshops have been presented, and over 60,000 people have attended.

We offer over 45 topics online (Zoom) or with an in-person presenter. There is no charge for these workshops as all our presenters are volunteers. To see what is available, go to our most current brochure www.seniorshelpingseniors.ca.

Our volunteer presenters are primarily seniors and have received in-house training to prepare them for this role. We always look forward to welcoming more senior groups to our growing list of hosting organizations and are equally pleased to welcome volunteers who would like to become presenters.

We rely on grants and donations to continue preparing, maintaining, regularly updating, and adding to our workshops on topics related to healthy living, legal and financial issues, safety, and personal planning. The PowerPoint presentations have been developed by our presenters and authenticated by topic specialists before being presented.

We thank the many supporters, including New Horizons Grants, BCGEU, United Way, B.C. Government Ministry of Health, B.C. Retired Teachers Association, Centre for Hip Health and Mobility, Vancouver Foundation for grants and in-kind support over the years.

Many thanks go to the late Sheila Pither for her initial leadership and to the current leadership team led by Barb Mikulec, chair/president of the Seniors' Health and Wellness Institute Society.

Please inform your branches about our free workshops, or volunteer to be a presenter! Contact Sylvia Helmer sylviahelmer42@gmail.com or Barb Mikulec mikulec@telus.net

Member Spotlight on David Kaufman

Describe your involvement in education in three sentences.

I was a faculty member at the college and university levels since 1970 at Concordia, Saint Mary's, Dalhousie and Simon Fraser University in Engineering, Education, and Medical Education. I also served for 8 years as Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre at Simon Fraser University.

What are four things you would like people to know about you?

1. I have 4 children and 5 grandchildren in Vancouver (BC), Picton (Ontario), Hamburg (Germany) and Phuket (Thailand).
2. I have been happily married for 25 years.
3. I have visited more than 60 countries for periods ranging from a few days up to three months.

4. I am bilingual because my parents immigrated to Canada from France, and we spoke French at home until the age of 5 when I started school in English.

What are you passionate about?

I have been passionate about health and fitness since the age of 16. I have been going to the gym regularly for most of the past 55 years.



What two things “drive you up the wall?”

1. People who try to ‘scam’ me and others.
2. People who are rude, mean, or cruel to others. Kindness is so important in the world today.

Name two destinations you have visited or would like to visit.

Two places I have visited are very different. The first is Switzerland which I love for the beauty and hiking in the mountains. The second is India which is fascinating and very different from any other place I have been. The contrasts there are enormous.

What is one goal you hope to reach in the next 12 months?

I would like to be able to speak Spanish, so I am studying with a teacher on Zoom.

My wife and I are planning a two-month road trip in Spain next winter.

Do you have any regrets?

I wish I had followed my heart and done my university studies in Psychology rather than Engineering. I worked in the Engineering field for only 4 years before going to graduate school in Education.



Winner of the Most Vandalized Public Sign

by Richard Sim



The vandalized ‘Wildlife Feeding Prohibited’ sign, spotted on August 10th while on my daily run, was the fourth reiteration of similar signs around the Lost Lagoon that have been repeatedly defaced.

After the episode in 2020 of wild coyotes in Stanley Park nipping and biting people, including children,

and the subsequent culling of the coyote population in 2021, signs exhorting park users not to feed wildlife were erected, the rationale being that the feeding habits of wild animals were harmed as a result of human interference, and the creatures, particularly wild coyotes, consequently lost their natural inclination to keep their distance from people and became aggressive.

The signs first erected around the Lost Lagoon were huge billboard-like structures with bright yellow backgrounds. Those did not last long as in short order, they were destroyed – defaced, torn down and broken up.

After that “regular-sized” signs replaced the over-sized ones. These were given top billing – positioned at the apex of poles already holding up one or two other prohibition signs – and the only ones with bright yellow backgrounds. For a while, it seemed that the replacement signs were

acceptable for public sensibilities for being told what should not be done. However, they too, were eventually mutilated – drawn over with graffiti and/or “torn away”.

A third round of the signs went up, but these, like their predecessors, were also defaced. And, when I thought that the last ‘Wildlife Feeding Prohibited’ signs had been seen, there they were yet again – up for the fourth time in mid-July this summer, until one of four signs erected was vandalized some time between August 9th and 10th, between my daily morning runs around the Lost Lagoon.

What is so offensive about the signs that they have been so thoroughly mutilated each time. Is it the bright yellow colour? Is the ability to feed wildlife so fundamental in our psyche that being ordered not to do so would engender so much aggression? Or is it just one prohibition too many?

On August 9th, there was a CBC news article about wild animal attacks on people and pets in Kitslano, only it was racoons this time. In one attack, a woman suffered lacerations on her calf requiring several stitches, and in a separate attack, a pet dog lost one of its eyes, both attacks occurring at the same spot within hours of each other. There was also



mention of an ongoing investigation into wildlife feeding near where the attacks happened. As in past episodes of aggressive coyotes, experts were sought out and this time were quoted as saying that people should not feed wild racoons

as it resulted in wildlife-human conflicts. Will 'Wildlife Feeding Prohibited' signs be put up in Kitslano? Will they continue to reign supreme as the most vandalized public signs?

First There was One, Now There are Two

By Carla Pitton

Shortly after I retired, on a cool weekday morning, I was surprised to see a gray-whiskered face peering in the window at our back door. I wondered how the furry creature got into our high-walled garden. When I bent down to say hello, it raised its paws to the window as if to say "please let me in." Feeling tender hearted, I opened the door and let the whiskered face in. That was the beginning of my relationship with Cinder the cat.

Cinder's busy owners lived a few doors away. When they let him out, he would enjoy visiting the neighbours. At first, my husband and I would invite him in for a short while. He'd wander through our home exploring the nooks and crannies, then sit by the door to let us know he wanted out. During those early visits I'd be most attentive to his room wanderings until he was ready to leave. As his visits grew longer and more frequent, I would find him napping in the closet on top of my husband's sports bag, sitting in the bathtub staring down the drain, or hiding under a chair.

When the weather grew colder, Cinder would not want to leave our home. Confession: his lengthy visits must've had something to do with the food I started giving him. Despite the axiom, "never

feed someone else's cat," the hungry look I saw in his eyes soon had me in the pet food aisle of the grocery store. With good food and tender affection, we bonded, and I began to treat him almost as my own.

By this time, Cinder's owners knew where he'd be if he wasn't at home. I had to confess my cat food indulgences to them. Thankfully, they didn't seem to mind; they absolved me of my sin and told me my penance was to let them know whenever Cinder dined with us.

About four months ago, Cinder's stepsister, Pip, discovered she was missing out on a good thing. One day she followed her stepbrother over the garden wall and up the stairs to our back door. For a time, I wouldn't let her in; after all, our home was Cinder's domain. But her beautiful face with large sea-green eyes, pink nose, and pleading meows were hard to ignore. So on a warm spring afternoon, I opened the door and she quickly slipped in. She appeared nervous at first, but her confidence quickly grew, and soon, much to Cinder's chagrin, Pip became a regular visitor.

Sometimes I curse myself for starting to indulge these cats, especially when their little faces appear at my door, and I'm wanting to be pet free or I'm ready to go

out. But for the most part, I enjoy their purring company, am amused by their feline habits, and take pleasure in their show of affection. But I must admit, when

Cinder and Pip sit at the door to let me know they want to be let out, I'm happy to say goodbye because I know the cats will be back the very next day.



Pip and Cinder sound asleep in our den on a warm summer's day.

Call for submissions from our RTOERO Members!

We're excited to be in the planning stage for our **January 2024** 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 550-750 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 eileen372@gmail.com by **December 1, 2023**. 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!

