



SUMMER NEWSLETTER ~ JULY 2011

What's New?

Plenty, that's what! To start with, we are sending you a **summer newsletter** to bridge that long gap between March and September, and secondly **we are sending it by e-mail!** This is truly a first for TRAS, and we are experimenting with this format for the following reasons:

- It saves paper (4 sheets of paper and two envelopes x 575 members)
- It saves the cost of printing and mailing (\$600 per issue) which could otherwise go to a project
- It means we can keep you up to date more readily

If you have do not have Internet access, or have chosen not to give us your e-mail address, then of course you will be receiving this by snail mail. BUT WE DO ENCOURAGE ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE E-MAIL ADDRESSES TO SEND THEM TO THE TRAS OFFICE info@tras.ca or tras@portal.ca. Thank you!

A **new location for the Annual General Meeting** turned out to be an exciting and perfect venue – more on that later. And over the page (or lower down your screen) you can rejoice with us on our **new projects in the publishing field**.

Most exciting of all, **TRAS reaches a new milestone** next year – **the Society turns 50!!** That's 50 years of Canadians reaching out to work with and help refugees, children, youth and families in the remote Himalayan regions of India, Nepal and Tibet. Over the years, millions of dollars have supported projects for thousands of people. Consider the many Tibetan doctors, teachers, principals and university professors who have benefited from TRAS assistance.

Look at the successful settlements in India and thriving villages in the Annapurna region of Nepal. Think of the many street children and orphans who have been given a good start in life and the hill village youth in India from illiterate families who are now studying at university. Don't you think it has been a productive 50 years?



We believe this milestone is worth celebrating and *we look forward to celebrating with you!* WATCH THIS SPACE in the September issue for a full list of all the exciting activities we have planned for 2012. VOLUNTEER to join the fun behind the scenes and at the events. PARTICIPATE IN THE CHALLENGES we have planned to make the 50th year the most productive yet. There is still a lot work to be done! To volunteer, please contact amrit.dhatt@tras.ca.

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The 49th Annual General Meeting of the Society

The 49th Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on June 20, 2011, at the Tsengdok Monastery in Vancouver. This is a calm and lovely oasis just off busy Granville Street, and we were warmly welcomed. Tibetan flags bloomed in the courtyard, carp swam in the tranquil pool, red and gold enriched the rooms, and the walls were covered in lovely thangka paintings and illustrations of Tibet. We had at our disposal a hall with magnificent red doors as a backdrop for our meeting, and a pleasant lounge for enjoying conversation and refreshments afterwards.

Forty-seven members and guests filled the hall as **Jennifer Hales, President**, welcomed them and called the 49th AGM to order. She thanked Tsengdok Rimpoche for allowing TRAS hold its meeting in such beautiful surroundings, which seemed so connected to our work in the Himalayas.

"I would like to take this opportunity to introduce and acknowledge some of the people who are involved in and contribute to TRAS.

First, the people who govern and run TRAS: TRAS's volunteer Board of Directors, whom you, the members, elect each year to oversee TRAS's activities, set organizational policies and objectives, and run TRAS programs. Along with myself, there is Russil Wvong (Immediate Past President, and current Vice President and Sponsorship Director), Kevin Yuen (Treasurer), Amrit Dhatt (Volunteer Coordinator), Lynn Beck (Project Manager), Frank Beck (Project Manager), Shirley Howdle (Project Manager), Cheryl Sullivan (Fundraising Chair), Daphne Hales (Projects Director and Newsletter Editor), and Videsh Kapoor (Project Manager). Marion Tipple (Project Manager), Kasandra Bonn (Secretary) and Marina Guy (Events Coordinator) were unfortunately not able to be here tonight.

Secondly, I'd like to introduce Armila Shakya, TRAS's Office Manager and TRAS's only paid staff member, who works part-time out of our tiny office, cheerfully and skilfully managing administrative tasks and communicating with members and partners.

Thirdly, I'd like to acknowledge some other key volunteers who work alongside the Board of Directors: Megha Shakya, who sits on the Projects Committee, Kathy Gibler (Handicrafts Coordinator), Beck Lamb (Newsletter Layout), and Heather O'Hagan (Archivist). As well, I'd like to acknowledge everyone who volunteers in various ways for TRAS helping at events, selling handicrafts, folding newsletters, and doing other tasks. It takes an awful lot of volunteer work and time to run TRAS, and we couldn't do it without you.

Fourth, it's a pleasure to have with us tonight some long-time TRAS members and supporters who have been involved since TRAS's early days in the 1960s. These are the people who helped lay the foundation that has allowed TRAS to be what it is today: **Dr. John Conway** (a founding member, former TRAS Director and President), **Dorothea Leach** (former Director and current Patron of TRAS), **Beth Whittaker** (former Director) and **Georgina Brunette** (long-time member who knew the Woodcocks well).

Fifth, I'd like to introduce and acknowledge some newer and younger supporters of TRAS. We have been delighted this year to work with two wonderful groups of youth. **Students of Sutherland Secondary School** in North Vancouver have, for the past few years, been staunch supporters of TRAS, holding annual events to raise money for Buddha Academy Boarding School in Kathmandu. We are very pleased that **Darylle So**, outgoing President of the Sutherland Student Council, and **Karim Kadi**, incoming President, along with their teacher, **Cynthia Bunbury**, could join us tonight. We appreciate and are impressed that a group of youth here in Canada considers a group of youth on the other side of the world, and does something concrete to help make their lives better. *(At this point, the two Sutherland students presented TRAS with a cheque for \$2,000 – wonderful!!)*

Sponsorships Urgently Required!

Recently three sponsors have had to drop out of this program, so we have three children at the Munsel-ling School in Spiti, north India, suddenly bereft of sponsors. Would anyone like to step in and give these children the comfort of knowing that someone is able to care for their wellbeing again? If you are interested in learning more, please contact Russil at sponsorship@tras.ca or phone our office 604-224-5133.

And, although they were unable to be here tonight, I'd also like to acknowledge the involvement of another group of youth. This year TRAS had the opportunity to participate in the **Community Service Learning Program at UBC**. TRAS was partnered with a 3rd-year Economics course on Poverty and Inequality taught by Dr. Catherine Douglas. Dr. Douglas's goal was for her students to develop a deeper understanding of what poverty means to people in developing countries by working with and for an organization (i.e. TRAS) that assists those in such circumstances. 18 of her students chose TRAS as the community organization for which they wanted to do a volunteer project. Working in four groups, they made two videos about TRAS, (soon to be posted on the TRAS website!), researched and wrote about the economic, political and social context of project sites in the Himalayas (soon to be posted on the TRAS website!), researched major foundations as potential sources of funding, and helped with the Nepali Film Festival. A huge thank you to the following students of Economics 317 (Spring 2011) for their contributions to TRAS:

Alex Baranovschi, David Basche, Phil Chou, Thomas Heister, Jessica Jiang, Stephen Kane, Grace Kim, Lauren Kong, Dorothy Lee, Kailey Metcalfe, Arezoo Payvar, Steve Shields, Diondi Tan, Gina Tan, George Ting, Edbert Wee, Gloria Wong, and Si Xin (Ada) Zeng

It was a pleasure and honour to work with such enthusiastic, talented and committed young people.

I'd also like to say how pleased I am that another young person is here tonight: **Camille Narayan**. Camille's involvement with TRAS began in 1997 when, at age 15, she was selected, with 7 other teenagers, to participate in TRAS's 1998 Himalayan Education Program for Young Canadians, a 3-week educational tour of TRAS-funded projects in Nepal. It has been many years since I have seen Camille, and she phoned me out of the blue this afternoon, having recently returned to Vancouver after several years working around the world, and wanting to renew her involvement with TRAS.

And finally, I would like to acknowledge **the many sponsors and financial donors of TRAS**. Your contributions are what make the work of TRAS partners in the Himalayas possible.

Of course, there are many people I have not mentioned – but please know that each of your contributions to TRAS is important and valued. Thank you.

We are always saddened when a TRAS member passes away, and sadly, this spring, two long-time and dedicated supporters of TRAS died. I want to pay tribute to their steadfast support of TRAS.

Major Donald Kaye passed away in March. Donald and his wife Jessie have sponsored children and given to TRAS for many years, and encouraged others to join TRAS. Most notably, they were inspired to run a 'Loonie for a Loo' campaign when TRAS was raising funds for toilets – it was wildly successful. We are so grateful for Donald's support, and send our condolences to Jessie and their family.

And then in April, my father, Donald Hales, died. He sat on the TRAS Board of Directors as Treasurer for five years in the mid-1990s. I have, since childhood, assumed that my mother, Daphne, introduced my father to TRAS. But recently I learned that in fact my father had been supporting TRAS and sponsoring Dawa, the Tibetan orphan in Dharamsala with whom I loved exchanging letters, photos and drawings as a child, since 1963, before my parents were married. My father therefore was one of TRAS's earliest donors and supporters, sponsoring children and donating to projects for 48 years. He quietly supported TRAS from behind the scenes for decades. I am grateful to him for his generosity to TRAS and to children in need, for his foresight, for his humility, and for the influence all of these have had on me.

So why do these people choose to give their time and/or money to TRAS? **Why TRAS?** Founded in 1962, TRAS is now 49 years old! Isn't that amazing? The fact that a small, mostly volunteer-run organization has survived into its 5th decade says to me that TRAS must be doing something right. What is it that TRAS does right, and why do people choose to continue supporting TRAS? Why TRAS? I think this is a valuable question to ponder, particularly as TRAS approaches its 50th birthday in 2012, and I'd love to know why you chose TRAS.

I'll begin by addressing three reasons why I believe people choose TRAS:

1. **TRAS's philosophy and approach** – TRAS takes a grassroots approach to development, never imposing ideas, but rather listening respectfully to the needs and ideas of small, locally-run organizations in the Himalayas, thereby ensuring that projects are both relevant and locally managed.
2. **Track record and successes** – TRAS has decades of experience in the Himalayas, and success stories that attest to the value of its work. Since 1962, TRAS has sent several million dollars to communities in India, Nepal and Tibet, funding over 300 multi-year projects that have provided opportunities to thousands of people.
3. **Engagement and involvement of members** – TRAS provides its members with opportunities to become involved and participate in the Society at many levels, from joining the Board and having a role in decision making, to helping at events and with tasks, to visiting partners and seeing projects first-hand in the Himalayas. This year we arranged for five members to visit projects in India and Nepal. All of them say that visiting the projects added meaning to their trips. They have returned inspired by the excellent work of our partners, and more committed than ever to TRAS.

Daniel Henshaw and **Brenda Kyle** are two such members. Daniel and Brenda spent 6 weeks in Nepal this winter, and while there, visited Buddha Academy Boarding School, Dhaka Weaves (from which TRAS purchases beautiful Nepali dhaka weaving), and two Directors of READI Nepal. Daniel and Brenda spent hours interviewing and filming these partners, and we are fortunate tonight to be able to see a short film they have made from the footage they collected. We will start this portion of the evening with the two 3-minute films about TRAS made by the UBC students, followed by Daniel and Brenda's film"

Kevin Yuen, Treasurer, told the gathering that the audited financial statements would be available from the office by September. He assured the audience that things are going smoothly and as expected with our finances. Roughly \$100,000 has been allocated to projects, and the same amount to sponsorships – these being the two branches of TRAS' work.

A motion to reappoint Tompkins, Wosny and Miller as the auditors for TRAS for the coming year was carried.

Daphne Hales, Projects Director, gave the projects report for the past year.

"This has been a year of consolidation for TRAS projects after the expansion last year into four new areas of work. There is just one exciting new venture to report, and that is in the field of books and libraries. Overall, TRAS committed \$82,201 to projects in the year 2010/11.

First, our long-time partners continue to do noble work for **Tibetan, Indian and Nepali children**. We continue to support the two **Tibetan crèches**, the **Tibetan nurses' training** project, the **Munsel-Ling School** in Spiti, north India, and the **Buddha Academy** in Kathmandu, Nepal.

- the children in the crèches are thriving, and Tibetan students continue to be keen on nursing as a career. TRAS has agreed to take on two more nursing students.
- In Spiti, the Munsel-Ling School grows apace and now has small satellite schools in various villages. Last year's greenhouses and new bedding are still benefitting the school, and of course the health centre and its staff are an ongoing boon. Two large projects will be funded in 2011-12.
- In Kathmandu, the Buddha Academy continues its good record for academic excellence and sound health. The vocational training program is 'the set of wings which enables some of the students to fly', says Dorje Namgyal, the Principal.

This year we completed our first year's partnerships with **READI Nepal, Voice of Children, SHARE and the Phadamchen school hostel in Sikkim**. We are very satisfied with the dedication, hard work and efficiency particularly of the three NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and plan to continue building up these programs. In each case, the results have exceeded the expectations.



READI Nepal, in the northwestern district of Humla, has fulfilled its goals of opening a hostel in Simkot, the capital, for poor village children and of enrolling them in school. Two teachers received an excellent training in Kathmandu, and are sharing their experience with local teachers. The goal of using local food supplies is working well; the children enjoy the food. Income generation schemes are starting for the parents, one being an apple drying and packing venture to make the most of their orchards. Two of the ardent young men who founded READI Nepal say that everywhere they go now, they are greeted by parents eager for their children to receive an education. Thanks to a grant from the Nepal Library Foundation, we were able to open **the very first library in Humla District**. Already READI Nepal has been able to obtain a grant from an Asian foundation to increase the library's stock of books. Exciting news!

Voice of Children, in the Nainital and Almora districts of north India, is more than fulfilling its mandate to encourage education and health for children in scattered hill villages. It is running twice as many programmes as last year. These have been enhanced through health workshops funded by UBC's Global Health Initiatives. The area was devastated by flooding in the fall, and TRAS responded with a \$5,000 grant to help relief efforts. The two NGOs which run Voice of Children were the first responders and main source of help for the villagers.



The second new project there this past year was also **libraries** – a small library in each of five villages. The community in each case provided a room and set the rules for library use. A local youth was hired as a part time librarian in each village, and books and periodicals were provided. The 'extra' here is that these little libraries have become the hub in each village, where the villagers meet and discuss many community issues.

The school hostel in Phadamchen, Sikkim, now has its third floor, paid for by TRAS and the Tibetan Children's Education Foundation. This will be used for studying and dining (previously the children sat on their dorm floors to eat and study). But in the meantime it has been put to good use to house still more students while another school is built for them.



The kitchen is currently in a bamboo shelter above the 3rd floor. Once the 3rd floor can be properly used, the kitchen will move to the ground floor, and funds will be needed to install it.

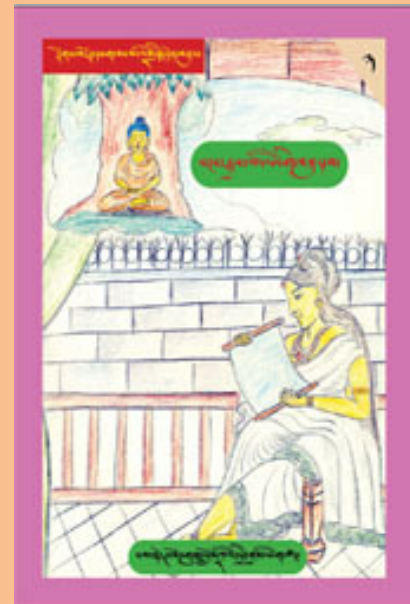


The finished 3rd floor

SHARE's vocational training program for village youth from the hills above Manali has had astounding success. In the first year they hoped to train 30 students (40% of them female) in computer use, English and hospitality, in the hopes of obtaining jobs for them in the tourist industry in Manali. 78 students did the course, (46% female) with only 5 not completing it. The rest either are returning for more in-depth courses in English and accounting, have already found work, or are receiving tutoring prior to entering university. Another 'extra' is that English courses offered to high school teachers were overwhelmingly popular and the teachers want more. Career counselling days have been planned for not one but three high schools. And thanks to SHARE's example, other computer training courses are starting up, but none has the diversity of the SHARE course. Naturally, expenses have spiralled upwards and we must decide whether we can help further, either with the increased course costs or by sponsoring those who are capable and keen to go on to higher studies.

Our one completely new venture this past year was in the field of publishing. The Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society (one group of the Tibetan schools in India and Nepal) had the farsighted idea of publishing some of Tibet's well-loved tales in the simpler of the two Tibetan scripts, so that young children could read the stories and improve their Tibetan skills at the same time. There are 20 books in the series, and thanks to TRAS members along with matching funds from TRAS, 14 of the books have been published so far, with 1,000 copies of each book being distributed to Tibetan schools in India and Nepal. Now they are hoping to go a step further and put all the books online, so that Tibetan children the world over can benefit. http://www.sambhota.org/book_web/1.html

So libraries and book publishing have been an exciting part of our work this past year, and the ripple effect from a fairly small monetary outlay looks to be huge. Thanks to our members' generosity, we hope to continue many such efforts in the future."



Russil Wvong, Sponsorship Director, gave the sponsorship report, first thanking director Marion Tipple for her six years of dedicated work as Sponsorship Director. Russil has now taken over this work.

"TRAS members are supporting 251 children, about half of them at Buddha Academy in Kathmandu. The total funding for sponsorships is roughly equal to that spent on projects. At present, we have 28 post-secondary students being sponsored. I thank most warmly the sponsors for their commitment".

Breakdown of sponsorships:

- Buddha Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal **110**
- Munsel-ling School, Spiti, India **52**
- Tibetan Children's Villages (Suja/Bir and Dharamsala) **26**
- Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre, India **22**
- Others **41**
- Post-secondary – Spiti **17**
- Post-secondary – other schools **11**

Russil Wvong gave the report on nominations for directors for the coming year. The following names were put forward: **Patrons:** Joan Ford and Dorothea Leach. **President:** Jennifer Hales. **Vice-President:** Russil Wvong. **Treasurer:** Kevin Yuen. **Secretary:** Kasandra Bonn. **Directors:** Frank Beck, Lynn Beck, Amrit Dhatt, Marina Guy, Daphne Hales, Shirley Howdle, Videsh Kapoor, Cheryl Sullivan, Marion Tipple. Motion carried.

The business meeting was followed by the excellent UBC videos and the presentation by Daniel and Brenda on their visit to Kathmandu. It highlighted Buddha Academy, Dhaka Weaves and READI Nepal, with interesting interviews with the key players at each. It made the projects come alive for the audience, as we heard the stories behind the creation of each of these worthwhile projects.

The TRAS directors appreciated the opportunity to meet and chat with members over refreshments.

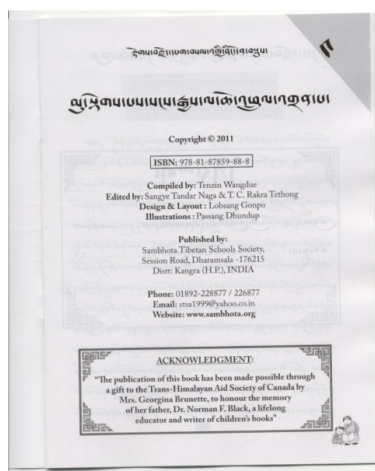
TRAS Directors' Report

TRAS Directors have not been idle this past year. With only one part-time office staff (our helpful and always-cheerful Armila Shakya), your directors work at a lot more than decision-making, important though that is. Here is a partial list of what we've been up to last year.

- Looked after projects and sponsorships on an ongoing basis
- Welcomed and trained new directors who bring diverse skills to TRAS
- Changed to Simply Accounting to streamline our financial and office procedures
- Redesigned the website www.tras.ca
- Recruited over 12 new volunteers
- Attended workshops and webinars on board governance, fundraising, CRA rules, and the BC Society Act to enhance our usefulness
- Gave several talks to a variety of groups
- Supported Sutherland High School in their fundraising efforts for Buddha Academy
- Worked with UBC economics students to teach them about international development issues
- Held a day-long strategic planning meeting
- Organized and ran a successful Nepali Film Festival
- Sold handicrafts at many venues, most notably at the Hycroft Christmas Bazaar
- Continued to sort through years of papers and photographs for our Archives
- Wrote, published and mailed 3 newsletters
- Coordinated the visits of 5 TRAS members to projects in India and Nepal

TRAS Members Have Not Been Idle Either!

So many of you have helped with the newsletter mail-out, the handicraft sales, the events, the archives that we cannot name each one of you – but we KNOW you haven't been idle! And those who were lucky enough to go to India or Nepal have been busy for TRAS too!



Daniel Henshaw and Brenda Kyle did in-depth interviews for TRAS with Buddha Academy, Dhaka Weaves and READI Nepal while in Kathmandu. As well as their presentation at the AGM, they are planning to produce more material for TRAS from their hundreds of photos. Shelley Ugyan spent a happy afternoon at Little Flowers Crèche in Dharamsala and has written a lovely report on it (to appear on the website shortly). Mati Bernabei worked with Sambhota Schools to put in place the publishing project, and brought copies of the books back from her recent visit. We were able to present one of them to donor Georgina Brunette at the AGM, who had dedicated it to the memory of her late father, a Canadian educator.

NOTE: We have a donation of \$200 towards the next book. 1,000 copies of each book cost \$730 – if we can raise \$530 more, we'll actually be able to publish TWO books, because TRAS is matching these donations!

TRAS

**Supporting health
and education for
children and youth in
the Himalayas**

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Patrons

Joan Ford
Dorothea Leach

Board of Directors

President - Jennifer Hales
Vice President - Russil Wvong
Treasurer - Kevin Yuen
Secretary – Kasandra Bonn
Projects Director/Newsletter Editor -
Daphne Hales
Sponsorship Director - Russil Wvong

Directors

Frank Beck, Lynn Beck, Amrit Dhatt, Marina
Guy, Shirley Howdle, Videsh Kapoor,
Cheryl Sullivan, Marion Tipple

Office Manager

Armila Shakya

Newsletter Design

Beck Lamb

TRAS thanks bookkeeper

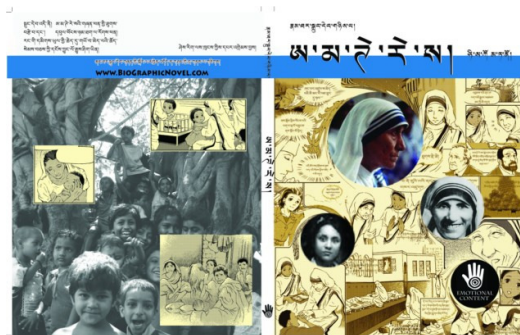
Marnie Termuende

Now that directors Russil Wvong, Kevin Yuen and Kasandra Bonn have put in hundreds of hours changing our systems over to Simply Accounting, things are more streamlined, and can be handled by Armila in-house. This means that we had to say farewell to Marnie Termuende, who has ably assisted TRAS for several years as our part-time bookkeeper. Marnie must have done this as a labour of love – certainly not for the money! She willingly gave us extra services, helping with the audit and with other tasks. Thank you, Marnie!

A Tibetan Graphic Novel on Mother Teresa

A Japanese publishing company, *Emotional Content*, creates graphic novels about famous people who are good role models for children. Recently, *Emotional Content* offered their book about Mother Teresa to the Department of Education (DoE) of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile at no cost so that it could be translated into Tibetan. The DoE then asked TRAS if we would fund the production of this book in Tibetan. The purpose is threefold: to augment the lamentably few books printed for children in Tibetan, to help preserve the Tibetan language in the wider world, and to teach Tibetan children in India about this wonderful woman whose compassion for the less fortunate is legendary.

A \$4,261 grant from TRAS is paying for the translation of this book from Japanese to Tibetan, and for the printing and distribution of 2,000 copies for the Tibetan schools in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The project is ahead of schedule, and the book will be distributed in September. We recently received a photo of the book's cover.



Your opinion matters!

No more donation slips; no more envelopes – what do you think?

For several years, we have been sending you donation slips and return addressed envelopes, to help you send your donations to TRAS. If we go to e-mailed newsletters, this won't happen. What do you think about this? Does the convenience of the envelope (even though you had to buy your own stamp) outweigh the savings (approx \$600/issue) in not printing the newsletter?

You can still send in your donations, and there are various easy ways to do this!

1. Pick up the phone and make your donation to TRAS (604-224-5133) using a credit card.
2. Write a cheque, and use your own envelope. Address it to TRAS, 720-999 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC, V5Z 1K5.
3. Go to the TRAS website (www.tras.ca) and click on CanadaHelps under the 'Donate' section. It's easy and secure, and we receive many donations this way.

However, there's no doubt about it – December brings in the most donations! Shall we continue to mail the December newsletter, along with donation slip and envelope? Or would you be satisfied to receive it by e-mail?

We'd like your opinions! Send an e-mail to newsletter editor Daphne Hales at daphne.hales@tras.ca to let us know what you think. Thank you!