



We begin this newsletter with a message from Kalsang Choedon who is in her second year of nurses training in a hospital in south India. Here we quote from her beautiful handwritten letter to all of us (you included) at TRAS.

Dearest TRAS,

It's been long months since I wrote a letter to you. Hope U and all your families are fine over there. Here I am fine and doing my studies well. Before starting my letter, I would like to convey my heartiest 'tashi delek' to you and all your families. Then, how's the weather over there? Might be cold as the winter is coming soon - rite? But here in South India it's neither too cold nor too hot, so I'm enjoying with my friends in my college.

As for now, I am in IInd year of the course and glad to share that I passed in all subjects. Nowadays we are having clinical posting for about 2 months. I am with patients with respiratory problems, so it's a nice opportunity to share and give our care to them. And that makes us have satisfaction when their families appreciate it. Also, we need to share our knowledge with them on how to take care of themselves from disease. After that, we are posted in OT (Operation Theatre) where we have to do 10 times soaping and prepare notes on all the instruments being used in OT,



Drawing by nursing student Kalsang Choedon

After that, we are posted in community where we are assigned to a particular family and within this family we have to collect history regarding diseases, and based on that we have to provide valuable health education to them by flash cards and many more. So, what I feel is keeping busy was a nice and new experience as we weren't aware of the time which is moving very fast!

There are many reasons to thank you. Primarily for being able to help with someone's education like me. It's really helpful towards my studies and I feel grateful that you have supported me from the first year of my course and have been continuing to encourage me to work and develop myself into a better being. But you make sure that you take care of YOUR health too. Having one year and a few months experience in the nursing field, I can feel the importance of health in one's life. So plz take good care of yourselves. And yeah! Since the Christmas is coming on, I wish you a merry Christmas in advance. May this Christmas bring you lots of smiles and good health and lots of happiness. And I wish you could all enjoy it fully with your families. Kindly pay my love and regards to each one of them. And also from my family and myself, thank you very much for working hard and bearing so much pain for the benefit of Tibetan students like me.

Now, I would like to cease my letter here with lots of love and care. My wishes and prayers are always with you,

Yours, Kalsang Choedon

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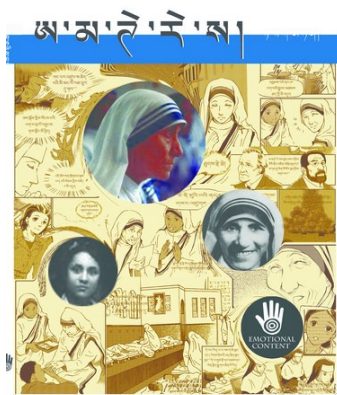
Reports from the field

Mother Teresa Comic book published in Tibetan

The final report is in from the Department of Education of the Tibetan Government in Exile about this project funded by TRAS, and it is most satisfactory.

“On getting permission from Emotional Content, the publisher of the book in Japanese and English, we started the translation into Tibetan, input work, replacing of speech balloons and proofreading etc. Having done all the editorial work, the camera-ready copy was sent to the Tibetan Cultural Printing Press in Delhi. Now 5,000 copies have been printed and distributed to over 80 schools, libraries of Tibetan studies and academic institutions.

According to initial feedback, children are deeply impressed and influenced by Mother Teresa’s determination, compassionate action and love for the needy. **Teachers say that this will be a priceless book in all the school libraries for many years to come.**”



We at TRAS are happy to think we have helped Tibetan students learn about a wonderful role model in the country that welcomed them as refugees.

The Tuting Project grows beyond our expectations

Remember the group of illiterate Tibetan mothers in the distant Tuting region of Arunachal Pradesh who wanted to learn to read and write so that they could correspond with their children far away in boarding schools? The project started with 45 women in 1 class, twice a week. It soon was up to 91 women, with classes held in a couple more villages. Now it has grown again! This report just in:

“By the kind generous assistance of the Department of Education and TRAS, we commenced adult literacy program from July 2010 to July 2011 without stopping with the total attendance of 161 learners. Total number of 10 teachers were appointed to carry out the activities of adult education. The programmes were organized for five different groups at 5 villages for a period of 3 hours every night. Many of the illiterate people are now able to read and write English and obviously Tibetan script too.



As such, some are now able to read and recite Tibetan religious books, but still they need further classes to become perfect in reading and writing. The people are taking an interest towards this program and intend to continue to attend the classes. They are very proud of themselves for being able to read and learn the script within this short span of time. Also 30 other illiterates are keen and eager to join. We are proud to confidently mention that we have received great benefit from this adult literacy program”

They decided to keep up the studies, even though they were not able to get word out to us until this week, in the hopes that we will continue to pay for their education (which comes on top of a full day of scratching a living from unproductive fields and caring for a family). **At \$4,620, that’s just over \$24 per person for 191 women, for a year’s tuition. How can we turn this down! And that \$24 worth of studying means these women can write to their children (there are no phones in the villages) and read their replies!**

**Join us in late Fall 2012 for the TRAS Gala Dinner
to celebrate 50 amazing years funding
successful projects in the Himalayas!**

Watch this space for more info!

Sikkim Hostel suffers collapsed wall

As we mentioned in the last newsletter, Sikkim suffered a major earthquake in September. Luckily, the children in the hostel and their families in the village of Zuluk were uninjured, though scared. The retaining wall in front of the hostel has collapsed, and being on a steep hillside, this is a danger to the building. Lama Paljor reports that they will be drilling rebar into the rock to secure it. A builder has discussed at great length the best way to rebuild it very securely. You cannot see in the photo, but the hostel doors are less than six feet from the collapsed wall. There is also one crack in the upper wall of the building, but this is easily repaired. **The cost of these repairs is \$4,510**, and TRAS is happy to send the funds to make the building safe again for the children. The cook's house collapsed, as did that of one other hostel staff, and Tibetan Children Education Fund, our partner in this project, is raising funds to rebuild those.



READI Nepal readies for winter

They've had a tough fall in Humla District in north-western Nepal – the only powerhouse was destroyed weeks ago by a landslide, so they are completely without power. The house rented for the 20 children in the TRAS education project has a few electric heaters – but with no power they are useless against the bitter cold. And now Humla is experiencing its second very cold winter in a row, so even with the warm quilts bought for them, the children are shivering. READI Nepal has asked, via a phone call to Kathmandu and then email to TRAS, if we could possibly provide a warm blanket and a warm jacket for each child. The directors have approved this mini-project, and the \$839 will be winging its way to Kathmandu on November 29. Raj, the project coordinator intends to fly to Nepalgunj in Banke District, as soon as weather permits, to do paperwork he can't do in Humla at present, and he

will buy the jackets and blankets there. A note from Vinod, their director in Kathmandu, reads "Millions of thanks to TRAS. This is real encouraging news for us and Humli children. Raj in Humla was extremely happy!"



Munsel-Ling School, Spiti

The Principal has written to tell us that finally the filthy hillside may be a thing of the past. And vegetables will certainly help combat anaemia. "Toilets are regularly used by our children. On our general cleaning day, which is on Sunday, all students and caretaker are cleaning hostel and school, including toilets and bathroom. From Monday to Saturday, students have toilet-cleaning turn. I am attaching here the latest picture of green houses, it is producing three kind of green vegetable- spinach, Mustard and Japanese spinach. It is producing enough vegetables for the school." These were both joint TRAS/Global Health Initiatives projects.



Back to paper for this month, so we can send you the President's letter, a donation slip and return envelope, to make it easier for you to support TRAS projects. We will try e-mail again in the spring.

Help us reach our goal of raising \$50,000 as we enter our 50th year. So far we have raised \$10,500!

And this amount will double thanks to a generous donor who has offered to match donations up to \$25,000.

Deadline for matching donations: January 31, 2012.
Send in your donation NOW and see it immediately double!

We asked you to share ideas for raising these funds. Here are some of the responses we received:

Grace Kim, our new volunteer 50th anniversary coordinator, wrote “I was having dinner with a friend and I mentioned that in addition to school I was volunteering. When she asked me to elaborate, I told her a brief history of TRAS and why I chose to volunteer for TRAS. I said TRAS appealed so much to me because it takes on a bottom-up approach. Communities in the Himalayan region are able to propose projects that answer their own needs, rather than have TRAS implement a project that may impose Western views diverging from the communities’ values. They focus on long-term goals and sustainability. For example, one of TRAS’s projects is a vocational training program that is the epitome of the old proverb, ‘give the man a fish and he’ll eat for a day, teach him how to fish and he’ll eat for the rest of his life.’ TRAS is the complete opposite of aid dependency; the Society and the local NGOs it works with promote self-sufficiency. I am not only inspired by their cause, but as a university student who studies international development, I am truly impressed at TRAS’s approach to aid. This is the type of organization I love contributing to.

The conversation took only 5 minutes. I then told her about the current project we were undertaking to raise \$50,000, referred her to the website for more detailed information about TRAS, and she was so generous as to offer a substantial donation.”

TRAS member, Shelley Ugyan, was inspired to raise money for Little Flowers Crèche, the Tibetan day care centre in Dharamsala that she visited last spring. Shelley approached a friend, and together they are hosting a “coffee house” in one of their homes this month. They’ve invited friends and will have live music, a silent auction and refreshments. All money raised will go to the Crèche!

Daphne Hales, volunteer TRAS director, invited friends to her home for tea recently, and sold over \$700 worth of TRAS handicrafts!

Another TRAS member wrote, “With regard to the \$50 idea, it just seemed to me that \$50 is a relatively small amount of money and might be within reach of some people just as a straight donation – never mind thinking of ways to raise it. Think of it as ‘just a buck a year’ for all the years TRAS has been doing its work. And I like the idea that it will become \$100 with a matching donation from an anonymous donor!”

\$50 will ‘buy’ the running of a Tibetan crèche for a week, or 4 warm coats for chilly children in northern Nepal, or a month of nursing training for a Tibetan student, and of course will help any of our other projects. Doubled, it will do twice as much!

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING OUR 50TH BIRTHDAY!

A fun-filled year lies ahead as TRAS celebrates 50 years...

Get out your calendars and mark in the dates! If you are in town, join us for discussions, ethnic food, cooking demonstrations, art, healing, movies and more. **We’ll send out e-blasts and reminders before each event, with up-to-the-minute details. Give TRAS your email addresses so that we can keep you informed! We look forward to celebrating with you!**

If you live elsewhere, why not host a Nepali Film evening for yourself and your friends (see page 6)? Purchase one of Paul Horn’s CDs, order Indian, Tibetan or Nepali take-out food - and have yourselves a lovely Himalayan evening!

Paul Horn, American pioneer of New Age music, and his wife, Ann Mortifee, Canadian singer songwriter, have generously given TRAS 100 copies of his CD ‘Tibet: Journey to the Roof of the World’. Hauntingly beautiful music of Nepal and Tibet is interspersed with the sounds and voices of these Himalayan countries. Available from the TRAS office for \$20. Phone [604-224-5133](tel:604-224-5133) or email tras@portal.ca. All proceeds to TRAS projects.

(continued on back page)

A chance to help newly arrived Tibetans in Canada

The Government of Canada is facilitating the immigration of up to 1,000 Tibetans living in the state of Arunachal Pradesh in India, at the request of the Canada Tibet Committee (CTC) and Canada's Tibetan community. The newly incorporated **Project Tibet Society (PTS)** will oversee the program. With CTC branches, local Tibetan Cultural Associations and Tibet supporters across Canada, PTS is now in the process of establishing local committees to oversee the five-year program.

Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh is situated in north-eastern India. With a total area of 83,743 sq. km, it has a long international border with Tibet to the north and northeast (1,080 km), Myanmar to the east (440 km) and Bhutan to the west (160 km). Although it is currently under India's political control, Arunachal Pradesh is disputed territory, with restricted access. Except when planes can fly in, it takes many days to get there.

Conditions of Tibetans in Arunachal Pradesh today

Even with India's incredible generosity, the reality for thousands of Tibetans who live in Arunachal Pradesh is that they may never have the chance to realize their potential and to experience what so many in Canada take for granted: the very best for themselves and their children.

The inaccessibility alone of the settlements means that providing for the education of children close to home is impossible. With assistance from the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, private donors, and support groups like TRAS, hundreds of children from the region are able to pursue an education in Tibetan boarding schools throughout India where space is available to accommodate and care for them. The schools are many days' or weeks' journey from their families. Due to poverty and the vast distances, visits home are typically possible only every 3 to 5 years. The cost of education is family separation.

For Tibetans in Arunachal Pradesh, jobs are scarce, their agricultural land in the settlements is poor, markets for their produce are hundreds of kilometres away, so life is extremely challenging. Coming to Canada offers hope.

An Opportunity to Help A preliminary meeting was held in Vancouver on November 5 with the Tibetan Cultural Society of BC, local Tibetans, TRAS members, other concerned and interested citizens, and **Mati Bernabei, the Vancouver contact for the Project Tibet Society**, to learn how Canadians can help.



It was wonderful to feel the excitement in the room, to hear earlier Tibetan settlers tell their stories and share their recipe for a successful transition to Canadian society. Mark Batt from Mosaic (www.mosaicbc.com), a Vancouver-based non-profit society that supports immigrants and refugees, spoke of the help that Mosaic can give in providing settlement support services, teaching English and helping with job searches, skills and processes. One could almost see the piles of blankets and household goods materialise as Mati asked for donations and somewhere to store them!

Are you interested in learning more? The key resource site is: <http://tibet.ca/en/projecttibetsociety> and this will link you further to Canadian immigration and more on the structure of Groups of Five.

A Group of Five is any group of five – or more – Canadians or Permanent Residents (18 years or older) who live in the community where the Tibetan family will settle. With help and guidance from PTS, Group of Five members will need to show that they have the resources, expertise and commitment to provide care, lodging, settlement assistance and support for the duration of the sponsorship period. Normally, this is 12 months starting from the day of arrival in Canada or until the individual or family has become self-sufficient, whichever comes first.

Sponsors will be responsible for helping the newcomers adjust to life in Canada, providing advice, encouragement and friendship. Along with the *Refugee Sponsorship Training Program* (a Toronto-based organization), Project Tibet Society will ensure that sponsors receive the required training to support this exciting initiative. In addition, Project Tibet Society will help guide Groups of Five through all the necessary steps required and be there to counsel groups during the 12-month period.

Group of Five instruction guide: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/group5.asp> / Photos above by KC Kyirong

Frequently Asked Questions

Visit the TRAS website (go to www.tras.ca and click on News and then Tibetan Resettlement Project).

If your questions are not answered here, please email TRAS at pts@tras.ca or Mati at vancouvertibet@gmail.com

New Directors and Volunteers at TRAS

TRAS is delighted to welcome two new directors, both of whom have been involved with TRAS previously. It is great that they have returned!

Maureen Minden, who was a director a few years ago, but left to work abroad, writes: "I was a nurse and midwife living in England in the 1980s, but something in me longed to share my privileged education with women in poor countries. I accepted a two-year post with Voluntary Services Overseas and the MoH, Nepal, as Senior District Public Health Nurse in a mid mountain district. Later my research in maternal child health and the programs I have designed took me back several times to Nepal, to refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border and to other countries. I have expanded my understanding of the struggles of underprivileged populations globally, and means by which to offer support."

I feel close to the people of Nepal, especially the women and children. I am familiar with their sweet nature, their daily struggles to get by, their intelligence, and their desire to bring about change in their lives and in the lives of their children. These years later, I look forward to being able to support them through TRAS."

Camille Narayan went to Nepal with TRAS' Youth Study Tour in 1998. After a busy life at university and working abroad, she has returned to Vancouver and immediately contacted TRAS. We are thrilled to have Camille on board, and we'll hear more from her in our next newsletter.



Maureen Minden

We also welcome with open arms two volunteers – young women who were part of the first Community Learning Initiative Partnership at UBC and who have stayed with TRAS to do valuable work for our 50th year. **Grace Kim** is co-ordinating all our 50th anniversary events, and **Jessica Jiang** is creating our e-blasts to keep you informed about everything. We are so grateful for their enthusiasm and expertise. More about them in our next newsletter.

TRAS partners with the new South Asian Film Festival (SAFF Canada)



SAFF CANADA
SOUTH ASIAN FILM FESTIVAL

We are thrilled to announce we have partnered with the South Asian Film Festival Canada (SAFF Canada). SAFF Canada's first festival will take place from June 13 to 17, 2012 in various locations in Vancouver, Surrey and the Fraser Valley. The Festival will showcase the best feature and short films, documentaries, animation, filmmakers and actors from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kashmir, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives.

As a partner, TRAS is connecting SAFF Canada with Nepali filmmakers and will host a fundraiser for TRAS projects at the Festival. Updates will be posted on the TRAS website and sent out through the TRAS e-blasts.

For more information about SAFF Canada please visit: www.saffcanada.org

We welcome SAFF Canada to the TRAS family!

Update on the TRAS Travelling Nepali Films

By the time you read this, TRAS supporters Jessie Kaye and Karen Trollope-Kumar will have hosted their own Travelling Nepali Film Evening and TRAS fundraiser at their church in Hamilton, Ontario. They invited friends and family and screened three of our most popular Nepali films: *Daughters of Everest*, *A Silent Monsoon*, and *Our School*. TRAS enjoyed working with these two long-time supporters to coordinate this engaging and fun event.



Why not kick off the holiday season or New Year by hosting your own Nepali film evening and fundraiser for TRAS? It's easy! You invite friends and family, and TRAS supplies the films. If you are interested in learning more please contact TRAS Events Coordinator, Marina Guy, marina.guy@tras.ca

Sponsorship Report

by Russil Wvong

This month we are highlighting three girls at the Tibetan drive along the foothills from Dharamsala. This school those who are too old to attend regular school. The first young girl whose parents are too ill to care for her. their history, a lovely photo and yearly reports and sponsorship@tras.ca if you can help.



Children's Village (TCV) Suja School, a few hours' takes in recent arrivals from Tibet, and particularly two young ladies fall into this category; the third is a Sponsorship costs \$400 a year, and you will be sent letters from them. Please contact Russil at

Trayang

Trayang was born in 1991 and belongs to a humble peasant family in South Eastern Tibet. She has never been to school while she was in Tibet. Since most of the people are not aware of the importance of education, they do not send their children in School. The parents of Trayang learnt about the opportunities for education in India under blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama from a group of monks who were heading to India. After a long discussion, the family finally decided to send Trayang and her younger brother to India. Trayang and her brother joined the monks and successfully escaped into exile after 12 days' perilous journey by foot through the mighty Himalaya. Trayang describes the journey as a painful experience but she found the pain of parting with the beloved parents more terrible.

On arrival at Dharamsala, they were blessed with an audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. She was sent to TCV while her brother was sent to Sera Monastery as he aspired to become a Monk. Trayang put in her best effort and made good use of the opportunity available in the school. She was placed in opportunity class for 2 years where she was taught by a team of dedicated teachers. Considering the progress she has made within the short span of 2 years, she was promoted to sixth class. Presently she is reading in seventh class and learning all the applicable subjects. English is her favorite subject.

Trayang is a tall and enthusiastic girl. She is friendly, smart and hard working. She is fond of playing sports and is a member of School Team for Basketball and Football (Soccer). She wishes to become a Teacher and give education to the deprived children.

Kunsang

Kunsang was born in 1992 in poor peasant family in Eastern Tibet. She had the opportunity to attend a school in Tibet for 2 years but owing to family problems she has to give up her education. She spent most of her childhood grazing animals and working in field.

One day a friend of her father living in India came to see them. He told them about the education opportunity that is available in India. On the request of the father, his friend accepted to take his daughter to India. It took 5 gruelling days of journey by foot and 2 days journey filled with anxiety and fear hiding in a truck.

Kunsang was placed in the opportunity class as her academic knowledge was very low. She did well to reach Class seven within a short period of 4 years. Kunsang is a smart young girl. She is fond of cooking, knitting and doing household work. She also loves trying her hand at basketball. Her favorite subject is Tibetan. She has a noble plan of returning back to Tibet to share her knowledge by teaching the children there.

Kunsang

Also named Kunsang, this child is a cute and intelligent little girl of 11 years. Kunsang was admitted to TCV under the destitute category as both her parents are suffering from tuberculosis and are in very bad state of health. Both of them became weak and thin. The parents used to run a small restaurant for livelihood which remains closed these days. Both of them are away from home and are undergoing treatment at Delek Hospital at Dharamsala since last year. The parents approached the Settlement Welfare Office for help. Considering the problem as genuine the Welfare Officer recommended the admission of Kunsang into TCV.

Kunsang is happy and has adjusted well in her new school. She is reading in Class four. She is a smart, well behaved girl. She tends to remain silent and doesn't speak out much. The health problem of her parents seems to have an adverse effect on her confidence. We hope she will gain her confidence as her parents get better and will have a steady growth under the care of TCV. She loves watching Indian movies and reading comics. Her favorite subjects are English and Social Studies.

UBC Community Learning Initiative Partnership

by Camille Narayan

(Camille is our newest TRAS director, and has done a superb job of coordinating this partnership)

The UBC Community Learning Initiative (CLI) partnered with TRAS for the 2011-2012 academic year. This is the 2nd year TRAS has partnered with the CLI, with six talented and hard-working students of Professor Catherine Douglas's ECON 335 course Fertility, Families and Human Migration volunteering for 2 months of their term on video projects on TRAS's organizational history. The students interviewed long-time TRAS members including Dr. Joan Ford and Dr. John Conway about their involvement with TRAS and their thoughts on TRAS's work in the Himalayan region. The students also created a short, vibrant video about the school hostel TRAS helped to build in Sikkim. The videos are part of TRAS's wider effort to engage new and interested people in our work as well as archiving our history. We sincerely thank the students: Jordan Fernandez, Emily Rakhit, Aude Menoret, Jessica Zheng, Vlad Vasilascu and Chris Maccullocc, as well as Professor Catherine Douglas, Heather Turnbull of the UBC CLI, and all interviewees for your time and dedication to this project. Look out for next term's students this January!



TRAS

Supporting health and education for children and youth in the Himalayas

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Whether you wish to sponsor a child, pay for the publication of a Tibetan book, help a Nepalese child receive an education, furnish a science lab for an Indian school, it's easy through CanadaHelps – visit the TRAS website at www.tras.ca

Join us in celebrating our 50th birthday! (continued from page 4)

The TRAS CALENDAR FOR 2012



JANUARY 25

TRAS Lecture Series - *The Tibetan Refugees' Dilemma: between Exile and Accommodation* by Dr. John Conway, 7-9pm at Langara College, Vancouver. Founding member and Past President of TRAS, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of British Columbia, **Dr. John Conway** will get us thinking with his provocative lecture.

FEBRUARY 28

Momo-Making Demonstration and Tibetan Meal! Ever had a momo? Think Tibet is on the other side of the world? Well, most of it is... but there is a small part of it right here in Vancouver. It is called **Vancouver Tibet Kitchen, at 6591 Fraser Street (between East 49th and 50th Aves).** Tibet Kitchen specializes in authentic Tibetan cuisine and spicy Indian style Chinese food. On entering Tibet Kitchen one is immediately transported to a Tibetan world: rich yellow walls with accents of red and blue, beautiful "crown moulding" of gathered fabric, traditional Thangkas and framed photos of Tibetan art. Infusing all of this is soft Tibetan chanting creating a tranquil atmosphere. If all this wasn't enough to transport you, there is the excellent food! No need to wait until February to sample chef/owner Tsering Norbu's delicacies—but do save the evening of **Tuesday, February 28 for Tsering Norbu's unique demo on how to make momos and Tibetan butter tea, followed by a sit-down delectable Tibetan meal!** More details and info on how to reserve your seat coming soon!

COMING IN THE SPRING (DATES TBA)

- **Nepali film screening sponsored by Reel Causes** (<http://reelcauses.org/>) with a large portion of the ticket price given to TRAS
- **Tibetan singing bowl concert:** Megha Shakya is a master of Tibetan singing bowl therapy and will demonstrate this ancient form of healing for the body and mind.
- **Nepali dinner and talk** (the second in the TRAS Lecture Series) on Nepal at the ever-popular Café Kathmandu

JUNE 13-17

The South Asian Film Festival Canada (SAFF Canada) kicks off for the first time (see page 6) and TRAS will be there.

JUNE

The 50th Annual General Meeting of TRAS will be held. Date and location TBA.

SEPTEMBER 1-28

Photography Exhibit - *TransHimalaya: Tibet, Nepal, India* by Marion Tipple. For the month of September, Marion's collection of wonderful photographs will be on display at the **Moat Gallery of the downtown central branch of the Vancouver Public Library**

And to wrap it all up, our GRAND FINALE...

LATE FALL

GALA DINNER TO CELEBRATE 50 AMAZING YEARS FUNDING SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS IN THE HIMALAYAS! Join the party! We can't wait to see you there! Alert your family and friends and watch for the details. They will be published on our website and in e-blasts.