



Still more to celebrate

TRAS is well into the celebrations for the 50th anniversary of its founding by George Woodcock – and now we are about to honour the 100th anniversary of George's birth! One hundred years ago, on May 8, 1912, he was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba. He was soon taken back to England by his parents to a rather austere life – and who would have thought that 100 years later we would be honouring the memory of a man who became one of Canada's most celebrated men of letters and the founder of not one but three charities which have helped thousands of people at home and abroad!

Alan Twigg, author and publisher of BC Book World, recently wrote *Tibetans in Exile* about the Woodcocks, their extraordinary lives and the impact they had on so many people through their charitable work.

We at TRAS are well aware of the story of how one couple from Vancouver quietly made such a difference, but for the sake of newer TRAS members, allow us to introduce you to George Woodcock and his wife, Inge.



George became Canada's most prolific and remarkable man of letters. He returned from England in 1949 to build a cabin in Sooke, British Columbia, with his German-born wife Ingeborg. They struggled in those early days, but eventually George went on to write and edit over 150 books. He taught English literature at UBC, and some of his students are still members of the charities he founded.

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TRAS

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50th Anniversary News

The first four events of 2012 and the travelling Nepali film festivals were successful and enjoyable!

There have been three Nepali film festivals around the country so far, and we've heard nothing but good reports. Well over \$2,000 have been raised for TRAS projects! It's an easy process and makes for an entertaining evening – so why not give it a try? Phone the TRAS office (604-224-5133) or e-mail info@tras.ca for details.

The monthly events are each being hosted by TRAS directors, who have written reports below.

January

Frank and Lynn Beck

TRAS kicked off its 50th Birthday celebrations with a stimulating lecture by Dr. John Conway, founding member and past President of TRAS. Titled "The Tibetan refugees' dilemma: between exile and accommodation", the lecture explored the history of the refugees' experience. It grappled with the challenging issues facing the refugees and TRAS' role in facilitating their journey. There was a worthwhile Q and A session after the lecture with members of the audience engaging with Dr. Conway about some of the dilemmas. A particular problem is posed by the fact that the Tibetan refugees in India remain stateless. The proceeds of the evening contributed to the Tibetan Tuting Literacy Project, which also happens to be the region in India where the Canadian Govt. is initiating a resettlement program to bring Tibetans to Canada. An interesting connection with a TRAS project! The evening was highly successful with 40 people attending and \$1500 raised towards the project. On behalf of TRAS we thank Dr. Conway most sincerely and look forward to seeing him at our Gala Dinner on November 3, 2012.



February

Shirley Howdle



Tenzin tried his hand at momo making

35 TRAS members and friends enjoyed a buffet dinner and traditional Tibetan MoMos at the Tibet Kitchen Restaurant. The decor of gold and rust colored walls and banners reminded one of Tibet. Owner Tsering and his daughter demonstrated the art of MoMo making. Quite a challenge for the novice attendees!! Funds donated will go to the Tibetan Tuting Literacy Project.

March

Daphne Hales

Over 80 people were privileged to hear the haunting music of the Tibetan singing bowls as Megha Shakya, who is a master of this healing therapy, played the 7 bowls. The darkened hall was filled with beauty and peace as we relaxed to the sounds of the music, sometimes calm, occasionally vibrant. Megha gave an interesting talk about the history of this healing art, and stayed answering questions for a long time. Thank you, Megha, for a unique evening. Ticket sales of over \$900 will help the TRAS Tibetan nurses training project.



April

Marina Guy

Another 50th anniversary event - **sold out!** TRAS was honoured to be chosen by local non-profit Reel Causes as the 'cause' for April. Every month Reel Causes chooses a different charity and shows a film with all ticket proceeds going to that chosen charity. A rainy spring evening did not keep TRAS and Reel Causes supporters away! *Sherpas: The True Heros of Mount Everest* directed by Frank Senn, Hari Thapa and Otto. C. Honegger was screened in front of a sold-out audience at Van City Theatre. The film shows the Himalayan expedition not from the perspective of the Western mountaineers, but from that of the ever-smiling Sherpas who make the westerners' adrenaline adventure possible in the first place. One of the film directors, Hari Thapa, Skyped in, all the way from Kathmandu, for an engaging Q and A following the film. Over \$2500 dollars were raised to support the READI educational project in Nepal. Thank you to everyone who came out to the event to support TRAS and Reel Causes!



President Jen and Hari sit in Kathmandu watching the audience in Vancouver!

Reel Causes is currently looking for sponsors. If you are interested in learning more about this local non-profit please visit: www.reelcauses.org Several of the audience wished their friends could have seen this gripping film. It is available for your very own film show, from the TRAS office, for a donation to TRAS.

May 9

A wonderful Nepali meal and live music by local Vancouver artists await you at Café Kathmandu (2779 Commercial Drive, Vancouver) on Wednesday, May 9. 7.00pm start, doors open at 6.30pm. Tickets: \$20 in advance only (based on availability). Call the TRAS office (604-224-5133) or email info@tras.ca. Donations made on the night will go to READI Nepal to educate village children in Humla.

June 6

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO THE 50TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE TRANS-HIMALAYAN AID SOCIETY on Wednesday, June 6, at 7.30pm (doors open at 7.00pm) at the Tsengdok Monastery, 1502 Angus Drive, Vancouver, BC. A short business meeting will be followed by:

"Notes from the Field" - a talk and slide show by TRAS President Jennifer Hales on her recent visit to projects in India and Nepal. Jennifer will present an in-depth review of many of the projects TRAS supports and the contexts within which our Indian, Tibetan and Nepali partners work.



Getting to the next village

Refreshments.

Please RSVP by Wed. May 30 at info@tras.ca or 604-224-5133 (seating is limited)

June 28

Celebrate the centenary of George Woodcock's birth at the annual award ceremony for the winner of the George Woodcock Lifetime Achievement Award for a BC writer. Speeches and readings in honour of George. TRAS will have a display there. More details to follow at www.tras.ca and at bookworld@telus.net. Vancouver Public Library, Alice MacKay Room, at 6.30pm.

September

TransHimalaya: Tibet, Nepal, India – a photographic exhibition by Marion Tipple, Sept 1 – 28, at the Moat Gallery of the downtown central branch of the Vancouver Public Library.

October

TRAS is partnering with the brand new South Asian Film Festival (SAFF Canada). More details soon at www.saffcanada.org. and www.tras.ca (moved from June to October)

November 3

TRAS 50th Anniversary Gala Dinner, Saturday, November 3, 2012. Final details will be on the TRAS website www.tras.ca and in e-blasts. Book the date now and invite your friends to join you!

Still more to celebrate (continued from page 1)

In 1961, George went to India to do research for a book. And that's when the coincidences – or karma - began. Inge had always been fascinated by Tibet, and seeing the word on a door at All India Radio in Delhi, she knocked and went in. The meeting with the Tibetan couple working there (broadcasting world news into an occupied Tibet) led to the Woodcocks going to the hill station of Mussoorie, where a Tibetan noblewoman, Mrs. Taring, had started an orphanage. They were moved by the plight of the children in ragged clothes and no shoes, sleeping five to a mattress with one thin blanket in the Himalayan winter and surviving on thin soup and wheat dumplings. Lessons were held outside on the ground, because there was no building large enough to hold the hundreds of children recently arrived from Tibet. The incidence of sickness and death was high. When George and Inge expressed their dismay and wondered how to help, a young Tibetan girl, Khando, told them that they “must absolutely come and see Uncle!” Khando was the Dalai Lama's niece. A long journey to Dharamsala led to the meeting which changed the Woodcocks' lives forever, and through them, the lives of countless Tibetan refugees. They discovered a similar scene of dire need at the nursery run by the Dalai Lama's sister. Their 20 minute meeting with the young Dalai Lama stretched to two hours, and the result, on their return to Vancouver, was the founding of the Tibetan Refugee Aid Society, the humanitarian aid society that is still going strong under its current name, Trans-Himalayan Aid Society, with more than 300 projects completed in the Himalayas and southern India.

In fact, they did not wait to return home but wrote ahead to colleagues at the University of British Columbia to start collecting funds. John Conway, a founding member, remembers George's facility at getting help: the first President was Dr. Norman MacKenzie, President of UBC; the UBC treasurer became the TRAS treasurer, and many professors sat on the board. Their friends in the artistic community were put to work too, designing Christmas cards and donating paintings. George and Inge led by example – no-one worked harder than they did. Once cajoled (or bullied) into helping, their friends had no choice but to follow suit. Dorothea Leach, now a Patron of TRAS, recalls that only a broken limb would be a good enough excuse to miss the weekly stints at garage sales and flea markets!

They were an inspirational couple who affected millions of lives with their charities (their second charity is Canada-India Village Aid, the third being a fund for writers in need) and yet they avoided all publicity for their good works. Barry Leach wrote that, in founding TRAS, this gentle, kindly man made three valuable contributions. He provided a vehicle for many Canadians to express their concern for the plight of the Tibetan people in generous and tangible forms. He contributed to the international effort to relieve and rehabilitate thousands of refugees. In doing so, he shared in the preservation of an ancient culture that has already demonstrated its relevance and value to the modern world. Through the person of the Dalai Lama, it has encouraged non-violence in politics, compassion for all sentient beings and concern for the environment. Utopian as they may seem, these attitudes offer the only long-term hope for the resolution of the problems that beset mankind today.

The Woodcocks opted out of active TRAS work after George had a heart attack, but TRAS has maintained their ideals for 50 years. George died in 1995, shortly after being given the Freedom of the City of Vancouver. Inge remained a Patron of TRAS, vitally interested in every aspect of our work, until she died in 2003.

The Tibetan community in BC remembers the Woodcocks with fondness. T.C. Tethong of Victoria, BC, wrote, at Inge's passing, “Tibetans owe much to these two kind souls from Canada for their initiative and dedication in starting TRAS, the first Canadian aid organization for Tibetan refugees. These two Canadians and their friends helped the Tibetans in our hour of need and always remained our close friends.”

If you would like to learn more about the Woodcocks and the charities they founded, TRAS has Alan's book for sale. Call 604-224-5133 or email info@tras.ca

(With thanks for excerpts from Alan Twigg, John Conway, T.C. Tethong, Dorothea Leach and the late Barry Leach)

TRAS 50th AGM

(see page 3 for more information)

Wednesday, June 6 @ 7.30pm
(doors at 7pm)

Tsengdok Monastery
1502 Angus Drive, Vancouver BC

BACK TO THE FUTURE WITH – PAPER!*by Daphne Hales, Editor*

Well, that didn't work!! So many 'experts' had told TRAS that e-mail was the way of the future for newsletters, but our experience and a recent article from another charity show that e-mailed newsletters just don't get read. I know myself that when an e-mailed newsletter pops up (even if it is one I want to read) I tend to put it aside until later – by which time so much more has appeared on the screen that I forget to go back to read it.

Thanks to some sleuthing by our computer whiz, we learned that not many of you opened the e-mail from TRAS, and a mere handful of you actually clicked on the link to the newsletter. So we think the majority of you must be like me, and put off reading newsletters on computers.

In the hopes that you do, indeed, wish to read the TRAS newsletter and that you might even wish to show it to someone else, we are returning to paper copies for all except those few who did reply that they would like to receive it by e-mail.

Do let us know if you are happy with this, and remember you may change at any time from one format to the other by letting Armila know at info@tras.ca or 604-224-5133. If you wish to see it in colour, the newsletters are posted on www.tras.ca (George and Inge would have a fit if we PRINTED it in colour!).

Sponsorship Report

by Russil Wvong

Sponsorship Increase in 2013.

Because of increases in the cost of living in India and Nepal over the last several years (with soaring food prices, for example), we'd like to increase the annual sponsorship amount for new sponsorships from \$400 to \$440, starting in January 2013. For our partners in India and Nepal, the actual costs of supporting a child's education and board have risen significantly since our last increase in 2006. We want to reduce the gap, without raising the sponsorship amount too drastically.

For existing sponsorships, the amount will not increase. If you are already sponsoring a child, the annual amount will stay the same until the child finishes school. Only new sponsorships after January 2013 will be at the new amount. We appreciate that agreeing to take on a sponsorship is a long-term commitment, and we do not want to change the terms of the commitment mid-way through!

Thank you to all our members who are sponsoring children! TRAS members are directly supporting the education of 223 children in India and Nepal. If you have any questions or concerns about the increase, please contact Russil Wvong (russil.wvong@tras.ca).

Can you sponsor a child or teenager? Here are two of the current requests for help from our partners in India.

Kunsang is studying at TCV Suja (the school for older Tibetan children in north India). She was born to a poor peasant family in Kham province in Eastern Tibet on Aug 16, 1992. Her family comprises of her parents and 2 younger siblings. She had the opportunity to attend a school in Tibet for 2 years but owing to family problems she had to give up her education. She spent most of her childhood grazing animals and working in field.

One day when she was 14, a friend of her father living in India came to see them. He told them about the education opportunity available in India. On the request of the father, his friend agreed to take his daughter to India. It took 2 days journey filled with anxiety and fear hiding in a truck and 5 gruelling days of journey by foot. Kunsang was placed in the opportunity class as her academic knowledge was very low. She did well to reach Class VII 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.

Yangchen, born on June 19, 2003, is at Munsel-Ling School in Spiti, north India. She belongs to a tiny village, Kiame. Her family is very poor. Her father is a seasonal labourer and her mother is a housewife. She has one younger sister. They are both studying here. Yangchen is in Class II and is very good in studies. She really needs your kind help towards her education.

A photo and full history will be sent to you. Contact Russil at russil.wvong@tras.ca or call 604-224-5133

Reports from our Project Partners

Two reports recently arrived, updating us on these worthwhile projects.

Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre Report

by Kesang Wangdu, Manager

Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre and Settlement was established in the year 1980 to rehabilitate Tibetan refugees coming from Tibet. The construction of the settlement was partly financed by the Government of India and major expenses were met by Central Tibetan Relief Committee of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Central Tibetan Administration based in Dharamsala. It is 14 km. from the city of Dehradun, located at an altitude of 640 meters above sea level.



Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre has a spacious Workshop initially accommodating 150 workers and a Crèche for 25 babies. Today we have 65 workers in the handicraft section and 15 children in the Crèche. We have 3 major traditional weaving projects and trainings in the Handicraft Centre: (1) Traditional Tibetan handloom cloth weaving for aprons, shoulder bags and winter jackets (2) Tibetan traditional herbal incense making, and (3) Tailoring. The workers are paid by piece rate wages; the more they work the more they earn.

The design and colours look very attractive and beautiful. Though there are not many sales of jackets made from this beautifully woven material these days, we are very happy to keep the traditional designs and culture alive for Tibetan youngsters. The incense sales are doing well and we are planning to increase the production by employing more young people from the settlement. In winter most of them go to other parts of India for winter sales, but during the summer there are many jobless young people living in the settlement and it is a sorry state to see them around having no work to do for a living.

Crèche: Children below three are in the Crèche under the care of two trained Ayas. The older children attend Montessori classes to receive elementary education, coming to the crèche for the afternoons.

The babies of the handicraft workers come free of charge and the 3 to 5 babies from other settlers are charged Rs.300.00 per month. This is irregular income as these children are not regularly brought in. We charge them even for a week's attendance as it helps us to cover the expenses in general.

TRAS support for the Crèche project will end in April 2012. Therefore we strongly request TRAS to kindly consider renewing the Crèche project again for a few years as we have no other NGO or government support for this project.

TRAS is also helping 22 children of mothers working in the handicraft centre to study in other Tibetan schools and colleges. Dekyiling Settlement School has up to class VIII. After passing class VIII, they are admitted to other schools to complete Class XII.

We heartily thank TRAS for the kindness and timely support given to us. We are greatly indebted for the generous and sympathetic support we have received for many years..

President's Visit: A big and happy surprise was meeting with President Jennifer Hales during her very kind visit to our centre at short notice. The Tibetan welfare officer, myself and other handicraft staff have welcomed her with our traditional scarf and introduced ourselves. Indeed it was not a properly arranged reception given to the President but her kind words said it was perfectly fine. It was a very simple and informal reception. Director Mrs. Daphne Hales had sent an e-mail notice just ahead of President's visit, but unfortunately our cyber was down for a week and we could not get the news about the visit. We sincerely apologized to her.

We were so happy to meet President Jennifer. I escorted her to the workshop to meet the workers, and then to the Crèche. I explained all the activities we are engaged in. She spoke a few words of Tibetan language which made everyone happier. Jennifer spent most of her time with the crèche and school children though her schedule was tight. In the middle of our talks about sad life of poor people Jennie's eyes were filled with tears. I felt so touched by her kind heart and sympathy and felt how lucky we are to have such a good friend.

Lastly, I would like to inform the TRAS Board members that I am again elected for the 3rd term as Manager of Dekyiling Handicraft. The term will end on 31st March 2015. So I hope and pray that my service term will be useful for the society and benefit the handicraft workers. I also pray and thank the TRAS organization for their kind support always extended to us whenever we were in need and especially when we face harsh financial problems of school fees and crèche projects. I will be humbly looking forward for the same support during my final term.

Buddha Academy, Kathmandu, Nepal: Vocational Training Report

by Dorje Namgyal, Principal

The current three-year vocational training started in March 2009 with six full time girls and thirty five part time girls in the tailoring class. There were also one full time and forty part time boys in the industrial education class including carpentry and electricity and also some mechanical drawing.

In April 2010 four girls from the previous course finished training and, as always, we gave each of them a sewing machine when they left us. (*Treadle sewing machines – electricity in Nepal is too dicey : Ed*) Two girls got tailoring jobs in Lebanon and two girls are working in different boutique shops.

By March 2011 the six full time girls were fully trained and capable of getting jobs.



Deepa and Rabeka got jobs in a boutique workshop in Kathmandu. Meena got married and plans to open a tailoring work shop in Kathmandu. Danma May has also opened a tailoring workshop in Kathmandu. Two other girls have left for villages and we have no news of them. But they are surely capable of getting jobs. After this in March 2011 we took six more full time girls in the tailoring class and they are doing very well. Some of them may find work even after one year. But probably they will continue further because the most important training of cutting of clothes is taught in the second year. There is also a possibility of finding good apprenticeship training in good tailoring shops and getting some pay. So the tailoring training is certainly beneficial for many poor girls who could not finish school and those who really want to keep this as their profession in future. We are giving them free lunch and also some pocket money every month.

The girls who are taking tailoring as a subject part time in classes IX and X will also find this useful to get better marks in the final SLC exams and to make simple clothes for their family, specially for children when they get married. They are also taught hand knitting. Normally the girls of poor people get married earlier, even before they are eighteen.

As for the carpentry and electrical courses, we tried very hard and even offered free board and lodging in our hostel; we could not find any willing and suitable boys except for one poor boy of thirteen in carpentry but even before completing one year, he was withdrawn by his father, who needs the boy for field work.

However, the boys taking this Industrial education including carpentry as part time in classes VIII to X as a subject in SLC level find it useful in getting better marks in the board exams and also useful for them when they leave us and go to their villages.

If they don't go for further studies and can't get a job, they could join carpentry workshops for apprenticeship training and get some pay plus good practical training. Really good carpenters and electricians need a lot of training and they become experts in this way. But here the most of this work is done by Indians from Bihar state. Generally, only low caste Nepalese do this work. And there is neither any encouragement nor any provisions by the government and families for vocational training.

We would like to thank you very much for your long and continued support for this project. We would be very grateful if your society could kindly consider further support.



TRAS has already agreed to continue these useful projects which nurture not just the children and young people, but also their families on a long term basis, and has sent the payments for 2012 (\$2,044 and \$13,525). One fact that might interest you is that these two Tibetan men were students together at the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie (the orphanage George and Inge visited in 1961) and have both devoted their lives to helping others.

Volunteer Corner

Grace Kim is volunteering as the 50th anniversary Events Coordinator. She writes:

"I have just finished my undergraduate degree in Political Science at UBC and I am looking to get into international development work. I became involved with TRAS through a Poverty and Inequality course at UBC, and was inspired by TRAS's philosophy. The organization's method and 'bottom-up' approach to development are what I personally connect with and strongly believe in, which is why I continue to work with TRAS with great enthusiasm".

Thank you, Grace – we appreciate your hard work!

Sutherland Secondary School Student Leadership Council Celebrates with TRAS: by Karim Kadi & Prabhjot Singh, North Vancouver, BC.

The Sutherland Student Leadership Council (SLC) has been working hand in hand with TRAS for over six years. Once our teacher sponsor, Cynthia Bunbury, joined the Council, we looked for a local charity to support that had a global reach and was fiscally frugal. Mrs. Bunbury's husband had worked closely with TRAS as a director for some time; with this personal connection Mrs. Bunbury thought TRAS would be a great candidate for our fundraising.

Ever since TRAS was proposed to the SLC, it has been our main charity (we also support the Nepal Library Foundation (NLF) annually). Each year has been better than the last; our council has found new ways to re-energize the cause and increase our efforts with each new developing idea. This year we have surpassed our goal with our fundraised amount, earned over the course of the year with our newly introduced (and sure to be annual) Spin-a-thon, and our traditional 24-Hour Fast. Both were very successful and allowed Sutherland students to support a great cause while having a lot of fun!

As our council evolves in its outreach, our aspirations for helping our charities expand as well. Here at Sutherland, we have taken advantage of a number of opportunities to sell Nepalese and Indian handicrafts that TRAS has available. We have created an informative display about our long-term commitment to Buddha Academy in Kathmandu, which will be on permanent display in the school by the end of the school year. We will be staffing a TRAS information booth and craft sale at Loughheed Centre on May 19. We anticipate further opportunities to get the word out about TRAS and to assist in continuing a flow of funds to Buddha Academy.



SLC Spin-a-thon

Our hard work and efforts gained the SLC some recognition this year. The British Columbian Council for International Cooperation chose us as one of three schools to be profiled during International Development Week in February. Reel Youth produced a short documentary about the SLC and our efforts on behalf of TRAS and NFL, as we took them through a day in the life of the SLC. We had personal interviews and an article on their website. This rewarding public exposure helped extend awareness of our charities, and energize our school and council to continue our work.

Another very exciting development in this vein is the new Social Justice course at Sutherland. To enhance the depth of the study of issues such as poverty, development, education and discrimination, students will be undertaking a 23-day trip to Nepal to visit Buddha Academy, Sutherland's sister school, the library in Srikhandapur, and to do a trek to the Lang-Tang region. We anticipate this first-hand experience will deepen our ties to Nepal and strengthen our commitment to our charities. We are beginning to understand that our small contribution goes a long way to provide access to basic necessities and opportunities for young people in Nepal. We are pleased that our relationship with TRAS continues to grow and look forward to next year's fundraising activities. We thank TRAS for its confidence and trust in SLC, and for the opportunity to continue this sort of commitment of service to others.

TRAS in turn thanks these wonderful young people!



Grace Kim