

JOHN CONWAY

(1929-2017)

We are very sad to announce the passing of our Patron John Conway. John was involved with TRAS from the moment of its creation in 1962 and his staunch support will be sorely missed.

John first came to Canada from England in 1955 to teach history at the University of Manitoba, coming to UBC with his wife Ann in 1957. From the start, he was involved in helping foreign students enrol at UBC, through the World University Service (WUS). This led him to become interested in refugee affairs and he subsequently became the Chair of the Diocese

of New Westminster's Refugee Committee. Helping Tibetan refugees, when he heard about their plight from George Woodcock, was a natural extension to his deep interest in lending a hand to less fortunate souls. Dorothea Leach remembers John flogging Christmas cards during a lecture at UBC in the 1960s to raise funds for TRAS. She asked him about TRAS and — long an admirer of Tibet — asked how one could join. 'It costs \$2', said John — \$2 changed hands and Dorothea was in — and still is!

**“[John] helped make TRAS a well-established
and well-respected NGO”**

Where George and Inge Woodcock raised funds in the early days through personal contacts and garage sales, John was the instigator of making use of government help as well — he found a little known agricultural fund in BC and got thousands from it for TRAS. He cemented our relationship with CIDA to huge advantage and helped make TRAS a well-established and well-respected NGO.

When George felt that the first wave of Tibetan children had been helped enough through sponsorship and that he himself should step down from or even close the Society because of ill health, John could see the larger picture and realised that without development things would fall apart for the Tibetans. So George passed the reins to John and for the second decade of its existence, under John's leadership, TRAS supported the development in India of many Tibetan settlements, training centres, and health centres, as well as keeping up the individual child sponsorships.

John visited the Tibetan settlements in India several times, and he and his wife Ann met with the Dalai Lama both in India and in Vancouver. John was instrumental in arranging the Dalai Lama's first visit to UBC, in 1981.

More recently John had graciously acted as one of our Patrons and he had given many talks on Tibet. His ongoing determination to help students get the best education they can led to his generous donation which has paid for the TRAS Tibetan nurses training project for the past three years. He was delighted with their successes, which led to just the kind of independence and self-sufficiency he fostered in so many over his years of helping students and refugees.

New Projects

The work started by George and Inge Woodcock and John Conway in the 1960s to aid Tibetan refugees still goes on. As long as there is a need to foster education and health for the children of the Himalaya, the small TRAS charity will continue to do its best — funded by our faithful members and supporters. We highlight our two new projects (already fully paid for by members) — one fosters education, the other brings better health to remote villages.

At the same time, we must remind you that our ongoing projects for Indian, Nepali and Tibetan children will cease without your continued financial contributions.
More about these ongoing projects in the November issue.

The Educational Project

We are thrilled to announce the opening of the wonderful **Munsel-Ling School Library**! It's hard to believe that the small, dingy room with a few outdated magazines and mouldy books so poignantly described by TRAS member Carole Nakonechny in the 2016 Winter Newsletter, has been replaced with a welcoming reading hall and many rooms of comfortable furniture and shelves galore of books on a wide-ranging variety of topics. Thanks to TRAS members, spearheaded by Yosef Wosk, the library has been fully paid for and is now catering to the 500 students and also to local Spiti residents. Here is the report from the School:

"The dream of having a wonderful space to call LIBRARY at Munsel-Ling turned into reality with the financial support by TRAS and in particular Dr. Yosef Wosk; their kind support and blessing has helped us to complete this dream. The newly established library will not only benefit the 500 students and 45 teachers at Munsel-Ling School but also the people of Spiti who can always look forward to making use of the Library. It was inaugurated on July 15, 2017 by the Head Lama of Key Monastery. He visited the Library and recited prayers for the new step towards the upliftment of the students.

The newly extended Library was renovated on the oldest building of the School, which has been converted into a main reading room and different library sections." (The full report is on the TRAS website www.tras.ca)

The walls and ceilings are colourful with paintings, bright fabrics and posters. The floor of the main reading room has been carpeted, to combat the cold, and both the children's section and the Buddhist/Tibetan section have mattresses on the floor. As the Principal says, "The reason for placing mattresses and not chairs in the room is because Tibetans prefer folding their legs and reading at low level tables." — and we all know kids love sprawling on the floor when they read.

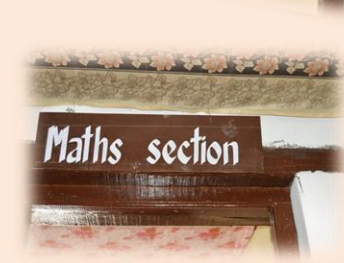
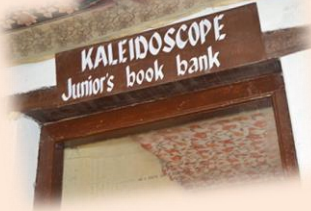
But most important are all the steel and wooden shelves covering entire walls and groaning with new books! (see Page 3 for a visual)

The Health Project

Here's another instance of the sensible, practical ways the **Voice of Children (VOC)** staff is able to build on previous successes and spread the help further. The primary health workshops for women and their children and the health information camps for teenaged girls have been well attended and popular in the 12 main villages served by VOC. This has led to vastly improved rates of immunization and baby care, the reduction of water borne disease and much better sanitation. Now, thanks to a gift of \$4,000 (given in lieu of wedding gifts to a young Vancouver couple) VOC is expanding these workshops and camps to 6 more villages. VOC has chosen the most populous villages with the highest numbers of children and the largest populations of Dalits. It's all about passing on practical knowledge, which will teach these villagers the very basics and help them to access what is theirs by right. The trainings started in July and we look forward to the first report later this year.



Munsel-Ling School Library



TRAS AGM

The 55th Annual General Meeting of TRAS was held at the TRAS office on September 19, with directors and a few members present. The President's full report and the financial report can be found on the TRAS website at www.tras.ca.

Russil Wvong, President, welcomed everyone and gave his report for the year April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017:

"First of all, thank you for your generous support of health and education for children and young people in Nepal, northern India, and Tibet! TRAS exists because there are people in Vancouver and elsewhere in Canada who want to help people in the Himalayas. Our approach is to work with local partners who can identify the needs of people in the region, plan projects to meet those needs, and carry them out. Our role is to evaluate project proposals, based on our experience with past projects, and to raise funds from our members to support these projects.

Activities in the Himalayas

TRAS members currently sponsor the education of 110 individual children in the region, from kindergarten up to Grade 12: 70 girls and 40 boys. We always have children needing sponsorship, so if you know of anyone who would like to sponsor a child's education, please let us know (info@tras.ca). The sponsorship amount is \$440 per year.



The TRAS Scholarship Fund, established through the generosity of two anonymous donors, supports post-secondary students at \$1000/year each for up to three years, through Munsel-Ling School in Spiti Valley, the Dekyiling Tibetan settlement, and the Voice of Children project, both in northern India. The fund is now supporting the education of 16 students. Post-secondary education allows students to receive training so that they can become teachers, bankers, scientists, nurses and business women. If you'd like to support post-secondary students, but on a one-time basis rather than as an ongoing commitment, please consider making a donation to the TRAS Scholarship Fund.

Last year TRAS sent \$46,000 for children's sponsorships, and another \$10,000 from the TRAS Scholarship Fund.

Our major projects over the last year include:

- The CTA Nurses Training project, which trains students from Tibetan settlements in India at first class institutions. The nurses then work in their settlements or in Indian hospitals. Our partner on this project is the Central Tibetan Administration in India. (\$6,500 a year)
- The Voice of Children project, which is improving education for children in the districts of Nainatal and Almora, in the northern Indian province of Uttarakhand Pradesh. (\$25,500 a year)
- Creating the library at Munsel-ling School in the Spiti Valley of India: furniture, bookshelves and books. (\$8,900 last year, plus \$8,900 this year)
- The SFSS Toilet Rebuilding project, which rebuilt 200 toilets in a settlement in Dolakha, one of the districts in Nepal which was worst hit by the 2015 earthquakes. (\$20,900 this year)
- The READI Nepal project, which is educating thirty children from Humla, the poorest district in Nepal and training their parents in basic health, sanitation and income generation. (\$21,000)



The Spiti library project and the SFSS toilet rebuilding project are both fully funded, but the CTA Nurses Training project, the Voice of Children project, and the READI Nepal project are all ongoing, and of course we're raising funds for them.

Rebuilding Nepal after the 2015 earthquakes

Sara Shneiderman, professor in the Department of Anthropology, UBC, is leading a collaborative study—with researchers from Nepal, Denmark, and elsewhere — of the challenges facing Nepal as it attempts to rebuild following the 2015 earthquakes. This is complicated by the fact that Nepal is still attempting to re-establish political stability, following the end of the civil war in 2006. The aim is both analysis (understanding the effects of the earthquakes and the difficulties involved in reconstruction), and policy impact (how to do things better).

TRAS will be one of the community partners in the study. For more on this, please read the full AGM report on the TRAS website (www.tras.ca).

Events last year

- November — social dinner at Gurkha Kitchen, sold out. A very enjoyable evening, thank you to everyone who came!
- April — talk by Mark Turin on Thangmi people of Dolakha, Nepal, at the Unitarian Church. The talk was fascinating: Mark, like Sara, a professor in the Department of Anthropology at UBC, is both very accomplished and an excellent storyteller. Mark already spoke Nepali fluently, but the Thangmi language (in the Tibeto-Burman language family) has no script and had never been studied before. He told us of the 10 years he spent living with the Thangmi people and learning their language.

We'll likely hold similar events this year: another social dinner in the winter (either November or February), and a talk by Sara on the 2015 earthquakes and post-earthquake reconstruction.

Draft bylaws

The BC government has replaced the 1977 Society Act which governs non-profits in BC with a new Societies Act, effective November 28, 2016. We have until November 2018 to transition to the new Act. Basically, this means that we need to file an electronic copy of our constitution and by-laws with the provincial government, and our constitution and by-laws need to comply with the new Act.

We've revised our bylaws to comply with the new Act. There aren't any substantive changes. Summary:

- Because the rising cost of postage is making it more expensive to send out mailings (like our newsletter), while it's basically free to send emails, we'd like to distinguish between *members* and *supporters*. Members pay annual dues, receive mailings, and can vote at general meetings. Supporters are more of an informal category: they're people who support TRAS and receive our emails, but are not members.
- Under the new Act, TRAS is required to maintain a register of voting members, with contact information (email or mailing address). To protect the privacy of our donors, access to the register will be restricted. If a donor would like to remain completely anonymous, they can be a supporter rather than a member, because supporters are not required to be in the register of members.
- Directors must be voting members.
- Directors can be removed by board resolution.
- 2/3 threshold for special resolutions to pass.
- Notice of the annual general meeting may be by email as well as postal mail, or by posting a notice on the TRAS website at least 21 days before the meeting.

The draft by-laws are posted on the TRAS website at www.tras.ca/societies-act. **Our plan is to ratify the by-laws at our next AGM, in September 2018.**



Organization

One of our three patrons, John Conway, has sadly passed away (see Page 1).

Cynthia Bunbury and Marina Guy have both had to step down from the board, due to time commitments — thank you both! Cynthia joined the board in 2015, but she had been involved with TRAS for many years before that, working with her students at Sutherland Secondary in North Van to raise funds for TRAS, and she's planning to continue in the future. Marina has served on the board since 2010: as our Events Coordinator, she organized many events for TRAS, got us onto social media, and helped improve our marketing. We'll miss her energy and enthusiasm!

We'll be recruiting more board members — so if you know anyone who you think would make a good board member, please talk to Abby (or phone the office 604-224-513). Our usual process is that we would ask people to give us their resume, and come to a board meeting, to make sure it'll be a good fit.

Thank you to our volunteers, especially to our regular volunteers who mail out our newsletter, to Beck Lamb (who does the desktop publishing), and to Maria Rubinchik (who maintains our website and Facebook page).



Thank you to Joanne MacLeod (pictured), who's now been our Office Manager for the last three years!

Finally, thank you to our volunteer Board of Directors. I really enjoy working with all of you. As an institution, TRAS exists because of its donors — but the institution also couldn't exist without the directors who are willing to carry the responsibility of making it run."

The financial statements were approved, Tompkins Wozny Miller were appointed as our auditors for the coming year, and the Society's directors were reappointed for another year (see list on Page 8). The meeting ended with refreshments and time to socialise.

**COMING
UP!**

Watch out for...

... another social dinner in the winter (either November or February), and a talk by Sara Shneiderman on the 2015 earthquakes and post-earthquake reconstruction.

Look how far we have come since John Conway helped found TRAS ... from sending emergency supplies, to providing top notch post graduate trainings. Let's keep up the good work!



SPONSORSHIP

\$440 ... or \$1.21 a day — that's what it costs to sponsor a child through TRAS!

What else could you possibly spend \$1.21 on each day that would make you feel as great as knowing you are helping a child to learn to read and write! Feel in your pocket, look under the cushions, empty the old penny jar — if you can come up with \$1.21 a day, you've come up with a way to give HOPE to a child in a Himalayan village! Phone Joanne at the TRAS office (604-224-5133) or email her at info@tras.ca and she'll help you choose the child who needs your help!



The TRAS Scholarship Report

By Lynn Beck, Scholarship Director



Thanks to the generous help of our donors the TRAS Scholarship Fund is thriving. We currently have 16 students studying in post-secondary education in N. India. So far all successful applicants have been women!

The demand for scholarship positions has been so great that our 3 partners have each had a very difficult process selecting 2 amongst many bright deserving candidates each year.

The diversity in our program we feel is its strength. The courses include a Master's degree in Science, a Master's degree in Arts, 4 bachelor of science degrees in honours Math. But we also have a Tibetan girl from a very poor family originating from Bhutan who is taking a very practical 3-year secretarial college course.

All of our students have successfully completed their previous year of studies and are enrolled in their current year.

They are hard-working young women determined to take advantage of the opportunity that you, TRAS donors, have given them.

As Malala has so eloquently said, educating women is the key to resolving many of the urgent problems we are currently facing in the world.

So please, continue to give generously so that these bright students can make a difference in lifting their lives and their communities out of poverty and ignorance. Thank you.

(Tenzin Choenyi pictured)

TRAS

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

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How would we manage without the internet! This edition of the TRAS newsletter was written in Arizona, designed in Connecticut, and printed in Vancouver!

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YES! I want to help children and youth living in the Himalayas

Name: _____
Address: _____
Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

- ☐ Please send event information and newsletters by e-mail
☐ Please send me information on Planned Giving

☐ attached is my cheque # _____ for \$ _____ (all cheques payable to TRAS)

☐ charge my VISA/MasterCard No. _____ Expiry Date ____ / ____

Please allocate to:

- ☐ Sponsorship \$ _____ for (name of child/youth) _____
☐ Project Donation \$ _____ for (name of project) _____
☐ General Donation \$ _____ for wherever it is needed most

Mail to: TRAS, 1183 Melville Street, Vancouver BC V6E 2X5
☎ 604 224 5133 Fax 604 738 4080 E-mail: info@tras.ca Web: tras.ca

Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!

A tax receipt will be issued for all donations.

Charity Registration #130620743RR0001

