

TRAS President Russil Wvong's Report for the 58th AGM, April 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

Welcome to all who are present with us today via Zoom.

Thank you for your generous support of health and education for children and young people in the Himalayas! And thank you for attending this meeting in these unsettling times. I hope you're all doing well and staying safe.

TRAS exists because there are people here in Vancouver, and elsewhere in Canada, who want to help people in the Himalayas. Our approach is grassroots-based: instead of sending people overseas to do the work, we work with local non-profits based in the region, who know the most important needs on the ground.

One of our long-time donors and sponsors, Margaret Johnson, recently passed away. She was a family lawyer, and had sponsored children's education through TRAS for 25 years. Her son Michael is here tonight, and on behalf of the TRAS board, I'd like to express our deepest sympathies.

As far as our activities are concerned, the biggest issue is the Covid-19 pandemic. Both India and Nepal are trying to balance lifting their lockdown measures with the need to control the spread of the virus. The 1918 flu pandemic lasted for two years, from spring 1918 to spring 1920, so that's our best guess for how long it'll take before the pandemic is over.

Looking after young Tibetan children when they fled into India in the early 1960s was the first task of the newly formed Society in 1962 and continues to be an important part of our work. The Sponsorship report by Joanne MacLeod will follow.

The TRAS Scholarship Fund (TSF), established through the generosity of two anonymous donors, supports post-secondary students at \$1000/year for up to three years, through Munsel-Ling School in Spiti Valley, the Deyiling Tibetan Settlement, and the Voice of Children project, both in northern India. The fund is now supporting the education of 17 students, with five more starting this year. They're all pursuing their courses online. Post-secondary education allows students to receive training so that they can become teachers, nurses, and doctors. If you'd like to support post-secondary students through this Fund, please consider making a donation to the TRAS Scholarship Fund. A full report will be given by the TSF Director, Lynn Beck.

Daphne Hales, our Projects Director, will be presenting a projects report. I'd just like to mention the Voice of Children emergency relief project, in May. This was undertaken at the request of our partner in Uttarakhand, Voice of Children. With the lockdown, many families in the villages where the VOC team works were facing a drastic loss of income, leading to severe hunger. Voice of Children received permission from the local administration to purchase and distribute dry food, soap, and sanitary supplies. **We sent out an appeal in May, and our members responded quickly and generously to support this project - thank you!**

Many thanks are also due to

- Joanne MacLeod, our hard-working Office Manager!
- our volunteers, especially our regular volunteers who mail out our newsletter; Beck Lamb (who does the desktop publishing); and Maria Rubinchik and Andre Melrose (who help to maintain our website and Facebook page).
- our volunteer Board of Directors. As an institution, TRAS couldn't exist without the directors who are willing to carry the responsibility of making it run.

- Tony Phillips, who has agreed to take on the position of Honorary Patron of TRAS. Lynn Beck will give an introduction.
- And finally and most importantly, our donors - the work that TRAS supports in the Himalayas happens only because of your support!

Best regards,
Russil Wvong