

## Can You Believe It?

**TRAS is celebrating 56 – yes, FIFTY-SIX – years** of heartfelt, respectful support for the hardy, wonderful people living in the magnificent but harsh environment of the Himalayas! A lot has improved over these years in the lives of the Tibetan refugees and Indian and Nepali villagers, and we can be proud that we have been able to help their efforts. If everything were perfect now in their lives we would do as George Woodcock said we should, and close up shop. But so much remains to be done, and with YOUR help, we'll carry on supporting them!

On September 12 at the TRAS office, directors and members met together for the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual General meeting.

## President's Report

*by Russil Wvong*

First, thank you for your generous support of health and education for children and young people in the Himalayas! 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.

### Activities in the Himalayas

TRAS members are currently sponsoring 120 individual children in the region. The TRAS Scholarship Fund, established through the generosity of two anonymous donors, is now supporting the education of 14 students (see Scholarship Report on page 3).

Our education and health projects for the year were as follows, with more details in the Projects Report:

- The Central Tibetan Administration Nurses Training project in India. (\$6,000)
- The Voice of Children project, improving education for children in the districts of Nainatal and Almora, in the northern Indian province of Uttarakhand Pradesh. (\$26,000)
- The READI Nepal project, educating thirty children from Humla, the poorest district in Nepal. (\$27,500)
- Updating the library at Munsel-ling School in the Spiti Valley of India. (\$8,900, with the same amount disbursed last year)
- A health awareness project through Voice of Children. (\$4,000)



*Environment Day March*

## Fall Dinner



Come feast with TRAS at the Gurkha Himalayan Kitchen!  
**Tuesday, November 20, 2018**  
 1141 Davie Street, Vancouver

Doors open at 6pm, dinner at 7pm  
 Tickets from the TRAS office (\$35 each)

**Hurry to buy yours – this social event is always sold out!**

## President's Report (cont'd)

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. We also have a new project started this fiscal year, to build basic laundry facilities at Munsel-ling School for the children to wash their clothes. If you'd like to make a donation to one of these projects, or to the Scholarship Fund, please let us know.

## Local Activities

- **November 2017:** Social dinner at Gurkha Kitchen. A very enjoyable evening once again, so we're planning a similar event for Tuesday, November 20, 2018.
- **May 2018:** Talk by Sara Shneiderman at Tsengdok Monastery on rebuilding Nepal after the 2015 earthquakes. Sara is a professor in the Department of Anthropology at UBC. She discussed and illustrated everyday life during the rebuilding process: community, home, temple, school. Some themes that I thought were particularly interesting: the acceleration of social change as a result of the earthquake, and the fact that reconstruction doesn't just rebuild what was there before.

## By-Laws

The BC government has replaced the 1977 Society Act which governs non-profits in BC with a new Societies Act. 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 (which need to comply with the new Act) with the provincial government.

The constitution must only set out the name and purposes of the society, and the purposes must be word-for-word the same as in our existing constitution.

We've revised our by-laws. 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: 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 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 and 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.

We've posted a copy of the constitution and by-laws, along with an overview of the changes, at [tras.ca/societies-act](http://tras.ca/societies-act).

A motion to accept these changes was carried.

Russil then paid tribute to retiring Patron, Joan Ford (see page 3) and thanked our Office Manager Joanne MacLeod, our regular volunteers (especially the newsletter publisher Beck Lamb, the newsletter mail-out crew, Maria Rubinchik who maintains our website, and André Melrose who joined TRAS recently to create social media content), and our volunteer Board of Directors. He encouraged other members to think about joining the Board by getting in touch with Abby Fitch.

Russil ended with a heartfelt thanks to our donors – the work that TRAS supports in the Himalayas only happens because of **YOUR** support!

# TRAS Scholarship Fund Update

by Lynn Beck, TRAS Scholarship Fund Director

The TRAS Scholarship Fund (TSF) program continues to thrive. It meets a real need to provide higher education opportunities, especially for female students in remote areas of India.

The program has three trusted partners: Munsel-ling School; Voice of Children (VOC); and Dekyiling Tibetan Centre. Each partner selects two new candidates per year for a three-year scholarship. The selected students each receive \$1,000 per year for three years, administered through our partner.

We try to be flexible. This year one of our partners, Dekyiling Tibetan Centre, has struggled after the sudden death of its long-time manager Kesang Wangdu. He was a passionate supporter of the scholarship program and we were saddened by his loss. They were unable to choose two new candidates this year and hope for four next year!

Munsel-ling School from the remote valley of Spiti currently has six female students being supported. Tashi Angmo and Sonam Dolkar graduated last year with honors BSc in Math. They are now independently pursuing a Master's in Sociology and a Bachelor's in Education, planning to teach in Spiti upon completion - a real success story.

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*One of the current Spiti students writes: "I am privileged and humbled to receive this scholarship.... because of your tremendous support I am able to complete my master's degree in Anthropology... I really thank you from the bottom of my heart."*

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Sachin Singh Negi

Voice of Children (VOC) covers a large catchment of remote villages in Northwest India. Scholarship candidates undergo a rigorous screening process. There is one big problem: too many deserving applicants! We are currently supporting eight students. Last year they chose the first male student in TSF!



The Interview Process

Sachin Singh Negi is very deserving. He is from a very deprived background, having lost his father when he was 3. He passed the entrance exam for a polytechnic college and now has the means to obtain a diploma in information technology.

Altogether TRAS was supporting 14 students by the end of March 2018 in postsecondary education through TSF. Several of our graduates are now pursuing their further studies independently, having had that first crucial support through **YOUR DONATIONS**.

## Farewell – and many thanks – to our Patron Joan Ford



After many years on the TRAS Board, as Director, Sponsorship Secretary and President, and then several years as one of our two Patrons, Joan has decided to step down. Joan's love of the Himalayan region was fostered after hearing Sir Edmund Hillary give a talk about the clinics he was setting up in Sherpa villages. Joan volunteered to do a stint as medical doctor, and asked what she would need. "**Just your stethoscope and a pair of runners**" was his reply! And with those two items plus her own experience working in Bella Coola and her common sense approach to any problem, Joan set off for Nepal, returning there many times over the years. When she joined the TRAS Board, she added inspection tours of TRAS-supported Tibetan projects in Nepal to her medical work, and we truly appreciated her down-to-earth wisdom. Joan received the Order of Canada for her work, and we were honoured when she agreed to be our Patron. Thank you, Joan – we will miss you!



# Financial Report

by Kevin Yuen, Treasurer

The financial report can be found on the TRAS website ([www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca)).

Motions to approve the Treasurer's report and to appoint Tompkins Wozny as auditors for the coming year were carried.

**Nominations:** Frank Beck read the names of members wishing to stand as directors. With no new names added, a motion to approve the list carried (see page 8).

## Kesang Wangdu: A True Friend to Tibetan Refugees

TRAS was saddened indeed to learn earlier this year of the untimely passing of Kesang Wangdu, manager of the Dekyiling Tibetan Handicraft Centre in north India.

TRAS has always teamed up with local partners who work hard to set up projects to help their own people. These partners know what the local needs are and what programs are best suited to address them. Kesang Wangdu epitomised the type of dedicated people TRAS is honoured to work with.



Kesang Wangdu had been exiled once, from Tibet to Bhutan, and then in 1980 he and hundreds of Tibetans moved on from Bhutan to India. After an arduous journey they arrived in the Indian foothills, where leaky army tents in a field awaited them. Tibetans already in India had pleaded with the Indian Government to take in this group, and were there to meet them and help them start to create a new settlement. From Day One Kesang Wangdu dedicated his life to helping his fellow Tibetans. He ran the handicraft workshops, for which TRAS built the large weaving shed, he filled our orders for colourful woven handicrafts, he oversaw the TRAS-supported crèche for the weavers' children, he ran the TRAS sponsorship program,

and of late he had overseen, with great joy, the selection of the first post-secondary students to receive grants from the TRAS Scholarship Fund.

Two TRAS members met Kesang Wangdu and both remember him fondly. Jennifer Hales, past President, says, "I remember him as an extremely dedicated, passionate, kind, humble man. I was hugely impressed with him and what he had accomplished for the Tibetans at Dekyiling. I'm certain his vision, leadership and compassion have made, and continue to make, a difference in hundreds of people's lives. He thanked TRAS profusely for the financial assistance provided over decades, but really, I felt so much gratitude for the opportunity to meet him and to be able to contribute in a small way through TRAS to his work.



Linda Bassingthwaite agrees, adding, "I was struck by his strong commitment to preserving the art of Tibetan handcrafting and providing opportunities for the necessary artisan skills to be passed on to the younger generation.

Kesang was deeply concerned about the Tibetan elders who worked for many years weaving carpets and cloth, sewing or doing woodworking. His dream was to have a retirement pension in place for the elders and was trying to create this program.

I am sure he will be greatly missed as the board and staff work hard to carry on its operation."

This month we have received a request for sponsorship for two young children at Dekyiling (see page 6).

TRAS allocated \$73,478.00 to projects for the year ending March 31, 2018.

## Completed Projects

**The Voice of Children Health Project** was a very successful initiative conducted by Vimarsh and Aman (the two Indian NGOs with whom TRAS partners in the Nainital and Almorah regions of northern India). *For a full report, see the Spring 2018 TRAS newsletter.*

**Munsel-ling School Library** in Spiti, northern India, was completed on time and on budget in the summer of 2017. *For a full report, see the Sept 2017 TRAS newsletter on the TRAS website.*

## Ongoing Projects

**CTA Tibetan Nurses Training**, overseen by the Tibetan Department of Education in Dharamsala. TRAS supports eight nursing students each year. The calibre of students is such that at least two or three are able to go on to complete higher degrees in nursing after TRAS has paid for their general nursing degree.

*Photo (right): Tenzin Choedonten (on left in photo) at her graduation – a proud moment!*



**The Voice of Children Education project** continues to impress us with their sensible and careful decision making and with the excellent execution of the various components of this far-reaching project. Local NGOs Vimarsh and Aman work in 12 remote villages to increase the standard of living through good education and health. Hundreds of children benefit, as do their mothers – which means the whole family benefits. The TRAS Board agreed to a three-year extension of this project from November 2017.

**READI Nepal** provides health and education to 30 children from villages in the remote district of Humla. 20 of the children are housed in a hostel in the tiny capital of Simikot and attend the local high school. Ten children were doing well enough that they were able to return to their families and continue their education in local schools. All 30 children are given extra tuition, health care and nutritious local food. Everything READI attempts is geared to improving life for the general population through example. *(see the full report in the Spring 2018 TRAS newsletter)* TRAS is pleased with the continual improvements made by READI, and it is clear that this small local volunteer group is held in high regard. Now that it has become better known and appreciated, TRAS is encouraging it to stand more on its own feet, and READI has agreed to reduce the amount requested from TRAS by 10% in the coming year.



## A New Project

**Munsel-ling School** has asked TRAS for a laundry facility to aid in keeping the children healthy, and TRAS has agreed. We have looked into two other requests, but sadly find that their lack of registration as charities able to receive foreign funds limits our being able to support them, and of course it is no longer possible to support any work in Tibet itself.



# Sponsorship Report

by Joanne MacLeod



TRAS members are currently sponsoring the education of 120 individual children from kindergarten to Grade 12: 74 girls and 46 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 (a little over a dollar a day).

Last year TRAS sent over \$44,000 to sponsor children at the Delyiling Tibetan Settlement, Tibetan Women's Centre in Rajpur, the Tibetan Homes Foundation in Mussoorie, the Tibetan Children's Villages in Dharamsala, Suja and Lower Chauntra and also the Munsel-ling School in Spiti.

For more details about sponsoring children, please visit the TRAS website at [www.tras.ca](http://www.tras.ca) or phone Joanne at the office on 604-224-5133.

**Tsering  
Rema**

*DOB Nov 11, 2007 TCV Lower Chauntra.* Tsering was born in Brokpalangchen, a district Tawang of Arunachal Pradesh state of India. The people are Buddhist but some are unable to speak Tibetan. Tsering belongs to a poor peasant family. Her father is a lama and he goes home to home to do puja and gets very little money. Her mother has a small plot of land which is not sufficient to feed whole family. Her parents have sought help from the Buddhist Himalayan Association and Tsering has received admission in this school and is now in need of sponsorship.

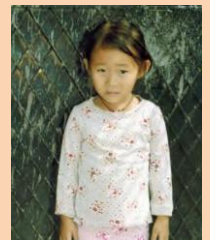


*DOB Dec 02, 2006 TCV Lower Chauntra.* Stanzin Norbu was born at Magto Village which is a remote village situated in Arunachal Pradesh, North East India near the Tibet boarder. The living standard of the local people is very poor and underdeveloped. His parents are farmers and the family income is limited. His parents have sent him to Lower Chauntra to learn Tibetan and he is now able to speak it fluently. Due to the lack of income TCV is seeking sponsorship for Stanzin.

**Stanzin  
Norbu**

**Tenzin  
Choegyn**

*DOB June 6, 2013 at the Delyiling Tibetan Settlement.* Tenzin comes from a home that supports two elderly grandparents and one older brother. Her parents received housing like other Tibetan refugees from Bhutan. Her parents go away in the winter to earn for their family. During the summer they have no work except some work her father gets as manual labour. Tenzin is currently studying in Stage 3.



*DOB July 10, 2012 at the Delyiling Tibetan Settlement.* Ngawang parents and grandparents come from Bhutan as refugees. His parents also leave for winter business as it is the only source of income. His father was in the army but was discharged due to medical reasons. Ngawang is currently reading in Stage 2.

**Ngawang  
Loter**

## Vivian Hunter – another true friend of the Tibetan refugees

Our spunky, indefatigable and good friend Vivian passed away this summer aged 91. Vivian's life was one long adventure – she learned to fly at an early age, she loved to travel and even more she loved helping those in need. The plight of the Tibetans in India in the 70s caught her attention, and in no time at all she had travelled to India and brought back with her wonderful Tibetan carpets and treasures to sell on their behalf. She transformed her garage in Terra Cotta, Ontario, into an upscale art gallery, and made many long buying trips to India, visiting Tibetan settlements and monasteries along the border with Nepal. 100% of the revenue from her sales went back to the Tibetans. Once she learned about TRAS she became a staunch supporter, inspecting projects on her trips, sending in insightful reports and producing the TRAS newsletter for several years. A friend indeed to the Tibetans!



## A Sponsorship Success Story

*Sponsorship has allowed many children to graduate and either to continue in further studies or find employment to enable them to help their family and villages. Here's a wonderful example...*



Tenzin was 4 years old when her mother was hired at the Deyyiling Handicraft Centre. Her mother had taken refuge in India from Central Tibet in 1970. Due to family conditions, the Handicraft Centre hired her and extended help to the family from time to time. The family had 6 children and was struggling as their father was quite old, so appealed for sponsorship of Tenzin.

TRAS members Bill and Heather started their sponsorship in 1999 when Tenzin was 4 years old and in Kindergarten. They provided assistance well past high school. Tenzin was accepted for her B.Ed. but she needed to discontinue her studies as she was struggling with the long period away from her aging mother. She applied and was accepted for a shorter study period as an Air Hostess. Bill and Heather were very happy to continue to support her as he had a family history in air travel. He writes, "What is interesting about Tenzin's current courses and her desire to become an airline stewardess is that my father's career was very much based on aircraft. He joined the Royal Air Force in the early 1920s. When he qualified as a Pilot officer he

was posted to the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm. He ended up with Imperial Airways (now British Airways) where he was a pioneer in airline routes in parts of Africa and Burma, and as a family we were based at one time in India. As a consequence, I would be delighted if Tenzin has a successful airline career."

Tenzin has just sent us an email: "I was just a little girl when Bill and Heather supported me and now I have become a woman pursuing my career. When I look back to all those years, I feel that I wouldn't have become what I am now without their constant support, love and guidance.

They have supported me financially through my journey of getting education and now continue their support for me to realise my dream of becoming cabin crew for which I am always grateful. I will always remember their love and kindness. Thank you Bill and Heather and all the people who have supported children realising their dreams. Always grateful."

Bill and Heather also sponsored another young girl to become a doctor; she is now practising in her local village.



# TRAS

Supporting health and education for children and youth in the Himalayas

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Dorothea Leach

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### Website

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### Social Media

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
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- 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  
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