



Notes from Home and Abroad

Lots to tell you about both here in Canada and in the field in India and Nepal! First we're going to blow our own trumpet for a moment! Here's the volunteer gang which meets three times a year to stuff and mail your newsletters to you! This same group of ladies has been doing the job for more years than they care to remember, and they enjoy getting together. In the next issue, we'll introduce you to the volunteers who look after our modern social media – the website, Facebook and e-blasts. They are the voice of the future - but we still like our paper newsletter as well!



Heather, Joan, Pat, Daphne, Kasandra
Missing: Dorothea and Abby, who took the photo

While we're talking about volunteers, kudos to the Sutherland Student Council once again for hosting 2 wonderful fundraisers for TRAS and the Nepal Library Foundation (NLF). The students of Sutherland Secondary School in North Vancouver put on a magnificent, tasty Nepali dinner in January, and invited North Vancouver adventurer Kevin Vallely to entertain (or horrify) us with a talk and slide show about his incredible, hair raising jaunt – rowing along the northern coast of Canada through the Arctic Ocean with three equally daredevil friends. The evening netted \$3,000 to be shared between TRAS and NLF. Then in February the students put on a Spin-a-thon, riding stationary bicycles for hours, while their friends and families sponsored them. Their hard work culminated in another successful drive for funds. Their 'sister' school, Buddha Academy, will benefit! **Congratulations, Sutherland, and thank you!**



And we welcome volunteer Jennifer Bond to the TRAS Board!

Jennifer says "While visiting in Tibet a few years ago, I was deeply saddened by the children and women who were walking around attempting to sell their wares to tourists for next to nothing. I did not do anything when I returned until one day I found an advert for TRAS looking for an office manager. After a chat with Cheryl it became evident that I was probably more suited to other ways of assisting this society – and this is the result. I have always been of the opinion that supporting mothers and ensuring their health and education would be a good way to move the plight of families from despair to hope; supporting education and health for children could only further that. My years of working in administration are being put to good use."

Do YOU want to join the TRAS Board?

Have you ever wanted to get more involved with TRAS? Now is your chance! We are looking for new TRAS Board Directors and seek candidates with fundraising and/or event coordination experience to share their expertise and time with TRAS.

Board members must have access to the internet, have basic experience with email and Microsoft Office and be able to attend the evening Board meetings on the third Wednesday of the month, where they will be warmly welcomed. To learn more please contact Marina Guy, marina.guy@tras.ca

The Dalai Lama is Coming to Vancouver

No details yet, but we know His Holiness the Dalai Lama will be in Vancouver October 20-23, 2014. A principal reason for his visit is to help with the Tibetan Resettlement Project. There will be at least one public meeting, and some of the funds raised will go towards helping the resettlement project. We will send out more details when they are known.

Sponsorship Report

Thank you to all of our sponsors who have renewed for 2014! We really appreciate your dedication and commitment to supporting the education of children in the Himalayas!

We'd also like to let sponsors of children at Buddha Academy know that the school has recently decided to end sponsorships after Grade 10, rather than Grade 12. The school has classes only up to Grade 10. At the end of Grade 10, each student writes the SLC exam ("School Leaving Certificate"). After that, if they do well on the SLC exam, they may go on to study at a separate two-year college for the equivalent of Grade 11 and 12.

Until now, we would still send payment for the student to Buddha Academy, and they would forward the money to the college. Unfortunately, it was difficult for Buddha Academy to coordinate with the students at the various colleges. After some discussion, they've decided to end each sponsorship after Grade 10, starting with students who finished the SLC exam in 2013.

If you have a sponsored child at Buddha Academy who is affected by this change, we'll contact you individually to let you know.

TRAS was very happy to learn that Tenzin, the son of Tashi Chozom and the late Dorje Namgyal, is following in his parents' footsteps and has been selected as the new Principal of Buddha Academy. You will be pleased to know that the Academy is working as smoothly and efficiently as ever and we look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with Tenzin.

This month we are looking for sponsors for four children at Buddha Academy. If you can help, please contact the TRAS office at info@tras.ca or phone 604-224-5133. Sponsorship costs \$440 a year.

Best regards,
Russil Wvong, Sponsorship Director



(Sponsorship Report continued on Page 3)

The Tibetan Prime Minister Pays a Visit

On a flying visit to Vancouver in February, Sikyong (Prime Minister of the Tibetans in exile) Lobsang Sangay talked with teaching staff and students at UBC. A few lucky TRAS members were able to attend. He acknowledged the enormous support which India has given to the Tibetans, and said he has good relations with the government of India. The Tibetan government in exile receives full support from all Indian political parties. The Sikyong then spoke with the newly arrived Tibetans in Vancouver, who were thrilled to meet with him. He encouraged them to settle in well, and to learn and respect the culture of their new country. It is clear that they are doing so.

Sponsorship Report cont'd

Arjun Tamang

ARJUN TAMANG is 8 years old. His parents live in Dhadhing district. He has an older sister who attends the village school and a younger sister at home. His parents are farmers who grow seasonal vegetables and potatoes on a small plot of land. It is very hard to make ends meet with the little farming that is done. They have a buffalo, a sheep and a goat. Arjun looks very happy now he is in school.

Durga Ragami

DURGA RAGAMI, now 9, has been at Buddha Academy for 2 years. He started in the Nursery class and is now in school. He comes from the distant, remote village of Gulmi, in the mid-western part of Nepal. He has 2 older sisters and 1 younger brother all in the village. The family's source of livelihood is farming and they also keep a few cattle - cows and buffalo. His parents are illiterate and simple folk. With the hope of getting free education, Durga was brought to Buddha Academy and requested help.

Nisha Rokaya

NISHA ROKAYA is a 7 year old girl studying in the Nursery class. Her family comes from the remote region of Charikot, Dolpa district. Her family consists of her parents, a grandfather and 2 younger sisters. Nisha's father does a little farming to sustain his family, growing potatoes, wheat and seasonal vegetables. Her mother takes care of her elderly father-in-law and the 2 infants. The family has 3 horses, 2 cows and 8 goats. They live a simple village life. Nisha feels lucky to attend school.

Pratima Buda

PRATIMA BUDA is 8 years old. Her family comes from the remote Dolpa region of Nepal. Her parents are farmers, who grow potatoes, peas, apples and tomatoes on a small plot of land. She has 1 older sister, 2 older brothers and a younger sister, all in the village. The family has 3 cows and 3 goats. Facilities like basic schooling are a privilege which only a few fortunate families can afford. Pratima feels lucky to be in school and likes to play with her friends.

And now for what's been going on in the field!

TRAS has received some fine reports recently, from India and Nepal. They are all examples of our aim to support education, vocational training and health for children and youth in the Himalayas. **Please will you help us keep the first three projects going? They are amongst those for which we are fundraising, and your donations will be most welcome!**

READI Nepal has sent the Year 4 report and budget for Year 5. It makes good reading and it is so encouraging to see the initial plans starting to have an impact. We are delighted with the children's continued success at school, and with the fact that the parents are happy and fully involved. It's great to see caste barriers broken down and the hostel being well run. It is even more satisfying to read of the preventative health care given to the children, the income generating schemes starting up, the library being restocked and READI itself reaching out to local sources for donations.

Raj Hamal, the chairman of READI Nepal, writes: "Again A+ results! All children have passed their final exams with very excellent marks. They have developed English and Nepali language skills. All the children are happy with the facilities provided by the READI home. They have developed the feeling of equality though they are from different castes. Guardians (*usually parents or older siblings*) are happy about their children's performance and they are very positive. Some are contributing to READI Home through supplying of firewood/minimum quantities of cereals etc., to show that they are also investing in their children. This has proved to be creating a sense of ownership and sustainability of what we are doing.



In coordination with the District Agriculture Development Office, READI has distributed 10 apple saplings for each of the guardians. They were also oriented on their care. This will be a basis for earning their livelihoods. Two parents are doing apple processing and two are running a small tea shop which also caters to few tourists along Simikot-Hilsa trail.

We have been caring for our children with regular vaccination and curative activities. Guardians are oriented on building toilets and hand washing techniques.

Good news! Room to Room approved finally two sets of reference books for our library. All children use the library properly and children from the local community also visit the library."

Funds needed for 2014/15 \$25,688. TRAS has agreed to increase its support by \$4,950 to \$23,486.

The annual report from Buddha Academy has just been received. It covers Year 2 of the current 3-year vocational training project. It is great to see that some of the tailoring graduates are finding well-paid jobs. No doubt the others soon will too. As for the younger students who are taking these courses as part of their regular school curriculum, they will be able to utilise these skills in everyday life once they leave school, and in many cases the skills will help them find work in small businesses. **TRAS has just allocated the \$14,877 needed for 2014/15.**

Buddha Academy Second Interim Report of the Three Year Vocational Training

The tailoring training: we have had six girls complete the tailoring training this year. Four out of the six have found jobs with very good salaries. Currently there are five new girls enrolled for this training. We provide them with tea, lunch, pocket money as well as the training. We also have 17 girls from Class IX and 18 girls from Class X taking this course as part of their curriculum. They help stitch the school uniforms, bedding and pillow covers.

Carpentry, electrician and industrial course: We teach the trainees basic hand tools, their use and polishing. We have a total of 37 students from Classes IX and X in this course. The 24 Class IX boys learn woodwork and technical drawing. They learn how to draw oblique, isometric and multi view drawings. The 13 boys in Class X study 'Industrial Education'. They learn metal work and electrical installation. This course teaches the students basic electrical theories and use of the different types of equipment, instruments and tools needed. They also get practice making different types of circuits using different appliances under the guidance of the experienced instructor.

These courses will be very useful to the children in the future. The above mentioned courses are recognised by the Education Ministry for their School Leaving Certificate."

The school lunch program in Phadamchen, Sikkim, is having good results. The school lunch program was set up for village children who walk to school daily, sometimes a long distance, and who miss too much school if they go home for lunch – IF there is any food at home for them. Valerie Hellermann, projects director of the Tibetan Children's Education Foundation (TCEF, a US charity), visited the school last fall and writes:

"The TRAS lunch project is now feeding almost 90 kids, dal, rice, veggies and tea.

(continued on Page 5)

I spoke to Lama Paljor at length about support from the parents; even a small amount. Many parents just have no money, there are only road worker jobs that rotate and people generally do not work more than 4-5 days per month. He said the parents would just not send the children to school if they had to pay, even small amounts. I really hope TRAS can continue the lunch program. It looks to me like this is a MAIN meal for many of the kids. They seem really hungry and devour the food quickly. The hostel is full now as Lama Paljor just collects poor, needy children, amazing person that he is!!!!

TRAS members may remember that we collaborated with the TCEF to build a third storey on the hostel, to house even more children from the villages too far away for kids to walk to school. The hostel is thriving. TRAS also built a retaining wall, which keeps the children safe and creates a large area for events, dance demonstrations and ceremonies.



The school lunch program for 2014/15 costs \$4,433 for 90 children (that's less than .20c a day per child).

This past year, TRAS agreed to support the Kailash Bodhi School in the Kullu Valley. This school was set up at the request of the Dalai Lama for the children of the various Himalayan peoples, speaking a variety of languages, who live in this hilly region. The lama who had run the school left for Nepal, and the parents were struggling to keep the school afloat. TRAS agreed to help for one year. There are 73 students in the school, from pre-kindergarten to Class 5. It is interesting to note that the 4 teachers of languages and humanities are men, while the maths and science teachers are both women. TRAS wishes them well in their efforts to continue running the school for their children, so that their own language, as well as Hindi and English, may be taught, along with their culture. They are either too far from other Tibetan schools or cannot afford them. Here is their report:

"The school's new academic session starts on 1st March every year. The school is busy giving new admission for the new comers during March. Last year the school provided 21 new admissions to students belongs to Himalayan regions. There are 6 teachers and 3 non-teaching staff during the last session. The students are divided in 2 houses Sakgyamuni and Melarapa house and these two houses compete with each other in the school annual co-curricular activities. As well as studying a regular curriculum, there are many stimulating competitions.



- In May there was 3 languages handwriting competition and drawing competition.
- School has 3 terminal exams, first term in June, second term in September and third term or final exam in December. The school achieved 100 % result last year.
- In August there were 4 languages reading competition.
- In October there was annual games and sports Day, and there was also poetry recitation competition for class I to V students.
- In November there was quiz contest for the class IV and V students only.
- Students performed cultural dance and songs on auspicious day like "Lord Buddha's birth day (Bodh poornima), H.H. The Dalai Lama's birth day and Independence Day of India (15th August) etc. School was closed for winter holidays from 21st December to 28th February."

Leaving a legacy is a fantastic way to extend a lifetime of support. As you plan your family's future, would you like to pass on a message of humanitarianism, a message about the cause you cherish? Including TRAS as a beneficiary in your will, life insurance policy or by donating mutual funds will provide future generations with the means to build a brighter life. You can learn more on the TRAS website at www.tras.ca, or phone the TRAS office for more information: 604-224-5133. Here are some ideas used by many to ensure their gift will be of most benefit:

1. Prepare a will.
2. Leave a gift in your will for the cause that makes a difference in your life.
3. Leave a specific dollar amount or a percentage of your assets.
4. Consider using assets for your legacy gift.
5. Name TRAS as a beneficiary on your RRSP, RRIF or pension plan.
6. Name TRAS as a beneficiary on an existing life insurance policy.
7. Purchase a new life insurance policy naming TRAS as the beneficiary.
8. Remember loved ones with memorial gifts through TRAS.
9. Encourage family and friends to leave gifts to TRAS in their wills.
10. Ask your financial advisor or estate planner to include charitable giving as part of your financial plan.

And looking forward to possible new projects!

In Sikkim, Lama Paljor is keen to build a large greenhouse or several small ones to supply the school with constant fresh vegetables, for the health of the children. He is looking into designs that will work in the damp, cool climate of Sikkim, and TRAS and TCEF will share the cost. Lama Paljor has already found an experienced woman to run the greenhouse, though one of his recent emails stressed that if a greenhouse is too expensive, he will employ the woman to grow vegetables for a few months of the year on the land next to the hostel, which he has already been given. Green leafy vegetables are so important for the children's health. Are there any farmers amongst our members who would like to sponsor a veggie patch or a greenhouse??



Greenhouses are also a top priority for Munsel-Ling School in Spiti. The greenhouses already in operation are producing masses of spinach, and there is a noticeable reduction in the rates of anaemia amongst the children. Now they want to increase production with 3 more greenhouses. They have a unique problem – with no outer wall to the property, the local cattle and dogs forage through the plants and the schoolchildren are wrecking the polythene sheeting by using it as a giant slide! Some barrier is obviously needed! Children happily sliding down the sheeting must be a delightful sight, but not so good for the greenhouses! *(Maybe slides are needed! Perhaps we should add playground equipment to the budget for these children who probably have never seen any!)*

The school wants to plant trees to improve the environment and prevent soil erosion, a worthy idea in this barren, arid landscape, which will need careful management to ensure survival. The third request is for furniture for a new classroom. At present many of the children sit on the floor, so this request is well designed for their needs. TRAS will be considering these requests and a continuation of the READI Nepal project over the next few months.

Update on the Tibet Resettlement Project

180 and counting! That is how many Tibetans have been welcomed to Canada from Arunachal Pradesh in north India since November. There have been new arrivals every month, in Toronto, Ottawa, Calgary, Vancouver, the Sunshine Coast and Victoria. Tired and disoriented when they finally arrive after days of travel, they have been overwhelmed and grateful for the warm welcome from their sponsors. They are settling in very well. The children are all in school, the adults are busy improving their English at ESL classes, and they are being pro-active about taking workshops in resume writing and interview skills. They are learning bus routes, to look the other way when crossing the road (India copies England in driving on the left!), to shop, to find bargains, to get used to different foods. Many have found work already, and in Vancouver the four young people are elated to be working and to feel self-sufficient. Some on the Sunshine Coast are entrepreneurs, selling momos at the farmers' market and making and selling stained glass. One is working in a restaurant; another is house cleaning. One of the young women told TRAS that, grateful as she is for the support she's received, she is so happy to be on the road to independence.

All the sponsors have enjoyed the experience of meeting these fine people, and there have been lots of fun times. The local Tibetan communities have put on parties and events, and the sponsors have taken some of them skiing and skating. One sponsor took two young people to an English panto – they were a bit bemused to be told that the principal boy is played by a girl and the funny old lady is played by a man!!

The next rounds of arrivals will come to Canada this summer and fall. In Ontario and Calgary Tibetan societies and faith groups have welcomed the Tibetans so far, and BC plans to do the same this year, rather than finding 5 individual sponsors for each Tibetan. They will be sponsored by the Tibet Cultural Society of BC and by various faith organizations. However, extra mentorships are always needed and appreciated. If any TRAS member is interested in helping in any way, please contact Tenzin Gyurme, the BC Tibetan Cultural Society President. tcsbcpresident@gmail.com.

They will also need jobs – by late fall they will be searching for work. If anyone knows of job opportunities in the Lower Mainland or Victoria, do please get in touch with Ray Yee at rayyeester@gmail.com or pts@tibet.ca. The Tibetans are so keen to work! Thank you!



11 Tibetans arrived at Vancouver airport late at night – another group arrived later at 1am, and found local Tibetans and their sponsors still waiting to welcome them

TRAS 2014 : Coming Events

Thursday, May 8
7pm-9.30pm

"Kick Off to Summer Social"

Catch up with TRAS members, get an update on TRAS projects and enjoy delicious Indian food at the **New India Buffet and Restaurant** conveniently located at 805 West Broadway in Vancouver. Please purchase your tickets in advance by credit card online at Picatic (www.picatic.com/tras) or by phoning Robin Goulding, TRAS Office Manager at 604-224-5133. Come and celebrate the coming summer with us. The food is really delicious! The restaurant is on the north side of West Broadway, on the ground floor, and there is ample parking (use the parkade entered from Willow St., free after 6pm, or park in the street). It is 3 blocks from City Hall Canada Line Station. We are delighted some of the recently arrived Tibetans will be our guests. We will be thinking also of the Tibetans in India and will be accepting donations for our TRAS project in support of young Tibetan women in India studying to be nurses.

Wed, Sept 17
7pm

The 52nd Annual General Meeting of TRAS

You are cordially invited to join TRAS for a short business meeting, followed by President Cheryl Sullivan's slide presentation of her recent trip to Nepal.

Location to be announced.

Handicrafts ----- refreshments ----- mingle with TRAS directors and members.

November 3-17

Experience the Exotic Splendour of Nepal!

Chhiring Sherpa of Sherpa World Adventure and Jody Corothers, Adventure Center's Travel Specialist, present the **'Best of Nepal Tour'**. Chhiring and Jody are friends of TRAS, so we are delighted that their 15 day cultural tour includes a visit to TRAS partner, Buddha Academy Boarding School and the Tibetan Refugee Camp and Handicraft Centre in Kathmandu Valley.

Nepal is one of the most fascinating countries in the world with its diverse culture, unique nature and ethnic diversity. This tour covers much of what makes Nepal so beloved by travellers. Whether you're exploring the exotic capital of Nepal, Kathmandu - one of the world's oldest cities with many world heritage sites; wandering around the ancient Newari capital Bhaktapur which is a museum of medieval art and architecture with many fine examples of sculpture, woodcarving and colossal pagoda temples consecrated to different gods and goddesses; discovering Pokhara, beneath awe-inspiring snow-capped peaks; or riding elephants through Chitwan National Park in search of wildlife including Bengal tiger, you will find that Nepal is truly incredible. After this tour you'll be left with no doubt why so many return to the country time and time again.



Included in the tour is a homestay in one of Nepal's most attractive villages, Sirubari, where you will receive a warm welcome - and discover why there is so much more to Nepal than climbing mountains!

For more information, visit the TRAS website at www.tras.ca or phone Jody at 604.734.1066 ext 122.

Land only price is US\$2,875 based on double occupancy.

TRAS

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

#720-999
West Broadway
Vancouver BC
V5Z 1K5

Tel: 604 224 5133
Fax: 604 738 4080
E: info@tras.ca
W: www.tras.ca

Patrons

John Conway
Joan Ford
Dorothea Leach

Board of Directors

President – Cheryl Sullivan
Treasurer - Kevin Yuen
Sponsorship Director –
Russil Wvong
Projects Director & Newsletter Editor –
Daphne Hales

Directors

Frank Beck, Lynn Beck, Jennifer Bond,
Balraj Dhillon, Marina Guy, Jennifer Hales,
Videsh Kapoor, Maureen Minden,
Megha Shakya

Newsletter Design

Beck Lamb

Keep in touch!

Want to keep in touch with
TRAS and all our latest news
and events?

If we don't already
have your email address,
send it to us at info@tras.ca
and we'll add you to our list!

👍 our Facebook page
www.facebook.com/trascanada
or visit our website www.tras.ca

In Memoriam

TRAS was sad to learn of the deaths of two men of vision with whom we worked for many years.

Kanai Lall, the founder and for many years the indefatigable Chairman of CHIRAG in north India, died last year in his late 80s. Kanai was one of a handful of Indians with whom TRAS worked for many years, who have a vision and follow it through. He and his wife Lakshmi retired to Sitla, a tiny village perched on a ridge between Nainital and Almora and dedicated their retirement years to helping improve life in about 50 hill villages through CHIRAG, the NGO they created. TRAS supported large reforestation projects, mother and child care, school enhancement, and simple technologies (smokeless chulas, rainwater collection barrels, biogas plants), to name a few. CHIRAG continues Kanai's vision to help the villages in many ways. (pictured : Kanai and Lakshmi Lall in 1992)



Doug Soo, the Head of Continuing Studies at Langara College, died recently on one of his regular Grouse Mountain hikes. Past President of TRAS, Jennifer Hales, writes "He was the first person I spoke to at Langara about using their theatres for the Nepali film festivals. That was in 2005. He was instrumental in making the film festivals happen there - at no cost to TRAS. He became an incredible partner and support for TRAS. And of course, that led to all the other events we have held at Langara. He was such a community-oriented and caring man. Through Doug, we did a great deal of fundraising at Langara. So he indirectly has supported many children and youth in the Himalayas." TRAS has truly valued its connection with Langara, where Doug could see the benefit of exposing his students to our work while at the same time supporting TRAS so wholeheartedly.