



The 59th Annual General Meeting

Let's start with the 59th Annual General Meeting of TRAS which was held (via Zoom, of course) on September 8, and then we'll move on to current news.

Last year was extraordinarily difficult for everyone worldwide. Our TRAS year started on April 1, 2020, just as the world was coming to grips with Covid-19 and its horrendous effects. Over the year, the mass movements of migrant workers in India and on into Nepal, inadvertently carrying the virus with them, caused such tragedies that we felt hopeless in the face of such overwhelming problems.



Tashi Tsomo teaching at her village of Rangrik

But little by little, our partners in India and Nepal kept going and we learned of small successes and amazing resilience. The community leaders in the Spiti Valley closed the valley to all travellers, only allowing in truck drivers bringing essential supplies, and isolating them until they left again. The result was practically zero cases of the virus and lessons as usual at **Munsel-ling School** whenever the government permitted.

With all educational programs and travel at a halt in hard-hit Himachal Pradesh, the small **Voice of Children** team reinvented itself as deliverers of emergency rations first to villagers at risk of starvation and

then to the emergency shelters where the migrant workers were quarantined. In Humla, **READI Nepal** sent the children home but followed up with food rations and health advice, and they all stayed healthy. Our **Scholarship students, Tibetan nursing trainees and Nepali midwife trainees** all went home and continued their studies as best they could via the internet.



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The 59th Annual General Meeting (cont'd)

And as our AGM reports show, you, our donors, rallied round magnificently. You sent nearly \$20,000 for emergency rations to the **Voice of Children** area. You purchased Internet connections and computers for the **midwifery students in Nepal**. The Tibetan Department of Health pleaded for funding for PPE and medical equipment for the **Tibetan settlements in Nepal** – they asked for \$14,000 and you responded with \$16,000! All this on top of donations for the ongoing projects, sponsorships and scholarships!

At the very end of the past fiscal year an urgent request was received from the Tibetan Department of Health for help with the deteriorating situation in some of the Tibetan settlements in India. And we learned with great sadness of the passing of Ray Yee of Vancouver, who had done so much for the Tibetan Resettlement program. A fund in his memory was started, to be administered by TRAS.

The full reports by Russil Wvong, President, Daphne Hales, Projects Director and Lynn Beck, Scholarship Fund Director, are posted on the TRAS website at www.tras.ca. The audited financial statements for the year, prepared by Kevin Yuen, Treasurer, are also posted on the website.

TRAS is grateful to have the support of Dorothea Leach and Tony Phillips as our Patrons. The Board of Directors remains the same as last year (see list on back page). Russil paid tribute to you, our faithful donors, without whom the Society would not exist.



The TRAS Scholarship Fund Update

by Lynn Beck

Munsel-ling School and the Voice of Children team had already been able to select new students for the current university year (see the TRAS Spring newsletter, www.tras.ca). **Dekyiling Tibetan Settlement** was suffering badly from the Covid-19 virus and we were not sure if they would be able to select students for this year. (The settlement had decided not to select two students last year because of the difficulty of online studying). Luckily word came last month that they have indeed been able to select two students. Both have chosen a career in nursing and both have been admitted to good teaching hospitals. What an inspiring choice at this time! The three current Dekyiling students passed their exams and are now entering their third and final year of study. Two of them are studying hotel management – it seemed like such a good choice in 2019. Hopefully travel and tourism will start up again one day soon. The third student is taking Higher Tibetan Studies.



The Sponsorship Report

by Joanne MacLeod

TRAS members currently sponsor 134 children, 82 girls and 52 boys. Nine graduated from Grade 12 in June. We have been in contact with the schools and settlements – all the children are doing well and were studying online at home when we last heard. If you are interested in helping a child, please continue to check our website (www.tras.ca) under **Facts about Sponsorship**, as updates and new case histories are posted as we receive them.

Thank you to all our sponsors!

On to current projects...

The Munsel-ling School flush toilets are finished!

This project had to be put on hold because of the lack of labourers allowed into the Spiti Valley last year, but this summer the building was completed and the children are happily using this facility instead of the local hillside. We had previously supplied the school with pit toilets, but the little kids found them frightening and wouldn't use them. Also the hand washing pipe was a long way away – so not much hand washing got done. Look at the smart new basins and generally more comfortable and sanitary design of the new toilets! A big improvement for the health of the children.



Current Projects – Munsel-ling School (cont'd)



The Snow Lion Foundation PPE project, providing PPE and sanitizing supplies to the Tibetan clinics and health posts in Nepal, was able to get supplies at a better price than expected, so they asked permission to supply their schools and old people's home with sanitizing supplies as well. In their latest report, they tell us that they have been able also to look after all the Covid-19 patients who are in isolation or who live alone, bringing much needed medical treatment, supplies and meals to them. Now they are receiving vaccinations, thanks to the governments of Nepal and the USA.



In India, **the Tibetan Department of Health** (DoH) published a report at the end of August, showing there had been 6,091 Covid-19 cases in the Tibetan communities in India and Nepal. 5,646 had recovered, with 301 active cases and sadly 144 deaths. The DoH was supported by well wishers world wide. We received a lovely certificate of thanks for the TRAS contributions and recently a full report of how our \$10,000 donation was spent in India. An oxygen concentrator and several oxygen tanks were purchased for the Norgyeling Tibetan Settlement in Maharashtra State, which was particularly hard hit by the pandemic. A major challenge was limited access to oxygen supplies.

Norgyeling Settlement was created in 1972 to house Tibetan road workers labouring on the rocky Himalayan roads. It is an agricultural settlement with a population of 1412. These oxygen concentrators are true lifesavers – our directors Lynn and Frank Beck, both doctors, had seen one in use in Nepal literally saving a woman's life, and as they convert regular air to a more concentrated supply of oxygen, they can be used for many years, and for many different medical emergencies.

The report states that the clinic in the Norgyeling Settlement also serves the local Indian population, so this equipment will continue to be well used. The majority of the TRAS funds were used to pay for urgent treatment for very sick Tibetans who were hospitalised in Dekyiling and Mundgod.

Current Projects – Tibetan Department of Health (cont'd)



143 patients were cared for – 83 males and 60 females. There were three children in this number – two as young as six years old, and several teenagers. One third of the total number of patients were in their 20s and 30s, while the oldest was 91. Without the TRAS funds (ie. YOUR donations) these people would not have had treatment, with local hospitals overwhelmed and private hospitals out of reach financially, so for roughly \$60 per patient 143 lives were saved.

The **Ray Yee Memorial Fund** was created last April to honour Ray and his tireless work for the Tibetan cause. TRAS was honoured to be asked by Ray's family to oversee this fund. It was decided that the funds should be used to improve life for the Tibetan school children in Arunachal Pradesh (AP) who did not have the chance to come to Canada through the Tibetan Resettlement program in 2012-2016. AP lies close to the borders of Myanmar and China, nearly cut off from the rest of India, and access to visitors is restricted. This means that the Tibetan settlements there do not receive the attention and financial help which the more regularly visited settlements get.

Current Projects – The Ray Yee Memorial Fund (cont'd)



There are two elementary schools in AP – one in Tezu and one in Miao. Once the children reach secondary school age, they are sent away to Tibetan high schools in the rest of India, some thousands of kilometres away. Often these children are unable to travel home more than once every couple of years because of the difficulty and cost of travel. All of these schools are administered by the Sambhota Tibetan Schools Society, under the auspices of the Tibetan Department of Education (DoE), so TRAS turned to our friends in the DoE to see what might benefit the children. The answers came back quickly. For the Tezu school, repairs to the poorly constructed and now

dilapidated block of senior classrooms, furniture for the water-damaged staff room with broken down chairs, and – at the urgent request of the children – Tibetan musical instruments. For the Miao School, furniture suitable for young children for their library and science room. Ray's family agreed to these requests, and all would have been completed by now except for Covid-19 holding up the supplies of musical instruments and children's furniture, and also labourers to renovate the building. But all will be done in time, and the schools are very grateful. Photos have just arrived of the staff room at Tezu with a new table and chairs (clearly marked TRAS Canada!).



Then we asked what could be done for the older children living so far from home in the various high schools down south. We wondered perhaps about some sports equipment, given that Ray was an ardent soccer player and coach. Well – did that ever produce an immediate, heartfelt plea. The schools put great emphasis on sports, for the health of the children, for learning teamwork and fair play and for sheer enjoyment. At each of these schools the original equipment was long since worn out or broken, so long lists arrived hoping for funds to purchase nets, goal posts, balls, ping pong tables, carom games and team uniforms and shoes. Then the photos arrived – masses of them – with the students showing off their new gear! What a boost to the students' morale, especially during the time of Covid.

TRAS is so honoured to have been able to administer this fund for Ray's family. The family has let us know they are pleased with the schools' requests and with the fact that the fund has brought joy to hundreds of children. You can find more of the photos on the TRAS website www.tras.ca under latest updates.

Current Projects – Ray Yee Memorial Fund (cont'd)



Schools (clockwise from above): Mundgod (Sr.), Kollegal, CVP Bylakuppe, STS Paonta Sahib. These are just four of the 12 schools which will receive sports gear.

The Voice of Children Education project is back on track as much as possible and is providing valuable learning opportunities even when the regular schools are closed.



Stringent health protocols are in place, with masks, distancing and frequent hand washing, allowing the tuition classes, education centres and computer classes to continue. These were vital for the older students who were about to be taking exams and they are also important for the younger students so that they don't drift away from the concept of going to school on a regular basis. The meetings for teenaged girls and women's groups continue as much as possible, with the Voice of Children staff finding every opportunity to remind women of their rights and opportunities. The additional programs which should have been added this year (driving lessons for girls and the making of sanitary pads) have been delayed, as have many of the larger gatherings to celebrate national days, children's festivals, and educational trips outside their villages.

TRAS

Supporting health and education for
children and youth in the Himalayas



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Thank you for your generous support to TRAS!

