
RTANL Executive Report to BGM 2022

by Sharon Penney, President

Our last BGM, by necessity, was a virtual one. It is great to be able to have this one as a face-to-face event. The BGM is the venue whereby the work of our organization is completed. Our Reunion Committee has planned a wonderful series of activities to help us celebrate our 50th Anniversary.

When the world shifted to virtual meetings, I erroneously assumed that this would mean a big decrease in the number of meetings I would have to attend. I thought that maybe it was fortuitous that I was assuming the role of President at this particular time. Boy was I wrong! I quickly came to realize that Zoom and WebEx made it possible to have even more meetings, because now nobody had to set aside long periods of time for travel and meetings. As a result, meetings were often arranged to deal with one particular issue or with limited agendas. Since I became President in March 2020, I have taken part in 44 meetings. They were equally divided – 22 by virtual means and 22 as traditional meetings. While both have their merits, I feel that a face-to-face meeting is more effective since it gives opportunities for other incidental topics to be covered and permits networking.

In this new digital environment even the correspondence of our organization has changed. By far the majority of our communication has been by email. In fact, I used Canada Post for only five pieces of mail during the last year, all of which were in connection with this BGM. Traditional telephone calls were limited as well. We did use email over 600 times during that same period. In addition, email is the main mode of communication between our Divisions and members. It is vitally important that the RTANL be made aware of changes to your email address to ensure you are kept in the loop of all our events.

Since our last BGM, the Executive has met at various locations in the province. We had intended to hold each of our executive meetings in one of our Divisions. This was not possible, but we did meet in Clarendville and Marystown. During these two meetings we had the opportunity to have lunch with the retired teachers in the area. These interactions were wonderful opportunities for us to share information and gain insights into what our members view as areas of concern. It is from these meetings that we plan our priorities. Having a firsthand knowledge of members' concerns is a great place from which to plan.

A vital part of our organization is the Retired Teachers' Foundation (RTF) for Children's Charities. As we departed our last BGM we did not have a solid plan for

our Foundation as no Division had come forward offering to oversee the work of the Foundation for 2020-22. After the meeting, a group of retirees from the Con-Tri Division offered to act as the Foundation Board of Directors. A delegation of the new Board of Directors travelled to Corner Brook to meet with the outgoing Board. After some growing pains, the Con-Tri group are up and running. The work of the Foundation has continued uninterrupted, and we continue to donate to our worthy charities.

This year saw Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador celebrate the 100th Anniversary of the Faculty of Education. They invited the RTANL to be part of the event. We took part in two seminars at The Rooms in May. The first, on the evening of May 4, was a presentation by Dr. Gerald Galway on *The History of Teacher Education in NL*. The second session, on May 5, was a panel discussion on *Teaching in Pandemic Times*. In addition, I represented our organization at a panel discussion during the Symposium that was held in September. Throughout the year our members have been involved in the Facebook online series *Teacher Tales*, hosted by Dr. Jan Bulle. Our members regaled the Facebook audiences with their remembrances of years of teaching and the myriad of situations they encountered. Some stories were downright hilarious while others were almost heartbreaking.

In keeping with the theme of celebrating the Faculty of Education, the RTANL commissioned a triptych piece of artwork by Donald Short and presented it to Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador during the 100th anniversary celebration symposium on September 16. This piece of artwork will hang permanently in the lobby of the G.A. Hickman Building. The triptych pays homage to our journey as teachers in this province and the role of the Faculty of Education in shaping the education of students in this province.

This year, the RTANL was invited to the Memorial University/NLTA Ceremony of Induction into the Teaching Profession, which was held on June 2, 2022 at Glendenning Golf in St. John's. RTANL Secretary Don White represented us. Our presence at the event was noted by a welcome from the podium by Stefanie Tuff, NLTA Executive Director. It is nice to have our role in the lives of teachers acknowledged right from the start of their careers. After all, they are not only the future of education in this province, they are the future of our organization as well.

As president of the RTANL, I attended both ACER-CART AGMs. Last year's AGM was held as a virtual event in

keeping with health protocols. I represent the RTANL as a Director, while our Vice President, Joe Lafitte, represented us as an observer. This year both Joe and I, in our respective roles, met with our counterparts in Ottawa during the first week of June. This meeting saw representatives of all the retired teachers' associations across Canada meet to discuss areas of mutual concern. Our collective concerns as retired teachers center around pension reform, universal Pharmacare, and long-term care standards. The Canadian Association of Retired Teachers actively engages with our counterparts across the country and with our elected representatives in Ottawa to further actions which ensure a more secure future for our retirees. Albert Legge, our past president, sits on the Health Committee with ACER-CART.

The East Coast Retired Teachers' Organization (ECRTO) meets every second year. This year I, and a yet to be confirmed executive member, will meet with our fellow retirees in Montreal in late October. ECRTO engages in many of the same political objectives as we do, such as physician availability, vaccination availability and cost of living indicators. The issues experienced by Atlantic Canadian retirees are indeed different than those in other parts of the country.

The Coalition of Seniors, Retirees and Pensioners (Coalition) is our closest ally. We have two members of the executive who sit on the Coalition and between them ensure we have an attendee at all meetings. The Coalition makes active representation to the various governmental agencies at both the Federal and Provincial level on any and all issues that are of importance to seniors. The Newfoundland and Labrador Public Sector Pensioners Association, of which the Coalition is a component, has expanded and hired an executive assistant, Sharron Callahan. We are bound to benefit from our association with this growing and dynamic organization.

The RTANL needs the support and active participation of all our members if we are to continue to thrive. I am certain that if the registration for this BGM is an indication of our future, we are in good hands going forward.

Addendum

No matter how much you write or how much you edit, as soon as you hit "send" you automatically remember something you should have added. This is exactly what happened to me right after I submitted my President's Report for the BGM package.

Even before I heard the familiar swoosh sound, I remembered about the Pre-Kindergarten program and how we were invited to be part of the process. I was contacted by Scott Linehan, Assistant Deputy Minister of Education,

very early in the process and invited to give some input on behalf of the Retired Teachers' Association. We were also approached from the start as potential teachers in the program. We were finally being recognized for our experience and expertise in the area of education, and especially early education. There have been many times over the last year and half that I have been proud to say I am President of the RTANL. The role has kept me quite busy.

The position of President has brought with it the opportunity to sit on incidental committees, and to be part of some unplanned meetings. Over the past term of office I have met the Federal Minister of Seniors, Filomena Tassi, all our provincial MPs, both our ministers of Education and Health, and both Seniors Advocates. I even had the chance to attend the Manitoba Retired Teachers' Association Group Insurance Meeting by Zoom in September. There were numerous online surveys that were submitted ranging from equity and diversity surveys to income and seniors' issues.

I have been invited to be a member of the Faculty of Education Selection Committee for the Legacy of Leadership Awards. As a representative of the Retired Teachers' Association, I am a member of the Arts Subcommittee for the 100th Anniversary of the Faculty of Education Celebration.

The Executive has worked hard on the development of the motions for this BGM. We had to come to terms with what would need to happen if we ever ceased to exist. It was difficult for us to get our minds around this concept. We felt it was better to have a plan in place rather than write a plan as we were in the process of shutting down.

As I reflect on my printed message, I realized that I had forgotten to thank the Executive, a knowledgeable and professional group of people who have shared the load of this office. They have gone out of their way to help in any way they could. I could not have a better support team and I appreciate everything you have done; it has not gone unnoticed.

As I embark upon another term, I am confident that I will have the continued support of the Executive. I look forward to the next two years with excitement and enthusiasm.
