



# BEYOND the BELL

Retired Teachers of Ontario NEWSLETTER

Spring 2021

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

### Resetting our lives to be kinder

Hi Everyone,

As I write this it is one year ago this week that I flew home from Las Vegas for my scheduled return from our winter trip. I had been following the news during our time away and it was only in the last few days before my flight that there was serious talk of the problems created by COVID-19. I wondered if there would be any health screening before I could board my flight but the only thing that was different was the lack of people at the airport and on the airplane. When I came through customs in Toronto there was no mention of quarantine or problems with my return. I had arranged for a family member to meet me at the airport and bring me up to Muskoka and it was my most uneventful trip home in the last 20 years.

Things seemed to change overnight. I went shopping the next day and I was chastised for leaving my house since I had been out of the country. I was told by other shoppers that I should quarantine. I made the assumption, that if that were the case there would have been information given to returning travellers at the airport. It was the beginning of a year of confused messaging and with every new development in the pandemic the communication lagged far behind the events. It wasn't always the fault of those in charge. Events moved quickly and early evidence sometimes led to decisions that had to be revised.

As the story unfolded, I think we all became aware of how lucky we are. As retirees, most of us are



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financially secure and not dependent on jobs that have disappeared or changed beyond recognition. We live in one of the loveliest areas of the province and even at the height of the summer we can find a lovely quiet place to enjoy the outdoors and get some exercise. The technology that has developed in our lifetime allows us to keep in close touch with friends and family, and we have the time and the means to enjoy entertainment from television and streaming services. We can read and enjoy our hobbies or develop new ones. For me, it has almost been a new and fresh retirement. My daily life has changed, and in a lot of ways it has changed for the better.

The view inside my bubble is pretty sweet. But when I look outside, I see so many people who are suffering – from the tragedies in the long term care homes; to the small businesses that are floundering; to the increased need for low cost housing and a secure food supply; and to the loss of life that touches our whole community. As the vaccines roll out, and we have a chance to resume family and social connections, let's work toward smoothing the lives that have really been diminished by the pandemic. And as we reset our lives, let's remember how we managed with less, and come back with a kinder attitude to our climate.

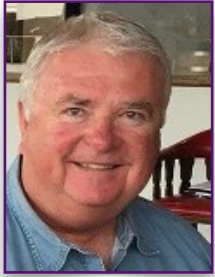


Joanne Garvey,  
President, District 46 Muskoka

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## URGENT - A POST PANDEMIC RECKONING Climate change has not gone away



*H*ello. Welcome to the continuation of a pandemic that after a full year has tested our resolve. Despite challenging interaction norms such as social distance and masks, we have been presented with opportunities to redefine our activities and expectations.

The pandemic is poised to change our routines as yet another international villain continues to require our urgent attention with the need to alter our behaviours that foster climate change.

Under its focus on Environmental Stewardship, Retired Teachers of Ontario leads our consciousness of responsible reactions to climate change impact on our future wellness.

A year ago in the Spring 2020 edition of *Renaissance*, our RTO magazine presented an article on what we now have absorbed into our conscious thought. Should you not have a hard copy at hand you can find it at [https://rtoero.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Spring\\_2020\\_ENG\\_final-min.pdf](https://rtoero.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Spring_2020_ENG_final-min.pdf). On page 44, an article by Ylva Van Buuren, *Shrink Your Carbon Footprint*, caught my interest in most part because it cites 10 practical ways you can make a difference in reducing greenhouse gases “that are generated by our lifestyle choices and actions,” according to District 39 member Sandra Rumfeldt.

Meanwhile, more and more information rooted in science and obvious events is causing our awareness of the urgent need to change social habits that contribute to the climate-induced phenomena that will shape our lives after our emergence from the pandemic.

Look at industry where unexpected decisions will soon alter our routines and change our economy. Ten years ago, would we have thought that transportation advances would suddenly be in the forefront of how we move about? We may not have thought then that electric vehicles would be the focus of the automotive powers so soon, and that an Ontario city may find new economic opportunity with e-trucks!

In December Muskoka District Council approved the document entitled *A New Leaf: Muskoka’s Climate Strategy*, created by the work of District staff. This document includes a climate change action plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lessen the effects of climate change in Muskoka. *A New Leaf* is a thoughtful plan directed at everyone’s best interests and should foster changes by every person. A single individual change may be small, but a thousand begin to make a difference.

**“We are all stakeholders.”**  
Presentation notes,  
District Council,  
December 2020

### Individual Ideas to Reduce our Carbon Footprints

A challenge: Please use the examples provided in the article contained in the Spring 2020 edition of *Renaissance* to guide your ideas on how members of District 46 Muskoka can make individual changes. If we were to collect these, we might have the beginning of a blueprint for change – a change in activities, behaviours, expectations and perhaps lifestyle.

So, seeking your indulgence and a few minutes of your time, please respond to this missive by providing one “practical way” that you might make a difference. The amount of detail is up to you, but the intent is to share ideas with our membership. Please email your ideas to me at [jbeatty391@gmail.com](mailto:jbeatty391@gmail.com).

I would also request that, unlike the article examples, we include in our ideas an indicator that can be measured and later calculated into carbon savings (details to follow) – but for now, just ideas and indicators.

My personal idea is to change my driving habits, watching carefully the speed that I travel (fuel consumption increases exponentially above 80kph), checking vehicle condition weekly (tire pressure etc.), and organizing my trips to be multipurpose as much as possible. My indicator will be monthly fuel consumption, I will refer back to fuel invoices from last year to establish a base line, then track consumption over the next three months.

OR alternatively, raise your commitment by visiting the website of Climate Action Muskoka (CAM) at <https://www.climateactionmuskoka.org/>. Besides a wealth of information on current events and actions to

urgently address climate change effects on the planet and on our lifestyles, you will find the **Community Carbon Challenge: 50% by 2030**. Take a few minutes to complete the guided self-assessment to calculate your individual carbon footprint and you gain a broader knowledge of how you might change personal behaviours to reduce your impact on carbon production.

Hats off to Climate Action Muskoka, a volunteer group striving to keep Muskoka a vibrant, sustainable environment. CAM was instrumental in having the District declare a climate emergency and in the inclusion of goals in Muskoka's Climate Strategy: a 50% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, and zero emissions by 2050. Furthermore, all future District decisions are required to be looked at through a climate lens.

The more we are informed, the better for ourselves and our planet. RTO District 46 Muskoka has selected from **Vibrant Voices** to focus on Environmental Stewardship this year. With this commitment we will be submitting a proposal to obtain a \$2500 Community Partner Grant that will be used toward a

collaborative partnership with CAM to foster more attention through a communication strategy on the work that they are doing. Please refer to [Vibrant Voices](#) on the RTO website for the latest news on the top advocacy topics. You will receive e-blasts from District 46 to keep your attention on our goal to increase visits to the CAM website and the Community Carbon Challenge.

Have fun with this. Hopefully these two opportunities provide part of a solution to foster realistic changes that contribute to eradicating the challenges that face us with climate change. The goal includes our efforts to become tangible within a short period of time spurring us to expand our awareness that change is needed, and to adapt our behaviours to those changes.

Can we learn from our pandemic experience changes that will apply to resolving climate change? Let's hope so.

*John Beatty, Political Advocacy*



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## BENEFITS

### District 46 thanks Rod Mundy for two decades of volunteer service!

For the past 18 years, Rod Mundy has done an outstanding job as the District 46 representative to the provincial RTOERO Benefits Committee (formerly Health Services and Insurance Committee). Thank you, Rod! He has attended provincial workshops and maintained up-to-date information to share with our members regarding the health insurance and benefits we are all so thankful to have access to through our membership with RTO. Unfortunately, Rod is no longer able to continue in this role and we need someone to fill this position. It is not overly time consuming and there is excellent virtual training offered through the provincial office. Please contact Joanne Garvey or any member of the executive if you are interested in learning more about the role of Benefits representative for District 46 Muskoka.



**Rod Mundy**



## BURSARY NEWS



### Multiple awards to feature top bursary of \$3000

A greater number of bursary applications is expected this year, as many students have not had the luxury of a paid job during the pandemic. District 46 will remain flexible regarding the number and value of awards offered, designating up to \$8000, and featuring one award of \$3000. The others will be determined at an Executive Council meeting to be held after April 30, the application deadline.

*Pat Schofield, Bursaries*

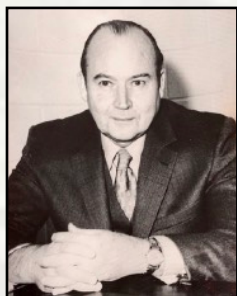


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## LEGENDARY EDUCATORS

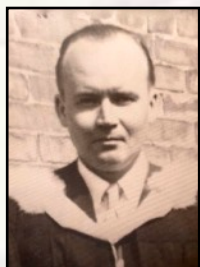
### Preeminent Director of Education Fred Hammell shares memories of his legendary teacher in 1985 newspaper column *Around the Barn*

*W.* Fred Hammell grew up in Watt Township and attended one-room schools from 1918 to 1925: S.S.#1 (Raymond) and S.S.#4 (Brackenrig). He was sometimes taught by very young pedagogues who were just a few years older than he. One such teacher – a Miss Whitten – is featured in this column. Fred, at 12



years of age, was the only boy of four students who took the dreaded "Entrance Exams". Had it not been for Miss Whitten, perhaps Fred Hammell's life as an educator might never have happened. He eventually became the first Director of Education for Muskoka from 1969 to 1975.

Fred Hammell's column *Around the Barn* appeared weekly in *The Muskoka Sun* from 1977 to 1986. His great respect for the pioneer community was inspiration for the column. He often focused on the importance of laying the groundwork for the next generations to thrive and the belief that certain individuals, through fate or luck, come into our lives and the difference lasts a lifetime...



The friendship between Fred Hammell and Ethel Whitten actually did last. Ms. Whitten/Boyce died in 1963 leaving her daughter Marjorie, then a young teenager. Fred and Audrey Hammell took her in and brought her up as one of their own. Marjorie pursued a career in

teaching and today is a happily retired member of RTOERO District 31.

Please enjoy this instalment of *Around the Barn: The Pursuit of Knowledge*, by Fred Hammell.

*Cheryl Tough, District 46 Member*



*Miss Ethel Whitten, 1924*



### **Around the Barn**

#### **The Pursuit of Knowledge**

*Published in the Muskoka Sun, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1985*

by Fred Hammell

The small, brick school building stood at the edge of the road. A wire fence enclosed the grounds, a relatively level piece of Muskoka ground with a small outcropping of rock in one corner. A local farmer had donated the property a good many years before – an acre set apart for his children and others in the rugged Laurentian hills. A metal gate allowed passage from the road along the path leading to the front door.

Inside, two cloakrooms, one for each sex, crossed the back of the room. At the front, a blackboard reached from side to side. In one corner, a large cupboard contained all the books available to the pupils. At the rear of the room stood the large box stove, from which rose the pipes that carried the smoke upwards and then horizontally to the chimney at the front of the classroom. That stove kept the pupils warm throughout the winter months.

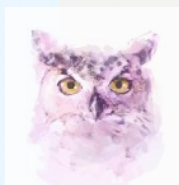
The teacher, a young lady of limited pedagogical experience, presided over the classes. Classes they were called – not Grades. The beginners entered the "Primer" class. Then came the "Junior First Class" and "Senior First Class" – all the way up to "Junior and Senior Fourth". The latter group upon whom the younger pupils looked with awe was also known as the "Entrance Class". It was from this particular level that the pupils moved on to high school, at what is known today as Grade 9.

The pupils, numbering about 28, occupied every class from "Primer" to "Senior Fourth". Keeping them gainfully occupied from morning until night was a challenge to the teacher. A goodly amount of rote learning was necessary because no one person could teach eight or nine lessons simultaneously. There was a great deal of seat work to be completed by each student. The further a pupil advanced, the more he or she was expected to work alone.

Great emphasis was placed upon the knowledge of facts. In the process of learning these, many skills were mastered. Pupils spent many hours writing voluminous notes on historical and geographical subjects. Arithmetic was a challenge in the upper classes. Pupils were expected to figure the amount of wallpaper required to decorate a room of specific dimensions. Another problem might give the assessment for a piece of property as well as the tax rate. The student was assigned the task of computing the amount of taxes to be collected. Entrance Class students spent considerable time figuring the interest that might be due on various loans for specified numbers of days.

All this work had to be checked for errors. There was a little point in assignments unless students knew whether or not their answers were correct. The teacher worked assiduously to supervise all written work. Sometimes senior students assisted in the checking of work done by the younger pupils. Such arrangements were limited since jealous parents often became irate because they felt that neighbours' children might be abusing their offspring.

The school year wore on. As spring approached, the teacher began to discuss the dreaded Entrance Examinations that were to be written on the last three days of the school year. In rural schools, all pupils were required to write these final examinations no matter what kind of standings they had received from their teachers.



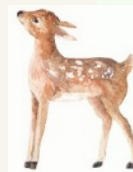
Three girls and one boy made up the Entrance Class. They were the particular concern of the teacher for, to some extent, their success or failure reflected upon the ability of the teacher. Pupils who were not well-coached might well fail, much to the chagrin of all concerned.

The teacher ordered back copies of the Entrance Examinations from James Texts of Belleville, Ontario. These she distributed to the pupils, who completed them in the same length of time and under similar circumstances to those that would apply at the Finals at the end of the term. Errors were listed and lessons taught to eliminate the weaknesses.

By the first of June, the students began to feel the mounting excitement. In a few weeks the time for

which they had been preparing would arrive. Two hundred lines of poetry had to be committed to memory. "The Burial of Moses" stood high on the list. Day after day, at home and at school - sometimes while walking to school - the pupils intoned, "By Nebo's lonely mountain, on this side Jordan's wave..." "What is so rare as a day in June; - Then, if ever come..."

On the first Friday in June the young teacher announced that she would be coming to school on Saturday morning to help any of the Entrance Class who might attend. This meant a walk of two miles for the teacher to reach the school. This Saturday session would be particularly helpful since the teacher would be untrammelled by the presence of other students.



Saturday dawned bright and clear, a glorious June morning. The birds sang rapturously in the meadows, by the roadsides, and in the woods that here and there encroached upon the road allowance: a day for fishing and playing and just enjoying life. But duty called; all four pupils arrived at the school - the girls in bright summer dresses and the boy in well-patched short pants and a faded shirt.

English grammar received attention: parsing of sentences, subjects, predicates, modifiers, verbs - transitive, intransitive and copular. What was the part of speech of "deep" in the phrase "Still waters run deep"? Geography, arithmetic, memory work, spelling were studied, and so the morning passed.

The next two Saturdays found teacher and pupils hard at work. Then came the time to go to the village a few miles away to write for three days until the spelling examination brought the curtain down.

Then to await the verdict! Each Thursday the weekly papers were scrutinized in search of the results. One week, then another went by. Interminable waiting! Then the news electrified the little group. One after another all four found their names. They had all passed!

And then the plans for the future - three to go to work; one to go on to high school fired by the dedication of that young teacher who had kindled a thirst for learning in a young impressionable mind. 🎓



## NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

RTOERO offers free membership until retirement to anyone actively working in the **education community in Canada**. Please visit [www.rto-ero.org](http://www.rto-ero.org) for information on pension, insurance and the many benefits of RTOERO membership.



## CONTACT INFO

Executive Committee members may be reached via the following secure contact form:

<https://district46.rto-ero.org/district-contact-us>

<i>President</i> <b>Joanne Garvey</b>	<i>1<sup>st</sup> Vice President</i> <b>John Beatty</b>
<i>2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President</i> <b>Laurie Fountain</b>	<i>Past President</i> <b>Bob Harris</b>
<i>Member Services</i> <b>Laurie Fountain</b>	<i>Goodwill Representatives</i> <i>Bala and Port Carling</i> <b>Carolyn Dunn Rapson</b>
<i>Secretary</i> <b>Position open</b>	<i>Bracebridge</i> <b>Norma Kaye</b>
<i>Treasurer</i> <b>Anne Mundy</b>	<i>Gravenhurst</i> <b>Kathy Allison</b>
<i>Pension &amp; Retirement</i> <b>Bob Harris</b>	<i>Huntsville</i> <b>Doris Macdonald</b>
<i>Political Advocacy</i> <b>Position open</b> with <b>John Beatty</b> and <b>Joanne Garvey</b>	<i>Health and Benefits</i> <b>Position open</b>
	<i>Bursaries</i> <b>Pat Schofield</b>
<i>Newsletter</i> <b>Lorna Walkling</b> and <b>Jennifer Lyndon</b>	<i>Communications</i> <b>Jennifer Lyndon</b>

## COVID-19 Vaccines

Information about **immunization**, assessment centres and local cases is available at the **Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit** website: <https://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org/Topics/COVID-19/Vaccine-and-Immunization>

## COVID-19 Updates

Visit the official website of the **Government of Canada** for the latest announcements and information about COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/en.html>

## UP-COMING EVENTS

For the safety of our members, all in-person events have been cancelled until further notice.

As restrictions ease, entertainment is standing by

**Old Time Gospel Band performance**

**Special guest Gayle Manley to speak on Elder Abuse**

**Fall Barbecue?**

**Winter "Bell Breakfast"?**

We will keep you posted by eBlast!

## Know someone retiring soon?

**Help them with the transition by sharing a ready-made to-do list and virtual booth**

RTOERO has a list of what you need to know to prepare for retirement in Canada. Share it with friends by email or on social media: [rtoero.ca/everything-you-need-to-think-about-to-plan-for-retirement-in-canada](http://rtoero.ca/everything-you-need-to-think-about-to-plan-for-retirement-in-canada)

RTOERO's virtual booth has elements similar to a face-to-face booth typically found at events and conferences, like a trivia game with a leaderboard! [rtoero.ca/visit-our-booth](http://rtoero.ca/visit-our-booth)



## Ramblings from Raymond

I have always found astrology quite fascinating, and just a few months before our lives were turned upside down by a global pandemic, I read a prediction that the year 2020 would be "a threshold to cross, a pause between the way it has been and the way it will be, necessitating a confrontation with all the difficult challenges in need of a remedy within civilization" and that planetary movements will "dredge up issues with societal structures in need of innovative reform, particularly involving global economics and systemic reform". Looking back now, I am stunned by the accuracy of these words by astrologer Gray Crawford! On every level, we are experiencing change, and it is my hope that if each individual does their small part, together we can make a positive difference in our emerging new reality.

I am so pleased that District 46 is submitting an application to the RTOERO provincial office, in partnership with Climate Action Muskoka, for a Community Development Grant of \$2500. This money will be used to assist this group in getting the message out to the general public about actions each of us can take as individuals to create change. Like John Beatty, I have chosen to focus on my driving habits and monthly fuel consumption as my personal way of reducing my carbon footprint. I do hope you will rise to the challenge of 50% by 2030!



I hope you have enjoyed reading about Fred Hammell, the first Director of Education in Muskoka, and the first story in a series of accounts of educators who stand out in the memories of our members. Please think about individuals or experiences that made an impact on your life in education, and I invite you to send me your memories to be included in future editions of *Beyond the Bell*. Watch for the upcoming publication of a compilation of stories of bygone days by Fred Hammell in his *Around the Barn* column of the Muskoka Sun from 1977-1986.

It looks like our meetings will continue to be virtual, and our communication with you will be through email or social media for the time being. I look forward to the time when we can be together in a room again and celebrate the next steps on our journey as seniors who still want to make a difference!

Sincerely,  
*Lorna*

## In Memoriam

*Although the list may not be complete, we are saddened by the loss of the following members and extend our condolences to family, friends and colleagues:*

- Lyle Benton (September 2020)
- Margaret Curlew (October)
- John Cats (December)
- Diane Yacula (December)
- Inglis MacDonald (January)
- Janet Gambrell (January)
- Barbara Palmer (January)
- Albert R Ashforth (February)

*Please be sure to notify a member of the executive if you know of a member who has passed on.*

## Seniors and Climate Change

To register for free online workshops offered by Canadian charity **MakeWay**, visit

<https://www.shiftaction.ca/workshops>

### Ontario Teachers Pension Plan and the Climate Crisis

Learn about the fund's approach to the financial risks of climate change and fossil fuel investments.

April 28 at 4:00 - 5:30 p.m. and  
May 5 - 8:00 - 9:30 p.m.

### Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan and the Climate Crisis

Working and retired Ontario teachers are invited to join Ontario healthcare workers and energy experts to learn how to protect your pension and tackle the climate crisis.

May 5 at 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

## HIGHLIGHTS OF FALL MEETING *on Zoom, NOVEMBER 26, 2020*

Award-Winning  
Author Yvonne Heath  
Inspires Participants  
at Virtual Meeting



Laurie Fountain  
Elected District 46  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President

### Webinar RPW Schedule Posted

Free interactive Retirement Planning Workshops are hosted online throughout the year by RTOERO, featuring a live moderator. Questions are answered in real time. Visit [rtoero.ca/join-us/retirement-planning-workshops](https://rtoero.ca/join-us/retirement-planning-workshops) to see the full list of upcoming RPW webinars and to register.

### Have you activated your Venngo MemberPerks®?

Venngo MemberPerks® is now available to all RTOERO members. Previously, the savings program was included for members who also had our extended health care plan.

MemberPerks® provides discounts on a wide range of products and services for health and wellness, travel, entertainment, apparel and more. Our members save more than \$200 on average per year.

To learn more, go to [rtoero.ca/services/venngo-memberperks](https://rtoero.ca/services/venngo-memberperks).

**Find the latest RTOERO advocacy news and register now for upcoming Vibrant Voices webinars at**  
<https://rtoero.ca/vibrant-voices/>

April 29 at 1:00 - 2:15 p.m. EDT

#### **Our Earth, Our responsibility: Take Action**

How to coordinate activities, accomplish goals and take action-oriented steps to help protect the planet.

September 15 at 1:00 - 2:15 p.m.

#### **Building an elder care system that actually cares**

Globe and Mail health reporter and columnist André Pickard identifies solutions to the eldercare crisis.

October 13 at 1:00 - 2:15 p.m.

#### **Saving the Forest...Saving Us**

World-recognized medical biochemist Dr. Diana Beresford-Kroeger demonstrates how we can save the planet, ourselves and the global forest.

November 3 at 1:00 - 2:15 p.m.

#### **Paths to Wellness for Older Persons: Body, Mind, Spirit**

Explore how true wellness is about body, mind and spirit working together.

6.3 million Canadians in nine provinces and territories have downloaded the free **COVID Alert mobile app**.



Canada

It privately monitors and notifies users of potential exposure to the coronavirus.

Visit **Ontario's** website for more information and links to public health advice:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covidalert>.

*In the event of a **federal election** during lockdown, a virtual all-candidates meeting will be planned.*



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