

# RALU NEWS

## RETIREES' ASSOCIATION OF LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

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### **College and University Retirees Association of Canada News: Getting Set for the AGM and Annual Conference in Regina.**

Mark your calendars. This year May 11-13, 2011 will see the annual conference and AGM at the campus of the University of Regina. The program outlines the challenging and timely theme: Keeping Up.

[http://www.curac.ca/?page\\_id=962](http://www.curac.ca/?page_id=962)

There are sessions on lifelong learning, the aging brain, threats to democracy, first nation's education, and saving Medicare. There are concurrent sessions entitled Revisiting Pensions and Brain Gymnastics.

### **Profile of Founding Member Clement Kent**

Dr. Clement Kent. There is still a trace of a New England accent in the voice. The road from the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he received a Ph.D.; through Case Western Reserve University where he taught; finally to the Lakehead, was arduous, but ultimately fortunate for our university community and especially our organization, RALU. Since retiring after a productive teaching career and research secondments in which he studied the mathematics of finding submarines for the U.S. Navy and later for the Canadian Department of Defence, he has been busy. Parallel to his academic and research accomplishments, Clem had another long and active career in union organizing before he retired in 1992. Since

the he has had yet another career teaching and mentoring young people. Here in a few characteristically spare words he describes his career at Lakehead and after. In the eyes of his colleagues at RALU, perhaps his greatest accomplishment was the formation of RALU, of which he was the driving force: the torch bearer through many lean years and latterly RALU's prime mover.

*"In the mid 1970s a small group of us tried to push the LU faculty toward unionization and were shoved back by the horrified mob. They didn't get the idea for almost another decade. Now, their achievements under unionization have been substantial and, as then, I continue to believe that little can be gained and still much can be lost by most of us without collective action. Hence RALU and affiliation with CURAC.*

*The "great depression" cost my father his life and my mother her job when I was seven, so I know how a lot of our fellow citizens feel today. I feel strong attachment to the labour movement today. I enlisted in the Navy at 17 and after WWII I fell into physics and mathematics and with the help of my well-chosen mother and my superbly chosen wife, Elizabeth, I achieved more than I really deserved. They raised our three children while I became an academic. Along the way Elizabeth worked as a medical laboratory technician while completing her M. Sc. and B. Ed. For 63 years come June, we have comfortably shared all decisions. Of these, the most important was to emigrate to Canada in 1968. We continue to be grateful to Canada, and Canadians, for our welcome here. All three of our children have endorsed that decision by remaining in Canada and raising their children in Ontario*

*I am frequently asked how I like retirement... I don't. The hardest part has been being denied the contact with students, and the requirement to graze through fields of mathematics as a general teacher of the subject. I did continue to teach part time, doing 17 half-courses in*

*the first 10 years, by the Registrar's record, and donating the miserable stipends to student support. I can also take some credit, with lots of help, for starting and running a computer contest for high school students for some years, which brought in contestants from over Northwestern Ontario. After that, we did the same for a mathematics contest. Not infrequently I hear the name of one or another of our math graduates in important jobs."*

\* university administration would appreciate a dollar value on this post retirement career. What do you think?

Dr. Kent is a modest man.

### **RALU: Further on Down the Road**

Where has your association got to? We are now 60 members strong and are continuing to organize. When RALU was founded in 2007 Tarun Ghose, then president of CURAC, warned us that it would take time and energy to build the organization and told us "Old orders changeth. Change is very much in the air these days. The newly established Retirees' Association of Lakehead University and its brand new Newsletter are very welcome changes that will surely usher in progress... College & university retiree associations have two principal objectives: i) to build a mutually beneficial relationship with their administrations and ii) in simple words: to look after its members. Looking after members includes monitoring and improving retirees' pensions and other retirement benefits as well as helping retirees to overcome the sense of isolation and bewilderment that follows the transition from work to retirement."

In the meantime what have we accomplished? We have helped build the basic human relationships that make an organization. To used an overworked word: community. So far we have provided an entertaining and very informative program. There is an annual field trip to discover the geography and history of the region. There

is an annual "Cake and Too" held during the winter break. We have built a basic structure that allows for communication by way of a website; a series of email "broadcasts"; and this newsletter. The website is distinctive and very functional. It presents basic information and events. <http://ralu.la/> All of these functions require your input, expertise and information to work properly. For efficiency and to reduce costs, the secretariat is based on email, therefore we do not yet serve those without access properly. We apologize for that and hope to fix that problem immediately by having caring members print and transmit these communications to people they know who are out of touch with the Internet. Thereby RALU can continue to save the revenue generated from publications and memberships for needed projects.

So far we have achieved none of our stated objectives insofar as providing a good relationship with LU, although this has not been for want of trying on our part. We expect that the Administration and current faculty organization will wake up to the wealth and knowledge we represent sooner or later.

Please contribute to your organization: give us your time and expertise in some capacity to make the sum greater than the parts.

### **FOLLOW THE PLANT HUNTERS IN YUNNAN**

After my presentation to RALU members about the LU Geography Department field trips to Yunnan in 2005 and 2008, a couple of people expressed an interest in finding out more about the places we had visited. Since the best way to do that is to go there, I have been toying with the idea of arranging a trip. Here are some of my preliminary thoughts:

Time: Probably late April/early May, 2012. That is a good time weatherwise – spring and relatively warm – pre-monsoon therefore dry – spring flowers blooming. October is also a possibility, but flowers would have gone by then.

Place: The trip would be centred in Lijiang and last for about 14 days including travel

time there and back. I would ask Lijiang Xintou Ecotours to arrange things. They did both of the student trips for us. They would arrange guided tours, by bus and on foot (and possibly also bike, mule and pony).

Accommodation: Mainly in relatively new, good quality guest houses, but if we want we can have farmstays or homestays.

Cost: Difficult to say at this time - breaks down in to two parts – getting there and back and in China. We paid Marlin Travel for our tickets and Xintou for all of the food, accommodation, transport and entry prices in Yunnan. Marlin Travel and Xintou were able to deal with individual requests – people who wanted to go elsewhere in China or SE Asia at the end of the trip, for example.

Numbers: My experience with two different sizes of groups was that round about 10 was best – it makes it easier to fit into buses, restaurants and hotels – but that could be changed.

If you have questions please contact me by e-mail at [panddkemp@shaw.ca](mailto:panddkemp@shaw.ca). We can get together and talk about the possibilities.

Dave Kemp

### **Pension**

Congratulations to founding RALU member Ernie Epp, who has been selected as the retirees' representative on the LU Pension Board. Best wishes from his colleagues in RALU. We look forward to a new era of openness and transparency and wish him well in looking after RALU interests and helping report to members.

Up to that point it had been business as usual. There has been no report on the pension plan or benefits since the last newsletter despite the collecting backlog of questions and swelling chorus of calls for information over the past years.

## **Supplemental Health Plan: A Report**

There is finally an information booklet available for retirees, which has evidently been mailed out. Below is from an email sent to a member from the individual in LU Human Resources who oversees benefits.

you can certainly contact GreenShield Canada directly with the toll free number located on the back of your card should you have questions regarding your coverage. Alternatively, you may contact the Office of Human Resources to determine eligibility prior to submitting claims.

Laura Dutchak  
Human Resources Assistant  
Office of Human Resources  
(807) 343-8022

According to Clem, we can expect to be able to clarify the new plan administered by Greenshield. So far it has been a little like the elephant and the non sighted person(s). LU Website seems to provide information for each group, but none for retirees. It was reported by Clem Kent "Of this, alone, it can be said that the only thing that is clear is that it is not quite clear. As persons paying the full premium for our continued membership in the group plan, it seems only reasonable that we know exactly for what we are paying a monthly premium.

Bearing in mind that the broad membership of RALU is covered by various sub-group plans, the ideal goal would be to develop an accurate comparative chart that fully clarifies the situation for all sub-groups. This is especially important for 'about-to-retirees', faculty, staff and administrators, who have to make the decision whether to stay in the LU group plan or to join another plan. A true comparative analysis will only be possible when each 'about-to-retiree' understands exactly how they would be covered. That

would seem to be a reasonable thing to ask of our university and health insurance company, and a useful objective." A hoped-for function of RALU articulated in the past by Clem was to provide a health consultancy serving all retirees.

The lack of information is described as "appalling" by more than one member. It should be remembered that there has been no opportunity to question let alone consult throughout the decision making process since the association was formed in 2008. This period saw the move to Blue Cross and then the current provider.

In the generally bleak picture there are small shafts of sunlight from unexpected sources: Hakim Optical on Memorial, as well as having good service and low prices, honoured an expired warranty on glasses for one of our members. There are opportunities to save money by sharing benefits with spouses and others who also worked at LU. This is somewhat arcane, but can be worthwhile.

## **What's New on Campus?**



Port Arthur Collegiate and Waverley Park Loppet. What would a fitness program in Thunder Bay be without skiing?



Here is an impromptu cross country course through Waverley Park and around the newest LU building, what was Port Arthur Collegiate.

### **Braun Building**

[Update on the insurance situation needed]

### **The Garden**

A couple of weeks ago the garden looked like this, but that is changing daily. The robins are back. Next will be the groundhogs. A little bird told us that there are still a few garden plots. Food Security Research Network (FRSN). <http://www.foodsecurityresearch.ca/index.php?pid=89> You can watch as your garden grows; eat wonderful, healthful food; enjoy the serenity of the garden; discover your neighbor gardeners and learn, learn, learn about growing things and sharing.

**For more information contact Campus Garden Coordinator Lee-Ann Chevrette at [leeann@foodsecurityresearch.ca](mailto:leeann@foodsecurityresearch.ca)**



### **The RALU Winter General Meeting**

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was the regular general meeting of RALU.



Kaarina Mikkola, Wim Baarschers, Susan Cole, and Peter Mah

In the photo our skeptical inquirers regard the camera which was the subject of the presentation.

Gerry Poling spoke on the care and feeding of digital cameras followed by David Kemp entertaining us with a good humoured rant on Green Energy.

### **LU To Join Academic Freedom Fund?**

At last there are indications on development in an issue keenly felt by everyone in the university community. Is the Faculty Association at LU finally joining the fight for academic freedom in Canada? A special characteristic of LU for the past years has been that of all institutions in Canada that call themselves universities, from the giant University of Toronto, that kicked in \$100,000, down to the College of Cape Breton, which somehow found \$11,000 to contribute to this cause, LU withheld its support and its money. Even the new University of Ontario Institute of Technology, which arguably is not an academic but a technical institution, found \$500. Will it at last shrug off its rogue status and contribute to the academic freedom fund of Canadian Association of University Teachers? This is after holding out for years and years until it seems like nobody believes it could happen. If the answer to that question is "yes", then the next question is how much? Let's face it: the association can afford it, after the détente with the administration over the past decade.

### **Events**

April 27<sup>th</sup>. RALU Regular Meeting. Grant Walsh of LU Administration to Roast LU. Details on Program and venue on the website  
<http://ralu.la/RALU%20Events.htm>

Federal Election All candidates debate held at Thunder Bay Campus, the Bora Laskin

Building 7 – 9.30 pm. (No room given so watch for directions)

May 11-13, 2011. CURAC Annual Conference. University of Regina Campus  
<http://www.curac.ca/>

May 11<sup>th</sup>. The Public Advisory Committee of the Thunder Bay Area of Concern Remedial Action Plan holds the monthly meetings on the second Wednesday every month. Details on venue on website

Check the website for other events and information on other North Shore areas of concern.  
[http://northshorerap.ca/show\\_events.php](http://northshorerap.ca/show_events.php)

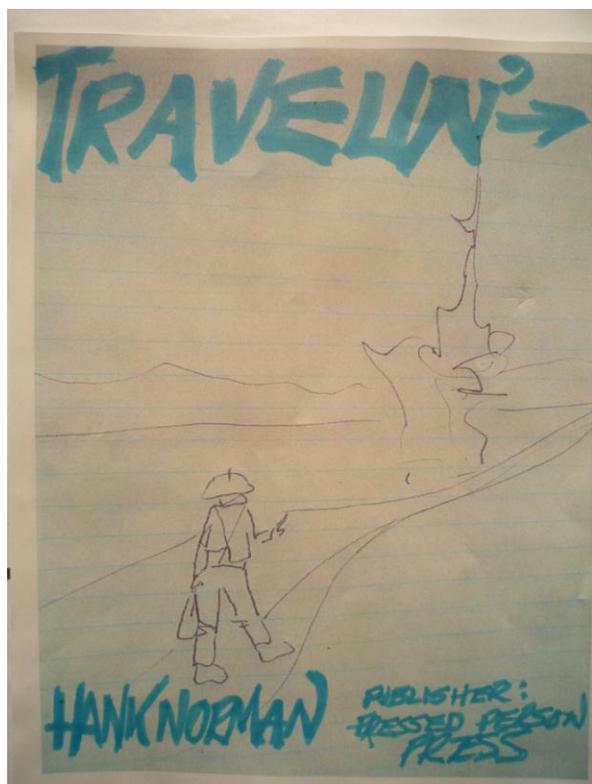
For more information contact Remedial Action Plan Coordinator, Nipigon Bay & Thunder Bay RC-3000, Lakehead University 955 Oliver Road, Thunder Bay, ON Canada P7B 5E1, Ph: [807-343-8514](tel:807-343-8514)

May 16. 8 pm. The Thunder Bay International Fine Arts Association holds regular meetings every third Monday of the month. We invite all artists and would be artists to the meeting. Look for more information on events like the Retro Theatre, book readings, and art shows. For more information write: Thunder Bay International Fine Arts Association, 97 Algoma Street South, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada, P7B 3B7

Contact: Pasquale Scarcello, President.  
[vinorosso26@hotmail.com](mailto:vinorosso26@hotmail.com) 807 767-7487

### **Marketplace.**

Watch for the publication of the anticipated *Travellin': Dispatches from the Culture Wars, a Virginia Diary, and a Mystery*. Thunder Bay: The Pressed Person Press, 2011. (ISBN 978-0-9811-334-0-9)



### **The New Three Rs: Notes from The Editor**

Help us put the newsletter to bed and communicate with the diverse group of people spread out from Scotland, New York and Washington States to Victoria and Qualicum on the West Coast, to Lethbridge in Alberta, Haines Junction in the Yukon Territory and last but not least Thunder Bay and Orillia, and all over Ontario. Send us letters, reports, information and opinion. Contact any member of the Communications Team.

April is the cruelest month. Taxes, more cold weather and now a federal election. Already there is enough for another chapter of *Fear and Loathing on the Campaign Trail*. Come what may it is finally springtime in Thunder Bay after a long picture perfect winter of snow and skiing. The ice is retreating from the harbor and the birds are arriving back from their winter homes: gulls, blue jays, grackles, and some

smaller birds that make a tremendous piercing song that destroys the attention. The next anticipated wave will be our own snowbird members who are arriving daily. We who wintered over are looking forward to finding out how things are in the south.



So that we can all look forward to a brand new day.



Could this be a picture of our future home at LU where retirees can will be recognized, respected and recompensed?

Can we look forward to a harmonious, productive future where retirees are finally given access to the resources needed to increase the mutual benefit of all members of the university community; that is, active and retired members?

Where are the regular contributors this month? Are they really just sitting on the beach in Bora Bora like the staffers of the Newsletter, without paper and pencil? Perhaps just sitting on the fence...

**Communications Team**

Privacy: The question has arisen as to whether members would prefer to have communications in the current form with all members emails displayed or whether you would prefer to have your email excluded from communication.

For the moment we will send to you individually, but please let us know.

Openness facilitates communication among members and having a single list is less work to organize. Communication is our objective and having less work to do means RALU can do more and keep more revenue for needed projects.

Let any member of the Communications Team what your preference is: Ian Dew, [ian@nextlib.com](mailto:ian@nextlib.com), Walter Momot, [waltermomot@yahoo.com](mailto:waltermomot@yahoo.com), Joe Stewart, [arkyjoe@gmail.com](mailto:arkyjoe@gmail.com), or Don Watson, [dwwatson@shaw.ca](mailto:dwwatson@shaw.ca)

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**RETIREEES' ASSOCIATION OF LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY  
Annual Membership Form – Sept 1<sup>st</sup> 2010 to Aug. 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013**

**First Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Surname** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email address**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Postal address**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Postal code** \_\_\_\_\_ **Tel. # (**  
**)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Expertise, contribution**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Office use only**

<b>Paid</b> _____ <b>as Cash</b> _____ <b>or Cheque</b> _____	<b>Date</b>
<b>dd/mm/yy</b> ____/____/____	

**Membership is \$10 annually or \$25 per individual per three years, with equal status of membership for retirees, spouses and partners. Annual membership is from Sept 1<sup>st</sup> to Aug 31<sup>st</sup>. Please return with a cheque made out to the "Retirees' Association of Lakehead University" to Secretary, Ian Dew, #3, 400 Red River Road, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 1B3. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Phillips, President at 807 344-3770 or [brianph@shaw.ca](mailto:brianph@shaw.ca). Thank you.**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Membership in RALU**

You are encouraged to support the association by joining us, even if you live far from Northwestern Ontario. What do we offer? RALU offers you your peers, who have a wealth of talent from apiculture to zymurgy. Membership will keep you on our email list, receiving occasional newsletters and benefiting from contact with former co-workers and whatever work the association can do on behalf of the retirees as a group. We are interested in all those people who have ever worked at LU joining to help us make a thriving university community. Please join us and help yourself.

Complete the membership form and return with a cheque or money order made out to the 'Retirees' Association of Lakehead University' to Secretary, #3, 400 Red River Road, Thunder Bay, ON P7B 1B3. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Phillips, [brianph@shaw.ca](mailto:brianph@shaw.ca) or 807-344-3770. Please note that there is a new area for expertise, contribution. Tell us how you want to assist RALU, for example, by contributing to the newsletter, giving us a presentation on your expertise, and so on.

The Retirees' Association of Lakehead University is inclusive and its membership is open to all retirees of the university.

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