

President's Report, 2013-2014

It's hard to believe that I am completing my third and final year as President of the UVic Retirees Association. Time is exponential the older you get! In taking on the role of President, I hoped to maintain or extend what we offer to the members. So, I hope in some small way I have been able to do this. Of course, I did not achieve much that I set out to do, and there is still some unfinished business that I hope in my role as Past President I can help bring some closure.

I am delighted to report that Peter Liddell will be stepping forward to take on the mantle of President. As you know, Peter has been a tireless worker for the UVRA over the years. With the help of Lois Jones, he completed the EHB and Travel Policy with Johnson, as well as guided the completion of the 50th UVic Anniversary Project. Peter also serves on several other committees, and is always a very active member of these groups. In other words, Peter has great ideas but, more importantly, is a "doer". So I wish Peter much success, as he takes on this new role, and I offer him my full support.

The year has seen some notable moments. In particular, as noted above, we now have an EHB and Travel Policy with Johnson, which is an alternative to the PBC policy offered through UVic. This was a lengthy process, but we are pleased to report many of our members have taken advantage of this option. The UBC Association of Professor Emeriti (UBCAPE) have just concluded a similar policy with Johnson, and were most appreciative of the work done by Lois Jones and Peter Liddell. The SFU Retirees are also working with Johnson on a similar policy. So the possibility exists that these three policies will be linked at some future point, which will increase the sustainability of the agreement. We continue to meet once or twice per year with our UBC and SFU counterparts to share information and ideas on how to serve the needs of our retirees, as well as continue to contribute to our institutions. We always find these meetings very useful, and bring back many ideas we feel could be implemented within the UVRA.

We did create the *UVRA Talk Series*, in which we hosted four presentations in the UVic Senate Chambers. The talks were well received, with an average of 70 people attending. At these talks, we offered coffee and refreshments, to provide the opportunity for the attendees to mingle with former colleagues. The *Masterminds Series*, chaired by Geri Van Gyn, was another resounding success, attracting audiences of 70-80, with the last one by Martin Collis being "sold out". Our thanks to Geri, and to our partners in the Masterminds series: the Centre on Aging and their great staff, who give generously of their time, and for the financial support from the UVic President's Office. We continue to receive great feedback from the community on the quality of these presentations. And, of course, a huge thanks to this year's presenters, who gave generously of their time and expertise.

Thanks to the ongoing efforts of Bev Timmons, the *Elder Academy* is not dead. We still believe in the value of such a program to the community. As previously reported in one of my "Bits from the Board" in our newsletter, the proposal was reviewed by the UVic Executive Council, who contacted us to say "we considered UVic's current financial

challenges and priorities and concluded we [sic] cannot proceed with the creation of the Elder Academy as put forward in your [sic] proposal". This was disappointing, as we had hoped the University would embrace the idea, and provide the necessary resources to implement it. However, the letter also stated that "we [sic] are looking for ways to meet our shared objectives through the enhancement of existing activities and the desire to work together in ways to incorporate UVRA ideas in future planning". Subsequently, we have met with several groups, to see how parts of the proposal can be implemented within the current structure and resources. It is early days in this regard, but we are optimistic we can implement some of the components and believe that once the University sees the value, they may reconsider their level of support. We will certainly be coming to our retirees for your help in offering short courses and programs. We have been strongly encouraged by the Centre on Aging as well as Lori MacCleod, Director of Elder Care in VIHA.

The other ongoing business also relates to the Memo of Understanding (MOU) as mentioned in my report for the last AGM. At the last Board meeting, we agreed to a general MOU that we now intend to take forward to the Central Administration, *clarifying* our position and role within the University. UBCAPE have just completed this process with their Central Administration and SFURA are undertaking a similar process. So it is certainly timely that we do this. Much of the MOU relates to the benefits extended to retirees and the commitment of the University. However, it also includes ways in which the UVRA can assist the University in fulfilling its mission, especially for those retirees who wish to continue to contribute to the University or stay connected in some way.

The Events Committee, under the able direction of Betty Miller, has been very busy organizing activities for our members, all of which have been well-received. This is a new committee, and they are to be commended for the what they have already done. Their plans for the future are extremely exciting. So, please continue to support their efforts, as well as bring forward your ideas and suggestions. We also hosted the second luncheon for our volunteers. Again, it was well attended and received. My thanks go to Rashna Charania and Linda Metters for organizing this event, which this year was held at the University Club.

One of our very effective initiatives undertaken this year was establishing an Ad Hoc Committee, led by Winona Pugh, to work with Human Resources and the Pension Office in regard to how, together, we can better serve the needs of UVRA members, as well as those approaching retirement. Those two offices have been very receptive, and have met with our committee on several occasions. It appears our approach is most timely, as the Office of Human Resources was already exploring similar ideas, and has hired a consultant firm to bring forward recommendations. The UVRA is certainly one group they will contact. One of the outcomes of these meetings was the recent successful session held specifically for UVRA members on the Employee and Family Assistance Program now being headed by OPTUM (formerly *PPC Canada*). This program is extended to UVRA members, and offers excellent services. There was a short article on the services in the last newsletter. If you are interested in following up on what they offer, their website is: www.livewell.optum.com Use the access code: healthy

Thanks to Victor Neufeldt, and for Peter Liddell for the formatting and printing, we have now published the History of the UVic Retirees Association. There are a few hard copies available for purchase from the UVRA Office, but it is also available online. It makes for interesting reading. Victor has done an excellent job in not just recording the factual history, but also capturing the flavour of our evolution. Please check it out.

Of course, the AGM sees some members of the Board stepping down, current members taking on new roles, and also the inclusion of new members. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the many contributions of Isobel Dawson who has faithfully served the Association over the last 7 years, including a three-year term as President. She is stepping down, but I am sure will continue to contribute to the UVRA in many ways. So many thanks to Isobel for a job well done. She has always been a voice of reason and sober second thought (definitely Senate material or maybe not!). I have been incredibly fortunate in having a supportive and hard-working Board for which I give many thanks. A special thanks goes to Melvin Klassen who continues to do “double-duty” as our Chair of Communications, including updating our website, and Editor and Formatter of the Newsletter. If you have skills or interest in any of these areas, please let one of the Board members know. I am sure Mel would appreciate your help. I would also like to extend my appreciation to all those volunteers who help run and operate the UVRA. They really are too many to mention but without them the organization would not exist.

I would also like to make special mention of Sharon Crumly, who sadly passed away quite recently. Sharon was a great contributor to the UVRA who kept things running and just did what was needed to be done in her quiet and efficient way. She will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

As always we are still in need of volunteers and, at the time of writing this report, this includes Board positions. I appreciate retirement for most of us is a busy time but we do have over 500 members with extraordinary skills and talents. Please do consider ways in which you can help the Association.

So thanks to everyone for making my term as President such a positive experience -- I wish you all the health and energy to enjoy the things you want to pursue.

Respectfully submitted,

David Docherty
President,
UVic Retirees Association