

# ELK ISLAND RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

## President's Message

The times they are a changing...

You have heard the message many times. We are all in this together. Stay strong. Stay safe. Stay home. It becomes a drone that you tune out when it comes on the radio or tv or you see a post or text or email. Don't let it disappear. Keep it always in the back of your mind. It is vital.

Elk Island RTA executive are continuing to meet, but not in person. We gathered together virtually to discuss issues and make decisions about the branch. The current situation has caused us to cancel or postpone events. The casino trip in March was one of those. We have tentatively scheduled the breakfast in September and the luncheon in December, but will evaluate the possibilities as the time gets nearer.

Our Annual General Meeting is usually held early in June. At this time, we have decided to postpone it until September. Other options were discussed and members will be informed if anything changes.

All of us are experiencing significant changes in our lives. We have had to face unprecedented restrictions and make adjustments for the most basic activities. It is natural to feel additional stress during all of this. Uncertainty and threat can become intense pressures. I hope all of you have access to people who can help you through these days. Reach out and touch someone (not physically, of course). Share stories and memories. Always stay in touch with friends and family. Connections will get us through.

Warmer weather and sunshine are always welcome. Find some time to get out and enjoy the coming spring. Take a walk. Just sit on the front steps. Breathe deeply and smell the earth. Life is good.

So...

Stay strong. Stay safe. Stay home. Stay connected!

Karen Atkinson  
President



## SPRING EDITION

April, 2020

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Elk Island RTA website:  
<https://artabranches.net/elkislandrta/>

Elk Island RTA email:  
[elkislandrta@gmail.com](mailto:elkislandrta@gmail.com)



Elk Island RTA is a branch of ARTA

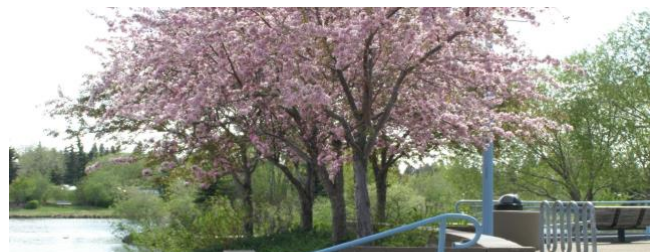
*Like ARTA, Elk Island RTA supports an engaged lifestyle after retirement through member-centered services, advocacy, communication, wellness and leadership.*

## Upcoming Event

*This page is usually reserved for an invitation to our next event. We have no invitation at this time; therefore, we will focus on Nature's next event -- Spring!*

Layers of purest white across a blue  
So clear it seems to glow,  
Filigree branches in silhouette,  
Dark contrast, vibrant, bold,  
Evidence of dormant life,  
Waiting.  
Below, the white spreads farther,  
Cold and crisp and clean;  
The shadows of the branches  
Blur and blend with smudges of others,  
Counterpoint – winter floor and summer ceiling,  
Between the two, soon, spring will come  
To join the promise to reality;  
For now I choose,  
The dream flows freely with the clouds;  
I raise my eyes above the ground  
And seek the precious blue.

by Karen Atkinson



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## Helpful Information (For You or Someone You Know)

### Strathcona Volunteer Program

(<https://volunteerstrathcona.ca>)

Need help?

Call us: 780.464.4242

We have a team of volunteers ready to help with things like pickup/delivery of groceries/frozen meals, prescription medication, and phone call visits.

Want to help?:

Volunteer with the COVID-19 Emergency Project

(<https://volunteerstrathcona.ca/covid19volunteer/>)

### Help Guide

#### Your trusted guide to mental health and wellness

(<http://clt1141827.bmetrack.com/c/v?e=10403E1&c=116C43&t=0&l=3D3CCEDA&email=OCyS%2FGJJEiKnC5l%2FKs%2F7AlnzBjzlZ2TJR>)

There are many helpful articles on this website. Below are just a few of these. I have linked the article directly to the titles below.

- [How to Sleep Better](#)
- [Deep Breathing Meditation](#)
- [How to Start Exercising and Stick to It](#)
- [Heart-Healthy Diet Tips](#)
- [How to Stop Worrying](#)
- [Anxiety](#)--This page links to several tips about how to deal with anxiety.

### ARTA Changes

According to recent information from ARTA, the following improvements to the Retiree Benefits Plan have been made. Please check with [ARTA](#) for further information.

1. Temporary suspension of the maximum number of dispensing fees allowed due to the government's advisory to provide a maximum 30-day supply of prescription drugs.
2. Paper claims may now be submitted via email to [onlineclaims@arta.net](mailto:onlineclaims@arta.net) ([electronic claim form](#).) Remember to include your name and benefits ID# in the subject line.
3. ARTA will temporarily accept claims for services performed virtually from the following list of service providers, as long as they are an eligible and certified provider: psychologists and master social workers, physiotherapists, dietitians and nutritionists, naturopaths, speech therapists.
4. ARTA plan members have access to the [SilverCloud](#) stress management program available online. Just click on the Sign-up button, enter your email address and choose a password. Use the access code ARTA20.

## Elk Island RTA Executive

To contact any of the executive members listed below, please email us at:  
[elkislandrta@gmail.com](mailto:elkislandrta@gmail.com)

President:  
Karen Atkinson

Vice President:  
Deb Gerow

Treasurer:  
Dolaine Koch

Secretary and Compassion and  
Congratulations:  
Carol Gilbertson

Past President and Communications:  
Inge Coates

Membership:  
Thelma Baumgartner

Phoning Committee Chair:  
Dianna Millard

Social Committee:  
Sylvia Roes  
Sheila Busch  
Ruby Okamura  
Lorna Johnston  
Karen Carlson

ARTA Reps:  
Dolaine Koch  
Karen Atkinson



## Mark Your Calendar

Although we have tentative dates for the *To Hell with the Bells* event (Sept 1) and our *Christmas Luncheon* (Dec 2), we will be re-evaluating the advisability of holding these gatherings as time progresses. We will keep our members informed through emails, our Summer Newsletter, and our website.

## News from ARTA

Please visit the ARTA website at <http://www.arta.net> for general information.

Information from ARTA Board of Directors meetings can be found at <http://www.arta.net/about/resources/briefing-notes/>

Links to the *news&views* magazine and Artafacts can also be found on the ARTA website

## Please Keep Us Updated

Please register changes in your membership information if...

- You have turned 80 years of age. (Membership is free after this age if you have been a member for the previous 10 years.)
- You have moved. (We need your new contact information.)
- You are not certain if your membership has expired.

To register changes, contact Thelma Baumgartner at [elkislandrta@gmail.com](mailto:elkislandrta@gmail.com).

**Important:** Please do not send cash through the mail to pay for membership fees, or for any other reason. It is much safer to send a cheque, and the cancelled cheque can also act as a reminder as to the details of your payment.

## Newsletter Editor Position

I have enjoyed being the editor of our newsletter for the past five years. It is, however, time for me to give someone else a chance to provide our members with a fresh perspective. If you are up to the challenge, I would be pleased to ease you into this role, or allow you your independence. Please contact me at [Elk.Island.RTA@shaw.ca](mailto:Elk.Island.RTA@shaw.ca) if you are interested in this position.

Inge Coates



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## Fake News?

With the ubiquitous use of social media comes an abundance of false or twisted information meant to deceive and manipulate the reader. I proudly thought "not me!" Surely, I am too aware to fall for someone's perversion of the truth--so I took the "Break the Fake" quiz presented by Media Smarts <https://mediasmarts.ca/break-fake>, and I failed! Apparently, I had lots to learn! Elsewhere on that website is a section on how to tell what is true online. <https://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/break-fake-how-tell-whats-true-online>. Here I found strategies that I could use to fact check, including online fact-checking tools like Snopes. <https://www.snopes.com>

In today's world, discerning the presence of deception has a new level of importance as we are bombarded with "news" and speculation about the COVID-19 virus and its impact on our health and economic future.

Knowing how to fact check is one thing, but trying to fact check the vast amounts of information pushed at us can be overwhelming. When this bombardment becomes too onerous, it may be time to switch off...and that's okay, too! A nice cup of tea and deep breaths can be very calming.

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As a post script, a good friend sent me a copy of the following poem supposedly written by Kathleen O'Mara in 1919 during the Spanish flu epidemic. The poem is wonderful, but checking with Snopes informed me that this is actually a modern-day poem written during the COVID-19 pandemic by author Catherine M. O'Meara, a former teacher in Wisconsin. It is still a thoughtful poem, worthy of sharing.

*And the people stayed home. And read books, and  
listened, and rested, and exercised, and made  
art, and played games, and learned new ways of  
being, and were still. And listened more deeply.  
Some meditated, some prayed, some danced.  
Some met their shadows.  
And the people began to think differently. And  
the people healed. And, in the absence of people  
living in ignorant, dangerous, mindless, and  
heartless ways, the earth began to heal.  
And when the danger passed, and the people  
joined together again, they grieved their losses,  
and made new choices, and dreamed new images  
and created new ways to live and heal the earth  
fully, as they had been healed.*

by Catherine M. O'Meara

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## Health Matters

*“Health Matters” is a feature written by Carol Gilbertson that offers health reminders. These reminders are meant to be helpful, and are not to be taken as medical advice. At all times, readers are advised to consult their own physician to ensure that what they are doing health-wise is in their best interests.*

### REACHING OUT FOR MENTAL WELLNESS

As we age it may be more common to need help with mental wellness. Sometimes we don't know exactly what we need or want, or we're unsure of what someone can offer. That's okay – that shouldn't discourage us from reaching out. Feeling helpless or exhausted is part and parcel of being mentally unwell. Being a senior is already challenging. If you are going through a rough time it's even harder. But we forget that it's okay to ask for a hand. Let someone know how you are feeling. You may be surprised by the ways they offer to support you.

Early interventions are *so critical* for our mental health. In other words, don't wait for your whole basement to flood before you fix a leaky pipe - fix the leaky pipe when you know the problem has started.

Finding a therapist or that someone to discuss things with is a huge step in taking charge of your mental health. Depression and other mental health issues can be debilitating for those who experience it. But there are many effective treatments and activities that are available that can help you manage your symptoms.

There will be deeply felt losses in all our lives. If you are in need of help through such difficult times, please consider the following resources:

-Grief and Loss Counselling in Edmonton, AB. Therapists for Trauma, Loss, and Bereavement <https://www.theravive.com/cities/ab/grief-counselling-edmonton.aspx>

-Grief Counselling | The Grief & Trauma Healing Centre <http://www.healmyheart.ca/>

-The Unexpected Grief Experience Called a STUG <https://www.nextavenue.org/the-blindside-wipeout-of-grief/>

-ARTA members may also contact Rachel Hughes RN. Care Specialist, Humanacare  
1-800-661-8191, ext. 286 [rhughes@humanacare.com](mailto:rhughes@humanacare.com)

### Note of Congratulations

We would like to include good-news notices in our newsletter, and encourage you to please send your happy announcements in an email to [elkislandrta@gmail.com](mailto:elkislandrta@gmail.com). Your good news also puts smiles on our faces!

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## Ideas to Keep You Entertained

Are you ahead with the spring cleaning and all those other things on your to-do list, or are you, like me, a little bit unfocused and walking from one room to the next wondering what you meant to do once you got there? Either way, here is a list of a few things that might keep you entertained...at least until you remember what you went to that other room for!

From "50 Free Things You Can Do During Lockdown" ([FutureLearn](#))

1. Watch a film: "Openculture has a great list of [1150 free films](#) you can watch online right now. If you have an eligible university or library card, you might also have access to [Kanopy](#) which offers thousands more film options for free."
2. Watch a documentary: "Whether you're into sharks, revolutions, or serial killers, you'll find something interesting to watch during lockdown. Some great sites include [Documentary Tube](#), [Top Documentary Films](#), and [Documentary Heaven](#). "
3. Write a novel: "If you're not really sure where to start, we have a [free course on how to start writing fiction](#) to get you on the right track."
4. Tour ancient Rome: "Current technology means that you can explore other cities and even other times online, such as this [virtual tour of ancient Rome](#) which takes you through the forum, capitoline hill, and famous monuments."
5. Write a screen play or short film: "You'll be pleased to know that the [BBC is on the hunt for original scripts about self-isolation](#) that they can turn into short films. If you're daunted by that task, you could try out our free [screenwriting course](#) to learn the ropes and (hopefully) catapult you into stardom after your first film is made."
6. Paint with Bob Ross: "You'll be pleased to know that 403 episodes of the timeless Joy of Painting have been added to [YouTube](#) so you can listen to his soothing tones while you paint happy little trees and enjoy the beauty of imperfections."
7. Write a song: "If you're not sure where to start a [songwriting course](#) could get you into the right frame of mind, and you can even start making some Spotify playlists in the meantime to get inspired. "
8. Visit the MoMA: "[New York's MoMA](#) is just one of the incredible galleries that you can visit from your own sofa, where you can enjoy Pollock and Monet without the crowds."
9. Explore the Uffizi: "If you prefer Botticelli to Pollock, you can [tour the Uffizi](#) in Florence, arguably one of the best collections of Renaissance art in the world"
10. Enjoy the Musée d'Orsay: Paris' Musée d'Orsay is home to an incredible collection of Van Gogh and Cezanne's artistic masterpieces. [Take a look around online.](#) "

For 40 more ideas, make sure to visit the website at <https://www.futurelearn.com/info/blog/50-free-things-you-can-do-during-lockdown>.

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## Notes of Compassion

*It is with heavy hearts that we send our condolences*

*To the family and friends of our colleague,  
Raymond (Ray) John Schmidt  
who passed away on January 26, 2020.*

*To Jeannie and John Sargent and their family at the passing of Jeannie's brother  
Ronald (Ron) Blair Anderson  
on February 16, 2020.*

*To the family of Beverly Carnahan, wife of Art Carnahan (deceased),  
at her passing  
On December 23, 2019.*

*To the family of our colleague,  
Annette Chase  
who passed away on March 17, 2020.*

*To the family of our colleague,  
Maurine Simonson  
who passed away on April 17, 2020.*

*\*Note: Please contact us at [elkislandrta@gmail.com](mailto:elkislandrta@gmail.com) if you know of news that should be included in our Compassion section. We depend on our membership to keep us updated.*

## Kindness

Are you aware of a member who is struggling?  
Please let us know, and we will reach out with a call or a card.  
Sometimes, just a little touch of kindness makes all the difference in the world.