

ELK ISLAND RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

President's Message

Elk Island retirees are a great bunch to work for. Your volunteer executive committee plans and promotes a sense of community, to help address seniors' issues and needs through organizing events and offering information sessions, to encourage members to take an active interest in the affairs of Elk Island Retired Teachers' Association as a branch of ARTA. ARTA is our generous 'parent' and support for all we do. The ATA Library helps us maintain a history and archive of the branch.

Our branch raised our membership fee after holding the line for over 40 years. You'll notice that increase as of October 1st. Every little bit helps to subsidize activities. Volunteers give of their time and energies for virtually no cost to all of us who participate.

October has been a fabulous month of weather and made your Thanksgiving celebration with family and friends. Our 'Walk in the Park' had us visiting as much as walking out there. Thank you to all who have been showing up.

My personal 'to do' list hasn't gotten any shorter. I Googled that word...and found out I'm just a procrastinator at heart. Every day is a new day for each of us to begin again, to continue something we've planned for, or to finish something too.

Some of our members already know this, but it's worth a mention. Our branch benefits from a grant each year from our parent group, ARTA. A portion of that grant enabled us to provide a great THWTB breakfast for members and invited guests for a reduced price. Elk Island Teachers Association hadn't increased our membership fee since 1985. We have been forced to increase it to \$20 per year in the branch. ARTA has not increased theirs. Thank you, ARTA! Just to note...if you are not already an ARTA member, your \$25 fee comes back to us in supports and grants from ARTA over the year.

And a note about participation in ARTA itself...we now have 6 members sitting on committees and as executive committee members. Deb Gerow is now Past President. As your President, I attend the Board of Directors meetings and share our news. Alain Levesque is Treasurer. Karen Wilson sits on the ARTA Foundation. Julie Ginther sits on the Health Benefits Committee. Edna Dach is now a member of the Communications Committee. We benefit by having input into the vision and mission of ARTA on all those fronts. Bravo!

Once again, the Christmas luncheon is almost ready with Ruby Okamura at the helm. Set your calendar for December 3rd. The Broadmoor Golf Club has continued to be our go to venue because they present a very cost-effective meal. Bring your singing voice and friends. Bring a Christmas gift to donate as well if you can.

Valentine's Day luncheon is in the planning stage for February 11th, 2026. Mark your calendars.



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Elk Island RTA website:

<https://artabranches.net/elkislandrta/>

Elk Island RTA email:

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ARTA
ALBERTA RETIRED
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

**Elk Island RTA Executive
Contact at**
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President

Dolaine Koch

Vice President

Maj-Britt Bigotti

Treasurer

Alain Levesque

Secretary

Elaine Whitford

ATA Liaison

Denis Schell

Compassion & Congratulations

Cathy Allen

Communication

Julie Ginther

Membership

Cathy Allen

Social Committee

Ruby Okamura

Members: Sheila Busch
Sylvia Roes

Members at Large

Kaye Schindeler Carol Gilbertson

Dianna Millard Karen Wilson

Lorna Johnson

Our active member colleagues of the ATA are really being tested for their strength and resilience right now. Elk Island Teachers Association has been connecting for several years now. Our ATA Liaison, Denis Schell, met with our Local #28 at the start of this school year and since. He's been connecting our Catholic Local members, meeting regularly. There has been no positive change in the way the provincial government is handling the whole education portfolio. Many of us have been showing up to the rallies. If you wish to hear news and know where/what's going on, please let Julie Ginther know so you can participate and send the word to our government.

Send your thoughts to the Premier and her minions. Find their contact information easily. Don't forget to copy your message to the NDP leader, Naheed Nenshi.

<https://www.assembly.ab.ca/members/members-of-the-legislative-assembly>

ARTA Rx is well on the way to making our Benefit Plan the best in Canada. The Calgary pharmacy is set to open in January 2026 if all goes as planned now. Did you know that the profits from the operation go right back into the plan to keep your premium cost low and to continue to add supported benefits to enhance your health and wellbeing?

Are you getting any emails from ARTA Travel Newsletter? Some exciting offerings are making me look forward to learning more. ARTA updates us by emails regarding our Health Benefits Plans. I hope you've updated your member information with them.

As an ARTA representative, I attend Health Services Committee meetings for ACER-CART (Canadian Association of Retired Teachers) and can share that most other provinces are experiencing the same awful health care supports or lack thereof. The pharmacare situation isn't getting any better. The dental plan is so convoluted and poorly administered, that some of us are a casualty of poor communication. This is resulting in the government asking for money back. We cannot imagine how bad this can be for pensioner. We should be lobbying our own MLAs here in Alberta (see the link above) to ensure all Albertans get to benefit from that too. You may be interested in this website where information a regarding health and seniors is very helpful:

<https://www.friendsofmedicare.org>

The ARTA Board of Directors meeting (held September 9 and 10) gave us some timely information regarding our benefits premiums and what we can expect. You should see an email explaining any changes. We will see a change in premium and what's covered as of November 1st. Did you receive a new member card yet? You can always get updates by signing in to

<https://www.myarta.net/>

We are all in this together. Do you have a question, a suggestion, or an idea that you'd like to share? Do you know of someone who could use our help? Us seniors need to support each other. We hope our Elk Island RTA can be of help.

ATA Liaison Report

October 2025

Take heed, 'tis the season for the eerie indeed!"

I trust you have signed the Alberta Forever Canada petition going around! A big thank you to those of you at the "To Hell with the Bells" brunch that added their signatures to Elaine's and my petition sheets.

Our respect goes out to our fellow teachers who are on strike. They are clearly showing their concern for an underfunded public education system in our province. Remember, they receive no strike pay and despite attempts to turn Albertans against teachers, they remain strongly committed and supported. The future of public education depends on what we do today to support teachers.

It was awesome to see so many of our Elk Island Retired Teachers at the Legislature and Rogers Place rallies supporting striking teachers. What a feeling to be part of so many people standing up and rallying for this important cause. A big thank you goes out to Elk Island Local for inviting us to share their bus transportation as arranged by Maxine, the ATA Local #28 president. It is so important to educate Albertans, the Premier and Education Minister on the true state of education in our province. Rally On!

Be sure to be informed regarding the Private School Petition asking whether the Provincial Government should be allocating our public tax money to private schools. Remember that Alberta is the only province in Canada that builds private schools with our public dollars and then funds their students at 70% of the per-student grant provided to public school students. This is the largest subsidy in the country at \$460 million which is definitely excessive, especially when our public schools are the least funded in Canada.

I hope you were able to get out and vote at the municipal election on the 20th and didn't have to wait too long in a line up. Did you notice that our Kaye Shindeler won her seat on the EIPS school board with the highest number of votes of all school board candidates? Congratulations Kaye!

Perhaps I should be a bear or some other hibernating animal for Halloween this year. My instinct nowadays is to be half asleep and just like my pal Yoda from Star Wars says, "For a tropical retreat I'm looking. Yes, hmmm."

Eat, drink and be scary friends!

Denis





Fall Walk

It was a lovely crisp fall day when 32 members and guests met on the afternoon of October 8th at the picnic shelter in Broadmoor Lake Park. With a roaring fire, hot coffee and tea to warm our insides, and snacks to give us energy, the afternoon became a great time to visit and walk. The skies were blue and clear as walkers did laps around the lake or stood by the fire to share their latest news and adventures.

Our walks usually happen two or three times a year. They provide a wonderful opportunity to get outside for fresh air and exercise. Our next walk will probably be in early spring. Make a point to come out and join us then.

Carol Gilbertson contributes to our newsletter with tips and ideas reflecting her passion for gardening. Carol has an amazing green thumb, and she enjoys spending time in her gorgeous garden

Note: Please be aware that registration implies that you will be attending. The cost of your meal will be charged to EIRTA by the caterer even if you do not attend, so please let us know in advance of your change of plans. You WILL be responsible for the cost of your meal if you have not cancelled before August 23rd. Thank you for your understanding.

***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.





Please forward this newsletter to any colleagues, friends or interested parties who would enjoy reading about what is happening in Elk Island