

ELK ISLAND RETIRED TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Happy New Year

President's Message

Happy New Year everyone!

We've heard a lot of stories about the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF). Let's get the best information. On Thursday, February 5, 2026, from 2:00 to

3:00 PM ARTA's Pension & Financial Wellness will host the annual ATRF Retired Teachers' Pension Fund Report **online**. If you wish to view the report, please go to the ARTA website at <https://www.arta.net/events> and scroll the list for the February 5 session. Simply click the button to link up on the appointed day.

We received a grant from ARTA in November. This is basically sending us \$20 of each of your membership fee that they receive from you. If you aren't a member, please consider it. The perks and advantages are much worth the price of that membership. <https://www.arta.net/arta-advantages> Yes, it's another fee, but then the grant gives most of it to us, wherein we can subsidize activity costs.

ARTA will be hosting the Board of Directors' meeting on February 24 and 25. Along with it will be the ARTA 101 information session. Alain Levesque will be attending as the ARTA Treasurer. I am considered a Director as your representative. You can view the November Board meeting report at <https://www.arta.net/posts/general-interest/2025-arta-agm-report>

Elk Island teachers and retirees have been on a roller coaster politically and regarding our economic situations. If you would like to keep abreast of the various emerging issues in Alberta such as Health Care, Education, and Long-Term Care, please go to <https://www.pialberta.org> for more information on these and other topics. This website will also tell you more about other organizations that are part of Public Interest Alberta. Maj-Britt Bigotti, our Vice-President, has been appointed ARTA's representative to this organization.

Maj-Britt is also our Representative armed with training to be an excellent source of ARTA benefits and perks. We look forward to having her address a group soon.

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Winter Edition

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Elk Island RTA website:

<http://artabranches.net/elkislandrta>

ARTA
ALBERTA RETIRED
TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Elk Island RTA Executive

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

Deb Gerow

Lorna Johnson

.../continued

Your Elk Island RTA Executive met January 7, 2026. A great lunch, hosted at Ruby Okamura's home, was served. We had much discussion about how to engage our membership in activities and supports that are meaningful and/or entertaining. The costs for activities are growing without any room for negotiation. With that in mind, we put aside a Valentine Luncheon because the cost would be prohibitive. We will send out emails about coming activities and dates.

As we all know, losing a loved one is never easy. But not having access to all the financial areas because of lack of information and/or passwords can be devastating on top of the grief one has. Have, and make available to the spouse or significant other, a record of every password for any bank accounts and JOINT bank accounts, any credit cards and JOINT credit cards. The passwords for the TV, streaming services and utilities and everything else that may require payments or changes must be available when one passes away. Check if you can add your spouse as another contact who can make changes. Is that in your 'notes app' or some record on a jump drive that you keep updating? There also are couples out there who the spouse isn't a primary holder of any credit or name on a utility bill. The problem with this is a lack of credit history. Some spouses have been financially devastated because they could not get timely access. We hope you all are keeping each other informed.

Lastly, but not the end...Let's keep sending our letters to the Members of the Legislature, including the Premier. 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>

Your executive team is needing your help! You will be getting a short questionnaire in your inbox in February. We are going to use this questionnaire to help plan our upcoming events. The rising costs for events have made planning events challenging. **Please** take a couple of minutes to answer the questionnaire.

Thanks!



ATA Liaison Report

January 2026

This is definitely a strange winter with a mixture of extremes! Like the commercial says, "If you don't like the weather now, wait 5 minutes..." It is difficult to accept that, "there's no such thing as bad weather, only the wrong clothes" when you are slipping and sliding on ice or shoveling all this snow.

Elk Island Teachers are back in their classrooms enduring the same conditions they were rallying to change back in October. EIRTA encourages you to continue supporting them by writing your MLA's and the premier's office. Be sure to copy the opposition as well.

Most of the Local ATA meetings have been virtual so far this year.

During those meetings, Elk Island Teachers have chosen to address a number of interesting issues. One that caught my attention on January 19th was that educators are questioning themselves on how to support 2SLGBTQI+ students within the constraints of the restrictive, discriminatory legislation passed by the provincial government.

The ATA Local also invited members to ski or toboggan at Sunridge Night on the 24th, I'm afraid the wait times in hospital emergency rooms would be a deterrent for me.

An event that may be of interest to us Elk Island Retired Teachers to attend is a Political Engagement Meeting at 4:30, February 9th at the ATA office in Sherwood Park. It is located at #647 – 33 Blackfoot Road. Let me know by email at djls@shaw.ca if you are interested in attending and I'll make sure there's a chair for you.

I will be helping to man the ARTA booth this year at Teachers' Convention. I enjoy talking to people and hopefully I can connect with some teachers who might be interested in our benefit plans and joining up with EIRTA in the future. Is it just me, or does it seem like our working colleagues are getting younger each year?

If you haven't signed the petition objecting to our public taxes being used to build and fund private schools, you still have some time to do so. Alberta is the only province in Canada that does this.

I find myself looking forward to spring, even though we still have a few months of winter coming. Here's a hint. If you get cold, try standing in the corner of a room. It's usually 90 degrees!

Respectfully submitted,

Denis





Membership has benefits!

Being a member of EIRTA does have benefits. Our membership dues are only \$20/year. Members receive special rates on many of our events. You get the opportunity to receive our quarterly newsletter and important email notifications. 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 Cathy Allen through the "CONTACT US" page.

“The Luck of the Irish” River Cree Casino Event Thursday, March 12, 2026

There is no cost to attend, and a complimentary bus will be available to drive us to the casino. The bus will leave from the southeast corner (facing Home Hardware) of the Wye Road Walmart’s parking lot.

The bus will leave the parking lot at **9:30 am SHARP** and will return around 2:00 —2:30 pm.

A cashout voucher of \$5.00 and a complimentary meal voucher will be provided for each attendee.

Register with **SYLVIA ROES** by **MONDAY, MARCH 9**. Please use the **"CONTACT US" page**.

If you need to drive yourself to River Cree casino, you **MUST** still register with Sylvia to receive the free vouchers.

Meet Your EIRTA Executive

DEB GEROW



Hello everyone. It is a pleasure to introduce myself to you. I am currently the past president of ARTA and am a long-time member of the Elk Island Retired Teachers’ Association.

When I retired from EIPS in 2012, I became a member of this branch. I served as newsletter and membership chair for three years and then vice president for four years. I currently attend branch executive meetings as an informed observer, bringing information from ARTA on matters that affect our branch members.

My husband and I reside on an acreage near Josephburg. We have both always been involved in our community, whether it was the volunteer fire department, the Josephburg Presents dinner concert series, or the local seniors’ club. I enjoy reading, quilting, making music, and spending time with our grandchildren.

I truly believe that maintaining an active and engaged lifestyle helps to keep retirees healthy. I will continue to work to make a difference for our members, other seniors,

ARTA's Pension and Financial Wellness Committee presents the ATRF Annual Report 2025.



Don't
Miss
This:

- Date
Thursday, February 5
- Time
1 p.m. - 2 p.m.
- Location
Zoom Webinar

Join ARTA's Pension & Financial Wellness Committee for another financial wellness webinar. This webinar will be of interest to retired teachers, as it pertains to the health and longevity of pensions for teachers in Alberta, and will be presented by the Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund (ATRF).

Registration

Link: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2KEoPUffSRStmd_ogaKrkW



Planning a vacation or buying a new car? Looking for a fitness membership or going for a nice dinner out?

ARTA can help you save on these and so much more!

ARTA Perks is the custom-built discount program for ARTA members, designed with you in mind. With a focus on travel, health and wellness, and shopping and entertainment, ARTA has been working hard at securing discounts on the services that mean the most to you. There is a selection of offers, both local and national.

Save much more than your annual membership fee by using the many discounts from a large number of partners around the world. The ARTA discounts are at no additional cost to you as an ARTA member and are designed to offer you more value for your annual ARTA membership.

All the deals available through the ARTA Perks program can be found in your myarta.net account, under the "ARTA Perks" menu bar. Check back often as we are adding new offers on a regular basis!



Notes of Compassion

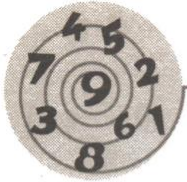
*It is with heavy hearts that we send our condolences:
To the family of our colleague and former Superintendent,
Terry Gunderson
Who passed away on
December 12, 2025*

www.CreativeCertificates.com



***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.***

Puzzle Page



MEDIUM

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In the Extreme Sudoku puzzles on these two pages, the shaded diagonals must also contain the numbers 1-9.

	5	4					1	
		1	4		2			5
2				5	1			
	3	2						4
			2	9	5			
6						5	2	
			9	2				8
3			1		6	7		
	9					3	4	



Some pictures from our favourite gardener, Carol Gilbertson



Puzzle answer

1	9	6	5	8	7	3	4	2
3	2	8	1	4	6	7	5	9
7	4	5	9	2	3	1	6	8
6	8	9	7	3	4	5	2	1
4	1	7	2	9	5	6	8	3
5	3	2	6	1	8	9	7	4
2	6	3	8	5	1	4	9	7
9	7	1	4	6	2	8	3	5
8	5	4	3	7	9	2	1	6

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