



Retired Women Teachers of Ontario / Organisation des Enseignantes Retraitées de l'Ontario

President's Message

December - the advent of holiday celebrations. I cannot believe we are here already. I am halfway through my term as Provincial President - and what a terrific six months it has been. Lively Board of Directors discussions, interesting Zoom meetings, and most of all the wonderful opportunity to meet our members in their Branches. I have found each Branch to be unique, but we are also similar in many important ways. We love to socialize with our colleagues, we love RWTO/OERO and we are devoted to improving the lives of women and children in our communities. You are such a welcoming group to me and our new members who I know will be made to feel at home in our Branches. It is such a pleasurable experience to visit you.

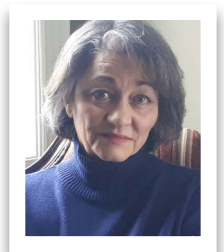
During the summer and autumn, the Provincial Board of Directors has been working hard to move RWTO/OERO confidently forward in difficult times. The Marketing Committee is working on several initiatives. The most important is the beautiful new brochure which will be sent to your Branch soon, if it is not already there. They certainly deserve a holiday break for all the work this committee has accomplished.

The Board of Directors accomplishes so much

behind the scenes. The Ad Hoc Committee on Provincial Delegates is meeting - interesting discussions there. The Ad Hoc Committee on Branch Leadership and Structure meets regularly in a forum format.

During my fall visits, I was impressed with how vibrant our branches are even when experiencing difficulty filling leadership positions. Some of you have found novel ways to solve this dilemma. If you have suggestions you would like to share, or issues to raise, please contact our 1st Vice President Jan Murdoch, the chair of the committee. She will arrange for you to attend one of their Zoom meetings.

The Ad Hoc Committee on Social Justice has also been very busy. They are examining Long Term Care issues to determine if RWTO/OERO can become involved. Many of our members are directly impacted by the level of care offered by these institutions. Moira Walsh, Investigative Reporter for The Toronto Star, spoke at



Sandra Salerno,
Provincial President

Retired Women Teachers of Ontario Organisation des enseignantes retraitées de l'Ontario

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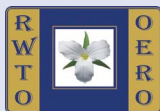
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President's Message – continued

one of our meetings.

Many Board Members are busy preparing for our Virtual Convention in 2024. I think everyone will be ready for the holiday break.

As we prepare to celebrate the holiday season with loved ones, we must not forget the elderly and vulnerable in our province. Our caring and sharing actions bring hope and cheer to the women and children we assist. Our motto is the cornerstone of

RWTO/OERO. I feel so proud of our organization when I see examples of this generosity all over Ontario.

I wish all our members, new and old, a happy holiday season.

May health and happiness be yours in 2024.

Sandra Salerno

Provincial President 2023 – 2024

Call for Nominations 2023-2024

1. Provincial Executive Officers

Nominations for the following elected Executive Officer positions for the RWTO/OERO Provincial Board of Directors will now be accepted until January 31, 2024:

- Provincial 2nd Vice-President
- Provincial Program Coordinator

Nominees should have experience at the Board Level, as well as at the Branch Executive level and/or in other organizations.

The job description for these positions are found in the RWTO/OERO Provincial Policies and Procedures Manual, which can be found on our website at www.rwto.org, under the title ABOUT, click on Governance. Please review Article VI, Duties of Executive Officers. You may also contact your Area Director or the Nominations Committee Chair for the job descriptions.

Nominees are to submit their name by completing the Candidate's Form for RWTO/OERO Elected Position, which has been signed by your Branch President or Co-Presidents. The Candidate's Form can be found on our website at www.rwto.org, under the title ABOUT, click on Governance. The form can be filled out online or printed and filled out. A reference letter is NOT required from the Branch.

You will also be required to submit a bio (maximum 200 words) and photo for inclusion in the March

issue of Connections. Instructions for what to include in the bio are listed on the Candidate's Form. Nominations should be emailed or mailed with a postmark by January 31, 2024 to the Provincial Nominations Committee Chair.

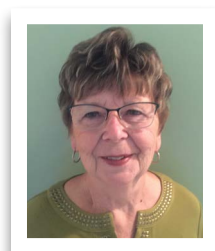
2. Area Directors

Any new Area Directors will be selected or elected in accordance with their Area's protocol (see Provincial Policies and Procedures Manual, Article IV 3.). Once chosen, the names should be sent to the Provincial Nominations Committee Chair before March 31, 2024.

For further details about any position, please contact any member of the Nominations Committee: Judy Drummond, Sandra Salerno, Lynda Sommer, Area 7 Director, Joan Gamble, Area 8 Director.

Judy Drummond, Past President,
Provincial Nominations
Committee Chair

140 Drummond Rd
Toledo, ON K0E 1Y0
jjdrum@xplornet.com



Honorary Membership Award Nominations

The Provincial Honorary Membership Award is the highest honour bestowed on a member for outstanding services to our organization at the Provincial level. This special award is presented at the Annual General Meeting. A description and the criteria for the award are found in Article XII of the Provincial Policies and Procedures Manual located on the RWTO/OERO website www.rwto.org under the link About and then Governance.

This Provincial Award can be made by a Branch or a member-at-large. Your nomination letter should include an outline listing the Provincial Committees on which the nominee has served, highlighting contributions to RWTO/OERO at the Provincial level.

Nominations must be received by the Nominations Committee Chair, Nancy Bell, by January 31, 2024. Please provide your full name, current mailing address, telephone number and email address of the nominee.

Please send nominations to:

Mail: Nancy Bell
120 Killarney Court
London, ON N5X 2B6
Email: rwto.pastpresident2022@gmail.com



Membership Award Nominations

All Branches should consider making a submission for the “Feather in Your Hat” award.

The Membership Committee recognizes creative, innovative, and successful activities carried out by a Branch or group of Branches who have cooperated on a project that has enriched the program offered by RWTO/OERO. The “Feather in Your Hat” award is now tiered according to Branch size. Three awards may be given in each category (small, medium, and large).

This award application must be submitted to the Membership Committee between January 1, 2024 and March 1, 2024. Please check the RWTO/OERO website for the criteria and procedure to be followed when assembling your submission. On the top bar, click on “Membership”. From the drop-down menu, select “Awards”.

To ensure your submission has been received, please notify the Membership Convenor by email at rwtomembership@gmail.com.

The Membership Convenor will confirm its arrival by email.

Good luck to everyone!

Kathy McLean
Membership Convenor





Insurance Matters

It's Christmas time again! The air is crisp. Homes are beautifully decorated with Christmas lights. Christmas parades and church Christmas pageants make everything festive and remind us of the reason for the season. It's such a wonderful time of year to connect with our friends and family. Christmas parties, shopping, wrapping gifts, planning for the Christmas Day feast, Christmas carols on the radio all help us feel a bit of the excitement we felt as children!

It's also a time of reflection. As the old year draws to a close and a new one begins, we reflect on the year that has passed and always look forward to better times ahead. I find Christmas to be a time to consider those less fortunate than myself and dig a little deeper to help others. A time to pay a shut-in friend a visit to spread the joy of the season and deliver a poinsettia. A time to donate to our local Food Bank. "Caring & Sharing" becomes more than just a motto but also a way of life.

This fall, as we've visited Branch Insurance Convenors at Fall Workshops, we've often wondered why some members haven't enrolled in the RWTO/OERO Hospital & Home Care Plan. Applying is easy...there is no physical examination or visit to the doctor required to enroll. If you've recently retired and are still in your first year of retirement, your acceptance into the plan is guaranteed. The plan is affordable, costing less than 50 cents a day. If a member is turned down for coverage, she would still be accepted the next time an Open Enrolment Period occurs, which is another opportunity to enroll in the plan with guaranteed acceptance. There are several benefits under the plan that aren't covered by secondary insurance, for instance, the Convalescent Benefit and

Comfort Care Benefit. Where there is duplication of benefits, you can claim under both plans through the Coordination of Benefits feature. The Hospital & Home Care Plan is a natural extension to your health insurance needs, supplementing and enhancing any Extended Health Care Plan you already have such as that provided by RTOERO, RTIP, or even a spousal plan. So, if you haven't enrolled in the plan, may we suggest that you take a closer look at the many benefits of the Hospital & Home Care Plan? Ask your Branch Insurance Convenor for a brochure. I'm sure she'll be happy to provide you with one.

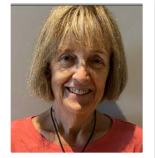
From your Insurance Team, we wish you a very happy and safe holiday season and a Happy New Year!

LeAnne Taylor, Insurance Convenor

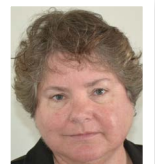
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rwtooeroinsurance@gmail.com



Assistant Insurance Convenor
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rwtoinsurance@gmail.com



Manulife Financial 1-800-268-3763
Broker: Terry Kennedy
The Dolphin Consulting Group
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Issues and Concerns

Senior Living Sector – Retirement Home Living *When and Where to start?*

We have a particular senior residence in my community that has been 'home' to seniors since the late '60s. At the time, the building was state of the art, supported by members of a local church who provided a personal touch when celebrating birthdays, holidays, entertainment and was considered innovative in its approach to meeting its residents' needs. My grandmother was one of the first residents and delighted in everything about the place from her own room with tv and washroom, her own pieces of furniture placed around the room, getting dressed up everyday, to tasty meals in the dining room sitting with friends. Over the years many of my relatives have moved into this residence. My mother was very unhappy there as it wasn't her decision to be there. My father-in-law on the other hand was quite satisfied with his surroundings and we were all sad to see him leave when he required more care. The residence underwent a complete 'refresh' a few years ago and I joked that by the time it's ready for a new remodel, that's about when I will be ready to move in!

Retirement homes can be owned and operated by: for-profit companies, not-for-profit companies and government owned, which enables accessibility for low income seniors. Residents reside as tenants who do not require a high-level care (defined as 1.5 hours or more of care a day.) Each retirement home is different, but most offer your own room or apartment, shared dining rooms and common areas or lounges, full wheelchair access, housekeeping and laundry (for a fee) and social and recreational programs. Many homes offer flexibility — you may choose to opt in or out of paid meal plans or other services as your needs change. You may also leave for extended periods of time (for example, vacation) and keep your residence, as long as you continue paying for rent and service fees. The government does not fund retirement homes. Residents are responsible for the full cost of their: rent, meals, care services purchased through the

home and external care services that are not publicly funded.

How will you know when it's time to consider moving into a retirement home? Or, when will your family think that it's time for you to move into a retirement home? From the beginning of this series of articles, the goal has been to ensure that we are making choices for ourselves. The day may come when you are tired of maintaining your yard, worrying about who is going to shovel snow, buying groceries and cooking meals. Home support services such as home care, meal delivery services, and transportation assistance are no longer meeting your needs. Falls, level of help in personal grooming, loneliness and family members unable to give you necessary time for care/visits, may all influence your decision. You may embrace living in a supportive, safe and secure environment that can accommodate varying levels of changing service needs, belonging to a community of peers and participating in that community while having the flexibility and option to enjoy privacy with support and caring staff available 24/7.

When exploring seniors' residences, look at what services are included in the monthly cost and what services, if any, you can purchase at an additional cost. Consider location and how easy it will be to get to community facilities such as churches, libraries, hospitals and community centres. Consider the availability of transportation for shopping, outings and medical appointments. Have a lawyer or someone you trust review a service agreement or housing contract before you sign it. Ask for information about the way a facility handles complaints and disputes. Other areas to question would be staff to resident ratio, do residents interact kindly and often with one another, cleanliness of the residence, how are the grounds kept, suitable lighting and falling hazards minimized. Try to talk to people who live there.

The decision to leave your family home and move into

Continued ►



Issues and Concerns - continued

a senior residence will take careful consideration and preparation, both physically and mentally. Best case scenario, it's one that you have made after reviewing your options, and selecting a residence that meets your needs and interests. The opportunity to meet new people, spending your day your way, having new, meaningful experiences without the obligations of home ownership, will contribute to this new way of living.

Finally, cost will be a consideration for many. Pres-

ently, according to 2021 data, the baseline fee per month is \$3200.00 - \$4000.00 +. Any services will add to that cost.

For further information on senior residences, please visit ontario.ca and choose Find a Retirement Home.

Lynn Sulman,
Issues and Concerns



Program

SEASON'S GREETINGS TO ALL AREA DIRECTORS AND PRESIDENTS!

Fall certainly started out more like summer, but of course, more seasonal weather has prevailed. As you prepare the many seasonal special events planned for your Branches, I have noted that you all, always remember to include vital caring and support within your communities in your planning.

In January, our thoughts must turn to focus on the **2024 Virtual Annual General Meeting 'Growing Forward Together'**. Thank you to all who will be part of our second Virtual Song Project. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

In mid-January, you will receive your **Membership** information, prepared by the **Provincial Office**, identifying **two things**. First, your **current membership**, as of the **January date** noted. Please

report any discrepancies in the information provided to the **Provincial Office** as soon as possible. Secondly, your **membership** as of **November 30** identifying the number of **delegates** your Branch is assigned for the **2024 Annual General Meeting**.

In **late January** I will send out the **2024 Annual General Meeting Bulletin**, which will provide details regarding the process and procedures related to the Annual General Meeting. This will function as a great guide for yourself and your executive in supporting your members. It is highly recommended that you print this document for future reference.

Judith Bennoch
Provincial Program Coordinator
rwtoprogramcoordinator@gmail.com



Board Reports

Archivist

Reminder to presidents, membership convenors, or treasurers: notices for deceased members must be sent to Linda Huffman at the provincial office by January 31, 2024. Send pictures to Susan Rose, rwtoarchivist@gmail.com by March 31, 2024. Be sure that you receive a reply acknowledging your notice; if not, please remind me. I can retrieve photos from websites if I know the name of the funeral home.

Any deceased member who has not previously been entered into *Connections*, the In Memoriam book

or slideshow may also be included. Sometimes it is difficult to locate members who move away or enter long term care homes, and we don't always find out until later. We don't want anyone overlooked. It is an honour to remember these ladies in our program.

Plans for this year's slideshow are underway; the theme is Time.

Susan Rose,
Archivist



Goodwill

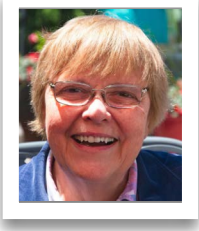
Greetings, RWTO/OERO Members!

The Provincial 2nd Vice President becomes the Provincial Goodwill Convenor for the year, and it is a privilege to be able to serve in this capacity. During our organization's 68th year, I am connecting with 286 of our most senior members, who have achieved the age of 90 or over, as well as 19 of our amazing Past Presidents. They will receive birthday, Christmas and spring greeting cards from the Provincial organization this year. Forty-four of our members will celebrate their 90th year in 2023/24, and are now included in this special membership group. Nine members will become centenarians this year and receive a special birthday gift on behalf of the

organization. They join twelve more of our members who are over the age of 100. I have been delighted to receive some replies to the birthday cards sent – they are a joy to receive. Branches are asked to help us keep our database up to date, with accurate birth dates and changes in personal information. Please send updates to Linda Huffman.

Enjoy a wonderful year full of Branch activities!

Linda Sargeant,
Goodwill Convenor
rwto2ndvp@gmail.com



Communications

Website Convenor

Thank you to everyone who has sent me updates for their Branch pages as well as News and Upcoming Events. Thank you also for your patience as I am learning to navigate through this position. I want to again encourage everyone to use the form that Kathy Gallagher set up for us all to use so that your items get posted promptly. You'll find it under the BRANCHES tab and Branch News and Events, on our website. Just a reminder that a **News** item is an event that has already taken place and you want to tell everyone about it, including showing some pictures that you took. An **Event** is something that you're advertising, that hasn't happened yet that will show up on your Branch page as an Upcoming Event as well as on the calendar, on the month and day that

it is taking place. You can again attach a picture of the poster that you might have created for the event or any other picture pertaining to the event coming up.

As the holiday season is quickly approaching, I look forward to seeing and hearing about all the wonderful events that are taking place in all our Branches. Remember, if you need help, I'm only an email away.

Jane Macdonald
Communications Website Convenor
rwtowebsite@gmail.com



Continued ►



Communications - continued

Newsletter Convenor

One of our goals as an organization is to communicate with the members regularly. RWTO/OERO's newsletter, *Connections*, is published three times each year and members determine how they wish to receive each edition - via email or a hard copy mailed to your homes. Costs of email are significantly less and you receive the news much faster this way. If you wish to receive the newsletter by email and you don't already, please contact Linda Huffman, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, and that change will be made.

Please keep us informed of any changes in your mailing address and email. After the September newsletter was sent out by email we received many "bounce backs" - newsletters not received because of either incorrect addresses or the email account is no longer active. Let's keep our member's information at RWTO/OERO updated.

Thanks so much!

Kathy Smith
Newsletter Convenor
rwtoconnections@gmail.com



**Coming Soon ...
to a computer,
tablet or
smartphone
near you!**



Virtual AGM Convention 2024

Tuesday June 4th & Wednesday June 5th

***Opportunities for both Delegates and All Members will be included.
Watch for details in the March Connections!***

Hosted by your Provincial Board of Directors

Sales and Materials

We are pleased to have a variety of RWTO/OERO materials available to order by email: rwtprovsales@gmail.com. Please take note of the new email. You may also telephone: 289 422 5730.

Our newest materials that are very popular are the logo sheets (50 for \$0.50), the new pen (\$1.25 apiece) and the RWTO post it notepads (\$1.25/apiece).

When you contact Joanne Weeks a package will be prepared. A receipt will also be included. We just need to know whether it is a Branch receipt or a personal receipt. The receipt will be included in your package.

To pay you send a cheque made out to "RWTO/OERO" for your total to Linda Huffman at RWTO/OERO 2736 Twelfth Concession, Tecumseh, Ontario, N8N 0H9.



@1.25.



@\$0.50 for 50



note pads @\$1.25

Joanne Weeks
Provincial Sales and Materials





News from the Branches – "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion"

Dundalk-Flesherton and District

The Dundalk- Flesherton and District Branch of the RWTO/OERO is a relatively small branch that does its best to accommodate the needs of our members.

All of our meetings are during the day to make travel safer for our ladies and are held in fully accessible venues. Our meeting calendar is organized with safe travel in mind as we do not meet during the winter months. We gather in a variety of locations to balance the distance that some of our members must travel to attend our meetings. We arrange the venue's furniture, as best we can, to allow all members to be able to see and hear those who are speaking and/or presenting. We attempt to ensure that our catered lunches are designed to meet the dietary needs of our membership.

Submitted by
Barb Henry, Co-President

Owen Sound and Area

The members of RWTO/OERO Owen Sound and Area Branch are no strangers to embedding diversity and inclusion into all that they do. It was part of who they were in their classrooms and schools. It is part of who they are as members of RWTO/OERO.

Accessibility is a huge component of diversity and inclusion. It is not simply about physical access to a building, to seeing and hearing at a meeting or program opportunity. It is also about being able to be an active participant in what we are doing. Let us consider line dancing as an example. ALL of our members were able to participate: some on their feet; some dancing with their hands on their tables; some weaving and bobbing in their seats. It gives us great joy to support our members in this

way.

Submitted by
Cynthia Lemon, Branch President

South Bruce

During the past twenty years South Bruce has experienced a greater appreciation, acceptance and respect of all cultures. In 2003 Dr. Chandra Tripathy organized a celebration of community and cultures coming together in a local school. This year 35 ethnic groups shared their cultures, cuisine, dance and traditions providing an opportunity for discussion and information. Hundreds attended the multicultural event. A real sense of belonging and inclusion is fostered. These people live and work here. Their children attend our schools. Together we make a community!

Some of our Branch members teach ESL to refugee families from Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine. Often the learning is a two way process. Pride parades are celebrated. Truth and Reconciliation Day was observed by staff and students in many schools. Orange T-shirts were worn with respect.

We welcome retired EAs, ECEs, Y&C workers and teachers from many cultures as new members to South Bruce Branch RWTO/OERO.

Submitted by
Frances Nixon, Branch President

Warton

Warton Branch of RWTO/OERO alternated meetings between the south end and the north end sixty kilometres away. We met in accessible venues between Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, supporting community caterers. Several members

News from the Branches – "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion"

judge the children's submissions at the three fall fairs to which we donate. Supplies are collected for the four food banks we support. The Land Acknowledgement began our November meeting at which Elder Shirley John, an Ojibway Mohawk from the local Saugeen First Nation, involved us in a moving Truth and Reconciliation circle involving the sharing of strawberries, and the blessing of each person in the circle with water from Georgian Bay. She has since won Bruce County's Woman of Distinction award. Our programs are varied and informative, often involving music or a guest speaker. Best of all is the opportunity to connect, socialize and celebrate with others.

Submitted by
Pat Howes, Branch President



Brant

For several years, the Brant Branch of RWTO/OERO has welcomed retired Educational Assistants and School Administrators to the Branch membership. There are some members of that group on the local executive. As retired teachers, we recognize the valuable role that each of those professionals played to special needs students in the classroom and to the success of the entire school.

Schools from Six Nations of the Grand River are invited to participate in the 'Bite of Brant' Agriculture Awareness program for Grade 5 students, held annually in April. In the past, representatives from the Indian Agriculture Association of Southern Ontario have presented one of the twenty

hands-on activity stations. Their theme was to explain and demonstrate some of their traditions with regard to the growing of crops, etc. Students from the W. Ross MacDonald School for the Visually Impaired have also participated in the Bite of Brant program.

Submitted by
Jean Emmott, Branch President

Haldimand

Haldimand is a rural Branch encompassing a large geographical area. We welcome members from Haldimand, Norfolk, out of area and those who have moved into our area since retirement.

Some began their careers in one and two room schoolhouses, while others taught in larger schools throughout the area. We welcome many from the elementary and secondary panels as well as administrators. We have welcomed many new members this year, including an educational assistant. We look forward to welcoming more women educational professionals from the EA, ECE and CYW groups.

We meet for socialization and home cooked lunches in local churches of various denominations. At our luncheons, we collect food and supplies for local food banks, "beautiful junk" for an Early Learning Centre and gift cards and cash for Haldimand Norfolk Women's Services at Christmas.

In Haldimand, Caring and Sharing is not just a motto, but a way of living for our wonderful ladies.

Submitted by
Anne Mageran, Branch President

Hamilton-Wentworth

Diversity is increasingly found in the school

News from the Branches – "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion"



Hamilton-Wentworth New Member Brunch

photo taken in our area ... inclusivity will greatly increase when these children grow up to be again part of these photos - as staff members. While we await the retirement of these future members, can we still be a diverse and inclusive organization? Absolutely! We already amalgamate members from public, separate, private, elementary, secondary, and advanced learning educational locations, and are now becoming more diverse in the job descriptions we held during our working years. Our Branch membership spans five decades, and we have learned to accommodate physical and intellectual capacity changes as we age, using accessible venues, dietary accommodations, personal visits, in-person and Zoom interest groups and life memberships. Our community outreach initiatives are extensive, assisting new Canadians, as well as women and children at risk in our communities, with goods, services, and funding. What have we really learned? We can all play nicely in the sandbox!

Submitted by
Linda Sargeant, Branch President

Belleville

Diversity usually means one of three things: demographic diversity (our gender, race, sexual orientation), experiential diversity (our affinities, hobbies, and abilities), and cognitive diversity (how we approach problems and think about things). Belleville Branch is located in a very diverse area that includes the Mohawk First

Nations-Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Many of our retired teachers taught in this area. The vast vineyards of Prince Edward County have international workers settling here. Loyalist College is filled with international students who have added their culture, music, food and festivals to the area. Belleville, since Covid, has become a multicultural city. New businesses and international restaurants have opened. Membership in badminton, cricket, soccer teams has grown. Many festivals have emerged - Caribbean Festival, Waterfront and Ethnic Festival, Pride Parade and music festivals. Theatres and live music have flourished. Our members embrace diversity. We accept everyone and extend membership to all.

Submitted by
Lynda Rollins, Branch Communications

Durham North

Durham North strives to be inclusive and offer a diversified set of activities. From several Nordic pole walking sessions to kayaking on Sturgeon Lake, members had opportunities to be active, understanding both physical and mental health are important! We are proud to note 85-year-old member Marta attempted kayaking the first time and enjoyed it so much, she went again! It's never too late to try something new! Our popular annual corn roast garnered 63 members in attendance! With a script written by an RWTO/OERO Durham Executive, members participated in an event that explained the origins of RWTO/OERO and struggles of women teachers in terms of a fair and equal wage.



News from the Branches – "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion"

We believe it's important to share the struggles and progress of the era. Upcoming events include an old-fashioned sing along, pierogi making, crafting, wreath making and Christmas carolling. Durham North looks forward to welcoming new members and continuing their engaging program.

Submitted by
Wendy Campbell, Communications



Northumberland-South Durham

The Northumberland-South Durham Branch personifies diversity, as it encompasses ten urban areas and considerable rural and farming land along the 401 corridor from Oshawa to Brighton, including Bowmanville, Newcastle, Newtonville, Port Hope, Cobourg, Grafton, Colborne and north to Campbellford. Branch meetings are held in accessible locations from one end of our Branch to the other to adapt to membership availability, limited mobility or transportation, and to mitigate costs.

We demonstrate inclusiveness by honouring our Life Members, changing the monthly Breakfast Club to the Lunch Club to accommodate a member's PSW schedule and carpooling.

Our members have a wealth of personal and pro-

fessional experiences, varied interests, and affiliations with a variety of local associations and look forward to welcoming new members to reflect the new RWTO/OERO Provincial Guidelines.

We enjoy plays, crafts, movies and dinner, Victorian Tea, singing, supporting charities, honouring members for their dedication to our Branch and each other's company.

Submitted by
Julia Esford, Branch President
Lynne Snee, Communications Chair

Peterborough

The Peterborough Branch fosters a sense of belonging and we strive to celebrate unique perspectives. We believe we all have a voice that is welcomed. Through activities like Book Club and lunches, we all feel safe to express our opinions, have spirited conversations and learn from each other regardless of our differences. We have in-person, Zoom or hybrid meetings of the Executive and Book Club. We promote equal access to opportunities for all by choosing locations which are accessible. We have initiated new activities like our Cards and Games afternoon at a local seniors residence, providing large cards and Bananagrams for those with limited vision. We send newsletters, notices and make phone calls to those who do not have e-mail. We carpool to farther destinations and some of us were pleased to attend the recent Area 7 Luncheon in Cobourg, hosted by Northumberland-South Durham, where we could reconnect with members from Belleville to Oshawa.

Submitted by
Judy-Anne Tumber, Branch President

Trenton

We are a busy Branch, meeting ten times a year.

News from the Branches – "Promoting Diversity and Inclusion"

We recently were joined by an educational assistant, a former lecturer at Loyalist College and a recently retired teacher. We include a wide variety of women from all educational sectors (elementary, secondary, private, separate). Because of our busy schedule, planning occurs early for the entire year. One of our local boards recently created a consultant position looking at truth and reconciliation, but we were unable to access this resource for the 2023-24 roster. It is definitely in the plans for next year.

Our planning committee has pulled together a programme that includes a local author, horticulturalists, a former nurse from the north, a proponent of revitalizing small communities and former newspaper editor, a spokesman from local homeless shelters, as well as a member leading a traditional carol sing. Each meeting includes a variety of meals and venues (not an easy task).

As a group, we strive to care and share as well as embrace diversity amongst our members, both

present and future!

Submitted by
Jan Coates, Branch President

Niagara West

Our recent name change to "RWTO/OERO Niagara West" was done to show inclusivity of the three areas that we represent: the towns of Lincoln and Grimsby, and the Township of West Lincoln.

Other ways we try to show inclusion and diversity in our Branch meetings are in the variety of topics, speakers and activities we offer to keep our members engaged, interested and feeling welcome. We value every member and what they bring to our meetings.

As we reach out for new members, we wish to have more diversity in our membership as we now invite ECEs, EAs and CYWs plus retired teachers from many cultures and backgrounds now living in our neighbourhoods. Everyone is welcome!

Yearly, we donate to our local Community Care organizations, Gillian's Place (a resource for women and children escaping unsafe situations) and to the various favourite charities of members who have passed away.

Submitted by
Diana Bujas, Branch President

Niagara Falls

Our Branch has always welcomed members with diverse teaching experience - elementary, secondary, and post-secondary - in both Ontario and elsewhere. To broaden our commitment to diversity and inclusion, the Executive is reaching out



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to other retired women professional educators to join us. We include all members in our regular communications.

We hold luncheons in an accessible venue so that all members can attend. To begin, we acknowledge that we meet on the traditional lands of Indigenous peoples who first settled our Niagara Region. Various speakers have presented on topics of cultural diversity, and we will continue to engage speakers on such topics. For example, Sheila Maracle, Indigenous Advisor at District School Board of Niagara, will speak at our December gathering.

To promote inclusion through donations, we support charities for children's mental health, women dealing with abuse, and people living below the poverty line.

Submitted by
Diane Ewen, Branch President

Niagara South

The Niagara South Branch of Area 13 strives for inclusivity in several ways.

We held a blitz of all public and catholic schools (elementary and secondary) in our geographical area to invite retiring teachers to join our Branch. Postcards with relevant details about RWTO/OERO and specifics about our Branch including contact particulars were distributed.

In planning our events we are careful to ensure the venue is accessible for all our members.

We also reach out to those members who are no longer able to attend our meetings. We drop off special treats or gifts on special occasions, so they know that our Branch continues to care and share.

At our meetings we always encourage our fellow retirees to invite retired teacher friends from all

levels of education to join our Branch. With the expansion of membership that includes EAs, ECEs and Youth Counsellors, our members have been made aware of the change and have been asked to invite any of these educational partners to become part of our Branch.

Submitted by
Anne Converset, Branch President

St. Catharines

St. Catharines Branch continues to be a very active Branch with 330 members. We welcomed nine new members this year so far. We have 15 interest groups and hold five luncheon meetings each year.

At our recent October luncheon, we hosted guest speaker Michele-Elise Burnett, accompanied by the Strong Water Singers. Michele-Elise is President of Kakekalanicks, an Indigenous arts and consultancy company which helps promote and educate about Indigenous art and artists to a broad audience. She has a focus on the power of sisterhood amongst all women and our responsibility to reconnect with nature. She shared her message of fostering unity and keeping connections strong with our Indigenous community.

Strong Water Singers began singing together eight years ago in their home base, the Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre. The group shared their singing and drumming that incorporates the beauty of unity, the power of sisterhood, and the strength of reclamation.

Submitted by
Melanie Kelch, Branch President



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