



TRAS News

Supporting health and education for children and youth in the Himalayas

Mission Accomplished!

Spiti visitors lay foundation stone to Munsel-ling School Medical Centre

In August, six TRAS members and friends including TRAS director Marion Tipple met in Delhi for the **“Spiti Expedition with a Mission.”** The “Mission” was to visit Munsel-ling Tibetan Children’s Home School which TRAS has been supporting for 10 years.

From the sweltering Delhi heat to the high altitude Spiti Valley in northern India, our journey was full of adventure and surprises. Travelling by rickshaw, train and jeep, we traversed valleys and high passes. Along roads carved out of cliffs, we drove through rivers and waterfalls. From the decaying splendour of the British Raj, we passed through market towns and remote villages, witnessing traditional cultures and visiting both Hindu temples and ancient Buddhist monasteries. In the high altitude desert valleys we hiked beside turquoise lakes enjoying wildflowers, birds and animals, including Kiang (Tibetan wild ass), Ibex, and Blue Sheep and saw tracks of the elusive Snow Leopard.

We finally reached Munsel-ling after a long, dusty and bumpy journey, extended by a 2 day detour caused by impassable roads.

The rigours of the journey, however, vanished with our arrival at the school and the warmth of Lama Tashi Namgyal’s smile and the welcome of the students and staff. The kindergarten class, in traditional dress, symbolically offered us gifts for honoured guests - tsampa (barley flour), yak milk and chang (barley beer). The staff dressed us in local costumes and we were received by the school children with songs and prayers.

Following a report of the school’s activities and successes and with a blessing from a Lama from nearby



Kyi monastery, we laid the foundation stones of the school’s new

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Student in traditional dress

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medical centre which TRAS has committed to fund. Then Tsering Dorje, the school principal, took us on a tour of the school. 400 children attend kindergarten to Grade 10; 18 teachers are on staff and 12 housemothers look after the children who board at the school. There were new classroom blocks, a teacher's residence and boarding houses, each with an attached solar greenhouse. The greenhouses, funded by TRAS, have made a significant difference to the children's comfort in winter, adding up to 20°C. We visited the library and computer lab (both funded by TRAS) where the older students demonstrated their computer skills. The children continue to excel; 40



students who achieved Grade 10 at Munsel-ling are now in Dharamsala completing high school. Many have ambitions to become doctors, engineers and teachers and plan to return to Spiti to further improve the welfare of their people. Once considered of inferior intelligence, Spitians are now proving that all they were lacking was access to good schooling!

Healthcare at the school has now become a priority. Diseases such as respiratory tract infections, scabies and eye disease spread quickly. The new medical centre will enable sick children to be isolated and properly cared for. It will also serve as a centre for health education both for the children and the local community. Plans are underway to involve UBC medical students in the medical centre (see "UBC Medical Students Collaborate" page 3.)

Our visit reinforced TRAS commitment to help Munsel-ling School. It is having a tremendously positive impact on both children and the local community and is rekindling a pride in their language and culture.

TRAS requires \$13,200 to finance the building of the medical centre.

We ask you to give generously.

Third Annual Himalayan Festival

October 28 & 29
11 am - 5 pm

Heritage Hall
3102 Main Street
Vancouver

*craft sales, entertainment, talks
and demonstrations*

Please visit the TRAS table!

TRAS Donor Funds Lhasa Kindergarten !

TRAS is extremely grateful to an anonymous donor who recently made a most generous gift of \$8000 for Lhasa Yuthok Kindergarten in Tibet.

Lhasa Yuthok is located in the heart of Lhasa. The school's 60 students attend kindergarten through grade two, receiving an education that prepares them for Lhasa's educational system while still honouring Buddhist culture.

TRAS has committed to funding the cost of maintaining the school for the next two years—an annual commitment of \$8580.

**Thank you
from everyone at TRAS!**

UBC Medical Students collaborate with TRAS on Spiti

Since 2004, I have worked with UBC medical students interested in international health and community development who are keen to have international experiences to enhance their learning. This summer, 3 UBC medical students and I visited the Spiti Valley and began the first phase of UBC medical student collaboration with TRAS on the Spiti Munsel-ling School health project.



Students at Munsel-ling School

We learned that many of the problems in Spiti Valley are related to sanitation, hygiene, malnutrition, and lack of access to clean water and sustainable healthcare. There is neither education nor protocol to deal with primary prevention, screening or

treatment of illness. For example, human feces are used as fertilizer leading to the spread of gastrointestinal worms. Education about alternative fertilizers and routine deworming of children would address this problem. At present, the area depends on local but transient government doctors and

visiting doctors whose visits are limited by seasonal inaccessibility.

The medical students plan to assist in developing a health care infrastructure and a health curriculum for the new Munsel-ling medical centre, sponsor the health care training of a local woman to run the health centre, work with her to set up health protocols and health needs workshops for Munsel-ling students, and liaise with students from other UBC faculties, such as engineering, to find solutions to water and sanitation problems.

Another team of committed medical students plans to go to Spiti in 2007.

By Videsh Kapoor

Donate stock and save tax!

Gifts of securities now exempt from capital gains tax!

The spring Federal budget had some exciting tax news for donors! Donations of listed publicly traded securities to a charitable organization are now totally exempt from capital gains tax!

In the example to the right, a donor is contemplating donating \$10,000 to a charity. If he sells his stock, he will realize a capital gain of \$6000, 50% of which is taxable at his marginal tax rate of 43.7%*. However, if he donates the stock, he will pay no tax on the share transfer. In either case, he will receive a charitable tax receipt for \$10,000, giving him a tax savings of \$4,370*. By donating the shares, he will save \$1311 in taxes and the \$10,000 donation will have a net cost of \$5630.

| | Sell stock & donate cash | Donate stock |
|--|--------------------------|--------------|
| Value of shares | \$10,000 | \$10,000 |
| Capital gain | 6,000 | 6,000 |
| Tax on 50% of gain @43.7% tax rate* | 1,311 | 0 |
| Tax savings due to charitable tax receipt* | 4,370 | 4,370 |
| Net cost of donation | \$ 6,941 | \$5,630 |

If you are interested in donating shares to TRAS, please contact TRAS at 604-224-5133 or call TRAS Director Heather Hamilton-Wright at 604-731-2446

* calculations assume that the donor is in the top tax bracket and has already made at least \$200 in donations

JOAN FORD—TRAS PATRON, VOLUNTEER AND SUPPORTER

“JUST TAKE A PAIR OF RUNNERS AND A STETHOSCOPE”

An interview with Dr. Joan Ford, Patron and long-time Director of TRAS



With no more briefing than this, Sir Edmund Hillary cheerfully sent Dr. Joan Ford out to Nepal to work for six weeks in one of his clinics for Sherpas and villagers in the remote mountains.

Luckily Joan had experience with “practising medicine without tools”, for she had worked in Bella Coola when she came to Canada from England in the 1940s, and had twice done locums in Dominica.

She was practising in New Westminster, and was a member of the projects committee of Save the Children when she first met a member of the Hillary Foundation, and on the spur of the moment offered to do a locum in Nepal.

Within months, the call came – did she really mean it? Joan, an avid hiker, said yes, and with that one instruction from Hillary, she was on her way. Six times in the 1980s she worked in Nepal, always thrilled by the scenery, and more particularly, by the people. She met many Tibetans, who came to her as patients, some of

them traders in the village market, others refugees who had trudged over the Himalayas.

Joan made another connection with Tibetans in the early 1980s, when Eric Brett left his fortune jointly to Save the Children and TRAS. Barry Leach, a director of TRAS and who also helped Save the Children, asked Joan if she would represent Save the Children on the TRAS board. With Joan already interested in Tibetans, this was a perfect match, and she has been a volunteer with TRAS ever since.

At TRAS, Joan has always been very involved. She was the project liaison officer for the TB program at the Tibetan Delek Hospital in Dharamsala, the Community Health Workers Training program and the nurses training projects. Most recently she was in charge of TRAS sponsorship for 8 years until her retirement from the board two years ago.

On one trip to Nepal, Joan was asked by a Tibetan organization in Kathmandu if TRAS would fund a small dam and irrigation system.

TRAS did! Joan also visited the Buddha Academy, where Dorje Namgyal’s work of looking after Tibetan orphans and Nepalese street kids impressed Joan. She encouraged TRAS to support his school and she herself sponsors two children there.

She has been honoured with the Order of Canada as well as a movie of her life which has been shown several times on television!

We are delighted that Joan continues to support TRAS so actively. When asked why she does, Joan said she likes and respects the Tibetan people, and although she feels the refugees are better off than they were 40 years ago, there are still areas of desperate need in the Himalayas and TRAS’s work for children and youth is well worth doing.

SPONSORSHIP

TRAS sponsorships provide education, school supplies and in some cases, food and shelter for over 200 children in the Himalayan region. We work through 12 different settlements and receive reports on the children's progress on a semi-annual basis. Sponsors can expect to hear from their sponsored child once or twice a year, and can send them correspondence directly, or through TRAS.

The cost of sponsoring a child this year is \$400* (includes the TRAS annual membership.) While sponsorship can be taken on at any time during the year, we ask for renewals to be confirmed annually by January 31st. Payments can be made by cheque, Visa or MasterCard.

To sponsor one of the children below or on our website please contact TRAS at 604-224-5133

or by email at tras@portal.ca.

For more detailed information or if you have sponsorship questions, please contact TRAS Sponsorship Director, Marion Tipple at: sponsorship@tras.ca.

** TRAS has a few settlements where the cost of sponsorship is currently \$200 per year. We will maintain those sponsorships until the children finish school.*

Kelsang Angmo - Kelsang is 10 and in the 3rd grade at Munsel-ling School, Rangrik, Spiti. She has one brother, and her parents have no regular source of income. Her dream is to study up to a higher level but really needs someone's helping hand to sponsor her education. She is

currently studying English, math, science, social studies, computers, Hindi and Tibetan. Please help to make Kelsang's dream come true.

Tenzin Wangyal is a 4 year old boy from Chicham village and is currently attending Munsel-ling kindergarten, Spiti. His parents are unable to care for him and he has been apart from them since he was very young. Fortunately, Tenzin can stay at Munsel-ling school but needs financial

assistance to be able to continue on.

Tenzin Dolma is a 6 year old girl from the village of Kuang and is now attending the Munsel-ling kindergarten in Spiti. Her mother is Spitian; her father is Nepalese. Both parents married out of the caste system, and have been neglected by their parents and society. Neither have any source of income and find it difficult to provide meals, let alone

schooling for Tenzin. Please give your support to Tenzin, so that she might continue her studies.

Lobsang Rinchen is a 7 year old boy from Chicham village and is in 1st grade at Munsel-ling School, Spiti. He studies English, Tibetan, Hindi, math, science, computers and social studies. His father died last year, leaving 4 children for Lobsang's mother to support. The

family is very poor. Lobsang is an excellent student and needs your help to continue his studies.

My Unconscious Relationship with TRAS

By Chung Tsering



Chung Tsering is a Research Officer for the Tibetan Government-in-Exile's Department of Education (DOE) in Dharamsala, India. TRAS has funded DOE projects for years. Chung Tsering has been in Vancouver since May learning English. Part of his work with the DOE is to translate English-written books on Tibetan topics into Tibetan.

Could you imagine that somebody could have helped you and your whole family many times, but not know who the helper was? I wouldn't have believed it if it hadn't happened to me.

I met Jennifer Hales, a TRAS director, in June, about one month after I arrived in Vancouver. I thought this was just the start of my personal relationship with TRAS. I never imagined that actually, my relationship with TRAS dated back more than ten years!

One day, Jennifer invited me for dinner at her house. There I discovered my real relationship with TRAS when Jennifer's mother, Daphne, also a TRAS director, introduced me to TRAS projects

which I have known for years without knowing they were in my life because of TRAS. I was deeply moved and amazed by this discovery. Here's my story:

In 1991, I escaped from Tibet to Bir in northern India and studied in Bir's TCV (Tibetan Children's Village) School for about two years. This school was very useful because it gave a special chance to those people who wished to study but were over aged. The Hales told me that TRAS sponsored projects in this school, so I think my relationship with TRAS started at that time.

After that, I joined the Tibetan teacher-training program at the Institute of Buddhist Dialects in Dharamsala. There, I learned many useful skills. Again, TRAS was the sponsor of this program. After this program started, many

of its trainees got Indian government recognized teaching certificates and the Tibetan government was able to implement its policy of 'teaching all subjects through Tibetan language' until grade five. 95% of those trainees, including my wife, are now still working as teachers at schools in India and Nepal. From these teacher training programs, many writers, researchers and editors have emerged. The famous exile Tibetan magazine "TSAMPA" and many others were started by those trainees.

After I finished my teacher training, I joined the Department of Education of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile in Dharamsala. We have organized many projects, such as teacher trainings and workshops, with, of course, support from TRAS. You may think

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Chung's teacher training class in Dharamsala, taken by Daphne Hales in 1994.

Chung is in the second row to the right of the teacher

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that my relationship with TRAS ended there, but it continued, and even deeper than before. My wife and I needed someone to look after our two children because both of us needed to work and we have no family in India to care for them. However, we could not afford to hire someone. Again thanks to TRAS, our children have been cared for. TRAS sponsored a creche called "Little Flowers" so we could send both of our little flowers to this "little flowers garden".

After discovering my relationship with TRAS, I feel two things: First, of course, I feel grateful from the bottom of my heart, not only because TRAS helped me and my family many times, but also because TRAS supported and helped many

other poor people when they needed it. Second, I feel ashamed because I didn't know who helped my family and me. I know the reason for this is just that we don't have a system that lets us know where money and support come from. But I feel I also have a responsibility to know who the helper is since I am receiving support from them. I am very sorry for I didn't do what I should do.

Here I also would like to mention that my family and I never wasted your help; both my wife and I are using our education and skills in meaningful ways to serve other people, and both of my children are studying very hard. We also try to help other people as much as we can.

Thanks, TRAS, for changing my life. Thanks to each and every member for helping us. I deeply

An Evening with Chung Tsering

Research Officer for the
Tibetan Government-in-Exile's
Department of Education in Dharamsala, India

Wednesday, November 8 at 7:30pm

Location: TBA (please contact TRAS for details)

Please join TRAS for an informal evening with Chung Tsering and learn about his work with the DOE, TRAS-funded DOE projects, and educational issues in Tibetan communities in India today.

Light refreshments will be served.

Please RSVP to:

TRAS (604) 224-5133 or tras@portal.ca

PROJECTS

Little Flowers Creche

Preschool for Tibetan children

In an upstairs room in the rabbit warren of buildings of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Little Flowers Creche, looks after children of government workers, and prepares them for kindergarten. Toys and equipment are minimal, but love and laughter abound as Tibetan ayahs care for the children.

TRAS has supported the creche for many years, recognising the necessary role it plays in helping Tibetan families earn a living. This year TRAS needs \$1,650 for its commitment to Little Flowers. **Please help us by making a donation.**

Teacher Training

A successful project completed!

Results are in from the recently completed **vocational training for teachers** for poor girls from lower castes in Kerala and Karnataka, and they are terrific! Of the 78 girls in the program, 67 are now permanently employed as teachers or lecturers, 4 have gone on to higher studies, one has completed her Master's degree and 7 are still in classes. Even more impressive, 50 of the students achieved 1st class in their final exams! Now they are confident, hard working, successful members of society. They are self-sufficient, often providing for their families. **TRAS support has made this program possible!**

Buddha Academy

A new name!

Our long-time partner in Kathmandu, Buddha Memorial, has officially changed its name to Buddha Academy Boarding School (Educational Trust). Their website is www.babs.edu.np.

Buddha Academy is home to more than 560 children aged 4 to 18 years. The mission of Buddha Academy is to provide education and protection to the most deprived, underprivileged, displaced, vulnerable and disabled children of Nepal. They come from remote areas and the streets of Kathmandu. TRAS is proud to support Buddha Academy's 3-year vocational training program, its medical dispensary and, through our sponsorship program, 120 students. Last year with the support of our members, TRAS funded the rebuilding of a collapsed wall at the school, and recently, funds were sent to help with children displaced because of the political struggle in Nepal.

Buddha Academy relies on continued support from TRAS and its members. Please call TRAS to see how you can help.

A Plea for Volunteers!

The work of TRAS would not be possible without countless volunteer hours on the part of loyal and dedicated supporters of TRAS. At present TRAS has a number of volunteer positions that urgently need to be filled by enthusiastic and capable individuals. These include: data entry associated with our sponsorship program, newsletter editing and layout (2 positions), event planning and organizing; website design and maintenance, mailing, fundraising and volunteer coordination. If you think that one of these roles might be of interest to you or a friend, please call TRAS today!

The continued success of TRAS depends on your help and support!

We've Moved!

After many years on the UBC Campus, TRAS has moved to a more centrally located office. You can now find us at:

**2412 Columbia St.
Vancouver, BC
V5Y 3E6**

Our phone number and email remain the same:

**604-224-5133
tras@portal.ca**

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Supporting Health and Education for Children and Youth in the Himalayas

Administrator: Debbi Salmonsén
2412 Columbia St.
Vancouver, BC
Canada V5Y 3E6

Email: tras@portal.ca

Ph. 604-224-5133
Fax. 604-676-2554

www.tras.ca