

REPORT OF THE DELEGATE TO THE 11TH ANNUAL CURAC CONFERENCE

Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland/Labrador, June 11-14, 2013.

John R. Meyer, delegate and outgoing Past President

I am again grateful to WURA for the support and assistance as their delegate to the 2013 annual CURAC AGM and Conference: *Staying Connected*. The occasion marked my swan song as a Director and former President with more than eight years of engagement.

To set the stage historically, the Organizing Committee chose two local and notable storytellers, Andy Jones and Greg Malone. Jones acted as an interpreter of Newfoundland culture and its ethos in a most comical manner. Malone presented another but controversial interpretation of Newfoundland's entry into Confederation. He referred to many passages in his book, *Don't Tell the Newfoundlanders: The True Story of Newfoundland's Confederation with Canada* (Random House, 2012).

The next speaker, Roger Butler (Memorial Fac. Medicine) moved us into the more serious issue of elder abuse. He reviewed three research studies that suggest the frequency and causes of types of abuse. The behaviors and attitudes of some care-givers, particularly some younger nursing aids/practical, in "for profit" facilities, need to change. Care-givers need to see the signs of neglect and/or abuse and as do family physicians who rarely report the cases. Sensitivity exposure, periodic training, staff support, exams, and enforcement of regulations are all suggested. Those with dementia and without family member care suffer the most abuse. Some 500,000 Canadians with dementia and often are victims of emotional and financial abuse. Dementia is costing about \$15 billion per yr. and 231 million care-giving hours. Training and consistent assessment were proposed for all care-givers in all care-giving agencies. Provincial legislation and regulation is required in many Provinces so that appropriate responses are provided for patients. Only Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and NL have mandatory legislation to report elder abuse. CARP's V.P. Advocacy, Susan Eng, is at the forefront to improve regulatory deficit in Ontario, federally, and in other provinces.

The fourth session, *The Destiny of CURAC?*, gave John Meyer, the opportunity to reflect on the present and future status of CURAC after Peter Russell described its founding and history. I noted that several recent surveys have indicated that sociological changes have affected retirees in the last decade. Seniors are living longer, enjoying better health care, are often caregivers for children and grandchildren, enjoy more travel, recreation, and less socializing with former colleagues. Financial restrictions may impede their voluntary work and often academic and staff retirees have had enough of organizational work. There are fewer retiring now and living longer. Others prefer to participate in local community and outreach activities.

Expectations of growing membership and retention may be unrealistic so it was suggested that CURAC spend the next few years reassessing its vision and purposes in order to address the issue of member and financial sustainability. After careful and systematic discernment and assessment, the CURAC Board should decide to answer the question: has CURAC sufficiently and realistically satisfied its initial purposes so that it can end its existence with satisfaction and dignity.

The next topic was regional conferences and how they might add to the work of CURAC. They have been held six times in the Maritimes and once in Ontario providing better opportunities to interrelate on topics and experiences relative to their regions. It has been suggested several times that the region/province and the general CURAC meeting might be alternated every other year. The required annual AGM business meeting would have to be conducted online or with some exemption from the new Not-For-Profit Act requirement.

I organized the session on “Best Practices” with three presenters: Barbara Cox (President of Memorial U.Pensioners Assoc.=MUNPA), Patti Stoll (Director, CURAC Board, and former Seneca College Administrator) and myself (U.Windsor delegate & Past President of CURAC). Barbara described the 1600 member Memorial Association that recently signed an MOU, a Memorandum of Understanding, to join some eleven other CURAC Associations who have signed MOUs. These memoranda help give boundaries, directions, and connectedness to the retirees' associations. MUNPA is located within the Human Resources department as is the growing relationship with university and college retiree associations. Another home support base-apart from the President's Office- in several North American associations is the institutional development office. The retirees can be and are major contributors as a group to the annual fund raising.

Patti Stoll, described the more exceptional projects and activities of St. Clair College (Windsor) with their development and care of the archives and custody of an art collection. Seneca College (Toronto) in addition to its many social and outreach activities, pays tribute to their retirees and utilizes photos to create high visibility of their mission and activities.

My survey research and that of AROHE, our USA partner member, indicate that all of our member associations sponsor and engage in one or more of four activity priorities: (1) socializing (travel group trips, games, and parties, (2) educational/mindful events (lectures, book groups, study groups), (3) outreach (voluntary work with community agencies, partnerships, and former institutional connectedness), and (4) advocacy of protection of benefits/pensions, seniors issues, at the local, national, and international levels. These are the actual rankings (most in no. 1) of the majority of member associations. Advocacy becomes particularly relevant in times of economic recessions. I described the challenges that retiree associations face during a period of sociological changes in the retirees' culture, particularly identifying the needs of retirees.

WURA has promoted student scholarships, has a rather unique joint consultative Council with administration, a memorandum of understanding about collective agreements affecting pension and benefits, an award to non retired supporters, and the retirees (72) authored anniversary book, ***Back in the Day: 1963 to 2013: The University of Windsor as We Knew It***, ed. K.McCrone et al., 2013 now available at the University of Windsor bookstore and online from LitDistCo. This product was inspired by previous and similar products of the Simon Fraser, York, and Wilfrid Laurier retirees associations.

The final two sessions returned to CURAC's concern of information from member associations about health benefits and pensions. Doug Creelman (RLUT) explained the results of a national survey that he conducted in 2012-13. It appears that most of the Associations including those of CURAC have matured to the degree that they have and sufficiency in their organizational structures. All of the usual benefits, though sometimes quite varied, and pension concerns are in place. The survey was fairly comprehensive so best contact the website link on www.curac.ca homepage to view the graphs, details, and a summary. No one referred to their link with CURAC so this may reinforce the national association to promote its policy on increased visibility. Several submissions on pensions have been completed and a new strategic plan is underway.

Paul Huber, (Dal.RA) gave a detailed expose of the deficiencies of pension reforms in New Brunswick, and Ontario Teachers Plan video. Paul makes 30 points about the intricacies of pension plans and language. Associations having concern about their institutional sponsored pensions should alert CURAC so that Paul and others can continue their important work of advocacy. See both the CURAC website www.curac.ca and www.mun.ca/munpa/curac2013 for most of the original presentations and ponder..