

# BCIT RETIREES' ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

www.bcitra.ca

Contact us at: info@bcitra.ca

*Edition 7*

*January 2020*

## INSIDE

- Christmas Buffet
- Firefighters Pub
- Annual General Meeting
- Pickpockets in Italy
- Stay on the road Workshops
- Travel
- MEDOC

## BCITRA 2019 CHRISTMAS BUFFET



Around 40 BCIT Retirees and spouses met for breakfast on Dec. 7th at the Grand Villa Buffet in Burnaby. This annual Christmas get-together has been happening for a few years now, and growing in popularity along the way.

The Sheraton Villa was a favourite meeting place for staff and students alike over the decades, but today's modern hotel and casino has few trapping from the past. The Tower remains as the only visible reminder from those days of yore, and the modern Casino beckons players from all over the Lower Mainland to try their hands at numerous games of chance.

And at the far side of the Casino, as always, lies a sumptuous buffet, and it has welcomed our Retirees' Association annual Christmas breakfast in recent years. Judging by our growing participation rate, it's a hit with attendees, so we can look forward to an early-December date for next year's event, too.





## ***BCITRA FUN FEBRUARY LUNCHEON***

**On Wednesday, Feb. 19 at 11:45**

**JOIN US FOR OUR WINTER LUNCHEON AND FUN  
WITH YOUR FELLOW RETIREES FROM BCIT**

**Location: Firefighters Public House,  
6515 Bonsor Avenue, Burnaby.**

**Venue:** Pay for your meal and beverage at the pub.

**Parking:** It is immediately adjacent to Metrotown and Bonsor Community Centre so there is lots of parking available. The parkade off of Bennett Street has upper level free parking available for the Firefighters Public House.

**This is a great opportunity to meet and chat with your fellow retirees  
*We'll see you there on FEBRUARY 19th!***

**CELEBRATE**  
**THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY**  
**OF**  
**BCITRA**  
**AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL**  
**MEETING**

[Thursday, March 12, 2020](#)

Mark This Date on Your Calendar !

BCITRA AGM **Plus** 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party

Building SE2 Town Square D

Registration 10:00 am : Meeting 10:20 am Sharp

Lunch with Anniversary Cake 12:00 – 1:45 pm

Be sure to come to this very special event in March this year. We are celebrating the 25<sup>th</sup> year that BCITRA has been in business. We will have special decorations, an emcee, historic guest speakers and exciting door prizes for those attending. Our AGM meeting agenda will be shortened to allow us time to celebrate in style.

Please register your intention to attend this event through [info@bcitra.ca](mailto:info@bcitra.ca) to enable us to order sufficient provisions for our luncheon. Watch for more announcements via e-blasts in the near future. **Find out how you can make a timely contribution to our planned entertainment. Your input is welcomed.**



## FALLING PREY TO PICKPOCKETS

They're everywhere--we know that--but we all take appropriate precautions whenever we travel, and hope we'll never fall prey to them: PICK-POCKETS!

After travelling in numerous countries for decades, and never having a bad experience, I thought I had it nailed. I'd read Rick Steeves' cautions, I was prepared for these guys and gals, I was on top of the situation, I was confident I was smarter than them.

And then we were on a crowded commuter train heading south from Naples, and I found out I wasn't as well prepared as I thought! This was a 'cheek-by-jowl' situation. Locals, tourists, all of us heading south from Naples, which is itself notorious for pickpocketing, were packed like sardines into a graffiti-laden carriage. I had my wallet deep down in a zippered pocket on the front of my cargo pants. The zipper was stiff, and I required two hands to open it. So I felt I was safe. No one could access my wallet without me knowing.

I was standing in the very centre of the carriage with perhaps 50 other people, and many others



filled the seats and aisles. At our first stop, the American woman beside me whispered urgently to her husband "He has his hand on your suitcase!" I looked between them, and saw a tall well-dressed guy in a grey suit with his hand through the carrying handle on the top of the husband's suitcase--and I thought "He's ready to dash out of the carriage just as the door is about to close!" The husband put his hand on the top of the suitcase, and Mr. Grey Suit moved his away and left.

So I thought "Maybe I should double check my wallet, but of course it's there, it's too deep in a zippered--zippered--zippered--" but my pocket was empty. We'd been in the carriage less than five minutes, crushed up against each other.



This could NOT be happening. But it was. The zipper was open, my wallet was gone.

I looked across the jammed carriage at my wife and said "My wallet is gone". The American woman said "Oh, I am sooo sorry". I looked at the teenager beside me, with a shopping bag slung over his shoulder. I looked at the tiny woman next to him dressed in a brocaded blue jean outfit, a jean cap jauntily placed to one side of her head. I looked each of the people near me in the eye, wondering which one--or two--had worked together to undo the pocket zipper and liberate my wallet. They all smiled at me.

Many folks blame the gypsies--the Romanys--central Europeans--but no one knows for sure where these thieves originate or how they are



trained. They usually work in teams, so one person may have nudged my pocket zipper open in the confusion of the crowded carriage, while another slipped their hand in to pull out whatever they found, and a third person would have it passed to them, to then pass it to a fourth who put it into their bag. All done in mere seconds, all done with practiced precision.



We continued toward our destination at Piano di Sorrento, many stops down the Amalfi Coast. The crowd thinned. The 'suspects' left. At another stop a midget with an accordion joined the train and began playing his instrument, a classic 'distraction'. "Who was the perp now?" I thought. That pregnant woman carrying a small child? She was smiling at people and they were ogling the infant in her arms, again, a classic distraction. Where were hands moving?

We arrived at our destination and were met by our B&B hostess and began loading our suitcases into the back of her van. We were travelling with friends and they had their luggage stacked on the curb, including a small travel bag atop all the others. A man stuck a coffee cup loaded with coins under my nose and I snapped "Leave me alone" and he did. But when we arrived at our home for the next week, that travel bag was missing, and we realized we'd been hit again, by the guy with the coins in his cup. The rattling coins were the distraction, while he or another hovering accomplice liberated the bag.

As soon as we were inside our flat, about 90 minutes after I'd noticed my wallet missing, I made several phone calls to cancel my stolen cards. VISA was first. They'd been awaiting my call. They had noticed typical tourist purchases since we had arrived in Italy, but about an hour earlier, someone had attempted a \$1600 purchase at a sporting goods shop in Naples, and they had blocked it. There had been half-a-dozen other attempts in the intervening minutes, all blocked. The perps obviously had gone to

work right away. More time was spent cancelling my driver's license, my BCAA card, travel medical insurance cards, etc.

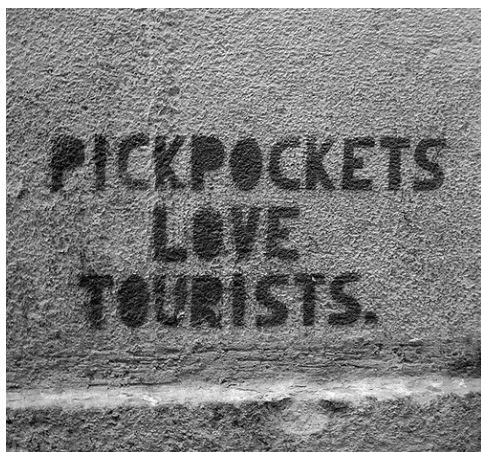
We four then sat back and said "Okay, is this going to colour our vacation in a bad way, or are we going to just move on?" Moving on seemed the logical direction, and out came the red wine, and we enjoyed the rest of our trip immensely. My wife had her cards, so there were no problems spending on trip activities--though VISA offered to deliver a new card to me at our vacation location within two business days, an offer I declined. Our travelling companions had lost some valuables, but nothing that could not be replaced and all would be covered by insurance. By the time we arrived home, a new VISA card was waiting, as was a replacement drivers license, along with other bits and pieces.

But this was just the beginning of our financial adventures. I'm now on my fifth VISA card since 2017 as there have been repeated attempts to access our account from around the world. One VISA failure occurred as I went to pay for dinner in a local restaurant about a year after our Italy trip. I called VISA to enquire, and they said "Did you perhaps order \$4000 worth of printing from a vendor in Australia earlier today?" Obviously, I had not, and they had thought that might be the case, so they froze the card and issued a new one. On a later trip in Scotland, I attempted to buy train tickets online, and my request was repeatedly refused at the point of payment. Another call to VISA showed yet more suspicious attempts had been made. And I got yet another new card.





These days I have a secret password known only to me and VISA. If any suspicious activity shows up, I receive a call and must initiate a return call to them on the phone number listed on the back of my card and then must provide my secret password before they'll even talk to me. This happened as recently as this past fall when yet another attempt was made to access my account.



Of course, I felt like a complete doofus. I was almost 70 years old then and I'd been had by a pickpocket in Naples. Embarrassing. And, then, the guru of all things travel, Rick Steeves,

published an article about such things last summer. He, of all people, knows all the angles, and he had to make his own embarrassing admission: he had fallen prey to pickpockets in Paris earlier in the year. Suddenly, I didn't feel so bad!

So how can we protect ourselves from these professionals? First, recognize that they are, indeed, professionals. They work in highly trained and practiced teams, and this is what they do, every day, all day. They identify marks in train stations, busy thoroughfares, restaurants, etc., and then practice their terrible trade on unsuspecting folk. The distraction can seem completely innocent, and something valuable can be slipped away in mere seconds.

The traditional methods of carrying valuables in a body belt wrapped around your waist or a pouch slung around your neck seem most highly recommended. Each presents its own access challenges, but these present the most challenges to thieves in turn. Pickpocket-proof clothing also is available with inside pockets, etc.

Preparation for protection begins before you leave: make copies of all your documents and keep one at home and one in a separate location with you, and carry the minimum documentation and cards you need on your person. Make sure

you've arranged travel insurance before you leave, including travel interruption coverage.

When you're in the throes of the action, don't touch your pocket when you see or hear a warning about pickpockets--they're watching and will note the location you checked. Keep an eye out around you, and always check when you leave a location like a restaurant table to make sure you have everything with you.

If you're sitting someplace, you can anchor your bag or purse around a chair leg. Some folks hide extra cash in a location thieves might not find it, like a pill bottle.

And if you use a backpack, check the bottom frequently. I read somewhere that thieves often use a very sharp knife to cut open the bottom of back-



packs in crowded venues, hoping that something valuable will drop out. Sure enough, when I picked up my pack on another Italian train trip, a portable audio speaker I carried rolled out. I looked at the pack, and there was a nicely cut opening on the bottom. One very serviceable pack ruined, but nothing valuable lost. I had to buy some duct tape, which wrapped the bottom securely and served me for the rest of our trip.

None of this is meant to discourage anyone from visiting Italy, or any other location. Pickpockets practice worldwide--even in Vancouver. But some precautions can help us from falling prey to these extremely skilled and experienced thieves.

# COSCO SEMINARS

## Seniors Helping Seniors Workshops

### STAY ON THE ROAD WORKSHOPS

The Stay on the Road Workshops came about because COSCO has been conferring with the Superintendent of Motor Vehicles for several years concerning the senior driver assessment program that kicks in when an individual reaches the age of 80. Our suggestions were well received, and we were pleased that a new program was launched in March 2018.

New Horizons provided a grant of \$25,000 and the BC Retired Teachers Association [BCRTA] realized that the workshop would be of value to their members, contributed \$5,000 to assist with the costs involved in the province-wide presentations COSCO was planning. The BCRTA contribution allowed us to schedule 20 workshops instead of only 15.

Staff members at RoadSafety BC and ICBC



have reviewed the workshop materials and admin staff from both ICBC and the Occupational Therapist organization has arranged to have speakers participate in the workshop presentations.

Before we even started the workshops we had requests from many areas around the province asking us to present the workshop to seniors in their community.

Most senior drivers are well aware that their driving will be assessed when they are 80. For many that is a very frightening thought, not necessarily because they are poor drivers, but because of their fear of failure, and the impact that would have on an important facet of their life.



Societally, there is concern about how losing one's licence contributes to loneliness and isolation. Age-friendly communities work to alleviate these conditions, but we know that there are enormous variations in what is needed. Participants will take a look at their own communities with a view to the possibility of providing alternatives to driving.

The main objective is to encourage and enable social participation and inclusion by providing drivers with information that will help them to retain their drivers' licence and to safely operate their vehicles. A vital component is to strengthen coping skills if a driver, either voluntarily or involuntarily, no longer retains his or her licence.

**Photo from Powell River Workshop**

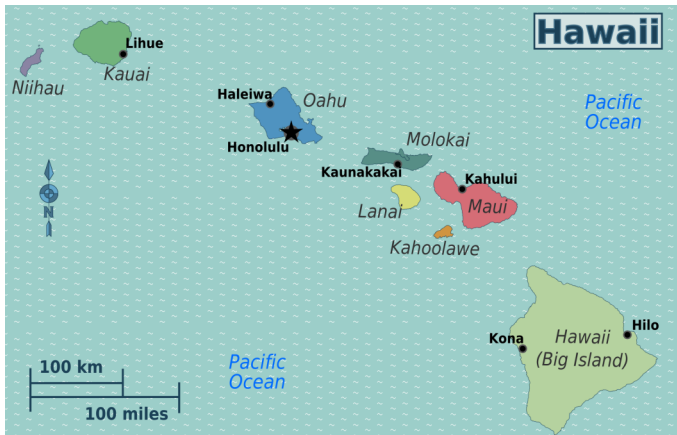


## WHERE ARE YOUR TRAVELS TAKING YOU

Let us know where your travels have taken you. This could inspire other members to enjoy the travel adventures that you have. Write a short piece on your travels for future newsletters. We would love to hear from you.

If you are planning a trip let us know about the trip ahead of time, when and where. This may excite members to join the same travel adventure.

### Honolulu to Vancouver



June and I will fly to Honolulu this spring. We will have 3 days in Honolulu and then will be boarding the ship. The ship leaves Honolulu at 6:00pm



for Lahaina on Maui. A day on Maui gives us time to explore Lahaina on foot. The ship leaves in the evening for Hilo on the Big Island of Hawaii. We have booked a tour of water falls, lava tubes and more at this stop. The next day is spent at Kailua Kona on the Big Island, again we will explore the town on foot or find some local tours. Six days in the Hawaiian Islands at the start of our vacation after the winter in Vancouver sounds like heaven.

The ship then sails for Astoria Oregon. Five days at sea, time to enjoy all the amenities of the ship

or sit back and read a book and chill out. The ship has a large library and the comfortable forward lounge. On sea days, tours of the engine room, bridge and kitchens are offered.

Tours are available to the Oregon wine country



from Astoria along with other tours. Next stop Seattle, and June is looking forward to the shopping. The last full day is in Victoria then home to Vancouver.

**Celebrity Cruises** has numerous tours in all ports of call, but we like to walk the towns if possible. Hilo, according our son, is too far to walk so we booked a tour. We may book other tours when we get on the ship.

13 days of no meal planning, no dishes, beds turned down at night etc.

Robert Wagner

June Wagner





**NEED TRAVEL MEDICAL, HOME, PET INSURANCE?**

BCITRA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
JOHNSON/ MEDOC TRAVEL INSURANCE  
can provide this kind of coverage.

BCITRA receives a percentage of the premiums paid.

These premiums provide funds that go into the  
ENDOWMENT FUND

Contact: Johnson / Medoc Travel Insurance

1 - 866 - 606 - 3362

Or

[Johnson.ca/MEDOC](http://Johnson.ca/MEDOC)



Our partnership with MEDOC has resulted in hundreds of  
dollars being directed to BCITRA

BCITRA thanks the members that insure through MEDOC