



IDRC Alumni Newsletter

Number 8

May 2005

INSIDE:

- From the Board
- Where are they now?
- 2005 Annual Reunion
- News from the Centre

Come golf with us

The annual IDRC staff golf tournament in late August seems to have become a fixture on the Centre's calendar. And for the past several years IDRC Alumni members have been invited to join staff in this event, which includes a round of golf followed by dinner at the clubhouse. Tournament organizer Linda MacWillie has extended that invitation once again. If you're going to be in Ottawa at the end of August, this is a great opportunity to come out and meet some of your former colleagues and fellow Alumni while playing a stress-free round of golf.

It doesn't matter if you're not a great golfer, this is not a "serious golf" day. You don't have to be able to play like Mike Weir or Lorie Kane (you don't even have to know who they are). The main objective of this day is to relax and have fun. You can have fun even if you've never played golf before!

Here are the details:

Date: Wednesday, August 31, 2005

Starting time: 12:00 noon

Format: Scramble (best ball)

Place: Meadows Golf and Country Club
4335 Hawthorne Road, Gloucester

Cost: \$70 (includes green fees, electric cart and dinner).

To register or for more information contact Linda MacWillie at IDRC (236-6163 ext.2134) or by email Imacwillie@idrc.ca.

Members Wanted

If you're reading this newsletter chances are you are already a member of the IDRC Alumni, since it's distributed only to members. Perhaps you know of other former IDRC staffers who might be interested in joining the Alumni. If you do, feel free to forward them a copy of this issue, tell them about the benefits of being a member, and invite them to contact Maria Williams, who will be happy to explain how they can become members. And by the way, if you had perhaps forgotten to send in your annual dues for 2005, Maria would also be happy to receive your cheque for \$20 Cdn (or \$15 US). You can contact her by regular mail at 40 Amberwood Crescent, Nepean, ON K2E 7B9 or by email at mariawx@rogers.com.

The *Alumni Newsletter* team:
Editor: Bob Stanley
Translation: Michèle Wilson

Write:
Bob Stanley, 6853 Twin Lakes
Avenue, Greely, ON K4P 1P1
Email: stanleyb@rogers.com



From the Board

Greetings in the Spring of 2005. News of the moment ...

IDRC Alumni membership was, at last count, 127 and continuing to climb. If you encounter former IDRC staff members who are not aware of the Alumni, please ask them to contact Maria Williams for information (mariawx@rogers.com or call 613-224-3926).

Building on the success of last year's program meeting between the IDRC President Maureen O'Neil and her senior program staff, with IDRC Alumni members, we have decided to make this informal meeting an annual event. At the 2004 meeting, over 50 IDRC Alumni members attended. The purpose continues to be the maintenance with our members of an up-to-date understanding of IDRC directions and programs. Last year, the meeting was held in an adjoining room on the IDRC conference floor, one hour before the commencement of the Annual Meeting and Reunion.

IDRC President Maureen O'Neil has confirmed that the IDRC Alumni can use an "alumni" version of IDRC's current corporate logo. Look for more about this, and the evolution of the IDRC logo in the next Newsletter.

We are pleased to advise you that IDRC has now designated a meeting room in the Headquarters building as the IDRC Alumni room. The room is to be used by the IDRC Alumni Executive and committees for scheduled meetings (as well as by IDRC personnel). We are now in discussions with IDRC on how best to decorate the room. IDRC has already provided the room with the credenza used by the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson, former Prime Minister, Nobel Peace Prize winner, and the first Chairman of the IDRC.

Remember the date of this year's Annual Meeting and Reunion at IDRC Headquarters in Ottawa – Friday 14th October, 5 p.m. The theme is "A Taste of Asia" and we look forward to seeing you.

Jim Pfeifer, Chairman

IDRC ALUMNI is now in its third year as an organization. Your current Board:

Chairman - James Pfeifer; Secretary - Chris Smart; Treasurer - Gerald Bourrier; Director and Newsletter Editor - Bob Stanley; Director Special Events - Angie Anton; Director Special Programs - Claude-Paul Boivin; Director Memberships - Maria (Herrera) Williams. IDRC representatives - Jean-Marc Fleury, Kim Daley.

Where Are They Now?

Neill McKee IDRC 1975-89

Whatever Happened to Neill (and Beth) McKee?

Neill, former IDRC Filmmaker and Associate Director of the Communication Division, has been in Moscow with his wife, Beth, since early 2004. After leaving IDRC, Neill was with UNICEF for 11 years in Bangladesh and in East and Southern Africa (Nairobi and Kampala). In 2001 Neill moved to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. Now Neill is in Russia working on a health communication project with the Center for Communication Programs, John Hopkins University, focusing on HIV/AIDS and reproductive health.

Neill stopped making films in 1990, but organizes teams of people to develop multi-media programs for social and behavioral change in health areas. He started some major communication initiatives in South Asia (Meena) and Africa (Sara) on the empowerment of girls, using animated film — something he started when at IDRC — as well as comic books, many other media and interactive training methods. He also became a facilitator and trainer and co-authored (with former IDRC Social Science awardees, Timmi Tillmann and Maruja Salas from Peru) a methodology on participatory training called “Visualization in Participatory Programs”. He wrote three books on communication, the first two while with UNICEF and published by IDRC alumnus, Chin Saik Yoon (Southbound), and the latest, “Strategic Communication in the HIV/AIDS Epidemic” by Sage Publications.

In Moscow, Neill is leading a team of Russians in the “Healthy Russia” project. Funded by USAID, the project focuses on HIV/AIDS prevention, care and support, and reproductive health. Since Neill arrived Healthy Russia has developed an education module on prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, a counseling manual and video for health providers, an in-school life skills curriculum, a peer education module, and a distance-learning course for journalists.

As well, regional advocacy networks are being formed and the first draft of a computerized resource needs model has been completed. Healthy Russia will soon launch a multi-media campaign for couples, aimed at increasing men’s involvement in reproductive health decisions in a country where the population is declining rapidly. All this work is founded on qualitative formative research studies and population baselines for four regions on knowledge, attitudes and practice, methods Neill learned during his IDRC-funded sabbatical year in 1987-88.

continued on next page

McKee continued

Neill and his team are also working on a sustainable Healthy Russia Foundation, an organization with a high-level all-Russian board of directors, which was set up to undertake new initiatives on a broader public health agenda. In Russia drugs and alcohol, smoking and accidents, heart disease and cancer are taking a terrible toll, especially on men, whose life expectancy is only 58 years.

Neill says he struggles with the Russian language — daily drills on CD while walking 45 minutes to work near the Kremlin, transcribing lessons in Cyrillic in a café at the Conservatory where Tchaikovsky wrote his music, and spending time with a tutor. He also finds that negotiating the donor, governmental and civil society environment is a great challenge in a country that probably made too fast a transition and now appears to be pulling back the reins.

The situation in the Ukraine is telling in a growing, new East-West divide. Even Neill's most western-educated staff members think Ukraine's democratic movement was a Western-backed conspiracy against Russia. Interesting times are unfolding in Moscow today.

Note: If you do a Google search on "Neill McKee" (with the quotation marks) you will be linked to a lot of his most recent work. Neill's e-mail is: Neill@hr2020.ru

Dr. Robert (Bob) Zeigler



IRRI gets a new director-general

The new director-general of IRRI, Dr Robert (Bob) Zeigler, has an IDRC connection. From 1982 to 1985 he was employed by the IDRC as a technical adviser to the Burundi Maize Program with the Institut des Sciences Agronomique du Burundi (ISABU).

An internationally respected plant pathologist with a Ph.D. in plant pathology from Cornell University, Dr Zeigler has more than 20 years experience in agricultural research. He is no stranger to IRRI, having worked there from 1992 to 1998 as a plant pathologist. During this period, he led the Rainfed Lowland Rice Research Program (1992-96) and the Irrigated Rice Research Program (1996-98). He has also worked at CIAT, where he was the institute's senior staff plant pathologist until 1992, ultimately taking over as the head of its rice program.

Dr. Zeigler assumed his new position as IRRI's director-general last month.

The 2005 Alumni Reunion and AGM Friday, Oct. 14

WANTED: Web worldly and savvy Samaritan

Paul Stinson heads HUPO

Paul Stinson, former program officer with AFNS, recently moved with his family from Vancouver to Montreal to take on the job of Director General of the Human Proteomics Organisation (HUPO). Since 2000 he had been at the helm of BC Biotech.

HUPO is a consortium of national proteomics organisations, and Montreal invested over a million dollars to bring organisation's headquarters to the city. Paul says that having HUPO in Montreal is a coup both for Quebec and for Canada. And he adds "The job will allow me to utilize both my international experience and lessons learned from managing a member-driven association."

If you haven't already done so, mark that date on your calendar now! That's the date for this year's fourth Alumni Reunion and Annual General Meeting. This is primarily a social occasion, an opportunity to renew old acquaintances, with as little time as possible devoted to the business part of the meeting. However, for those who like to keep in touch with the direction the Centre is taking there will once again be an informal presentation by senior staff one hour before the reunion. See Jim Pfeifer's remarks on page 2 for more details.

In keeping with our plan to showcase each of the Centre's Regional Offices in turn, this year's event will focus on the ASRO region with the inviting title "A Taste of Asia". Angie Anton is already busy planning for the event, so look for full details in the next issue of your *Alumni Newsletter*.

Chris Smart and Michael Graham, with a lot of help from IDRC's IT staff, have put together what Chris calls the rudiments of an IDRC Alumni Website — hosted on the IDRC server. It is still password-protected and too shy to reveal its face yet! But Chris and Mike say it's time we got someone who really know how it's done to help complete this project.

Is there a member of the Alumni out there who would contribute their time and skill? Someone who can take the work that's been done so far and turn it into a site that will be proud to show its face to the world, that will assist with networking members and show off what IDRC Alumni is all about? If that sounds like **you**, please contact Chris at:

csmart@ca.inter.net.

NEWS FROM THE CENTRE

Improving Health Care Through Better Planning

Africa and the rest of the developing world face many health challenges — malaria, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malnutrition, and anemia to name a few. In Tanzania, recent experience and IDRC supported research are providing cause for optimism. Twelve years ago the World Development Report suggested that mortality rates could be significantly reduced if resources were directed more in line with local “burden of disease.” The Tanzanian Essential Health Interventions Project (TEHIP) was founded to test this idea.

Tanzania has an annual health budget that works out to about \$4 per person. In rural areas, the per capita spending is even less. “We’re probably not going to get a lot more money for health in this country, but we’re looking at how can we get the most out of the little that is spent,” Dr Graham Reid, TEHIP Project Manager, told *IDRC Reports* early in the project. “You don’t need much money to get the system running more efficiently. What is needed, is better planning, based on evidence.”

So Tanzanian researchers and health workers worked together in two of the country’s 117 districts — Morogoro and Rufiji — to determine the local people’s greatest health needs. After a decade of research and experience, the verdict is in: the idea is solid, and has produced some remarkable results. Two districts in Tanzania, for example, have seen child mortality rates fall by more than 40 percent.

Now a new book in IDRC’s *In_Focus* series presents the TEHIP story. Called *Fixing Health Systems*, it is a story of hope, and holds important lessons that can be applied widely throughout the countries of the developing world, and beyond. The book comes with a CD, which presents the associated thematic Web site. You can also view this Web site online at www.idrc.ca/tehip.

The authors are Don de Savigny, TEHIP Research Manager for IDRC; Harun Kasale, TEHIP Project Coordinator with the Tanzanian Ministry of Health; Conrad Mbuya, TEHIP Research Coordinator also with the Tanzanian Ministry of Health; and Graham Reid, TEHIP Project Manager for IDRC.

You can order copies of *In_Focus: Fixing Health Systems* (ISBN 1-55250-155-8) online at <http://booktique.idrc.ca/>

