



SUMMER 2016

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**Website:**  
[AKREA.ORG](http://AKREA.ORG)

**Anchorage and Mat-Su**  
**CARTA**, President: Kathryn Berkowitz  
CARTA meets 1st Saturday at 12:30 at the Anchorage Senior Center (Sept.-May)  
Contact: Ronelva Peacock (907)349-1714

**Fairbanks (FRTA)**  
Steve Heckman  
  
FRTA meets the 2nd Wednesday at 11:30

**Juneau/Douglas:** Barb Potter  
billstoy@aol.com  
JRTA meets on the 3rd Monday every month

**Seward:** Mary Daniel  
Box 593 , Seward, AK 99664  
[smdaniel@gci.net](mailto:smdaniel@gci.net)

**Kodiak:**

**Kenai** Virginia Walters  
214 Birch, Street, Kenai, Ak 99611  
[vewalters@gci.net](mailto:vewalters@gci.net)



Nicole Twichell, 2016 scholarship winner from Kasigluk in the Lower Kuskokwim

Nicole attends University of Alaska, Juneau, and is a Junior enrolled in B.A. program in Elementary Education. In 2016-17, she will be finishing up her remaining course work and doing her student teaching at Akula Elitnaurvik in Kasigluk. She received an Associates of Arts degree in 2014, and expects to graduate with her Bachelor’s degree in spring 2017. Her long term goal is to return and teach in her home district. She plans to eventually earn her Master’s degree in Education.

Nicole writes: “I came to college knowing little of the outside world nor did I have knowledge of applying what I ‘knew’ to assignments that called for European thinking. I adapted, taking a cross-cultural approach by making my assignments relevant to my Yup’ik culture whenever possible....I hope to transfer this method to my Native peers so that they, too, can make non-native curriculum relevant to them....Growing up immersed in the Yup’ik culture, language and values, I came to realize how crucial it is for Native students to assert their rights to culturally relevant instruction....I am the first generation in my family to attend college. I want to serve as an example and make a difference to the younger Yup’ik generatrion, showing that a college education is a road to a secure career.”

Seward Retired Teachers committee made the selection from several very qualified candidates from around the state.

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## BARB'S BY-LINE



The AKREA board has been working hard to bring the organization in to the modern generation by keeping up with Facebook, Twitter, etc. AKREA is on Facebook; hope you are following us. We are having a board meeting in Anchorage in October for more training on these issues. NRTA, the educators' section of AARP, is sending a consultant to help us. We will spend two days improving our skills in these areas so we can keep you better informed of all the issues. As you can see from other articles in this issue something is always happening to cut benefits and we all need to keep abreast of these issues. We send informative emails to our members who give us their address. We never give anyone your email address. It also helps us a great deal to send the newsletter by email. The postage and printing have gotten so expensive.

We are trying to keep you aware of all that is happening with our healthcare, pension etc. RPEA has helped us with getting these issues to you and we thank them very much. They are still pursuing the law suit to protect our benefits. You can donate to them if you want or join RPEA. You can find information at [www.rpea.apea-aft.org](http://www.rpea.apea-aft.org)

There are a lot of fun and important things going on with AKREA. I had the pleasure of being part of the group to select our classroom Opportunity Grants. It was fun to imagine the youngsters being able to have something that they probably would not have if we didn't give out the grants. After awarding them we always get some feedback. The group in Whittier sent us pictures. With their money they bought a sewing machine and made different things such as purses and the new scarves everyone is wearing nowadays. They looked so proud to be modeling the pieces (elementary school). Another school bought binoculars for the whole class because in the spring they go bird watching. We hope to expand these grants. If you would like to help us with them you can donate some money. Just send it to the treasurer (Virginia Walters, 214 Birch Street, Kenai AK 99611).

I would like to thank the board, Liz and Virginia especially, for doing most of the work lately as I have had some health issues. It is important that we keep up with everything and we need some younger members to step up and take the positions. If you are interested in helping let me know by email or phone. Thank you one and all. Barbara 907-687-6299 or [barbnroy@ecsalaska.com](mailto:barbnroy@ecsalaska.com)

Like ALASKA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION on Facebook for up to the minute news as we receive it. Visit AKREA.ORG for relevant information, important phone numbers and other points of interest to retirees.

# IN THE UNITS

## *CARTA Awards Three Scholarships*

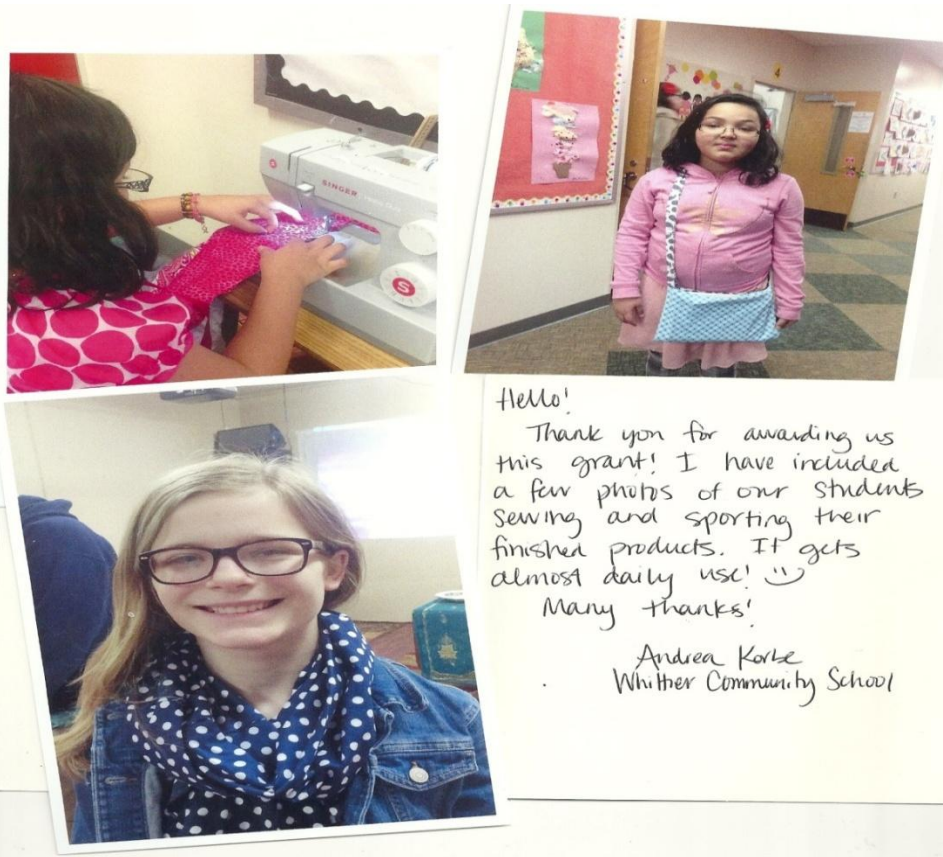
Central Alaska Retired Teachers Association announced and introduced the winners of three CARTA/Marie Paxson Scholarships for the 2016-2017 academic year. These scholarships, valued at \$2,500 each, are awarded to students from either APU or UAA and all its branches, who are nearing the completion of their studies that will result in being certified to teach in the State of Alaska. All three winners this year are students at the University of Alaska Anchorage and all were able to be present to be introduced at the May CARTA meeting. Preference is given to students planning to teach in Alaska. Funding of these scholarships comes from the earnings of the investment of funds that came from a bequest from the late CARTA member, Marie Paxson, plus individual gifts to the savings account held by CARTA and the proceeds from the CARTA auction held in April each year.

The first scholarship for a teacher planning to teach at the elementary school level was presented to **Stephanie Lamartino**, who plans to finish her bachelor's degree next spring. Stephanie says she knew she wanted to become a teacher when she was still in high school in Illinois. She made up her mind as she was fulfilling her high school graduation requirement of 24 hours of community service and her task was working in a fifth grade classroom. A unique part of Stephanie's response to our question of where do you plan to teach she said she would like to teach in Anchorage, but she is "open to the opportunity to teach in rural Alaska." The reason for that response? "It was not until I moved to Anchorage when I started to work with diverse groups of students with experiences very different from my own." Throughout her time in Alaska she has become very aware and very sensitive to the different cultures in our students and the very "culturally responsive teaching methods" she needs to provide as a classroom teacher.

The scholarship presented to a teacher preparing to teach at the secondary school level went to **Roger David**, a young man who grew up in Anchorage, graduated from West High School, and earned his Bachelor of Music degree at UAA in December of 2015. His plan now is to finish his MAT in music at UAA in the summer of 2017 and wants to teach music in the ASD. As we said when we introduced him to the CARTA membership, Roger is thoroughly music. The teacher he would most like to emulate was his sixth grade music teacher who "is one of my biggest heroes," and "is the teacher I want to be when I grow up." Further, "She probably saved me by putting a viola in my hands and saying, 'You're playing viola.' She was one of the first people to tell me that I was good at something that wasn't a part of my family, and to be a kid at a Title 1 school who grew up poor not ever expecting to be involved in music, that was the most empowering and impactful moment of my life." Incidentally, that teacher, Kathryn Hoffer, is now retired from the ASD, but probably best known as the long-time Concert Master of the Anchorage Symphony Orchestra

**Teeka Ballas** is the third scholarship winner given to a student planning to teach at either elementary or secondary level. This is a young lady who has tried many different career tasks before becoming a substitute teacher and realizing "my true calling – to teach writing and language arts to the kind of at-risk kid I had been." She admits that she was headed down a destructive path by middle school, but she says two things saved her: first, she developed a love of reading and second, two teachers who, "Taught me to apply myself, to persevere, to be tolerant of my and other's mistakes and flaws, and to recognize my self worth." After high school Teeka went to music school in Los Angeles and sang professionally for 10 years. She then returned to school and got her journalism degree at UAA in 2008. Then it was reporting, writing, teaching others to write, and working as a staff and freelance writer for several years. She started substitute teaching in 2014. She worked in "a dozen different schools," and that lead to seeking an MAT at UAA next spring. This past year, she has worked a long-term job at Begich Middle School helping teach special education language arts to kids who struggle with emotional and behavioral disorders.

## OPPORTUNITY GRANTS



Retired teachers in Fairbanks (FRTA) selected these grant recipients from applications from around the state. \$1000 annually is available for these grants, so the amount per teacher is decided by the committee's determination of classroom viability and need as well as the budget supplied by the teacher.

**Jennifer Sargent** from Sandpoint, Aleutian East School District, to buy supplies for a project to analyze cleaning compounds and determine the efficacy of each and whether natural is as good as or better than chemicals.

**Sharee Smith and Angela Hayden**, Sleetmute Jack Egnaty Sr. School, Kuspuk School district, to help with gas money for a student trip outside the state including travel by car to points of interest.

**Gwendolyn Brazier**, Arctic Light Elementary, Ft. Wainwright, Fairbanks North Star School District, to purchase age appropriate violins for the kindergarten class music program

**Andrea Korbe**, Whittier School, Chugach School District, to purchase a sewing machine for the classroom

**Julie Gottfried**, Sterling Elementary, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District to purchase binoculars for bird identification along the Nature Trail near the school.

**Penney Connealy**, Ninilchik School, Kenai Peninsula Borough School District, for a student trip to the Kachemak Bay research facility to study invertebrates.

If you have a group who would like to make the selection, please contact Barb Rich at [barbnroy@ecsalaska.com](mailto:barbnroy@ecsalaska.com). You do not have to be a formal unit to participate in the selection if you have an interested group of retired teachers

## “Almost” End of Session Advocacy Report – 29<sup>th</sup> Legislature

Ken Helander  
Advocacy Director  
AARP Alaska

Since legislators did not come to agreement on the state’s fiscal plan, the governor called another special session to begin July 11. This follows the eleventh hour veto of \$1.29 billion from the legislature-appropriated budget, including capital projects, education cuts, reduction in oil tax credits, and capping the PFD at \$1,000. Despite all the last minute wrangling, it has, to this point, been a consequential and somewhat productive session.

While the overriding theme for legislators was the severe loss of state revenue due to low oil prices worldwide, and the challenge of how to address this in the state’s budget process, much time was spent looking for cuts in state spending, and any bill that had a fiscal note had little chance of advancing. Cuts in spending were significant to many areas of state services, including the university, education, capital projects, and of course, health and social services. There is still wrangling on the proper use of state oil tax credits, the structure and use of Permanent Fund earnings, and other specific taxes, such as on mining, alcohol, fisheries, etc. The legislators seemed generally unwilling to consider broader and potentially more unpopular revenue sources such as state sales or income taxes, presumably because it is an election year. Nevertheless, they still have another special session and anything could happen at the last moment.

While much less was heard about the proposed gas pipeline project (it is still on the agenda), the Knik Arm Bridge, and some discussion about how to deal with legalized marijuana, there were two very notable bills that will have significant impact on the state. The first dealt with Medicaid reform, SB 74. Its provisions include new ways of addressing opiate abuse, appropriate use of hospital emergency rooms, telehealth, false claims/fraud, behavioral health integration, primary care/health homes, and tribal health policy. There are also provisions for feasibility studies of privatization of the Pioneers Homes (or specific services) and the Alaska Psychiatric Institute. AARP Alaska, and many familiar partners all worked hard to craft the bill’s provisions, and it notably had much bipartisan support. There is a partnership effort to provide education to stakeholders and the public on the bill’s particulars through a series of webinars. These are now archived and available on the DHSS website.

The second major piece of legislation was SB 91, a sweeping bill to reform the criminal justice system, particularly with regard to non-violent offenders. The bill is very complex and it will take some time to parse all of its implications. It is projected to save the state money and to provide increased supports to persons re-entering the community from correctional facilities.

This year, AARP Alaska conducted its first legislative “fly-in” with 21 staff and volunteers from around the state convening in Juneau to advocate for AARP’s priorities. Bedecked in red vests, the advocates roamed the halls of the capitol, met with many legislators and their staff, sat in on House and Senate floor sessions, and attended a bill overview by the Director of the Division of Banking and Securities (SB 108 and HB 194, both stalled in committee).

The fly-in members had four priority items to advocate with legislators:

- HB 8 – Uniform Power of Attorney Bill (Rep. Hughes, sponsor)  
This bill has been in the works for more than four years. Its primary purpose is to update existing POA statute to more closely conform to the uniform language being used in an increasing number of states. It provides increased protection from financial or material

- exploitation for vulnerable adults (principal); clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the person to whom powers are delegated (agent); and facilitates acceptance by third parties. The bill passed the House last year, and was unanimously passed by the Senate on April 16. It awaits the governor's signature.
- SB 72 – CARE Act (Sen. Giessel, sponsor)  
The CARE Act is an AARP initiated bill (most states have passed or are working on it) to address the needs of caregivers of persons being discharged from hospital care. The bill requires hospitals to develop policies that contain three main elements: opportunity is given to a patient to designate a person (e.g., family member, friend, neighbor) who will provide post-hospital care and support; record the name of the designated caregiver in the patient's record; provide the opportunity for the caregiver to have demonstrated instruction in post-discharge care tasks. The purpose of the bill is to reduce caregiver stress, provide increased patient/caregiver safety, prevent unnecessary hospital readmission, and increase likelihood of positive health outcome. The bill was passed unanimously by both the Senate and the House, and awaits the governor's signature. Notably, fly-in members were present in the Senate gallery for the floor vote.
- SB 1 – Statewide Smoke-free Workplace (Sen. Micciche, sponsor)  
AARP Alaska has been a longtime partner with other health organizations (American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, American Heart Association, et al.) to extend the protections from second hand smoke in the workplace and other public spaces that are enjoyed in many local communities (e.g. Anchorage, Juneau, Bethel) to the rest of the state where many communities do not have health powers to enact local regulations. As the bill progressed over the past several years, it necessarily evolved to deal with the advent of e-cigarettes and legalization of marijuana. The bill passed the Senate with a wide margin, but despite thousands of support cards, hundreds of business and community resolutions, and even clear majority house member support, it was held up by one committee chair and prevented from moving to a floor vote. This was a very disappointing setback for those who believe all Alaskans have a right to breathe clean air.
- Senior Safety Net (State Operating Budget)  
Despite ardent advocacy by seniors, providers and many aging persons, there were some other aging persons in the legislature who saw fit to cut programs that make up some of the safety net that helps keep seniors independent in their own homes. The budget included a \$9 million elimination of the state energy assistance program that aids low income seniors. It removes the \$6 million Medicaid adult dental program. And the budget provides for a \$100/year fee to be on the waiting list for the Pioneers Home. Just finalized to remain in the budget are state grants that support in-home care, transportation, and respite programs. Having already made some cuts to the Senior Benefit Program's highest tier level for FY 2016, the just signed budget will keep funding level for FY 2017. The lowest two income eligibility levels will continue to receive the \$250 and \$175 monthly payments. The highest income level will receive \$76/mo, subject to periodic review during the fiscal year with adjustments made depending on case load. The preservation of the Senior Benefit Program in this budget can be directly attributed to the advocacy of senior groups, beneficiaries, and AARP!

There was an attempt to eliminate the statutory mandate for property tax exemption on the first \$150,000 of assessed value. This was in conjunction with the desire of the legislature to reduce/eliminate revenue sharing with municipalities (now called community assistance).

- However, push-back from older property owners forced the exemption to remain.

## PENSION LANGUAGE IN THE BUDGET

The Alaska legislature has recently submitted their budget bill, HB 256, to the Governor for approval. There is language in that bill that asks for a feasibility study to be done concerning moving the retiree pension/health benefit trust asset investment and management responsibilities from the Alaska Retirement Management Board (ARMB) to the Alaska Permanent Fund Corporation (APFC). After careful review of such a transfer, and discussion with members of the ARM Board, RPEA and AKREA feel this would not be in the best interests of retirees or the trust that funds our pensions and health benefits and sent a letter to Governor Walker stating the same.

The ARM Board recently had their regularly scheduled meeting, which includes ARMB trustees, as well as representatives from the Departments of Revenue and Administration. RPEA additionally made a statement during the public comment period outlining the same objections cited in the letter to Governor Walker, and their comments were very well received by the ARM Board. At the same meeting, the ARM Board unanimously passed a resolution opposing such a transfer, and this resolution has been transmitted to Governor Walker, as well as the APFC and all legislators. Their resolution is posted on the AKREA (AKREA.ORG) website.

However, as we went to press, we've been told that the Governor signed HB 256 and did not remove the language requesting the feasibility study, and the firm to do the study has already been hired.

We will keep you abreast of this as things happen. Please check our web site and the Facebook site. If you have an email let us know and we will send you updates as we get them.

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### E-MAIL ADDRESSES

AKREA sent emails last spring to the membership regarding some issues and changes with AETNA and with the Long Term Care insurance. If you did not receive these emails, and have previously shared your address, please put AKREA on your approved recipient list, and make sure AKREA has your correct email address. Each time we send an email, about 10% are returned as undeliverable because of 'no recipient with that address' or because the server will not accept bulk mail.

AKREA does not send email except for current issues immediately affecting the membership, and your address will never be shared with other entities. Sending the address to AKREA does not mean you will automatically receive the newsletter online, either, unless you request it be sent that way. If you did not receive the insurance emails, please send current email addresses to [akretirededucators@gmail.com](mailto:akretirededucators@gmail.com) and indicate whether you want to receive the newsletter online or via USPS.

### IN MEMORIAM

**Kathy Wischer**, AKREA board member and Kodiak representative passed away on July 3, 2016. She was the main stay behind the AKREA web page and an advocate for all retired educators.

**Dr. Mari Rich** passed away on June 5<sup>th</sup> at her home in Cleveland, Texas, at the age of 89.

In 1959 Mari and family moved to Anchorage where she taught at Government Hill and Lake Otis elementary schools. She later served as principal at Chugiak Elementary and was the founding principal for the Chugach Optional School.

She retired from AISD as Supervisor of Elementary Schools in 1979.

Dr. Rich was a Lifetime member of AKREA.

## ALASKA EDUCATORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**2017** marks the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Purchase of Alaska. The Alaska Historical Society is promoting celebrations in various parts of the state, sponsored by the local Historical Societies and other interested organizations. **AEHS** is putting out the call for submissions from retired teachers for another book to honor the anniversary.

Sandy Sinclair sent us a copy of his book *Inside the Rainbow*, his story of coming to Alaska in the 1950s from the Pacific Northwest to teach on the Aleutians and of subsequent moves to other bush schools during the next thirty years. The book is available on Kindle.

And, Steven R., McCain sent his book *Alaskan Adventure: Stories of our Bush Teaching Experiences* about his family's move from Idaho to New Stuyahok in the early 1980s. This book, too, is available on Kindle.

Both of these books tell interesting stories of the extensive preparation necessary for the move and the culture shock of moving to a Native Village in the 'old days'. We are also waiting for news from Jean Paul Cechkowski about his stories on the beginnings of ARC with "no building, no books, no black board, no nothing".

Also still available is *Juneau Teacher Tales:1930-1950* from the Juneau Retired Teachers Association. Contact Barb Potter at [billstoy@aol.com](mailto:billstoy@aol.com)

We all have at least one story. Send it to AEHS for inclusion in the 150 year anniversary book. It will be our fifth volume. Volumes 1-3 are small booklets of 30+ pages. Volume 4 combines the first three volumes and adds some stories to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Statehood in 2009. We have a few of those in hard copy left and Volume 4 is available on Kindle, through Amazon.com.

Tell your friends. They do not have to be a member of AEHS or AKREA to submit a story. Our institutional history is fast becoming obsolete and needs to be preserved. Stories from janitors, maintenance people and cooks are also welcome, as those educators most often had the best insight into the workings of the school and the students.

Send all submissions to AEHS, 214 Birch Street, Kenai AK 99611 or email to [vewalters@gci.net](mailto:vewalters@gci.net).

From INSIDE THE RAINBOW by Sandy Sinclair:

"We're not going to Alaska in that little thing," screamed Marie. 'That Little Thing' was the 120 foot tramp steamer that moored in Seattle for 10 days before making the stormy 20 day freight run to the Aleutian Islands, the most westward part of North America.. Our destination was one of those islands. It had no established radio nor telephone communication. The GARLAND would be our only contact with the outside world. She'd bring mail and the supplies we'd ordered the month before through the faithful Sear and Roebuck catalogue...

We had no clue about what food to order for a year nor did we know what clothing we might need...We [asked] why the information was so tentative. Their answer was that the island was so remote that no one from their department had ever been there.

We took the job. They said "Good Luck"



**ALASKA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION**

**NAME (Please Print)**

**Last** \_\_\_\_\_ **First** \_\_\_\_\_ **M.I.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **State:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

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**I prefer to receive the newsletter via**     e-mail     USPS

**Dues: \$15 per year    4 years/\$50**

**Make Check Payable to ALASKA RETIRED EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION**

**mail to: Virginia Walters  
214 Birch Street  
Kenai, Ak 99611**

The AKREA dues year is January –December. Any dues received after September 15 each year will cover the next year



**AKREA Executive Director, Liz Lucas**

**How To Live Our Best Lives**

This phrase caught my attention recently. I find myself reflecting on “how do we live our best lives?” I don’t pretend to have a solution...just a few personal thoughts.

I experience the greatest joy when I focus on something that has meaning for me. To develop a passion for a task or cause that promises to make a difference in the life of someone else is extremely fulfilling.

I find meaning in advocating for innovative, productive solutions that are relevant to people in my community and the communities of Alaska. To be able to work with others, using our collective experiences and skills, to bring about needed change is the greatest reward. *Think...*2016 legislative session and the Care Act that was passed! AKREA assisted AARP in their successful efforts.

Own this moment of time in your life! I love that thought. More and more people are living longer. As we enter each new life phase we continue to explore the various ways to live our best lives. Enjoy!

Liz



Alaska Retired  
Educators Association

**ASRTA**  
**214 Birch Street**  
**Kenai AK 99611**

AKREA news is a publication of ASRTA. It is mailed at irregular intervals at bulk rate to members. It is NOT forwarded by the post office. Please send address change to the above address.

Check your mailing label!! The date your membership expires is the number following your name; i.e. John Doe '16 indicates dues paid through 2016. An "L" indicated a Life membership. If your expiration date is '14 or before this is the last newsletter you will receive unless AKREA receives your dues for 2016. Annual dues are \$15 or 4 years for \$50. A membership/renewal form is on page seven.

### 2016 AKREA TRAVEL.....

*Consider Nova Scotia this Fall September 19 –29, 2016*



**EDUCATORS**

**READY**

**TO**

**GO.....**

**Hi,**  
***There is still time to join us in an exciting venture .....***

- . rugged beaches***
- . picturesque fishing villages***
- . salmon barbecues***

***We are again going with Collette Tours  
exploring the Maritime Coastal Wonders, from the rugged Cabot Trail  
to the amazing Fundy tides!***



***Check out details at : [akrea.org](http://akrea.org)***