

The origin and growth of the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan truly reflects the spirit and nature of the prairies. The early days are marked by the drive and commitment of educational champions such as Avery McDowell, Stan Fowler, George Taylor, Emma Stewart, and Caroline Robins who were known to frequently challenge the government of the day - highlighting the need for pension reform that guaranteed each of Saskatchewan's retired teachers "a life of dignity, security and adequate income" (Stan Fowler, 1979).

On October 10, 1973 thirty-two delegates from Melfort, Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Regina, and Saskatoon met at the Saskatoon Public Library and established the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan (STS). The founder's commitment at this inaugural meeting was two-fold: one to address the existing and glaring inequity of teachers' pensions; and two, to "improve the lot of pensioners – past, present and in the future."

Local Chapters of superannuated teachers are the foundation of the STS. Throughout its fifty-year history, the STS has relied upon the energy and guidance of Chapter volunteers in fulfilling the organization's vision as well as ensuring that programs, activities, and services align with its mandate. During this time, the STS has welcomed and supported members around the globe as well as in every Canadian province and territory. Today, with a membership of well over 12,000, the STS represents approximately eighty percent of retired teachers in Saskatchewan.

The STS's newsletter, *Outreach* was first published and mailed to members in 1974 with the purpose of communicating and informing members of Executive meeting highlights as well as of organizational, local, Chapter and national events. Today, *Outreach* has a paper distribution of over 7,300 copies with a printing and distribution cost of close to \$11,000 per issue as well as an email notification to approximately 3,500 others. *Outreach* is also publicly available through the STS website.

Since its inauguration, the STS Executive has worked hard to ensure that programs and services are responsive and relevant to the growing and evolving needs of its members. For example, the introduction of a specially designed Group Benefits Plan in 1996, provided dental, health and travel benefits, and offered a valuable level of support for STS members. The ongoing success of the Group Benefits Plan provides peace of mind and quality service to the membership and demonstrates the Executive's ongoing commitment to member health and well-being.

Over the years, STS Chapter's social relationships have evolved with changing faces and changing interests. Chapter events have ranged from regular meetings and luncheons or dinners, holiday celebrations, organized events such as card or sports tournaments

to quilting and stitching gatherings, travel opportunities, guest presentations and/or letter writing advocacy campaigns.

Historically, the ties between the STS and the STF are inextricable. The STS organization exists as a local body of teachers established in accordance with *The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006* and as such has full representation and participation in Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) governance processes such as the Federation's Annual Meeting of Council. At these meetings, STS Councillors elected by Delegates at the Annual General Meeting, ensure that the views of Saskatchewan's superannuated teachers are represented in the deliberations. STS archives provide evidence of ongoing collaboration on areas of mutual benefit ranging from political action on collective bargaining to office administration resourcing and support.

The STS organization is committed to teachers' ongoing professional learning and since 1991, the STS has made an annual donation to the Dr. Stirling McDowell Research into Teaching and Learning Foundation. In 2011, the McDowell Foundation awarded the STS with the *McDowell Foundation Annual Research Award* in recognition of members' ongoing and valuable contributions. In addition, since 1997, the STS has provided bursaries to students entering their fourth year of teacher training in the Colleges of Education in both Saskatoon and Regina.

The STS mandate of establishing and maintaining positive alliances with like-minded organizations has strengthened over the past fifty years due to society's increasing awareness of the importance of ensuring adequate support for Canada's older adults. In 1990, four members of the STS Executive were fundamental to the establishment of the Saskatchewan Seniors' Mechanism (SSM) and since then both organizations have collaborated on initiatives that ameliorate the quality of life for Saskatchewan's retired teacher community. Saskatchewan superannuated teachers have also had a significant presence at the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers – Association Canadienne des Enseignants R traites (ACER-CART) table over its three-decade history.

Over fifty years, the STS has evolved from a fledging organization with a primary focus of equity to a mature and well-organized body providing a strong voice on issues, be they educational, social, medical, economic, technological, or political.

In 2023, as a mature organization celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> year, the STS stands firmly rooted in its heritage and its commitment to its mandate. The strength and vitality of the STS lies in its members who today, as in the past, are excited about the prospect of enjoying a well-deserved retirement while remaining active and vibrant participants in their communities.