

Iyengar Yoga Association of Canada Newsletter/ Les nouvelles de l'ACYI

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Dear Jane,

Not sure about you, but we are still a little rattled by the consumer marathon of Black Friday, which offered a frightening glimpse into the shadow side of our culture as we trample over one another for bargains.

Low prices come at a high cost, usually at the expense of employees who are paid less than a living wage; particularly evident in out-sourced factories in parts of India and Asia. And, as we all know, this push for consumerism is destroying the earth. (Check out *The Story of Stuff* if you are interested in solutions: <http://storyofstuff.org>)

Now the yin side to Black Friday. For years, Vancouver-based *AdBusters* has promoted Buy Nothing Day, a chance to do charitable work, to focus on relationships rather than retail. And then there's Giving Tuesday (fast becoming a day when the inbox fills with more than the usual number of requests for donations from worthy and well-intentioned causes).

In Victoria, the founder of the Luminara Lantern Festival is spearheading an initiative to illuminate the city in these dark days. (LED please!) It's not just the time of year. There is much darkness in the world, as anyone who has heard a recent newscast knows. ISIL. Syria. Sexual Assault. Climate crisis. We are sorely in need of more light.

And for all of us yoga is that light. Let's use it not only to keep ourselves healthy and fit into old age, but to aid and accelerate the transition to a world where people matter more than profits.

"Don't just try to do a better pose. Try to be a better person." Was it Prashant who said that?

Like *Eka Hasta Vrksasana*, easier said than done. Still, winter seems a fitting time for some in-depth *Svadhya* - how we live, both on and off the mat.

This issue begins with one example of *Yoga for the Greater Good*; Stephanie Tencer's way to support community-builders (usually low wage earners) with discounts at her new Toronto studio.

Postcards from Pune, penned by the talented "Pune Bloomers" Jane Munro and Jayne Lloyd-Jones, brings a ray of de-light into the pre-Solstice darkness. Be sure to read their thoughtful, humorous reflections from RIMYI.

Contentment is the antithesis of consumerism. Senior teacher and seasoned practitioner Ingelise Nehrlan helps us find more *santosa* in our *asana* practice (and then spread it outward).

Betsy MacKinnon uncloaks the elephant in the yoga room; yoga wear. Are bikinis okay in yoga class? What do you think?

Lastly, this Newsletter needs a new Editor or perhaps that's Editors. (Scroll down to the bottom to see the Job Description.)

We've both had fun, but it's time to move on.

We thank you all for your contributions, and for the wonderful opportunity to learn about and serve the Iyengar community across Canada.

We'll be here to help whoever comes next with the transition, including help with learning the formatting program we use.

Blessings of the season,
Eve Johnson and Karyn Woodland



Postcards from Pune

By Jayne Lloyd-Jones and Jane Munro



Jayne (left) and Jane (right), Pune-style

POSTCARD #1, November 7, 2014

~ Geeta taught Monday night's class this week, with no fanfare or announcement. We are waiting to see if she will teach again tomorrow evening.

~ The location for Geeta's birthday teaching sessions has changed to accommodate the 2,000+ students now signed up. In class today the session was still being advertised.

~ Model Colony's gentrification is definitely under way. The stray dogs are looking healthier; the sidewalk paving in red and yellow bricks is almost complete. And we've only seen one pig around.

~ Jayne has signed up to observe medical classes and is wishing there was a diagnosis on each student to better understand the prop set-up for each individual.

~ Several of the medical class patients were young children, which surprised me. With several children playing in the room, Abhijahta's daughter and one or two others, there was a community atmosphere.



Spices for sale

~ Prashant's new book is out, and Jane has one of the first copies! Watch this space for her review in the coming weeks.

~ Prashant's points this week included: 98 per cent of you come here to improve your physical poses instead of deepening your consciousness; and this rigidity in focus on 'Photo-asana' leads to fundamentalism. So, we're yoga fundamentalists. Jayne thinks he even mentioned terrorists.

~ He's also been talking about using the breath as a tool for integration (which he described as a necessary step on the path to unity or Yog). One of his metaphors for this was the breath as "Queen Bee" that all the senses and body systems follow. At first, Jane thought he was saying the breath was like "green beans" - blame it on the street noise pouring in through the open windows.

~ Prashant claims you can use the breath to increase the strength of bones and increase their intake of calcium. So, you don't need to take multi-vitamin and mineral pills.

~ Of course, all this is filtered through our memories of what we could pick up during class. But, we both agree that his points have been well constructed and we've been able to follow the thread of his discourse better this time. We don't know if this is related to the fact that they are recording his classes now.



Ganga on her Makara (crocodile)

~ Guruji's absence during practice times casts a poignancy over them: every time we walk past his trestle to get props, he's not there. But he is at the same time very much there with all the photos of him around the hall.

~ Raya has had a haircut! He looks rather corporate - no more abundant curls.

POSTCARD #2, November 13, 2014

~ Geeta is teaching! She taught three classes last week: *asanas* Monday and Thursday plus *pranayama* Friday. The *pranayama* was a particular treat. Her instructions were insightful and easy to follow. There were many peaceful,

smiling faces as we put on our shoes and drifted off into the night.

~ "Westerners" are now given a choice on Monday and Thursday between the 7 am class (Prashant) and the 6 pm class (so far, Geeta).

~ The division between "Gents" and "Ladies" classes has disappeared. (But Prashant has yet to join the non-sexist language movement: today he spoke of "man-making" and kept using "he" as a generic pronoun.)



A beautifully dressed merchant with her scales

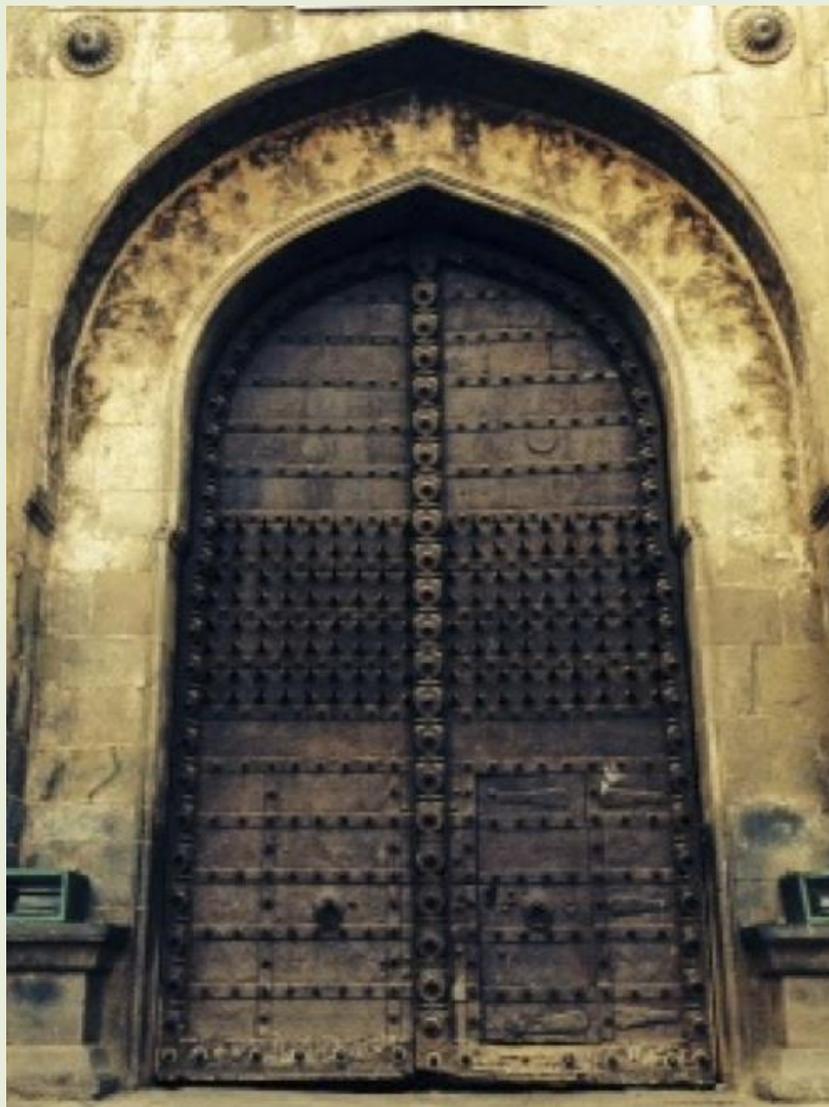
~ Gulnaz taught an excellent 9:30 am class (formerly a Ladies class) on Wednesday to mostly women but two brave men attended. So, last week we had three classes with Geeta, two with Prashant, and one with Gulnaz.

~ Babies are a hot topic. Prashant and Geeta have both mentioned "the granddaughter." We've heard Abhi's daughter's voice downstairs when we're upstairs practicing and seen her in the medical class and outside the Iyengar's house. Prashant has drawn analogies with babies or children in every class. On Saturday, he built a complex description of psychoanalysis that culminated with "when baby goes to sleep, mother can do her work for baby" - i.e., when monkey mind gets hypnotized, psyche can get to work. And there are

more babies coming. Jayne noticed Raya's pregnant wife in the medical class.

~ Not only are there new red and yellow sidewalks going in - the park also has red-bricked paths edged with red and white tiles circling an expanded children's playground. There's a looping network of hard-packed walking paths, jet sprinklers spraying undergrowth, fresh white and red bands around the trunks of trees, and a bevy of attendants sweeping fallen leaves.

~ We set off at 6:30 am on Sunday to join a Heritage Walk around Pune's old town that was to start at 7 am. After adventures with rickshaws, we missed the start (this was a very well-organized walk which began precisely on time) so had to speed walk across Shivaji Bridge to catch up with the tour group at their first stop, Shaniwar Wada. We hadn't realized that the Maratha empire, ruled from Pune, stretched over most of the Indian subcontinent and included parts of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Our guide was an architect with a passion for preserving Pune's heritage buildings. Afterwards, we first found a clean washroom in a restaurant near the Mahatma Phule Market, then enjoyed masala dosas and chai. Refreshed, we crossed the street and bought spices.



Ancient Gate in Pune

~ Last night, Geeta spoke of how bad "Canadian" headstands have been and undertook to renovate Jane's *sirsasana*. I was right under her nose in the front row. She sent Gulnaz to hold "the Canadian's" ankles (so I wouldn't topple over) and Abhi to lift my shoulders. Abhi is very strong! Her hands felt like a pair of hydraulic jacks hoisting my head four inches off the ground.

"She has to learn to do it at the wall," Geeta observed. Two tri-folded blankets, a wall, and some prompting later, I got a glimpse of what Geeta is looking for. This is not going to be a quick fix - but, what luck!

~ Jayne has registered to observe medical classes, wanting to learn more about set-ups for pregnant students and other specific conditions. The first class proved to be a frustrating

experience, as observers have little idea what they are observing, not being privy to the injury or illness. However after gleaned tips like "NEVER sit down!" from a US teacher assisting the Indians, I have managed to make myself useful and am assisting several people in the class, under the supervision of an Indian teacher.

~ We attended an evening meditation at the Indira Ashram next door on Saturday. Our landlady, who is a devotee of Sri Aurobindo's two disciples who founded the ashram, invited us along. It's a graceful airy building dating from the Raj; it has its own temple inside and well-tended gardens with memorials to the two spiritual leaders.

POSTCARD #3, November 27, 2014

~ This week Geeta has been teaching "spine extensions" - not to be called "backbends." She began with *Gomukhasana*, prepping each arm independently, then taking *Gomukhasana* into the backward extension of *Parsvottanasana* to get even more opening in the armpit which allowed us to draw the upper arm further back from the ear and down. Result: both Jane and Jayne caught four fingers in each hand!

~ In her second class, we did *Baddha Padmasana* to open the upper chest. Her work with every aspect of this pose was fascinating.

~ "Why do you need a blanket for your head in *Savasana*? Next week you'll be wearing helmets!"

~ "Remove your specs: you don't need specs to see your soul! You meet the Atman face to face."

~ Yesterday, Prashant got onto the topic of "intensives." (RIMYI is abuzz with preparations for Geeta's Intensive.) Prashant said he is "educating" us in a way that cannot be accomplished in a workshop or intensive.

~ "Don't invite me to come to you. The mountain does not go to Muhammad, Muhammad must go to the mountain!"

~ "Asking me to come to you is like asking the sun to revolve around the earth."



The beauty of dosas

Prashant takes a forensic interest in words - often viewing them as evidence from a crime site. (Of course, he makes up words too!)

~ "Apart - ment: what is the fascination of being separated from others?"

~ "Corner your consciousness by taking it to a specific part of the body."

~ "Employ psyche-analysis to deepen your practice."

~ "Hypnotize monkey mind with cyclical breathing so you can do your yoga practice without interruption."

~ "RIMYI is an 'academy' for study and experimentation. A 'laboratory.' Why use the word 'studio' for yogaaaaah? Because you are striving for 'photo-asana'!"

~ We had another cracking class Wednesday morning from Gulnaz who picked up on and deepened the work Geeta introduced Monday night. Gulnaz is clear and demanding; she doesn't miss anything or anyone. She produces amazing results from us, while retaining a warm relationship with the class.



RIMYI students visiting Buddhist caves at Ellora

~ We made the six-hour drive (through pouring rain) to Ellora with its Buddhist, Hindu and Jain caves on Saturday after Prashant's 7 am class. En-route, we saw Aurangabad's caves and mini Taj Mahal.

~ Sunday, we visited the amazing Buddhist and Hindu caves at Ajanta (dating from 200 BC to 650 AD). Their monolithic sculptures, beautiful paintings, and the astonishing feats involved in carving these temples and residential caves into the basalt cliffs (then decorating them!) left us reflecting on the transitory nature of our own art and cultures.



Monastic visitors with cameras at Ellora

~ At dawn on Monday, five of us entered one of the main Buddhist cave-temples (from 750 AD) in Ellora and had it all to ourselves, except for a yellow dog who had followed us in. Later, we saw her with her five pups lounging on one of the paths. By then, there were throngs of tourists. But that early light shone in through the entrance and through a round window cut into the upper level and gradually intensified. We sat on the smooth, cool stone floor and meditated for some time - a memorable experience!

Yoga for the Greater Good

By Stephanie Tencer

In the Spring I embarked on a new venture with my friend and colleague, Sharon Citron. We opened Studio Po, in Toronto.

The name was Sharon's idea, so I take no credit, but I loved it as soon as I heard it. I especially liked all the "po" words that we could play with - potential, pose, possibility, power, poise - and Studio Po just sounds fun!

The idea of a "po" was created by author [Edward de Bono](#). He wanted a third alternative to our usual way of thinking, which is either "yes," the answer of belief, or "no," the answer of skepticism. A "po" is a possibility, a statement made to provoke the creative process and help move thinking forward.

Keeping a "po" in mind, one of the things that excites me about this new venture is that all of the decisions are ours to make. This gives us tremendous freedom and a feeling of empowerment. What kind of yoga studio do we want to run? What kind of business do we want to operate? What are our values? And how will these core values affect our business?

As new business owners, we do not take these questions lightly. While Sharon and I bring varied and somewhat eclectic backgrounds to this venture, our core values are very much in sync.

Sharon is a former English and drama teacher and I'm a former city planner and urban designer. We hold the concept of community in the utmost regard, and have a special place in our hearts for people who work in the arts, health, the environment, and community improvement. Without this hard work, our city could not flourish as it currently does.

Be it a coordinator for a local food bank, a grants manager for an arts organization, or a researcher for an environmental group, these people provide an incredibly valuable service to society.

But the talented men and women who do this work are too often over-worked and underpaid. In response, we decided to start a Yoga for the Greater Good program at Studio Po, which offers a 20 per cent discount to employees of these organizations.

People turn to yoga for all sorts of reasons. Some find that the physicality of yoga keeps them active, healthy and vibrant.

Others find the practice of yoga calms them and helps them to relax. People say that a dedicated yoga practice helps them approach new situations with a clear and open mind, with level-headedness and greater empathy towards others. Others espouse the spiritual benefits of a dedicated practice.

Sharon and I believe wholeheartedly in the merits of yoga. While we know that yoga cannot solve all of the world's problems, we believe strongly that yoga can effectively support people out there who are working to make a difference.



Stephanie Tencer

Stephanie teaches classes at Studio Po and at [Yoga Centre Toronto](#). She studies regularly with Senior Iyengar Yoga Teacher Marlene Mawhinney and has also had the privilege of studying with the Iyengar family at the Ramamani Iyengar Memorial Yoga Institute in Pune in July of 2011 and again in December of 2013. In March of 2014, Stephanie passed her JI1 Assessment. You can read more about her yoga journey on her blog at [yogabound.ca](#).

Santosa: An Act of Will, or a By-Product of Practice?

By Ingelise Nherlan

I either read or was taught once that contentment is a choice. One can say that whatever happens in one's life, contentment can and should be cultivated, because it serves a practical purpose.

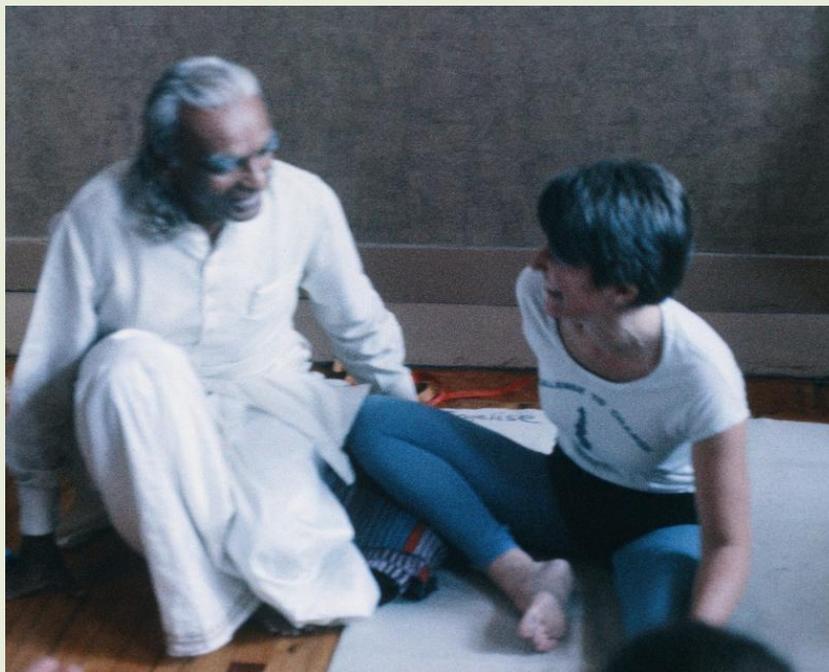
From this point of view, we can take on *santosa*, second in the list of *niyamas*, as a mental discipline, and think our way into contentment.

But is it possible to apply this exercise of will to one's nervous system? And if so, is it honest or artificial? Can the conscious pursuit of contentment really be used as a survival technique, a way to "fake it till you make it?"

Perhaps there's a more natural way to reach *santosa*, and one that gives a true, honest and lasting state of contentment.

All of the eight limbs of yoga work together in ways that are sometimes surprising. As Guruji taught, we are able to practice every limb of yoga in *asana*. At the same time, our experiences on the mat can permeate our consciousness so completely that *santosa* becomes a natural way of living.

The gateway, in my experience, is *sukha*, translated as "happiness, delight, sweetness and pleasure." It's a sensation we all will experience at some time in our practice, who knows when? I do know that the experience of *sukha* cannot be planned, hoped, or prayed for, except as Guruji's famous guiding words are adhered to: "My body is my temple. The *asanas* are my prayers."



Ingelise and Guruji in Vancouver, 1984

(And of course it can't be grasped at, or held, for that's the trap of attachment to pleasure, *raga*.)

Sukha sounds a bit like sugar both in English, and even more in my first tongue, Danish, *sukker*. We feel it as a sweet nectar in our body when we "find the place" in *asana*.

Or as Geetaji said once, "I've got something. Don't disturb me."

Her words validated the feeling one gets when harmony - *sukha* - happens in *asana* practice. And from *sukha*, contentment grows naturally. We taste this sweetness, and cannot help but be content, because unlike the sugar we eat, which only leaves us craving more, *sukha* in *asana* fills us and nourishes us completely.

Once a split second of *sukha* has visited us in practice, we get to appreciate even more the power of *asana* practice. We are hooked, and a day without practice doesn't seem like an option.

So how can you cultivate *sukha* in *asana*?

Give yourself time in the final moments of the pose. Don't be continually adjusting. Instead find your fullest pose and then be there, feeling intelligence everywhere you can in your body,

and opening to the possibility of *sukha*.

Little moments of true *santosa* come to us all many times a day, with or without yoga practice. But when *santosa* has been developing inside us and becomes an effortless state of moment-to-moment living, then we can truly say: "I am in peace."

Ingelise Nherlan holds a Sr. Int. teaching certificate, and has studied at RIMYI for several month-long visits. (Her last in the summer of 2010.) In the late 1970s, Ingelise introduced Iyengar Yoga to her native Denmark with a series of week-long workshops every summer, for four years. She has since taught workshops across Canada, developed new teachers through her Room for Yoga Teacher Training Program, and contributed to IYAC as an Assessor.

Yoga Wear for Women - Liberating or Alluring?

By Betsy MacKinnon

There have been a number of online postings lately in the Iyengar Yoga community about dress. Also, some active-wear companies have been in the headlines due to transparent tights and the technical problems of covering big thighs. There have even been resignations and product recalls.

I myself unhappily participated in a workshop where *Prasarita Padottanasa* was more of an anatomy lesson than a yoga pose. One active-wear manufacturer posted photos of various tights' performance in the same benchmark pose. At least one point being, we should not be oblivious to our dress and its effects.



Being at the bare edge of yoga fashion isn't one of them

The online [yoga] community is of course international. Some Iyengar female teachers have lately posted photos of themselves in bikini bathing suits performing asana.

Comments have been both positive and negative. Senior teachers have questioned the wisdom of self-exposure on the basis of ego and modesty, which surely do fall under the umbrella of yogic behavior.

Supportive comments have focused on feminism, on the right of women to proudly display their bodies as men do. Certainly many photos of Mr. Iyengar show him bare-chested and he is nothing if not a role model. Male Iyengar Yoga teachers often promote themselves online and in advertising wearing only shorts and without provoking comment.

The Iyengar Yoga community has always been big-tent inclusive. "No one is too old, too young, too fat, too thin, too stiff" has been our mantra.

The dress code for teachers in Pune included shorts and T-shirts for men, bloomers and T-shirts for women; tucked in please. With the huge numbers of participants from various Indian communities as well as international students, common practices around dress muted vast cultural differences. That participants were fat or thin, old or young hardly mattered due to similar dress.

Advocates of bikinis wish to be under that tent now too. Will participants who don't even own a bathing suit due to their size or age or both feel comfortable among the bikini-clad?

Some countries including Canada interpreted the dress code as being part and parcel of the Iyengar Yoga identity and student teachers are advised how to appear while representing the Iyengar brand.

[Ed's Note: See also IYAC Code of Ethics, Items 4.1 and 4.2: <http://www.iyengaryogacanada.com/code-ethics>]

Other countries interpreted the dress practice as specifically Indian and did not feel obliged to duplicate Pune dress at home.

Still other forms of yoga actively encourage bathing suits due to the quantity of sweat released by high temperatures. But then, they are a different brand.

The question is, "Is dress part of our identity as students and teachers of Iyengar Yoga?" or "Is dress a matter of personal choice?" The conversation seems to have begun.



Betsy Mackinnon

Betsy MacKinnon is an Introductory II certified teacher (since 2010). She began teacher training optimistically at the age of 60 and specializes in the teaching of adults in mid-life and older. She is principally a student of Marlene Mawhinney at Yoga Centre Toronto but has attended workshops with many senior Canadian, American and Indian teachers. In 2010 she moved to her Lake Ontario studio [Sandbanks Yoga](#) in Wellington, Prince Edward County but returns to Toronto often. That same year, she studied in Pune before travelling throughout North India.

Remembering Guruji



14. Dec.1918 - 20.Aug.2014

I always tell people,
live happily and die majestically.

Shirley Daventry French and Leslie Hogya spoke recently to Janine Bancroft at the University of Victoria Radio Station (CFUV) about BKS Iyengar's life and teachings.

Here is a link to that conversation: <http://wp.me/13CyL> .

Assessment News

Congratulations to the Successful Candidates!

Introductory II/ Intermediate Junior I
June 6-8 * MONTREAL

Introductory II

Louis Gérin Quebec, QC
Yan Chabot Montreal, QC
Marie-Claire Martin Montreal, QC
Carla Ramirez Montreal, QC
Claudie Berge Montreal, QC
Michèle MorrierMontreal, QC

Susie O'Reilly Montreal, QC

Intermediate Junior I

Marie-Chantal Perras Montreal, QC
Kara Thorsen Montreal, QC

Intermediate Junior II June 20-22 * Victoria

Jayne Lloyd-Jones Vancouver, BC
Frema Bram Edmonton, AB
Sharoni Fixler Calgary, AB
Lori Berenz Markham, ON
Azita Bafekr North York, ON
Darcia Fenton Kelowna, BC
Lynne Bowsher Winfield, BC
Glenda Balkan-Champagne Victoria, BC

Intro II Sep. 19-21 * Victoria

Ruth Martin Calgary, AB
Tracy Silberer Cowichan Bay, BC
Tracy Harvey Nanaimo, BC
Jane McFarlane Victoria, BC
Brandy Baybutt Sooke, BC
Sooyoun Ham Victoria, BC
Suzanne Tremblay Victoria, BC
Jana Bodiley Nanaimo, BC

Intermediate Junior 2 October 24-26 * Vancouver

Susan Brimner London, ON
Melissa Perehudoff Kelowna, BC
Nancy Searing North Saanich, BC
Nicola Tiburzi Roberts Creek, BC
Melissa Schoales Halifax, NS
Tim Ruddy Montreal, QC
Michèle McLean Toronto, ON

Introductory II November 7-9 * London

Barbara Lee Calgary, AB
Colette Fitzpatrick Calgary, AB
Maryna Ilyashenko Toronto, ON
Mary Mohamed Markham, ON
Nozomi Morimoto Toronto, ON
Ethel Glinert Toronto, ON
Sandra D'Ippolito Port Franks, ON
Karen McKinnell Toronto, ON

Thanks to Fay Gascho, Assessment Coordinator

AIYAC News/les nouvelle de l'ACYI Submission Guidelines

IYAC News/les nouvelle de l'ACYI
Submission Guidelines

We welcome feedback, IYAC news, updates, articles, workshop reviews, interviews, recipes, and RIMYI practice sequences, (in either of our official languages).

SEND TO: kwoodland@telus.net

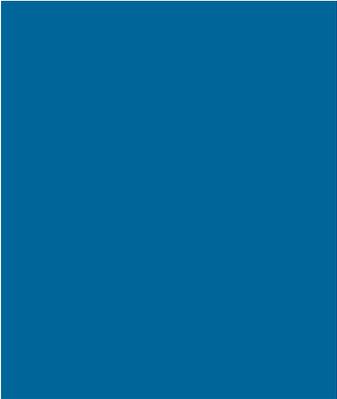
- * Please keep submissions to 500 words or less.
- * Single space between lines, and after periods.
- * Please include your name, and a brief bio.
- * We welcome photos (jpeg format).
- * Please identify subjects of photos.

This newsletter is published in January, April, September and November.

IYAC News/les nouvelle de l'ACYI Editor (or Co-Editors) Job Description

THE EDITOR/S OF THE IYAC/ACYI NEWS/LES NOUVELLES DE L'ACYI:

- * Ensures (to the best of their ability) that four annual issues of The IYAC/ACYI News/Les nouvelles de l'ACYI are sent to the membership by deadlines.
- * Receives submissions, (writing and photos), communicates with writers, edits, and organizes the newsletter.
- * Formats the newsletter in Constant Contact and sends to



membership.

* Provides the President with a preview copy for approval prior to sending to membership.

* Provides the Chair of the Communications Committee with an Annual Report for the AGM.

* Updates this job description on an annual basis.
