Seeking Terra Firma in Exercise TerraMoTI

Submitted by Kristen Reimer, Multimedia Information Officer

Picture this…

It’s just after lunchtime during a typical, wet winter day on the south coast of British Columbia, when a devastating 9.0 earthquake strikes the region.

Buildings in Victoria and Vancouver sway and collapse; roads and bridges become unpassable; countless people are injured, unaccounted for or dead; communication is cut off; a tsunami is fast approaching the wounded coast and the public begins to panic...

What happens next?

That’s exactly the question more than 100 ministry staff were asked during Exercise TerraMoTI, which played out in real time across the province on Jan. 16 and 17. Staff gathered in Kamloops, Coquitlam, Prince George and Nanaimo and worked through the mock scenario, in order to test and validate our plans and capabilities in a large-scale earthquake, and identify areas for improvement – before the big one strikes.

How did it go?

As should be expected in any emergency situation, technical difficulties, communication breakdowns and command structure confusion served as significant speed bumps in the early hours of the exercise. However, on the second day of the exercise, teams really started to get their legs under them, making strides toward re-establishing communication within our ministry and reconnecting infrastructure in the South Coast Region with the rest of the province.

Phew!

Mock emergency command centres were successfully established in Kamloops, Coquitlam, Prince George and Nanaimo, to collect critical information and direct aid to impacted areas. The Southern Interior Region office, in Kamloops, served as the Ministry Operations Centre, in the absence of communication with Headquarters in Victoria and offices in the Lower Mainland. While they worked tirelessly to get the Lower Mainland back in action, the Fort George District rallied troops in the Northern Region to re-establish connection with available staff in Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island.

Re-establishing transportation networks following a major earthquake will be priority number one – not just for the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, but for the province as a whole. Our ministry’s constant exposure to floods, landslides and wildfires gave many participants a leg up on the process of emergency response; however, the exercise reinforced where we have lots of room to improve. Exercise participants and observers recorded their experiences in order to tackle any weak spots. Despite the bumps and thumps felt throughout the exercise, the number one comment heard was, “It felt like it was real!”

A big thanks to everyone who developed TerraMOTI 2018. Patricia Wong, Jack Bennetto, David Retzer, Trish Ryu and Russel Lolacher worked for months to create the realistic scenario and bring the participants together. Challenges they offered up included bridge damage, landslides, a tsunami, staff shortages, working with limited information and coordinating...
Editor’s Note

This edition of *Road Runner* features quite a few creatures.

There are magnificent bears, elk and birds – images created or captured by Northern Region employees. One story focuses on Brazil’s wildlife collision prevention measures to protect exotic (to us) species like the capybara, giant anteater and puma.

Find out where “Road Kill Bill” spends his winters – you might want to stop in to say “hello” to him. (Don’t worry, he’s actually highly presentable, and no animals were harmed in the writing of the article).

People beyond our organization are interested in what the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure is doing, and several visitors recently came to see employees in action. They include Brad Bushill’s 14-year-old daughter who wrote about her experience, seven Hong Kong police officers and a Brazilian biologist.

It’s been a winter of heavy snow, storms and a few surprises. Ministry staff have been responding to forces of nature – getting unplanned experience with ministry operations on their way home from an annual meeting, and coping with Quadra sand that quickly collapses when wet, taking roads with it.

“It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.”

– Charles Dickens

Nancy McLeod
Editor

Seeking Terra Firma in Exercise TerraMoTI  Page 1
Editor’s Note  Page 2
Alaskan Earthquake and Tsunami Reality Check  Page 3
Vanderhoof-Saik'uz Community Transportation  Page 4

Employee Advisory Forum
Fall Temperature Checks and Supervisory Excellence Series  Page 5
Washed Away – Heavy Rains and Washouts in Vancouver Island District  Page 6
New Hires Breakfast at the South Coast Region  Page 7
Prose by Pros: A Look into Corporate Writing Services  Page 8
Take Your Kid to Work Day – in Service Area 14  Page 8
Introducing Road Kill Bill  Page 9
2017 Engineers-in-Training Annual Meeting  Page 10
Hong Kong Police Visit South Coast Region  Page 11

Community Events
2017 PECSF Participation Up  Page 12
Brazil Biologist Learns About B.C. Wildlife Crossings  Page 13

Onto New Vistas
Sherrie Applegate Retires – Keep Calm and Carve On  Page 14

The *Road Runner* employee newsletter is published four times a year, on the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure Internet site.

We welcome your story submissions. Email your article as a Word document (approx. 500 words) and your high-resolution photographs as JPEGs to: *RoadRunner@gov.bc.ca*.

For contributor guidelines, writing tips and upcoming deadlines, see *Road Runner on TRANnet*.

Check out the Employee Advisory Forum website for regular updates: *gww.th.gov.bc.ca/EAF/home_intra.asp*.

For @Work – the Public Service Community Website, visit: *gww.gov.bc.ca*.

Graphic design for *Road Runner* is provided by Kathy Macovichuk.

A pen and ink drawing by Sherrie Applegate; see page 14.

The oh-so-cute capybara, a relative of the guinea pig; see page 13.

Courtesy Road Projects Assessment Department of the Companhia Ambiental do Estado de São Paulo.
support on municipal and federal levels. Throughout the exercise, the facilitators injected new situations to add complexity. For example, an aftershock triggered a sub-aquatic landslide in the Burrard Inlet, that blocked access to ports in Vancouver.

Do you know your role?
Staff not directly impacted by the “Big One” will need to work as hard as they can to help impacted areas get back up on their feet. We all need to know how to help.

Take some time to look at our ministry’s Provincial Transportation Earthquake Immediate Response Plan. It’s a quick and easy visual guide outlining essential actions to be taken by employees, in the first hours after a major earthquake, and is meant to be read by all ministry employees. Figure out what will be required of you during an event like this and review your business continuity plan.

Incident Command System 100 training is required for all ministry staff, yet just over half of employees have taken it. The one-day online course is offered through the Justice Institute of BC, and work units can be registered as a group. Employees in the work unit take the self-paced course at a time that suits them, within a one-month period. If you have not yet completed the training, please do so, and record it, as this information is being tracked. You’ll be glad you took it!

Just a few days after the TerraMOTI exercise, an Alaskan earthquake led to a tsunami warning which was a wake-up call for many folks living on B.C.’s coast. Luckily, the Jan. 23 warning was downgraded. However, there was a window of time where the threat was real, forcing us to ask ourselves, “Where do we go? What do I do?”

For disaster readiness information for all kinds of hazards, start by visiting PreparedBC. It’s British Columbia’s one-stop shop for emergency prepareness, and offers many useful videos, guides and tips to be ready at home and at work. Some specific resources address preparedness for seniors, people with disabilities, pet owners, people living in condos and apartments, neighbourbooods... plus there’s the popular Emergency Mommy blog for families.

The good folks at Emergency Management BC and the Justice Institute of BC have combined forces to produce an excellent series of webinars on emergency management. These webinars are intended for emergency management practitioners, but are also useful for anyone with an interest in increasing their emergency management expertise. (That’s you!)

PreparedBC is encouraging British Columbians to host a High Ground Hike during Tsunami Preparedness Week, during the second full week of April. The event could start at a tsunami risk location, and have participants run, walk or hike to “high ground,” following a marked evacuation route. A preparedness fair, held at high ground, could educate the public about tsunami science and readiness. It’s an excellent way to recognize the week and draw the attention of residents and visitors, to local tsunami risk and response.

A High Ground Hike can help increase tsunami preparedness and awareness.

Employees at the Ministry Operations Centre during the TerraMOTI exercise, wore coloured vests which indicate their area of responsibility.
Vanderhoof-Saik’uz Community Transportation

Submitted by Tiana Lewis, Aboriginal Youth Intern

The District of Vanderhoof, a community of 4,500 residents at the province’s geographic centre, is a hub that supports many of the surrounding rural communities. Located 14 kilometres south of Vanderhoof is the Saik’uz First Nation.

Previously, there were no public transportation options connecting the communities. As a result, many Saik’uz residents had to hitch-hike to access employment opportunities, health services, education and shopping.

Last year, partners Vanderhoof and Saik’uz, along with 11 other communities and organizations, were successful applicants for the Community Transportation Grant Program. The ministry is providing funding for the purchase of community vehicles, along with a three-year operating subsidy. Administered by the Transportation Policy and Programs Branch, the program is one element of the $7.3-million provincial Highway 16 Five-Point Action Plan.

This funding enabled Vanderhoof and Saik’uz to develop transportation solutions for their communities. Before the service began, research and discussion was carried out to ensure that the program could meet a diverse set of needs. Many community members expressed the need for a daily bus that could take students, seniors, the disabled and other community members into Vanderhoof, and to transfer onto buses headed to Prince George.

Since its launch in July 2017, the free bus service has been a great success! The scheduled route provides coverage from the Saik’uz First Nation to Vanderhoof. Service runs weekdays from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. There are 16 stops on the community bus route, with destinations that include St. John Hospital, Vanderhoof Christian Fellowship Church, Vanderhoof Library, Independent Grocery and the Vanderhoof Community Museum.

Service is coordinated with BC Transit routes, like the 161 bus that connects Burns Lake to Prince George. Between 11:20 a.m. and noon, the bus is on-call for personalized “taxi” service – passengers just need to contact the driver to get a ride to the destination of their choice.

The scheduled service is averaging 42 riders daily, while the personalized on-call service is averaging between one and three riders daily. The bus can accommodate up to 12 passengers and two wheelchairs.

The on-call service has benefitted seniors and people with mobility challenges. It has been used by seniors who live a great distance from bus stops or need the extra care. On the first day of operations, an elder commented on how it had been her first time out of the house in months. Of the service, she said, “This is just wonderful!”

The bus has also been great for strengthening ties between the communities. The relationship between the Saik’uz First Nation and the District of Vanderhoof has not always been strong; however, this joint venture has been received positively. This bus service has been great for its user clientele, and as a visual reminder of the cooperation between the two governance systems.

Tiana Lewis is from the Squamish and Tsawout First Nations, and is an Aboriginal Youth Intern with the ministry’s Transportation Policy and Programs Branch. The Aboriginal Youth Internship Program, now in its 11th year, is an innovative, award-winning, culturally responsive 12-month paid internship for Aboriginal youth in B.C. It’s designed to provide interns with meaningful and challenging positions in ministries and Aboriginal organizations, and to develop their professional skills and leadership abilities in support of the Province’s new relationship with Aboriginal people.

Bus Driver Dave Flurer and Vanderhoof-Saik’uz Community Transportation bus.
Fall Temperature Checks and Supervisory Excellence Series

Submitted by Brittney Speed, Manager, Strategic Human Resources on Behalf of the EAF Leadership Team

The Employee Advisory Forum (EAF) has been busy working on a number of different projects as part of their mission to improve the work environment.

First up is Temperature Checks. In the fall of 2017, EAF members conducted 147 Temperature Checks across the ministry, focusing on workplace flexibility and mobility.

What did we hear?

• Employees feel that improved work/life balance is a top benefit of workplace mobility and flexibility, and that flexible work options increase employee engagement and job satisfaction.

• The majority of employees who discussed their interest in pursuing flexible work options with their supervisors saw a beneficial change in their work arrangements.

• Supervisors feel that flexible work options are successful when clear expectations have been established for all parties, health and safety concerns have been addressed, and communication processes are agreed upon.

• Supervisors would benefit from tools and resources to help them support employees with flexible working arrangements, or leading a virtual team.

We also asked employees: What is one change you’d like to see in your work environment that would be most meaningful to you and your colleagues?

Some of the responses included:

• Improved physical work environment (e.g. space usage and furniture);

• Increased communications between business units, departments and other ministries;

• Flexible work options; and

• Enhanced technology and IT-related support (such as connectivity.)

Now what?

The high-level aggregate results of the Temperature Checks will be shared with the forum members, our Executive team and our SHR and Succession Planning committee partners. Stay tuned for updates from the EAF about what we’ve heard. The next round of Temperature Checks will be conducted in late spring or early summer.

Other EAF Activities

The EAF’s Supervisory Excellence team has been busy preparing a new series of easy-to-read two-pagers that provide tools, tips and resources for supervisors. The first in the series, Supporting Employee Performance, was released in December.

The impetus for developing these supervisory excellence resources was feedback the EAF received during Temperature Checks. Based on this feedback, a small group of EAF members formed to develop the supervisory excellence series. It was discovered early on, that supervisory excellence isn’t just about supervisors – all employees have to play a role.

With that in mind, the goal of this series is to provide information that is relevant to supervisors and non-supervisors alike. For example, the next focus is on resources for employees who aren’t currently supervisors, but want to be. Stay tuned for the release of the next two-pager in this series, coming soon.

The ministry’s Succession Planning Committee is also focusing on supervisory excellence, and over the past two years, has delivered the critically acclaimed supervisor summits and supervisor network sessions. The EAF and Succession Planning Committee will continue to work collaboratively to support and complement each other’s activities going forward.

Please participate in Temperature Checks – the more we know what employees are thinking, the better we can facilitate action! 

We welcome your feedback on the series and your ideas for future topics. Feel free to email Mark Traverso or the EAF inbox with your thoughts.
Washed Away – Heavy Rains and Washouts in Vancouver Island District

Submitted by Mike Pearson, District Manager

It was a wet, wet weekend in January, when after three days, Nanaimo received 115 millimetres of rainfall, and our roads started to break.

All the creeks and drainage courses were already flowing at or near capacity before this storm, and there was already localized flooding in many areas of Vancouver Island.

The first call came around 1:30 a.m., on Jan. 29, with reports of a washout in Lantzville on Rumming Road. Someone was trapped, after their car fell into the chasm. Luckily, the Arrowsmith Search and Rescue team got the person out quickly, and with only minor injuries.

By 2 a.m., we already had our Geotechnical Engineer Ryan Gustafson and District Operations Technician/Area Manager Jessica Learn on-site assessing the damage. The culvert under Rumming Road had become overwhelmed which caused the water to flow overland to the low point and over the road. The water running over the road caused the shoulder to wash out, and it quickly eroded back, taking the road with it.

The road base was almost completely made out of Quadra sand. Quadra sand is as hard as concrete until it gets wet, then it just liquefies. It’s basically beach sand.

Our operations team, led by Stefan Yancey and Jessica Learn, were on it! The washout on Rumming Road presented a number of complications; for one, it was located exactly on the municipal border with the District of Lantzville. This required a coordinated effort between ourselves and Lantzville for the fix. Secondly, way downhill of the road there is the E&N Railway line, which also had a failing culvert. The last culvert in the system went through a private property with a culvert running literally right under the front door!

Jessica and Stefan worked closely with our maintenance contractor, Emcon, the District of Lantzville, Regional District of Nanaimo and the Island Corridor Foundation (railway) to coordinate the repair of the washout, including the challenge of redirecting the existing drainage into a new system. The old system started with a 500-metre corrugated steel pipe culvert underneath Highway 19, about 10 metres below the road. It was directly tied into the District of Lantzville culvert (which failed) under Rumming Road, then into a culvert under the railway and finally into a culvert on private property.

For the new system, it was determined that the best solution was to upsize the culverts to 900 millimetre high-density polyethylene, and redirect the water through the washout onto an existing ministry drainage easement, under the railway, and to the ocean. This avoided going through any private property or putting homes at future risk.

This was the first major washout for Jessica and Stefan and they did a great job taking quick action, getting the resources they needed on site and taking the lead working with the other levels of government and private property owners, to get the road put back together as quickly as we could. The road should be reopened by the end of April. ✦
New Hires Breakfast at the South Coast Region

Submitted by Kathleen Au, Records Clerk

On Nov. 9, the South Coast Region hosted our first New Hires Breakfast. This was a great opportunity for new staff from across the region to learn about our ministry and meet some of the faces behind the work we do. We kicked it off with a warming breakfast and a round of “People Bingo.” This is basically bingo, but a little more challenging, as the squares are filled with employee trivia (e.g., has travelled to seven countries) instead of letter and number combinations. This was a great chance to get to know each other.

After we ate our stomachs’ fill and met our fellow newbies, we had a brief presentation from our fearless leader, Regional Director Ashok Bhatti, who provided an overview of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the systems we work within. What do we do? Why we do it? How do we do it?

But enough with the bigger picture! Next, our Regional Management Team introduced themselves and explained a bit about their work. Following that, we gave the new hires a chance to grill our panel – Daveena Thomas, Jay Porter, Kenedee Ludwar, Steve Bauer and Maziar Kazemi – with hard questions, no holds barred!

(Note: if you have a question you’re just dying to ask management, feel free to put your new staff up to it – wink-wink, nudge-nudge!)

Lastly, we took the new hires for a tour of the Regional Transportation Management Centre, and ended with some questions and answers.

Here’s some feedback from the attendees which we will address at the next new hires session:

- What does it mean to be part of the BC Public Service and a union member?
- How can we carve our career paths during our time with the ministry?
- An acronym cheat sheet would be really, really helpful!

Got new staff? Be on the lookout for our next New Hires Breakfast to take place in the fall.
Prose by Pros: A Look into Corporate Writing Services
Submitted by Maija Liinamaa, Senior Writer/Acting Planning Analyst

“A word after a word after a word is power.” – Margaret Atwood

In our social media saturated world of endless tweets, texts and Facebook posts, do people still write letters to the government?

As someone who has worked more than a decade with the ministry’s Corporate Writing Services (CWS) I can offer a resounding “yes”! The CWS team prepares and facilitates hundreds of responses each year to correspondence sent to the Minister, Deputy Minister and Executive. The office reviews communications from members of industry, elected officials, taxi drivers, business owners, activists and all manner of regular citizens.

Topics run the gamut; road safety, transit, property disputes, large and small-scale infrastructure projects, cycling, ridesharing, ferries...The list of possible transportation issues is nearly inexhaustible, and the ease of electronic communication has only increased the volume of correspondence, along with the public’s expectation for a prompt reply.

Preparing a response to a piece of correspondence is a multi-step process bound by the common goal of ensuring the reply is accurate, responsive and timely. Our office, program areas, Executive and the Minister’s office all work together to this end, and responses often go through several iterations to ensure they are the best they can be.

It might be tempting, given the contentious or critical tone of some correspondence, to become discouraged over time; it would seem that people are more inclined to express dissatisfaction rather than praise. However, it helps to remember the fact that people can write government to be heard on important issues without fear of repercussion, confident that they will receive a response. It’s a freedom not available to everyone globally. It shows that our government is listening and the value of this cannot be overstated. Also, the discussions generated by correspondence at the program level can result in immediate, concrete improvements that strongly impact people’s lives, as with a parent requesting a school zone sign amendment, or a resident experiencing flooding related to drainage on a ministry right-of-way. It’s worth noting also that our office directs a steady stream of concerns and enquiries received through the ministry website to regional staff for reply, a process that enables members of the public to have direct conversations with ministry program experts at a grassroots level.

It is fascinating work. I have been privileged to experience such a multitude of different perspectives and voices — viewed collectively, they form a rich tapestry of 21st century humanity. In this sense, each piece of correspondence is a sort of historical artifact, preserved digitally, indefinitely. I hope that 100 years from now, when the roads are full of automated vehicles and the sky is full of flying cars, that this cumulative, ever-growing body of writing still exists as a piece of British Columbian history and a testimony to the extensive network of people working hard every day to improve transportation and infrastructure for all British Columbians.

If you would like to learn more about Corporate Writing Services, visit http://gww.th.gov.bc.ca/cws/index.aspx.

Take Your Kid to Work Day – in Service Area 14
Submitted by Brooke Bushill, Daughter of Brad Bushill, Operations Manager

From Brad Bushill: When I found out about Take Our Kids to Work Day across B.C., I wasted no time arranging to take my daughter, Brooke Bushill, with me to work in Merritt Service Area 14. Brooke is 14 years old and attends Sahali Secondary School, in Kamloops. It was a fantastic day for sure, as I was proud to show her what we do at the ministry.

Nov. 1 was Take Your Kid to Work Day for Grade nine students, and I was going to work with my dad, who works for the Ministry of Transportation Infrastructure.

My dad had to wake me up because I was not listening to my alarm clock on my phone to wake up. We left our house at around seven o’clock in the morning to drive to Merritt.

When we got to Merritt, we went to his office. I met Beau Sutherland, area manager of roads; Roxanne Lorette, the clerk; Brian Jepsen, manager of corporate services; Jurgen Lutter, bridge area manager; Tom Agar, road area manager; and, Justin Jepson, another road area manager.

Tom, Dad and I sat in Dad’s office, waiting for a conference call from his boss who is Trent Folk, the district manager. I sat in the corner of the office playing with a paper shredder trying to get it to turn on, only to find out that it wasn’t plugged into the wall.

After the conference call, Dad and I walked out to the hall and we each grabbed a high-visibility jacket and a hard hat. It said “MOT” on the top but when I looked in the window and saw the Corporate Planning, Strategic Initiatives and Writing Services team: (standing) Sara Haskett, Susan Paton, Rita Chan, Lauren Goodland, Natasha Scott and Victor Underwood; and (seated) James Hill, Siobhan Baird, Aaron Shepard, Megan Spedding and Maija Liinamaa. Tim Mitchell is on the computer screen.

Brooke Bushill ready for the work day with her father, Brad Bushill.

More on Page 9...
my reflection I thought that the hat had “TOM” on it. I enthusiastically said, “My name is Tom!” and Dad just broke out in laughter. I sat there looking at him in confusion, then realized the hat said “MOT.”

After our little laugh, we walked around the office to meet everyone. I saw all of the photos of pets that everyone had on the wall, including Princess, Tom Agar’s fake dog. When we were done walking around the office, we got in the truck and headed out for the day.

First we went to the new Loon Lake rest area on Highway 97C, a brand new rest area that was being built. The thing that I liked best about it was the cool garbage can designs, the Garbage Gobblers.

After that, we took some back roads to Kentucky Alleyne Provincial Park, off Highway 5A. We were driving along and saw a lot of cows. Dad and I were joking about how we had just seen a million dollars’ worth of cattle. After that, we went back to Merritt to have lunch.

When we were done lunch, we went down the Coquihalla Highway to the construction projects at Dry Gulch Bridge and the new Box Canyon Chain Up area. There I saw construction and paving. I met Frank Heller, the project ministry representative who supervises all of the construction at the site. Then we went up through the snowshed tunnel, and stopped at an old avalanche control turret platform, named Desdemona. There we saw all of the sand piled up, off to the side of the road, from all of the years of sanding in the winter. I also crawled up on top of the platform and Dad took a picture of me.

After that, we went on a few more back roads and started to head home. We stopped at a broken cattle guard at the Mill Creek washout site. On our way back to Kamloops, at the top of Helmer we saw what Dad called a “moosey place.” He told me jokingly, to look for moose. I didn’t quite understand the sarcasm he was throwing at me, and I looked down for some moose. Believe it or not, there was a moose sitting there in the little swamp.

Of course, I freaked out and made Dad turn around so we could get a better look. After five minutes of driving on another back road we finally got back onto the highway. When we got to the spot where the moose was, we stopped and got out to look at it. A baby moose hopped out of the bushes and ran away with its mom. When we were done watching the moose on the side of the road, we got back in the truck and drove home from an eventful day.

My dad has a pretty cool job and he works with some cool people. I never recognized that it was very important to be working with the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, until I experienced it myself.

 Brooke Bushill gets a good look at construction and paving on the Coquihalla Highway.

Introducing Road Kill Bill

Submitted by Heather Harris, District Clerk

This is Road Kill Bill! This questionable animal was a gift to me from a friend and co-worker at the Fort George District office, Jeannette Grant.

After looking at him (and, at first, wondering why she would buy me such a thing...) I decided to name him Road Kill Bill. How suitable for a Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure district office – especially one located in northern B.C., where about 70 per cent of the province’s approximately 210,000 moose dwell.

(Not to mention that our office seems to have a strange sense of humour.)

Road Kill Bill now comes out to play near the end of November and sits on the reception desk, greeting people and dispensing good winter driving advice. We don’t want any of our local wildlife or residents to end up looking like Road Kill Bill (although he is rather nattily attired for a moose!)

DIVERSITY and INCLUSION

THREE-YEAR ACTION PLAN
FIFTEEN COMMITMENTS TO STRENGTHEN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE BC PUBLIC SERVICE

For more information on this plan, visit gww.gov.bc.ca/news/2017/1030/diversity-and-inclusion

The BC Public Service is committed to being an inclusive organization made up of unique and talented individuals who reflect the diversity of the citizens we serve and where we can all see ourselves reflected.
Every year, the ministry hosts a meeting for the participants and supporters of its Engineer-in-Training (EIT) Program.

The 2017 meeting was held in Kamloops in early November, with EITs and geoscientists-in-training (GITs) gathering with engineering directors, our Chief Engineer and guest speakers, for two days of professional and personal development. Bringing people together fosters knowledge transfer, builds capacity and is one of the core elements of our longest-standing strategic recruitment and employee development program.

For me, as EIT/GIT Program Administrator, organizing the annual meeting was a great opportunity to meet the six new EITs we welcomed to the ministry in 2017, and to connect with the other EITs and GITs who I usually only get to speak to over the phone.

Over the course of two days, participants enjoyed a variety of presentations and professional development opportunities, along with a breakout session. Topics included:

- A “District 101” engineering presentation by Thompson Nicola District Engineer Susan Randle and EIT Trevor Demerse;
- A case study of Mill Creek Road from the May 2017 flood event by Thompson Nicola District Manager Trent Folk and District Engineer John Babineau; and
- A hydrotechnical engineering presentation by EITs Daniel Cossette and Alysha Piccini.

Day one included a surprise visit, by video conference, from Highways ADM Kevin Richter. Kevin “dropped by” virtually for almost an hour to provide an update on what was going on in his world, and to engage in a question and answer session with participants.

Day two, unfortunately, didn’t go quite as planned, as we woke up to snow and challenging driving conditions. We did our best to rejig the agenda to see if the weather would improve, so we could get to our Mill Creek Road site visit later in the morning, but the weather gods did not cooperate. With many participants driving north or south, we wrapped up a bit early.

This ended up being a good thing, as several EITs had an eventful trip home. On Highway 5, EITs assisted drivers and worked to clear a path for emergency/recovery vehicles to reach the scene of several spinouts. EIT Trevor Demerse contacted the ministry’s Regional Transportation Management Centre to communicate the status of Highway 5; and the highway closed not long after that, once a final wave of vehicles got through.

The annual meeting has taken place almost every year since at least 2001, and is a highlight in the EITs’ and GITs’ calendars. Feedback from participants shows that EITs and GITs look forward to attending this meeting as it allows them to understand more about important ministry projects and initiatives, network with colleagues and learn about other parts of the ministry they don’t often get exposure to. Participants at this year’s meeting shared the following feedback:

- “I enjoy the ‘boots on the ground’ stories the district can tell.”
- “John and Trent’s presentation was terrific... It is impressive to see the extent and impact of the flooding and the overwhelming level of professionalism and determination the district showed during this event.”
- “The breakout session is a wonderful way for us to all connect and share our experiences, and learn from each other.”

Despite the weather event, the meeting was a great opportunity for employees scattered across the province to come together, share knowledge and learn more about the important work that Engineering Services does for the ministry and the province. I’m already looking forward to next year – but maybe this time without the heavy snow!
Hong Kong Police Visit South Coast Region

Submitted by Kathleen Au, Records Clerk; and Porya Khorsandi, RTMC Supervisor

On Nov. 24, the South Coast Region had the privilege of hosting members of the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF) who wanted to know how we manage highways and regulate commercial vehicles. We pride ourselves in the excellent work we do every day, and other countries have taken notice!

Introduced by our friends at the RCMP, the HKPF members were interested in learning about the Regional Transportation Management Centre (RTMC) and Commercial Vehicle Safety and Enforcement (CVSE), and how they could apply our best practices back in Hong Kong. With the employees from the HKPF, RCMP, RTMC and CVSE assembled, we got down to some serious talk about our policies, procedures and road management, and shared some big ideas about the future of transportation.

The delegation toured the RTMC, a centralized hub of real-time information, with more than 200 live-stream video feeds of weather, road and traffic conditions from all over B.C. We informed them about our traffic congestion monitoring and incident management practices, as well as how we provide coordinated responses during emergency events. They were particularly interested in knowing how we manage information sharing and communication between our varying levels of government.

CVSE promotes and enforces compliance with safety regulations within the commercial transport sector to increase road safety, and protect public health, the environment and transportation infrastructure. The HKPF learned about the security measures we have in place, and how we regulate the trucking industry through inspections and other systems. Commercial transport regulations are fairly consistent among provinces within Canada, and even across North America. However, there are differences between Hong Kong and Mainland China, so it was interesting for our visitors to compare the movement of goods and services from one jurisdiction to another. There was also discussion about the future of automated commercial vehicles – how these would impact our ability to regulate the industry and conduct enforcement, and possible liability issues that could arise.

Cultural Learnings

Of course, we also had an opportunity to learn from the delegation on a cultural level, as one of our staff found out the hard way the cultural differences between North America and China, for meet and greets. Respect and relationship-building is something heavily embedded within the Asian culture, so first impressions are essential.

Here are examples of what not to do (thanks to our anonymous employee who took this in good humour and shared some newfound wisdom):

- Don’t show up without business cards. In a business meeting, there will always be proper introductions. Come prepared with an ample supply of business cards!
- Don’t accept business cards with one hand. Give and receive business cards with both hands. When handing out the card, the writing should be upright for the person receiving the card. Study it. Comment on it. Now’s the time to clarify a name if it’s hard to pronounce.
- Don’t shove the business card in your pocket. And definitely don’t sit down with the business cards in your back-pocket! The card represents the person. Line the cards in front of you according to where they are sitting at the table.
- Don’t come empty handed! Expect a small gift-exchange. Thankfully, this potential snag was evaded by some excellent last-minute shopping.

As Vancouver becomes more and more multicultural, and is vital as a Pacific gateway to Canada’s trade and economic growth, we can expect many more international exchanges in the future. These are excellent tips to review, when meeting Asian visitors.

B.C. representatives:

RTMC Director Chris Lee (fourth from left), RCMP Sgt. Patrick Davies (fifth from left) and CVSE Deputy Director Perry Dennis (sixth from left). Hong Kong Police Force: Chief Inspector Roger Yuen (third from right) and six other members of the force.

Employees from the South Coast Region, CVSE and the RCMP assembled at the RTMC to meet with the Hong Kong Police Force.

A tiny Mercedes Benz Hong Kong police vehicle and a pen were presented as tokens of appreciation by the Hong Kong Police Force.
I volunteered to be the ministry’s lead campaign coordinator for the 2017 Provincial Employees Community Services Fund (PECSF) and it was a very positive and memorable experience.

The campaign, running from Sept. 26 to Nov. 10, was a great opportunity to network with ministry coordinators, canvassers and volunteers. Together, we joined forces to create fun and exciting ways to raise money and awareness for PECSF.

Year after year, PECSF provides an opportunity for employees to make a difference in their communities, and give back to more than 900 organizations that provide services and supports to our families, friends and colleagues, when needed.

The ministry’s Executive Sponsor for the campaign was Partnerships Assistant Deputy Minister Silas Brownsey, and the effort was supported by the rest of the Executive team. Campaign volunteers across the province stepped up to coordinate a number of events held within Headquarters, the districts and at regional offices. Canvassers for each work unit provided one-page PECSF calendars to their co-workers and encouraged employees to donate to the campaign from their paycheques.

The South Coast Region hosted their annual chili cook-off, with winner Kent Hodgson earning bragging rights and a certificate of distinction.

Here at Headquarters, events included campaign kick-off morning goodies served by Executive, Wednesday Win It 50/50 draws, a silent auction, candy grams, bake sales and a pizza lunch.

My personal favourite was the candy grams. These were a great way for employees to acknowledge their colleagues and say “thank you” with a treat. Delivering these was half the fun, because we got to see the surprise on people’s faces.

Our Wednesday Win It 50/50 draws were also inspiring. Two of our winners donated a portion of their winnings back to PECSF, which shows how dedicated our employees are to giving back.

None of our success would have been possible without the help of all of our other volunteers who took the time to bake, cook or provide services and items for the various events.

Congratulations to all ministry staff on a job well done, and thank you so much for your support. Our final tally was an impressive $46,710 from a total of 130 donors. Our ministry was amongst the finalists for “most improved” in the participation category, compared to 2016.

Every single donation contributed to our success and helped to make a huge difference in your communities!

I would encourage anyone interested in getting involved in PECSF, to take the plunge next year and volunteer. This great learning experience allowed me to connect with colleagues across the ministry who care so much about their communities.

Our silent auction at Headquarters raised more than $1,600!
Brazil Biologist Learns about B.C. Wildlife Crossings

Submitted by Len Sielecki, Wildlife and Environmental Specialist

A biologist from Brazil, who was interested in our ministry’s wildlife protection initiatives, visited me on Nov. 24.

Biologist Juliana Moreno Pina is with the Road Projects Assessment unit of the State of São Paulo’s Environmental Agency. I gave her a PowerPoint presentation on our ministry’s wildlife protection initiatives, and we spoke for about four hours. She was very interested in what we have been doing to protect wildlife.

The State of São Paulo, in southeastern Brazil, is an economic and industrial hub, and the largest business centre in Latin America. It has more than 20,000 kilometres of highways, which are operated by public agencies and private toll road agencies.

Brazil’s Environmental National Law, enacted in 1981, requires environmental impact assessments for transportation projects, like highway construction and expansion. The State of São Paulo also requires highways authorities to adopt measures to protect wildlife from becoming roadkill. (This is not a nation-wide regulation.)

Juliana told me that the species most commonly hit on São Paulo’s highways is capybara (Hydrochoerus hydrochaeris), the world’s largest rodent, which is closely related to the guinea pig. Next up are rabbit (Sylvilagus brasiliensis) also known as Brazilian cottontail, which live in parts of South America, Central America and Mexico. Skunks (Didelphis aurita) and racoon (Nasua nasua) are other smaller creatures which sometimes become roadkill. Endangered species at risk on São Paulo highways include giant anteaters (Myrmecophaga tridactyla) and puma (Puma concolor).

Crossing structures are the most common form of wildlife protection on São Paulo highways, and there are 103 underpasses along 17 different roads. The majority convey water, but there are also dry underpasses built for wildlife. Other wildlife protection measures are warning signs, speed reducers, fencing, overpasses for tree-dwelling animals, monitoring of crossing structures, education programs, gathering of roadkill statistics, temporary road closures and animal rescue during construction.

I presented Juliana with one of our ministry’s wildlife stakeholder engagement T-shirts. She was ecstatic with it, and put it on right away. She was awed by the big size of B.C.’s wildlife, which the T-shirt illustrates.

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Len Sielecki and Brazilian Biologist Juliana Moreno Pina shared knowledge about preventing wildlife collisions.

A wildlife tunnel being constructed in Brazil. Courtesy Road Projects Assessment Department of the Companhia Ambiental do Estado de São Paulo.
Sherrie Applegate Retires – Keep Calm and Carve On

Submitted by Marlene Keehn, Area Manager

On Jan. 31, the Bulkley Stikine District lost a treasure of knowledge, history and teamwork, and an admirable co-worker, to the realm of retirement.

After 28 years, Senior Development Approvals Technician Sherrie Applegate retired. In January, a dinner was held for Sherrie, which was well attended by friends, family and co-workers from across those 28 years, all gathering to congratulate and wish her a happy and rewarding retirement.

The Skeena District family put together a wonderful slide show, defining Sherrie to a T. Skeena employees described Sherrie as knowledgeable, capable, committee member, team player, mentor, loyal, artist, generous, animal lover, early riser, punctual and honourable. Two send off comments were, “Sherrie will be missed” and “Keep Calm and Permit On.”

Sherrie has mentored many development approvals colleagues across the ministry. Her dedication and drive for excellent customer service is highly commendable. The business community in the Bulkley Valley, Lakes and Stikine area appreciated her quick and knowledgeable response to their needs.

Sherrie is going to remain in Smithers, and will keep busy with her artwork, carving and drawing. Her talent is exceptional, as shown in the photos here.

The Bulkley Stikine District’s traditional parting gifts over the years have always included beautiful artwork created by Sherrie, along with a meritorious service scroll, plaque and jade figurine. Since we couldn’t ask Sherrie to make her own retirement gift, we expressed our appreciation with materials of wood, mammoth ivory and antler, for her to create future masterpieces. (We also gave her the meritorious service scroll, plaque and jade figurine.)

Congratulations Sherrie, on your successful career and new phase of life. Keep Calm and Carve On!

Service Pins

For employees celebrating a career milestone of five, 10, 15 or 20 years, the corporate Service Pin program is their opportunity to register and be presented with a pin to commemorate this notable achievement.

For more about the corporate Service Pin program or to register for your pin, visit gww.gov.bc.ca/career/service-pins/.