



**A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association (YURA)**

**Spring 2020**

**No. 50**

**YURA is a member of CURAC/ARUCC, the federation of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada/Associations de retraités dans les universités et collèges du Canada**

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## Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Dear YURA Members:

Compared with last winter, winter 2020 has generally been much more pleasant. As a result, we have had a steady stream of inquiries at our office at 101 Central Square. We are grateful to our office volunteers who donate their time and talent to welcome drop-in visitors. There are two main types of inquiries we get from our visitors. Some are about to retire and wonder what it's been like for us. We provide them with ideas, and information about YURA, and they leave encouraged.

Others are YURA members with inquiries about various retirement matters, and if we don't know the answers, we can direct them to someone who does. We are grateful to our volunteers: John Lennox on Tuesdays, Agnes Fraser on Wednesdays, and Philippa Marchetti and Sara Kozlowski on Thursdays. Many hands make light work, so if you would like to volunteer, please let us know.

At our executive meeting of December 3, the dates of this year's theatre outings were discussed. As a result, our June trip to Stratford will be on June 9, and we will enjoy *Chicago*. The date is also set for the Shaw. We will see *Gypsy* at the Shaw festival on September 29th. Watch for announcements on our email list, or check our web page for further details. Our Events sub-committee is continuing to work on plans for outings, such as our very successful Muskoka cruise in the fall. If you have ideas for visits that YURA could organize for our members, please send an email to [YURA@yorku.ca](mailto:YURA@yorku.ca)

Fred Fletcher, the representative for the YURA Executive Committee on the Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians at York, let us know that the spring meeting of ARFL will take place on May 15th in the Harry Crowe Room New College (Atkinson Building) starting at 11 a.m., followed by

lunch and, at 1 p.m., a speaker, Dr. Sheila Cote-Meek, York's Vice-President of Equity, People and Culture. Her topic is "Indigenous Students and Professors' Experience in Post-Secondary Education." The annual meeting of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) will take place in Vancouver from May 13 to 15, hosted by the University of British Columbia, and Simon Fraser University.

Members will have received in early December a letter with our annual funding request from Charmaine Courtis. We ask that you consider making a donation to support one of the three YURA-supported student awards or bursaries; or the York Camps Subsidy Fund, or the YFS Food Bank. We have been encouraged by the response. YURA continues to be pro-active in providing student support. If you missed Charmaine's letter, you can donate directly at this link:

[www.giving.yorku.ca/YURA](http://www.giving.yorku.ca/YURA)

On December 3, the YURA executive decided to suspend Showcase for two years, and replace it with the Scotiabank Walk as YURA's fall fundraiser. The executive will also consider a possible winter-spring fundraising activity. As a result, YURA's major fund-raiser for 2020 will be our participation in the 5 km walk/run in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge on Sunday, October 18. In 2019, eight YURA members walked five km, had a great time, and raised nearly \$12,000 for YURA graduate awards. In 2020, our goal is to raise at least \$20,000. To do this, we will need 20 team members who will walk and raise donations. Please consider this event and participate if you are able. We expect that it will be possible for our walkers/runners to begin registering to participate around the time that you receive this newsletter. If

you would like to register, or would like more information about how this fund-raiser works, please contact one of our co-champions for the event: Ian Greene at [igreene@yorku.ca](mailto:igreene@yorku.ca) or 416-571-8742 or Peter Victor at [peter@pvictor.com](mailto:peter@pvictor.com).

Please put the YURA Annual General Meeting on your calendar now: Friday, October 30.

With best wishes,

--Charmaine Courtis and Ian Greene

## 2019 SHOWCASE

Photos taken by Steve Dranitsaris and Lori Sgarbossa



**The Team:** Back row: Mildred Theobalds, Steve Dranitsaris, Lori Sgarbossa  
Front row: Sara Koslowski, Agnes Fraser, Natasa Bajin

**Thanks to Steve Dranitsaris for providing the details of the photographs.**



Foreground: Mildred Theobalds  
Centre Left: Janet Rowe  
Centre Right: Cathie Stone



Centre Left: Natasa Bajin & Savitsa Sevigny  
Centre Right: Sara Koslowski



## IN MEMORIAM

Sandra Aiken	November 23
Yvonne Aziz	November 16
Mary Borrelli	November 27
Michael Boyer	November 13
John Caldwell	December 14
Lidia Coccari	November 4
Oreste Deluca	November 22
Hazel Doray	December 9
Shirley Fletcher	November 2
Mozelle Friedrich	October 22
Elizabeth Gross	November 29
Dennis Hefferon	November 3
Anne-Marie Mair	November 1
Peter Minkus	September 24
Tammanah (Ted) Sanasie	January 4
Randy Scott	November 6
Joseph Simonetta	September 17
Noli Swatman	November 26
Linda Wallace	November 13
Eric Winter	December 21

### Life As It Was Back then: Reminiscences

*Our 29<sup>th</sup> Reminiscence is authored by Fred Fletcher. When Fred retired in 2006, he was the Director of the Graduate Program in Communication and Culture and a Professor in the Department of Political Science. He has chosen to entitle his reminiscence, "GROWING UP IN EAST VANCOUVER, 1940-1950."*

It was a sunny day in Vancouver's East End. I was playing on the front porch of my family's small house in our working-class neighborhood when suddenly the air raid sirens blared out their raucous warning. Before I could make sense of this unusual occurrence, many of housewives on our street burst out their front doors shouting, "The war is over. The war is over." I was four years old.

Not sure why they were shouting and hugging each other, I went inside and said to my Mother, "the war is over. What does that mean?" I don't recall this part of the incident but I am reliably informed that it

is true. In any case, I don't remember her answer but I do recall that she seemed pleased.

This anecdote is one of my first memories of life on Parker Street, a few blocks east of Renfrew Street and a kilometer or two south of the Pacific National Exhibition (PNE) grounds at Hastings and Renfrew. I have not been able to ascertain which of several possible end-of-war days it was. It could have been VE-Day, May 7-8, 1945, or, more likely, VJ-Day, August 14 or 15, since it was the war with Japan that framed the lives of my neighbors on Parker Street, though the war in Europe also affected us on a daily basis.

So it is, then, that my earliest memories include my Father's nightly patrol as a black-out warden, reminding our neighbors to douse their lights or close the blinds. My memories also include shortages of some foods, ration books for such things as milk and eggs and, more dramatically, an explosion in Vancouver Harbour that shattered windows in the Eaton's cafeteria where I was having lunch with my Mother. (It came out years later that it was a munitions ship.)

In general, Parker Street seemed like a welcoming and quite safe place. Many of our supplies were delivered to the house. The milkman picked up empty bottles from our front porch and left full ones, with the cream at the top. The bread man dropped off loaves of bread on a regular basis. Two newspapers arrived daily. These deliveries took place at the front of the house. For some reason, the Chinese green grocer, driving an odd sort of truck, came down the back alley hawking his wares. (I learned later that the market gardeners from the Fraser River Delta had special licenses.) Less often, two men in turbans came to the back of the house and delivered sawdust from the Fraser River mills to be dumped down a chute into the basement to be burned in our central furnace. (My Father was the foreman at a plumbing and heating company, so we had the latest technology, including a wind-up conveyer belt that brought the sawdust to the furnace. Dad spent most of the war working at the

shipyards in North Vancouver on what I think were sub chasers.)

There were very few cars on the block. Leaving the neighbourhood meant a longish walk north to Hastings Street or south along Renfrew to First Avenue. I remember the barbershop there sold Irish Sweepstakes tickets, then illegal, and possibly other illegal products. To venture further afield meant taking the bus (later a trolley bus) to Hastings and riding the streetcar for 30 minutes or so to shop at department stores. The downtown had two local chains, Woodward's and Spencers (later Eaton's), and when funds permitted the Hudson's Bay Store at Granville and Georgia, which also featured the Birk's clock. Birk's was good only for window shopping. Most trips were to Woodward's or the Army and Navy.

My family's Christmas rituals illustrated among other things the continuing influence of the "Old Country," since my mother's family had emigrated from Glasgow in 1898 and came to Vancouver after stops in Welland and Winnipeg. My maternal grandmother, who lived with us, made the Christmas pudding, Scottish style, and paid more attention to the New Year celebrations (Hogmanay), complete with first footing after midnight on January 1 (which required the first visitor to be a tall, dark-haired man carrying food, drink and fuel, a role usually played by one of my numerous uncles).

Perhaps most exciting for me would be our trip to the Union Steamships dock at the foot (north end) or Main Street, to pick up the Christmas package from my father's parents, who lived on their small subsistence farm about 12 kilometers south of Powell River. The package usually contained a tree, hand-logged by my grandfather, wrapped in burlap and a burlap sack containing home-grown vegetables, fruit and preserves. This ritual underlined the links between Vancouver and the rural areas it served.

From time to time, my grandmother would take me with her to visit relatives in New Westminster. This

involved a trip by bus and street car to the inter-urban station, where we could board a smallish train for the 12-mile trip. I don't remember much about the visits but the trip was exciting, though I am told I tended to fall asleep on the way home. On other occasions, my father would have a company pickup truck for the weekend and he would take across Burrard Inlet via the Second Narrows Bridge, which could only be used when trains were not crossing. The goal was the Palm Dairy outlet at Deep Cove where we were treated to ice cream cones and could walk along the beach.

My recollections of Sir Matthew Begbie School are somewhat scattered. The main building was highly visible, clad as its two floors were in yellow stucco. Various memoirs have written about the large portrait of the "hanging judge" himself, forbidding a top hat and tails, and how it frightened the children. Speaking for myself, I never noticed it, perhaps because my first two years there were spent in portables at the east end of the playground. I do recall that I didn't think much of going to school, despite the best efforts of an amazing principal, and was happy when my family moved to the growing suburb of South Vancouver. My experience at my new school was much more positive.

What I did like was having free run of a safe neighbourhood. I hung around with my friend Johnny, interacted mostly happily with other kids – including the Gunn twins, who told harrowing stories about their lives in Hong Kong during the war. When bored, I could sometimes cadge 25 cents on a Saturday and walk the half hour to the Olympia cinema on Hastings, which presented a children's matinee, with cartoons, a serial of some kind, and a B-movie. A quarter would buy admission, a soft drink (pop) and a hot dog. Or one could spend a nickel each way to ride the bus. No one did. If really bored, I could walk for 30 minutes in the other direction to visit my cousins. Our ages did not quite match but, sometimes, they deigned to play with me anyway.

In the neighborhood, there was strong sub-culture among the children. The brother of my friend Johnny was a runner for bookie and we would often bet \$2 on a horse of our choosing. We listened to the race calls on the radio with rapt attention. Very occasionally, our horse won. Buddy would subtract all of his losses on our bets and split the rest between us. We mostly bet on horses whose names we liked.

Since none of us had much money, we often sneaked into the PNE in August and September. Each generation of sub-teens taught the next one how to sneak in, where to go for free food, and how to hang around the entrance to the Shrine Circus in the hope that a kindly Shriner would provide tickets just after the show had begun. It did happen! In fact, I learned many years later that my Father, who had arrived at the age of 12 from a one-room school in Stillwater near Powell River, had also learned these secrets a generation earlier.

We were free-range kids who started our lives under the shadow of distant wars in families with only limited means. But we felt secure and well-cared for and grew up under the watchful eyes of the whole community.

--Fred Fletcher

### NEW MEMBERS

Angus Anderson  
Patricia Armour  
Sheelagh Atkinson-Branson  
Sylvia Kohar Baghdaserian  
Naomi Black  
Stephen Buck  
Theja De Silva  
John DiZazz  
Steven Glassman  
Amira Hawa  
Patricia Keeney  
Lawrence Lam  
Agnes Levstik  
Chantal Lishingham  
Patricia McDermott  
Anita Milne

Gerard Naddaf  
Marcia H Rioux  
Hazel Rosin  
Wendy Schnobb  
Linda Steinman  
Xiulan Sun  
Wendy W. Chan Tang  
Martin Thomas  
Stanley Vuitton  
Marc Wilchesky  
Phyllis Ann Wilson  
Clara Wong  
Diane Woody

### TRAVELOGUE

#### Seeking New Worlds above the Treeline

#### Part 2: The People

By Frances Frisken

This is the second part of an account of my memories and impressions of an *Adventure Canada* cruise along sections of the Greenland, Labrador and Newfoundland coasts that Bill and I took in late September 2018. Part I focused primarily on zodiac excursions to sites along the way; this second part focuses on what brought those visits to life: the people who shared their knowledge about what we saw. In recalling those people, the first words that come to mind are diversity, inclusivity and respect, both for the lands we were visiting and the people who lived there. This was just as true of the passengers as it was of the tour organizers, the team of experts and entertainers who informed or amused us, the crew that operated the ship, and the staff members who looked after us.

The tone was set by Cruise Host, Cedar Swan, daughter of the founder of *Adventure Canada* and the company's CEO, and her partner Jason Edmunds. Cedar is a founding member of Canadian Women for Nature, a fellow of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society, a member of the Explorers' Club, and a member of the board of directors of Project North (the charity discussed in Part I that gives sports equipment to Inuit youngsters). Jason,

an Inuuk who grew up in Nain, was the trip's planner, Expedition Leader, guide and general problem solver. He too is a member of the Explorers' Club and the Royal Canadian Geographical Society.

Jason's first job of the day was to make the daily wake-up call, which began with reports on the weather and the ship's position and ended with a quotation that extolled the benefits of travel. These quotations particularly pleased those of us who were near or past retirement age. At the other end of the age spectrum were Cedar and Jason's daughters Charlotte and Islay (aged 5 and 3), who seemed to be equally at home playing "house" with their caregivers and other child-passengers under a wide set of stairs or sitting quietly in the main lounge while someone informed or entertained us.

The team of speakers assembled for this cruise included academics, five Inuit "culturalists" who gave first-hand accounts of Inuit life and challenges, and non-Inuit Canadians who lived, worked or travelled in the Arctic. All were impressive for their breadth of knowledge, their enthusiasm for their subject matter, and their evident desire to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with us.

It was from some of the speakers that we learned about the people whose visits to the region in the past had become part of its history. Among them was Leonidas Hubbard, who died of starvation and exhaustion after losing his way while on a canoe expedition in a remote part of Labrador. Another was his wife Mina, who undertook the same trip to honour her husband's memory and succeeded where he had failed. There was also the seven-member crew of an American bomber that crashed on the Labrador coast during World War II. Three of its members went off in a boat to seek help and were never seen again; the other four died of starvation waiting for help that never came. Their experience prompted the U.S. Airforce to develop a program of survival training for new pilots.

Other visitors who had more lasting and widespread influence on Arctic life were missionaries sent out

by the Moravians, a Protestant sect based in Saxony (now part of the Czech Republic). Their first Labrador mission (founded in 1771) evolved into the Town of Nain, now the administrative capital of the autonomous region of Nunatsiavut, where their church still functions. They opened seven more missions along the Labrador coast between then and 1905, after which they closed them one by one because of cutbacks in church and government support and population losses due to serious illness. (The mission settlement of Okak was closed in 1919, for example, after 161 of its 220 people had died of the Spanish flu.)

One of the last mission settlements to close was Hebron, which Inuit residents were forced to leave in 1959. Moravian missionaries and the Canadian government had withdrawn their support after agreeing among themselves, without consulting residents, that the Inuit would have better lives if they moved to larger communities. The missionaries went back to Europe; the Inuit residents scattered among different towns where they were often treated as unwelcome competitors for scarce resources. The results of the resettlement were so devastating for some of those affected that in 2005 the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador verbally apologized to them, after which his government erected an apology-inscribed monument at the site. The buildings remain and the site is now a tourist destination. We saw it only from a distance, however, because a rough sea forced the cancellation of our scheduled visit.

Before beginning their work as preachers and teachers, Moravian ministers were required to learn Inuktitut so were able to involve Inuit in their work as "church servants" or "helpers," one of whom spoke to us at the Inuit church in Nain. These people have kept some churches open since the last of the missionaries went back to Germany in the early 2000s. Their influence is declining as they age, however, and as younger people turn away from the church. What has survived is a Moravian-established musical tradition of choral singing and the playing of brass and string instruments. These

talents were on display in Nain, where we were greeted by a small brass band when we arrived and heard a choral performance in the Moravian church before we left.

Other outsiders who played a crucial role in the lives of Newfoundland and Labrador residents were the Grenfell missionaries, who brought medical services to remote communities between 1893 and 1981. They also opened hospitals in some of the communities they served, helped to set up industries based on local crafts, established two orphanages for children whose parents had died of tuberculosis or other diseases, and operated residential (boarding) schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Mission's reputation has been tarnished in recent years by accusations that children who attended its schools were sometimes abused or belittled by the persons who ran them – accusations that led to a lawsuit to have them recognized as “residential school survivors.” In 2016 the federal government made them eligible for the same level of compensation as had been awarded to the survivors of residential schools in other parts of Canada. Then in 2017 Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made a formal apology for the abuse and cultural losses they had suffered.

Still highly regarded are Grenfell Mission doctors, some of whom suffered severe hardships in carrying out their work. We learned about these from Team Member Dave Paddon, the son and grandson of Grenfell medical missionaries, who read us a long letter written by an unnamed doctor late in the winter of 1949-50. It described a harrowing mid-winter journey made with several Inuit drivers and a team of half-starved dogs. (“The seal fisheries were very poor last autumn,” he wrote, “the result of premature freeze-up in the bays, and dog feed is desperately scarce throughout the country”). A short excerpt from his letter gives a sense of what the trip was like:

*“Driving snow and icy particles cut conjunctivae painfully and stings our faces. My boots are sticky with blood. We have a small pilot team and they are*

*having a hard time. At dusk we manage to locate a certain abandoned house, but are quite a long time digging down to it, for it is quite buried in snow. My three drivers are just as wretched, but they are solicitous for my comfort whereas I am solicitous only for my own, and the realization makes me ashamed. And they are doing this work for a pittance, in order to help me bring what limited comfort I can to the sick.”*

Conditions like these, which are described at several places in the letter, were all too familiar to the above writer's Inuit guides and patients, whose people had managed to survive for generations in this incredibly difficult environment. The failure of outsiders to respect the culture that enabled their survival has been blamed for some of the chronic problems frequently linked to Inuit communities: life expectancies and rates of high school graduation that are much lower than the Canadian average and rates of poverty, residential overcrowding, food insecurity, infant mortality, tuberculosis and suicide that are higher – sometimes much higher. Nonetheless we were told more than once by Expedition Team member Andrew Bresnahan, a young anthropologist and physician who works in the Inuit Territory of Nunuvut, that he believes that the Inuit have “turned a corner,” that their lives and prospects are slowly improving. One of the Inuit “culturalists” was similarly hopeful. A “new spark of optimism” is being kindled in the north, he said, and a new sense of pride. The Inuit are now recognizing the importance of maintaining a way of life that relies for food and other necessities on harvesting the north's resources instead of depending on government handouts. They have also gained a right to choose their own way rather than having to abide by choices made by others.

This emerging sense of pride and self-confidence owes much to the achievements of Inuit participants in land claims negotiations with other governments and the Innu First Nation to the south. The earliest of these were members of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), an organization of Inuit elders



formed in 1971 to represent the interests of 65,000 Inuit living in 51 communities in the four Inuit regions (Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavuk) that make up Canada’s far north. In addition to negotiating land claims it has become an advocate for federal and provincial health, education, housing and other policies that respect Inuit culture. It also encourages community-based initiatives to reduce food insecurity– a challenge that stems from a variety of factors and intersects with other challenges. Such initiatives include food banks, community freezers, community kitchens, and programs to encourage the harvesting of the land-based (“country”) foods that once comprised the Inuit diet.



**Town of Nain**

Several of us visited a food security initiative in Nain: an experimental community kitchen sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Development of the government of the region of Nunatsiavut and backed by several community organizations. The woman in charge welcomed us with a bowl of delicious partridge soup. We then learned that she gives cooking lessons to women and teenagers, bread-making lessons to men, and, with one or more helpers, prepares daily bag lunches for children attending the town’s two schools. She teaches young people methods of harvesting and preparing land-based foods – a healthier and less expensive source of food than much of that flown in from south. (We had been given a chance to sample it while crossing the Davis

Strait from Greenland to Labrador.) She also notifies local people on *Facebook* when there is leftover food available.

The government of Nunatsiavut is one of two local governments created in 2005 to serve individual Inuit regions (the other is in Nunuvut). The addition of these governments to those already involved in multi-government negotiations has added another level of complexity to the task of finding and funding culturally-appropriate policies for the Inuit territories. Such negotiations can take a lot of time and require a willingness to reconcile very different expectations and points of view. (Those leading to the creation of the Torngat Mountains National Park took more than 35 years.) What keeps them going, said one participant, is a lot of patience and a shared understanding that the goal is to “come to an agreement”– a negotiating philosophy that, if followed, would make the world in general and Canada in particular much more comfortable places to live in right now.

–**Frances Frisken**

## FAMOUS QUOTES

1. We hang the petty thieves and appoint the great ones to public office.  
-- Aesop
2. Suppose you were an idiot. And suppose you were a member of Congress. But then I repeat myself.  
-- Mark Twain
3. A liberal is someone who feels a great debt to his fellow man, which debt he proposes to pay off with your money.  
-- G. Gordon Liddy
4. Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.  
-- James Bovard, *Civil Libertarian* (1994)
5. Foreign aid might be defined as a transfer of money from poor people in rich countries to rich people in poor countries.  
-- Douglas Casey, *Classmate of Bill Clinton* at Georgetown University

## YURA Executive

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### YURA Office Hours

Tuesday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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