

PostScript

WINTER 2025



THE MAGAZINE FOR RETIRED EDUCATORS

Keep hearing & enjoying



The sounds of the season have a way of bringing us back. It might be the laughter of family around the table, watching your favourite holiday movie, or the crunch under foot as you walk amongst a snowy landscape. These sounds do more than fill the air. They connect us to the moments and people we hold dear.

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PostScript

WINTER 2025



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PostScript welcomes photography submissions from members for our cover and for articles. Printing requires high resolution images at least 300 pixels per inch in printed format (3000 pixels wide by 3600 pixels high).

Submission guidelines at bcрта.ca/postscript-submissions



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OK, we have to talk about books. Perhaps, like me, your relationship with books could use a 12 step program for sobriety. But why do the program when you can read about it? Much more interesting.

As I write this, we are moving house, and part of the downsizing process has been to confront our book collection. The volumes are, um, voluminous. Teachers (my spouse, that is) collect a wealth of books as personal resources, and **Janet** has let go of several hundred books for young readers, many to other teachers, some to charity. But a few that she wants to share with our grandchildren remain. Our shared collection has also been knocked down by a few hundred but is still in the thousands. Yes. It's our glory and it's our shame, and it is going with us.

As you might have guessed, this issue of PostScript features a number of writers with the same problem - I mean - devotion. **Phyllis Ferguson** laments (or luxuriates, it is hard to tell) over the books she intends to read but never quite does. **Joan Elliott** features some great Canadian titles that make worthy reading with the young ones in your life. **RR Smith's** featured partner this quarter is **Afretech**, who set up libraries for students in Africa. And we have our usual **Books of Note** column showing the work of BCRTA writers.

Perhaps you tuned in to BCRTA's 2025 conference and took in **Crawford Kilian's** brilliant keynote talk "Education - From the Stone Age to AI." If not, the good news is that we have it here. A very worthy read. And if you prefer to see it on the screen, you can do so, along with the other presentations, on our website, see p. 55.

Surrey is the home of some great ideas, two of which are **Tammy Neuman's** Bright Beginnings and **Rob Hollins' Repair Café**, and they tell us about them.

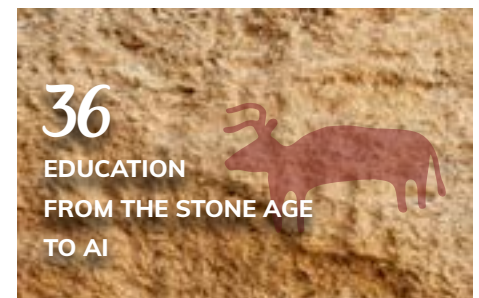
So as you curl up against the December cold with this issue, accept our best wishes for a happy holiday season, and may there be at least one book in your stocking. We will see you again on the other side!

The Editor

postscript@bcрта.ca

contents

POSTSCRIPT MAGAZINE | WINTER 2025



- 4 EDITOR'S NOTE
- 6 PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE
- 8 LETTERS
- 9 LIFE MEMBERS
- 10 IMPORTANT DATES
- 11 BRIGHT BEGINNINGS
- 13 DOGWOOD BENEFITS BY BCRTA
- 21 BUILDING BONDS BY READING WITH CHILDREN
- 46 HEALTH NOTES
- 48 BOOKS OF NOTE

- 50 GAMES LADY
- 52 REPAIR CAFE
- 55 BCRTA CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS
- 57 CLASSIFIEDS
- 58 CROSSWORD
- 59 SUDOKU
- 60 IN MEMORIAM
- 61 POSTSCRIPT HONOUR ROLL
- 62 PHOTO FILE
- 63 RR SMITH



SEPTEMBER BEGINNINGS

Every year, I create a Birthday Book for each of my granddaughters. I started the tradition when the eldest celebrated her first birthday and have subsequently produced seventeen books for her and fourteen for her sister.

Throughout the year, I gather snapshots, ticket stubs and other memorabilia that capture adventures they've had and experiences we've shared. Whether it's baking cookies, forest walks, family gatherings, travels, or extracurricular activities, each year's volumes are full of unique memories.

In the beginning, I did a lot of cut and paste, working with original photos and printing text on the computer, then trimming, and glueing to the pages. Over time, I learned how to create pages that are first printed, then embellished by hand with stickers and other bits of bling.

The greatest pleasure is looking through the Birthday Book together on the big day. As we look at each page, I'm reminded that memories are more than just a record of what happened- they're a map of who our girls have become. Looking back helps us see where we are and, when we understand where we are, we can start imagining where to go next.

That same idea runs through my reflections on BCRTA's 80th birthday this past year. When we look back together, we see 'snapshots' that define our work and our community. Each event, meeting, and project has added a new page to our collective Birthday Book. The pictures tell the story of who we are as an organization, and where we're headed.

The BCRTA Conference and AGM provided several bright new pages to the BCRTA story. We had great speakers who inspired and challenged us, a renewed Board ready to lead, and new staff joining our strong team. The energy in the room was wonderful- a mix of enthusiasm, purpose, and connection. You can experience some of that by viewing those presentations online at bcrt.ca.

At the ACER-CART, COSCO and NPF conferences, we engaged with ideas that will shape our thinking in the months ahead. I was reminded



"Memories are more than just a record of what happened – they're a map of who our girls have become..."

that BCRTA's advocacy is part of a larger, living movement of retirees across Canada. Our collective voice can shape what comes next. The discussions reminded me that lifelong learning never stops- curiosity is one of our strengths as retirees. Conversations about ageism reminded me how powerful it can be when we push back against outdated assumptions about aging - and how important it is to speak up for the dignity, ability, and wisdom of older adults. Conversations about human rights underscored that retirees have a continuing role in shaping a fair and caring society. These ideas will guide a lot of our thinking and advocacy work in the year ahead.

Our cooperation with The Public Sector Retiree Group (BCRTA, BC Government Retired Employees, Municipal Pension Retirees and College Pension Plan Retirees) has proven a valuable collaboration. The PSRG as a group produced the video presentation ***What They Don't Tell You About Retirement***, which features lively conversation about purpose, identity, health, and connection after our working years. Our partnership with PSRG has given us deeper insight into what retirees truly need and value.

This year also marked the launch of our Dogwood Benefits brand of Extended Health Care insurance. You know that we have had a long collaboration with first Johnson Insurance, later Belair, now our plan has matured to the point that it is now self-funded and governed by a dedicated board of experienced benefits leaders from BCRTA. It continues to offer superior benefits coverage designed by and for BC retirees. The move to our own "brand name" of Dogwood

Benefits is a milestone worth celebrating! It represents a big step forward, with the plan's new terms in 2026 offering improved coverage and a doubling of the lifetime maximum claims to \$500,000. It's another way we're making sure that members' needs are not only met but also anticipated.

Throughout the year, I have been continually encouraged by the feedback we receive from our members and Branch leaders. They send notes of appreciation to recognize bright BCRTA moments, things like: great staff service; informative, enjoyable BCRTA meetings; Pensions oversight; our recognition of individuals. We have shared a few of the notes we recently received from new Life Members in this issue's Letters section. These heartfelt notes remind us that the work of BCRTA makes a difference every day.

When I look back at all these 'snapshots', I see a community that's informed, energized, and deeply caring. We've had a full and meaningful year - the big picture shows how committed we are to supporting each other and the generations of retirees to come.

My granddaughters' Birthday Books always end with this phrase: *to be continued...* In the same vein, as BCRTA turns the page to a new year in 2026, I am filled with optimism. We will continue to build on this strong foundation - expanding our advocacy, deepening our partnerships, and improving the ways we serve our members. The world around us keeps changing, but our shared purpose remains the same: to make life in retirement richer, more secure, and more connected for everyone in our BCRTA community. •



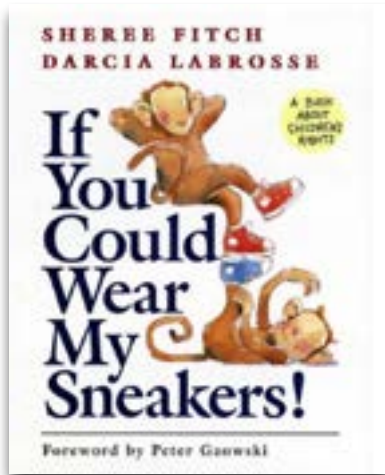
CAROLINE MALM is President of BCRTA

PostScript Letters

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

I always find one or two articles in your magazine that I can personally relate to. I was interested to read the article on teaching children about the rights of children. I always included a mini-unit on this as part of my social studies

program. One tool I found helpful was Sheree Fitch's book of poems, "If You Could Wear My Sneakers." Each poem in the book addresses one of 15 (out of the 54) rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. At the end is a quiz which invites you to match one of the poems and illustrations with the appropriate Convention article. It is also a great basis for discussion and other extension activities.



Jennifer Davidson
Nanaimo

PostScript Partners

In your last issue, the article "What They Don't Tell You About Retirement" is a timely, and accurate reflection, confirming the paucity of relevant information given upon retirement. My own retirement began with two years of a bewildering nightmare of inactivity, loss of identity, bereft of purpose and fulfillment. I soon discovered that this period of life was meant to be far more than laying in each morning followed by coffee with a mate. And so I began planning - something I had never been informed of - deciding what I wanted my purpose to be; passion soon evolved. My 30 years of elderhood - the stage after childhood and adulthood - has become a potpourri of: writing for magazines, a fitness blog, giving a Ted talk, completing the Ironman triathlon, volunteering, running 30,000 km, Grouse grinding 2,000 times, continuing to tutor Math part-time, hiking, and many other activities.

I would encourage all about-to-become-retirees to thoroughly plan - a couple of years beforehand - what you want your purpose to be. Welcome to the golden era.

Barrie Street

High School Annual and Retiree Quarterly

I was always in awe of my colleagues who helped our students put their yearbook together. Yearbooks are magnificent achievements. PostScript is magnificent these days. I am in awe of you.

Thank you for the commitment and effort that makes it so.

Valerie Sinclair



Write us at postscript@bcrrta.ca

Life Members

Celebrating BCRTA Life Members!

Each year BCRTA confers Life Membership on members who attain the age of 90 and have been members for at least eight of the previous 10 years. Newly instated Life Members receive a BCRTA membership pin and a letter of congratulations from the President of our association.

Life Members are exempt from annual membership fees for BCRTA and BCRTA branches, but retain voting privileges.

As of November 2025, we have 1,506 Life Members.

Congratulations to all our new Life Members for 2025-2026!



Some Recent Notes from Life Members

Dear Caroline

You guys are the first to recognise my 90th. Thank you. You will be interested to know the letter arrived here well – Canadian postal system is not as bad as you think it is. Or is it?

I have been in New Zealand since 2012 and all communication comes through well.

Should you ever be this way please contact me and I will give you a guided tour of Napier.

Thanks again for the contact and the pin.

Art H.
Napier, New Zealand

Dear Caroline

I would like to thank you and the BCRTA for your recent letter and the lovely membership pin. I am very grateful for your recognition.

Best wishes to all and thank you.

Vivian S.
Duncan

Dear Caroline

Thank you so much for the pretty little pin and for informing me of my new status as a Life Member of the BCRTA. Years ago I was in awe of any Life Member in our District – and here I am!

I'm grateful for the many colleagues I see and meet, mostly in the Trail/Castlegar area. The mountain air must benefit us!

With sincere thanks to you and the BCRTA board for the many hours dedicated to the needs of retired teachers.

Barb R.

important dates

CPP and OAS

Payment Dates

- December 22, 2025
- January 28, 2026
- February 25, 2026
- March 27, 2026
- April 28, 2026
- May 27, 2026
- June 26, 2026
- July 29, 2026
- August 27, 2026
- September 25, 2026
- October 28, 2026
- November 26, 2026
- December 22, 2026

Teachers' Pension

Payment Dates

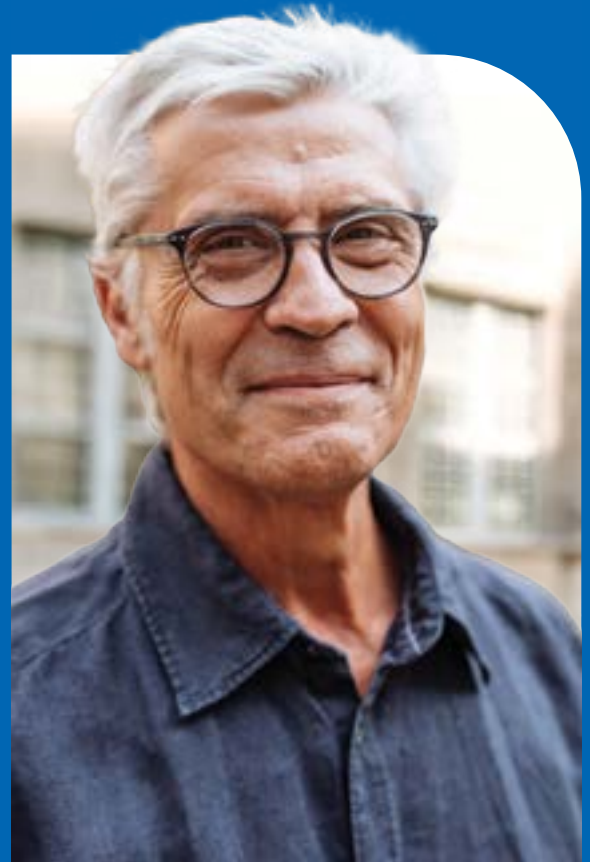
- December 23, 2025
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- June 29, 2026
- July 30, 2026
- August 28, 2026
- September 28, 2026
- October 29, 2026
- November 27, 2026
- December 22, 2026

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A Decade of Bright Beginnings

About eight years ago, PostScript's Autumn 2017 issue featured an article about a young organization called the Bright Beginnings Foundation (BBF).

Now, BBF is ten-years old and is ready to celebrate magnificent growth. Some notable successes are:

1. BBF has raised over 1/4 million dollars in the past 10 years
2. BBF have awarded 7 full-ride bursaries, 7 small grants of \$2,000-5,000 and 17 gently-used or new laptops
3. BBF have changed the life trajectory of a dozen Surrey students and their families.

Over the past decade, the Bright Beginnings Foundation (BBF) has been laying a pathway to many bright futures for graduating Surrey students. This small but active nonprofit society aims to transform the lives of Surrey secondary school graduates who are marginalized by poverty, trauma, and other significant life challenges. BBF provides selected students with full-ride bursaries for post-secondary education, enabling them to pull themselves and their families out of poverty.

Ten years ago, BBF's founder and president, Tammy Neuman, was getting ready to retire from a 30-year teaching career with the Surrey School



District. She cared dearly for all her students, did her best to help those who needed it most, and wanted nothing more than to carry her work into her retirement years. In Tammy's own words:

"I grew up in a family where social justice issues were front and centre in our lives. And during my working career in the public school system, I worked in many schools where some of my students were living with very difficult financial challenges. I felt powerless when my students came

to school hungry or dressed inappropriately for the weather. I provided many of them with lunches and winter coats, and I tried to support their families, but I wanted to do more. How could I help level the playing field so that students living with low incomes could get ahead? I realized that getting a higher education is key to breaking the cycle of generational poverty.

"As I was getting ready to retire, I realized I wasn't ready to accept a life of leisure. My co-founder, Sylvia Moffatt, and I founded the Bright Beginnings Foundation as a way of helping marginalized Surrey students and their families. BBF was started with a grant from the Surrey Teachers Association which helped us get off the ground – and the STA has continued to be a loyal supporter throughout our journey. Our goal was to provide the students we cared for with everything

they need to succeed: full tuition, student fees, and educational materials for the postsecondary institution and program of their choice. As the work of organizing and fundraising increased, Sylvia and I were joined by a group of dedicated directors, and we are now a board of seven working and retired educators.”

The Bright Beginnings Foundation Fund, a donor-advised fund administered by VanCity, is supported by donations and fundraising activities organized by BBF’s board of directors. Generous donors include the R. R. Smith Foundation, the City of Surrey, and many others. Fundraisers are held throughout the year, including galas, pub nights, raffles, silent auctions, plant sales, and more. In recent years BBF has partnered with the Surrey Fire Fighters Charitable Society in their annual Christmas gift wrapping event at Guildford Mall. Initiatives and partnerships like these have allowed BBF’s directors to provide selected Surrey secondary school graduates with one full-ride bursary and a number of smaller grants every year. Because BBF is entirely volunteer-driven, 99% of all fundraising proceeds and donations go directly to help students.

One of BBF’s current students, Hala Bkri Basha, describes the foundation’s impact on her life and dreams: *“As a small child growing up amidst war, corruption, and conflict, I lost my childhood to circumstances far beyond any child’s control. And even after my family immigrated to Canada, I graduated*



The BBF leadership team includes Tammy Neuman (far right)

from high school thinking that my educational journey was over, due to financial hardships and many personal struggles. However, I was given a rare gift: a second chance. BBF gave me a renewed purpose, a pathway to pursuing my post-secondary education. BBF is the reason that now, as a young adult I, am fulfilling my dream of becoming a lawyer, fulfilling my dream to advocate for children like myself and for anyone who has been forced to surrender years of their lives to fear, injustice, and corruption. BBF has not only funded my education, but they have restored my hope and given me the opportunity to turn loss into purpose: to stand alongside those who feel they have no voice.”

BBF has grown from a seed planted in Tammy’s mind to a registered non-profit society that has raised over a quarter of a million dollars and helped eleven Surrey students pursue their dreams of achieving a postsecondary education.

On September 18, 2025, BBF will celebrate its tenth anniversary and the start of another ten – or twenty, or thirty – years of supporting marginalized Surrey secondary school graduates.

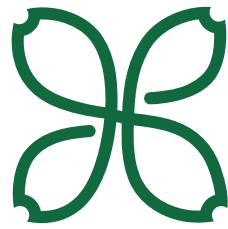
WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

Please visit BBF’s website to volunteer or make a donation.

brightbeginningsfoundation.ca

Since retiring as a Kindergarten Teacher for SD 36, **TAMMY NEUMAN** has divided her time between family, community gardening, crocheting and working for Bright Beginnings Foundation.





DOGWOOD
RETIREE BENEFIT PLANS

EHC • DENTAL • TRAVEL • TRIP • HOME

Exciting news for BC retirees!

For a number of years BCRTA has sponsored our own Extended Health benefits plan, first with *Johnson Insurance*, and later with **belair** insurance. Our plan has matured to the point where it is now self-funding and governed by its own board. And now our plan has a new name that reflects its BC identity: ***Dogwood Retiree Benefits Plan***.

If you are currently on the BCRTA plan with belair/Johnson, you don't have to do a thing - your ID and policy number remains the same, and a new card with the Dogwood logo will be issued to you in January.

If you are on another plan and want to join the runaway winner in client satisfaction, use the link below or call us.

Our plans are improving! Here are some of the exciting developments for our plan effective January 1, 2026:

- ✓ The EHC lifetime maximum increases from \$250,000 to \$500,000
- ✓ Paramedical coverage increases from \$1,000 to \$1,500 per person per calendar year
- ✓ Under the Dental Plan, Major Services Coverage increases from \$700 to \$1,000 combined per calendar year
- ✓ Travel plans are now fully "a la carte" - you do not have to have EHC coverage to sign up for Dogwood Travel Gold coverage (formerly "Prestige"), and you also have the option to take Dogwood EHC without having a travel plan.
- ✓ The "MEDOC" is now Dogwood Travel Silver - *now available to friends and family of BCRTA members!*

Welcome to a better world of coverage, created by BCRTA for BC Retirees!

NOTE: EHC plan uses the BC Pharmacare formulary. Make sure to check that drug coverage is appropriate for you.

For plan comparisons & more information visit **bcрта.ca/dogwood**



10,000 MILES FROM HOME

BY PATRICIA JONES

It was the day before Christmas, but the sky was a clear crystal blue, the air was warm, and we were in the middle of summer. It was 1957 and I was in Cape Town, South Africa. I was 21 and recently graduated as a nurse from the Royal Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, BC. My best friend Gail, also a nurse at the Jubilee, and I decided that we would like to see the world outside of Victoria. Where would we go? China? Hong Kong? New Zealand?

Then one of our doctors suggested for a real adventure we should consider applying and working at Groote Schuur (Afrikaans for Big Barn) Hospital in Cape Town, and so we did! We had just enough money to book a one-way ticket on a bitumen-loaded freighter sailing out of New Orleans. The trip would take a full month.

Gail and I were excited. As was the tradition in

the 50's, most young women were thinking about marriage and starting a family. But for us, not just yet! There was a big world out there and we wanted to see it. Into our suitcases went all twelve of our white, starched dresses, bibs, and aprons, and our warm black and red serge capes. Our caps, unique to our RJH School of Nursing, were also carefully wrapped and placed inside.

We pictured swimming from the Cape's sandy beaches and climbing Table Mountain to see where the Indian Ocean met the Atlantic. The southern hemisphere was waiting.

Crammed in along the sides of our suitcases were paper and envelopes for all the letters we had promised to write home. Our mothers had packed sandwiches, enough to see us through the three-day trip from Seattle to Chicago, a city with skyscrapers



*Above: the freighter. Right: Patricia (L) and Gail (R).
Photos provided by Patricia Jones*



like we had never seen. Rail travel by the Great Northern and Illinois Central then took us through the southern US states. Along the Mississippi we sped through the cottonwoods, magnolias, and southern plantations to New Orleans, our port of departure.

The historic Stella Lykes, our freighter, was loading up barrels of bitumen. Then thirteen, intrepid passengers walked up the gangplank and we were off to South Africa. The ship rolled, pitched, and sometimes calmly sailed its way across the Atlantic, arriving one month later in the beautiful harbour of Cape Town.

We found our way to Groote Schuur. It was and is a very large teaching hospital in the Cape Province. The matron, a rather austere lady wearing a dark blue uniform, shoulder epaulettes, many badges, and a stiff white veil met us in her office. I think we were the first Canadian nurses she had encountered so we were on our best behaviour. Matron advised us that we would wear the uniform and cap of South African registered nurses. Gail and I quietly thought of the load of "starch" in our suitcases. However, we had arrived and were so happy!

It was the era of apartheid. Segregation by colour was strict, even throughout the hospital. Nelson Mandela was then a prisoner just four years into his 27-year imprisonment. It wasn't until 1990 that he was released and negotiated the end of apartheid and in 1994 led the first multiracial democratic election.

We had a lot to learn, beginning with the location of the nurses' residence. It adjoined the hospital and was surrounded by iron gates, and if I recall correctly, had a curfew, of all things. In the park next to the hospital and residence there were zebras and monkeys, but no lions, thank goodness. The nursing staff were friendly and sometimes invited us to their homes. They wanted to know if I'd ever met Elvis Presley. No. I hadn't!

Gail was pleased to be assigned to an adult surgical ward where Dr. Christiaan Barnard was at this time a young intern or resident. He later became famous as he performed the first open heart surgery in 1967 at Groote Schuur. As an aside, Dr. Barnard got married on St. Valentine's Day which seems romantic, if not entirely appropriate for a heart surgeon.

*They wanted to know if I'd ever met
Elvis Presley. No. I hadn't!*



*Above: Groote Schuur in 1957. Left: On duty.
Photos provided by Patricia Jones*



*I would never
complain about
working hours
again in my life...*

I was delighted to be assigned to the “coloured” children’s ward. I loved caring for these little ones. They were often brought to the ward tucked securely into a shawl on their mother’s back. She had likely walked many, many miles to get help for her child. Often the babies were suffering from malnutrition. They responded quickly to a research formula of yoghurt. When strong enough, they would be discharged.

A telegraph would be sent to the District Commissioner, the mother located, and she then trudged back to the Hospital. I learned to tuck babies into the mother’s shawl for the trip back to their compound. I have often wondered if these little ones grew up. Their health was precarious, but they were hardy, and their mothers, caring.

We worked long days, usually ten hours, including four-week night tours from 8:00pm to 7:00 am with a meal and rest period included. We had one day off each week. I would never complain about working hours again in my life. What Gail and I did have time for was writing all those letters and loved to receive mail from home.

There was no time for beach parties or swimming but we had other adventures. One of them happened at Christmastime. It was my day off and I went to downtown Cape Town. As I was admiring the flowers on Adderly Street, I heard someone speak in a charming American drawl. I turned to find a good-looking young man dressed in a white naval uniform. "Pardon me ma'am, my buddies across the street dared me to ask you for a date. Would you like to go for an ice cream?"

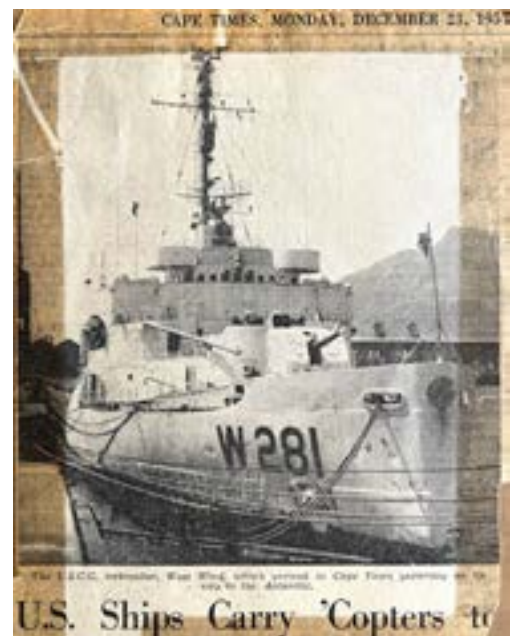
He was so shy and embarrassed, and his accent was enchanting! I looked over and saw his buddies all dressed in their summer whites and watching this encounter. I smiled at them, took his arm, said "yes", and off we went. That day before Christmas was a memorable one. I had now met this handsome, young American sailor, who had crossed the street to ask me out on a date! His ship was in port en route for a year's tour of duty in Antarctica. Cape Town was their last port of call.

The next evening, on Christmas Day, the ship's company had been invited to have a special dinner as guests of the beautiful Mount Nelson Hotel. Jim, my new sailor friend, asked me if I would like to join them. I said I would and asked if my friend Gail could come as well. With a big smile, Jim said "Yes!" So that evening Gail and I joined the Captain, Officers, and Crew of the USCG West Wind for an elegant dinner in Cape Town, South Africa.

Looking back, I think how thoughtful and generous it was for our South African friends to invite the ship's company for dinner and for the captain to include two young Canadian nurses with their group. It was a delightful evening for Gail and me. We now had a company of new American friends and one who was special.

We returned home to Victoria the following year after having had an exciting and memorable adventure in Africa.

Did I meet Jim again? Yes, but that is another story! •



Mementos of Christmas, 1957. Photos by Patricia Jones.

In her second career **PATRICIA JONES** taught elementary grades in Vancouver at Sir William MacDonald, Champlain Heights, Sir James Douglas, and John Norquay. She also taught in Japan. She now lives in Saanichton, BC.

BOOKS I INTEND to READ

Images Credits: iStockPhoto



BY PHYLLIS FERGUSON

BIIR is my acronym for “Books I Intend to Read”. The chilly sound contrasts with the coziness of curling up with a good book.

However, at seventy-two years of age, my piles have multiplied, even taking over a small neighbouring book shelf. Perhaps I should consider re-naming it as the Leaning Tower of Pages. Another re-branding possibility is Pyramid Piles as the not-yet-read books will be my provisions accompanying me into the after-life.

Indicative of good intentions, some of these excellent books have bookmarks in them. I wondered if the word ‘wolf’ was a jinx as two of these are Hilary Mantel’s *Wolf Hall* and Wallace Stegner’s *Wolf Willow*. However, there are also markers half-way through Richard Powers’s *The Overstory*, Michael Christie’s *Greenwood* and Suzanne Simard’s *Finding the Mother Tree* which may indicate that I love the physical actuality of trees as well as their pulped product.

How did my BIIR pile grow to such proportions?

Recommendations from my children. Our son, Tim, is a volunteer Board Member for the Vancouver Library and the fastest reader that I know. He likes to recommend Russian authors and has stated that he will only read *Pride and Prejudice* when I have read Vasily Grossman's *Life and Fate*. In addition, he has committed to reading a second novel by Austen when I finish Larry McMurty's *Lonesome Dove*. I should point out that these two books are 858 and 952 pages long. Just saying.

Our daughter, Jan, and I recommend and swap books constantly. One of the most unsettling but memorable ones was Hila Blum's *How to Love Your Daughter*. Not what we expected!

Prolific Authors. So many fabulous writers! Tim Winton's *Eyrie* is in the pile because I loved *Cloudstreet* and Annie Proulx's *Barkskins* earns a spot because of *The Shipping News*. Geraldine Brooks, Pat Barker, Mary Lawson and Elif Shafak are represented as well.

Book Reviews. I read them faithfully in our local paper and in The Economist. So many possibilities! Then, in 2017, our son subscribed to *Slightly Foxed: The Real Reader's Quarterly* for me. Each issue has an average of fifteen erudite articles about "books

that are no longer new and fashionable but have lasting appeal". That could describe my personal appearance as much as my book choices!

Book Discussion Groups. I have co-founded two on-going ones: my neighbourhood Carisbrooke Book Club (1993) and a Book Circle at my church (2004). On a monthly basis, their selections are temporarily added to my BIIR pile where they bump down other books! For our up-coming meeting I need to read Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

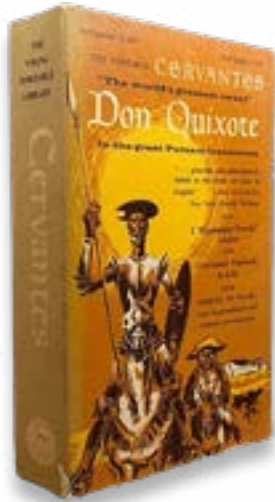
Gifts and Loans. Being in the Jane Austen Society of North America plus various discussion groups, I have friends who quite accurately offer selections based on my interests. At present, Fiona's copy of *The Personal Librarian* and Diana's edition of *Pastoral Song: A Farmer's Journey* are temporarily lodged in the 'not-mine' section. When we were visiting Shelley in the Dandenongs, she thoughtfully placed a gift, Anna Funder's *Wifedom: Mrs. Orwell's Invisible Life*, as the sole book on her guest room's bedside table. This enthralling book went straight into my hands and then my mind.

Little Free Libraries. In our car's trunk, I keep a small box of donations to drop off. However, simply opening the doors and straightening up the

*Simply opening the
doors and straightening
up the shelves exposes
me to temptation...*

Credit: iStockPhoto





shelves exposes me to temptation. My best find was a hard cover copy of Anthony Doerr's *Cloud Cuckoo Land* the very month that it was our Book Circle choice! Score! Other oddly tempting ones that came home with me include Nancy Mitford's *Madame de Pompadour* now in the left pile on the second shelf.

Travel. We are fortunately maintaining ourselves at the Go-Go stage of retirement (the later two phases being Slo-Go and No-Go). Before, during and after a trip I like to read books set in that locale. Due to travelling to Japan, Wales and Spain in the last few years I have these partially read titles in my

piles: Yukio Mishima's *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*, Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was My Valley* and Washington Irving's *Tales of the Alhambra*. Since I am in confession mode, let me share that I ambitiously purchased a second-hand copy of Miquel Cervantes's *Don Quixote* almost exactly fifty years ago. I haven't quite finished it but I did take it with me to Castilla-La Mancha where we posed affectionately in front of a windmill! That book and I have lived together at seven addresses so it has earned its honour as the venerable foundation stone of my BIIR pile.

Next month my husband and I fly to the Mediterranean. Googling produced a list of 'The Twenty-Two Best Books Set in Malta'. Perhaps it is fortunate our local library only has one of them! However, there will be bookshops on the island and it is a long flight home.

Years ago I pinned Luc Van Donkersgoed's reassuring words by my computer: "Think not of the books you've bought as a 'to be read' pile. Instead, think of your bookcase as a wine cellar. You collect books to be read at the right time, the right place and the right mood." Recently, I learned that the Japanese have a term, 'tsundoku', for owning yet-to-be-read books. A much more elegant word than BIIR pile although equally puzzling to pronounce.

I sense that I am not alone! •

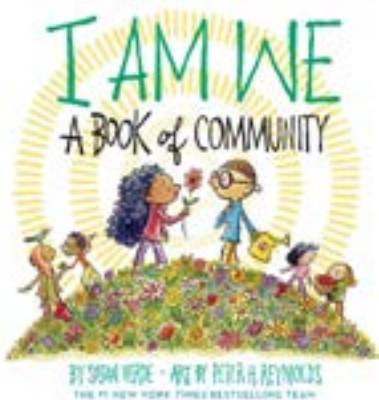
PHYLLIS FERGUSON retired from SD#44 where she was a speech language pathologist. She piles her books in North Vancouver.



Building Bonds Through Reading With Children

BY JOAN ELLIOTT

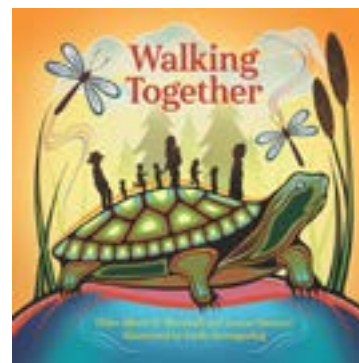
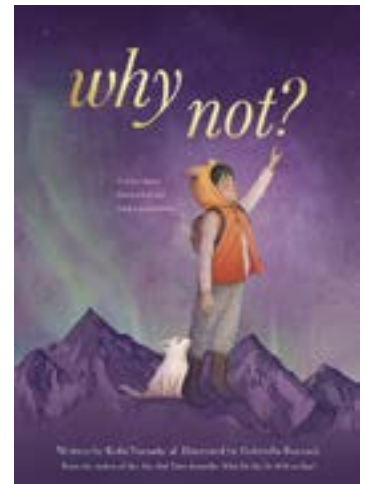
The holidays are a wonderful opportunity to share your love of books and reading with the young people in your life. Whether on a road or camping trip, at the cabin or in your backyard, reading together helps build relationships and is a powerful way to connect generations. Here are some engaging titles for retirees to consider sharing with their younger family members.



I Am We: A Book of Community, written by Susan Verde and illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds, is a heart-warming picture book that illustrates how caring for

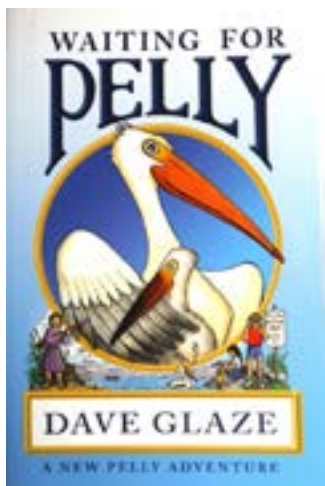
ourselves enables us to care for others because we do not exist alone, but are part of something bigger. Readers are shown how compassion and kindness, turned outward, build safety nets for each other, assist us in standing up to injustice or solving problems, and foster a sense of belonging.

Why Not? A Story About Discovering Our Bright Possibilities, an inspirational picture book written by Kobi Yamada and illustrated by Gabriella Barouch, reveals how each day holds the potential to discover talents, get to know the unknown, have adventures, and be courageous and grateful.



Walking Together, co-authored by Elder Albert D. Marshall and Louise Zimanyi and illustrated by Emily Kewageshig, is a vibrant picture book which describes how walking together in

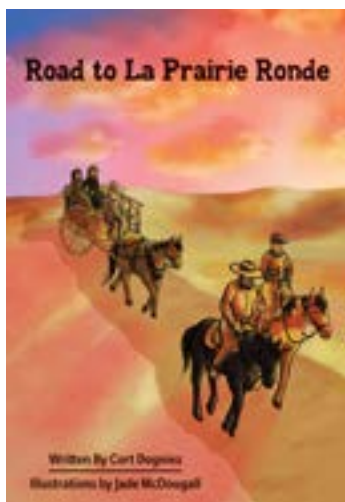
a good way helps us see nature through two eyes. We learn that we are all connected, and about the gifts and stories of our family, lands, waters, plants and animals. The book builds understanding of the importance of protecting Mother Earth.



Waiting for Pelly, by Dave Glaze, is a novel geared to middle grade readers. It is the story of Sandra, a young girl in Saskatoon who anxiously awaits the return of her pelican friend, Pelly. The story outlines Pelly's new life setting up a nest and describes Sandra's enjoyable visits with a pelican researcher to Redberry Lake where they watch the pelican families with their babies.

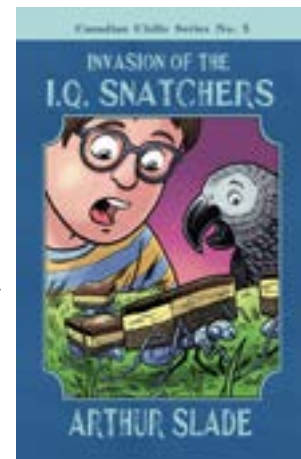
Road to La Prairie

Ronde, written by Cort Dogniez and illustrated by Jade McDougall, is a historical fiction tale in which eleven-year-old Frederick takes readers on an imaginary journey from Batoche to La Prairie Ronde with Gabriel Dumont and his family, a few years before the 1885 Resistance. On the journey, he learns about the importance of staying connected with family and the group hunts buffalo and meets Chief Wapaha Ska (Whitecap).



Invasion of the I.Q.

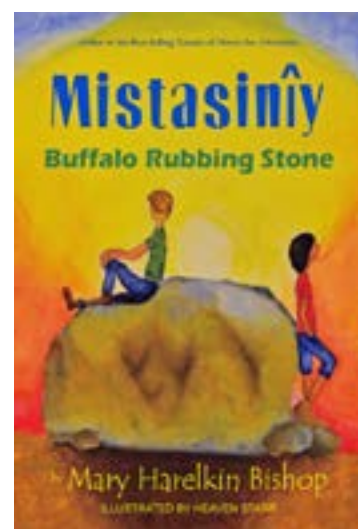
Snatchers, by Arthur Slade, is a hilarious chapter book for young readers. The far-fetched plot revolves around solving the mystery of who is delivering plates of Nanaimo bars to homes in Nanaimo because the bars are causing people to behave strangely.

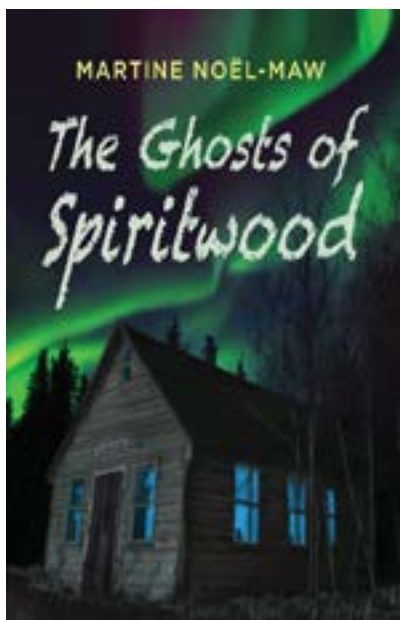


Mistasiny: Buffalo

Rubbing Stone,

by Mary Harelkin Bishop, is a touching middle years novel told from the perspectives of two young people. One is Danny, a boy in grade 6 who learns about the history of his family's farm when doing a school heritage project. From his great-great-grandmother's journal, he learns how they broke the land, built a sod house, received help from First Nations people in the area, and in turn, assisted them when food became scarce after the disappearance of the buffalo. The book is also about Zach, a First Nations youth whose feelings of being unwanted at school lead him to troublesome behaviours. The two boys form a bond while working on the family history project together, and after, Danny shares with Zach the location of the Mistasiniy stone, which was important to Zach's people and to the buffalo.





The Ghosts of Spiritwood, by Martine Noël-Maw, is a great young adult novel to share around the campfire. Ethan and four friends end up in the ditch north of Spiritwood one summer night when heading for a camping trip to watch the northern lights. When a thunderstorm breaks out, they take shelter in an abandoned country school where they relate scary stories, and Ethan shares the legend of the northern lights.



Rank 6: Firestorm, by Barry McDivitt, is a young adult novel about the fear and destruction caused by a forest fire. Emily, the teen protagonist who has struggled with depression and suicidal thoughts, races into the inferno to save a dog. She comes to realize that her rash actions could have killed her and that she wants to live. •

JOAN ELLIOTT is the Librarian/Manager, Emma Stewart Resources Centre at the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in Saskatoon, SK.

This article first appeared in the May 2025 issue of Outreach Magazine, published by the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan (STS). Reprinted with permission. STS and BCRTA are provincial members of the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers (ACER-CART).

IT'S YOUR TURN - SHARE AND WIN!

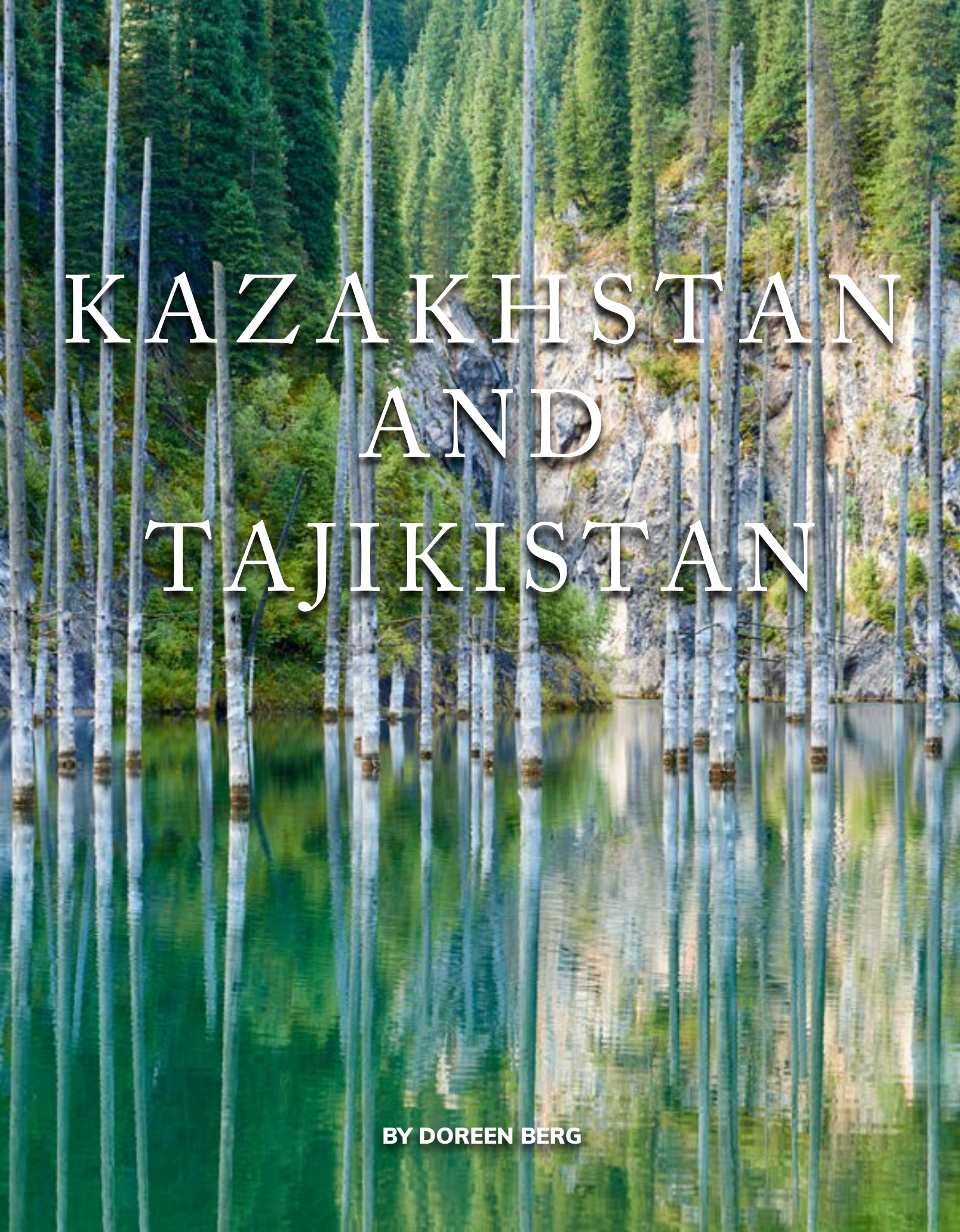
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KAZAKHSTAN AND TAJIKISTAN

BY DOREEN BERG

Although Kazakhstan is the largest of the 'Stans' and the 9th largest country in the world by area, it hasn't traditionally had the same appeal for tourists as Tajikistan. But over the past few years its wealth of natural resources, particularly oil and minerals, have led to a surge in development and a rise in the numbers of both domestic and international travellers.

As we crossed into Kazakhstan from Kyrgyzstan, construction on the roadside was everywhere, with large backhoes, trucks, and packers clearing the culverts as we worked our way around them. We waited for over an hour in the heat of the day before our first passport check. Unfortunately, one of our members tripped over construction wire and fell flat on his face, suffering mild injuries. They immediately cordoned off this area.

The border officials checked our passports several times before allowing us to leave Kyrgyzstan.

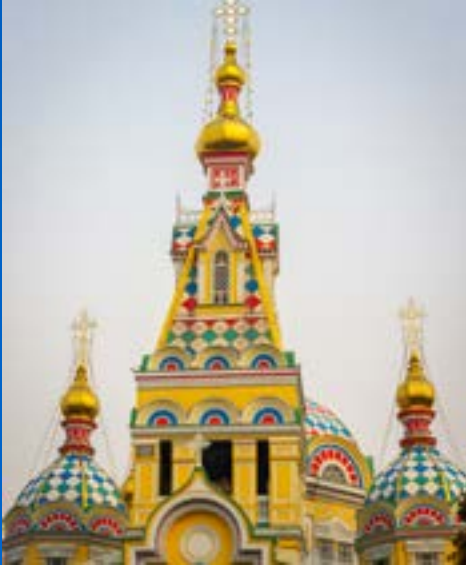
Eventually we loaded into two vans and finally drove into Kazakhstan, eating our picnic lunch in the vans as it started to rain. Later in the day we arrived at our homestay in Saty Village, which is part of the Kolsai Lakes National Park.

After taking our luggage to our rooms, we divided up into three groups and loaded into four-wheel drive vehicles. We climbed hills and forged riverbeds until the road became a trail. Then all sixteen people plus our tour guide, Bek, transferred into one Russian 4x4 and, squeezed like sardines, we bounced and rattled up the steep grade to the park entrance. What a hoot! There we bailed out and hiked to see the Sunken Forest at Kaindy Lake, a beautiful emerald-green lake in the valley, formed by a major landslide in 1911.

Pretty yellow poplar trees bordering the lake sharply contrasted with the green water, inviting many photos. We then again crowded into the



Facing page: The Sunken Forest at Kaindy Lake. Above: Charyn Canyon. Photos by iStock/Getty.



Left: Independence Square. Photo by iStock Center: Zenkov Cathedral. Photo by iStock. Right: Almatay Navat Restaurant. Photo by author.

Russian vehicle to ride the bumpy trail back to our waiting four-wheel drive vehicles.

We returned to our accommodations by 5:30 pm before heading out for a supper of dumplings, buns, tea, and sweets. John, my husband, had voiced some serious reservations as to what our homestays would be like, but as it turned out they were brilliant. Meals in our homestays were excellent and accommodations wonderful with friendly hosts and self-contained suites.

On our way to Almaty, a large city of two million people, we stopped at Charyn Canyon, which is not dissimilar to the Grand Canyon in Arizona. We walked the rim for about an hour viewing the deep, vast landscape before continuing. Stopping in a small town, we bought fresh cheese turnovers and observed the huge amount of bagged produce--peppers, carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, and cabbage--for sale along the roadside, concluding that the land was very fertile in this area.

Our lodgings at Hotel Kazzhol were very beautiful, with our rooms on the sixth floor. Next, we took a city tour with Eli, a local guide, which included the colourful Zenkov Cathedral, a large birthday cake of white, blue, red, and gold, roofed with several domes.

We carried on to Independence Square where we found a huge obelisk with a horse rider called The Golden Warrior Monument. From there we continued to the Green Bazaar, where one could buy anything from spices, meats (including

horsemeat), souvenirs, candy, and furniture.

After our tour we went back to the hotel for a quick rest, then off to Almatay Navat Restaurant which was beautifully decorated with colourful local fabrics, for a scrumptious meal and entertainment by a local dance troupe. We sat at a long table that accommodated all 19 of us. Down one side was a long-padded bench and on the other side of the table were comfortable armchairs. The bus drivers joined us for supper which made it very special as this was our last dinner with them and Bek. We thanked them and presented each person with a money envelope as the next day we were flying to Tajikistan.



National Museum, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Photo by iStock.

We flew from Almaty Airport, Kyrgyzstan to Dushanbe, Tajikistan, a 1-1/2-hour flight. Over 90% of Tajikistan is mountainous and rugged and over half of Tajikistan's territory is above 10,000 feet and very popular among mountaineering groups.

The capital, Dushanbe, is a colourful, wealthy-looking city with clean streets and well-preserved old buildings. Our new guide, Marifat, met us at the airport and took us by bus to a shopping mall to obtain local currency and some snacks for tomorrow's drive. After the mall shopping, we visited the main highlights of the city, strolling past many colourful brightly lit fountains. Hamid, a student of tourism, helped Marifat as she is from Uzbekistan and Hamid is from Tajikistan. We were then driven by bus to another beautiful accommodation, the Atlas Hotel. Supper later at an Arabic restaurant consisted of delicious lamb kebobs and roasted vegetables.

Tajik National Park covers 18 % of Tajikistan, and contains 100 glaciers. Tajikistan is a mix of steppe, desert, grassland, and alpine regions. This

rugged eastern part of the country wants to separate from the rest of Tajikistan, hence a recent civil war. One such war after independence in 1991 lasted five years. The eastern section of the country has gold and the western side has farming, with apricots being an important farming product. The country is developing and changing rapidly and is currently peaceful.

We had a long drive through valleys and mountains to Kull Iskandarkul, a pretty green lake in a valley. We drove past Alexander the Great Lake and then disembarked from the bus and took an hour hike through the Fan Mountains to Iskander Darya Waterfall— height 38 metres. It was scary standing over the tumbling water on only an iron grid made from rebar!

The trail had some difficult areas to navigate, and I mis-stepped and fell hard on a bush, cutting my finger. It seemed minor but took days to heal. Smaller vehicles took us over rough roads and through many tunnels; one tunnel was five miles long with little ventilation and very little light.

We finally arrived at Gazza Village at seven

Tajik National Park. Photo by kStock.



in the evening after a tiring day of travel. In the high mountains, Gazza is one of the more remote villages of northern Tajikistan. Our accommodation was at a Community Guest house. Dinner was served in a separate dining hall high on a hillside, which we finally found after walking around buildings and up narrow trails. After a delicious supper of salads, breads, tea, soup, and stuffed peppers filled with meat and rice, John and I hiked back to our guesthouse, nearly getting lost in the dark. This was one of the few times we had to share a room with another couple.

After a scrumptious breakfast of crepes, omelettes, jam, fresh bread, and hot coffee, we set out on a very strenuous hike to reach one of the oldest villages high in the Fan Mountains. Twisting and turning up pathways and narrow dirt roads, we found the elevation hard but took our time, stopping along the way to visit with locals. A group of children hung on their gate (made of poles), giggling and very excited to see us. One little fellow donned John's hat for photographs. When we showed them the photos on the phone, their happy faces said it all.

We saw many small donkeys loaded with great quantities of hay for winter, going up the mountain. This seemed to be the local people's main mode of transportation. The village was unlike anything we had seen before in its isolation and the durability of

its inhabitants in withstanding physical hardship.

We finally made it to the top attended by our leader, Marifat, who accompanied us for safety reasons as we trudged up the mountain. We were led to a blacksmith's shop where the smithy demonstrated shaping various pieces of equipment, repeating the forging techniques when the other group returned from a second hike.

As we left the blacksmith shop some dear old ladies were selling trinkets and beaded bracelets. Of course, we bought some.

A French teacher invited us to his home built of poles and mud where his wife and family had prepared a tea on an outdoor rooftop. Quilts were placed on the ground then covered with tablecloths, and we were offered pots of tea, biscuits, and candy by our gentle smiling hosts.. We sat cross-legged on the quilts as we enjoyed their hospitality.

We then hiked back down the mountain to our homestay in Gazza Village, a much easier hike. From there, we were driven in two vehicles to lunch at another guesthouse. Bowls of coleslaw and trays of tomatoes and cucumbers were placed on the tables along with trays of rice, peppers, chunks of meat, and fresh bread. We all ate heartily. After resting, we finished the day with another small hike, then a lamb stew dinner followed by watermelon. It wasn't long before we were sound asleep after a busy day.



Meeting village children and donkeys loaded with winter hay. Photos by author.



Khujand Fortress. Photo by Шухрат Саъдиев via Wikimedia Commons

The next morning, we drove from Gazza Village to Khujand, a city on the Syr Darya River founded by Alexander the Great in 329 BC. Over the years it developed into an important center of trade, industry, and agriculture. On the way, we stopped in Istaravshan to explore a local mosque and the ancient Fortress Mug Teppe. This fortress reminded me of the medinas in Morocco.



Khujand Panjshanbe Bazaar. Photo by author.

Next, we drove to the Hotel Sugdiyoni in Khujand. Ten storeys high and in the center of the city, it had a spa and indoor pool and many amenities. This four-star hotel was a real bargain at around CAD 50.00 per night.

Before continuing to the Uzbekistan border, in the morning we visited Khujand Panjshanbe Bazaar, the largest market in Tajikistan. Many fascinating products were for sale in the bazaar and beautifully dressed women strolled in the square.

The trip to the 'Five Stans' was one of the best trips we had ever taken in twenty years of extensive travel. We would highly recommend using a travel company such as G-Adventures as the distances are long, travel can be difficult, and crossing borders isn't easy. You won't regret adding the 'Stans' to your bucket list! •

DOREEN BERG and her husband John live in Powell River. In previous issues of PostScript she has shared the story of their adventures in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and this recounting completes their epic trip to "The Stans".



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THE MAHMOUD TRILOGY

BY VALDINE CIWKO

PART 1: MAHMOUD AND THE MOTHER

“Miss Ciwko, you gotta come quick! There’s a fight on the soccer field!”

So begins another early fall day of my first year of teaching in Ottawa, and the dreaded lunch time yard duty. Man, this is one of the hardest parts of a day. I’ve learned to handle the classroom and even to manage to keep some semblance of order indoors but I live in mortal fear of the dreaded yard duty, those half hour blocks either before or after school, at lunch, or the fifteen-minute intervals called recess.



At this school, with its rep for being a bit tough, it amounts to ten duties a week. Though I am green to teaching, I’ve had a few experiences already that lead me to the recitation of my daily mantra as I exit the school door. “Please don’t let me be the first adult to arrive on the scene of a fight.”

The mantra, obviously, has not worked.

I expect to find a huddle of boys fiercely grabbing the soccer ball like wolves tearing at fresh kill, flailing away at each other. Instead, I am horrified at what I see. Before me are two individuals so disparate, they look for all the world like something out of a commercial for the World Wide Wrestling Federation. One is a wiry little guy who I figure is maybe seven years old. The other...a blonde...a woman in her late thirties!?!?

“Oh, for god’s sake, it’s Jenny’s mother!!” I think in my head as I race toward them. She’s a mom known for hovering on the schoolyard the way drug dealers used to in the back hall at my old high school in Winnipeg.

“What IS going on?”

They are screaming at each other, and it appears she is trying to rip something from his hands. She does, and just as I arrive, he raises his fist and brings it down on her arm.

“YOU!” GO to the office right now!” I demand in my most firm teacher-like voice.

The mom looks at me.

Suddenly her inner child tunes in to that teacher-voice and she obeys.

I know my best chance at cooling things down

PART 2: MAHMOUD AND THE WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

February and the snow is high. It's cold and icy but, thankfully, it's winter and there is no soccer craze yet. Those games take on epic proportions and consist of many little guys unclear on the real rules of the game, plowing through anything in their sight.

Oh no.

Mahmoud is sitting by the wall in spot number one, the first of five spaces designated for time outs on the school yard. The kids have only been out here for five minutes. How can he possibly have gotten himself in trouble already?

Yikes! Did I just see some shiny metal glinting in the sun? What does he have? Should I just pretend I didn't see anything? Nope, better me than someone else. I walk over.

"Hey Mahmoud! Whatcha got there?"

"Oh this really neat thing my brother gave me. See it can pick at the ice and look at all the other things it has!"

It's a seventeen-in-one tool-in-a-pocket. Oh god, I guess this qualifies as a weapon doesn't it, especially in the hands of this guy. I remain calm, avoiding the weapon word altogether.

"Mahmoud, that looks pretty sharp. You could hurt yourself with that. Maybe you'd better give it to me to keep for you at recess."

He hands it over willingly.

"You think that's sharp?? Wanna see what's in my pocket?"

"NOOO!!!" screams the voice inside my head but I calmly reply, "Sure" and he whips out an exacto-knife blade, unwrapped, from the left front pocket of his pants.

"I guess you'd better give me that too" I say, silently thanking the rap stars for the fashion statement of huge wide-legged pants.



is to get her out of the way. He certainly is in no mood to listen. I put him in my best teacher/mother-like shoulder cradle and we head for the school, slow but steady.

"She ripped my magazine, that bitch."

"But you hit her; you can't go around hitting moms."

"I don't know what her problem was. It's my magazine. I want it back."

So, in between words not fit for a teacher to repeat in print, I ask him his name.

"Mahmoud," he replies.

Somewhere between the soccer field and the school building I am able to find out what grade he is in and who his home room teacher is.

The magazine? I have no clue. Something titillating enough for a young boy to want to show around; something a mom thinks is "inappropriate" for the school yard. The magazine was never mentioned again.

As we enter the school hall he breaks down in tears, and I know he's scared. But he comes with me and accepts his sentence from the principal, which includes being sent home for the afternoon and sitting out recess and lunchtime for the rest of the week.

Jenny's mom escapes justice. Unfortunately, you can't give parents detentions.

The next day, as he is sitting out recess by the principal's office, he sees me walking down the hall.

"I'm mad at you. You got me in trouble."

I continue walking, "I didn't get you in trouble, you got you in trouble. I didn't hit that mom."

It's September. Something tells me I'll be getting to know this little guy pretty well before the year is out.



PART 3: MAHMOUD AND THE BARBER

It's spring. A lovely fresh and sunny Friday morning. I like these morning duties the best. Most times I don't even have to sort out any fights. Some days though, without him even knowing it, Mahmoud's just looking for something or someone to bug. This particular morning, he is about to jump on someone's back, perhaps his peculiar way of saying good morning.

I race over and call out to him "Hey ya, Mahmoud. How are you this morning?"

He turns toward me instead of making the leap. Whew! Got him out of that one.

"Nice haircut!" I say.

"Shit man," he says. "The stupid barber didn't do it like I wanted."

"Mahmoud," I say, "do you think that's how I want to hear you talk?"

"Oops, sorry" he says. "I wanted it like my brother. Shit man, oops, I mean sorry, I wanted it to be shorter at the back."

Now I should point out that Mahmoud's most revered role model is his older brother who at 12 is in and out of trouble and detention centres with distressing regularity. This morning's performance is full of gangster gestures and posturing, yet here is my little gangster-in-training still trying to remember his manners.

"He's not really a bad boy, just a little troubled," I mumble under my breath, and then louder at the dinner table that night as I recount the latest Mahmoud story at home.

The following year, with the offer of a more permanent position, I switched schools. One fall day, not unlike that fateful fall day a year earlier, I returned to my old school for a project I had developed around Black History in Ottawa. Of all the kids I had encountered that first year of my teaching career, he was the one I most wished to see. But it was the end of the day. Most kids had already gone home. Just as I was about to enter the gym a little guy came racing down the hall. Mahmoud! His face beamed. Mine too. He gave me a big hug and then he was gone.

Rich man, poor man, beggar man, thief, doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief? We all wonder what happens to the kids we can't forget.

Mahmoud, I hope it all worked out okay. This one's for you. •



VALDINE CIWKO got her teaching degree in Ottawa at age 40 and taught in Vancouver until she retired in 2018. The Mahmoud Trilogy was originally written for a humour course as part of her Masters degree in Curriculum Studies at UBC. She is currently working on a memoir with the title **Shirt Stories**.

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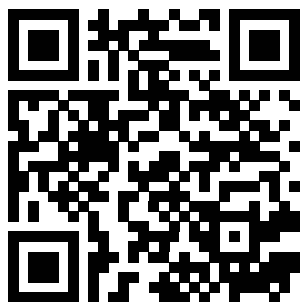
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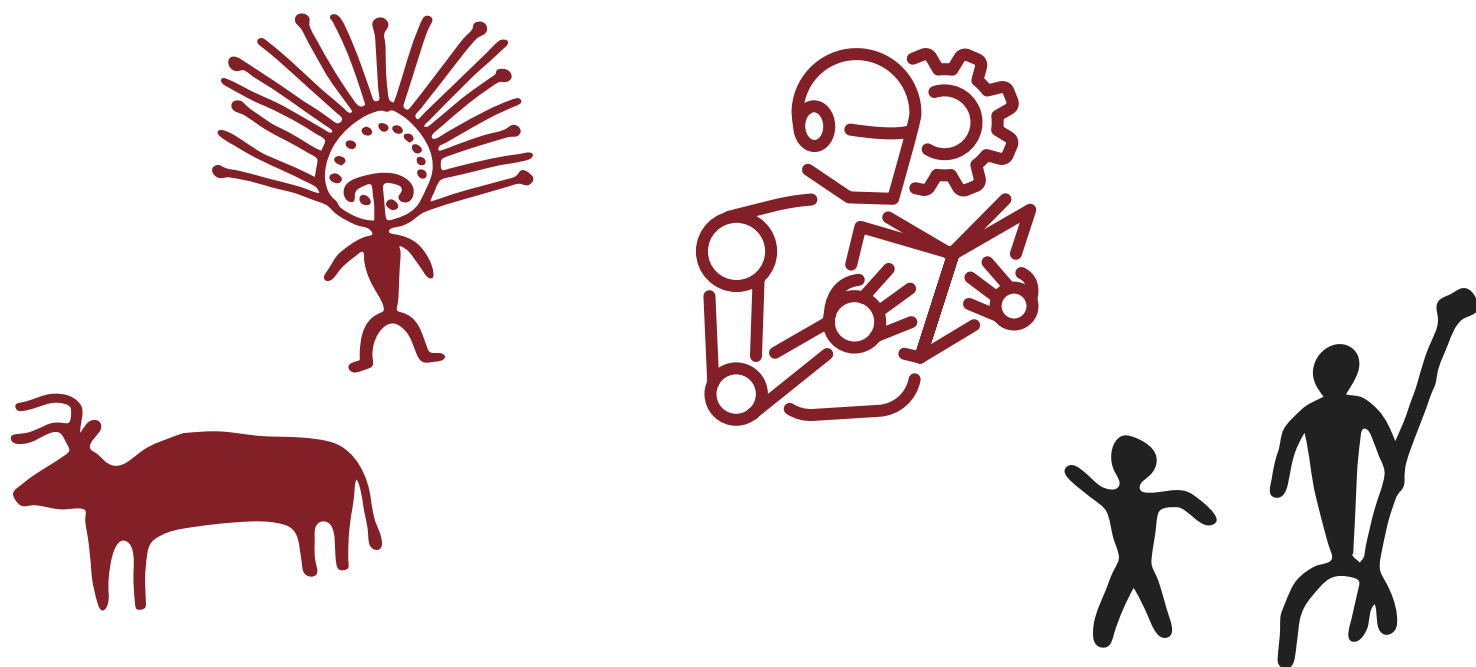
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EDUCATION FROM THE STONE AGE TO AI

KEYNOTE MESSAGE AT THE BCRTA 2025 CONFERENCE

BY CRAWFORD KILIAN



Those of us now of retirement age have lived through some of the most dramatic changes education has ever seen, and I know I'm not the only teacher to retire while mumbling "What the hell was that all about?"

When I started teaching in 1967, high tech in education was the overhead projector and the

dittograph. Before I left teaching, I was designing online courses and writing a textbook on how to write for websites. I retired in 2008, just before the iPhone hit the classrooms, and now our young colleagues are wrestling with AI.

I'll come back to AI, but first I want to talk a little about my post-teaching retirement. It's

been said that going to college seriously interferes with one's reading, and so does teaching. Once I was safely retired, I started reading a lot. I was beginning to look for writers with a different take on both history and the present. The history I'd been brought up on didn't explain how a half-century of ever-expanding education in North America could have resulted in the early 21st century as we have experienced it.

So I found writers like Kurt Andersen whose book, *Evil Geniuses: The Unmaking of America* documented the neoliberal takeover of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. That explained a lot about why education was chronically underfunded, because the neoliberals didn't want public institutions to succeed.

I read *The Nutmeg's Curse*, by Amitabh Ghosh, which traced the origins of capitalism to the trade policies of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, who worked for the Dutch East India Company in the 17th century. His thesis was that there is no trade without war, and no war without trade.

I also read Ghosh's *Smoke and Ashes*, about the opium trade in China and how it became the foundation of some of the greatest American fortunes.

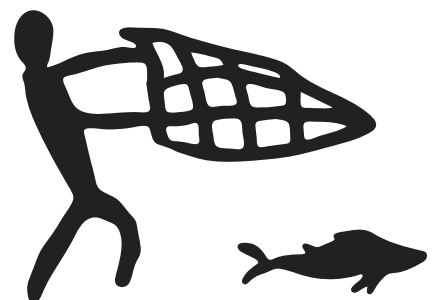
And I read David Graeber and David Wengrow's remarkable book *The Dawn of Everything*, which invites us to consider that our Stone Age ancestors

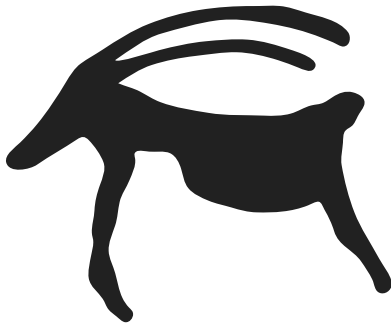
were just as smart as we are, and probably smarter. Moreover, Graeber and Wengrow argue that we weren't just generic hunters and gatherers for 200,000 years. Instead, we lived in many different kinds of society, from authoritarian horror shows to egalitarian democracies.

That led me to think about my own education in 1940s California. The history we were taught started with Christopher Columbus and segued rapidly to the triumph of Europe over peoples of which we knew little and cared less. They were savages whose function was to bite the dust when shot off their horses by the brave pioneers sheltered by their circled wagons.

I recall learning in Grade 3 or 4 about the Yang-Na, a tribe living in the Los Angeles region who came under the control of Spanish priests working the California missions. But I didn't learn their fate until I was retired, when I read a book, *Eternity Street* about the early days of Los Angeles. It mentioned in passing that the Yang-Na were allowed to get drunk on Saturdays; then they were arrested and auctioned off for a week's slave labour until the next Saturday rolled around. The Yang-Na effectively vanished in an 1862 smallpox epidemic that raged up and down the west coast; here in B.C., a third of the 60,000 Indigenous people living on the coast died of smallpox within a year or two.

“The history we were taught started with Christopher Columbus and segued rapidly to the triumph of Europe over peoples of which we knew little and cared less...”





“Even the smallest hunter-gatherer group would have had a full stock of stories, songs, mythologies, and heads full of useful knowledge acquired from parents and relatives...”

Well, why hadn't we learned that in school? Very simply, doing so would have turned us from the heroes of our own story to the villains in an Indigenous tragedy. Seventy-five years later, the Trump government is busy literally whitewashing the facts we now know about American history, trying to take Americans back to the sanitized mythology I was taught.

Now one effect of mythology is that it doesn't encourage close analysis of mythic figures; they're gods or demons or superhumans, simplified for storytelling purposes. And the effect of the mythology I learned in school all those decades ago was that I didn't really think much about the preliterate people who preceded us. The real action, the real interest, was in the farming peoples who developed writing to support a modern hierarchical state, complete with kings, priests, and warriors.

Writing was the big breakthrough that permitted the creation of modern states. It enabled rulers to assess their own resources and to allocate them to ensure the strength of the state. That required a literate class, and that required education. The Sumerians invented the first classroom as an administratively convenient way to teach groups of children. Other agricultural states, like those of ancient China, seem to have independently invented the classroom for similar reasons.

And that led me to ask myself a question. If the Sumerians and Chinese taught children with methods we would recognize, what did the preliterate peoples do?

One thing we know about Stone Age peoples is that their surviving technologies, in the form of spears, arrowheads, blades and axes, were remarkably conservative. A single style of arrowhead, for example, could be found in sites dated many centuries apart. Then that style would vanish and another would take its place, perhaps introduced by a new people.

We tend to look down on such slow-changing technologies because we're accustomed to new technologies transforming our lives every few years. But to create a single style of arrowhead or spear point, generation after generation, implies extraordinarily good education.

That in turn implies people endowed with high intelligence, excellent language skills, and near-photographic memories.

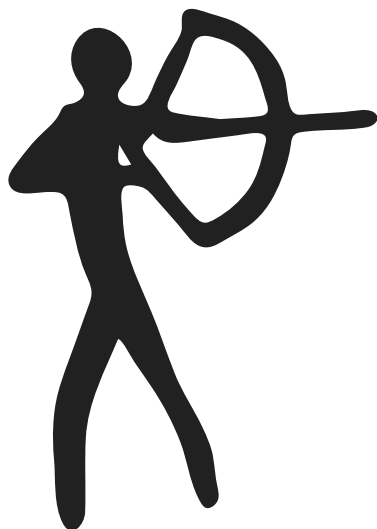
Even the smallest hunter-gatherer group would have had a full stock of stories, songs, mythologies, and heads full of useful knowledge acquired from parents and relatives. They would have spent days and nights talking, laughing, grieving, talking shop, and debating. As a general rule, natural selection

would have favoured the articulate, the observant, and the good explainers.

Now I can imagine a woman in her late teens or early twenties, a skilled hunter, taking her two boy cousins to find a reliable outcrop of flint. She shows them how to identify a promising chunk of rock, how to break it off, and then how to chip flakes off it. She keeps up a running commentary as she fashions a spear point, and challenges the boys to do the same. Clumsily they chip their first crude points, then break more stones to practice on. She encourages them, very likely with easy-to-remember songs or chants about technique.

The cousins listen attentively, memorize the songs and chants, and their next points are better. They can take endless hours to practice because the adults' spear points are good enough to keep them well fed, and good hunters enjoy great prestige and authority. The cousins dream of acquiring such status, and keep practicing while listening to the adults talk around the campfire about how to choose the right stick for a shaft, how to butcher prey, how to preserve the hide and use hand axes or blades to dismember the carcass.

By the time the cousins are young men, their mentor may be dead, but they have learned all she had to teach them and they are now hunters the group can rely on.



They are also reliable teachers, teaching their children as they themselves were taught. At night, around the campfire, they talk about their aunt, the great huntress, and how well she fed her people. The children listen, and remember. In a few generations she will be a goddess to whom hunters pray for success.

The more I've learned about the preliterate peoples, the more it's clear that they were in general highly intelligent, highly articulate, and good listeners. Their memories were excellent, and they were very observant.

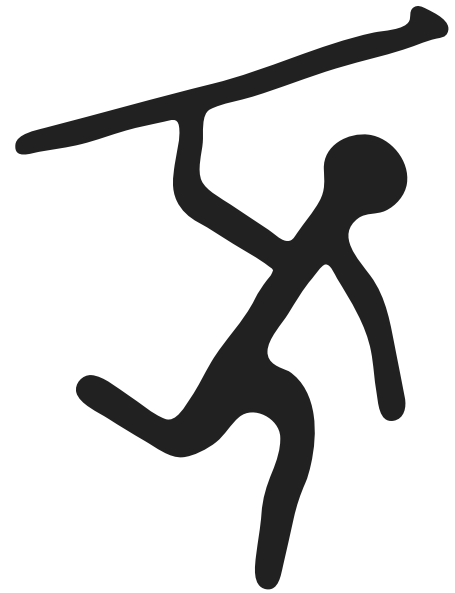
Some at least must have been able to do complex mathematics in their heads. And they could operate not just in little hunter-gatherer bands, but in elaborate agricultural societies as well.

So someone in Mexico 9,000 years ago noticed a plant called teosinte, and thought it might be made a more useful food resource. So they cultivated it through generations, passing their knowledge to their children around the campfire. And eventually they produced what we now call corn or maize. We are the unwitting beneficiaries of generations of ancient Mexican genetic engineers.

Or consider Poverty Point, in Louisiana, an enormous system of earthworks built between 1,700 BCE and 1,100 BCE—six centuries. Something induced the hunter-gatherers living along the Mississippi River to gather in what is now Louisiana and build a kind of settlement and ceremonial centre. Whatever they got from it, it seems to have been carried from generation to generation; each generation evidently thought it was worthwhile work and brought up the next generation to continue it. As a functioning culture, Poverty Point seems to have collapsed at about the same time that Troy fell.

And here's an example from Canada. In 1988, archaeologists were working in downtown Winnipeg, in an area known as The Forks. Two elders approached the archaeologists and told them that the site was famous for an event in the year 1285. A drought had been afflicting much of central North America, and that had led to damaging wars between the peoples. So a conference was called involving at least 10,000 people from nine different

“Preliterate peoples, operating in multiple languages, could convene and conduct an international conference and bring it to a successful conclusion...”



cultures, and in 1285 they had met at The Forks to work out a peace treaty.

Working the site, the archaeologists found pottery shards from nine distinctive Indigenous cultures, dated to just the time the elders said the conference had taken place. The story had then been handed down for 700 years, an example of how preliterate peoples, operating in multiple languages, could convene and conduct an international conference and bring it to a successful conclusion.

I could go on, but I hope I've made my point: preliterate societies were skilled at teaching and learning. The arrival of Europeans, especially in the Americas, was a catastrophe. European diseases like smallpox and measles spread on Indigenous trade routes, far ahead of the Europeans themselves. The high fatality rates shattered Indigenous communities, depriving the survivors of the practical knowledge and political wisdom that had passed down through generations.

The agricultural societies of Asia and the Middle East, meanwhile, had been shaping themselves into something like modern states. The sheer numbers of people that could be supported by farming required a small class of accountants and record-keepers to keep track of food supplies, taxes, and men available for military service. The accountants were often priests, acting with divine authority to determine the bottom line.

Someone had to educate that class, and here's where classrooms in Sumeria and China come in. They created a literate managerial class to help run a hierarchical society, and no better way has emerged in 4,000 years. Most societies since then have done the same, expanding formal education to meet the needs of church and state. Not until the 19th century was the idea of free public education actually adopted in North America. And right from the start, it was seen as a path to social mobility.

Public education turned out to be a virtuous cycle. Literate kids created a demand for printed news and entertainment. Even the penny-dreadfuls and dime novels of the late 19th century offered thrills and interesting ideas to the young people who could read them.

Strikingly, print also encouraged the rebirth of oral culture. It had never really gone away, but it was the culture of the lower classes. Huckleberry Finn is a kind of homage to that culture: Huckleberry's Pap is a foul-tempered illiterate, and Huckleberry's language is no better than his—but Huckleberry shows that the American oral vernacular is capable of creating a detailed and nuanced narrative.

As well, oral culture flourished in the middle classes. Popular writers like Charles Dickens published their novels first in instalments, and when the latest instalment arrived on a ship from Britain, families would rush home and someone, usually the

father or mother, would read it to the enthralled family. For that matter, Dickens and many authors went on stage to read from their written works.

The print culture of the 18th and 19th centuries of course was the result of the printing press, which opened literacy to a far broader population. Printing was an enormous cultural shock, and it took centuries to assimilate its effects. In the 20th and 21st centuries, more shocks were to arrive.

Now I'm going to launch us from the conquest of the Americas to the middle of the 20th century. The Second World War has ended in victory for the Americans and their allies, a victory thanks in large part to education. Armies have always been schools as well, but the armies that won the war were among the finest educational institutions the world had ever seen, and their graduates were masters of logistics, technology, and a range of skills that would serve them well in peacetime.

One of the first demands that Canadians and Americans made on their peacetime governments was better access to education. They wanted their kids to get at least through high school, and if possible go on to some kind of post-secondary. Veterans, most of them old enough to remember the Dirty Thirties very well, wanted more education, and got it. In both Canada and the U.S., community colleges and public universities found themselves teaching teenagers and people in the 30s in the same classroom, and the demand did not ease.

If anything, it increased as young families began the baby boom, which lasted for 20 years. Free public education had been theoretically available for many years, but in practice many children had had to drop out for economic reasons—especially in the Depression. Some of those dropouts had made up for it by going back to school after the war, and all parents wanted a better life for their kids than they had known. Education was critical, and dropouts were considered failures of the system.

So political pressure was intense to build more schools, more colleges, more universities. They still offered some trades training, but the emphasis was always on college prep—getting the kids ready for post-secondary and upper-middle-class professional occupations.

To give you a sense of how rapid the growth in education was, I consulted Perplexity.ai, an AI search engine, and asked it what percentage of Canadians were post-secondary graduates in 1950, 1960, and 2000. Perplexity told me that just 6% of Canadians were enrolled in postsecondary in 1950, so the percentage of graduates would have been somewhere between 5 and 8%.

In 1960, 11.9% of the population aged 15 or more had graduated from some kind of post-secondary, with men slightly ahead at 12.5% and women at 11.2%. In 2000, 38.2% had a post-secondary credential, and this year, 2025, 63% of Canadians aged 15 to 64 have achieved a post-secondary credential—the highest proportion in the G7 nations.

I was born in 1941, which makes me a war baby, and it was my demographic that benefited the most from the education boom. While we were still in high school, the Russians put a satellite into space and a scare into western governments. Because of a perceived education gap between us and the Soviet Russians, governments poured money into education at all levels. That meant that kids like me could take advantage of more scholarships to more universities, and we graduated just as the first baby boomers were entering high school in the early 1960s.

I started my teaching career in 1967 at the old VCC King Edward campus, which was then just two years old, and moved in the following year to brand-new Capilano College on the North Shore. We didn't know it yet, but the baby boom was over. But who cared? The last of the boomers wouldn't arrive in our classrooms until the mid-1980s. So students arrived in their hundreds and then in their thousands.

The education they got was classic Sumerian style: at VCC, in a repurposed high school building, the desks were still on rails. They got what I learned to call "full frontal teaching": someone standing in front of them, lecturing, explaining, and scrawling on a chalkboard, just as we war babies had been taught.

But something else was going on that would make our students very different from ourselves.

Movies had been a staple of cultural life from the early years of the century. Every home had had a radio since the 1930s, and by the early 1950s Canada was broadcasting TV (a lot of Canadians living near the border were already tuning in to American stations). By the 1960s, movies, radio and TV were beginning to replicate the collective experiences our Stone Age ancestors had, sitting around their campfire: they were watching and hearing stories about heroes, about the great forces that ruled the world, and about how to enjoy life.

Print-based education found itself competing against a revived oral education, complete with singing and dancing and dramatic stories. I could see the kids mentally changing channels right in my classroom, looking for something, anything, more interesting than me explaining essay structure or subject-verb agreement.

Eventually I adapted my teaching to include lots of jokes, and my classes generally went well. But in hindsight I can see my teaching was most effective when I sat down with individual students and went over their writing with them, one to one. I didn't know it, but I was teaching them to chip flints into arrowheads.

Meanwhile, demographics began to catch up with us. As the baby boomers tapered off in the late 1970s and early 80s, married women began to turn up in growing numbers. The reason was simple: stagflation and then recession meant that their households needed a second income just to stay above water. We also began to see younger women in previously all-male bastions like business management. And everyone was more serious about their education because so many college grads were already out in the labour force that a diploma or degree was becoming just a lottery ticket: it might get you an interview, but it wasn't a guaranteed job anymore.

At some point government funding for education began to fall behind the demand. Tuition began to rise. International students, a novelty in the 1980s, became essential in the 1990s. By paying the full costs of tuition, the internationals subsidized Canadian resident students. A lot of school districts began to recruit internationals as well. At the post-

secondary level, we began aggressively recruiting students in Japan, South Korea, and China.

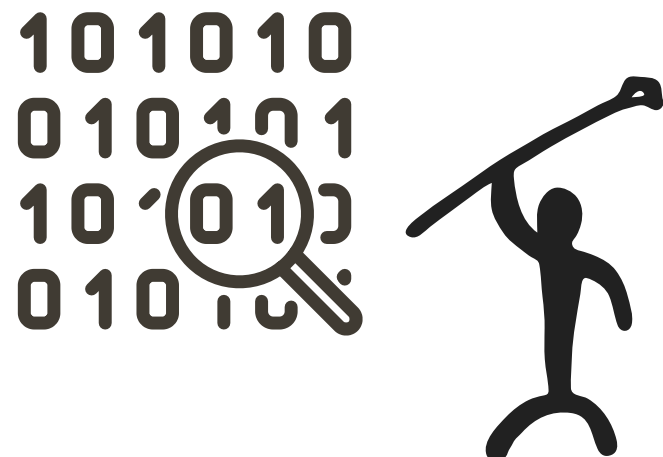
And a new competitor for student attention made itself known. In a Sumerian classroom, it's just the teacher and the students. In Canadian classrooms, it's now the teacher, the students, and all the internet. By the time I retired in 2008, most of my students had laptops. I tried to exploit them by challenging students to find information online instead of in their heads. The results were doubtful, at best.

It was even worse in 2010 when I went back into the classroom at another college as a semester-long substitute. The prof I was sitting in for had stipulated no smartphones in class, and trying to enforce his rule nearly ruined the semester for the students and for me. This was three years after Steve Jobs had introduced the iPhone, and my students were already deeply addicted.

I was glad when the semester ended and I could go back to walking my dogs and googling information for writing my articles in The Tyee.

And now we've got AI. I explored ChatGPT soon after it came out and wrote a Tyee piece about it. And I will confide to you what I didn't say in The Tyee: its first replies read like the quality bullshit that any good English major can produce on demand.

But it also made me consider some of the issues I've been discussing this morning. Writing was a way of fixing information so that any literate person could access it. But as we came to depend on it, our

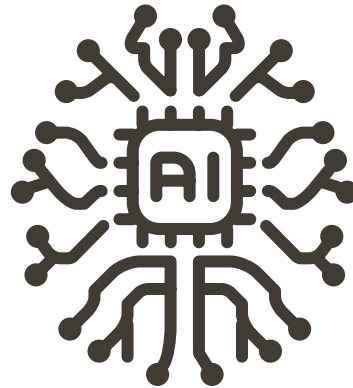


powers of memorization began to fade. Oral culture survived among the illiterate, but literacy offered a way out of poverty and eventually we all took it. With the loss of oral culture we also lost our powers of speech and argument. From Aristotle's time to our own, rhetoric has been a technical subject for specialists, not a means of expression for everyone.

And now artificial intelligence seems poised to make natural intelligence obsolete. Computers in the classroom taught us to think less about the right answers, and more about the right questions. Now, if you ask an AI chatbot, "What are the best ways to phrase a question for you?"—you'll get a detailed answer, and perhaps some follow-up questions you haven't thought to ask.

At this point you may be expecting some pessimistic conclusion, but I don't have one. Actually, I owe you thanks for inviting me to talk about this, because as I've put this speech together I've come to understand something.

I mentioned our ancestors teaching each other in small groups, and doing it so well that given technologies could be passed down intact through many generations. And I mentioned how at night they must have gathered around a campfire, talking



and singing and arguing, passing along stories about their parents and grandparents and great-great grandparents; any further back and the ancestors became mythical superhumans or even gods. That image, of a collective around a campfire, teaching and learning, has stuck with me.

And while writing this speech, I've come to realize that our modern media function the same way. Instead of a campfire, though, we have a movie screen, or a radio, or a laptop, or a smartphone. The screen is our campfire, and the collective who gather around the screen are teaching and learning all the time. No doubt our ancestors taught and learned a lot of nonsense along with how to chip a flint arrowhead, and the same is true of us.

Nevertheless, if we can find the right questions, we may be able to stumble our way to better answers, and to assimilate AI into human life instead of merely obeying its dictates. Our ancestors around the campfire talked their way out of some very bad situations by drawing on their collective knowledge. I believe our children will be able to do the same. •



Born in New York City in 1941, **CRAWFORD KILIAN** grew up in Los Angeles and Mexico City. After graduating from Columbia University in 1962, he served in the US Army. Moving with his wife to Vancouver in 1967, he began a 41-year career teaching in BC community colleges; he retired in 2008. Crawford has published over 20 books, both fiction and nonfiction. Most recent is the third edition of *Go Do Some Great Thing: The Black Pioneers of British Columbia* (2022). He also wrote an education column for the Vancouver Province from 1983-1994, as well as publishing articles in other newspapers and magazines. Since 2003 he has been a contributing editor of *The Tyee*, a Vancouver online magazine. He lives in North Vancouver with his wife Alice and their Aussie shepherd Perri.

Our Schoolhouse Heritage Project

BY SHIRLEY BLACKSTAFF AND HILDA MCDONALD



Left: Opening day. Photo by Shirley Blackstaff. Right: Schoolhouse interior. Photo by Doug Currie.

Something magical happens when you visit the 'Wheels of the Past' Heritage Village, located on Shirley and Harry Blackstaff's property south of Ladysmith, BC. As the highway noise fades and the roads narrow, you enter a special place. Modern-day life dissolves as you step back in time. It is an experience of being alive within a heritage, cultural, and natural space that is itself alive, so it was the perfect place to carry on the purpose of the Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society (CVSHS), which is to collect and preserve past educational history for present and future generations.

In 2012, CVSHS members embarked on our first project, which was to honour former schools with signage in the shape of a school bell placed at or near the original sites of the former schools. We documented over 200 schools, both public and private, dating back to 1849. We also collected hundreds of archival records and transferred them

to the established fonds at the Cowichan Valley Museum Archives. Our findings were publicized in newspaper articles, Postscript magazine (Winter 2024, Spring 2025), on our website (cowichanvalleyschoolsheritagesociety.com), and in a 40-page booklet "Cowichan Valley Historic Schools Remembrance Project".

For our second project, we chose a one-room schoolhouse, and on a lovely sunny day, September 14, 2024, CVSHS members and over 600 people from our local communities attended the Official Opening of the schoolhouse at the Heritage Village. This schoolhouse resembles many of the features of the old Koksilah School and had their 100-year-old desks, books, and royalty pictures on display, so we were honoured to have six of the original Koksilah Historical Society members join our celebration.

Our members continue to work together to show the development of education through

textbooks and artifacts. CVSHS actively collects historical documents, textbooks, photos and artifacts related to Cowichan Valley & District schools.

Volunteers play an important role, and we thank all the volunteers who made the one-room schoolhouse building authentic and the Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society members who assisted with the interior décor and continue to organize donated school books and artifacts.

Recently, we received an encouraging visit from the Nanaimo Ladysmith Retired Teachers Heritage Committee, who were thrilled with our efforts in building a one-room school house and setting it up with local artifacts and books. They offered to assist us in the future with our preservation and cataloging processes.

Our future plans include having an educational program in the one-room schoolhouse to share the history and activities of past school days and to provide heritage, cultural, and nature opportunities at the site to enrich our field trip programs.

During the fall of 2025, we will assemble a PacRim Log Structures kit for an inclusive, accessible washroom. When we have the funds and necessary volunteer assistance, we'd like to add a bell tower and cedar siding to the one-room schoolhouse.

When we have everything in place, we will be reaching out to homeschool educators, public and private school teachers, and groups interested in educational field-trip programs that share the history and activities of past school days through a variety of activities, further fulfilling CVSHS's goals.

HERITAGE AWARD

On February 22, 2025, the CVSHS was a recipient of a 2025 Heritage Award from the Ladysmith & District Historical Society for preserving an experience of early one-room schools by recreating a building similar to the original Koksilah School. The Award plaque and our framed acknowledgement of Koksilah Historical Society's generous donations and our volunteer appreciation statement are on view in the schoolhouse. •

SHIRLEY BLACKSTAFF a retired elementary teacher, lives in Ladysmith, BC with her husband Harry. They have created on their property a Heritage Village, Interpretive Forest Trail and Nature Centre. Their one-room school house is the site of the Cowichan Valley Schools Heritage Society's second Educational Preservation Project.

HILDA MCDONALD is a graduate of Malaspina University College, and has a double major in creative writing and anthropology. These interests help Hilda serve her community as a volunteer.



Volunteers make things happen. Photos by Shirley Blackstaff

DID YOU KNOW?

FASCINATING HEALTH FACTS

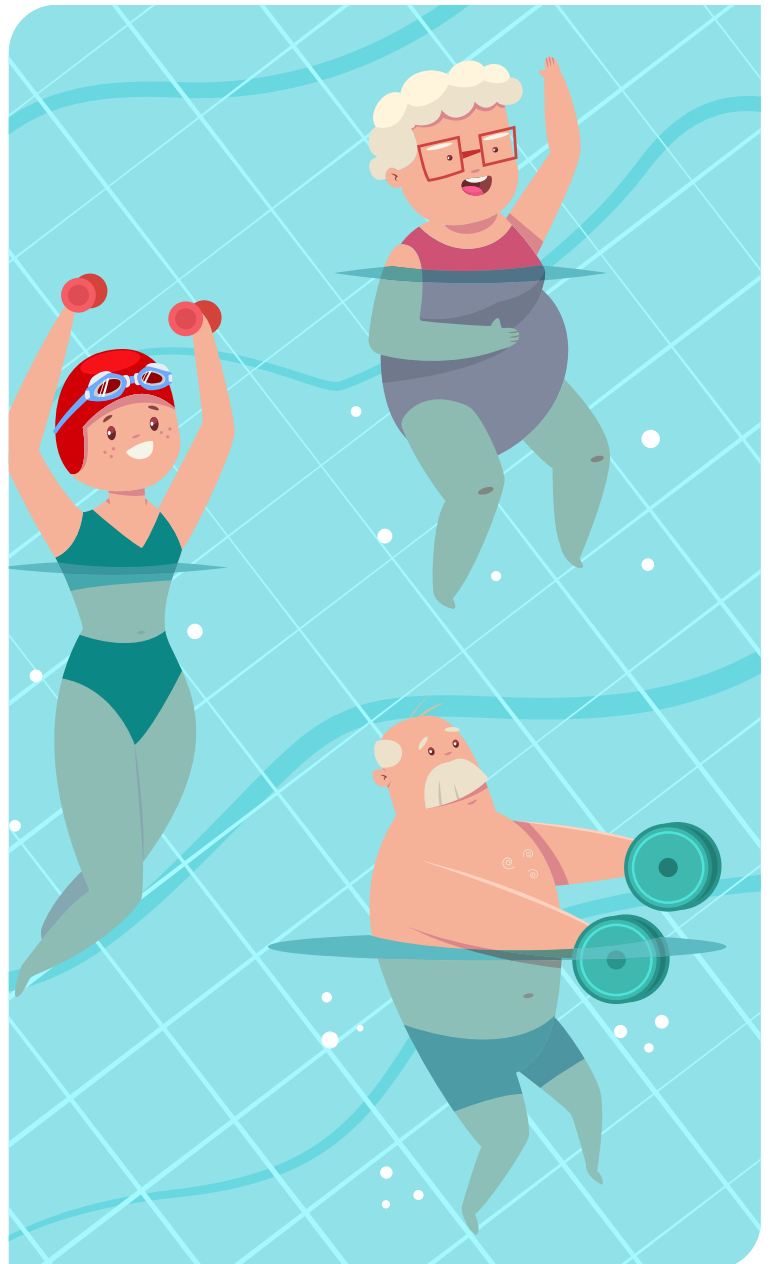
BY PAT THIESEN

POOLED BENEFITS

Doing laps in your lane of the pool is wonderful exercise if you are a confident swimmer, but for many of us, that is not an option. But other water-based activities can provide the benefits.

Water is many times denser than air, which means that even when walking forward through water, the muscles have to work much harder to fight the resistance of all dimensions of the water: vertically, horizontally, and rotationally. Yet, movements done in the water are less taxing on the joints and bones because water reduces the load of body weight, hence exercising in water is beneficial for the elderly due to their loss of flexibility and the tendency to feel achy and “stiff”. Try some simple exercises on your own: running - whether in deeper or shallow water, pool-edge push-ups, squat jumps, pool side-to-side shuffling, scissor kicks, and even jumping jacks.

Or engage in a group aquacise class with rhythmic music and direction from a pool-side instructor. Many municipalities and cities offer the use of their swimming pools. Joining an aqua-size class in your neighbourhood pool is a true opportunity to build lean muscle, burn fat, and help reach your fitness goals.



Search on “aquarobics benefits Seniors”

I DARE YOU TO TRY THIS IN THE LIBRARY

Research suggests that we may be missing out by reading only with the voices inside our minds. The ancient art of reading aloud, and of being read to aloud, has benefits for adults, including helping improve our memories and strengthening emotional bonds between people. A researcher and psychologist at the University of Waterloo, Colin MacLeod, has shown that people remember words and texts better if they read them aloud. Even just silently mouthing the words makes them more memorable, though to a lesser extent. Other modes of vocalizing texts, such as reading aloud loudly and singing, have even stronger memory effects.

For many, reading aloud brings joy, comfort and a sense of belonging. Some people in these studies felt that when someone read aloud to them, they had given or been given a gift of their time and attention, and would remember those situations with a great degree of accuracy. Some read to friends who were sick or dying, as “a way of escaping together somewhere.”



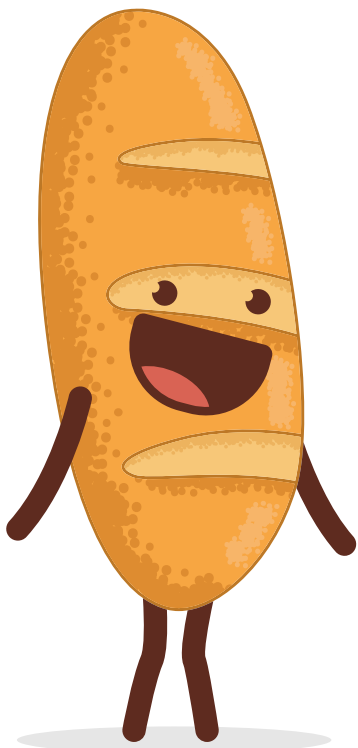
<https://uwaterloo.ca/news/news/study-finds-reading-information-aloud-yourself-improves>

GOOD NEWS ABOUT ANCIENT BREAD

Until the the 1800s, sourdough, made with whole grain flours and naturally occurring yeasts and lactic acid bacteria was the main type of leavened bread consumed worldwide. There is a renewed interest in the health benefits of this traditional loaf.

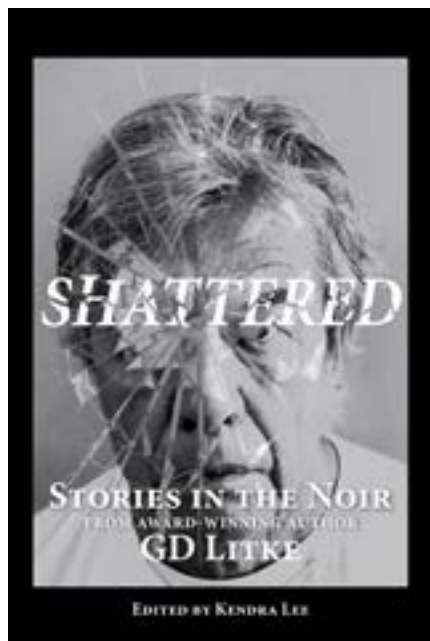
Some widely-accepted benefits to eating sourdough:

- The fermentation process helps make calcium, sodium, magnesium, iron, and zinc more available to the body and increases the levels of folates and antioxidants.
- The bacteria-yeast composition will start to break down the starches found in the grains before it even reaches your stomach, making it much easier on your gut.
- Whole grain sourdough bread is not gluten-free, but one study found that sourdough consumption might help improve the digestion of gluten because the yeasts and bacteria “predigest” some gluten, and the fiber content is helpful to your gut, too.
- Overall, consumption of whole grain sourdough bread is related to slower aging via its positive effects in slowing the onset of diabetes, coronary diseases, and cancer.



books OF NOTE

Books of Note features publications by BCRTA members.
To have your book included, send the details to postscript@bcrt.ca



SHATTERED: STORIES IN THE NOIR by G.D. Litke

Love, betrayal, and survival collide in this mesmerizing collection of short stories where intimate vows unravel, where loyalty turns lethal and where every choice becomes a matter of life, death or something darker.

Peel back the layers of what binds us together and what tears us apart, what we wish for and what we get.

Darkly lyrical and unflinchingly human, these tales prove that sometimes the end of the world starts in the heart.

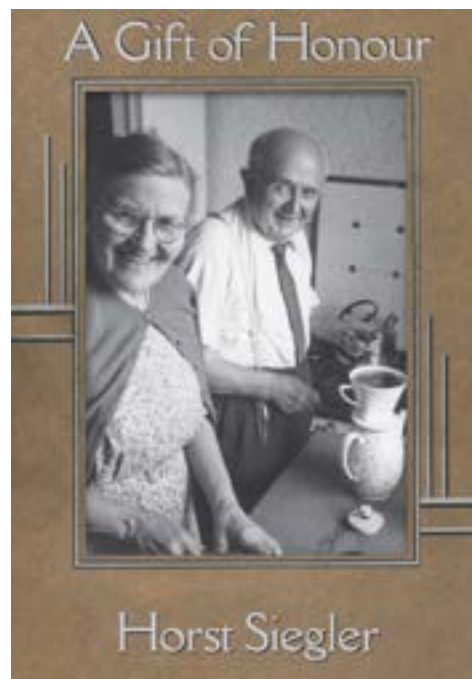
Available at [Amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca)

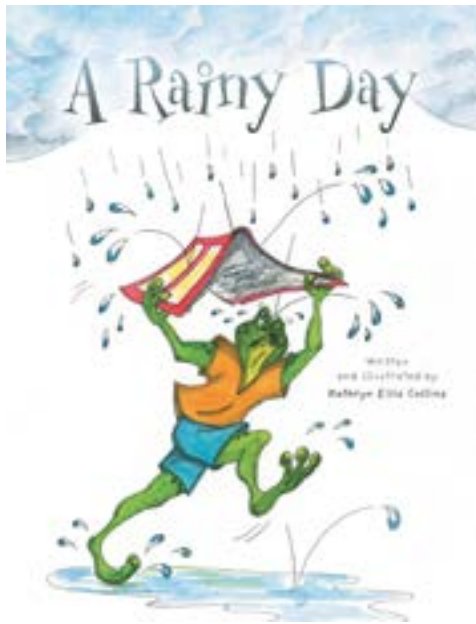
A GIFT OF HONOUR by Horst Siegler

“Is it possible to atone for the mistakes we make when we are young?” Sometimes, if we are fortunate, what we thought of as mistakes, return later in life, not to haunt us, but to offer us the redemption we seek.

It has been a challenge to put this story to paper, not least because it has involved a lifelong search for meaning gathered from conflicting oral histories, text-book accounts of a century of turmoil, and archival sources, many of them both contradictory and puzzling. A family history is rarely a continuous narrative. Rather, it is a series of disparate memories featuring characters and events that have shaped our lives, often separated by vast stretches of time and space, seemingly unconnected. Yet often they surprise us when viewed in retrospect, with a story that can offer us the peace of mind we seek.

Available at [Amazon.ca](https://www.amazon.ca)





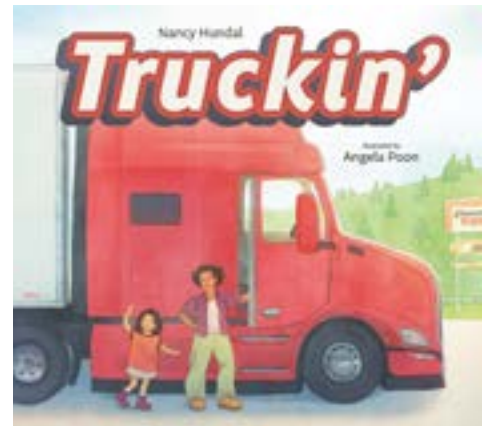
A RAINY DAY by Kathryn Ellis Collins

A little green frog is disappointed that he cannot go outside to play with his friends because it is raining. As the rain continues his patience decreases and frustrations grow bigger. After much complaining and self-pity he remembers words he read in the school library that totally changed his attitude to one of acceptance and he is inspired to find a positive way to spend the rainy day. This transformation will enable him to solve future problems that will surely come to pass.

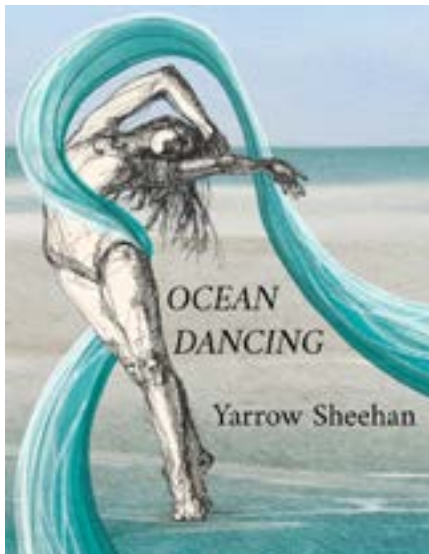
Available online and from Friesen Press – friesenpress.com.

TRUCKIN' by Nancy Hundal

On a long-haul trucking trip with her mom, a girl watches the world go by from the high window of the truck's cab. As the 18-wheeler eats up the road, the girl plays Punch Buggy, Go Fish, and I Spy to pass the time. Soon, a giant swerve tells her they're pulling into a truck stop for lunch, to use the dirty bathroom, and to take a few laps around the truck to wake up their legs. At bedtime, the girl falls asleep in the cozy bed behind the driver's seat, while her mom drives for a few more hours into the dark night.



Truckin' is available at Vancouver Kidsbooks, Indigo/Chapters and by order from any local bookstore.



OCEAN DANCING by Yarrow Sheehan

Ocean Dancing is a lyrical and unflinching memoir by Yarrow Sheehan that traces a life shaped by the sea, by silence, and ultimately, by the transformative power of storytelling. Through a mosaic of vivid, interconnected essays, Sheehan invites readers into a deeply personal journey of resilience, reckoning, and reclamation.

Available at Amazon.ca.

GAMES LADY

ROUND IV

BY PAT THIESEN

Now that the time for walking in the sunshine has come to a close, it's time to focus on some of the other wonderful experiences we can have with one another, often prefaced by "Do you want to play a game?" I've collected a few favourites, some newer and a true old timer. Have some fun with these entertaining yet inexpensive games.



BEARS AND BEES

Age: 10+. **Players:** 2 to 5. **About** 20-40 min.
\$25 or less.

Gameplay: This game uses small hexagonal cards which adjoin one to another to create a bee hive. The Queen Bee card is on the table to start the game, with honeycomb, drone, worker, flower, and bear cards to be placed next to one another creating a bee hive. The goal is to get rid of all your cards by connecting them. Once someone has used all their cards, the other players tally the points from their cards and record the score. Play 3 rounds. Lowest score wins.



OLÉ! GUACAMOLE

Age: 10+. **Players** 2-8 (best 5). **Time per round:** 15 minutes. **Less than** \$20 CAD

Gameplay: Players take turns saying a word that does not contain any of the letters visible on the table, and which is related to the previous word! The difficulty increases, because another 1 or 2 letters are added to each turn. On each turn, the active player draws a card showing a letter and puts it on the table next to any previous ones. The other players now have 12 seconds to find a word thematically linked to the one told by the previous player which doesn't contain any of the letters

shown on the cards already drawn. If they succeed, it is the next player's turn. But if they fail to do so, they take all the cards drawn so far and the next player starts over. The game ends when all cards have been drawn. Person with fewest cards wins.

Fact: Awarded a Star from 2023 Games for Tweens by Astra Play Awards, but fun for everyone!

Fun: Shouting out “Guacamole” as time expires (12 seconds) before players can come up with a word.



CHRONOLOGY

Age: 14+. **Players:** 2-8. **Duration:** about 30 minutes
Cost: Less than \$30.

Gameplay: Each player selects a card, reading out the historical event and the year associated with it. That card begins the player's personal chronologically accurate timeline. Player A then reads the next card for the person on their left, Player B. Player B must then decide if the event took place before or after the one in front of them. If correct, that card is placed in position in B's timeline. Player B then selects an event card for Player C. Should Player C answer incorrectly, player D has a chance to respond. Play continues until all have had a chance to place a second event on their timeline. For the next rounds, the decision will be made whether the event happened before, after or in between the dates in their timeline. The first player to reach a correct 10-card time-line wins.

Fun: Realizing that your timeline is totally different from others and sometimes your decisions are easy or hard depending on the spacing between events in front of you. This is a favourite game of BCRTA's current board members.



SLAMWICH

Age: 6+. **Players:** 2 to 6. **About 20 minutes.** A fun little game I've played with my granddaughter. Less than \$20.

Gameplay: This is a fast-paced game that has players flipping over their cards to build “slamwiches”, 2 of the same cards separated by a different one or double-deckers, 2 of the same cards in a row. Should either event occur, the first player to slap the pile wins all the cards in the pile. Should a “thief” card appear, the first to say “Stop Thief” also wins the pile. Other cards may also appear with varying consequences. The winner is the player who collects all the cards. Awarded a 3-Star (highest rating) Award winner from the Canadian Toy Testing Council.

Fun: Trying not to be outplayed by eagle-eyed, fast-reacting youngsters!



A resident of Delta and former BCRTA director, **PAT THIESEN** is a frequent contributor to our magazine. As a Grade 6 teacher she loved to introduce her kids to Math Games Friday.

WHAT THE HECK IS A REPAIR CAFÉ?

BY ROB HOLLINS

When something in your life breaks or stops working there is often a strong urge to heave it into the waste bin. Metro Vancouver waste is trucked to the landfill in Cache Creek, or south to Washington state at a cost of \$30 million a year.

There is a better way – take it to a Repair Café!

Repair Cafés are run by groups of talented, creative and caring folk who meet with clients who bring broken items that just might be fixed. Our success rate is around 60%. We enjoy meeting people and fixing things.

Our Repair Café belongs to the movement started 15 years ago in The Netherlands. You can view the Repair Café International web page (repaircafe.org) and click the visit tab get an interactive world map and find a Repair Café near you.

After the COVID lockdown, the computer recycler FREEGEEKVANCOUVER closed. I had volunteered there a lot and its closure left me at a loss. I had found the Repair Cafés in South-Surrey-White-Rock, Langley (LEPS) and SPEC in Vancouver, and these kept me somewhat occupied. But there was nothing like those RC's in my North Surrey community. So I set about to create one.

Our local Guildford Public Library in Surrey offered support with a meeting room, publicity, printing and advertising. I bought a membership in the Repair Café organization in the Netherlands and they provided materials and checklists for how to begin. The Vancouver Foundation's Neighbourhood Small Grant program provided funding for the new venture and I established an email address, surreybcrepaircafe@gmail.com.

I quickly found many kindred fixers and helpers. Our first RC was in September 2024. We have done RC's on the third Tuesday evening of each month since then.

STORIES FROM THE REPAIR CAFÉ

A client brought a battered and dirty toaster oven to my table. It heated but the timer wasn't working. He was tired of burned food.



This timer has a balance wheel movement like a wind up clock. The normal tick-tick-tick just wasn't happening. Carefully opening the timer found a dead earwig caught in the hair spring mechanism.

The insect pieces are on the right of the picture. Re-assembled, the oven was once again working.

North Surrey Repair Café

Do you have skills and are Interested in volunteering? Or need a repair of an item?

surreybcrepaircafe@gmail.com



A client brought in a heavy metal elephant with a broken tusk. The client had previously glued the tusk but the glue just wasn't strong enough. Gluing a previously glued break is tricky.

Our fixer drilled the two parts of the tusk and inserted a small nail for extra strength.

It was then re-glued and splinted for the trip home as the glue cured.



Our fixers are amazingly resourceful people.

They gather clues as they talk with the client about the broken item. They look for damage, wear and burn marks. Figuring out how to open the case can be a big part of the puzzle.

Internet searches for repair information augment the fixer's background knowledge. Defective parts are sourced, ordered and installed.

Every item they work on is an opportunity to learn and become a better fixer.



This tiny, delicate, porcelain dog with puppies was brought in with broken legs. I wondered how I would ever fix this beautiful treasure.

The pieces were so tiny.

We discussed the types of glues I had in my kit: tubes of epoxy, china and glass, contact cement and "crazy" glue.

We decided to use the "crazy" glue because of the fast curing.

Each leg piece was touched with glue and held in place by hand for a count of 60.

Definitely a picture of success!



This retired Home Economics teacher uses her considerable skills to mend and alter many clothing items. Not only does she plan her travels around Repair Café dates, but items are taken home if she needs more time or different materials.

Our fixers rely on our support people.

The welcome desk greets, manages the waiver paperwork, and routes clients to appropriate fixers. Clients return to this desk to hand in completed paperwork.

Other support is found in the wonderful staff in the Guildford Library. I count on their wise and helpful behind the scenes work.

And thank you to Surrey City for your recent generous grant.



RESTORING A PRACTICE OF GIVING

And now I wonder at all the folk who busily fill up bucket lists and/or are addicted to their Netflix etc. subscriptions. Is there a volunteer position where you could continue to do good works?

We retirees are usually financially secure and if our health is good, we are truly blessed. Service organizations like Rotary, Lions, Elks and Oddfellows, used to do an amazing amount of charity work for our communities. They would again welcome your participation. The excuse that, "I gave so much during my teaching career." is not an excuse to let the rest of the world go by. Our world needs our help.

Good fortune in health and wealth should be a spur to each of us to continue giving to our communities. Being active in environmental groups, literacy programs, food banks, coaching a sport, Big Sisters or Brothers is vital and life enriching. I hope your retirement has moments of bliss when you know you have made a difference.

ROB HOLLINS retired from teaching in SD 36 in 2006. He lives and volunteers in Surrey.

THE FIX IS IN (THE CAFÉ)

There are hundreds of Repair Cafés opening around the world. One product successfully repaired can prevent up to 24 kilos of CO² emissions, according to UK researchers.

Typical items that can be repaired:

Electrical

Vacuum, mixer, fan, juicer, blender, popcorn maker, grill, coffee maker, kettle, lamp, toaster oven, Christmas lights, heaters, air filters, drills, saws, sanders, hair dryers and other tools.

Electronic

Radio, stereo, CD player, Bluetooth speakers, laptops.

Mechanical

Chairs, picture frames, bicycles, or other items needing adjustment or where some part is broken and needs glue or another fix to make it usable.

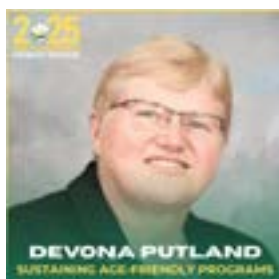
BCRTA PRESENTS

now available to view online

CRAWFORD KILLIAN traces humanity's long journey of learning from prehistoric campfires to digital classrooms and artificial intelligence. Drawing on history, anthropology, and his own decades of teaching, Crawford explores how each new medium — writing, print, film, the internet, and now AI — has transformed how we teach, learn, and think.

DEVONA PUTLAND

explores the Age Friendly movement, building inclusive communities, and aging-in-place in her talk, Sustaining Age-Friendly Programs.



VICKI ROBINSON presents Gift of Knowledge – Steps to Consider before the End, addresses many of the questions that arise in the final chapters of life.

THE 2025 POSTSCRIPT EXCELLENCE AWARDS celebrate the contributions of BCRTA members to our magazine.



bcrta.ca/conference

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PostScript

CARING FOR OUR ENVIRONMENT

PostScript Magazine is part of the Tree-Neutral Printing movement. Thanks to our printer, *Mitchell Press*, and their partner, *Print Releaf*, every copy of PostScript Magazine works to ensure that reforestation projects are undertaken and certified in areas that need it most. The program keeps track of fibre used in the printing process and carbon generated and then initiates planting of trees via certified global reforestation projects to offset all the effects.

Print Releaf sponsors reforestation and carbon storage projects around the world, including the BC's Cariboo, where they are currently reforesting areas with native species like Ponderosa Pine, Western Larch, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir, and Spruce.



CLASSIFIEDS

TRAVEL

DISCOVER CUBA Cuba1tours of Courtenay, BC takes groups to Cuba and offers a safe and fulfilling experience. You will travel from location to location in a modern, comfortable bus with space to relax and enjoy the scenery of the Cuban countryside. All special tours are guided by professionals and your tour guide is with you throughout. Tours are run through Square1travel, Courtenay BC which is a full service BC registered agency.

www.cuba1tours.com

COSTA RICA TRIP January 14 - 26, 2027

BCRTA member Alex Campbell is organizing and leading a group of retirees to sensational Costa Rica.

Alex's been to Costa Rica 21 times and has taken many groups. Please email Alex kocho@shaw.ca if you are interested in taking a no obligation look at the itinerary and trip details.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Open a world of reading to a child and become a volunteer tutor with **ONE TO ONE Literacy**. Learn more at <https://one-to-one.ca/>

Academy Farms in Langley, BC (a bison & water buffalo farm) is seeking volunteers to teach life-skills workshops to vulnerable young adults. Topics include Budgeting, Communication, Goal Setting, Cooking, Computer Skills, and more.

Contact: gabrielle@volken.org | 778-999-4272

BCRTA MEMBER DISCOUNTS

Have you explored the savings?

Endless Savings, Perkopolis, IRIS, HearingLife,
Collette Travel, Trip Merchant and more...

www.bcrta.ca

GROUPS

Do you remember Tinleys? Bobbies? The Ship? Killerton b.b.q? Bene de Cat? Sherry with your tutor on Saturdays? Rowancroft? Then you must have been at St Lukes Exeter. Please contact Bev at bparslowca@yahoo.ca if interested in forming a group.

ACCOMMODATION OFFERED

SUNSHINE COAST 3 bedroom, rustic and cozy waterfront cottage with view and beach. Perfect for retirees and families. Between Gibson and Langdale ferry. April, May, June, Sept, Oct. Contact Barry 250-744-7447 bwrolston@telus.net for information.

NANAIMO - townhouse walking distance to shopping, library, beach, fitness centers, and theaters. Suits single/retired couple. Available Dec. 1st to mid April 2026. Contact mkoski67mv@gmail.com or 250-816-1597 for details and photos.

Rent – April 2026 - Tri Palms Resort, Palm Desert CA
2 bedroom home. This is a 55+ resort with an 18 & 9 hole golf course. Clubhouse with restaurant, bar, billiards room, library, card room, 2 swimming pools, 2 hot tubs, tennis, pickleball, shuffleboard. \$2000 per month plus damage deposit. Nonsmoking, no pets.

barbara_grundy@yahoo.com or call 604 855 5536.

MEXICO - Vidanta weeks at members prices at the most prestigious resort in Mexico. Puerto Vallarta, Nuevo Vallarta, Riviera Mayan, Acapulco. One to 4 weeks available. Call John/ Gillian Goudsward at 604-594-5961 for info and prices.

Heritage house in Alsace-France, Vosges Mountains, three bedrooms, modern kitchen, wifi, located on wine route, close to Germany (Freiburg) and Switzerland (Basel). Partial cleaning included, CA\$850 per week. mano936@gmail.com

MOVING? CHANGED EMAIL?

You can submit a change of address or contact information on our website BCRTA.CA - use the option "UPDATE MY MEMBER INFO" on the top menu!

crossword

Snowbird Migration

By Lynn Hembree

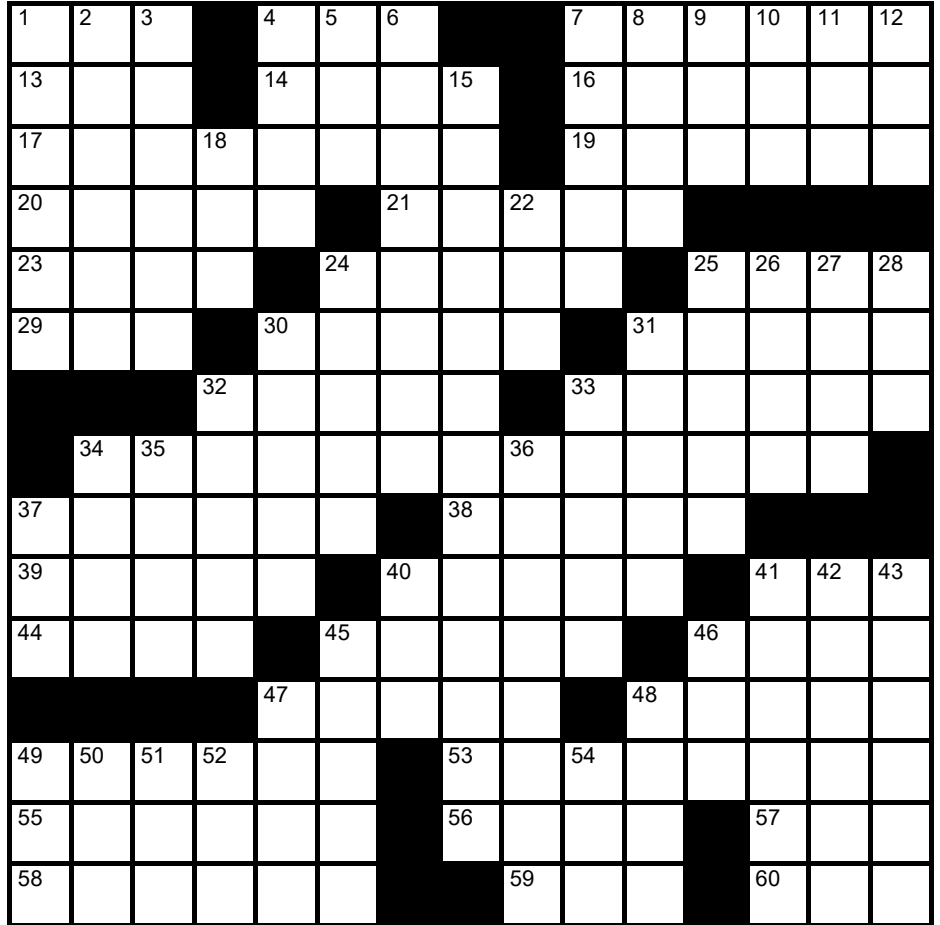
Email: crossword@bcrrta.ca

ACROSS

1. Blazer, e.g.
4. "King ____", 1978 song previewed live on SNL
7. "Please sign on the ____ line."
13. One side of the "Troubles" in Ireland, briefly
14. Dot on a radar screen
16. Tulum lizard
17. Farm workers, often
19. Snowbird destination
20. Broadcasting
21. French public secondary school
23. Ancient aromatic ointment
24. Computer helpers?
25. Strike with a whip
29. Like a fox?
30. ____ Dayan
31. Phil Silvers' character "Ernie"
32. Popular Asian watch brand
33. Type of puzzle or tool
34. Favourite "1959" movie of snowbirds? (4 wds)
37. Like Antarctica
38. Surrounded by water, but smaller than an acre
39. German sausages, briefly
40. As good as equal (2 words)
41. Propel a boat
44. Candy ____
45. Common refrigerant
46. ____ Verde National Park, CO
47. African language
48. Rock band or welcome sight?
49. Snowbird destination
53. "Our sixth planet ____" (2 wds)
55. Powerful character in "Stranger Things"
56. ATM product?
57. "O Sole ____"
58. Machine catch?
59. 100 bani, in Romania
60. "C'____ la vie!"

DOWN

1. Carly and Paul
2. Marcel Duchamp's "Fountain," essentially
3. Peculiarity or idiosyncrasy
4. Mountain lift
5. Found amidst "artfulness" and "joyfulness"?
6. "Name" for a Nancy Greene memoir? (2 wds)
7. Small change?
8. Arch type
9. Formal wear, informally
10. Clavell's "____-Pan"
11. Addition to a letter (abbr.)
12. Belief in nature, ending in -ism
15. Movement using only the power of the mind?
18. Free from, with "of"
22. Michael ____ of SNL
24. Fine fabric
25. "All the ____ We Cannot See" by Doerr
26. "Not to mention ..."
27. "Get lost!"
28. "____ do you do?"
30. "Where The Rubber ____ The Road", 1995 song Meat Loaf
31. Ankle -____



32. Smacked or struck (archaic)
33. Village in Semnan Province, Iran
34. Evening in Rome
35. Country near UAE
36. Act of adopting or supporting a cause
37. Canadian Bank
40. May follow a "b", "c" or "t"?
41. Begin again
42. Egyptian god
43. "Truly, that ____ my fault!" (2 wds)
45. Barely noticeable
46. Welcome ____
47. "Good" in Cannes
48. Diamond Head locale
49. She likes to go out, but ____ rather stay home!
50. A pint, maybe
51. "You're all ____ behind the ears!"
52. St. or Blvd. (synonym)
54. 180° from NNW

Sudoku

8				5			2	
	4	3		9		1		6
		7			4			
	7		6			5		
	8	9		7		3	6	
		5			9		8	
			9			6		
7		6		3		9	1	
	9			2				3

	3		8		1			
	4			5				
8			9			4	5	
	2	1						4
	9	4	2	1	8	5	3	
5						1	2	
	1	9			4			7
				3			1	
			1		7		4	

TO SOLVE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3 x 3 box contains the digits 1 through 9.

SEND COMPLETED PUZZLES TO:

100 – 550 West 6th Avenue,
Vancouver BC V5Z 4P2

FOR MORE ONLINE SUDOKU PUZZLES:

www.websudoku.com/

DEADLINE FOR SUDOKU AND CROSSWORD SUBMISSION IS:

January 31, 2026

Congratulations to last issue's puzzle winners. Your cheques are in the mail!

Crossword:

Sharon Parker, Comox
Carole Eyles, Gulf Islands
Gaetane Royer, Parksville/Qualicum

Sudoku:

Nancy Gleeson, Langley
David Rolston, Kamloops
Doug Hillson, Langley

FALL 2025 CROSSWORD SOLUTION

	1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12									
	T	A	L	L		G	A	R	B		Y	O	K	E									
13	R	A	D	I	I		L	I	E	U		I	L	L	S								
16	C	L	I	M	B		A	L	E	S		E	D	I	T								
19	O	C	T	O	B		E	R	S	K	Y		L	I	M	E							
						22	E	R	E			23	B	I	D	E	T	S					
						25	A	S	T	R	A			28	G	R	O	U	P				
30	A	M	A	H	S						31	D	E	A	D	R	O	M	A	N			
35	H	E	R	E							36	S	O	O	T	Y		37	W	A	R	E	
38	A	N	D	R	O		39	M	E	D	A							40	W	E	D	G	E
							41	O	B	E	S	E						42	V	I	R	E	O
43	A	C	A	C	I	A					46	S	I	N									
47	D	A	N	K							48	R	O	C	K	E	T		51	B	O	Y	S
55	Z	I	T	I							56	J	U	R	Y			57	E	A	S	E	L
58	E	R	S	E							59	O	T	I	P			60	R	I	L	L	Y
61	S	O	Y	S							62	B	A	B	E			63	S	L	O	P	

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twitter.com/bcrta1

Obituaries

Location listed is the area given as "last taught"



Adams, Rosemary	North Vancouver	Hendry, David	Burnaby
Auffray, Regis	Chilliwack	Holt, Margaret L.	Beneficiary
Borthwick, Robert B.	Shuswap	Jeffery, Doreen E. M.	Kamloops
Bose, Anne	Surrey	Jones, Sharon	Delta
Bousema, Gail	Surrey	Langin, Susan	S E Kootenay
Busay, Bill	West Vancouver	Lessard, Denis R.	Quesnel
Chorzempa, M. Jean	Creston	McCutcheon, Irene	Vancouver
Cooke, Rosemary F.	Burnaby	McKnight, Kathy Kay	Peace River North
Cooper, D. Eileen	Greater Victoria	Nagle, Audrey	Rocky Mountain
Crockett, Dawn	Vancouver	Palmer, Michele	Surrey
Currie, John	Richmond	Palleson , Edward R.	Burnaby
Dicken, John	Surrey	Petrak, John A.	Vancouver
Dobie, Susan	Vancouver	Richmond, Wendy Flora	Burnaby
Dye, Pym	North Vancouver	Shaw, Terry D.	Ahousaht
Gale, Margaret C.	Quesnel	Shore, Marilyn S.	Cariboo-Chilcotin
Godfrey, Christine	Saanich	Smillie, Scott	Central Okanagan
Grant, Louise M. C.	Coquitlam	Sparks, Patricia M.	Surrey
Grout, Noel A.	Vancouver	Vernon, Julia M.	North Vancouver
Gullion, Bernadette M.	Central Okanagan	<p>Note: Some notices may be delayed by recent labour stoppage at BC Pension Corporation, and will appear in the next issue of PostScript..</p>	
Guppy, Joanne M.	West Vancouver		

PostScript Honour Roll

Our magazine has featured great content from our members and subject matter experts. Here are some updates on what two former PostScript columnists have been doing.

Dr. Roger Wong has moved on from his position as Vice-President and Dean of Education at the Faculty of Medicine at The University of British Columbia. He is now Vice President, Medicine and Academic Affairs at Vancouver Coastal Health and remains Clinical Professor of Geriatric Medicine, Faculty of Medicine at UBC.

Roger makes frequent media appearances, educating seniors about gerontology, dementia and Alzheimer's.

Roger is especially interested in educating people about the early signals of cognitive impairment and the role that new forms of technology make take in the care of the elderly.



Dr. Marie-Hélène Pelletier's PostScript column "Your Resilience Minute" was an early stage in a significant specialization. Her book that emerged on this theme, ***The Resilience Plan***, has gone on to become an international bestseller, winning multiple awards, was named as a Top Five book to read by *Inc.* and *Forbes* magazines, and is the subject of dozens of interviews and media appearances.

Dr. Pelletier is a frequent speaker to business and public sector leaders, and is a member of the Harvard Business Review Advisory Council and the Global Clinical Practice Network of the World Health Organization.

Photo File



Winter Snow Falls at the Harewood Dam

DIANA DUGAS is a member of the Nanaimo-Ladysmith branch of BCRTA and her photography has been featured in previous issues of PostScript.



R. R. Smith Memorial Fund Foundation is the charity established by the BCRTA in 2002 to support Canadian-registered charities who support the cause of education around the world.

A Thank You Letter

I just wanted to thank you for your kind donation to Afretech. We just loaded another container for Kenya on Saturday, and it included enough books for another school library. Once I arrive back in Nairobi this coming January, I will head to the Textbook Store to buy books in Kiswihili or by African authors to complete the library content by addressing cultural needs. Having the books definitely changes not only the kids' lives but the entire communities. I have added a photo from a recent installation - always a long and challenging day, but so very satisfying.

Sincerely

Bonnie Sutherland
Chair, Afretech Aid Society



2025 GRANTS

- Afretech
- African Canadian Education Society
- Blue Act Marine Society-Sunshine Coast
- Bright Beginnings Foundation-literacy
- Canadian Friends of Oaxaca
- Canadian Harambee Education
- Children's Care International
- Compassion Fruit Society-literacy
- Days for Girls-Port Moody chapter
- Families for Children
- For the Love of Africa
- Innovative Communities Foundation
- Into All the World - education
- Love Guatemala
- Niteo Africa Society
- One Girl Can Society
- Real Humanitarian
- Right to Learn Afghanistan
- Spinoza literacy
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