

President's Note

David Hill-Turner, President

It has been another “quite the year”. Just as we thought life would settle into a winter slumber, it had other ideas!

Heritage has faced many setbacks and opportunities in 2021. As we all eventually got “the jab” museums, galleries and historic sites slowly reopened with regular hours. Sadly, fires and floods have affected many museums and heritage sites in BC. Our hearts go out to those who have worked so hard in their communities to celebrate their heritage and who are now faced with the monumental task of rebuilding. There have also been opportunities. We understand that historical narratives are constantly being challenged. While it can be unsettling, new stories present opportunities for developing a different appreciation of how our province developed.

After 18 months of meeting via Zoom, we finally welcomed members and guests to a public meeting on November 18. It was a great success and I'd like to thank everyone for their cooperation by having passports and masks. If you missed the presentation, it will be available on our YouTube channel.

While history is often thought to be about the past, it is also about the present. It's amazing how fast as a society we can forget about the events of today. The present is when we should be collecting stories of Nanaimo for future generations. This is a project we'd like to develop as we plan our microgrant program that will be announced in the coming months. Your board has been creating a structure to prepare it for the future.



Darrell Ohs introduces our November 18 presentation on 'The Dambusters and the Nanaimo Connection' by Brian McFadden

While we are aware of the past accomplishments of the Nanaimo Historical Society, our focus should now be on what we can do with our available resources. We invite you to share your ideas for future society projects.

As 2021 draws to a close, I'd like to thank the directors and volunteers for their support and contributions of time and expertise. As the society moves into its 69th year, we are looking forward to learning and sharing stories about our community. Through working together, we can make 2022 a better kind of "quite the year".

Important Membership News

Beginning with the 2022 year, Nanaimo Historical Society membership fees will be:

- personal membership - \$10
- family membership (2 or more members at same address) - \$15
- group membership (business or other organization) - \$15
- student membership - \$5

Membership fees will no longer include subscription to ***British Columbia History***. (see article below)

You will receive a membership renewal notice. If you have questions about renewing your membership, please contact Gordon Miller at nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca

This summer the British Columbia Historical Federation decided to cancel the bulk subscription program for ***British Columbia History***, their quarterly magazine.

Regrettably, this means that the Nanaimo Historical Society will no longer be placing subscriptions to this magazine on your behalf. You will be responsible for maintaining your own subscription.

The British Columbia Historical Federation will be contacting you directly when it is time to renew your subscription. Those members who have email accounts will be receiving emails. Those who do not will receive notices by regular mail.

British Columbia History will be available in either paper or digital editions. Renewals will be \$25 and can be made by mail or online. Detailed instructions will be provided in the renewal notice. If you have questions about renewing your subscription, please contact Gordon Miller at nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca

Spring 2022 Programme Lineup

January 13, 2022: Members Show and Share of historic items and stories. Members are encouraged to bring artifacts, stories, questions about local history to share and discuss.

February 10, 2022: Historian and author Catherine Marie Gilbert speaks on the history of Strathcona Park.

March 10, 2022: AGM and Speaker Susan Garcia: Topic: What Did Justice look like in the Gulf Islands in the 1870's? How one murder on Mayne Island played out across Plumper Pass. Hear how Susan connects this story to Nanaimo.



Susan Garcia visited Mayne Island in July 2021

April 14, 2022: Local historian Sean Enns will profile Charlie Abbott, the Chemainus Hermit. In the early '80s, Abbott wandered into the forest beside the railway tracks through town and dedicated the rest of his life to transforming the raw forest into parkland and pathways before he died in 1989 at the age of 87.

Watch for NHS Website Coming Soon!

Since the summer, the Nanaimo Historical Society board has been working on the development of a brand new website for NHS. We expect the website to be launched in late December or early January. Watch for news of the launch, or check www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca

2021 VIU History Awards

Here are the 2021 winners of the VIU history awards sponsored by Nanaimo Historical Society:

Ethel Barraclough Award

Joseph Sparrow: *The Racial Categorization of the Descendants from Humanity's 'Single primitive stock': Anti-Asian discrimination in 19th century Canada*

Peggy Nichols Award

Vien Vu: *The Crimean War in Victorian Britain's Journalism, Arts and Literature*

Copies of these papers are available on request from nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca

Nanaimo Historical Society has copies of the award winning papers for the years 2015-2021 as digital files. Earlier papers are available in hardcopy.

Watch NHS Events Online

Did you know? You can watch online presentations and field trips of the Nanaimo Historical Society on our YouTube channel <https://bit.ly/30OItRR> Here's just a sampling:

- ~ October 2020 - Christine Meutzner "Wellington Cemetery tour"
- ~ January 2021 - Show and tell meeting and Tony Orchard "History of the Colliery dams"
- ~ April 2021 - Dave Bodaly on Sayshutsun (Newcastle) Island and family history
- ~ June 2021 - Virtual field trip to Mt. Benson site of October 1951 crash of Queen Charlotte Airlines Canso aircraft
- ~ September 2021 - Hayley Healy "Vancouver Island Women"
- ~ October 2021 - Greg Fraser "Joseph McKay biography"
- ~ November 2021 - Brian McFadden "Dam Busters, Nanaimo connection"

Nanaimo's Heritage Conservation Program

By Chris Sholberg

As the City's Community/Heritage Planner, I am periodically asked about whether or not the City of Nanaimo has a heritage conservation program. The answer is yes, although this fact is not well known. To bridge this gap, here's a little background on how and why the program was created, including a brief outline of its key elements.

Nanaimo's Heritage Conservation Program formed as a result of a Heritage Action Plan created in 1998 to integrate heritage planning with the larger municipal planning framework. The Plan, or blueprint as I like to call it, outlined a number of actions (including policies, regulations, guidelines, incentives and promotion) the City could use in order to better conserve and encourage the rehabilitation of our finite collection of heritage resources. Most of these actions were completed by the mid 2000's and include the following:

Creation of a Heritage Commission in 1996. Appointed by City Council, the nine person Commission worked in tandem with City staff until it was decommissioned in 2018 to monitor and implement the Heritage Conservation Program, promote heritage awareness, and advise Council on heritage related matters.

Creation of a Downtown Heritage Conservation Area in 1999. The conservation area provides long term protection for historical buildings with special heritage value and/or heritage character located in the City's downtown core.

Promotion of Heritage Awareness since 1999. Public awareness initiatives are key to promoting heritage conservation. In Nanaimo, these efforts have included the creation of heritage walk brochures, interpretive signs and on-line information related to the City's history, as well as recurring events such as the City's annual Heritage Summit.

Nanaimo's Heritage Conservation Program

Creation of an Archaeological Sites Policy in 2000. The City fills a key informational and monitoring role by ensuring that proposed development that may impact known and potential archaeological sites are brought to the attention of the B.C. Archaeology Branch.

Creation of a Community Heritage Register in 2002. The legacy of Nanaimo's history is a rich collection of heritage buildings, structures and sites which contribute to Nanaimo's particular sense of time, place and identity. They are the tangible reminders of the City's history. The Heritage Register is an official list of 159 buildings, 9 structures, and 9 sites which is updated periodically and forms the foundation of the conservation program.

Adoption of a Heritage Procedures Bylaw in 2002. The procedures bylaw formalizes procedures for heritage alteration permits, heritage inspections, heritage register updates, delegation of permit authority to City staff and demolition delay procedures.

Operation of heritage tax exemption, heritage facade grant, and heritage home grant programs since 2003. Financial incentives are effective tools for encouraging heritage conservation objectives. Many communities across North America use these tools to great effect, with the closest examples being the Cities of Vancouver and Victoria (after which Nanaimo's incentives are modelled).

For more information on the City of Nanaimo's Heritage Conservation Program and the online Heritage Register database, please visit www.nanaimo.ca/goto/heritage or contact me directly at chris.sholberg@nanaimo.ca, 250-755-4472.

The Legendary Luomas of Shack Island

The Luoma family lived and worked on Shack Island during the 1930s. From a small boatshed beside their home the family created “the Cadillac of rowboats” – classics from Nanaimo’s Shack Island.

Frank Hackwood launches his beloved old rowboat down a slip built from old coal car rails into Pilot Bay off Gabriola Island. As soon as it hits the ocean the inanimate hull comes to life, floating remarkably high and gracefully. Hackwood pulls on the 7’ oars and the boat lunges from a standing start.



Frank Hackwood , Pilot Bay, Gabriola Island

To Hackwood and other local mariners this is no garden-variety dinghy – it’s a Luoma, built entirely with hand tools on Nanaimo’s Shack Island. Hackwood set his eyes on these working skiffs when they were used by depression-era handline fisherman trolled for salmon in the Strait of Georgia. “As kids we used to watch the traffic in Nanaimo Harbour and say, ‘Look there’s a Luoma!’ They were in a class by themselves.”

The double-ended, carvel built skiffs were prized among the area coal miners-cum-fishermen for their speed, handling, and seaworthiness.

Judge Stan Wardill rowed the same Luoma, that he bought for \$35 in 1937, for the rest of his lifetime. It took him three years to save the money, partially raised from playing in Nanaimo’s Silver Cornet Band at the 24th of May parades, and a lengthy Chinese funeral march. “You remember the things you got paid for during the Depression,” asserts Wardill.

Wardill, who won a rowing competition with his Luoma after more than 60 years of ownership cracks, “One stroke and they’ll go for half a mile!”

Searching Shack Island’s pebbled beach today yields scant evidence of the boatyard that spawned these vessels. By turning over a rock or two at the long vacant site one will only find rusty bent nails, some charred wood, and bits of broken glass. Even so, as long as the last of the Luomas continue to ply local waters, their legacy born on this rocky islet lives on.

Darrell Ohs

Commemorating 1886 Explosion in Nanaimo



The **SS Queen of the Pacific** was a 336-foot, iron-hulled, commercial passenger cargo steamer/brig built in Philadelphia for the Pacific Coast Steamship Company. It was one of many steamers that ran from San Francisco to Alaska, stopping in Nanaimo to discharge and load freight and passengers. Islapedia.com

On July 29 1886 an explosion on board the Queen of the Pacific in Nanaimo harbour, resulted in the deaths of six longshoremen, two seamen and one labourer. With the exception of one local labourer, those killed were from Seattle and most were members of the **Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers' Union of Puget Sound**.

Commemorating 1886 Explosion in Nanaimo

Within hours of the explosion, the undamaged ship left the carnage in Nanaimo behind, carrying 1,000 tons of Nanaimo coal bound for San Francisco.

This past summer, on the 135th anniversary of the explosion, the ILWU (International Longshore and Warehouse Union) Local 508 Young Workers Committee gathered by a memorial in St. Peter's Cemetery in Nanaimo which remembers the workers killed. The BC Labour Heritage Centre was honoured to participate in the event.

Reprinted from BC Labour Heritage Centre August 2021 Newsletter



On July 29, 2021 members of the ILWU Local 508 Young Workers Committee , a representative of the BC Labour Heritage Centre, and three directors of Nanaimo Historical Society gathered at the memorial at St. Peter's cemetery to commemorate the workers killed from the explosion on the Queen of the Pacific. Back 3rd and 4th from right David Hill-Turner and Susan Garcia. Front 2nd from left Sue Creba.

Christine Meutzner Receives BCHF Award



Christine Meutzner

Congratulations to Christine Meutzner, who received the BCHF Award of Recognition at the British Columbia Historical Federation's annual conference awards gala on June 5. Christine, member and former director of NHS, has advocated for Nanaimo heritage and history for nearly 25 years. Awards of Recognition go to individual members of BCHF member societies, such as NHS, who have given exceptional service to their organization or community, either for a specific project or for long service in the preservation of British Columbia's history. To see Christine's acceptance of the award, please visit

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhnKwx4bLUQ>

Member opportunities

The Nanaimo Historical Society is a volunteer-run society. As the society reorganizes and prepares for new programs and events, please consider joining us as a volunteer at the board or committee level. It is an opportunity to meet people who share your interest in history and is an opportunity to share skills or develop new ones.

- Board of Directors: We welcome the addition of people with adult learning, project planning and communications experience and interest..
- Governance Committee - advises the board on policies and procedures
- Programme Committee - developing learning programs, organizing refreshments, organizing rideshare (Note: some Committees meet regularly, others 1-2 times per year)
- Communications Committee - website, Facebook, YouTube, newsletter, media promotion
- Leynard Microgrant Program - developing our community grant program

About the NHS

Founded in 1953, the Nanaimo Historical Society has been an influential partner in advocating for the awareness, understanding and appreciation of our community's diverse heritage.

Nanaimo Historical Society

President:	David Hill-Turner	Directors at large:	Susan Garcia
Vice President:	Sue Creba		Darrell Ohs
Treasurer:	Tony Orchard		
Secretary:	Gordon Miller		

How to reach us



nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca



[facebook.com/NanaimoHistory/](https://www.facebook.com/NanaimoHistory/)



<https://bit.ly/300ItRR>

Mailing address Box 933, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5N2

We acknowledge that we meet on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw people from whom Nanaimo takes its name.

Nanaimo Historical Society Tapes Digitized

Nanaimo Historical Society owned many tapes going back decades of interviews and lectures on historical topics. They have now all been digitized by Vancouver Island University and are available for listening here: <https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/14188>

Thank you Vancouver Island University Library for this service!