

Now and Then

News from the History Department at University of the Fraser Valley

March 2017

A Message from the Chair



Being a university teacher – professor, if you prefer – is a privilege. Sometimes one can forget the pleasures of this job when the papers pile up awaiting

grades, meetings proliferate, and that draft of an article, book, or review is not getting the attention it needs. But the richly human experience of teaching and learning that happens at a university mercifully makes itself apparent quite regularly and when it does it is extremely gratifying.

In the last few weeks I have had the pleasure of interacting with colleagues and students in a productive and inspiring manner. For some time I have been working with UFV administrators and staff to organize a regional debating tournament for high school students. This was the first time UFV would host such an event and we relied on an external organizer to make sure that many of the details concerning the actual debating were correctly arranged. Inviting the community onto the campus is essential and the event was a tremendous success. A large group of students and parents arrived for the day of debating and we received positive comments about the campus and its location. What was really gratifying was how well our student volunteers responded to the call and they similarly got praise for their work and commitment.

More recently my colleague Scott Sheffield and I took a group of seven senior history students to the Qualicum History Conference. This graduate level conference has always been welcoming of undergraduates considering further studies in the discipline. For our students it was both inspiring and eye-opening. Making the decision to pursue graduate studies is difficult and hearing of the experiences of those doing it can complicate matters; their passion is self-evident, but the job prospects seem bleak. Nevertheless, seeing that life is rarely a straight path and hearing how our students balance their ideals with practical reality is both sobering and inspiring. Having the time to chat informally with students (and, for that matter, colleagues from other institutions) gives one perspective on their often complex lives. It was a delight and a privilege to go to this conference with such dedicated students and faculty.

Of course, these interactions happen regularly. Molly Ungar supports a number of practicum students and Robin Anderson and Scot Sheffield are working with students in an unconventional course, HIST 440, Local History on the Web. These collaborative and practical approaches to history and instruction are not only enriching but afford an interaction with students that has a very different quality than that created in a regular classroom.

While we strive to offer a range of teaching styles and educational opportunities for our students, connecting with them in a manner that sees their three dimensionality is wonderful and

can inform how we approach our courses. Of course, they too benefit from seeing the person behind the lecture. History, both the phenomenon of the past and its disciplinary present, is about the human experience and in these last months that quality has revealed itself in the activities of the department.



Qualicum History Conference:
Kelly Miles, Colin Nichol, Evan Funk, Melissa Wing, Rachel Vandenberg, Rachelle Steegstra, Kelsey Ablitt, Chris Leach, Scott Sheffield

Faculty News



On March 3, **Dr. Barbara Messamore** delivered the keynote address for the Canada 150 Conference at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. The talk was on “Confederation Myths”, and was hosted by the university's Institute of English and American Studies.

<http://ieas.unideb.hu/index.php?p=menu&main=34&l=en>

Messamore with Dr Peter Szaifko, the director of the popular Debrecen Summer School, which teaches Hungarian to a wide range of students and professionals, such as diplomats, in an intensive program.

The
Debrecen University
Library, housed in the
Reformed
College.



On November 12th **Professor Robin Anderson** presented a talk at the Surrey Museum and Archives as part of their Remembrance Day program. He spoke on "Vancouver, Fitzmaurice, and the First World War." There was a good turnout and interesting discussion after the talk. He was also invited to sit on the organizing committee for the 2017 British Columbia Historical Federation Conference that will be taking place in Chilliwack this May.

On January 26th he participated as Moderator for the UFV Politalk Roundtable: "Trump as President: What Now?" The discussion included commentators from a variety of disciplines, and included History faculty members Dr. Scott Sheffield and Dr. Steven Schroeder. There was a large and enthusiastic turnout to what proved to be an interesting and unpredictable conversation on the meaning and impact of Donald Trump.

Anderson's History 401 student Melissa Wing, has been pursuing an Applied History Practicum at the *Chilliwack Progress* newspaper to help celebrate the



newspaper's 125 anniversary. Melissa has been busy researching and writing articles on local Chilliwack history, drawn from the newspaper's archives and published under the title "History in Progress". The articles so far have been very well received; her first article focused on Chilliwack's response to the early

days of World War One and her second looked at local reactions to the imposition of prohibition in British Columbia in 1916 and 1918.

During this Winter semester, Sheffield and Anderson have been overseeing students in History 440: "Local History for the Web", for which students create web pages of local history projects. In this version of the course, students are doing research projects on the history of sport and recreation in the Fraser Valley.

Students are attached to specific local archives and their collections, and this year's cohort are doing research at the Surrey Archives, the Langley Centennial Museum, The Reach Archives in Abbotsford, the Mission Community Archives, and the Chilliwack Archives.

By the end of the semester, students will have translated their research findings, words and visuals, into HTML web pages and presented these for public consumption on the History 440 website, "Fraser Valley History".

Alumni News -- Marc Forcier

I just completed my 5th and final year of my Bachelors of Arts degree in History. (graduated Winter of 2016). I currently work as the Digitization Assistant at The Reach Gallery Museum in Abbotsford, having started there as Archives Collection Assistant. I work on our online digital photo archive.

Using a Microfilm reader (ScanPro1100) I go through archived news from the *ASM News* (Abbotsford, Sumas, & Matsqui), adding context to The Reach's collection of photos. I use the microfilm reader to read the newspaper from 1925 – 2006.

Under the supervision of Archives & Collection Manager Kris Foulds, I have learned about archival practices and procedures as well as collection and digitization standards. These include how to accession and de-accession collection items, how to read Collections and assessment rolls, how to read past civil engineer plans, how to clip and organize files digitally and electronically, and how to answer questions related to Abbotsford, Matsqui and Sumas. Before I entered this position I did not know that Abbotsford, as we know today, is actually an amalgamation of Abbotsford, Matsqui Prairie, and Sumas Prairie.

At The Reach, I've work in a number of different areas. I help with personal research projects for members of the community and patrons of The Reach, and as a summer intern in 2015 I was directly involved in the research process for the development of "Voices of the Valley", a major museum exhibition which won the prestigious 2016 Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Community Programming.

I remember sitting in Molly Ungar's History 102 class in my second semester at UFV. I was a new student to UFV, having transferred from UVIC after 4 semesters there. During an aside to a class lecture Molly discussed how we as (History) students should look at history outside the classroom, and try to find student positions to engage us in our field. I remember her using the cen-

otaph as an example. None of us students at the time could explain the relevance of it, which dawned on me immensely. On that day I promised myself that my summer job would not be at my Dad's work nor with a landscaping company. Instead, I decided that I would work or volunteer that summer at an institution pertaining to my academic interests — Culture, Heritage and History.

On my own intuitive, I checked various platforms for internship/summer job positions for students. I found myself on Young Canada Works and saw that an Archives Collection Assistant position was open at The Reach Gallery, so I immediately sent my resume in. I did not care if I worked in a basement or in the backroom of a library. As long as I was working in the field of my study I knew I would be happy — and this has proven true tenfold. My time at The Reach has been wonderful, to say the least.

The courses I have taken at UFV have helped me immensely to understand the material and people I interact with. Having knowledge in a variety of national histories has helped me to understand the motive of patrons who come in wanting to know details about a certain event or events. Moreover, when I read about an event from one of our archived collection pieces, I am able to put that into a larger narrative that has been discussed in one of my many courses. As well, my courses have positively influenced my writing ability, and I can't stress how important this skill has been for my job.

My courses have also helped me to see the importance of understanding "contingency" and "contingent factors"— the ripple effect. Before, I used to think of Abbotsford as just my home town, nothing more. Now, having completed my History Major and having been employed at The Reach for a year and a half I have come to learn that Abbotsford is rich in history. You just have to look beyond what you see, and ask the right questions — who, what when, where, why, and how.

Additionally, my time at The Reach has seen me involved with committees that I would not have known existed in our community -- Arts, Civil Rights, Religious, and Political...And because of my well-rounded knowledge of historical events pertaining to these subjects I have rarely felt out of place in terms of my understanding! Thanks PROFS!



Student News -- Brian Radant



Brian at work in the Archives of the B.C. Dairy Historical Association

My Directed Studies course has given me the opportunity to do archival work for the BC Dairy Historical Society (BCDHS). The non-profit organization is operated by members of BC's dairy industry who are dedicated to promoting its history. Since 1999, the BCDHS has put together a significant collection of primary materials, culminating in a 590-page inventory plus uncatalogued new items. The society faces two main challenges: lack of expertise, and lack of steady labor. I've been asked to bring my perspective as a history student with some archival experience to this project.

I was tasked with first taking complete inventory of the collection, and second, presenting the society with several options for the proper storage of the collection; third, implementing their preferred method of storage.

I've encountered two main challenges in my work thus far. First, there was minimal organization to the collection. For example, the society has approximately 70 volumes of the publication, *Butter Fat*. This series

was scattered across the collection in various boxes. The same was true for most of the material. Second, the society's previous inventory was not accurate. Therefore, I could not organize the collection before taking an entire inventory.

Going forward, I plan to continue researching archival storage practices. I will present my work to the society so that the board can make an informed decision which balances the longevity of the collection with their financial realities.

Once the collection is properly stored, the society will have decisions to make regarding the future of its material. Should they continue to handle the collection, or find a professional museum or archive to house it? I will advise the society to attempt the latter, but will ultimately assist the organization along whichever course it takes.

Rachel Vandenburg

As part of my Practicum course this semester, I have had the opportunity to work at the MSA Museum and at the Chilliwack Museum and Archives. At the MSA Museum I spent most of my time hands-on with the artefacts, learning processing and preservation techniques. Christina Reid, the Collections Manager and Heritage Officer provided excellent feedback and guidance. My favourite experience was exploring the collection and finding interesting artefacts (like a real leopard-fur coat and WWII rifle).

I learned how to use PastPerfect software, how to do condition reports on objects, how to accession and deaccession, how to properly store artefacts, and how to write detailed descriptions.

I then began the second part of my Practicum at the Chilliwack Archives, where I'm working with Tristan Evans, the Archivist. So far, I've learned the basics of Archives Collections Management, and have created a processing plan for a collection of documents related

to the history of the Soroptimist organization in the Fraser Valley.



Alumni News -- Brett Pardy

I graduated with a BA Major in History from UFV in 2013. When I was attending classes at UFV I did not know what I would do, so I continued along the academic path.

After leaving UFV I went to SFU to do an MA in Communication, Culture, & Media. I graduated in 2016 after conducting research and completing a thesis entitled "To Fight the Battles We Never Could: The Militarization of Marvel's Cinematic Superheroes".

While my MA was not directly related to History, I was able to draw on my history background to analyze how Marvel comics film adaptations have been used as part of post 9/11 American military culture – a sort of history of the present.

Today, I once again find my history foundation highly beneficial as I pursue a PhD in Integrated Studies in Education at McGill. I am able to combine my appreciation for history and culture with my interest in media to research how people learn empathy for difference and what are the social barriers that exist when educating towards empathy.

When I reflect back on my time at UFV, what I learned has been invaluable – and on a number of levels. Historical thinking helps me to look at the big picture of how and why social trends occur. It helps me to contextualize various events, situations, and issues that inform our daily lives. It has been a huge benefit in graduate level work.

The classroom environment of UFV's history program was a wonderful experience that, now having seen larger universities operate with their cavernous lecture halls and grad student run tutorials (I enjoyed facilitating them, but I don't think it compares to actually discussing with the course instructor), I appreciate it even more.



Brett in front of the Montreal skyline

And, when my grandparents wondered how would I get a job with a History degree, they are now impressed that I have been able to work as a teaching assistant and remain out of debt as a grad student.

As a teaching assistant at both SFU and McGill I have adopted many techniques I learned from observing the UFV History faculty. For example, I work to grade assignments and provide feedback like Geoffrey Spurling and I run class discussions like Molly Ungar.



As I start to think about life after my PhD. I realize that my foundation in History has expanded my opportunities into a variety of areas.



Brandon Langhjelm

UFV history student Brandon Langhjelm completed his law degree at UBC, and recently articulated with the Department of Justice. He was called to the bar on February 17. Brandon has a special interest in constitutional history.

Student News -- Élise St. Martin

I had the opportunity to work as a summer student for the MSA Museum Society this past summer of 2015, as an historical animator.

Over the course of the summer, I worked on developing some of the Museum's programs, and I gave public tours of Trethewey House, the MSA's house museum. I gave historical walking tours of Mill Lake and translated this tour into French.

I was also in charge of the "Stories on the Porch" program, which invited the public out to the front porch of Trethewey House to learn about the local history of Abbotsford and surrounding communities.

I organized guest speakers to come out once a week and present talks for this program. Guest included some Abbotsford pioneers, like Ernie Poignant and Cyril Holbrow. Kris Foulds from The Reach Gallery and Museum came out to present stories on the life of Abbotsford pioneer Margaret Weir, and the Fraser Valley Regional Library also came out on two days.

On the mornings when there was no guest presenter, I was in charge of coming up with a story to share. This allowed me to do some research of my own into the local history of Abbotsford.

For May and June, I was in charge of a major program on "The 1920s School House Experience".

The MSA is a popular location for field trips, especially for grade 3 classes

who do a unit on local history. The MSA has set up Joey's Playhouse as a 1920s one-room school house I played the part of a 1920s teacher, and described to the students what school was like nearly 100 years ago. I had some activities and



Élise speaking at the MSA's "DiversiTEA", and below (right) with an MSA colleague



lessons planned for the students to use the slate chalkboards.

At the end of the summer, I helped to plan the Museum's Summer Social event. This was a family-friendly event that ran all day and included a pancake breakfast, hot dog lunch, and pasta dinner and FREE ice cream! There were also 1920s-themed crafts, games, and activities to do throughout the day.

During this event, I gave tours of Trethewey House and ran some of the children's craft and game areas.

I also gave a speech at the annual Pioneer Tea, "DiversiTEA", which was held as part of the Summer Social.

As part of my work experience, I was trained in using museum software, and helped to organize the museum's collection database. I also got to archive a series of letters and poems written by William Jerdan. Many of his letters were addressed to L.E.L., and there some of her poems included in the collection. The writing was all dated to the early 19th century (about 1820 to 1850).

I also had the opportunity to participate in painting a tile for the Canada 150 mosaic mural! (I painted a tile of Trethewey House).

Overall, this was a wonderful experience that allowed me to learn all about the local history of Abbotsford! I hope to continue working for the MSA Museum next summer!

Alumni News -- Anna Irwin

I currently work at the MSA Museum Society as the Education Coordinator. In this capacity, I wear a variety of hats (sometimes literally) – I am part teacher, part researcher, part historian, part security detail and more - and no day is ever the same.

In a single day, I can design and execute a variety of different types of on-site programming, including daycamps and school tours. I actively research, compile and re-work materials for educational kits to align them with B.C.'s new curriculum, I do graphic design work, website design and content development and help plan the museum's events. While most days consist of a few of these duties, some consist of these and more!

While at times it can be a dizzying whirlwind of activity, working at a museum is an immensely and deeply gratifying experience. Explaining and sharing local history and the history of Trethewey House to visitors and tour groups is one of the most deeply satisfying experiences I have had.

Every day, I have the chance to be a catalyst and to spark people to an "AHA!" moment when visitors, both temporary visitors to the community or longtime residents of Abbotsford, learn something about the City's past that they were unaware of. Be it learning that the upright posts in Mill Lake are train trestles that were used by the Abbotsford Lumber Company or that the reason behind the lake being called Mill Lake is because it was the site of a working lumber mill before being designated park land, watching the light go on in people's eyes when they understand and are excited about something I shared with them is the reason why I do what I do.

I also have the chance to do this while helping people discover local history in my work as a Museum Attendant at the Chilliwack Museum and Archives. Here, I regularly greet and interact with visitors as they go through the museum and answer questions about artifacts on display or about the changes that have occurred throughout the city over the decades.

These exchanges are far from one way dialogues – when talking with visitors, I have an equal opportunity to hear new stories (from the young and the young at heart!) about the city, and gain a new perspective on events and local history through their experiences. These lessons and new ways of looking at the world can be useful later on



in other parts of my work, where I help design hands-on activities and crafts for kids to complete during their museum visit, amongst other things.

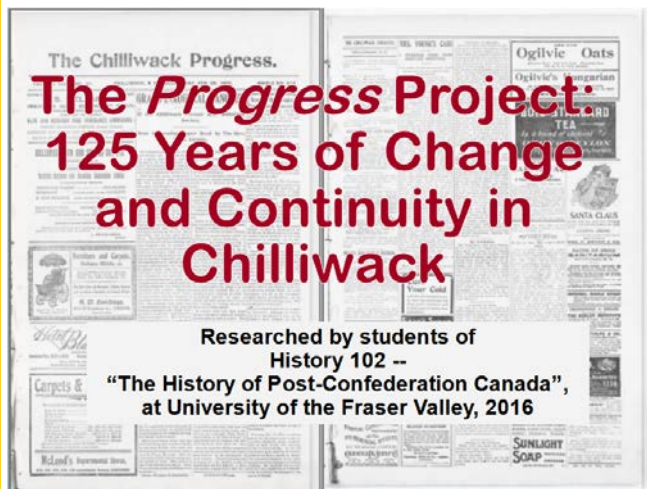
I graduated from UFV with a double major in History and French in 2015, but my educational journey has not stopped there. I am partway through completing a Professional Specialization Certificate in Collections Management at the University of Victoria, where I am learning how to care for museum artifact collections and how to display them for the public.



"As historians and storytellers, you play an essential role in our society. You help us understand who we are as a people, where we've come from, where we've made mistakes and where we've succeeded" -- Governor General David Johnston, on the occasion of the presentation at Rideau Hall of The Governor General's History Awards for Excellence in Community Programming for "Voices of the Valley", an exhibit to which a number of UFV History students contributed, while working for both The Reach Gallery Museum and the MSA Museum.

Student News -- Hist 102

The Progress Project Album



For the Fall semester's research project, an entire Hist 102 class worked on "The Progress Project", each student researching one topic from the *Chilliwack Progress* over a span of 125 years, to mark the 125th anniversary of the newspaper.

Using the newspaper's digital archives, students chose 20 articles about their topic, to show what has changed over time in Chilliwack's community.

Their research was made into "The Progress Project Album", a digital collection that will be uploaded to the newspaper's website. In the photos above, Editor Greg Knill attended and spoke at the Group Presentation, after which each student discussed their topic, and then got together for a group photo.

