



Keeping The Connection



Members of the UFV Retirees' Association Board.

MESSAGE FROM THE UFV PRESIDENT

James Mandigo

It is a pleasure to welcome the UFV Retirees' Association to another year as a special part of the University of the Fraser Valley.

Retirement may mark the end of a career at UFV, but it certainly does not end your connection to the University. Our retirees bring a wealth of knowledge, experience, relationships, and institutional history, along with a genuine commitment to UFV and its people.

As UFV continues to grow and transform, we are fortunate to have so many changemakers who have helped shape the institution we are today and who remain connected to its future. Your perspectives and experience are valuable as we look ahead and build on the strong foundation created by generations of faculty and staff.

Thank you for all you have contributed to UFV, and for remaining part of the life of the University. We are grateful for the lasting impact you have made, and continue to make, on UFV.



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Adrienne Chan

Welcome to our inaugural edition of *Keeping The Connection: UFV Retirees' Association Newsletter*! It means a great deal that you are part of the association community and continue to be a part of UFV as retirees.

We have had a busy year since our formation in April 2025. UFVRA launched our own website in October and attended the annual retirement event in November. Both these things have brought much interest to our association. Our AGM on May 6 of this year was a successful gathering with members greeting each other warmly, as well as participating in the formalities of an AGM. A highlight of the proceedings was the awarding of Honorary Memberships to Fran VanderPol and John Pankratz. After the meeting was concluded, many people spent time visiting with each other.

The word is spreading about our association, and positive messages have been sent to us. All our work is supported by the Office of Community Engagement and in particular the office of Relationship and Fund Development. They have made a commitment to us as a part of the UFV community.

In this issue we provide you with some news updates, perspectives from retirees, and a highlight on a retiree in our 'Member Spotlight'. Our 'Retirement Corner' welcomes one or two contributions, in each issue, from retiree members who share their perspectives or experiences. Our work is all about community and staying connected, so our retiree contributors are a part of the work we do!

It has been my privilege to work with great people on our board and at UFV. Everyone has pitched in to make our association vibrant and current to our retiree community and to the university. As a President, you need a solid team and good communication. We have that in our board, and in our colleagues at UFV.

Our board looks forward to hearing from you and connecting through the year. We are always open to suggestions and information that may be of interest to retirees.

Our work is all about community and staying connected.

OUR FIRST YEAR

80

members as of September 16, 2026

60

people joined our May webinar on transitioning to retirement

Apr 2025

association formed

VOLUNTEER WITH US

If you would like to help us with an event, please let us know. We always need volunteers and ideas, even for one event. We work in partnership with UFV on our events. We also pass on information of events that may be of interest.

Association News & Updates

- **Board activity:** In February, UFV hosted the UFVRA inaugural speaker at the Abbotsford campus with “What’s so funny about retirement?” We had 40 people attend in person and about 15 attended online.
- In May, Adrienne Chan and Ian McAskill gave a webinar upon request from the FSA (Faculty and Staff Association). The webinar was well received with 60 people attending. The focus was on transitioning to retirement and questions about benefit plans.
- Adrienne Chan attended the President’s Roundtable and the annual conference of CURAC (College and University Retiree Associations of Canada). The conference was very informative in terms of other retiree associations and also ideas for our newsletter. curac.ca
- The Board is currently working on a list of possible events for the year 2026–2027 including a possible “Conversation Café” and our speaker or panel event during Reading Break in February 2027.
- **Membership:** As of September 16, 2026 we have 80 members. That is a great number for our first year as an association!
- **Collaborations:** The board continues to work collaboratively with Relationship and Fund Development, Human Resources, and Community Engagement about their events and plans.
- **UFV Research news.** Check out the Research Office for their updates: ufv.ca/research/research-office



Dr. Rajnish Dhawan delivers his stand-up routine: What’s so funny about retirement?

SAVE THE DATE

The week of **February 14, 2027**, we will hold our annual ‘lecture’ event. More details to follow or email ufvretirees@ufv.ca

Upcoming Events

NOV

2

2026

Tour of Coqualeetza

10 am · \$27.50 per person

You will be guided around the Coqualeetza grounds while listening to stories about the grounds and surrounding area. A great way to learn about the Stó:lō people, traditions, culture and language. Registration for the purpose of numbers is required. For more information contact ufvretirees@ufv.ca

NOV

24

2026

Retirement Event

2 – 4 pm

This event is replacing the Retirement dinner usually held in November. This is an important recognition of the employees who have retired this year. We will have updated information as it is available.

Finding a New Rhythm in Retirement

The Woodturning Journey of Robyn Harcott



Robyn Harcott (left) with wig stands turned on the lathe. The Fraser Valley Woodturners Guild makes them for people undergoing chemotherapy.

After seventeen years at the University of the Fraser Valley, Robyn Harcott retired in 2021. Her career at UFV was entirely within IT, in the Office of the CIO, where she began at the Help Desk and eventually became Manager of Application Services. Many UFV faculty and staff will remember Robyn for her ability to solve problems and for the support she provided to colleagues over the years. But before retirement, Robyn had already discovered a new passion—woodturning.

From IT to the Woodshop

Robyn's interest in woodturning began in 2006, thanks to UFV colleague Barry Clark, who was a woodturner himself. Robyn quickly "got hooked," and the rest, as they say, is history.

Woodturning is a skilled craft in which a piece of wood is mounted on a lathe and rotated while the turner uses specialized cutting tools to

shape it. The result can be anything from spindles and bowls to ornaments, vases and decorative pieces.

Robyn set out to acquire the equipment she needed, including a wood lathe, band saw, chop saw, drill press and planer. Today, she has what she describes as a "fairly well-equipped woodturning studio" in a shed on the family property.

Much of what Robyn creates is made as a gift for family and friends rather than for sale. The enjoyment comes from the process of creating something unique by hand. Last year, she made 30 wooden lightbulbs as Christmas gifts for family and friends. Other Christmas ornaments she's created include bells and teardrop-shaped ornaments, and this year she is working on icicles. She also turns bowls, platters, vases and lidded boxes and is currently experimenting with mixed media turning incorporating resin with wood.

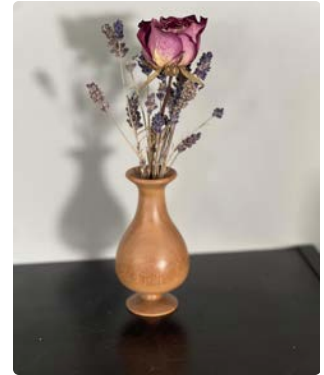
The time required to make each piece varies considerably. A lightbulb can take about 25 minutes to turn, but painting and applying the final clear coat can extend the process to a



Wooden lightbulb ornaments.



Maple bowls at the lathe.



A turned vase.

Sharing the Craft

Robyn is now the Vice President of the Fraser Valley Woodturners Guild (FVWG), a role that allows her to combine her love of woodturning with many of the skills she developed during her IT career. The Guild has approximately 70 local members, along with members from across the province. Robyn manages the Guild's website, Instagram and Facebook accounts and oversees its audiovisual needs.

The Guild meets once a month for a social evening that includes a woodturning demonstration. Members who live outside the area can also join in through Zoom, allowing the Guild to stay connected with its out-of-town members. During the demonstrations, a lathe is set up, and a piece of wood may be transformed into a finished object before the audience's eyes. Other demonstrations focus on teaching a particular technique, giving members an opportunity to learn new skills they can apply to their own projects. The Guild also takes its craft into the community, this year demonstrating

woodturning at the Hobby and Train Show at the Heritage Centre and at KMS Tools in Abbotsford in October.

week. A bell may take a couple of hours, while a large maple salad bowl can take several weeks to complete to Robyn's satisfaction.

woodturning at the Hobby and Train Show at the Heritage Centre and at KMS Tools in Abbotsford in October.

One of the Guild's most meaningful projects is making wooden wig stands for people undergoing chemotherapy who are experiencing hair loss.

"One of the Guild's passion projects is turning wig stands for patients undergoing chemo who are losing or have lost their hair. We've partnered with Because We Care in Cloverdale to distribute them to chemo patients for free, and we've sent many of our turnings down to them."

The project provides Guild members with an opportunity to use their skills to create something practical and meaningful for people going through a difficult time. There are wig stands shown at this website:

thebreastcancershop.com

Taking Time to Get It Right

For Robyn, woodturning is about patience, creativity and enjoying the process.

"One of the keys to success in woodturning is don't hurry things. Take time and make it come out the way I want." She is currently working on a vase for her granddaughter.

While woodturning has become a significant part of Robyn's retirement, it is certainly not her only interest. She enjoys golfing and tending to her large gardens, as well as spending time with family. Her grandchildren are now in their twenties, and she enjoys being able to "hang out" with them. Family BBQs, games and card nights are all part of the fun. At home, the family includes two senior cats. Robyn also enjoys paddleboarding, walking, travel and reading. Her creative interests extend beyond woodturning to making essential-oil blends, jewellery using beadwork and silverwork, and, most recently, pipe-cleaner flowers.

Robyn's Advice for Retirement

For anyone approaching retirement, Robyn's advice is simple: "Prepare. I see a lot of people around me who are retired and can't seem to

find a comfortable rhythm. Before you leave the structure of the workday, you should try to figure out how you want to spend your time. Think about what you might want to do in your new everyday life. Make some plans. You don't want to be adrift." Financial preparation is just as important, she says.

"You have to think about living on a whole different income before you retire. What kind of lifestyle do you want to have? How can you support that lifestyle once you don't have that paycheck any longer? That all falls into 'prepare.' Give yourself some time to adjust."

For Robyn, retirement has provided the opportunity to explore new interests, spend more time with family and continue learning. Most importantly, it has given her the time and freedom to create—one piece of wood at a time.

Supporting UFV Students

Thank you to all our donors who contribute to the students at UFV! Here is an update.

UFVRA Annual Leadership Award

\$800

current balance as of September 16, 2026. The award was disbursed and funds released in August 2026. **Applications open in Spring 2027 (March 15 – May 10)** for the next intake.

Retirees Bursary

\$900+

current balance is just over \$900. **Applications for the bursary, and other bursaries, open again in the Fall from October 1 – November 30, 2026.**

Retirees have helped shape UFV's legacy, and we invite you to continue that impact by supporting the UFV Retirees Association Bursary or the UFVRA Leadership Award.

About making a donation: You can do this through our website, ufv.ca/retirees-association/donate, or giving.ufv.ca

Connections Beyond UFV

“Perhaps the most important thing about being a trustee is the recognition that I am helping to create stability in the lives of retirees.”

Candace Fertile, College Pension Board of Trustees

CPPR: Candace Fertile, New Trustee for the College Pension Board of Trustees

Excerpts of a letter from Candace Fertile to the College Pension Plan Retirees' Association (CPPR), posted in the CPPR newsletter Prime Time, Winter 2026. cpr.ca

“Before I became a trustee, I served on FPSE's Pension Advisory Committee for about nine years. It was an excellent way to learn something about the pension world, and I was fortunate that FPSE also funded me to attend a week-long pension course at Winter School, held at Harrison. All of that experience and education helped, but I really didn't know what it was like to be a trustee until I was one.

Perhaps the most important thing about being a trustee is the recognition that I am helping to create stability in the lives of retirees. And I'm helping to do it in conjunction with various groups: the trustees, the Secretariat staff, service providers, Pension Corporation, and BCI. While we may have some differences of opinion about steps, everyone is clear about the goal and works toward the goal.”

“In pension news, retirees are likely happy that the COLA adjustment is 2% effective January 1, 2026. One of the College Pension Plan rules is that the maximum capitalized value of the COLA cannot exceed the amount in IAA (Inflation Adjustment Account). That rule, as do others,

helps to maintain the stability and sustainability of the plan. Other pension plans have different ways of ascertaining COLA.

Also given the chaos in the world these days, the board and the various entities involved in pension management are pleased that the pension promise is being honoured. And we will all work hard to maintain that situation.” ~

Candace Fertile

CPPR and MPRA: Travel-Medical Insurance

If you join the College Pension Plan Retirees Association or the Municipal Pension Retirees Association (both are \$40 per year and can be automatically deducted from your pension), you can access their travel-medical insurance plan through Bel Air Direct. Their rates are per year, which allows for multiple 30-day trips each year. Their rates are much better than paying for travel-medical insurance per trip. Check out cpr.ca and mpr.ca

CERA: From Shelley Canning

CERA is a multi-disciplinary research centre. We hosted our 4th annual CERA Day on Sept 25 on the Abbotsford campus and hosted over 100 older adults for a day of presentations and workshops. We are excited to be partnering with the Alzheimer's Society of BC and Yukon with our popular Trishaw Rides and upcoming intergenerational cafe programs this year.

Renewed memories, relations and perspectives

Jacqueline Nolte, retired 2023



Looking out over a gorge and waterfall in KwaZulu-Natal.

South Africa is a place of extremes: extreme beauty and violence, an extremely tragic history and extreme accomplishments in its transition to democracy.

Reasons for travel vary and, in retirement, sometimes coalesce. In my case it was my brother's ill health and my need to travel "home." It was time to overcome fears I had long carried from a frozen past, and an opportunity to travel with my sister from the UK to introduce my young niece to the richness of the land. We had three weeks to reconnect with family and friends and to visit sites in KwaZulu and Cape Town.

My brother lives in Hillcrest, a beautiful area north of eThekweni (Durban). His house is located within sumptuous indigenous flora and fauna but close enough to local supermarkets to stock up on requisite "boerewors" and spices for braais. We visited forests, nurseries, the Hillcrest craft market, and an open-air gallery exhibiting interesting critiques of colonial conquest. We explored the Ammazulu African palace guest house, an extraordinary fusion of Zulu and eastern references. All this we did against the backdrop of highway driving where informal settlements of corrugated iron flowed downhill to the edge of the paving, tangled electricity wires overhead, and municipal services varying in relation to how quickly the settlements spring up.



A lioness resting in the shade.

Inequities were grossly visible at times and nuanced at others. A highlight of our stay in KwaZulu was three days at the privately owned Nambiti Game Reserve, two and a half hours north of eThekweni. We travelled along treacherous highways dominated by delivery trucks and subsidiary roads with little signage. Our lodge offered breathtaking views over valleys toward the distant Drakensberg mountains. The conservancy covers 23,000 hectares of thornveld, gorges, riverine, and grasslands dotted with acacias. Over three days, we encountered African buffalo, elephant, rhino, leopards and one dramatic lion kill. We sat alongside cheetah, hippo, hyena, jackals, silver-backed fox, mongooses, wildebeest, herds of zebra, giraffe and innumerable buck.

Our guide informed us of the innovative profit-sharing arrangement between the local chief and community and the conservancy. He was one of the recipients of a land claim settlement filed around the time entrepreneur Rob le Seuer envisaged the conservancy and bought failing farms in the area. Under the settlement, claimants received employment and training, including opportunities to become drivers, guides and entry-level management. The first claim by the Senzo'kühle Communal Trust was



Golden-hour light on rust-coloured boulders and grassland, with flat-topped hills beyond.

based on ancestral (pre-colonial) rights; a second was made by tenants. The trust secured ownership of about a third of Nambiti, while Nambiti Pty (Ltd.) continued the reserve's conservation and economy through lease payments, profit sharing, and providing ownership of one lodge to claimants. Community representatives also gained board representation. The settlement was heralded as an innovative combination of land restitution, conservation, and economic development, although the settlement has created schisms between beneficiaries and those excluded.

Our days in Cape Town and surrounds included the old colonial gardens in Government Avenue, museums in the city centre, and the Malay Bo-Kaap, now celebrating its Muslim heritage with craft stores, small museums and huge pro-Palestinian murals painted alongside mosques. We travelled in the city by Uber, driven by migrants from Malawi, Nigeria and Congo. Some spoke of plans to fight "in Ukraine" for "better compensation"; many were forced to leave months later amid xenophobic mass protests.

At the Waterfront, I spent an intense couple of hours at the Zeitz MOCAA Museum. Two exhibitions reflected on the liberation struggle, including a multigenerational conversation

between contemporary artists and those who had experienced exile under apartheid or banning and house arrest within. Seeing works of an old contemporary of mine, including copies of Staffrider, the resistance journal on which I'd worked in 1981, jolted me into thinking I'd become a historical relic.

That sense of time passing was reinforced by visits with dear friends I'd not seen for 18 years and with whom I'd shared intense years during the struggle against apartheid. Still working on grassroots projects with now poorly funded NGOs, they reminded me of the contrast between their lives and the ease and comfort of life in Canada to which I'd become accustomed. In the bowl of Table Mountain, we visited Kirstenbosch Gardens, caught the cable car to the summit, then drove to Cape Point and Simonstown.

We ended our trip in the Western Cape Winelands, staying on an estate in Franschhoek. The wine, food and splendour of this area was

overwhelming. Yet alongside this booming tourist economy was the reality of the townships where hotel and vineyard workers live. Some employees spoke enthusiastically of their slave ancestry, entwined with colonial slave owners, going back generations on these same farms.

Flying out, we reflected on the changes since we'd last visited. I left filled with the optimism exhibited by a post-apartheid generation. My sister's observation was more cutting: "not much has changed." Given new educational and economic opportunities and the new political alliances, I was struck by her comment. Yet she was right: that enclaves of racism persist, social and economic schisms remain deep, and extreme violence continues, now driven less by oppression than by criminal syndicates. And still, amid all this, the absolute beauty and cultural vibrancy allowed me to surrender to the best of somatic memory—an antidote to muscles that had not unwound for some time.

WEBSITES FOR YOUR BROWSING

[Ammazulu African Palace | 5 Star Guest House](#)

[Nambiti Safari Lodges | 10 Luxury Big 5 Lodges in KwaZulu-Natal](#)

[Kirstenbosch – SANBI](#)

[Our Story – Zeitz MOCAA](#)

[Staffrider | Digital Innovation South Africa](#)

[Slave Lodge – Iziko Museums](#)

[Bo-Kaap Museum – Iziko Museums](#)

[Simon's Town Historical Society | Gateway to Simon's Town History](#)

[Boulders Beach Penguin Colony – A Visitor's Guide & Conservation Story | Cape Town Explore](#)

[franschhoek.org.za · This Friday night market in Franschhoek Winelands is child and dog friendly](#)

What's Going On

- Ufvra is working with Jacqueline Noftall in Human Resources to assist employees with a guide for Offboarding for those who are retiring or just retired.
- Ufvra asked UFV if it is possible for retirees to access Microsoft Suite. They are looking into this.
- **A tip from Ufvra:** On your own you can purchase a subscription to Microsoft Family which currently (as of August 2026) costs \$145 Canadian plus taxes. The Family subscription can be shared with five people. This way you can 'create' your own Microsoft family subscription members and share the cost.

MICROSOFT FAMILY TIP

\$145

Canadian plus taxes, as of August 2026. One subscription can be shared with five people.

In Memoriam

Those who have passed away January to August 2026.

Peter Jones: UFV's 3rd President and Vice Chancellor. Peter came to what was then Fraser Valley College in 1987 and led a challenging but successful campaign to achieve university-college status in 1990/91.

Bonnie Hamilton: Bonnie worked in various roles supporting students with disabilities. She was an advocate for people with disabilities, a teacher, and a writer.

Ken Fernstrom: Ken was a faculty member in Communications and taught for several decades. Ken was a founding chair of the UCFV research journal and helped found the UCFV Press.

Mary Stewart: Mary taught the first cohort of the Halq'eméylem graduate certificate and diploma. Mary also learned and mentored as part of the Stó:lō Shxwelí language program. She had a life-long passion as a language revivalist.

Donna Costello: Donna taught in the Upgrading and University Prep department for many years, starting in 1989. She had a lifelong love of learning and teaching.

FOR MORE DETAILS

For more details and information:

blogs.ufv.ca/announce/category/obituary

CLOSING

Stay Connected!

News and updates are posted on our website: ufv.ca/retirees-association



Our website

ufv.ca/retirees-association



Join us. Membership is free!

[Membership application form](#)



Support a student

ufv.ca/retirees-association/donate

Interested in donating to support a student? We have a leadership award and a bursary. We welcome your contribution.

Contact us: ufvretirees@ufv.ca

Calling all retirees! We are always interested in member stories, event ideas, and if you want to volunteer to support the association. If you have some information that you have from a retiree perspective, you might want to share it. We look forward to hearing from you!

We appreciate and acknowledge the great support that the University of the Fraser Valley provides to the UFV Retirees' Association. So many people work with us and support our work. We could not connect with you, our members, without their in-kind and financial support.

We gratefully acknowledge that we live, work, and retire on the traditional territory of the People of the River, in Stó:lō Téméxw. Many of us branch out to other traditional territories across British Columbia and Canada.