Nanaimo Historical Society
News and Views

NANAIMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Spring 2024

President's Report — Susan Garcia

This will be my "swan song" message as I retire in March 2024, after six years on the Board of Directors and almost two of the last years as President.

With all the members of the Nanaimo Historical Society, I share a passion for history and learning. My parting message is "Keep learning!"

I see BC history rapidly evolving and becoming richer. February was Black History Month and the beginning of the Chinese Lunar New Year. Living in Nanaimo, I feel grounded by learning some of the Hul'q'umi'num language of the Snuneymuxw Nation. We have been experiencing history together. On two Nanaimo Historical Society October tours we've walked on the sites of former Snuneymuxw villages: Sti'ilep at Departure Bay and Tsesleta at the mouth of the Millstone River, with traditional knowledge keeper Dave Bodaly and Director Ted Lord. We held coal miners' tags that our youngest NHS member shared with us, imagined those thriving industries and ships, workers and residents that disappeared long ago.

I feel grateful for the positive responses NHS members and the public have shown to the Board of Directors, presenters, volunteers, and people behind the scenes for all our efforts to make Nanaimo's history known.

Finally, if you caught my rendition of "The Black Ball Ferry" song last November, you'll know that I'm not leaving for a singing career. I look forward to hearing, seeing, walking, and talking with other NHS members in 2024.

Annual General Meeting on Thursday, March 14

Don't miss our annual general meeting on Thursday, March 14 at Bowen Park Complex, 500 Bowen Road, in Activity Room #1. Doors will open at 6:30 PM, the AGM will begin at 7:00 PM. Members of the public are welcome to attend. New memberships may be acquired at the meeting. However, new members and guests will not be permitted to vote during the business portion of the meeting

Following the business meeting, we have a feature presentation by Tony Orchard, Nanaimo Historical Society Director and Treasurer. He will present his video 'The History of Westwood Lake', describing the migration of the Westwood family to Nanaimo, the draining of the original swamp to create a farm, sale of the property and subsequent construction of dams by the Nanaimo Electric Light and Power Company, and the conversion of the reservoir to a city park.

Refreshments will be served at the conclusion of the meeting, when members and guests will have the opportunity to visit amongst themselves and speak with the video's creator.

Questions or comments? Email us at nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca

Leynard Legacy Heritage Grants

Nanaimo Historical Society's Leynard Legacy Heritage Grants support projects that will improve our community's awareness, knowledge and understanding of the natural and cultural history of the Nanaimo area. These grants are made possible by a bequest to our society from the late Liselotte Leynard, widow of Arthur Leynard. Arthur Leynard (1921 - 2008) was a prominent member of our society, and former City of Nanaimo engineer.

Grants awarded by the NHS Board for 2023:

Lantzville Historical Society: $4,500 for book on Lantzville history 1955 to 2003

Simon Priest: $2,000 to support publication of self-guided interpretive historical tours in Nanaimo area

South Wellington Community and Area Association: $1,000 to support South Wellington Heritage Days in 2025

Grants awarded by the NHS Board to date for 2024:

Nanaimo Community Archives: $5,000 to assist their ongoing historical support.

Nanaimo Family History Society: $10,000 to create a 1921 map of Nanaimo with information on property and residents

Parksville Museum: $5,000 to support museum programs by becoming a Champion Sponsor

Protection Island Cultural Historical Society: $5,000 to support organizing their archives

At right: NHS Director Ted Lord presented a cheque for $5,000 to Susan Wismer, President of the Parksville Museum on February 26

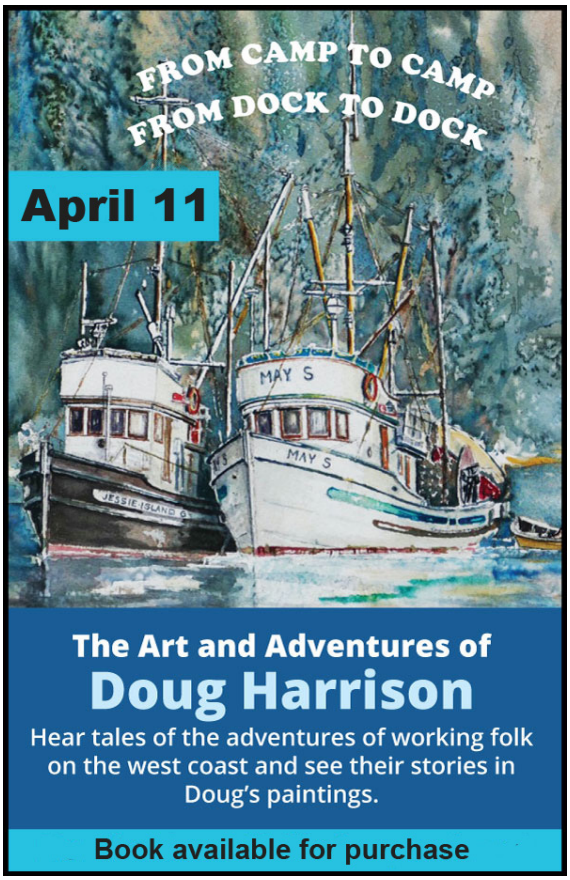
Below left: NHS Director Ted Lord presented a cheque for $10,000 to Susan Bates, President of The Nanaimo Family History Society, at the NHS January 11 general meeting

Below right: On January 14 ,NHS President Susan Garcia presented a cheque for $5,000 to Cathy Tuominem, President of the Protection Island Cultural Historical Society

Leynard Legacy Heritage Grants

Individuals, societies and community groups based in the Nanaimo area are eligible to apply. The program provides a one-time only cash award to an individual or community group that encourages creative community engagement in our heritage. The project's objective must include creating awareness and understanding of persons, events (natural and human), structures or activities that occurred within the Nanaimo area. The value of a grant is subject to available funds. For grant guidelines, parameters for activities and application process, please visit https://www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca/about/leynard-legacy-grant-program

You have seen how the NHS Grants Committee is providing grants for history projects, in keeping with our charitable purposes, which are listed on our web site. If you are a member in good standing of the Nanaimo Historical Society, we are seeking your input on how you think your Board of Directors should manage the Leynard bequest going forward. Should the Society maintain most of our Capital and use interest and donations to support our Grants, or should we plan on reducing our Capital over time to support worthy grants and projects? Please contact grants@nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca



April 11 Presentation

At our April 11 meeting, guest speaker Doug Harrison, former MacMillan Bloedel logging division manager, will attend to present a mixed bag of his paintings and anecdotes from coastal logging between Haida Gwai and Vancouver Island. Some of these stories and images are in his coffee table book of his paintings depicting the working west coast: "From Dock to Dock: The Art and Adventures of Doug Harrison".

Thursday, April 11 at Bowen Park Complex, Activity Room #1, 500 Bowen Road. Doors open at 6:30 pm, meeting begins at 7:00 pm. All are welcome. Refreshments will follow the presentation.

May event

Watch for a field trip being planned for May! Details coming soon on our website and Facebook page.

September 12: Stories from the BC Forest Discovery Centre

Mike Bonkowski will present his investigative research into many of the items and displays at the BCFDC in Duncan (formerly the BC Forest Museum) Bonkowski will also tell of its founder, Gerry Wellburn, and how his private collection evolved into a public open air museum.

Thursday, September 12 at Bowen Park Complex, Activity Room #1, 500 Bowen Road. Doors open at 6:30 pm, meeting begins at 7:00 pm. All are welcome. Refreshments will follow the presentation.

Watch Our Past Meetings and Tours Online

Did you know you can watch online presentations and field trips of the Nanaimo Historical Society on our YouTube channel **@nanaimohistoricalsociety1953** ? Here is the lineup:

~ October 2020 - Christine Meutzner “Wellington Cemetery tour”
~ January 2021 - Annual Show and Share 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 “More Stories of Trailblazing Women of Vancouver Island”
~ October 2021 - Greg Fraser “Joseph McKay biography “
~ November 2021 - Brian McFadden “Dam Busters, Nanaimo connection”
~ January 2022 - Annual Show and Share Meeting
~ February 2022 - Catherine Marie Gilbert “The history of Strathcona Provincial Park ”
~ March 2022 - Susan Garcia “Murder on Mayne Island“
~ April 2022 - Sean Enns “Charlie Abbott, the Chemainus Hermit”
~ June 2022 - Liam Hall “Morden Mine Restoration” and Welcome Back picnic
~ September 2022 - Dave Flawse “Nanaimo’s last hanging & Jack the Flying Dutchman”
~ October 2022 - Ted Lord and Dave Bodaly “Departure Bay Historical Stroll”
~ November 2022 - The E&N Railroad: Obstacles & Challenges Still Visible Today
~ January 2023 - Nanaimo Historical Society Annual Show and Share
~ March 2023 - Dalys Barney *Message on a Bottle: Nanaimo’s Soda History*
~ April 2023 - Cowichan’s Old Hillcrest Chinese Cemetery onsite interview with Neil Dirom
~ May 2023 - Walking Tour of Buttertubs Marsh with Bill Merrilees
~ September 2023 - Japanese history in Nanaimo with Tami Hirawasa
~ October 2023 - Stroll through Maffeo-Sutton Park with Dave Bodaly and Ted Lord
~ November 2023 - Passenger Ships and Ferries that Served Nanaimo from 1881-1961
~ February 2024 - “The History That We Share” with Robert Janning

Additional Historical Presentations Online

In addition to online presentations of NHS meetings and events on our website (and on YouTube - see above), you can also browse a section that features other articles and presentations of interest https://www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca/articles Here is what we have added recently:

History of the Electrical System in Nanaimo

Nanaimo’s Welsh Community 1860-1914, an online presentation by Dr. Gethin Matthews which was hosted by the Glamorgan Family HIstory Society in Wales on December 14, 2023

May 3, 1887 Mine Explosion, an article by NHS member Wanita Malkiewicz

The Story of Stovely 1862-1990, an article by NHS member Richard Prior

Provenance of the Poppy, an article by NHS member Darrell Ohs

Nanaimo’s Soda Bottling History, an article by NHS member Dalys Barney

The Horses of Nanaimo's Early Firehall

The "Black Diamond Engine Company" was housed in the 1893 purpose-built firehall at the foot of Nicol Street. In 1901, the City took over the company and it became the Nanaimo Fire Department. A pair of horses were purchased in 1902, named Tom and Jerry (photo right), who were later replaced by Pat and Mike. The horses were stabled in stalls at the rear of the hall, which were placed in such a fashion that the horses had to move forward a short distance into another stall where their harnesses hung clear. The driver on duty would lead the horses into the stalls and press a lever, which lowered the harnesses onto the horses, ready to be buckled. One day a driver went to the stables in response to an alarm and found both horses already in their harnesses, standing patiently waiting to be buckled. This puzzled him until he later accidently tripped the alarm and to his amazement both horses moved forward until their chests touched the lever, thereby solving the mystery. The fire horses were known for their eagerness to reach a fire. When motor trucks replaced the horses, the animals retired and were allowed to run free on a nearby farm. It was often said that the horses would be found at the scene of the fire long before the arrival of the truck.

Adapted from "The Beginning of the Nanaimo Fire Department", researched and written by John Cass, prepared for the Radio Series "Files of Yesteryear", presented over CHUB Radio, January 11 to January 19, 1968 and presented to the Nanaimo Fire Department on January 22, 1968
Image Credit Nanaimo Museum F1-6
Nanaimo Fire Department 1910.

At right: Nanaimo Historical Society members enjoyed our holiday no-host lunch social on December 2, 2023 at Minnoz Restaurant in the Coast Bastion Hotel.

At left: On Saturday October 7 2023, the Nanaimo Historical Society hosted *A Stroll through Maffeo-Sutton Park,* a well attended historical walking tour

Dave Bodaly, NHS member and Snuneymuxw Cultural Guide, NHS Directors Susan Garcia and Ted Lord and NHS members Mali Bain and Marion Lord enjoyed refreshments on the waterfront following the walk.

Member Opportunities

Since 1953, the Nanaimo Historical Society has been researching and developing projects that record and celebrate the long and diverse history of the Nanaimo area. We are a volunteer-run society, and as we prepare for new programs and events, we are seeking individuals with an interest in local history to join us at the board or committee level. This is an opportunity to meet people who share an interest in history and is an opportunity to share your skills or develop new ones. We offer seven to eight public meetings and tours each year on a variety of historical topics. You can check out our activities at nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca

Board of Directors: Qualifications: we welcome the addition of people with adult learning, financial, governance, project planning and communications experience and interest. There is a requirement to attend monthly board meetings and general meetings, and to be involved in at least one of our committees. Our committees are below. We especially need more board members for the first two *****.

*** Governance Committee:** advises the board on policies and procedures

*** Programme Committee:** organizing meeting topics and guest speakers, speaker support (new!), developing learning programs

Communications Committee: website, Facebook, YouTube, newsletter, media promotion

Leynard Legacy Heritage Grant Program: administering our community grant program

Finance: overseeing and reporting on the society's finances

Other: We are seeking volunteers to organize refreshments at our meetings and a member to coordinate taxi rides to our meetings for other members. If you are interested in volunteering, email communications@nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca or call Sue Creba at 250-753-3371.

Historical Recordings Transcribed to Digital Files

Audio files and transcripts of NHS recordings are available at Vancouver Island University. This work is ongoing and here are links to the most recent additions:

Nanaimo in the 1920s & 1930s / Jan Peterson https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/23406

Making of a coal town: Nanaimo, 1852-1858 / Richard Mackie https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/16373

Nanaimo community heritage register update / Christine Meutzner https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/21882

History of the Newcastle townsite / Christine Meutzner https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/20291

History of the Nanaimo Fish and Game Club / Ted Barsby https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/23400

Kanaka: The untold story of Hawaiian pioneers in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest / Tom Koppel https://viurrspace.ca/handle/10613/23413

Submitted by Dalys Barney, NHS member and Digital Collections Assistant, VIU Library

About the Nanaimo Historical Society

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 Board

President:	**Susan Garcia**	**Directors at large:**	**Darrell Ohs**
Vice President:	**Sue Creba**		**Ted Lord**
Treasurer:	**Tony Orchard**		**Clive Hadfield**
Secretary:	**Gordon Miller**		

Find Us At:

nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca

https://www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca

facebook.com/NanaimoHistory/

YouTube @nanaimohistoricalsociety1953

Mailing address: Box 933, Nanaimo, BC V9R 5N2

NANAIMO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Nanaimo Historical Society membership fees are:

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

Renewals are due in January of each year.
Please contact Gordon Miller at nanaimohistoricalsociety@shaw.ca to renew your membership, apply or renew at any in-person meeting, or sign up on our website.

Visit Our Website and Facebook

Our Nanaimo Historical Society website features upcoming and past events, news and resources and much more! We invite you to visit https://www.nanaimohistoricalsociety.ca
If you follow Facebook, visit facebook.com/NanaimoHistory to learn about events and news about local history.

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