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Message from the President Mary Ann Hayes

It is definitely turning to fall and this process changes our landscape. As the Gold Rush Exhibit leaves the museum our docent landscape will also change. I have certainly enjoyed meeting visitors at the weight cart. I found the items on the cart drew people to join me eager to engage in learning. Sometimes I was the one who learned from them. From geologists to people who had worked in refining gold to yes, even people out there still panning; my experience was rewarding.

Now we move on to the new Wildlife Photographer of the Year exhibit. I hope you also see the changing landscape inside the museum as an opportunity. Where else

Mark Your Calendars
Circle January 25th and February 29th for the first two Docent Associations meetings of the year. See you then in the Newcombe Conference Hall 10 a.m.-12:00 noon.
might we volunteer in a place where we learn as we teach and meet people from around the world!

I wish you a fall full of beautiful colors and a joyous festive season.

Christmas Cheer

Bring out your red and green, Christmas bobbles and sense of fun. Monday, December 7th is the annual Docent Association Christmas Luncheon. The potluck event is from noon to 3 p.m. in the Newcombe Conference Hall. Count on stimulating conversation, a sumptuous potluck buffet, surprises and prizes. Sign-up sheets will soon be posted in the Volunteer Lounge.

Meet Leanne Webber

Winnipeg-born Leanne Webber has had several interesting careers. After moving to Victoria in 1957, she worked with McGill and Orme Pharmacy. Then her passion for travel led the way. She became a stewardess with Trans Canada Airline, now Air Canada, on domestic and international flights. She married and raised a family while she earned her B.Ed. in history, music and English. Leanne taught in several Victoria elementary schools, capping her career with 14 years at Willows School.

Her 13 years as docent were also varied, spanning special exhibits including Da Vinci, Eternal Egypt, British Museum, and Gold Fever, helping in coat check, on the information desk and the school program. She is justly proud of organizing and leading three multi-day trips for docents and their friends/spouses. The first explored the Sunshine Coast and featured boating in the Princess Louisa Inlet. The second followed the Gold Rush Trail to Barkerville where adventures included eating at Canada’s oldest Chinese restaurant and a fear-riddled bus ride down Pavilion Mountain. The third
followed the Hudson Bay Company – its forts, museums and socio-economic footprints – from Victoria to Fort Vancouver. Dr. Lorne Hammond joined the Barkerville and Hudson Bay tours adding colour and vignettes of miners, settlers, trappers and voyageurs. “He’s a walking encyclopedia and everything he told us was fascinating.”

“We miss our long trips but now the prices seem too high for most people to do them. Many of us are getting older so the bus trips don’t seem so comfortable anymore. C’est la vie! Now, I spend my time being a docent and tour guide for Helmcken House and St. Ann’s and looking after five glorious grandchildren.”

“It is some years since I have been an active docent but this was an important and rewarding time in my life. It was a constant learning process and a challenge. We were exposed to so much information which we co-ordinated into a program. We helped each other and also managed to share many laughs.”

Betty Holms – long service docent

Meet Bronwyn Frazer

Bronwyn Frazer trained in accounting before she realized her heart was in the social sector. She returned to university to major in sociology and women’s studies when her two sons started school. She fell into a career of communications and special event management, working on large projects like the Olympic Torch Run, a telethon broadcast live to Hong Kong, and the just out whacky like a snowball fight in July. Born in Toronto, she spent most of her life in Ontario, but ever the adventurer, she and her husband straddled two provinces and set up a cattle ranch in Stettler, Alberta raising purebred Red Angus, a strain developed by her husband’s uncle. Later, her husband’s work opportunities triggered their migration to Dallas for five years and then on to Auckland.

The Auckland Museum became a social and professional anchor for Bronwyn in New Zealand. She worked in several volunteer and staff capacities. Bronwyn supervised the revitalization of the museum’s front-of-house to enhance visitor experience. Then, as Development Executive, she became lead fundraiser.
When their first grandchild was born in Nanaimo, the Frazer’s pulled up stakes and moved to Victoria. Since their arrival in September 2011, Bronwyn has been active at the RBCM. Currently vice-president of the Docent Association, Bronwyn devotes most of her energy to school programs including trailhead tours, and with the handling collections team. Here she is part of a team enthusiastically identifying objects and artifacts that can be located in one spot, easily accessible to educators and program directors for both in-museum and outreach learning.

Bronwyn is a passionate genealogist, reader, globe-trotter and nanna to her two Nanaimo granddaughters and two Ontario grandsons.

“I have been a docent for over 40 years. There have been lots of changes at the museum over this time. What I like best is the feeling of belonging with a group of people. I have enjoyed every minute of it.”  June Ruskin

Enriching Visits for People with Disabilities

Any museum can pose physical, sensory, learning and social discomfort challenges to people with disabilities. On October 21st, Helena Prins and Rob Baker of the Garth Homer Society conducted a workshop with docents. The air was charged with positive energy as participants ‘stepped into the shoes’ of persons with disabilities. They brainstormed how to reduce identified barriers so persons with disabilities can enjoy the RBCM. We asked the Garth Homer Society to give us guidance.

Helena summarized some of the key insights and suggestions on ways docents can enrich the RBCM experience for persons with disabilities:

- The most important message was to give them a warm welcome and a smile.
- Many are naturally curious and enjoy learning, but they all learn in different ways.
- Start with a quick verbal rundown of the museum for caregivers and their clients who have never been to the museum. Highlight the most popular exhibits: this can help them choose how they would like to spend their time.
- Some clients can be overwhelmed when approached by someone they do not know. Offer a general greeting question such as, “How are
you enjoying your visit today?” Allow the key worker or client to lead from there.

- Persons will disabilities can be loud, excited and exuberant, since the museum is often a very fun outing.
- They often need assistance with their mobility and use wheelchairs, walkers, or canes. When the museum is busy we have struggles getting around. If a volunteer notices this, kindly asking the other patrons to move is extremely appreciated.
- Those clients with low vision would benefit from having museum exhibits and artifacts highlighted with a flashlight so they can better see them.
- If one of the clients approaches you with a question, feel free to answer it like you would if anyone else asked you.
- When noticing that a client’s discomfort is escalating, crowd control would be the most helpful strategy.

This workshop led to a new partnership being formed between the Royal BC Museum and the Garth Homer Society. The collaboration will focus on making the museum more inclusive and accessible to all. Helena comments, “People with disabilities want no more or less in their lives than the rest of us.”

Please feel free to contact Helena Prins at 250-475-2270 ext 236 should you have any further questions.

**Photo:** (left to right) Diane Swanson, June Slack and Margo Farren discuss with Rob Baker how docents can enrich the RBCM experience for adults with developmental delays. Baker is a LifeStreams facilitator with the Garth Homer Society.

**Tip:** Just in case there is ever an emergency evacuation at the museum, Kathy Harris suggests we take our car and house keys with us on our shifts. That way, if the museum is in lockdown for a few hours, we can get into our cars and our homes.
Update from Holli Hodgson

The 2015 Emeritus and Long Service Tea celebrated Peggy Foot, Shelagh Graham, Rosemarie Jeffrey, Lynn Murray, Olive Quayle and Dr. Nancy Turner who were awarded with Emeritus status in 2015. We welcomed Bonnie Gallagher, Bonnie Henley and Marlene Lavallee as new Emeritus Volunteers who will be awarded with Emeritus status at our 2016 Recognition Ceremony. June Ruskin was congratulated and commended for 40 incredible years of Long Service in 2015. Sincere appreciation for all of our Emeritus and Long Service volunteers was expressed by all who attended. Executive Team Members Professor Jack Lohman, Dr. Scott Cooper and Melissa Sands joined us and Angela Williams sent her regrets. Department Heads Kelly Sendall and Janet McDonald also attended.

Professor Jack Lohman congratulated these outstanding volunteers for their contributions toward pivotal RBCM successes in 2015. Among these, the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) announced that the Royal BC Museum is a winner in the 27th Annual AAM Excellence in Exhibition Competition for the feature exhibition Our Living Languages: First Peoples’ Voices in BC. For the second year in a row, reviewers on TripAdvisor.ca have picked the Royal BC Museum as the best museum in Canada, topping a 2015 list that also includes the Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver and the Royal Ontario Museum. Our Living Languages: First Peoples’ Voices in British Columbia – 2015 was also a Finalist for the Governor General’s History Award for Excellence in Museums: History Alive!

Gold Rush! El Dorado in BC was the first exhibition in over 20 years that was planned and developed in-house for internal, national and international display. Curators are now orchestrating the safe transport of the Gold Rush exhibition to the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec. Two Gold Rush panel exhibitions are currently on display in China. Docents and other volunteers gave valued support to museum and archives staff in their efforts to build a legacy of internal and external partnership and international cooperation.

“This volunteer opportunity has been a real treasure to come across. After several years of retirement I found myself doing similar roles as to my past career. This is refreshingly different and rewarding for me to learn and interact with our guests who really want to be here in this incredible setting.”

Bob Clark – new docent (see Bob’s photo on p.8)
Exploring the World of Taxidermy

A modern taxidermist starts with a gutted animal. By the time a cougar or deer is ready for museum display, everything but the skin, antlers and hooves may be fabricated. Birds get to keep their feathers, wing bones and feet. Animal skins are tanned and birds are dried with borax powder. Terry Woodworth and his assistant Jason Maat gave docents a step-by-step walk through the process from fleshing and salting to selecting the right eyes and teeth.

Docents toured Lagoon Taxidermy on November 7th and are now checking out Terry’s handiwork in RBCM: including the bobcat, spotted owl, and squirrels. Most of his magic is done with polyurethane mannikins that he can nuance by carving or by adding paper mache, potter’s clay, wire, and an assortment of rubber and plastic snouts, ear forms and body part shapes.

A hummingbird is his smallest achievement. A 13-foot African crocodile is his biggest. A warthog and a hyena mingle with stags and birds on his shop walls. If you front up after discovering a freshly killed bear and are curious about prices: a bear rug will cost about $1,500 and a life-sized bear about $3,000. No taxidermy is allowed on most animals or birds without a permit. The local First Nation is always consulted and has a priority claim to any bald eagle for ceremonial purposes.

After Terry’s jovial and informative insights into taxidermy, docents toured the Coast Collective Art Gallery located at historic Pendray House and lunched at the Four Mile Pub. Thanks so much June Salter and Jocelyn Skrlac for organizing this fun filled and information-rich day.

Taxidermist Terry Woodworth
More fun at Lagoon Taxidermy

Thyrza Blaze with the head of a black-tailed mule deer awaiting fleshing, the first step of many before mounting

Donna-Lee Munroe was gifted a rubber bear tongue to enhance the bear animation cart.

Terry Woodworth with a wolf head form that he needed to extend

Bob Clark in a close encounter with a timber wolf
Out and About

Our docent outings are more than mere local learning experiences beyond the museum’s walls; they also serve as interesting and enjoyable ways for us to get to know each other better. Even when we’ve already visited some of the docent tour destinations, a repeat visit exploring and experiencing the same place with new people broadens our concepts of the place. Besides that, it’s also jolly good fun!

Because most of us will be at the museum celebrating the festive season at the Docent Christmas Party on Monday, December 7th, our next docent trip will not be until next year. The exact date has yet to be decided but likely will fall during the third week of January, 2016.

Clue 1: It’s a place we locals see regularly but visit rarely;
Clue 2: It’s a signature icon for our city as well as for our province;
Final Clue: The golden man standing atop it has two left (or is it right?) feet.

If you still haven’t guessed our mystery destination then suffice it to say that after our visit there we’ll stop for lunch at the Ledge.

Stay alert for the final date announcement to be issued early in the New Year.

WANTED: Linda Pennells and Karen Gallagher are enjoying pulling together the content and photos for the Docent Association newsletter but are seeking a person to do layout. If you have these skills, please contact Karen Gallagher  kgallagher@shaw.ca  Tel: 250-381-6081
Thank you to Aki Graber for graciously laying out this newsletter.