



**BC**  
**HISTORICAL  
FEDERATION**

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

**2023-2024**  
British Columbia Historical Federation

*Photograph courtesy of Leanne Flinton.*

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*Greg Dickson and Henk Piket, Princeton, 2023.*

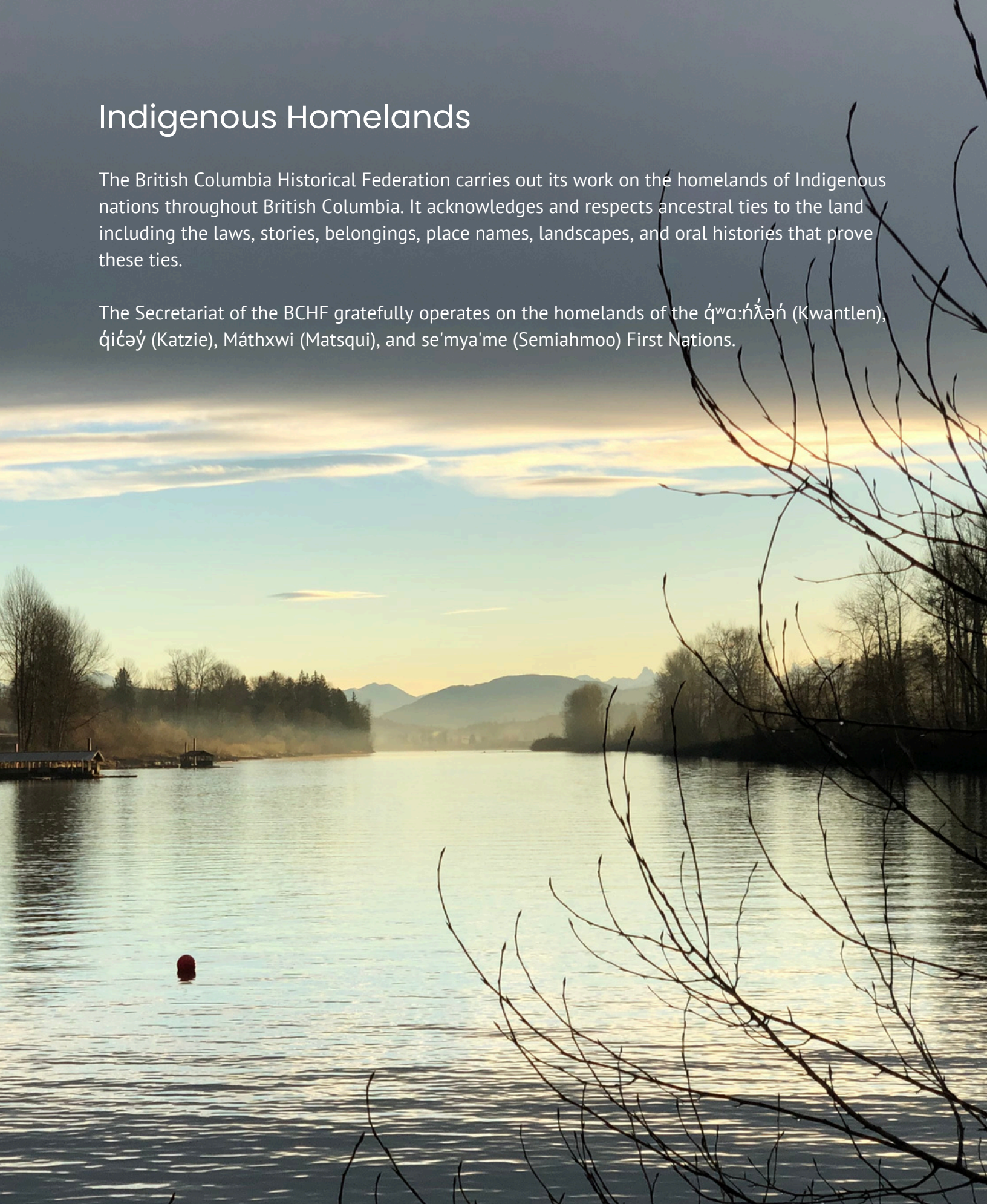


*Photograph courtesy of Leanne Flinton.*

# Indigenous Homelands

The British Columbia Historical Federation carries out its work on the homelands of Indigenous nations throughout British Columbia. It acknowledges and respects ancestral ties to the land including the laws, stories, belongings, place names, landscapes, and oral histories that prove these ties.

The Secretariat of the BCHF gratefully operates on the homelands of the ḡʷa:ḡḷəḡ (Kwantlen), ḡíćə́ý (Katzie), Máthxwi (Matsqui), and se'mya'me (Semiahmoo) First Nations.



# Values Statement

The BCHF is a value-drive organization. The values held by the organization are:

## **1. Inclusive and diverse voices**

The BCHF includes people, stories, research, and preservation from geographically, culturally diverse and Indigenous communities from around BC.

## **2. Evidence based storytelling**

The BCHF is committed to research-based publishing that acknowledges the rights and wrongs of the past and provides a catalyst for dialogue.

## **3. Supporting preservation**

The BCHF knows that the preservation of historical records, both tangible and intangible, is critical to the ability to present and discuss history. We support historical archives and projects that catalogue unwritten and unbuilt history.

## **4. Accessible and relevant**

The BCHF puts accessibility at the centre of its storytelling. We listen to what the public is curious about and create information that puts history into context. Through British Columbia History magazine, and new uses of technology, including social media and video content, we are committed to remaining relevant and timely.

## **5. Informal and professional**

The BCHF wants to create a fun and warm environment for its members while remaining professional. Members should feel comfortable and welcome, with our direct, personal style.

## **6. Transparent and ethical**

The BCHF will have a strong environment that ensures good financial stewardship and internal controls ensuring long term financial sustainability. We will communicate with members openly and clearly and behave ethically. We want to reduce our environmental footprint as much as possible.



## President's Report

The 2023 fiscal year has been one of steady work and continuous improvement here at the BCHF. Our members continue to inspire us with their efforts to archive critical source materials, gain new insights into British Columbia's past and inspire all BC citizens through engaged and ethical storytelling.

Here at the BCHF, we have continued to focus on integrating our core values and our new governance documents into our communications, meetings and tasks, which continues to lead to rising energy and positivity in our organization.

Like many of our members, the BCHF is run entirely by volunteers, so we focus on three main projects. In 2023, each of these major pieces of work saw significant success. Four thought-provoking, groundbreaking magazine issues are among our best! A grass roots, energizing, music-filled in-person conference in Princeton, BC! A full list of notable award winners, many who attended our gala awards night and were celebrated for their accomplishments! More details are recounted by the respective team leaders in their individual reports.

At an organizational level, we have continued to see strengthening and renewal in our Board. Four of our new directors have made significant positive contributions this year. Monica Miller continues to do excellent work as our Membership Secretary. Teresa Carlton led our Book Awards program with support from Shannon Bettles. Jon Bartlett helped our conference team with its planning for 2024 and 2025 conferences. Quentin Wright led our Centennial Legacy Fund program as our newest director.

At the same time, our returning Board members continue to hold the society's vision, often doing the unseen and necessary support work that is essential. This year, Shannon Bettles stepped up to completely redesign and update our website, moving it onto our Wild Apricot platform. Without her generosity and expertise, this necessary project would have cost our organization tens of thousands of dollars.



**Rosa Flinton-Brown**

Two very important Board members, Mark Forsythe and Emma Quan, have stepped down from their board positions. We thank them for the commitment and energy they brought to the organization. We are grateful that Mark will continue his work with the *British Columbia History* magazine as a columnist.

The BCHF has a representative seat on the Land Title Stakeholders Association board. For many years, Jacqueline Gresko fulfilled this important role for us. In 2023, she stepped down and we nominated John Lutz to this position. We are grateful that we continue to have a seat at this table to represent the interests of BC historians and researchers.

With respect to our advocacy and collaboration work, we have continued to support the ongoing public consultations on the Royal BC Museum Collections and Archives building. Our Board has invited Emma Wright to come and present to us at our June board meeting. We encourage all our member organizations to participate in the process and communicate their hopes and needs for that new building clearly and directly.

The BCHF actively participates in quarterly conversations with GLAM (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, Museums) sector stakeholders in BC to share insights and common challenges. Providing support and relaying information to one another in this time of shrinking funding and post pandemic challenges is key. Since BCHF members often hold multiple memberships in the BCMA, the BCLA and other provincial organizations, it has been valuable to work together in their interests.

One new collaboration for the BCHF this year is with the Canadian Historical Association (CHA). The CHA initiated a project called “Bridging the Gap” to collect information through a qualitative survey on all the national and provincial historical associations and federations. You can find more details below.

I want to express my deep appreciation for you, our members, for your continued support and commitment to the BC Historical Federation. We know that budgets are tight, and every dollar spent is evaluated and assessed each year. We do not take it for granted that you choose to support the *British Columbia History* magazine, our writing and advocacy awards, the Centennial Legacy Fund, and our annual gathering of the community each year. Thank you so much.





## Board of Directors

Rosa Flinton-Brown, Langley  
 Anna Irwin, Victoria  
 Kira Westby, Smithers  
 Barbara Kearney-Copan / Rosa  
 Flinton-Brown

Jon Bartlett, Princeton  
 Teresa Carlson, Chilliwack  
 Chelsea Dunaway, Victoria  
 Mark Forsythe, Fort Langley  
 Aman Johal, Surrey  
 Monica Miller, Maple Ridge  
 Greg Nesteroff, Trail  
 Emma Quan, Burnaby  
 Ron Verzuh, Victoria  
 Quentin Wright, Vancouver  
 Elwin Xie, Vancouver

Shannon Bettles, Williams Lake  
 K. Jane Watt, Fort Langley

**President**  
**First Vice-President**  
**Secretary**  
**Treasurer**

**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**  
**Director**

**Past President**  
**Honourary President**



*Photos: BCHF board members gather and catch up at the Princeton conference.*

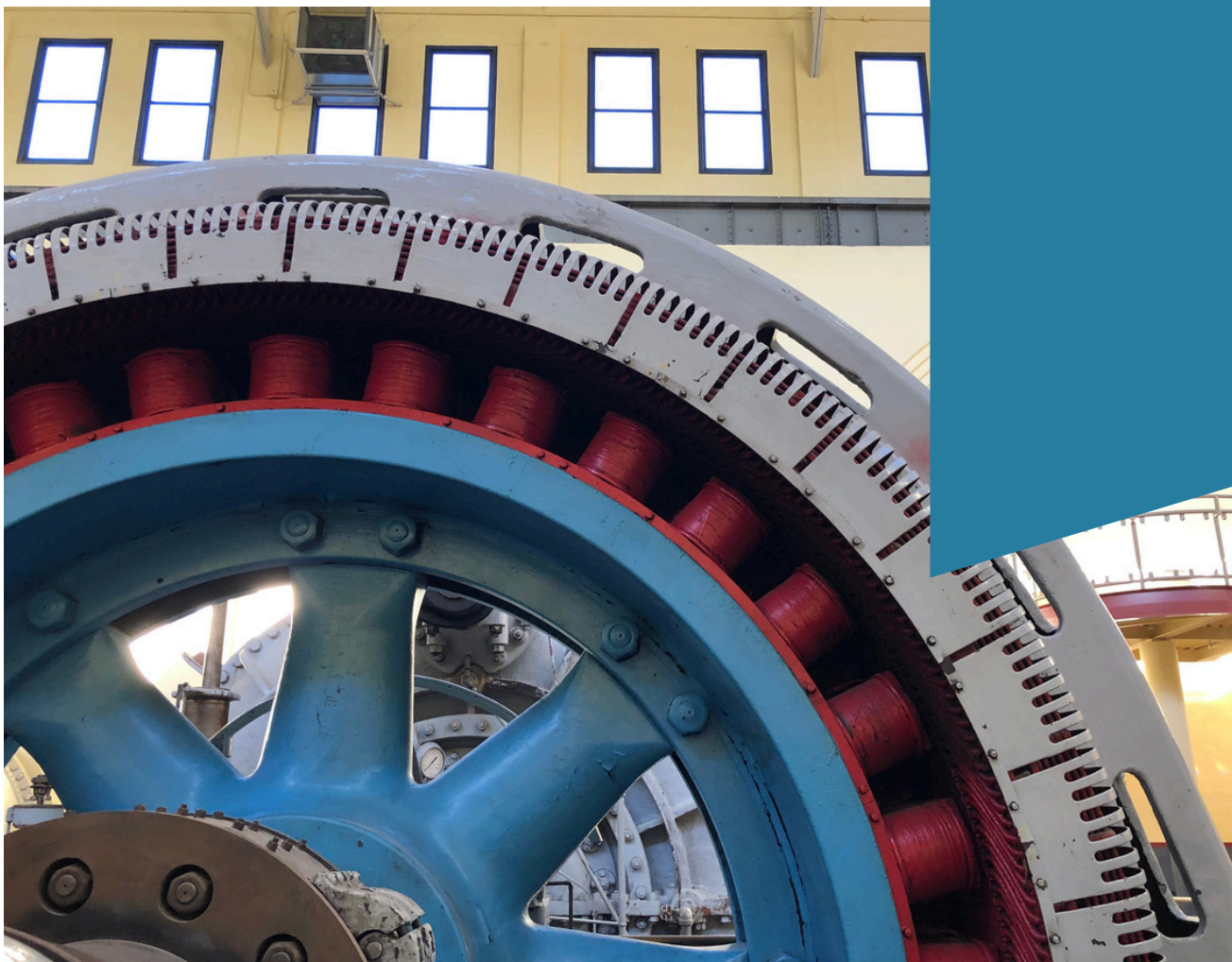
## Honourary President

Once again it has been such a pleasure this year to work with this incredible group of people as they support member societies in every corner of the province, foster leadership in the sector, and carry a formidable portfolio of projects that celebrate and share the work being done in public history in BC.

The BCHF board lives its values. It makes space to build connections across and between cultures. It meets the challenges of colonial history with toughness and curiosity. It keeps laughter alive around the board table, and it works hard to find ways to cultivate new communities and new understandings of the past through the telling of stories.



**K. Jane Watt**



*Powerhouse at Stave Falls, Mission. Photograph courtesy of Jane Watt..*



# Membership

Monica Miller started in the position of Membership coordinator in May 2023, taking over from Shannon Bettles as interim coordinator, who handled these duties after Callie Anderson's retirement from the board in March 2023.

At the 2023 AGM, the motion was passed to adopt an updated constitution and bylaws, which included changing membership categories and procedures. To be more inclusive and simplify language, the Associate membership category was renamed Individual, and the category called Society was renamed Organization. The other membership categories—Affiliate, Corporate, Honorary—remained the same. The other change was that new members no longer need to be approved by the board. Applications will automatically be approved upon submission of membership information and payment of dues.

While our numbers are down compared to the past two years, this seems to be due to lapsed renewals—possibly from reduced capacity at member organizations due to budget cuts or loss of staff—rather than not finding value in membership. We have formulated a plan for addressing those lapsed renewals and have ideas to increase memberships after BCHF activities such as the Conference and Awards.



Monica Miller

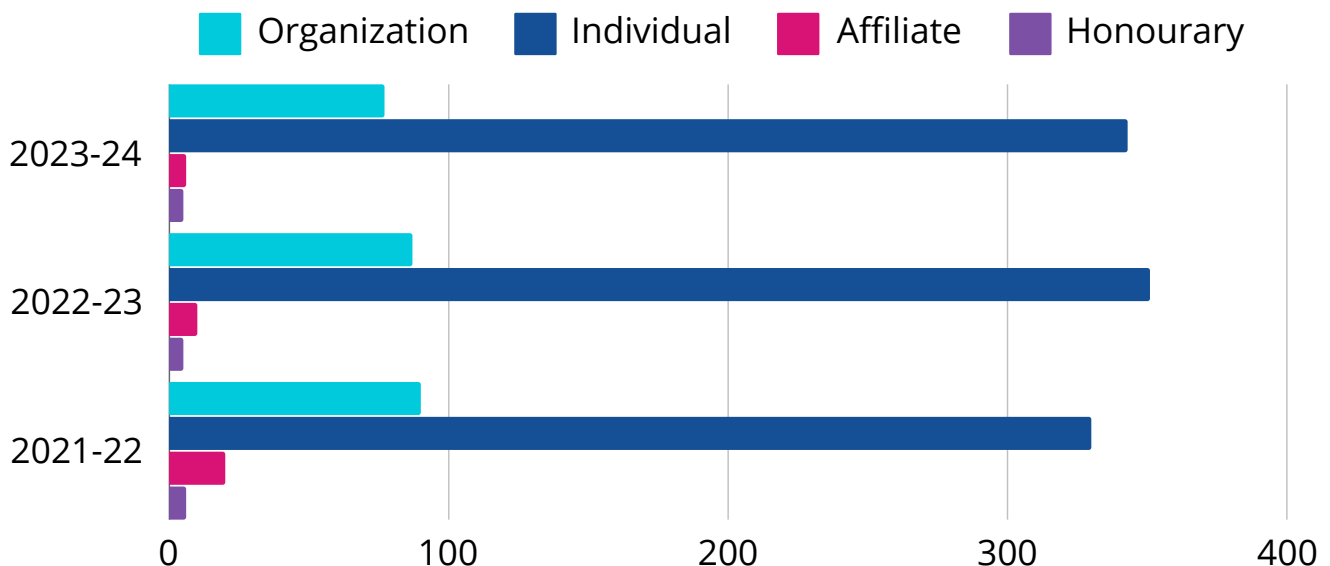


Table: Membership numbers across categories 2021 to 2024.

# Report on the National Initiative

## *What is “Bridging the Gap?”*

“Bridging the Gap” is a project initiated by the Canadian Historical Association (CHA), which is intended to produce a written report on the state of Canada’s national and provincial historical organizations. The survey asked these umbrella organizations about their history, vision and objectives, funding sources, projects and accomplishments, and current challenges. This is the first time that the national organization has reached out to the historical sector’s umbrella organizations across the country, so it is an exciting initiative with a lot of promise.

The CHA, and those organizations who have committed time to the project and joined the various steering committees, hope and believe that this initial report will lead to more cooperation and cohesion throughout the sector. We have much to gain from working together. Basic knowledge on each national and provincial organization is the place to start.

The report will be presented in a panel format at the Canadian Historical Association Conference at Congress 2024 from June 17-19, 2024 in Montreal. Rosa will be a panelist representing the BCHF. We believe our organization has much to offer to the other provincial and national historical associations because our core values prepare us for a more inclusive, diverse and truthful telling of BC’s history. More highlights of the report will be shared with members as they become available.



*Left: Logging legacy, Alouette Lake. Right: Nest in outhouse. Photographs courtesy of Jane Watt.*

# Magazine

We are so proud of *British Columbia History* magazine and of the magazine dream team that makes it all possible. We have just completed another annual cycle of welcoming guest editors to help us shape the thematic direction of each issue:

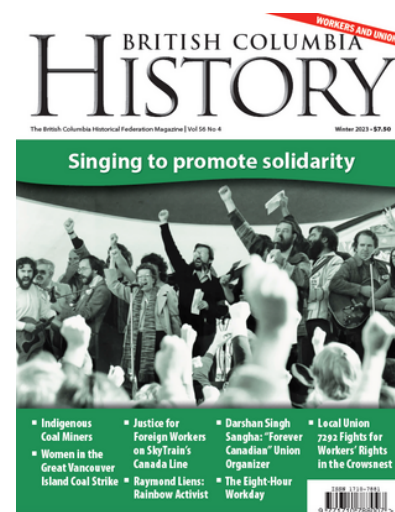
- Summer 2023: Collective Futures, with guest editor Aimee Greenaway
- Fall 2023: This Land, with guest editor Angie Bain
- Winter 2023: Labour History, with guest editor Ron Verzuh
- Spring 2024: Doukhobor History, with guest editor Jonathan J. Kalmakoff

We walked with Researcher-in-Residence Terry Arnett throughout 2023 as he shared the life of his great-grandmother Mejade'sse and the story of his evolving relationship with his own Tahltan heritage. We are delighted to welcome Elder and teacher William A. White (Snuneymuxw/Cowichan) as a regular columnist as well as Writer-in-Residence Spencer Legebokoff of Castlegar who is exploring the story of his Doukhobor heritage in prose and poetry.

We have exciting new energy in our Mags Team: after five years as Books Editor, Aimee Greenaway has stepped into the role of Managing Editor. We welcomed Dalys Barney as Books Editor, and we welcomed back designer Bill Glasgow. We continue to lean on copy editor Robyn So, Editor-at-large Greg Nesteroff, columnist Mark Forsythe, and our rotating team of proofreaders: Ron Greene, Greg Nesteroff, Ron Verzuh, Spencer Legebokoff, and Greg Antle. Monica Miller ably handles our subscription-in-membership. We are grateful for the work of the BCHF Comms and Web teams.

Our print run is holding steady; however, print costs have grown substantially post-pandemic, so we are looking at ways to meet this challenge. We are selling more single copies than in previous years. Our digital presence through Zinio is growing, and our relationship with EBSCO means that the digital magazine is easily available in public libraries through the Libby app.

We are always looking for writers and guest editors for our themed magazines, and we welcome people interested in supporting the behind-the-scenes work as well. If you think *British Columbia History* magazine is a place you'd like to serve the historical community, we'd love to hear from you.



## Magazine Team

Aimee Greenaway, who joined the British Columbia History magazine team as Books Editor in 2018, moved into the Managing Editor role in fall 2023 with support from long-time Managing Editor K. Jane Watt.

British Columbia History magazine's commitment to sparking conversations about history - rights and wrongs - through evidence-based storytelling is particularly exciting for Aimee. She's looking forward to working with contributors from all over the province to present geographically and culturally diverse voices and stories. Collaborating with the knowledgeable and creative Magazine Editorial team has already become a highlight while developing upcoming issues. Aimee is looking at opportunities to streamline behind-the-scenes processes to make more space for engaging new voices in the magazine, and to build resilience.

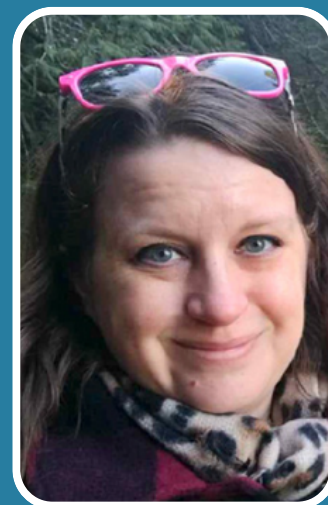
Aimee is a sixth generation Nanaimo resident and grew up in the former coal mining community of Extension. Her passion for local history was sparked by her own genealogy research, and BC history courses at Vancouver Island University (graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a Bachelor of Education). She worked at the BC Forest Discovery Centre from 2006-2011 and wrote a column on logging history in the Cowichan Valley Citizen. Aimee has worked at the Nanaimo Museum since 2011 and is its curator.

In fall 2023, the magazine welcomed Dalys Barney as the new Books Editor. Her keen eye for great BC history books and fresh perspectives, along with her engaging writing style, make Dalys an ideal fit for the Books column.

Dalys Barney is the Digital Collections Assistant at the Vancouver Island University Library. She grew up in South Wellington, a small coal mining community just south of Nanaimo, and currently lives just across the river in Cedar. She is a member of the Nanaimo Historical Society and maintains her own local history blog at [www.vanislehistoryexplorer.ca](http://www.vanislehistoryexplorer.ca).



**Aimee Greenaway**



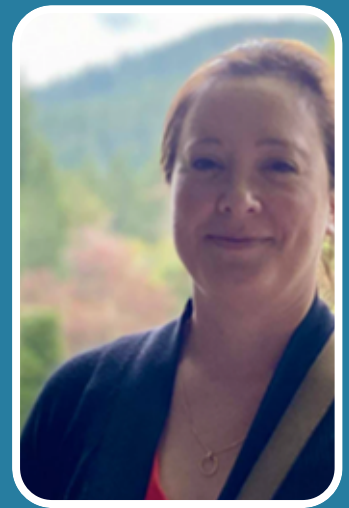
**Dalys Barney**

## Conference

The 2023 BCHF annual conference was held in Princeton from July 20 – 23 in partnership with the Princeton and District Museum and Historical Society. The conference, sponsored by Johnson Insurance, was BCHF's first in-person gathering since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Princeton put on a fabulous conference, bringing together 60 individuals from 16 organizations and 18 communities across the province. The conference featured 12 presentations on topics of local and provincial history, field trips to Keremeos, Hedley, and Granite Creek, a wine and cheese reception at the Princeton Museum, and an awards banquet featuring keynote speaker Judith Guichon and musical entertainment from Jon Bartlett, Henk Piket, and Rika Ruebsaat.

The historical presentations were recorded and are now available for free access on BCHF's YouTube channel. Presenters include Elder Dawn Johnson, Greg Dickson, Elwin Xie, Ron Verzuh, Jon Bartlett & Rika Ruebsaat, Quentin Wright, Todd Davidson, Lydia Kinasewich, Spencer Coyne, Janet McArthur, and George Elliot.



**Shannon Bettles**



*Left: Rika, Jon and Henk perform at the awards banquet. Right: After hours the music continues in Princeton.*

The conference follow-up survey showed positive and supportive responses from those that attended, indicating that the conference was successful in bringing people together to share and learn about BC history. The delightful social opportunities, interesting activities, hospitality, and collegiality exhibited amongst participants were favorite themes arising throughout the survey.

*“I was excited to gather with BCHF members for the first time since the pre-pandemic Courtenay conference. Nothing's better than personal contact. Also pleased that we put the spotlight on Princeton, still recovering from the floods of 2021. Their organizers rose to the challenge.”*

Thank you to the organizing committee of the Princeton conference who put much effort into creating a successful event. The planning committee included: Jon Bartlett, Kim Davidson, Marjorie Holland, Todd Davidson, Henk Piket, Bob Long, Stella Holiday, Anna Irwin, and Shannon Bettles.

Plans are now well underway for the 2024 conference being held in Ts'elxwéyeqw (Chilliwack) on May 4, 2024. Without a partnering host stepping forward this year, the board decided to hold a one-day event while piloting a hybrid (online and in-person) approach for its AGM. The gathering will include an in-person and virtual AGM with keynote speakers, a cultural road tour, and an awards dinner.

The BCHF is seeking hosts for the 2025 annual conference and while it has received some early expressions of interest, no location has yet been decided upon.



Photos: Some highlights from the conference in Princeton.

# Awards

## Centennial Legacy Fund

The Centennial Legacy Fund (CLF) was initiated in 2017 to acknowledge, in turn and collectively, Canada 150, British Columbia's union with Canada 1871, Sesquicentennial 2021, and the centennial of the founding of what is now called British Columbia Historical Federation, in 1922.

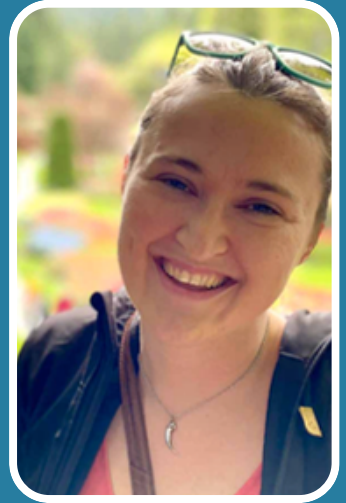
The CLF is a fund designed to support small, innovative, and hard-to-fund projects. Successful projects commemorate or preserve historical sites, cultural landscapes, or objects, and encourage new research, interpretation, or publication of British Columbia history.

## Recognition Awards

Members of the Recognition Committee included Jane Watt, Quentin Wright, Greg Nesteroff, Kira Westby, and Anna Irwin. The award program continues to move along smoothly, building on previous years' success.

With Rosa Flinton-Brown stepping back from the Centennial Legacy Fund, Quentin Wright rose to the challenge with steady assistance from Jane Watt. The Historical Writing Competition also saw a changing of the guard with Maurice Guibord's retirement after ten years. Teresa Carlson and Shannon Bettles have now taken over as co-chairs. The competition awards the Lieutenant Governor's Medal for Historical Writing to the best of the best in historical BC literature.

Special thanks to our outgoing external committee members Christina Reid and Paul Ferguson, who have been stalwart supporters of the work of the committee and have been boisterous, thoughtful colleagues throughout their time on the committee. Both retired from their positions after the 2022-2023 awards cycle ended.



Anna Irwin



*Johnson Insurance and Belair Direct sponsored the BCHF gala awards evening.*

Winners from the 2022-2023 Awards cycle were announced at our Princeton Conference in July:

- Award of Recognition: Maurice Guibord; Shawn Lamb (Appreciation); Halle & Linda Flygare; Vancouver Island Local History Society; (Recognition); Tom Bown; Nisga'a Ni'isjoohl Memorial Pole Rematiration Team (Merit)
- Storytelling Award: Chinatown Storytelling Centre
- Cultural Resource Accessibility Award: Lytton Chinese History Museum, Lytton First Nation and Lytton Museum and Archives
- W. Kaye Lamb Scholarship: Rebecca Campbell (3rd/4th year); Carlanna Thompson (3rd/4th year – Runner Up)
- Best Article Award: Jennifer Iredale; Catherine Clement (Honourable Mention)

2023-2024 Award winners will be announced at our Awards Gala on May 4, 2023 in Chilliwack.

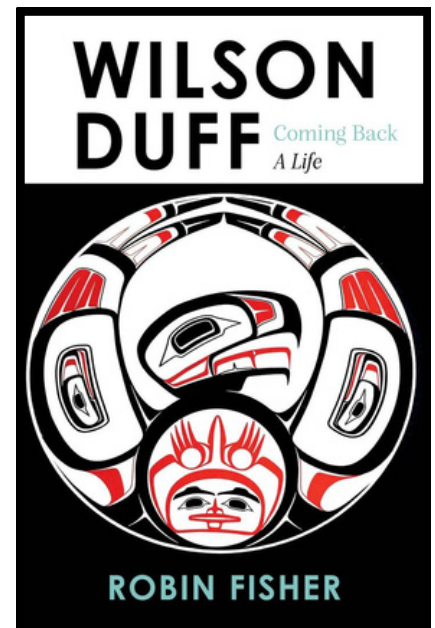
### Historical Writing Awards

The 2022 awards for historical writing were administered by Maurice Guibord and winners were announced at the 2023 conference awards gala in Princeton last July. Award recipients were:

- Lieutenant Governor's Medal for Historical Writing – Robin Fisher, *Wilson Duff: Coming Back, a Life*
- Second Place – Sean Carleton, *Lessons in Legitimacy: Colonialism, Capitalism, and the Rise of State Schooling in British Columbia*
- Third Place – David Rossiter and Patricia Burke Wood, *Unstable Properties: Aboriginal Land Title and the Claim of British Columbia*
- Honourable Mention – Satwinder Kaur Bains and Balbir Gurm, *A History of South Asians in British Columbia*
- Honourable Mention – Gaadgas Nora Bellis with Jenny Nelson, *So You Girls Remember That: Memories of a Haida Elder*
- Honourable Mention – Derek Hayes, *Incredible Crossings: The History and Art of the Bridges, Tunnels and Island Ferries that Connect British Columbia*
- Community History Award – John Adams, *Chinese Victoria: A Long and Difficult Journey*



Teresa Carlson





# Communications & Digital

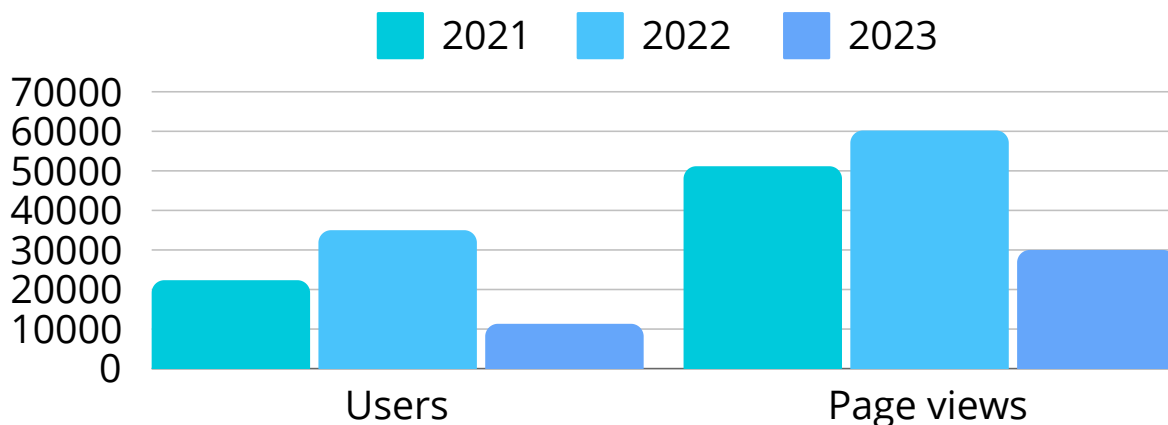
The communications committee met monthly to coordinate a unified voice through various media channels. Work included publishing conference video recordings online, drafting press releases, promoting *British Columbia History* magazine, and sharing and developing material for website, video, e-newsletter, and social media. Going forward, the BCHF Communications Committee will be recruiting volunteers following the board retirement Mark Forsythe and Emma Quan. The committee thanks both for their dedicated service and volunteerism over many years, including during the challenging times of a global pandemic.

## Website

In 2023, the BCHF decided it was time to update its website. The previous website had been operating for nearly ten years and was at risk of failure if significant time and resources were not invested. In the fall, necessitated by website warnings and errors, it was decided to migrate the website to the organization’s membership management platform, Wild Apricot. The third-party hosted system includes website capabilities and because the organization was already paying for the system, going with Wild Apricot for website hosting proved to be a cost-effective way to make the most of its existing software capabilities. Wild Apricot serves as BCHF’s platform for membership management, event registration, membership directory, blog, online newsletter, and magazine shop.

The website is a continual work in process, and the organization’s plans include auditing its digital operations to identify efficiencies and improve systems, usability, policies, and processes. Because the organization is entirely volunteer run, it recognizes the importance of creating digital environments that are sustainable, manageable, and secure. Special thanks to MicroAge Technologies for donating service time towards our website migration.

Table: Website users and page views, 2021 to 2023.



2023: Note that due to the migration of the new site, three months of statistics are not available.

# Communications & Digital

## BC Buzz Newsletter

The *BC Buzz* is the electronic newsletter of the organization, which aims to provide links to information of interest to members including BCHF news, member stories, new articles, and historical tidbits. Greg Nesteroff has been compiling newsletter content for a number of years. Newsletters are archived on the BCHF website.



Greg Nesteroff

## Digital Engagement

The organization’s volunteers continue to utilize social media to share news and information about BCHF activities and matters of local history of interest, and amplify the reach of its members’ news, to its community of online followers. Platforms used include Facebook, X, Instagram, and YouTube.

In 2023, Bill C-18 (the Online News Act) resulted in some platforms removing access to all Canadian news articles online. As a result, the BCHF has struggled to find and keep up with stories of interest that affect the provincial historical sector as effectively and easily as in the past. The organization is attempting to identify news stories and include them on its website and communicate them out in our e-newsletters, which has been made more difficult given the BCHF’s provincial reach.

Despite this, BCHF has maintained and increased the number of followers across its platforms. A decision to include more content on YouTube (there are now 70 videos), along with having in-house video editing expertise, has resulted in a 68% increase in subscribers since 2021.

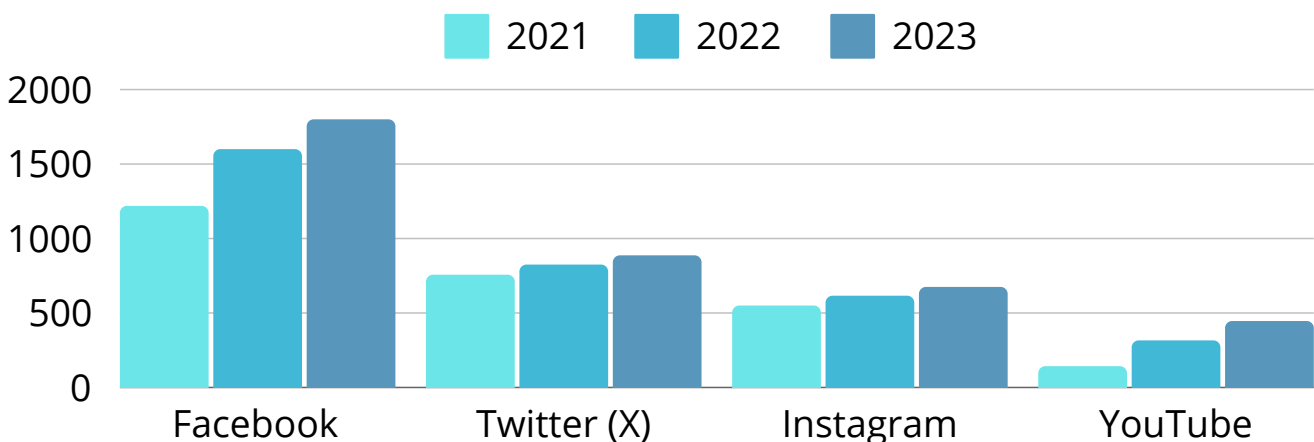


Table: Social media subscribers and followers 2021-2023.



Above: Monica Miller cleans gravestones with the Maple Ridge Museum.  
Below: British Columbia Magazine is at the new Chinese Canadian Museum.



Photos from around BC including carousel at Burnaby Village Museum, The Chasm, Chris Mathieson from the Keremeos Grist Mill, Fort Langley cranberries. Photographs courtesy of Monica Miller and Jane Watt.



# Treasurer's Report

Dear Members,

Please refer to the following financial statements for more detailed information. This report will include an overview of the most significant changes and balances.

2023-2024 was a year of holding steady at the BCHF, continuing to be mindful of costs and learning how our finances would fair when we fully emerged from the pandemic. The results are mixed as they are for many of our members.

## Revenue

At the height of the pandemic, we had our memberships and subscriptions hold steady and even increase. Over the past two years, we have seen a 5% annual decline in membership and magazine subscriptions revenue. These declines have been offset by an increase in referral fees from Johnson Inc. and increased interest revenue from our term deposit. While overall revenue has increased, we do need to ensure that our member based and magazine revenue sources remain healthy to ensure the overall sustainability of the federation.

## Expenses

Our expenses in 2024 continued to increase over 2023 levels as overall costs were impacted by rising inflation.

Producing the magazine continues to get more expensive, despite the generosity of our authors, editors, proof readers and designers who continue to provide their services far below market rates. In particular, printing the print edition of the magazine is costing much more than in past years. We returned to an in person conference this year in Princeton. It was a wonderful event and energized us to continue our good work together. The conference shortfall (\$2,792) and the travel costs of bringing our Board members to Princeton (\$2,337) contributed to our operating deficit. Having people from throughout the Province on our board gives us priceless insight into the regional challenges and opportunities. We are committed to gathering together once a year in person to encourage each other and build our team.

On the administrative side, Wild Apricot increased its monthly fees which has substantially impacted our operating costs. We moved our website to the Wild Apricot platform to try to maximize the amount we use the capability of that system. Wild Apricot is fully integrated into



**Rosa Flinton-Brown**

our membership and subscription management systems and continues to be more cost effective than other database systems so we are not considering a change, despite the increased costs.

## **Financial Position**

BCHF's balance sheet continues to be strong with cash and savings of \$120,865. Our GIC is contributing significant positive cash flow to our organization which has been a real help. Thank you to all our supporters who donated to the Centennial Legacy Fund and the BCHF general fund this year. We received donations of \$2,519 for the CLF this year and \$3,532 to support the ongoing work of the BCHF. Thank you so much! The current balance in the Centennial Legacy Fund is \$11,530 and we funded \$10,500 in small projects in 2024. We will continue to need your support to keep the Centennial Legacy Fund healthy. The impact of this small fund on ground breaking historical work in BC is extraordinary.



*Photograph courtesy of Leanne Flinton.*