



YOUR NEWSLETTER

WINTER 2023

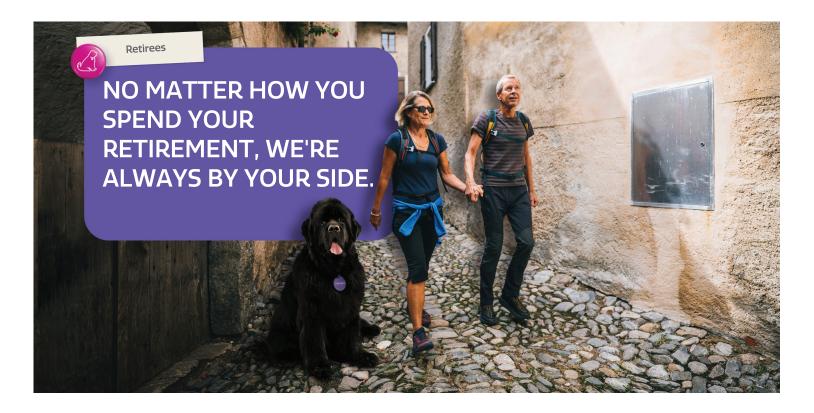
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ON THE INSIDE



■ The President's report

Find out why making a difference is never wasteful, why simplifying the BCGREA Volunteer experience can be rewarding, and why we must go digital. Read President **Brian Green's** annual report focusing on where we are and how we can move forward, starting on **page 4.**

Former 1st Vice-President's report

Read **Vincent Sherry's** report on the successes achieved and his decision to step aside on **page 6.**

■ Bob Curtis, Victoria Br 1200

Want to know what someone shy of 99 does and did over the years? On **page 7**, read about Bob Curtis's life and service at the Queen's Printer.

■ Charles La Vertu, Western Communities Br 2700

The Karate Shichidan puts away his camera. On **page 8**, read about Charles's event-filled life and what led him to become our newsletter's editor and provincial photographer.

■ Orderly Affairs

Have you planned for who can access your digital assets and files when you pass away? On **page 9**, learn some details from **Daralynn Wei** that could help keep them safe.

■ Al Barclay, Provincial Membership Secretary

A Tsunami of new members brought challenges. Read Al Barclay's recounting of the multitude of projects and activities in 2023 on page 12.

■ Marina Krjivitsk - Once in a lifetime moment

Turn to **page 14** to read Lawrence Johnson's accounting of this wonderful woman who just turned 100.

- Turn to page 7 to meet and learn about your new 1st Vice President, George Bowden (Victoria Branch 1200), elected at the 2023 AGM who is tasked with updating our Bylaws now that our Constitution has been accepted.
- Page 14, meet your new Administrative Support, Jodine Ducs, who is managing our central office now in West Kelowna. If you need help, do not hesitate to ask Jodine info@bcgea.ca or call 1-250-751-8814.
- Interested in sharing your or someone else's story?
 On page 6, read the 2nd VPs report on how that can happen.
- On page 15 meet the association's new photojournalist, Linda Foubister.
- From forest firefighter to forest compliance officer, read about **Dan Harlow's life experiences** and how he served the province before retiring on page 15.

The Pen, Fall / Winter 2023 edition

www.bcgrea.ca

The Pen is the official newsletter published for BC Government Retired Employees' Association (BCGREA) members, a self-funded, non-partisan and not-for-profit organization established in 1947.

Designed and printed by: Duolynx Design & Print https://duolynxprint.com

Copywriting by: Williams Copywriting https://williamscopywriting.ca

BCGREA - PROVINCIAL OFFICE

Contact: Jodine Ducs PO Box 26067, West Kelowna RPO West Kelowna, BC V4T 2G3 Tel 250-751-8814 E-mail: <u>info@bcgrea.ca</u>

Communications Committee Editorial Team

Patrick Harkness Bill Myers Laura Lam Tammy Welch Linda Foubister

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The Pen welcomes photography submissions from members and articles. Printing requires high-resolution images at least 300 pixels per inch in printed format (3000 pixels wide by 3600 pixels high). Maximum 500 words per article submitted. For submission or advertising guidelines, contact us at: thepen@bcgrea.ca

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BCGREA Provincial Office

PO Box 26067, West Kelowna RPO West Kelowna, BC V4T 2G3

Tel: 1-250-751-8814 Email: info@bcgrea.ca

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



After a change of heart, I decided to stand for re-election at our recent 2023 AGM and was subsequently returned to my position as president. My ambivalence in not seeking another term was, to a significant extent, related to the challenges of leadership



Brian Green

in a volunteer-led organization.

Making a Difference is Never Wasted

Volunteering doesn't appear fashionable these days, yet organizations like the BCGREA can only survive if people step forward. We're always looking for more people to help in roles large and small. Key areas we would like to expand our expertise in include:

- Member engagement
- Digital communications
- Building and assessing affinity partnerships
- Promoting senior's wellbeing

Simplifying the BCGREA Volunteer Experience

It's easy to presume someone else will do it, or it's not my thing. All I can say is the rewards for volunteering are real, and the inability to recruit people only diminishes what we can offer the membership.

We're focussing on skills and abilities that people want to exercise rather than fit them into predefined roles or positions. There are many opportunities to challenge yourself and work with others. Don't hesitate to contact us at our general email at info@bcgrea.ca, and let's start a conversation.

Going Digital

Over 5,000 people now digitally access The PEN for each issue. This is the most cost-effective and timely way to communicate with members. While we're committed to maintaining a print version, it's becoming more difficult and expensive, limiting our ability to receive feedback promptly.

If you have the capacity to receive The PEN, and other communications, via email please consider doing so. Our central support service will happily help you make the transition. The same applies to those of you who pay by cheque. The workload on our volunteers to process cheques can be substantial. We ask you to be mindful of this impact and consider moving to automatic dues deduction.

Where We Are

A core group of members continues to access social functions and information sessions at the local branch level. Hopefully, enough members will continue volunteering to ensure these activities continue across the province.

Many members find good value in the offerings from our **affinity partners**. Over the next year, we intend to do a member survey to confirm this and see what other offerings you might want.

Our new constitution is completed. It provides a valuable statement of our mission, and we continue our work to modernize our bylaws and policies.

This last year, we've grown by more than 3,500 new members - an increase of almost 50% due to our "one-off" membership drive.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT CONT'D



This remarkable achievement has been noticed and recognized by our partners. It assists our work as the official representative for Pension Plan Members as set out in the joint trust agreement that governs our pensions. Retirees care about their pension security and seniors' rights within our communities. Taking advantage of this increase and working collaboratively with the other public sector retiree associations and non-profit senior advocacy groups is the next chapter we need to work through.

Moving Forward

We're in the process of choosing our method of governance to ensure that our regionally based branch network of delegates and directors is balanced and cost-effective. We have identified two options that we need your comments on.

Concurrently, those of you on our general email list will have received a document

outlining the options and the opportunity to participate in an online poll using the technology in our new client management software. This reinforces our commitment to involve our overall membership in critical decision-making. The ability to conduct polls of the full membership, or segments, allows members to participate so we're more responsive to our members' wishes and can fine-tune our offerings.

I thank all those who contribute in ways great and small to our success. To conclude, we have the necessary resources to demonstrate value and innovation in the services we offer. Your involvement and participation can only help in fostering this work.

I wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season, peace, and contentment in the New Year.

Brian Green



FORMER 1st VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT



It's been a busy year volunteering with the BCGREA, and many items in our constitution and bylaws were dealt with. I couldn't attend the April EGM, but I wish to thank Jean S, Edna P, and Barry Z for representing our committee. Unfortunately, Barry is following other ambitions and has left our committee, but two new members decided (or were voluntold) to join. Michael Miller, our legal counsel, is filing our constitution and bylaws in compliance with the *Societies Act*.

I wish to thank the team for getting things done in a timely manner. It was a steep learning curve, but there is a group of wise, committed individuals working to make BCGREA a better and modern organization that represents the interests and benefits of its members.

After careful consideration, I've decided not to stand for re-election as the 1st vice president at the upcoming AGM. I wish to thank, honour, and recognize the current members of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee: Alan Kneel and, Edna Park, Jean Sickman, Lynda Hoel, and George Bowden. The work is ongoing as we continue to hear from our members and address society's changing norms. I appreciate the provincial connections and relationships I have gained, and thank you for your support and the gift of your friendship over the past two years. I will continue to

support my local branch. I wish you all the best in your endeavours.

Respectfully,

Vincent Sherry



A REPORT FROM THE 2nd VICE PRESIDENT

(Communications Committee)

This past year has been a time to reflect and consider a new pathway to successfully communicate with BCGREA members.

The PEN was, and will continue to be, published twice yearly but it needs to include more member-interest stories and articles of general interest. This is an opportunity to learn more about our members and their interests. So, tell us something about you!

We will continue our eBlast, created under The PEN emblem, to inform members of current and upcoming topics and events. However, your Communications Committee feels more member-interest stories would add value to its content.

We want to keep everyone current, but we need your help. Two committee members, Charles La Vertu and Dan Harlow, have stepped aside, so we're looking for more members to join us. We want to know if you, or perhaps a retiree you know, would



enjoy being either a communications committee member or a reporter for The PEN (or both).

Remember, members asked for more communications in the province-wide membership survey and rated The PEN as one of the BCGREA's most valued services. I need your help, so please consider helping us communicate with our membership. Let me know at thepen@bcgrea.ca

BOB CURTIS'S LIFE



Bob Curtis – Victoria Branch 1200

Shy of 99, Bob starts every day by listing things he likes to do.
Growing up in Fernwood, he sold newspapers and later delivered prescriptions for Clark Pharmacy on his bicycle. He enlisted in the Canadian Navy at 18 and was one



of the lucky ones to return. In 1949, Bob met Ellie (Paterson) and married in 1950. They had two children, followed by six grandchildren and seven greatgrandchildren.

Bob was 17 when he started his printing apprenticeship at the Colonist newspaper and finished it after World War Two at the Queen's Printer (QP) - now called the King's Printer. He went on to work there as a journeyman, then foreman, and finished his career as superintendent of the printing department.

Bob enjoyed his years with the BC government. "It was the kind of place co-workers worked together to get things done." His father also worked and retired there, starting as a Page Boy in the early 1900's. The job had its challenges and deadlines were often looming as the QP was responsible for printing most of the government's documents.

Bob fondly remembers touring the Crofton Pulp Mill and visiting Toronto and San Francisco to look at new printing equipment. After work, he enjoyed bowling with co-workers and was invited to lunch in the Legislative Dining Room by Premier Dave Barrett and the Provincial Secretary, Wesley Black. He was honoured to attend a long-time service awards dinner at Government House.

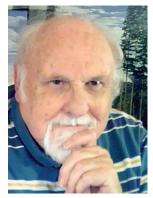
Bob retired from the QP in 1983 after 39 years of service. He has now been retired longer than he worked! Today, Bob spends his time helping his children and grandchildren with renovation projects, yard work, and maintaining his garden. When Bob isn't fixing something, he can be found pitching horseshoes at Victoria Horseshoe Club. He's Canada's oldest competitive horseshoe pitcher and says he isn't quitting anytime soon.

MEET YOUR NEW 1ST VICE PRESIDENT, GEORGE BOWDEN (Victoria Branch 1200)

After graduating from Simon Fraser University, George worked in large corporations as a communications software developer in Canada and the United States. When he returned to British Columbia, he worked as an analyst in Victoria for BC Crown corporation, BC Systems Corporation.

George has taken his background in building websites and applied it to non-profit societies such as Together Against Poverty, the Art Rave Society of Alberni, and the Victoria Computer Club, where he serves on the board. He has been secretary, treasurer, president, webmaster, and a teacher of digital skills to seniors in his many volunteer roles.

George joined the BCGREA Victoria Branch in 2022. Having served on various boards, George is interested in the governance of non-profit societies, and his computer background draws his attention to their information systems.



CHARLES LA VERTU



Charles La Vertu – Western Communities Branch (2700)

Charles is a multi-faceted writer, editor, publisher, karate teacher, small business owner, public servant, union activist, sailor, volunteer, and amateur photographer.
Born in Prince Albert, SK, he moved with his family in 1946 to Sooke, where the family owned and operated the world-famous Sooke Harbour House for 25 years.

The major highlight of his life was marrying Cathryn (Kate) and adopting her two children, Marisa and Barbie, in 1987.

Before joining the B.C. government as a communications specialist in 1980, he was a member of the B.C. Legislative Press Gallery in Victoria for 11 years, serving 8 years on its executive, including 5 years as its president. He worked as a reporter/columnist for the Thomson Newspaper chain, correspondent for Radio Canada, and then as senior correspondent for The Canadian Press, Canada's national news service. Charles was a frequent guest interviewer on BC Television's Capital Comment, then BC's premier public affairs program.

Charles joined the BC Government's Public Affairs Bureau in 1987 after working as director of the Communications in the Ministry of

Intergovernmental Relations and a stint as public relations manager for the government-owned BC Steamship Company, which operated the Princess Marguerite ferry service between Victoria and Seattle.

In the latter capacity, he was instrumental in getting Princess Marguerite on a Canada Postage stamp and served as a director of Tourism Vancouver Island.

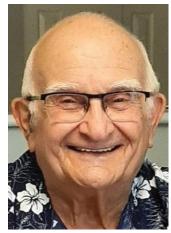
While in government, Charles was fired 4 times and demoted once as the various political parties changed the face of government. As a result, he became an activist with the BCGEU, serving on the Victoria Local and Provincial Component executives for several years. On retirement, he was appointed a life member. He was also a trustee of the Victoria Labour Council. After being fired for the last time, he was asked to create the government media monitoring unit working out of the Office of the Premier.

Charles became a 7th dan (Shichidan - 七段) black belt in 2019. He served 12 years on the executive council of Karate BC, the governing body for sport karate in B.C., and the last 4 years as president.

Charles retired in 2006 and was the founding editor-publisher and co-owner of the Island Sports News Network, now Independent Sports News, and served on the United Way of Victoria campaign cabinet for one term.

He joined the BC Government Retired Employees Association in 2007 and served as editor/photographer of its newsletter, **The PEN**, for 15 years.

Today, Charles is still very busy with Karate, his strata council, a seniors group newsletter, and now also cares



for his wife Kate, who has Parkinson's, but he says he enjoys every moment of it all.

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Don't Forget Your Digital Assets When Getting Your Affairs In Order

By Daralynn A. Wei

Our digital assets and data files are an extension of what we leave behind. Like with our financial assets, we need to have conversations and document who can access our data after we die. However, the distribution of our digital assets is less



defined and constantly evolving as technology advances. Some internet providers and services may not allow account transfer to heirs, even if it's stated in our Will. Legislation such as the *Criminal Code*, the *Privacy Act*, and the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act* may also prohibit access to digital accounts. It's essential to consult with a legal representative when preparing or reviewing your Will to ensure your digital property needs are met.

If an executor or beneficiary receives passwords, they may discover information about you that you didn't want them to see. Tidy up and document your online account information and life while providing your executor with the necessary information to manage and deactivate your accounts. Some accounts should be deactivated immediately, especially if they're linked to payment methods that need to be cancelled or may be vulnerable to fraud or identity theft. Remember, it may be unsettling for your loved ones to see your social media accounts and posts as active after you have died.

If you prefer a digital approach, consider using a password keeper for online account storage and discuss an appropriate application with a trusted source. Be sure to include how to access that account or use a separate address book to record usernames and passwords. Whatever method you choose, ensure that your online account information is accessible by your executor.



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Branch 100





BCGREA 2023 AGM



Branch 400



Branch 600



Branch 800



Branches 900 & 1000





Branch 1700



Branch 1200



Branches 1900 & 2300





Branches 2000 & 500

Branch 2100 & Leslie Gaudette, President, COSCO





Branch 2700

Branch 2500



Elected Table Officers

George Bowden, 1st Vice President Brian Green, President Patrick Harkness, 2nd Vice President & The Pen Editor Al Barclay, Membership Secretary Johanna Morrow, Treasurer & Trustee, BC Public Service Pension Board Kathy Torhjelm, Secretary



Plaques of Recognition



Randy Pearson accepts for Phil Erickson



President Brian Green presents to Lawrence Johnson



Al Coccola accepts for Charles La Vertu

BCGREA PROVINCIAL MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT



As of September 30, 2023, the BCGREA had 11,421 members. This is an increase of 48% compared to the total membership I reported for last year's AGM.

It has been a busy year on the membership front. The most significant events were:

- The recruitment membership campaign.
- The conversion of our central membership database to the Findjoo platform.
- The resignation of our previous central support contractor and the recruitment of our current contractor.

As we wrapped up the AGM last year, the Pension Corporation started mailing out the 75th Anniversary recruitment brochures to retirees who had not previously joined the BCGREA. The response was positive. I thank Vince Dimanno (our website developer), Josie Byington, and the people she brought on to assist her in handling the tidal wave of applications. We tried to ensure that new members were welcomed to the Association as quickly as possible, but there were delays in some phases. Josie handled it well, and we were happy to be dealing with the issues of increasing membership instead of the previous trend of declining membership. We will continue to work with the Public Service Pension Plan employees to investigate if there are opportunities to raise our profile and encourage new retirees to join the BCGREA.

We quickly learned that our previous central membership database could not handle the workload. Josie, Bill Myers, and I researched the Client Management Systems software available. Findjoo was the platform most suitable for our requirements at a reasonable cost, so

Josie and some other branch testers used a trial version for March, and then we completed the conversion in early April. Some of its features are:

- Integration of the member database and email delivery systems.
- An online member portal will allow the updating of contact information and printing of membership cards.
- Simplified processes for producing a variety of reports at various levels.
- Ability to set up area or function-specific email lists and templates.
- Multi-user authorization for accessing portions of the database.
- A dedicated account manager to deal with any issues and training.
- Secure data storage in Canada.

In June, Josie Byington said she would not renew her contract. This was unwelcome news as I had grown to depend on Josie's expertise for the last few years, but we started recruiting a replacement contractor.

Seeing the level of interest from many qualified candidates for the position was gratifying. Jodine Ducs of West Kelowna was selected for the position and started work in early July. We were fortunate that Josie made herself available to assist her in the job via Zoom training sessions until mid-August. Jodine has come up to speed quickly and embraced the opportunity to pass her knowledge to the branch people who want

to learn the system. I am confident she will provide leadership and support in this position for the foreseeable future.

Respectfully submitted,

Al Barclay, BCGREA Provincial Membership Secretary









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MARINA KRJIVITSK TURNS 100



Marina was born in Shanghai in 1923 to parents who escaped Russia during the Russian Revolution. She was six months old when the family moved to Vancouver Island to develop a farm outside of Ladysmith. The rent was affordable, the lifestyle was healthy, and it had a spectacular ocean view.

Following the death of her father, the family moved to Vancouver. Marina graduated from Britannia High School in 1943, took bookkeeping at a business college, and got a job with B.C. Electric and then B.C. Hydro.

She loved to travel and bought a "cross Canada" rail ticket. She got off-and-on the train to cycle the more scenic parts. To get around, during the Second World War, you needed a bicycle; there was gasoline rationing. She remembers traveling across Europe, staying at youth hostels, and paying \$1.50 for opera and ballet performances. The Canadian dollar was very strong back then.

Marina moved to Montreal and worked for R.C.A. She went to McGill University, attended night school, and learned to speak Spanish. Realizing she needed a pension when she retired, she went to work for the BC provincial government at the Vancouver Law Courts.

Marina retired at age 65 and continued her traveling adventures. She moved to Nanaimo in 1991 and heard the BCGREA Nanaimo Branch was a nice group. She has enjoyed her membership over the past thirty-five years, attending most monthly meetings and social events.

She attributes her long life to her love of nature, to downhill skiing, along with



swimming almost daily in the ocean, which is a little harder to do now with poor eyesight and balance issues.
Her appreciation of nature helps her keep a positive, happy outlook to enjoy life.

Submitted Lawrence Johnson Chair, B.C.G.R.E.A Nanaimo Mid-Island Branch #600

NEED HELP? DON'T HESITATE TO ASK JODINE DUCS, ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Jodine started as the BCGREA Central Support administrator in July 2023. While born and raised in British Columbia, Jodine spent several years working in pharmacies throughout Alberta and the Northwest Territories. When her children were born, she twisted her Prairie husband's arm into moving back to BC. She returned to university to complete a Political Science degree. From there, she worked for the City of Kelowna before traveling the globe for six months with her family. It was an experience of a lifetime, and never would have guessed that Rwanda and Bolivia would be her favorite destinations.

This part-time position is a wonderful opportunity to blend the best of everything: working with great people, serving a diverse group, and with a schedule allowing her to be home with her boys. They're teenagers but still



need a mom - whether they'll admit it or not.

Jodine can be reached at 250-751-8814 or info@bcgrea.ca.

DAN HARLOW'S LIFE EXPERIENCES



DAN HARLOW – Grand Forks Branch 400



Dan Harlow was born in Burnaby, British Columbia, and he recollects his youth while living in Toronto, Montreal, and Port Coquitlam. The nomadic life was due to his father's work in broadcast technologies.

Dan, his wife, and two children lived in Williams

Lake, where Dan worked for a local sawmill. However, Dan had some difficult choices when the IWA went on strike. He couldn't live on the strike pay offered, so he applied with the BC Forest Service to become a forest firefighter. Dan was hired and immediately sent to Riske Creek, where he joined the Central Initial Fire Attack Crews (C.I.F.A.C). In recollecting those days, Dan found that job and comradery the most rewarding.

In 1988, Dan relocated to Alexis Creek, where he worked in the district warehouse. His supervisor encouraged him to apply for a forest technician position. Dan's education fell short of some requirements, but he demonstrated he had the knowledge, skills, and abilities to become a technician. With the introduction of the Forest Practices Code Act and the expansion of the Ministry of Forests in 1995, Dan competed in the cross-Canada recruiting, placing 46 out of 2,600 applicants. He was offered a compliance & enforcement position in either Chilliwack or Boundary (Grand Forks) Forest Districts. Dan chose Grand Forks, where he worked until the government set to purge the number of employees, which made his retirement in 2010 an easy choice.

Dan joined the local branch of the BCGREA in 2012 and became their co-chair in 2017. He helps organize their 3 or 4 meetings a year at the local Legion. This past August, the branch held its second annual barbecue at the Boundary Museum, which the Branch 400 executive organized.



Linda Foubister – Photojournalist

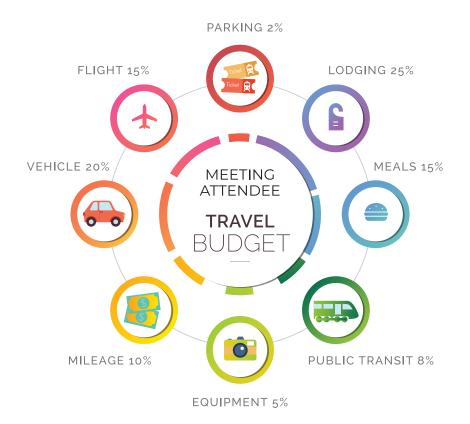
Linda was born in Victoria and worked for the BC government for many years, initially as a biologist and later as a policy analyst in various ministries. In May 2021, she joined the BCGREA and attended monthly meetings with the Victoria Branch 1200. After winning the Branch photo contest, she began to take photographs at the events. She enjoys participating with the BCGREA, meeting new friends, and learning about the pension and seniors' issues it promotes.

Linda, now also a member of the Provincial Communications Committee, is the official BCGREA Photojournalist.



BCGREA TRAVEL POLICY





Meeting attendees are reminded to choose the most economical travel option. Otherwise, mileage, meals, and accommodation expenses will not be reimbursed beyond the costs that would have been incurred using the most economical travel option.

Determine Whether to Drive or Fly

Compare the cost of economy airfare, airport parking, mileage to-and-from the local airport, and public transit (taxi, Uber, SkyTrain) to the meeting, with the cost to drive the total distance, including additional mileage, accommodation, and meals (that would not have occurred if flying).

NB: The most economical travel option assumes reasonable accommodation for disabilities, weather conditions, and/or late-night travel. For example, an extra night's accommodation is reasonable if traveling home on the same day of the meeting means driving or flying late.

Acceptable Travel Expenses via Personal Travel

When combining a BCGREA meeting with other personal travel, reimbursement will be based on the lesser of the actual costs or an estimate of the minimum acceptable expenses that would have been incurred if the personal travel had not occurred.

NB: Mileage, meal, and accommodation expenses will not be reimbursed beyond the costs that would have been incurred had personal travel not taken place.

IN MEMORIAM



Zella Marjorie Macdonald (1935-2022)

Cranbrook Branch 300

Editor's note: Zella's obituary, produced by her lifelong companion and husband, Chris, was misplaced during year-end changes in 2022. We apologize for that and present it here.

Zella was married to Knud-Einer (Chris) Christensen for 39 years. They shared similar passions and were the love of each other's lives. Chris is missing Zella and is surrounded by family and friends.

Zella was a fierce advocate for women's rights and social justice issues. She worked tirelessly throughout her life to promote positive change. Zella was awarded a Life Membership in the BC Government Employees Union and the federal and BC NDP. Zella also served as a delegate on the East Kootenay Labour Council.

Zella made photo albums for her and Chris' eight grandchildren. Each album captures all aspects of their lives. She welcomed two great-granddaughters into the world. Sadly, she missed meeting a great-grandson in September 2022.

We have been advised that the following BCGREA members have passed since the 2022 AGM. To all the spouses, partners, friends, and families that they leave behind, we send our condolences. Dealing with the loss of someone you love, care about, and spent a lifetime with is never easy.

Branch 100 - Fraser Valley (Abbotsford)

Doreen Thiessen
Dorothy I Maynard
Edith (Donna) Gustafson
Edwin H Klassen
Eva Marie Beckett
Helen W Steward
John Harry Wickham
Norma Jean Nelson
Patrick D Dale
Sharon A Markert
Wayne A Johns

Branch 200 - North Island (Comox) Bernard Emile Duteau

Bruce D Horning
Donald P B Geiger
Eileen Barbara Evans
Eleanor Walker
Glenda E Gentleman
Harold T Walker
James (Jim) William Ettinger
Janette Harrison
John Howard V Higginbotham
Karen B Pettigrew

Lois V Jacklin Reina S Cote Roland Arthur Mast Rudolf (Rudy) W Baerg Sandra M Anderson Tim E Deadman

Branch 300 - Rocky Mountain (Cranbrook)

Diane Martin
Gysje Coates
Harold Floer
Jo-Anne R Mann
Lawrence Taylor
Lloyd Edward Dean
Maxine Romano
Russel Allan Romano
Wendy R Bartlett
Zella Marjorie MacDonald

Branch 400 - Grand Forks

Catherine (Gayl) Taylor Daisy Burton Douglas W (Wayne) Campbell Ina Good Wasil W Sookochoff

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Doreen Mary Greig
Dorothy Beetstra
Douglas Thomas McCallum
Eila Elisa Keski-Hynnila
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Merle Shaw
Peter V Dasnieres
Reo Johnnie Peloso
Ruth E M Klughammer
Sandra J Mooney
Sandra K Plumb
Sheila Ingibord Dumore
William G Idler
William Gordon Potter

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Beverley F Green
Carol Louise Lake
Charles R Horton
Donalda Beck
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