



VHS Newsletter

A Publication of the Victoria Historical Society
No. 54 Spring 2020

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VHS Meetings

4th Thursday of the month
(September – May)

James Bay New Horizons,
234 Menzies Street, Victoria.

7:15 pm - refreshments and conversation.

7:45 pm - a short business meeting followed immediately by featured speaker.

Admission – members free
\$5 for guests for each talk.

Website:

[www.victoriahistoricalsociety.
bc.ca](http://www.victoriahistoricalsociety.bc.ca)

Or visit us on Facebook.

March Presentation

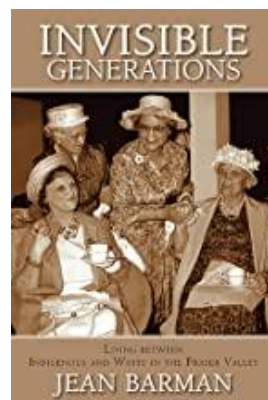
The March presentation was cancelled but the scheduled speaker, Jean Barman, graciously shared her presentation with VHS members and also answered questions related to the presentation; see pp. 3 – 6.

The program notice is below:

Invisible Generations: Living between Indigenous and White in the Fraser Valley

Speaker: Jean Barman

Jean Barman explores the prejudice people of mix Indigenous and white decent faced, with a focus on her good friend Irene Kelleher. Kelleher was the first BC woman of Indigenous heritage to be awarded a teaching certificate. She taught throughout BC including remote island communities.



Jean Barman is Professor Emeritus at UBC and winner of the Governor General's award for Scholarly Research. She is the author of over a dozen books about BC and Canadian History.

Barman is donating all royalties from *Invisible Generations* to the Julia Mathilda and Cornelius Kelleher Endowment Memorial Scholarship and the Irene Kelleher Memorial Endowment Bursary.

Note: the Society deemed it prudent to cancel the April meeting. The presentation notice is included below for members' information as well as to indicate the breadth of the VHS programming.

Thank you to Pia Russell for agreeing to be on the 2019-2020 speakers' program; she may be able to present to the VHS in the future.

23 April 2020 - cancelled

Myths and Omissions: A Textbook History of British Columbia

Speaker: Pia Russell

Through an exploration of textbooks used in BC schools (1871 – 1921), this talk explores the common myths and omissions included in this early historical narrative written for children. This presentation will explore the historical textbook representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures and what this means in the context of Truth and Reconciliation today.

Pia Russell is a passionate librarian, archivist, educator and historian. She is University of Victoria's Education Librarian, Coordinator of UVic Libraries' Learning and Research Unit, and a director on the board of the BC Library Association. She is also the founding Curator of the UVic Libraries' British Columbia Historical Textbooks collection and digital library.

Note: it is possible that the May meeting will not be able to proceed. VHS members and the public will be informed if the May meeting will be held.

The program notice is below.

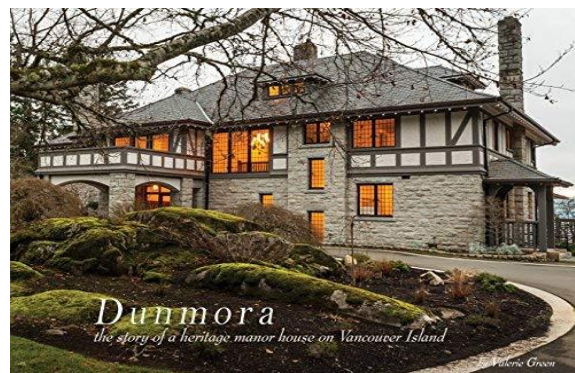
28 May 2020 - tentative

Dunmora: The Story of a Heritage Manor House on Vancouver Island

Speaker: Valerie Green

Step back in time and listen to the walls talk as Valerie Green describes a totally different world through almost ten decades in the life of Dunmora, a heritage manor house on the Saanich Peninsula. Built in 1922, Dunmora has hosted many famous visitors and is valued as one of the grandest early twentieth century estate homes on Vancouver Island.

Valerie Green has a background in journalism and law and worked for a while at M15 London. She moved to Canada in 1968 where she has worked as a columnist, feature writer and author of more than twenty books.



Added Perspectives: Jean Barman Responds

Editor's Note: Jean Barman agreed to answer VHS member questions related to her prepared presentation (see p. 1). The **VHS Newsletter** took her up on that offer. Thank you for your gracious gifts of time and thought, Jean.

1. You met Irene Kelleher just about the time *The West Beyond the West* was first published. Could you comment on how your friendship may have influenced the course of your research and writing over the past 25-plus years?

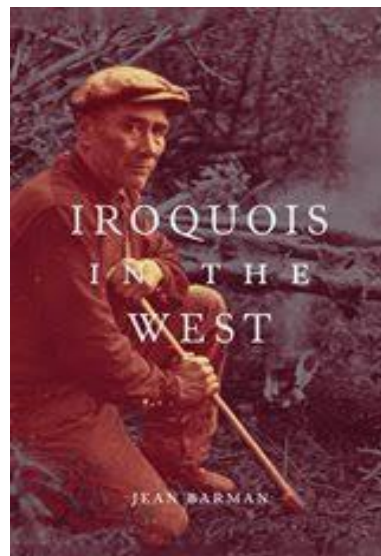
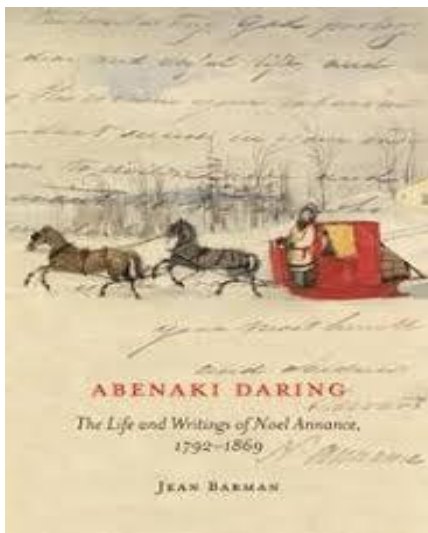
Irene's presence in my life as I describe in *Invisible Generations*, along with those of others I have come to know who have shared similar experiences of living between Indigenous and white by virtue of their descent from an Indigenous woman and a non-Indigenous man, ground much of my writing. With the notable exception of *The West beyond the West*, a general history of British Columbia I wrote in good part to understand for myself the province in which I had come to live with two young children and my husband, a historian of Latin America, accepting a job at the University of British Columbia, much but not all of my research and writing has focused on Indigenous and white women's lives in British Columbia across time. It early on became important for me not only to *savoir* (know about) but also to *connaître* (experience) what I was writing about, which caused me increasingly to draw on firsthand accounts. While as historians we focus on the past, our task is to bring our subjects to life almost as if they reside in the present day. Whether or not we do so deliberately, we are inevitably influenced in our writing by the catalogue of life experiences we bring to it.

2. As you worked with Irene to "get the Kelleher story down" what similarities and differences did you find with the stories of other people who "lived between" in British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest? Among others, I'm thinking of Noel Annance, who, like Irene, found that education allowed him to follow a path that might not otherwise have been possible or the Iroquois working in the fur economy who formed a community within a community in the Willamette Valley.

This question is fascinating. Each of us has our own story to tell, and no two stories are identical. I would like to think I begin each of the books and articles I have written afresh, but that is clearly not so except in my imagination. I have to like a topic in order to proceed, and it has always been the human dimension that spurs me on. It was with Irene a mutual acquaintance who suggested we might like to get to know each other. With Noel Annance it was fellow historian Morag Maclachlan, who on realizing she did not have enough time left in her life to tell his whole story, secured my promise it would be done, hence *Abenaki Daring* published in 2016. With the Iroquois it was an air traffic controller at the Vancouver airport who phoned me one day with a family story he wanted to share that sent me on a long winding path to *Iroquois in the West* appearing in 2019.

Until reading this question, I had not considered the similarities, in particular between Irene Kelleher and Noel Annance, an Abenaki from Quebec who studied at Dartmouth

College in New Hampshire and subsequently came west with the fur trade, but, yes, they were both worn down but not flattened by the racism of the day. Irene and Noel each persisted, Irene by becoming a career school teacher even if it meant being dispatched to the edges of the edge by virtue of her Indigenous descent, Noel by doing much the same in the far west fur trade on realizing the full extent to which his being Indigenous excluded him from the white world of his higher education. Iroquois' initiative across the North American west tells a similar story, one that repeatedly strikes home for me, as with a woman by happenchance sitting next to me at a public event in Stanley Park sharing her story of Iroquois descent going back in time to the fur trade. In British Columbia, as elsewhere, the past is all around us alongside the present day.



3. What was it about Irene that enabled her to be a successful teacher in the Doukhobor community? You mentioned courage but knowing her as you did, what else?

Like many of the women of her day who moved out of the home into the public sphere, Irene lived a double life of sorts. She was a teacher because she wanted to be, but also a provider enabling her parents to have a better quality of life than they could otherwise have afforded. Irene lived for and through them, as well as for herself.

It is not unsurprising then that Irene's introduction to the Doukhobors and to their distinctive way of life rejecting formal schooling for their children as an unwanted outside intrusion came through good friends of her parents. Their son-in-law had charge of Doukhobor schools badly needing committed teachers, as Irene became owing to two summers taking courses at the Victoria normal school under his tutelage. The teacherage in which Irene and others lived so as to protect themselves was at one point firebombed as part of the determined campaign to close down schools. Irene was still emotional on sharing the story with me so many years later as to how she had nonetheless not swerved in her determination to make a difference to these children's lives.

4. Irene taught in the Fraser Valley for two decades and eventually became a principal. That was a remarkable achievement for any woman in that time period. Again, what was it about Irene that made this possible?

Irene had the good fortune to live in changing times. When she became a teacher, women were, as was Irene with the double challenge of also being part Indigenous, all too often relegated to the edges of the edge, to the lowest grades and most remote localities. Irene's decade working with Doukhobor children, which she did by choice despite the likely dangers, had as its upside that she was made a principal of a Doukhobor elementary school. The experience gave her both the courage and the opportunity also to be so when changing attitudes toward persons of mixed race finally permitted Irene to teach back home in the Fraser Valley. Her success in being so was validated every time, on our walking down the street in Abbotsford where she lived, someone stopping and greeting her in that capacity.

5. A number of our VHS members are historians, researchers and writers themselves. What advice can you give about telling the stories of others, especially those people whose voices have often been silenced?

Do it! You never know what is possible until you try. Irene's story was published by Caitlin Press, a remarkable British Columbia publisher willing to take a chance on interesting stories out of the ordinary. For me the important caveat has been that I have to like my subjects. Because I do so, it matters to me to understand what mattered to them and thereby should do so to the audience I am trying to reach in telling their stories. This does not mean ignoring the nasty bits, which we all have of one kind or the other at some point in our lives, but putting them in context to the extent they are relevant to the larger story I seeking to tell.

6. Your newest book, *On the Cusp of Contact*, is a collection of essays. How about a preview of what readers might expect?

When I said that I have to like my subjects, as well as to understand them, in order to write about them, I only came fully to that realization on a colleague of mine in the English Department at UBC, Marjorie Fee, unbeknownst to me putting together sixteen of the essays I had written over the years into a collection. I had the opportunity to reread them during the editing process of *On the Cusp of Contact* and only then fully realized what I had been about over the years.

As cleverly assembled and introduced by Marjorie, *On the Cusp of Contact* moves across time from the earliest contacts in British Columbia between Indigenous peoples and white and non-white newcomers in Victoria, Nanaimo, the Gulf Islands, Vancouver, and across much of the province almost to the present day. In line with my having taught in the Faculty of Education at UBC, several of the essays turn attention to children's lives, including in residential schools. The emphasis is, as with all my writing, on individuals acting for themselves in what they perceive as their best interest even as they are being acted upon by others.

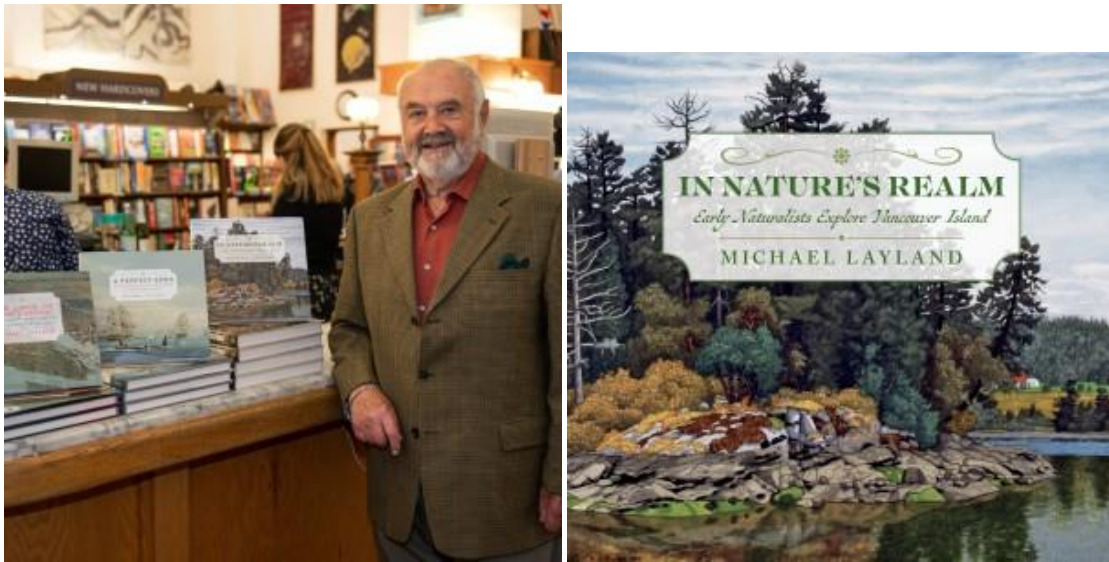


7. Finally, you suggest that all of us calling British Columbia home strive to seek a more inclusive province, country and world. What are some concrete steps you think our **VHS Newsletter** readers could take?

When I was invited to speak to the VHS which did not come to be, I admit to doing some informal thinking about who might attend, therefore how best to focus, and quickly realized what a large proportion to writers and others who I admire live in Victoria and elsewhere on Vancouver Island. You have long been seeking through your writing and your ways of being a better place for all of us, and I thank you for doing so. It is also the case that wherever we live across British Columbia and beyond, we tend to associate with our own kind, and it makes sense for all of us to reach out more generally through our lives and our writing to expand our circles of acquaintance.

Editor's Note: Jean Barman's books are available from several local booksellers, including Munro's. Many bookstores are offering pick-up or delivery options. What a great time to support them!

Celebrating Our Members: Michael Layland



Michael Layland at Munro's Bookstore, Victoria.

On Monday, March 2, 2020, TouchWood Editions recently announced that Michael Layland has won the prestigious Basil Stuart-Stubbs Prize for Outstanding Scholarly Book on British Columbia for his latest book, ***In Nature's Realm***. The \$2,500 prize will be awarded at UBC's Irving K. Barber Learning Centre in April.

In Nature's Realm: Early Naturalists Explore Vancouver Island is a celebration of the richly diverse flora and fauna of Vancouver Island as explored through the records of explorers, settlers, and visitors reaching back as far as 13,000 years. Thoroughly researched and beautifully designed, it gathers initial reports, recorded histories, and personal accounts left by the Island's early naturalists who studied the region's plant and animal life. It is the third book in Layland's award-nominated series on the history of European discovery and settlement of the region, which also includes ***The Land of Heart's Delight*** and ***A Perfect Eden***.

(Adapted from Touchwood Editions press release)

Michael Layland's three works are also available at local booksellers.

Council Members 2019 – 2020

Executive

President: Jack Bryden 250-590-8594
VP: Kathryn McAllister 250-415-3985
Treasurer: Ronald Greene 250-598-1835
Secretary: Michael Halleran 250-383-0721
Membership Secretary: vacant

Members-at-Large

Patricia Roy (Past-President)
proy@uvic.ca

Frances Aknai (Publicity & Distribution)
faknai@shaw.ca

Paul Ferguson
Michael Harrison
Sherri Robinson
Irwin Rubincam
Doris Schuh
John Whitaker

Council terms are one year. Please contact the chair of the nominating committee, Patricia Roy, (proy@uvic.ca) to express interest or ask about specific positions.

VHS members are encouraged to volunteer for positions on the Council or for other volunteer roles (such as helping with registration at meetings, organizing refreshments or submitting articles for the newsletter).

VHS is a registered, non-profit charitable society and may issue tax receipts for donations of \$10.00 or more.

News & Notes

AGM and Election of Council Members

Date: 28 May 2020 (or as determined)

Time: 7:45 pm (Preceding the Regular Meeting)

Thanks to Michael Harrison for editing the **VHS Newsletter** for the past fourteen years. Starting with this issue, No. 54, the Society has moved to a simpler format. It will be emailed to members and available on the VHS website.

Members are encouraged to submit articles, photos or story suggestions related to local, regional or provincial history. Please contact the editor, Britta Gundersen-Bryden (bgbryden@gmail.com) Authors should credit sources and are responsible for obtaining any required permission for use of photographs and images.

Thank you to Donna Blythe for volunteering to take on the responsibility of Membership secretary from September 2019 to March 2020.

The VHS appreciates the work of Martin Perez, who has volunteered to assist with the Society's website and wishes to thank Helen Edwards for serving as the webmaster over the past years.

Up-coming field trips: TBD

BC History Federation Annual Convention
Cancelled. Details at:
<http://www.bchistory.ca/conference/>