

Reflecting on Research and Teaching

After seven years in Canada as an International student, last summer I finally came back to Italy. On May 22, 2024, I delivered a presentation entitled "The Ambiguity of Tobacco in Stó:lō Culture, Tradition, and Historical Consciousness" at the International Conference on "Decolonization and Indigenization: The Contemporary Debate in Canada" hosted by the University of Calabria.

Furthermore, I received an invitation from the Head of the Department of Humanities at the University of Calabria to serve as a visiting scholar in History for a duration of two months, from May 2 to June 30, 2024. During this period, I actively engaged in research and pedagogical activities within the "Modern and Contemporary History" course, which is directed by Professor Katia Massara. I had the privilege of delivering six guest lectures. Three guest lectures in the course "History of the 20th Century:"

- History of Canada in the 20th Century, May 14, 2024.
- History of the Stó:lō People in the 20th Century, May 27, 2024.
- Italian Canadians During the Second World War, May 20, 2024.

Three guest lectures in the course "History of the 19th Century:"

- History of Canada in the 19th Century, May 15, 2024.
- History of Indigenous-Newcomer Relations in the 19th Century, May 17, 2024.
- History of the Stó:lō People in the 19th Century, May 16, 2024.

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Featured Professor

Professor Alessandro Tarsia engages students in UFV's history program to understand local Indigenous pasts. He has important global perspectives that speak to our times. He teaches History 103, among other newly developed courses, and works to support community-engaged research in local settings.

In this feature, Prof. Tarsia reflects on his time in Canada and what he has done to advance his important research and teaching from a distinguished fellowship to return to Italy last Summer (2024). He now continues his intensive local research and teaching that engages ongoing efforts to serve Stó:lō Téméxw and forward efforts towards reconciliation.

Faculty Feature

In June 2024, I carried on historical research at the National Archives in Cosenza, Istituto Calabrese per la Storia dell'Antifascismo e dell'Italia Contemporanea (Calabrese Institute for the History of Anti-Fascism and Contemporary Italy) Archives, and San Vincenzo la Costa ProLoco Archives. The research has been focused on the role of the Canadian Army, in particular Indigenous soldiers, in the heavy shelling and subsequent conquest of the houses and land of my ancestors. I also travelled searching for signs of the Fascist regime, and Nazi-Fascists abandoned defensive bunkers, on which I wrote an article for *Active History* titled "Fascism and Anti-Fascism in Italian Historical Consciousness."



Above right: Archivio Santuario San Francesco di Paola. Alessandro Tarsia, June 14, 2024.

Above left: Alessandro Tarsia Guest Lecture. History of Canada in the 19th Century, May 15, 2024.



Bottom left: Nazi-Fascist Bunker - Capo Colonna (Crotone, Calabria, Italy). Alessandro Tarsia, May 29, 2024.

Alumni Highlights

A Journey in Public History

By Gureena Saran

I completed my BA in 2020 with a major in History and a minor in English, initially planning to pursue a career in teaching. However, my time at UFV—and particularly my experience with Robin Anderson—sparked a passion for history that ultimately shaped my career path. His approach to teaching was fresh, engaging, and deeply immersive, making history feel dynamic and relevant. It was in my second year that he first mentioned maybe looking into the public history program, though at the time, I was certain I would become a teacher. Funny enough, by the end of my degree, I found myself returning to that very program. A pivotal moment in my undergraduate studies was taking an upper-level archival research course with Anderson, where I worked alongside local history providers, including archives, museums, and historical sites, to explore Abbotsford's neighborhoods. This hands-on experience helped me understand the importance of preserving and interpreting local histories. My research eventually culminated in a work-study project.



Alumni Highlights

In January 2020, I joined The Reach Gallery Museum to work on Des Pardes, a community-led exhibition on the history, culture, and contemporary experiences of South Asian communities in the Fraser Valley. Originally planned as a one-year project, COVID-19 forced us to move research and community consultation online. Through this process, I developed a deeper appreciation for museums as spaces for storytelling and community-building. Encouraged by my colleagues, I applied to Carleton's MA in Public History and was fortunate to be accepted. Moving to Ottawa for graduate school was an exciting transition, and I was grateful to continue working on Des Pardes remotely while incorporating it into my thesis, *Motherland - Mother Hand: Exploring Identity, Community, and the Collaborative Artistry of South Asian Women in Abbotsford, British Columbia*. This research focused on one of the exhibition's most meaningful components: a community mural led by artist Sandeep Johal, where seven South Asian women, aged 18 to 70, created artwork reflecting their identities and connections to home and abroad.



Des Pardes Exhibition Opening

Des Pardes—which translates to “home and abroad” or “Motherland/Other Land”—became one of The Reach's most significant projects. The exhibition wove together personal narratives, historical artifacts, oral histories, and contemporary art to highlight the South Asian community's major contributions to the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Abbotsford. It also featured newly digitized heritage resources, including the Punjabi Patrika newspaper archive and the Baltej Dhillon Archive. Running from October 2023 to June 2024, Des Pardes was the result of three years of community-based research and collaboration.

Looking back, my time at UFV provided a strong foundation for this work. The mentorship I received, particularly from Robin Anderson, helped me recognize the power of history beyond the classroom. His encouragement, along with the hands-on experiences UFV provided, ultimately led me to a career in public history. As I continue my work in the field, I remain committed to amplifying historically underrepresented voices and fostering meaningful conversations about identity, heritage, and belonging.

Student Highlights

By Jakob Peterson

A Message from the President of AHS

Hey there, my name is Jakob Petersen, and I have been the president of UFV's Association of History Students (AHS) since the Fall Semester of 2022.

I originally learned about AHS when I received an email from professors Adrianna Bakos, Sebastian Heubel, and then president of AHS Carlanna Thompson. I went to the meeting with the idea that they were trying to get students more involved with AHS and participating in its activities. Little did I know, it was actually a meeting where they approached me to become the next president!

With shock, I accepted the position and officially started my journey with AHS. This was just after some of the pandemic restrictions had been lifted back in the Winter Semester of 2022; the semester when masks were starting to come off in the classrooms. The pandemic, due to online classes, stay-at-home orders, and restrictions on gatherings, had greatly impacted AHS and the momentum it had been gaining. Two years of online-only classes made it difficult to have engaging events, and many students graduated or stopped attending UFV for other reasons.

I was brought on under Carlanna's mentorship (in addition to the other then-executive members Steven Prosser and Alysha McGuiness/Marie, who have both since graduated) to help revitalize AHS and its membership. There had been two years of new students, which meant two years of prospective new students for whom we could help create a community.

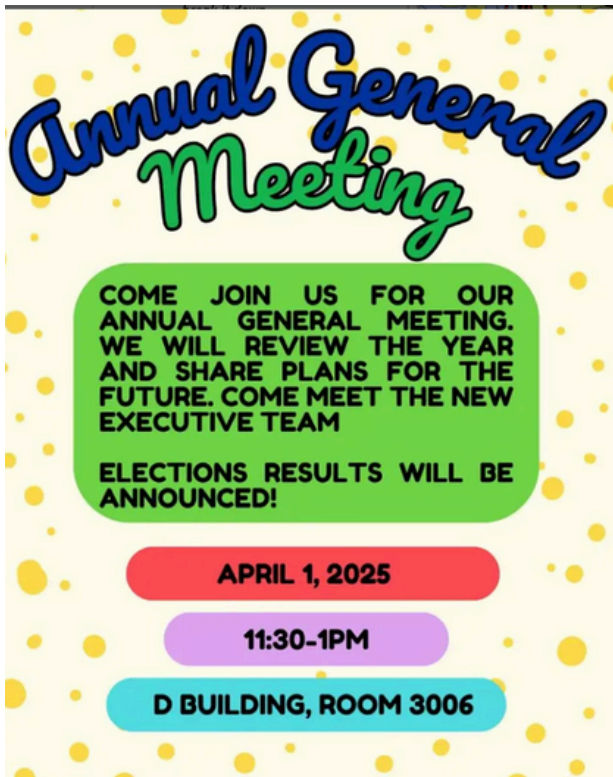


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Student Highlights

It was during 2023 when most of the other present faces of AHS, Aidan Spence, Clare Vike, Hunter Gauthier, Maggie Meyers, and Maya Drisner were brought aboard to replace the graduating executives who brought me in and acted as my mentors. With guidance and assistance from the old executive team, the current team worked to continue building up AHS. We now come to a time where all of the current executives of AHS, myself and those brought on after I started, are approaching our graduation. Thus, causing history to repeat. As I write this, we are days before the 2025 AHS election results are finalized, and so AHS's future is undetermined. This is an exciting time when AHS has been built up again and has the foundation and members to have an election! Even though I and a few of the current executives are running again before graduating in the next school year, fresh faces are coming to join the team. I'm excited to see where AHS goes here in the final year of my history degree, and also later in the future. This has been a fantastic journey for me so far, where I have met many great people and had fantastic opportunities. I hope those who succeed us and take the reins of AHS in the future find just as much joy and fulfillment in it.

My thanks go out to all those who have assisted AHS and me on this journey so far!



Poster from the most recent AHS Annual General Meeting



AHS executive members Hunter Gauthier, Aidan Spence, and Maggie Meyers at UFV Kickback, 2024.

Student Highlights

By Bradley Duncan

Would You Like Nostalgia with That? Collective McMemory and the Legacy of Vancouver's Expo 86

Author's Note: *This article was submitted shortly before McBarge capsized in late March, 2025. Whether this development renders its arguments irrelevant or all the more urgent— I leave to the reader.*

Nestled in a refuge of slack water, an aging relic bobs lazily among the reeds. This dishevelled transient was once a striking vision against the False Creek skyline, but those glory days are gone. Officially named the Friendship 500, it's better known by another name: McBarge. For decades, the once proud aquatic McDonald's sat anchored in Vancouver's coastal waters, neglected, waiting for something to happen. The people of Vancouver waited too. In 2015, on the verge of its thirtieth birthday, the fossilized Friendship was towed up the Fraser to its current Maple Ridge residence. Revival proposals have been floated, only to be scuttled. Locals have grown disillusioned. While its fate remains uncertain, it would be a mistake to repurpose it like an abandoned Pizza Hut or condemn it to a future as an artificial reef. The McBarge has become a totem: a symbolic representation of a critical turning point in the history of Vancouver.

The aquatic McDonald's debuted as part of the 1986 World Exposition on Transportation and Communication. Lost, however, in the success and fanfare was the unease that Expo 86 triggered as a harbinger of unchecked corporatization and commercialization. Despite Vancouver's growth and investment, many feel abandoned— adrift in the wake of progress. Nearly four decades hence, McBarge physically and psychologically lingers; a reminder that the promise of tomorrow which it heralded has failed to manifest for many. Rather than consigning it to decay and obscurity, McBarge should be reclaimed as a museum dedicated to the complicated and enduring legacy of Expo 86. To do so would not only preserve an iconic artifact but create a space and forum to critically engage with our local history.



Figure 1. McBarge at Expo 86, a floating McDonald's that symbolized Vancouver's futuristic ambitions. (Image via Agassiz-Harrison Observer, originally sourced from Imgur)

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Student Highlights

From May 2 to October 13, 1986, Expo hosted 22 million people, 54 participating nations, dozens of celebrity guests, performers, and world leaders. In the preceding years the city transformed False Creek's industrial hinterland and constructed the SkyTrain, the Expo Centre, (renamed Science World in 1990), the Plaza of Nations, and BC Place. On the opposite shore, the Granville Island Public Market opened in 1979. In the ensuing months, most of the pavilions and ancillary attractions were dismantled and sold off, but the vacant McBarge remained, collecting bird droppings in Burrard Inlet. It's this sad outcome that makes McBarge unique. It has become, in the words of French historian Pierre Nora, a *lieu de mémoire*— a site of memory. Nora describes these places as "moments of history torn away from the movement of history." It is McBarge's purgatory that's made it symbolic. It is Janus faced— marooned between two starkly contrasted realities— the embodiment of a romanticized past we cannot return to, and an imagined future that has failed to materialize. This dichotomy is key to *lieux de mémoire*. "...no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded."

McBarge embodies the triumphs and controversies of Expo 86's legacy. Critics feared the fair's neoliberal policies would divert funds from much-needed public services. The libertarian anarchist news journal Open Road reported that 70,000 British Columbians had become dependent on food banks after "BC's resource-based economy essentially collapsed" following shifts in lumber and mineral trade internationally. Yet Expo undeniably transformed Vancouver from a sleepy coastal city into a global hub. It fueled tourism, real estate speculation, and film, but cost "Hollywood North" its affordability and prior identity. Many see Expo as a Faustian bargain— prestige gained; soul lost. McBarge is a monument to that covenant, and monuments have the power to shape, enhance, or obscure historical memory. They can be tools to unite— or sow divisions— but McBarge has remained in Vancouver's common consciousness precisely because it is so fabled; and vice versa, steadfastly docked in our collective memory.



Figure 2. The abandoned McBarge in its current dilapidated state, moored in Maple Ridge. (Image Via North Shore News, originally sourced from Bright Sun Films, "Abandoned: McBarge 2021 Update," YouTube, 2021)

Student Highlights

Vancouverites have waited for someone to write the next chapter of McBarge's story, but through its long, silent vigil, it has written it for us. Suspended in the liminal space between past and present, progress and stagnation, it has already become an artifact of memory. As a museum, a reformed and reimagined McBarge would serve as a site of reflection, recognition, and reconciliation surrounding Expo 86. It would offer visitors a glimpse into the spectacle that was Expo 86 and engage with the upheaval it facilitated. If, as Jocelyn Letourneau and Sabrina Moisan state, that "society as a whole generates memory," we must shape what and how we remember. Imagine McBarge restored—moored once again in False Creek— an iconic vestige returned to its briny reliquary. Restoration is an act of defiance against forgetting, and by saving McBarge from the dustbin of history, we refuse to cede our agency as the future unfolds before us. We are still living in the world Expo 86 helped create. The least we can do is acknowledge its legacy— before it drifts further out of reach.

Coda

As if responding to its own neglect, McBarge has now partially sunk. This may mark its final chapter, but if there was ever a moment to decide what it's worth— what it means to the history of Vancouver— that moment is now.

Suspended in the liminal space between past and present, progress and stagnation, it has already become an artifact of memory. As a museum, a reformed and reimagined McBarge would serve as a site of reflection, recognition, and reconciliation surrounding Expo 86. It would offer visitors a glimpse into the spectacle that was Expo 86 and engage with the upheaval it facilitated.

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**This article was originally completed as a local history research paper for History 400 with Prof. Eiji Okawa in the Fall term of 2024.*

Student Highlights

Liberated by the Nation?

By Keshav Dubay



This artwork represents the changing roles of Korean women during the early twentieth century. It explores how literature, nationalism, and identity shaped their lives during Japanese colonial rule. The image is inspired by the ideas in the article [“Women and the Promise of Modernity: Signs of Love for the Nation of Korea”](#) by Sheila Miyoshi Jager. In her article, Jager explains that Korean women were not given full freedom to be independent. Instead, they were used as symbols of the nation’s suffering and struggle. My artwork shows this complex reality by using colours, symbols, and different figures to represent how women were viewed in Korean society.

**This artwork was completed for [Prof. Eiji Okawa's History 385: "Imperialism in East Asia,"](#) and is reproduced here with permission.*

Retired Faculty Reflections

Prof. Emeritus Robin Anderson



-When did you start teaching history?

I began teaching here at UFV in the fall semester of 1993. And in fact, Chris Leach and I were both interviewed to be sessional instructors in the fall of 1993. Neither of us knew anything about this university college, as it was called at that time.

-What first drew you to this subject area?

Well, first off, I think the influences I had were important. I think the first one probably was my dad. My father, he was an engineer. And he had a good professional life and all that. But what he loved, and I think it was because his father was involved in the military both in World War I and during World War 2. Dad was really interested in history... he had lots of books, all the classic books on all that. And it was something that he did kind of pursue, you know. And so... I think history kind of lived as a significant thing within our family, right? Not that my mother was keen about that, and I don't think my sister was at all either. And honestly, I don't think I was terribly keen either, but I think I was influenced by our notions of history.

And secondly, when I was 18, after I finished high school, I was kicked out of high school, so I finished high school at Vancouver Community College. But when I did finish it at the end of my 18th year, I got into the antique business, and so I was involved and started working for a very important antique business actually in West Vancouver, but that was moved within a year to North Vancouver along Marine Drive. I was in the antique business for I think almost, well very solidly about eight years. But I was probably involved for almost ten years and that was kind of historical, right? And so I was sent to England after a few years. I became an important member of our rather large store, and I was doing a lot of the reworking on a lot of the antique stuff. So I was doing lots of hands-on work and that kind of thing. But I was also being sent to England to look over the arrangement of all the shipping of antique furniture. And it was mostly furniture. We were in the furniture business. And so, you know, I had to learn. I know this is really kind of part of the non-academic public history environment, and the commercial environment in particular. But I had to learn about when those kinds of chairs were made and where did they come from. It's like the history of material culture.

****This oral history interview transcript, completed with Prof. Ian Rocksborough-Smith in September 2023, is excerpted from a longer interview.***

Retired Faculty Reflections Cont'd

-What for you was most special about working at UFV?

I knew nothing about this institution before I got here. I did know that Barbara, our colleague Barbara Messmore, she actually had taught a couple of courses here as a sessional the year before Chris Leach and I arrived. So, she was actually the first of all of us that started, but then she disappeared. But I really didn't know much about it at all. What I did enjoy when I did start working here is that it was small, right? Yeah. So it was not a very big place. It was a much smaller institution than SFU, right? And of course, SFU was even much smaller than UBC. And so it wasn't very large. And that meant that in ways you had more connections and perhaps better connections with people across the institution. And believe me, in the early 1990s, and really right up until probably when it really started to kick in slightly differently in the early 2000s, you knew everyone, right? And you even knew the president, right? Right. Kind of like a first name basis. Yeah, and people would meet up. And there's some wonderful pictures of UFV or the University College of the Fraser Valley from that period, where everyone working in it is in a picture. You know, you could never have done that with these larger institutions. So I think, honestly, I think that was really helpful for people and for instructors and sessionals, etc. I've written here that there were greater individual influences on UFV structures as well, and I think that is true. I think because it was small, you could influence things. I didn't do that a lot, but if you had a goal and you had something that you wanted to be done at that point, it could certainly happen.

Now, the negative part of that is you can get away with things. But I wasn't in that category. I really wasn't. I'm not trying to pat myself on the back. But I was right from the very beginning wanting to do the best I could. And, of course, as time went on, I wanted to contribute more than just simply teaching a class. And, of course, I guess the last thing, the last thing is that the classrooms were smaller....

-What do you think has been the role of the UFV History Department at this institution over time?

It was really, really important early on. I think that largely came down to Jack Gaston. Jack was very much involved in trying to move the institution forward to a university level. And so he was involved in the transition from Fraser Valley College to the University College of the Fraser Valley. History was very, very popular. I think in some ways he, and he was the head of the department in these early days and enormously important.

And so, yeah, the History Department was hugely important. To be honest, I think the English Department and the History Department were the two departments that were really the strongest departments in the arts.

-What will you remember the most about your colleagues?

Well, my colleagues here, certainly within our department if I can just mention that, were really supportive. There was a lot of communal relationships there and of course I got the sense that we were very practical too, right? I mean, yes, I think some of us had very strong social positions on things and that, but we were also able to kind of step outside that in order to make sure that we tried to create logical and practical outcomes like that. So I think that was probably really important. I will mention as well that our non-history colleagues... they were really important for me. I was lucky because I started working in the '90s when I was a sessional here. I also was working in the Writing Center. And so I was spending half my time in the Writing Center and half of my professional time teaching classes for the History Department. And because I was in the Writing Center, I had wonderful connections with all sorts of discipline areas and a lot of the instructors.

It's very common for our [history] students to go on to education... that is a very common thing.

-What will you remember most about your students?

I think there's like 58 letters that I've written in my life here [at UFV] and that's quite a few. 34 of them were for students wanting to get into an education program. It's very common for our [history] students to go on to education... that is a very common thing, which is something that we try not to admit. I don't know what that's all about. I'm not trying to be critical, but I keep thinking we have to acknowledge the fact that at least half of our students, at least half... want to go on to become teachers.

History Trivia 2025



Profs. [Eiji Okawa](#) and [Sebastian Huebel](#) organized and MC'd the popular annual "trivia night" tradition with UFV History and the Association of History Students (AHS) which involved a free pizza dinner, competitive group debates, and prizes for the top teams!

Film Series, 2024-2025



Profs. [Aleks Jovanovic](#) and [Ian Rocksborough-Smith](#), resumed the infamous history documentary film series - part of an older tradition in the UFV History Department of watching historically-related films. Here, we are watching an episode from the [BBC series](#), "[Filthy Cities](#)."



Students from Prof. Aleks Jovanovic's History 120 "Europe 500-1600" Winter 2025 class showcase their projects (upper right)

Scene from the UFV History Department annual tea in March. Always a wonderful time thanks to the efforts of Department Coordinator Nicole Kungle! (middle right)



Students from Prof. Eiji Okawa's HIST 398F "Samurai: Warriors in Japanese," present artwork from a group project coordinated by history majors Grace Jager and Clare Vike (bottom right).



If you are a current student or alumnus and are working on something you might like to have profiled in this newsletter, consider submitting ideas to *Now and Then*. We would love to hear from you! **Contact: historyinfo@ufv.ca**