

EDITORS' NOTE

NOTE DE LA RÉDACTION

Memories of the CHA

I write my last editor's note feeling a mixture of relief and sentimentality. It was before Christmas in 2006 when the military historian, Jean Martin, at the Department of National Defence, approached my branch at Parks Canada, looking for someone enthusiastic to replace John Willis as the English-language secretary. Jean and I had represented our respective organizations on the inter-departmental heritage review committee that assigns heritage scores to federal buildings over 40 years in age, and from that experience I knew he would be easy to work with. Moreover, I had great respect for the CHA and fond memories of attending conferences over the years. With little arm-twisting, I concluded that this was a worthy cause and I put my name into the hat. About six months later I was meeting with Jean and John in one of the boardrooms of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. I had no idea what the next few years would yield, and no crystal ball to tell me that the CHA was on the cusp of a major transformation.

In the first year, beginning in the summer of 2007, Jean and I continued to produce the *Bulletin* as it had been done for over a decade. It was a year of learning about the organization and about the new direction of "internationalization" that had recently been identified as important. The goal in this regard was to encourage historians whose field of study was not Canada to participate in the CHA's annual conference and take out memberships, and to turn the association into a home for all professional historians in the country, regardless of their national specialization. But how could one accomplish this? What could possibly unite historians working in disparate fields with seemingly endless conference opportunities and membership demands? No easy answers have come forward either then or now, but the CHA council has diversified, and on one front, that of advocacy for the profession, a common goal has been identified. Granted, for many outsiders the CHA is still perceived as only being interested in the history of Canada, but for anyone who has been following the *Bulletin* for the past few years, efforts have been made by many to bring a broader perspective to the organization. In addition to pursuing obituaries for all historians who worked in Canada, regardless of their specialization, news relating to international matters and shifting government policies for research has also been a focus.

The turning point for the CHA was the summer of 2008 when the CHA's long-time employee Joanne Mineault resigned, and some tough decisions had to be made about what the CHA should do next. Council and the executive had already planned to restructure in the fall of 2008, but Joanne's departure made everything so much more urgent. In the summer of that year, Jean and I produced the *Bulletin* under great duress without Joanne's assistance, and Marielle, Jean, and I spent 4 hours

putting it into envelopes so it could be mailed. This was in the final days of the CHA's occupation of the offices at 395 Wellington, with the move already slated for the downtown site, albeit with no one other than Marielle on staff.

Over a few weeks of craziness early in the fall, Craig Heron and the other members of the executive formed a hiring committee and selected Michel Duquet, a fellow historian, as our new executive coordinator. This was an incredibly stressful time when we all worried at length about the financial implications of decisions taken. Even now, almost 3 years later, it still feels like the CHA is growing through the aftershocks of that time. Once Michel was in our new office, it required at least a year to get us extricated from "Leverus" and to build a new web site, and since that time many improvements have been made to how the CHA functions. It should go without saying but having one central coordinating person makes a world of difference to a volunteer organization such as this one. Since Michel's arrival, we editors have tried to modernize the *Bulletin*, and with Michel's help and his pursuit of advertising revenue, it has turned into more of a magazine than a newsletter.

Over the years, many people have helped with the *Bulletin* in different ways and I am very grateful to everyone. Incredibly, I still pick up the phone and call John Willis now and then – not always because I need to, but because he has an understanding ear when it is necessary to rant about this, that, and the other. My two co-editors, Jean Martin and Martin Laberge have also been very reliable, making it possible for me to not fret about the French. There's always been enough to fret about with the English. Mark Humphries and Xavier Gélinas provided significant support on particular issues. Joanne Mineault was always a positive force in all my dealings, as was our layout specialist, Robert Ramsay. But most of all, the greatest tribute must be paid to Michel Duquet, who is the penultimate diplomat in all his dealings with his volunteer editors and the executive.

As a council and executive member, it has been a wonderful experience to work with so many historians from across the country over the years, all of whom are committed to service to our profession and are full of idealism about the significant work being done by historians. I have gained much from the leadership and collegiality of Margaret Conrad, Craig Heron, Mary Lynn Stewart, James Opp, Lyle Dick, and Marielle Campeau, and many other council members. I know I will continue to be a member of this association for a long time to come.

Alexandra Mosquin