

ARFL NEWSLETTER

Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians of York University

Website: <http://yuarfl.org>



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President's Report

Bob Drummond

This is my first Newsletter message since succeeding Al Stauffer in November, and my first responsibility (gratefully accepted) is to thank Al for his remarkable service to ARFL over several years. I am doubly thankful that he remains as Past President on the Executive where his experience and practical wisdom continue to make a valuable contribution to the organization. As you may know, YUFA will be going into negotiations in 2015 for the renewal of their Collective Agreement, and ARFL will as always be providing advice on the needs of retirees. The contract is still our best means of maintaining and improving retiree benefits, not only for our current ARFL members but also for current employees who must think seriously about what awaits

them when they cease full-time employment. I am grateful that so many of you completed the brief benefits survey we recently circulated; it will help inform our advice to YUFA as they approach bargaining.

There are two other matters to which I would like to devote attention during my time as President, and I invite your comments and assistance as I pursue them. The first is the challenge of maintaining our membership and ensuring that newly retiring faculty and librarians join ARFL at the earliest opportunity. We are aware that some at retirement may be confused by the request to join *two* retiree organizations – ARFL and YURA (York University Retirees Association). The latter is open to retirees from all occupations at York, while ARFL seeks to serve interests unique to faculty and librarians. It is ARFL, formed initially by retiring YUFA members, that has mainly concerned itself with faculty and librarian retiree benefits, while YURA has had a broader mandate to encourage continued connection to York for all former employees in retirement. I am happy to belong to both organizations, as I know do many of you. I hope I can count on you to advise colleagues you know who have retired and have not joined ARFL (or have let their membership lapse) to sign up. It would also be helpful if you can make the same pitch to those you

know who are approaching retirement in the near future.

The second issue, and one that may be related to the membership question, is my hope that we can broaden the activities of ARFL beyond simply advocating for better benefits. As you know, we try to combine our membership meetings with a lecture on some subject of intellectual interest, and I commend our Vice-President, Saber Saleuddin, for his success in attracting some extraordinary visitors. We assume that the term “former academic” is an oxymoron; once we became connected to the academy, we were always likely to retain the curiosity and intellectual excitement that brought us to the career in the first place. We on the Executive would like to make continued connection to academic life as easy as possible for those who want it, and we are eager to hear from you about how best to achieve that goal. We have some ideas (which we will discuss with you as they develop) but we are always open to suggestions.

In the mean time, I look forward to seeing many of you at our May meeting and for years of active retirement thereafter.



May 9 - Post Meeting Talk

Routes to Freedom

Afua Cooper

Introduced by Saber Saleuddin

“Routes to Freedom: the Beginning of the Underground Railroad to Canada,” investigates how Canada came to be ‘Freedom Land,’ a place to which enslaved African American runaway slaves fled in search of liberty. It will do so by underscoring the centrality of the paradoxical role played by Chloe Cooley, a Black enslaved Upper Canadian woman who was sold across the Niagara River into New York state. “Routes to Freedom” will also explore the Underground Railroad as myth and reality.



Dr. Afua Cooper is the James R. Johnston Chair in Black Canadian Studies at Dalhousie University. The mission of this centre is to foster an understanding of the cultural diversity of Black Canadians through teaching, research, publications and through networking. Dr. Cooper was born in Jamaica and after a short stint in school teaching, she immigrated to Canada. She received her BA, MA and PhD from the

University of Toronto. Afua's research interest is on African Canadian history with specialities on slavery and abolition. Her doctoral dissertation was "Doing Battle in Freedom's Cause". Afua is a dub poet and has won several awards for her literary excellence such as Harry Jerome Award. She has published four books of poetry. Her book entitled "The Hanging of Angelique" tells the story of an enslaved African Marie-Joseph Angelique who was hanged in Montreal when Quebec was under the French colonial rule. The book was short listed in 2006 Governor General's Literary award for non-fiction. Before joining the present chair at Dalhousie, Afua taught at York, Ryerson and Simon Fraser.

links to information on and tributes to Lee has been provided by York librarian John Dupuis. This information may be accessed by following the link at the end of the Wikipedia article

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lee_Lorch.



Lee would have been required to retire from York in 1981 at the age of 65. He fought this and, with the help of YUFA, succeeded in gaining a reduced-load extension until 1985. To the kindly question "And when did you retire?" from new acquaintances, he would respond "I never did; it's just my salary that was retired." To the question of where he might be going on holiday, I heard him respond: "I never take a holiday; I just work on different places". I recall visiting him on a Tuesday afternoon in Fall 2011 to be greeted by "I guess we're both playing hooky today!"; my puzzled expression brought the explanation that we were missing a departmental meeting.

Lee was Vice-Chair of YUFA in 1977-79 and was a strong proponent of the



Treasurer's Report

Stanley Jeffers

As of April 1, we had 193 members who are current with their dues, slightly up from the number reported at the AGM.

We have \$9658.05 in our current account and \$17,593.65 distributed in three term deposits. It is anticipated that expenses for the current year will be quite a bit lower than last year. Last year, the CURAC conference was held in Newfoundland entailing high travel costs. This year the event is being held in Hamilton with consequent savings.



Lee Lorch 1915-2014

Martin Muldoon

Longtime ARFL member Lee Lorch died on February 28, 2014 at the age of 98.

Lee's lifelong struggle for civil rights and educational opportunities for minorities has been documented. A very extensive set of

involvement of faculty members in governance of the university and in society generally. As could be expected, he was one of the strongest supporters of ARFL and one of the the most loyal attenders and participants at its meetings. He appeared to doze off during the last meeting he attended (November 25, 2011), but that did not prevent him from mounting a spirited harangue on what we should be doing to provide better information to members on their rights and benefits.



The York University Retired Faculty and Librarians Benefits Trust

*by Margo Gewurtz
(slightly edited by Bob Drummond)*

The YURFL Benefits Trust was established by agreement between the Employer and YUFA on Nov. 28, 1999. (Full text of the agreement available on the website). The initial source of the funds was a result of the Employer taking a Pension contribution holiday but continuing to deduct pension contributions from the employees. The money that was wrongly deducted from gross salary was to be returned to the Faculty and Librarians who had contributed that money during the pension holiday. YUFA members voted to put the money into a Fund to help pay for benefits rather than repay small amounts to many individuals. It was also agreed that the Fund be used to improve retiree benefits. ARFL polled members and found that the dental benefit was the top priority. Early returns in our current survey of ASRFL members suggest that it is still a high priority.

For many years, the Employer contributed \$750 and the Trust \$300, so that the annual maximum was \$1050. In 2009 the Employer raised the contribution to \$950 so that the current maximum is \$1,250. In the era before the recession of 2008, the Fund earned more than it was required to pay out, even though the investment policy was risk averse. In 2005, the claim was \$37,946.00 but by 2010 that amount had risen to \$53,283.51 and by 2012 it had climbed to \$69,624.86. The increase represented a combination of improvement to benefits, higher dental fees, and the growth in numbers of retirees covered by the plan. The very low interest rate environment since 2008 has exacerbated the impact of higher costs. To worsen the situation, the bulk of our capital is coming up for reinvestment in 2014 and 2015, and we will be lucky to get half the income from maturing investments that we got in the past. Currently there are 589 individual members in the York Retirees Benefits Plan and 468 family members, with a net increase of approximately 35 memberships per year. If all the potential claimants actually needed the entire \$300 “top up” the liability would be huge. As it is, we currently serve about 16% of that liability and cannot even meet that demand. Although the Trustees have agreed to a modest increase in risk in an effort to obtain better returns, they do not see any way to meet all our obligations under current conditions.

As a consequence, the Benefits Trustees have asked the YUFA Trust for funds to meet our obligations for the dental plan “top up” for 2013. (The YUFA Trust oversees and distributes funds that are rebated to

YUFA from Employment Insurance because YUFA administers its own long-term disability insurance plan.) The 2013 amount owing is payable after we receive the precise figures from the Employer. That amount is currently estimated as similar to 2012 or approximately \$70,000. Without liquidating any capital, we can only muster \$26,948.88 from our earnings on capital and cash on hand.

The Benefits Trust recognizes this request as a stopgap measure and have asked that ARFL make the Employer's taking on the whole \$1250 a priority in 2015 YUFA bargaining. Should that bargaining succeed, the Benefits Trust would attempt to fund other ARFL priorities such as audio-visual (hearing aids, glasses).

If the Employer does not take on the full cost, the Trustees will consider the following options, singularly or in combination, to achieve financial viability:

- Levy fees as is currently done for Extended Health and is allowed under the Trust agreement Article 6.02.
- Reduce the amount of the "top up", which would effectively reduce the dental benefit. Requires YUFA agreement.
- Wind down the Trust by using capital to meet bills. We estimate the Trust would last an additional 8-10 years. This action is justified in that the Funds came from a particular cohort of Faculty and Librarians employed when the Fund was created and does not need to continue in perpetuity. The life of the Fund could be

extended if the capital draw down was combined with income from investments and income from fees. A possible scenario:

Amount owing is \$83,000. Based on numbers currently in the Plan (above), a fee of \$30 per person/per annum & \$45 per family per annum yields \$38,730. With investment Income of \$20,000 & capital withdrawn of \$25,000 the total available would be \$83,730.

The ARFL Executive would welcome any comments on the above and would be pleased to try and answer any questions you may have about the situation.



Website Status Report

Al Stauffer

We are in the process of updating the ARFL website to make it easier for individuals to add material and keep it up to date. Some updating has been done already but the News section is very much out of date at the moment. Have a look at our site at <http://www.yuarfl.org> to see what it looks like at the moment.

We are seeking feedback on what the website should contain and what we can do to make it easier to find pertinent material. We want to make it a place that you will go to for information about ARFL and its activities as well as for a broader range of information about activities and services for retirees at York. If you have suggestions or comments about the existing site or how it can be improved, please send an email to

stauffer@yorku.ca and let us know how we can improve the site



ARFL SCHOLARSHIP

Saber Saleuddin

The ARFL Endowment Fund was created a couple of years ago in order to award an annual scholarship to a First Nations student studying at York. The recent value of the fund is approximately \$35,000.00. The scholarship was awarded last February to Raymond Therrien, who is pursuing a BA Bilingual Honours in Linguistics and Language Studies. The value of the scholarship awarded was \$750.00.

The ARFL Executive Committee has not decided whether or not to name the scholarship to honour a famous First Nations Canadian. Please contribute generously to the fund. Contributions are tax deductible. To contribute funds to the Scholarship, please contact Marcel Dupuis of Advancement Office

marcel.dupuis@lassonde.yorku.ca



Report on YURA Activities - April 2014

John Lennox Co-president YURA

YURA was happy to welcome Fred Fletcher as an ex-officio member of the YURA Executive Committee at our meeting in February. We want to publicly thank Stan Jeffers for his good offices in filling this role. This reciprocal representation between the two associations continues to be a positive link in YURA/ARFL cooperation.

Recent YURA activities include the establishment of a \$1000 YURA Graduate

Student Award which will be awarded for the first time for the 2014-15 academic year. The award is in place for an inaugural three-year period which we hope to renew at the end of that time. It was funded in part by proceeds from the Silent Auction held at our AGM in October. The purpose of the auction was the establishment of the award.

Early in February, three YURA faculty retirees took part in a Presentation Skills Workshop organized through the Faculty of Graduate Studies. Our thanks to David Bell, Irmgard Steinish, and John Warkentin for taking part. This was the second of such workshops and FGS has indicated that they would like them to continue.

We continue to work with the Office of the Provost on initiatives springing from the Memorandum of Understanding.

YURA will be collaborating with ARFL in organizing a spring seminar on home care.

On May 22, YURA's spring trip to the Stratford festival will take place.



UPCOMING

November, 2014 ARFL AGM

Preliminary Meeting Agenda

Call to order.

Amendment/acceptance of the agenda

Minutes of 2013 AGM

Election of Officers

Other business.

Adjournment.

Guest Speaker

Tracking the environmental effects of oilsands development in both space and time
John Smol

JOHN P. SMOL, OC, PhD, FRSC is professor of biology (cross-appointed with the School of Environmental Studies) at Queen's University (Kingston, Ontario), where he also holds the *Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change*. Smol founded and co-directs the Paleocological Environmental Assessment and Research Lab (PEARL), a group of ~30 students and other scientists dedicated to the study of long-term global environmental change, and especially as it relates to lake ecosystems. An *ISI Highly Cited Researcher*, Smol has authored over 470 journal publications and chapters since 1980, as well as completed 20 books. Much of his research deals with the impacts of climatic change, acidification, eutrophication, contaminant transport, and other environmental stressors. He has led research on circumpolar Arctic lakes for 3 decades. Smol was the founding Editor of the international *Journal of Paleolimnology* (1987-2007) and is the current Editor of the journal *Environmental Reviews*. Since 1990 Smol has been awarded over 45 research and teaching awards and fellowships, including the *2004 NSERC Herzberg Gold Medal* as Canada's top scientist or engineer. He has won 10 teaching, mentoring and scientific outreach awards, and was named by *Nature* magazine, following a nation-wide search, to be *Canada's Top Mid-Career Scientific Mentor*. Recently, John was named an Officer of the *Order of Canada*, the country's highest civilian honour.

2013/14 Executive Members

President - Bob Drummond
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Note about electronic payment of dues

Al Stauffer

ARFL dues are now payable for 2014-15. A dues form is included in the newsletter for those who haven't yet paid. Payment can be made by sending a cheque along with the dues form to the address indicated or by paying in person at the AGM. This year, for your convenience, we have instituted the option of paying your ARFL dues by credit card via the web. Simply go to the website.



12th Annual CURAC / ARUCC Conference & AGM

INNOVATION: THE FUTURE OF AGING

May 28 – 30, 2014

Presented by Retirees Associations of
McMaster University & Mohawk College in Hamilton, ON

The 12th Annual CURAC/ARUCC Conference and AGM attracts university and college retirees from across Canada and takes place in Hamilton, Ontario on May 28 – 30, 2014. For more information: Ctrl+Click to follow link:

To Register:

<https://conferencereg.mcmaster.ca/go/conferences/CURAC-2014>

Conference Program (draft):

<http://mcmaster-retirees.ca/PDF/CURAC%202014%20preliminary%20program.pdf>

Want to participate in a Best Practices session? Contact Mary Johnston at johnston@mcmaster.ca

Conference Details:

T: 905 525-9140, ext. 23171 or email: curac2014@mcmaster.ca
Website: <http://mcmaster-retirees.ca/curac2014.html>
