



## 2022 Canadian Immigration Historical Society's Annual General Meeting

Don Cochrane

*Don Cochrane joined the Immigration Foreign Service in 1992 and retired in 2022, with postings in Budapest, Vienna, Ankara, London, Beijing, and Geneva. He also served at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada headquarters in various positions. He resides in Ottawa and joined the board of the CIHS in 2021.*

The Canadian Immigration Historical Society's annual general meeting (AGM) took place on 20 October 2022, once again in a virtual format. While we all look forward to a day when the meeting may once again be held in person, its virtual nature facilitated participation of those outside the National Capital Region. Organizers encouraged members and observers to sign in up to 30 minutes early to test their connection and enjoy some informal discussions. Over the course of these conversations, the group noted that the cumulative experience of those on the call spanned six decades and amounted to several centuries. Holly Edwards asked those present to help her understand the history of Canada's various business immigration programs, and a short discussion ensued on that topic.

The agenda items and supporting materials for the meeting had been distributed in advance to preserve the time available for more substantive discussion. Agenda items for the meeting itself, which was attended by between 25 and 27 participants over the ensuing 90 minutes, included:

- President's welcome to participants;
- Overview of the various annual reports;
- Presentation of the Society's board and officers for the coming year;
- The Gunn Prize winner and honourable mention;
- Keynote speakers; and
- A discussion of activities planned for the coming year.

### President's Welcome

Dawn Edlund called the meeting to order, noting the presence of the winning author of the 2022 Gunn Prize and the author of the runner-up paper. She paid tribute to those members, former colleagues, and noted individuals who had passed away over the course of the past year and whose deaths were noted in the In Memoriam segments of the Bulletin: David Bullock, Lloyd Champoux, Bert Gordon, Darrell Mesheau, Randy Orr, Demetrios Papademetriou, Ben Pflanz, Jim Redmond, Clare Scatchard, Alain Théault, and Gordon Whitehead. Edlund expressed her thanks to those members who took the time to share their personal recollections of those who are no longer with us.

### Overview of Reports

The president continued with an overview of the various reports, which, as noted, had been distributed in advance. The Society had another big year, with considerable activity on several fronts. The bulletins produced over the past year were

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excellent products that were rich in content. The Society's finances are in a good state, ensuring support for its activities as needed. While the investment account has declined in value, it remains sufficient to cover the ongoing liabilities of the Gunn Prize and the Molloy Bursary. The Molloy Bursary and the Gunn Prize are both on a solid footing, with submissions for the bursary due at the beginning of November. It was especially encouraging to see the Gunn Prize successfully re-invigorated with the kind assistance of Carleton University's history and political science departments. The president gave special thanks to Kurt Jensen for his role in leading this important initiative. A subcommittee of the board is working with our webmaster on modifying the look and organization of our website. Membership numbers are down slightly; the board welcomes any suggestions as to how this situation can be improved.

### **Presentation of the Society's Board and Officers for the Coming Year**

Edlund noted that this year's election acclaimed the slate of proposed candidates. She also noted that Karim Virani, who had served over much of the past year as liaison between the CIHS and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada following Randy Orr's death, and who had been included on this year's proposed list of candidates, would no longer be able to fulfil that function. He was recently appointed to a new position at IRCC and has more demands upon his time. Edlund will identify and approach other potential candidates for this role. Edlund also expressed her thanks for the long service of Raph Girard as the society's treasurer, noting that we are fortunate to continue to have his knowledge and experience available as a member at large. In addition to having done a great job as our treasurer, Girard was also the author or co-author of three of the "best of the best" articles selected for republication in Bulletin 100.

CIHS board members for the 2022/2023 year are: President, Dawn Edlund; Past President, Mike Molloy; Vice-President, Anne Arnott; Treasurer, Don Cochrane; Secretary, Robert Orr; Bulletin Editor, Diane Burrows; IRCC Liaison, vacant; Member Emeritus, Joe Bissett; Members at Large, Brian Casey, Charlene Elgee, Raph Girard, Kurt Jensen, Gerry Maffre, Ian Rankin, and Robert Shalka.<sup>1</sup>

### **Gunn Prize**

The leadership of Kurt Jensen, coupled with the collaboration of a new partner (Carleton University), generated more interest in the Gunn Prize this year. The selection committee received twelve entries, of which it deemed ten eligible. All were of very high quality, and the committee decided to award one "honourable mention" in addition to the first-place award. The two individuals who were honoured were:

- Manum Shahid, who submitted the winning essay titled "Agency and Resilience: South Asian Migration to Canada 1900-1967". Manum Shahid is a fourth-year student at McGill University. Her essay will be posted to the CIHS website, and a summary or extract will appear in the Bulletin.
- Megan Yaskow, who was awarded an honourable mention for her essay titled "Planning for Stability: Alcan, Kitimat, and the Portuguese Community 1952–1980". Megan Yaskow is a fourth-year student at the University of Northern British Columbia and will receive an honourable mention certificate.

The president congratulated Shahid and Yaskow on their excellent papers. For more information regarding this year's Gunn Prize awards, please see Bulletin 102 (September 2022).

### **Keynote Speakers**

#### **50 Years Later: Tibetan and Ugandan Asian Resettlement to Canada**

The year 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of two significant events in the history of Canada's immigration service: the arrival in Canada of some 7,000 Ugandan Asians and the identification and processing of 228 Tibetans who had been living in exile in India.

Mike Molloy carefully described the context in which these movements occurred, noting that until 1972 no mass resettlement of non-Europeans to Canada had ever taken place. Over the course of the preceding decade and a half, however, changes had taken place which laid the groundwork for Canada's involvement and engagement in more global undertakings.

With the adoption of international and domestic human rights instruments (the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Canadian Bill of Rights in 1960) and an increasing tendency for Canada to find its own way in the world, the government's policies had become increasingly global and no longer solely focused upon Europe. In 1962, regulations were promulgated which removed many of the blatantly discriminatory provisions in Canada's immigration framework. The implementation of a "points system" in 1967 marked another shift towards a regime which was more inclusive. Indeed, within two short years of its implementation, Canada had welcomed new immigrants from 100 countries and territories.

A further evolution of Canada's stance followed its accession to the UN Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol in June 1969. Canada incorporated the Convention refugee definition into its own domestic legislation and defined a

separate “oppressed minorities” category for those who might not meet the Convention definition (for example, where an individual was still within the country of their citizenship). It was in this context that these two extraordinary events of 1972 took place.

### **Tibetan Movement, presented by Dicki Chhoyang**

The society heard a first-hand account of this movement from Dicki Chhoyang, who arrived in Quebec with her family as one of the first Tibetans identified for resettlement in Canada in 1972. She has been a lifelong advocate for human rights in Tibet and currently works at McGill University as the director of stakeholder relations for its master plan.

Chhoyang’s parents were among those 100,000 Tibetans who fled to India in 1959 and remained there throughout the 1960s. Following discussions between the Dalai Lama and then Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, arrangements were made for a small cohort of Tibetan refugees to be resettled to Canada. In all, 228 of the 240 individuals who were thus identified ended up coming to Canada: unlike many other ethnic groups, there was no significant diaspora of Tibetans living outside the region; indeed, Canada was only the second country (after Switzerland) to welcome them. Chhoyang described the cohort’s resettlement as being almost a “covert operation”, given the geopolitical sensitivities in play. The 228 refugees were distributed across Canada, with their destination roughly matching the school of Buddhism to which they belonged.

The models of resettlement varied according to the province in which they were resettled. Those destined to Quebec spent their first six months learning French in a smaller community (in Chhoyang’s family’s case, Drummondville) before eventually regrouping in Montreal. In Ontario, the emphasis was on vocational training. A number of the new arrivals were sent to beetroot farms in Alberta, where they were subjected to very difficult working and living conditions. Chhoyang remarked that this group had decidedly unpleasant experiences that resulted in significant mental health issues.

While the initial movement in 1972 was quite small, many more Tibetans arrived in Canada during the 1990s. Today, their largest community (numbering some 7,000–8,000 individuals) is in Toronto. In 2015, an additional 1,000 individuals were resettled to Canada from a region of India which had significant security issues.



L-R: Dawn Edlund, Mike Molloy and Dicki Chhoyang. Photo taken at a lunch in August 2022. (Credit: Dicki Chhoyang)

While the Tibetans are still a small community, Chhoyang noted several significant achievements by its members, including the first Tibetan Rhodes Scholar, a member of provincial parliament, and a candidate for the recent city council election in Toronto.

Membership in that first group—some of whom were born in and remember a free Tibet—is decreasing. With the objective of documenting and preserving their stories, an oral history project was undertaken. Given the small size of the community, it was a challenge to find a suitable repository for these histories. Chhoyang reached out to the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21 and found it to be a perfect place for the storage and curation of these important stories. The Ontario Provincial Archives has also demonstrated an interest in preserving the materials which relate to that province.

### **Ugandan Asian Movement, presented by Mike Molloy**

Molloy delivered a fascinating account of his experience as an immigration foreign service officer who, being based in Lebanon at the time, found himself in the middle of this extraordinary movement.

When Idi Amin seized power in 1972, Ugandan Asians were a well-established community. Many were the descendants of Indians who had been encouraged to move to Uganda while it was under British colonial rule; 90 percent of Uganda’s economy and 50 percent of its businesses were attributable to Ugandan Asian residents. In August of 1972, they were all ordered to leave the country within 90 days.

Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau took personal charge of the situation, meeting with the U.K. high commissioner and other stakeholders. Canada's early focus was on those individuals who held U.K. passports (but without a right of abode in the U.K.). Eligibility was later expanded to those who had no other solution.

As there was no official Canadian presence in Uganda, the assembled team encountered significant logistical challenges in setting up an operation and operating in an environment where communications possibilities were scarce and unreliable. Molloy recounted how simple yet effective solutions were found, such as assigning each application a number and publishing the application numbers in the local newspapers as a means by which applicants could learn when to arrive for an interview.

Communications with Canada were also much more limited than today, of course, and Roger St-Vincent, the project's lead, telephoned Ottawa each evening to deliver his status report. The Canadians were fully aware that their communications were being monitored; it was no mere coincidence that the line would go dead as soon as French was spoken.

As the situation evolved, the cabinet determined that this was to be considered a humanitarian movement, concentrating on individuals who had no other solutions open to them. Applicants were accordingly treated as if they were stateless. Though the intent of cabinet was carried out, Molloy noted that there was no clear policy in place: applicants were not eligible as refugees and yet were not selected under the "oppressed minority" definition. A great deal of deference was given to the discretion of visa officers on the ground; while at first there was some effort to use the points system as a guide, this was abandoned in favour of taking those in the most precarious situations.

It was noted that this was a generally well-educated cohort that was able to adjust quickly to life in a new country. As expatriates from South Asia in another country (Uganda), they had already demonstrated the ability to adapt to a new environment. As Molloy put it, they were "half-cooked Canadians" for whom there were few settlement concerns.

Following several questions, the president thanked both Choyang and Molloy for their insights and for sharing their stories with us.

### **Focus for the Coming Year**

Edlund noted the desire to continue with such activities as:

- The history of resettlement and immigration programs/policies through the collection of oral histories (with the kind assistance of co-op students from Toronto Metropolitan University);
- Documentation of the Lebanese Special Measures program, for which an abundance of material has been collected; and
- The Hearts of Freedom program.

Edlund also appealed to members of the society to consider ways in which membership can be promoted and increased, given the continued decline this past year. She thanked members for their attendance and expressed the hope that the next annual general meeting could be held in person.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Paula Pincombe has since joined the CIHS board as the new IRCC liaison member.

## **The 1970 Cabinet Decision Authorizing Canada's First Tibetan Refugee Movement**

Diane Burrows, Dawn Edlund, and Donald Cameron

*Ed. Note: The authors are indebted to the work of Dr. Jan Raska, Historian at the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, who has researched and written comprehensively about Canada's resettlement of Tibetan refugees in the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> The following article focuses on a very narrow angle of this refugee movement—the importance of a specific cabinet decision of 1970. Our transcription of this cabinet paper follows below. Thanks also to Raphael Girard and Michael J. Molloy for their comments on drafts of this article.*

The CIHS Bulletin recently published an overview by Donald Cameron<sup>2</sup> about Canada's acceptance of Tibetan refugees 50 years ago and their coming to Canada. Our article examines the very early stages of the movement, particularly the [cabinet conclusion](#) that authorized this initiative.

Here are some relevant high-level events that spanned Canada's first Tibetan refugee movement:

- 1966: The United Nations High Commissioner for Convention Refugees (UNHCR) approached Canadian officials asking if Canada would consider resettling groups of Tibetans living in India. This request was turned down: Canada only resettled individuals/families; and the Canadian government was concerned that the Tibetans in question would have difficulty establishing themselves in 1960s Canada, as they were viewed as predominantly nomadic people. There was also no compelling reason at the time for Canada to focus on this particular group for resettlement. The Dalai Lama then wrote to Prime Minister Lester Pearson with a formal request to resettle Tibetan refugees in Canada.
- January 1967: A federal-level interdepartmental committee, struck and led by an official from Manpower and Immigration Canada (MIC), met to explore various means of assistance to the Tibetan communities in India, Nepal, and Sikkim, including resettlement of small numbers of Tibetans to Canada.<sup>3</sup>
- 1 October 1967: Immigration regulations introducing Canada's "universal points system" came into effect.
- January 1968: The federal interdepartmental committee studying the Dalai Lama's request recommended that MIC resettle families to smaller communities.
- December 1968: MIC agreed to consider a small Tibetan refugee program.<sup>4</sup>
- Late December 1968: Prime Minister Trudeau wrote to the Dalai Lama to offer assistance to Tibetan refugee families in India.

[Prime Minister] Trudeau hoped that Canada would be able to provide homes for a number of Tibetan refugees should they be prepared to immigrate as families rather than as a large group or community. The Canadian prime minister informed the Dalai Lama that the federal government was also prepared to provide transportation, training, and resettlement assistance as well as pre-arranged employment with companies engaged in primary industries in rural areas.<sup>5</sup>

- 18 June 1970: The federal cabinet decided to proceed with resettling some Tibetan refugees in India to Canada. With this cabinet conclusion, Canada ultimately agreed to select and accept up to 240 Tibetan refugees.
- 13 October 1970: Canada recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC).
- March 1971: Selected Tibetans started to arrive in Canada.

### **1970 Cabinet Conclusion on Tibet**

This cabinet conclusion document opened with concerns expressed by the Secretary of State for External Affairs, who "emphasized the importance of having a minimum of publicity in connection with the settlement of Tibetan refugees in Canada in order not to harm present negotiations with China". Dr. Raska's paper provides the background:

As concerned Canadians were sharing their views on the possibility of resettling Tibetan refugees, DEA [Department of External Affairs] officials in Ottawa were in discussions with Beijing to formally establish diplomatic relations. [...] DMI [Department of Manpower and Immigration] officials were concerned that a program to resettle Tibetan refugees would adversely affect negotiations between Canada and the PRC for diplomatic recognition. [...] Discussions within the DMI surrounding a potential Tibetan resettlement scheme remained separate from the negotiations held by Canadian diplomats and their PRC counterparts. Canada officially recognized the PRC on 13 October 1970. Several months later, Canada and the PRC established resident diplomatic missions."<sup>6</sup>

### **James George, Canada's High Commissioner to India**

Of possible relevance to this cabinet decision—and more certainly to this specific resettlement movement overall—is a connection claimed by James George, Canada's high commissioner to India at the time, to former prime minister Pierre Trudeau. George advocated strongly for this initiative. He met the Dalai Lama in the late 1960s and they established an enduring bond. It was generally acknowledged (see Cameron's article) that the high commissioner was very much involved in the plan to resettle Tibetans to Canada. George later wrote that he and Pierre Trudeau "had known each other as friends when we were both serving in the Privy Council Office, or Cabinet Secretariat, in Ottawa in 1948-9." When interviewed by *The Toronto Star* in 2010, George declared, "I whispered in Trudeau's ear and he turned them around rather promptly.... The response from immigration suddenly became a green light".<sup>7</sup>

## Immigration Selection of Tibetan Refugees

Even though cabinet had authorized resettlement, what was the legal authority to do so? How did the Canadian immigration foreign service—Manpower and Immigration Canada’s Foreign Branch—approve the Tibetans who came to Canada? No Canadian regulations prescribed unique selection criteria for refugee resettlement.

The standard approach for approved refugee applications at the time had two possible selection steps. First, officers would assess the refugee application using the “universal points system” regulations implemented in 1967. If the application passed the selection stage (received sufficient points), then there was no issue, and the application would proceed to consideration of admissibility criteria and the final decision. Second, in the event that the application did not receive sufficient points to pass, the responsible visa officer could put forward the application for consideration by a delegated officer for “positive discretion” under subsection 32(4) of the regulations. If this was done, the application’s total score could be overridden. The delegated officer (the immigration program manager) could consider other factors, such as governmental and community support, in deciding if the applicant would successfully establish in Canada.

Donald Cameron, an immigration officer in New Delhi at the time, shared<sup>8</sup> his understanding of how the selection of the Tibetans worked:

I accompanied to the Delhi airport the last two groups to depart for Canada and from talking to those people I would say that [Cliff Shaw] used the "likely to successfully settle in Canada" selection criteria. Those selected were young to middle aged and largely from urban rather than rural India. Some spoke English very well. To the best of my recollection there was at that time no legislation or regulation that provided for the acceptance of refugees just as there was not for the selection of Czechs fleeing the Russian invasion of their country in 1968.

The Tibetan movement’s political sensitivity in an era of growing Canada-China rapprochement required deft handling, agility on the ground, and a low foreign policy profile to make it happen. Fortunately, the fairly new (1967) Immigration regulations and a broad interpretation of settlement potential gave officers in the field the appropriate discretion to override the selection criteria in place for independent immigration applicants. Canada thereby selected sufficient numbers of Tibetan refugees to fulfill the Prime Minister’s commitment to the Dalai Lama. Furthermore, Canada’s recognition of the PRC in 1970—unaffected by this small resettlement initiative—led to a wave of similar recognitions by other countries in the following decade.

### **Cabinet Conclusion of 18 June 1970**

#### **The Settlement of a Limited Number of Tibetan Refugees in Small Family Groups in Canada**

**The Cabinet** had for consideration the memorandum of the Minister of Manpower and Immigration (Cab. Doc. 611-70) and the report of the Cabinet Committee on External Policy and Defence (Cab. Doc. 728-70).

**The Secretary of State for External Affairs** emphasized the importance of having a minimum of publicity in connection with the settlement of Tibetan refugees in Canada in order not to harm present negotiations with China.

**The Cabinet** agreed that:

Up to 240 Tibetan refugees be accepted to come to Canada during 1970 for settlement on an experimental basis;

Additional funds for the fiscal year 1970–71 to the extent of \$694 thousand be provided for this purpose;

The provinces in which the refugees are to be settled be consulted to determine the assistance they may be willing to provide;

Six man-years additional to the present strength of the Department of Manpower and Immigration be authorized to guide the settlement of Tibetan refugees, one for each of the proposed areas of settlement and two at headquarters to deal with the necessary liaison and communications with the provinces and interested private organizations;

The question of additional numbers of Tibetan refugees being brought to Canada be considered in the light of success achieved with the experimental movement which is now proposed and if staff requirements are sufficient;

*[the rest of the document has been exempted under ss 15(1) of the Access to Information Act—likely to be under “injurious to international affairs”: i.e., “may refuse to disclose any record ... that contains information the disclosure of which could reasonably be expected to be injurious to the conduct of international affairs [...] (g) on the positions adopted or to be adopted by the Government of Canada, governments of foreign states or international organizations of states for the purposes of present or future international negotiations”.]*



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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jan Raska. "Humanitarian Gesture: Canada and the Tibetan Resettlement Program, 1971–5". *The Canadian Historical Review* 97, 4, December 2016, University of Toronto Press. Access to this article requires a subscription to *The Canadian Historical Review*.

<sup>2</sup> Donald Cameron. "The Tibetan Refugee Movement 1970–1971", *Bulletin* 97, Canadian Immigration Historical Society, June 2021. pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Raska. Page 554.

<sup>4</sup> Raska. Page 557.

<sup>5</sup> Memorandum from Director General of Operations J.C. Morrison to Regional Directors, Operations, Department of Manpower and Immigration, 1 April 1969, Refugees—Tibetan Movement General, record group 76, vol. 1217, file 5786–1, part 4, lac. Referenced by Raska. Page 557.

<sup>6</sup> Raska. Pages 559–560.

<sup>7</sup> Sandro Contento. "[For Tibetan refugees, Canada was literally the new world](#)", *The Toronto Star*. 23 October 2010. Accessed 04 December 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Cameron. Email to Diane Burrows, 15 November 2022.

## An Excerpt from "Agency and Resilience: South Asian Migration to Canada, 1900–1967"

Manum Shahid, McGill University.

*Manum Shahid is a Joint Honours BA graduate from McGill University, where she majored in History and World Islamic Studies with a specialization in South Asia. She is currently pursuing her MA in Immigration and Settlement Studies at Toronto Metropolitan University on Canadian immigration detention centres. Ms. Shahid's essay was the recipient of the 2022 Gunn Prize. The [full paper](#) explores the history of South Asian migration to Canada prior to 1967. Shahid emphasizes the agency of migrants in shaping Canada as a potential destination.*

In September 1908, in the same year that the Canadian government created the continuous journey regulation, the federal government created a plan to send South Asian migrants to work in British Honduras (present-day Belize). They sent a delegation with two Sikh representatives to convince South Asians to migrate, as they could not forcefully expel them due to imperial politics (Basran and Bolaria 98). However, South Asians were aware that this policy was intended to exclude them and began mobilizing to educate and unite the community. South Asians in Vancouver gathered in the gurdwara on 2nd Avenue and raised its members' awareness of their rights as British subjects and the realities of the policy ("Gurbachan S. Johal"). The Sikh representatives themselves told the community that the deal was no good (Basran and Bolaria 98). Soon, negative ideas about British Honduras spread, such as its bad working conditions, lower pay, yellow fever, mosquitoes and its larger distance from India than Canada (Mehta 147).

Through the first half of the 20th century, it was extremely common for people of all faiths to assemble at gurdwaras which served as the natural place for B.C. South Asians to organize for their rights. In 1908, the gurdwara also created the Khalsa Diwan Society, which is now the largest and oldest Sikh organization in North America. The Khalsa Diwan Society was highly involved in advocating for South Asian rights along with aiding community members during hard times (Jensen 9). The gurdwara and the Khalsa Diwan Society members were normally supported by Punjabi intellectuals who had settled in the U.S. or by highly educated and well-travelled South Asians from the eastern Indian coast province of Bengal (Kazimi 55).

During this time, mobilization against the British Honduras plan was spearheaded by Teja Singh, a well-educated lawyer who convinced the delegation that the plan was inadequate, and not needed (Mehta 147). He explained to the government that Sikhs "here are nearly all doing well" and they migrated from India to earn good wages and not necessarily to settle. He also stated in the *Vancouver Daily Province* that "it would be a serious step for the British government if the Hindoos [Indians] here were deported. Such action would not tend to allay unrest in India." ("Few Are Unemployed" 3). Teja<sup>1</sup> along with other members of the community, were conscious of their imperial rights which they exercised and reminded Canada of when threatened. Moreover, Teja was able to use their unfair treatment as a rallying point to unite Punjabi Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims with Bengali Brahmins in a manner not even done in caste-divided India (Jensen 124).

Through Teja's persuasion, the leader of the delegation, Colonel Swayne would go on to report that:

There is no reason why these Hindus should not do very good work here. Many mills speak strongly in favour of the better class amongst them, and it is to the Asiatic in Vancouver that the present stage of



Manum Shahid, the 2022 Gunn Prize Winner

activity of the mills and allied industries must be chiefly ascribed. The railways want them badly as development is hampered by the grip of Trade Unions (Mehta 146).

By uniting the diverse community, and educating them on their rights, the South Asian community successfully mobilized against the British Honduras deal for what was best for them and remained in Canada. This initiated the trend of South Asians collectively mobilizing when threatened by state immigration policies, as well the strategy of sharing their perspective in newspapers to allow the community to speak for itself. While this proposal failed, the legal avenues for South Asian immigration were still virtually closed.

Nonetheless, South Asian migrants from 1907 to the 1920s still managed to enter the country and settle in various ways. Migrants like Husain Rahim, who arrived in Vancouver in 1910, moved as tourists and were therefore not subject to the continuous journey regulation. Rahim claimed he was en route to New York with his final destination as England via Montreal (Kazimi 83). It is reported that he looked like a “westernized” South Asian who spoke perfect English and travelled first class, which allowed him to enter based on an officer’s discretion (Kazimi 83).

Some migrants also changed their names on their documents to avoid being traced back to their activities in Japan, Hong Kong or India, which might have given away that they were migrating for the purpose of settlement. Rahim was in fact Chagnan Khairaj Varma from Gujarat, who changed his name in Honolulu, making it harder for authorities to trace him to his home in Japan or Gujarat, which he fled due to financial troubles (Kazimi 83). Such a tactic would be used by South Asians deported in the latter half of the 20th century, who also changed their passport names in Honolulu to re-enter the state (“Sadhu Singh Sekhon”).

Rahim’s return to Vancouver a couple of months after his arrival in Canada, where he incorporated a real estate company and gained a name within the community, alerted his presence to the authorities who detained him (Kazimi 83). The community once again gathered in the gurdwara on 2nd Avenue and managed to raise funds to post his bail and fight his case. During this time, South Asians were paid on average ten cents an hour in the lumber industry, where the majority of them worked (“Sundar Singh Thandi”). They worked on the “back end of the green chain where the longer, heavier lumber was being fed into,” whereas their European counterparts “tended to work in the front region, with lighter pieces of lumber” (“Kesar Singh Nagra”). Despite the fact they were paid in cents when the bail and legal fees were in dollars and the tremendous amount of physical and difficult work to earn this money, the South Asian community in British Columbia still managed to financially aid those trapped in immigration problems. This trend continued throughout the first half of the 20th century.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I’ve chosen to use first names instead of last names as Singh is the standard last name in the Sikh faith for men, and Kaur for women.

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### Annual Dues

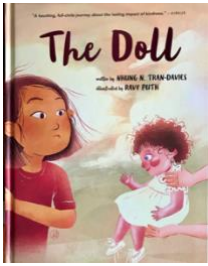
While CIHS is a volunteer organization, it still has some expenses and for this we rely on members’ dues. If you are not a life member and have not yet paid your dues for 2023, we would be grateful for your support. Details on how to pay are on the CIHS [website](#).



## Book Review: *The Doll*

Gerry and Cheryl Maffre

*The Doll* by Nhung N. Tran-Davies, illustrations by Ravy Puth, Second Story Press, 2021, Toronto. It can be ordered (\$19.95) online from the publisher's website.



A book written for children deserved a reading with two of our granddaughters, so we sat down one Sunday with Zoë (nine) and Quinn (seven). This is an autobiographical story by Dr. Nhung N. Tran-Davies, who fled Vietnam as a four-year-old with her family and three hundred others in a boat. They found temporary refuge in Malaysia before travelling to Alberta, where the congregants of Our Lady of Mercy Catholic Church in Enoch awaited them.

When the family arrived at Edmonton airport, the welcoming party included a young girl who gave Tran-Davies a doll with “wild curls of cinnamon, lips sweet and rosy”. She kept this doll for years as it always reminded her that she was “home”. She eventually became a doctor.

One night, TV scenes of the refugee situation in Syria led Tran-Davies to greet such a family arriving in Canada. To the overwhelmed little girl of the family, Tran-Davies presented a doll with “wispy curls and rose-sweet lips”.

A small act of kindness from a long-ago moment is not forgotten. It ripples outward, beyond our doors, over our steps, across the seas, and welcomes weary travelers home.

Our granddaughters enjoyed the story and clearly heard the message that acts of kindness can go a long way to help someone. As they agreed, one doesn't realize how sharing or a small gesture can mean so much to someone for so long. Quinn and Zoë enjoyed the very colourful illustrations that bring the three main characters to life. “It's a style I like.” And they agreed that they would like to know more about the people in the story.

Dr. Tran-Davies donated her first doll to the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, where it is now on display. Visit the author's [website](#).



Nhung's doll, on display at the Canadian Museum of Immigration, Pier 21, Halifax.

## Donation to Pier 21

Gerry Maffre

With the assistance of the CIHS, our colleague Helen Economo recently donated a collection of photographs, artwork, and a poster to the [Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21](#).

Helen was the immigration program manager of the Canadian visa office in Athens in the early 1990s. There, she coordinated with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) the delivery of Canada's overseas orientation program. The visa office referred selected immigrant applicants to IOM, which then delivered the federal LINC program (Language Instruction for New Canadians) and orientation services.

In 1992, IOM held a celebration to commemorate Canada's 125th anniversary of confederation. Several applicants (selected as Designated Category 3—DC3—in the self-exiled class from Poland) created artwork for the event, expressing their thoughts and impressions of Canada as they prepared for their resettlement. Helen received the artwork and photographs from IOM after the event.

Helen's donation included an Air Canada poster and pictures of then Director General of Immigration's Settlement Services, Ann Midgley, who was in Athens on a



Photographs of then Director General of Settlement Services Ann Midgley visiting the IOM classes and meeting students.

program visit. She observed the classes and handed certificates of completion to students. The photographs show IOM staff and students. The Air Canada poster encouraged immigrants—in Greek, English, and French—to fly with the company to Canada. At the time, most people in the designated category and refugees used the Canadian government's refugee travel loans to travel to Canada, in this case, on Air Canada.

It had always been Helen's hope that she could donate these exceptional works to the Pier 21 Museum as a record of Canada's integration model, which includes the overseas orientation program. That hope has now been realized with thanks to Norman and Millie Morgan for delivering the donated items to Sarah Little, the museum's exhibitions coordinator. All photographs are courtesy of Helen Economo.



Album of pictures of the Canada Day event with pictures of students and IOM staff.



Drawings of Canada and the Canadian parliament by Adam Buchowicz. (20"x28") and of a young child by Marek and Dagmara Staszak (20"x28").



Air Canada poster

## Donald Milburn, Part III: A Career Ending with the Settlement of the Boat People

Kurt F. Jensen

*Ed note: CIHS board member Kurt Jensen prepared this series of articles from Donald Milburn's memoirs, a copy of which Milburn donated to the Canadian Immigration Historical Society for its archives. This is the final instalment.*

Donald Milburn's career in the immigration foreign service ended at a baseball game in New Delhi when he tried to steal third base. An Achilles tendon snapped, and he was evacuated to England for surgery. When complications followed with poor skin healing, he was deemed medically unfit for postings in unhealthy climates and returned to Canada.

Milburn returned to Canada in March 1970 for a new domestic career. He became an administrative officer (AS-5) in the "secretariat" tasked with formulating immigration policies and selection methods—probably the Recruitment and Selection Branch. Much of Milburn's work included ministerial correspondence seeking special treatment or consideration. Accepting that he was settled into a domestic career, Milburn purchased a one-bedroom condominium in 1972 in the Eastview (now Vanier) district of Ottawa.

In 1975, immigration moved its headquarters to a huge concrete complex in Hull (now Gatineau), Quebec. At about the same time, three positions became available at the PM-6 level. Milburn applied for all three and soon learned that he had won a position located in Toronto. He was about to accept the offer when he was also accepted for one of the jobs in Ottawa. As he owned a home in Ottawa and had many friends there, it was clear which position he would accept.

The new position was in the Settlement Branch under director Janet Zukowski, and entailed the post-arrival settlement of immigrants. This included assistance with employment, accommodations, schooling, and general settlement challenges. His unit drew up the operational guidelines, provided budgeting, and assisted with guidance to the field offices. His position had recently been deemed bilingual, and he was sent off to study French. While he achieved competency in French in the classroom setting, he proved unable to pass the language laboratory examination. He was reassigned to a unilingual position but continued for the rest of his career in Settlement.

His failed language examination coincided with the “Boat People” crisis. The Indochina War had come to a calamitous end and the population of the affected countries, particularly the Vietnamese, fled in the tens of thousands from the new and oppressive regimes.<sup>1</sup> Canada made an early decision to assist thousands of the refugees with settlement in Canada. Many of these refugees would be sponsored by Canadian church and civic organizations, which would be responsible for assisting the refugees until they were self-sufficient.

Milburn was placed in charge of managing the placement in Canada of these vast numbers of refugees. He began the task alone but quickly had a full-time team of eight people.

The operation to save the Indochinese was complex. Offers of sponsorships arrived at his unit in the thousands from sponsors and potential employers alike. The overseas immigration foreign service officers trawled the Southeast Asian refugee camps identifying “named” refugees (that is, those with sponsorships) as well as individuals likely to settle successfully in Canada with some assistance from others willing to act as sponsors. Airplane charter flights had to be arranged and reception facilities established.

Milburn’s unit received copies of chartered aircraft manifests listing all passengers, including date, time, and location of arrival. With the assistance of computer-generated listings of sponsors, Milburn and his staff would marry offers of sponsorships with appropriate family units and assign these persons to their appropriate destinations. The system worked perfectly, even in those instances when several planeloads of refugees would arrive on the same day—and some of the larger flights held upwards of 500 persons.

These were exceptionally hard years in the service, and immigration officers went beyond all expectations to help destitute and helpless people. By 1980, life returned slowly to normal. Janet Zukowski returned to her earlier job and first love, personnel. Milburn became acting director of Settlement Branch (perhaps he was not made full director because he had not passed the language requirement).

In 1981 Donald Milburn retired from the Department of Manpower and Immigration. He is remembered as “a straightforward kind of guy, erect and plain spoken”.<sup>2</sup> This is an epitaph which can describe many of those who worked in immigration. He is remembered by Raph Girard as “always patient, superbly organized, and focused on his job.”<sup>3</sup> There were many Donald Milburns in the immigration service, dedicated and effective in providing Canada with people to help build this country. That is perhaps his testament. Unassuming, hard-working, dedicated, and committed to assisting people, many, like Donald Milburn, quietly carried out their duties and equally quietly made a difference to the lives of many people.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See *Running on Empty* by Mike J. Molloy, Peter Dushinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert J. Shalka, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal & Kingston, 2017.)

<sup>2</sup> Email from Gerard Van Kessel to Kurt Jensen. 25 July 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Raphael Girard in *CIHS Bulletin #70 of 2014*.

## In Memoriam

### Olson, Norman

We were sad to learn that Norman (Norm) Olson passed away in early November 2022 at the age of 86. He earned a BA from the University of Alberta and a Masters in Political Science from Stockholm University in Sweden. Norman first became a teacher, and then in 1968 he became an immigration officer, and served in Geneva, Vienna, Madrid, and Bonn (Bad Godesberg). He also worked in Ottawa, Uganda, and Trinidad, and became Director of Immigration for Alberta and the Northwest Territories. In his retirement, he managed the Canadian Bible Society Bookstore in Edmonton for several years. In 1994 he began a new chapter in his life supporting his wife Margaret in her church ministry, which took them to Inuvik in the Northwest Territories, and Athabasca, Ellscoff, Olds, and Marwayne in Alberta. As his former colleagues

would attest, Norman was a linguist: he fluently spoke French, Swedish, Spanish, and German, and began learning Russian. He was also an avid reader.

*Remembered by Joe Bissett*

Sad news about Norm. He was a fine officer and a true gentleman. One of the best. Condolences to Margaret and family.

*Remembered by Kurt Jensen*

Norm was one of the people from my time in immigration whom I remember very fondly. A kind, sincere and helpful person.

*Remembered by Robert Shalka*

Sad news. I would second Kurt's comments about Norm. He was the Manpower and Immigration member of the team that interviewed me in Edmonton for the foreign service in late 1973. I ran into him again in Ottawa, in Bonn where he was program manager, and again in Edmonton where he was the foreign service liaison officer and later director of Immigration. A sincere, serious, and helpful colleague.

**Whitehead, Gordon**

The Bulletin published an In Memoriam article in the last issue about Gordon Whitehead, who passed away in July 2022. That article included many tributes in his memory, but the obituary had not yet been published. The obituary is now available [online](#).

CIHS thanks its corporate members - IRCC and Pier 21 - for their significant support as well as its life and annual members. All these contributions allow us to pursue our objectives and activities.

<p>The Canadian Immigration Historical Society (<a href="http://www.CIHS-SHIC.ca">www.CIHS-SHIC.ca</a>) is a non-profit corporation registered as a charitable organization under the Income Tax Act.</p>	<p>The society's goals are:          - to support, encourage and promote research into the history of Canadian immigration and to foster the collection and dissemination of that history, and          - to stimulate interest in and further the appreciation and understanding of the influence of immigration on Canada's development and position in the world.</p>	<p>President – Dawn Edlund; Vice-President – Anne Arnott;          Treasurer – Don Cochrane; Secretary – Robert Orr;          Editor – Diane Burrows; Past-President – Michael Molloy          Members at large – Brian Casey, Charlene Elgee, Raphael Girard, Kurt Jensen, Gerry Maffre (Communications), Ian Rankin, and Robert Shalka          Member emeritus – J.B. "Joe" Bissett          IRCC Representative – Paula Pincombe          Webmaster: Winnerjit Rathor; Website translations: Sylvie Doucet</p>
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