

ElderCollege Connector



AUTUMN 2025

2025-26 CVEC EXECUTIVE

Chair:

Sheila Borman

Vice Chair:

Pam Monroe

Past Chair:

John North

Chair, Communications:

Solweig Williams

Chair, Curriculum:

Jane Sterk

Chair, Volunteer Support:

Gary Priestman

Chair, Member Support:

Beth Regehr

Finance Officer:

Liz Morris

Members-at-Large:

David Clark & Geoff Battimelli

Co-Secretaries:

Jackie Greening & Mary Gray

INTRODUCING 2025 / 26 CVEC EXECUTIVE !



Back L to R: David Young, Gary Priestman, Jackie Greening, Beth Regehr, Geoff Battimelli, Liz Morris

Front L to R: Solweig Williams, Pam Munroe, Sheila Borman (chair), Mary Gray, Jane Sterk Missing: John North

CHAIR: Sheila Borman

Welcome to another great term of courses and lectures at ElderCollege. I have been involved with our organization for several years, beginning as a subject coordinator on the Curriculum Committee and then the co-chair position. Five years later, I became the vice-chair of the Executive Committee and was elected Chair at the recent AGM.

My life helped prepare me for this task. As the only girl in the family with three younger brothers, I took on responsibilities that ultimately led to a career in education. With degrees from Western (Ontario) and McGill, my teaching began in Kitimat,



Achieving a Masters degree in curriculum development and administration from Simon Fraser, my career path included Ministry of Education work in social studies, writing teacher manuals for elementary instruction, and in professional development roles both as a teacher, and as an administrator.

Following retirement and a move to Galiano Island for 11 years, I continued active volunteering as chair of the library board, the gardening club, the concert society, and secretary-treasurer of the community water board.

A lifelong interest in boating began with instruction from my father in a 15-foot sailing dinghy on a lake in the Haliburton Highlands. Over the years, my husband and I have had adventures boating in Mexico, the Mediterranean, New Zealand, the Caribbean, and the US Intracoastal Waterway, as well as 55 years in our beautiful west coast waters. Moving to the Comox Valley 11 years ago, I now belong to a book club, sing in a local choir, garden, ski and continue to learn through travels to places near and far. Recent involvement with family history has renewed an interest in writing and introduced me to relatives in Scotland and Ontario.

VICE CHAIR: Pam Munroe

I am a transplanted Albertan who moved to the Comox Valley 25 years ago after visiting a cousin who lived here. Most of my work life was spent in the oil industry as a financial executive which allowed me to retire early and volunteer my expertise to other organizations. A deep interest in politics led me to the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada in the Joe Clark era. Later I became involved with the Green Party of Alberta and, upon the move to BC, with the BC Green Party and the Green Party of Canada. I was a Green Party candidate in one provincial election and two federal elections in the early 2000s.

ElderCollege became an interest, first because of the courses, and then I got involved with the Finance Committee that evolved into the Operations Support Committee that I led until its dissolution in 2024. An invitation to return to the Executive Committee as vice chair for one year has brought me back and I am looking forward to working with this new group, several of whom I know from my previous involvement.

This year I will celebrate 45 years of partnership with my husband Donald Munroe. We have a daughter and family in Calgary whom we visit at least once a year driving our electric car.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY NIC! - Don Axtell

North Island College (NIC) is having a birthday! Imagine: in 1975 NIC started from scratch with a dream, followed by legislation and a small contingent of educators, and now fifty years later, it's well established with facilities and programs in four North Vancouver Island communities! We are especially fortunate in the Comox Valley to have an NIC campus offering programs in our community.

Halfway through its fifty years of existence NIC joined with a group of elder citizens to found the Comox Valley ElderCollege (CVEC), a stand alone, volunteer organization within NIC's Continuing Education Division.

Last year CVEC celebrated its 25th anniversary of offering lifelong learning opportunities to mature adults. During last year's celebration, NIC President Dr. Lisa Domae brought greetings from NIC and applauded CVEC's achievements during the past quarter century. This year it is the turn of CVEC's members and volunteers to congratulate NIC for fifty years of service to the North Island community and to offer thanks for its continuing support of CVEC!

50 you say? WOW!

GOOD NEWS! – Sheila Borman

At our AGM in May, the Article of Governance and the Bylaw relating to membership was amended to read "Open to anyone 50 or over." - We are excited to welcome new members and hope that you will spread the word so that friends or family can register in time for our fall classes.

The \$20 yearly membership gives you access to over 60 courses and lectures during each term, October/November and February/March. Be sure to look for the fall course guide online or in locations around the community and I look forward to meeting you at upcoming lectures and courses.

How ElderCollege is Helping Students Thrive at NIC – Melanie Nagy, Executive Director, North Island College Foundation

For more than 30 years, Comox Valley ElderCollege (CVEC) has been a vibrant champion of lifelong learning and a steadfast supporter of North Island College (NIC) students.

What started with a vision to offer engaging, affordable courses for adults aged 55 and up has grown into a lasting partnership grounded in shared values including learning, community connection and accessibility. Today, ElderCollege not only inspires hundreds of curious minds each year through volunteer-led classes, it also plays a meaningful role in supporting students of all ages through the North Island College Foundation (NICF).

NICF is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing student success, education and community growth. Since 1991, donors across the region have helped the organization provide more than \$4 million to over 5,000 students. These gifts make a tangible difference by supporting scholarships and bursaries, upgrading classroom technology, providing emergency funding and ensuring students have access to high-quality education close to home.

ElderCollege stands out as a valued and long-standing partner in NICF's growing donor community. Since 2001, CVEC has made 28 gifts, totalling more than \$177,000. These contributions have funded numerous student awards, particularly those focused on healthcare programs. As with other NICF initiatives, the funds have also helped deliver much needed classroom equipment and most recently, helped grow an emergency fund that provides critical financial assistance to students experiencing unexpected challenges.

"ElderCollege's unwavering support of NIC students is a shining example of community in action," said Melanie Nagy, NICF's Executive Director. "Their generosity is always appreciated and their dedication to continual learning is inspiring."

With four separate endowments, including funds established in honour of ElderCollege founders and milestone anniversaries, the CVEC's impact will continue to grow for generations. Their story is one of vision, volunteerism and a deep belief in the power of education to transform lives.

"With your financial support, I feel relief and renewed confidence to achieve my goal," said Gulniza Duran, recipient of the 2024 CVEC Betty Emery Founders Bursary. "I want to prove to my children that everything is possible regardless of age. My desire to study will encourage my kids to learn and be brave. This bursary truly inspires me to achieve my dreams, and I am sincerely grateful for your contribution to my education."

As part of a broader community of more than 2,000 donors, ElderCollege helps NICF bring educational opportunities within reach for students from all walks of life. Together, they are advancing students, education and their community—one gift at a time.

More Additions: Frank Lo, Community Outreach



My name is Frank Lo. My wife and I moved to the Comox Valley in 2007. I worked in Port Hardy for 11 years as a dentist and she as a family doctor before moving here. We love living on the Island, as we learned so much from nature through its people, who are good stewards of this land. Sharing of information is such an integral part of a healthy community. We are very blessed with a large influx of retirees from all parts of the world that choose this place as their new home, and the Elder College at North Island College as a centre.

Farewell to Jim Peacock, CVEC Photographer

It has been eight years since Jim began capturing iconic scenes and events featuring CVEC members. Jim will be leaving us as he has had to drop many of his photography commitments.

Jim - you are a wonderful photographer and your contributions have been so appreciated. You will be greatly missed and we will need to beat the bushes to find a replacement for you.

Best wishes to you as you move onto other adventures.



Volunteering with CVEC - Gary Priestman

As most of our members know, CVEC is a self-managed unit within the Continuing Education faculty of North Island College. As such we rely heavily on volunteers - they are the lifeblood of

our organization. It takes over 110 volunteers each year to organize, support and deliver all the wonderful courses.

Traditionally the rest of this article would be a plea for new volunteers. However, I would rather present the perspectives of three of our current volunteers. I asked each of them the following questions:

- 1) How long have you been a CVEC volunteer?
- 2) Why did you choose to become a CVEC volunteer?
- 3) How have you benefited personally from your CVEC volunteering?

Barb Smith 11 years of volunteering

"We moved to Courtenay in Dec. 2013. My husband was ill at the time and we only knew a couple of people. He encouraged me to join in community activities so I could meet people and find things to do. CVEC was one of the names that came up when I looked online for volunteer positions. I liked the idea of CVEC and contacted them.

"Friendships with other like-minded people. Ability to be useful in a much-needed area for 'older' people where my skills are appreciated. Access to courses and lectures."

Mary Gray 9 years of volunteering

"Around 2015/2016, after I had finished work life finally, I was recruited at a Sat lecture series. I support the CVEC mission and enjoy being part of the organization. From my volunteer positions I believe I do my part in supporting the mission "

"I have lots of skills and I like using them. Gives me pleasure and much satisfaction. I am a people person - like meeting people and interacting and being involved in joint efforts and projects."

Barbara Bruederlin 3 years of volunteering

"I was thrilled when I first spotted a notice that the Communications Committee was seeking a new volunteer. As a writer who had worked in branding and marketing prior to retirement, I suspected that I had some skills that could be of use to CVEC. At the time, I had only lived in the Comox Valley for a couple of years, but ElderCollege had already become an important part of my new life - a place to explore new interests, gain knowledge, and interact with people who were equally inquisitive."

"Being a CVEC volunteer has helped me maintain a real sense of purpose during retirement, has allowed me to keep my pencil sharp, and has provided balance in my life. As part of the Communications Committee, I work closely with a group of dedicated, talented and really fun people! We get a lot of work done, but we also enjoy potluck meals on occasion and laugh a lot. It also just feels good to give back to an organization that has enriched my life so much."

From the above you can see how each of our volunteers has their own reason for volunteering and each enjoys the benefits of volunteering with CVEC. Now that you have heard the voices of our current volunteers, there is only one question remaining: will you be the voice of a future volunteer?

JOIN US!

Define your passion and come share with others.

Fall Course Sneak Peek

Our course guide is now available in locations throughout the Valley. There are over 70 courses being offered during our fall 2025 term. Here's a look at just four of the new offerings.

Art of the Silk Roads (2 weeks online) Alan Freeland



For thousands of years, people, goods and ideas travelled east to west and west to east between Europe and China. To successfully navigate these trade networks meant embracing different cultures, negotiating unwanted tariffs, and avoiding conflicts. The presenter will introduce us to the people, the trades, and the ideas that travelled these vast distances and how art gives us a window on this world.

Making Sense of Medical News (5 weeks on campus) Warren Michelow



Understanding health information is of increasing importance as we age. This course aims to improve health literacy and help you find and make sense of medical information. Explore how medical/health research and various types of studies are done, learn key terms, and understand how to read scientific papers. Then we will put it all together by working through case studies chosen by you and the instructor.

Amsterdam: A Historical Tour (4 weeks on campus) John Sterk

Explore Amsterdam's evolution from its medieval origins to the present (1100 on). Through engaging presentations and slide visuals, we'll examine the city's politics, architecture, culture, and society across centuries, highlighting its transformation during the Dutch Golden Age, resilience through conflicts, and modern development. This course offers a comprehensive and visually enriched understanding of Amsterdam's unique history.



Health, Reactors and Climate (8 weeks online) Jess

H. Brewer The greenhouse effect of fossil-fuel use is causing disastrous global climate change. We need alternative sources of electric power, one of which is nuclear fission. However, some people are afraid of radiation and believe nuclear reactors will inevitably release dangerous amounts. We need to understand not only nuclear reactors but also what radiation is, how it's measured and its actual health effects.

FALL LECTURE SERIES FOCUS - All Creatures, Great and Small

From the cougars we share the woods with to the dogs and cats we share our homes with, this term's lecture series takes a close look at the animals all around us. All of the creatures, great and small. We'll dive into the waters of the sea, visit the bats of Cumberland, and discover why the spring herring run is such an important cornerstone for so many creatures. Along the way we'll learn what we can do to keep Vancouver Island wild.

Life Under the Sea - Kolin Hansen - October 4



Long-time diver and underwater photographer Kolin Hansen takes us under the sea at our very doorstep. Come meet some of the remarkable creatures that live there. Kolin is the creator of Getting Salty; his mission is to raise awareness of the incredible ocean life in the Pacific Northwest through photography, videography, art, and design. As a technical diver with a deep passion for underwater film and photography, he is driven to document the unique and diverse marine life that calls Vancouver Island's waters home. From the vibrant kelp forests to the mysterious depths, Kolin showcases the beauty and importance of our ocean ecosystems. His aim is to inspire others to appreciate and protect the rich biodiversity that thrives beneath the surface.

Bats In the Forest - Meaghan Cursons - October 18

Bats are a critical part of our local ecosystems, and their habitat is all around us in the Comox Valley. Join Cumberland Community Forest Society (CCFS) executive director and bat naturalist Meaghan Cursons to learn all about the bats in our



midst: their evolution, biology, roosts and reproduction, habitat, myths and legends, fears and superstitions, local monitoring projects, and the science of bat conservation. CCFS is the local coordinator for the BC Community Bat Program providing public education about these fascinating species at risk.

Meaghan is executive director of the Cumberland Community Forest Society, a conservation organization purchasing forest land from private timber companies and leading work in land conservation, public education, watershed protection, and wildfire resilience on eastern Vancouver Island. She also works as a watershed protection educator for the Comox Valley Regional District through its Connected by Water project. In her spare time, she leads heritage walks, produces environmental theatre with kids, and wanders around at dusk looking for bats.

Protecting Pacific Herring - Sydney Dixon - October 25

Discover the critical role Pacific herring play in the coastal ecosystem—and why their future hangs in the balance. This talk explores the ecological, cultural, and economic importance of herring, the threats they face from industrial exploitation, climate change, and mismanagement, and the urgent need for action.



Sydney is a marine specialist at Pacific Wild and the driving force behind the organization's marine campaign work. With a background in marine ecology and a deep passion for ecosystem-based conservation, she leads initiatives focused on protecting forage fish, like Pacific herring, that form the foundation of B.C.'s coastal food web. She brings both scientific insight and advocacy experience to this lecture, drawing on her work at the intersection of marine policy, ecological research, and community engagement.

Living with Cougars - Mollie Cameron - November 1



Explore how to understand cougar signs and behaviours, as well as effective strategies for mitigating human-wildlife conflicts. The discussion will cover common and uncommon cougar observations, potential attractants that draw these animals into human-inhabited areas, and the dangers that cougars face in our changing environment. This presentation will deepen your understanding of cougars and inspire a greater appreciation for their role in our ecosystem.

Mollie is a wildlife photographer, naturalist, ecotourism guide, and president of Wild Wise Society, an organization focused on mitigating human-wildlife conflicts and promoting peaceful coexistence with nature. She became president of the society in 2023, where she continues to provide public education on wildlife issues in hopes of expanding community awareness. In 2020, Mollie launched The Cougar Coexistence Initiative, a passion project that maps cougar sightings and conflicts, tracks behavioural patterns, and documents predation and community issues through remote camera traps. This research aims to shed light on wildlife behaviour and improve coexistence strategies between humans and wildlife.

The Science of Pets - Jay Ingram - November 15



We are the only species that keep pets—but why? And how did it happen that dogs and cats (descended from wolves and wild cats) became our favourite pets? Looking to the future, when by 2050 it's estimated that two-thirds of the world's human population will live in cities, how different will the world of pets look?

Jay has hosted two national science programs in Canada, Quirks and Quarks on CBC Radio and Daily Planet on Discovery Channel Canada. His 20 books have been translated into 15 languages. Jay has seven honorary degrees and is a member of the Order of Canada. From 2005 to 2015, he chaired the Science Communications Program at the Banff Centre, and he is co-founder of the arts and engineering smashup called Beakerhead. His book *The Science of Pets* will be available in November.

Bird Brains: Smarter Than You Might Think - Sandra Milligan - November 22

Once dismissed as “birdbrains,” birds are now recognized for their remarkable intelligence. Sandra explores the evolution of our understanding of avian neuroanatomy, focusing on local species. Through engaging stories and videos, she will explore how birds solve problems, use tools, express empathy, and communicate with rich vocabularies, while inviting you to see these creatures with newfound respect and wonder.

Sandra has been teaching biology at NIC for over 20 years. With graduate degrees in neuroscience, she's now a generalist, naturalist, and lifelong learner. In Campbell River, she's a recognized environmental advocate and educator. Her passion for birding has evolved into a deep interest in avian behaviour and intelligence. Drawing on her neuroanatomy background, Sandra has followed the growing research on bird cognition—confirming what many intuitively felt: birds display an extraordinary range of intelligent behaviours.



The Amazing Diversity of Insects - Steve Perlman - November 29



Insects are by far the most diverse organisms on the planet, accounting for more than half of all described species. Hear an overview of insect biodiversity, including new approaches to discovering species. Our focus then turns to the most diverse insects of all—parasitic wasps, with an introduction to their amazing natural history, ecology, and behaviour.

Steve is a professor in the Department of Biology at the University of Victoria, where he has worked since 2005. He teaches entomology and evolutionary biology. He grew up in Toronto and completed his PhD at the University of Arizona. His research focuses on the ecology, evolution, and genetics of associations between insects and the diverse organisms that infect them, from parasites to beneficial microbes.

When it's TIME to REGISTER:

Registration cheat sheet for returning CVEC members

Step 1: Go to register.cvec.ca

Step 2: Click on 'Sign in' in the top right of the page. Sign into your account with your assigned username (e.g., jstudent@northislandcollege.ca) and password. Call Student Services (1-800-715-0914) if you have forgotten your NIC email address.

Step 3: You should be returned to the Instant Enrollment registration page.

Step 4: To register for a course, find it in the list (it may be on another page). Click the 'Select' button to the right of the course title and then choose 'Add section' from the popup. If you just want to see more information about the course, you can click on the CVEC course number to see more course details like the seats available, course description, etc. Repeat this step for every other course you wish to register for.

Step 5: Click the yellow box in the top right corner to dismiss it, and then click 'Next' to advance to the payment steps in the process. Note that receipts are emailed; the print prompt will not work.

If you get stuck, call us at 250-334-5005.

Registration cheat sheet for new CVEC members

Step 1: Go to register.cvec.ca

Step 2: To register for a course, find it in the list (it may be on another page). Click the 'Select' button to the right of the course title and then choose 'Add section' from the popup. If you just want to see more information about the course, you can click on the CVEC course number to see more course details like the seats available, course description, etc. Repeat this step for every other course you wish to register for.

Step 3: Click the yellow box in the top right corner to dismiss it, and then click 'Next' to advance.

Step 4: Enter the requested personal information. This will set up a CVEC account with NIC.

Step 5: Once your entered personal information is confirmed, you will advance to the payment steps in the process.

Step 6: Then, when your payment is complete, you will receive two emails right away: one to confirm your course enrollments; a second to give you your initial password for your new NIC/CVEC online account. A third email will arrive in a day or two that provides your login ID (it will look like an email address with your name followed by @northislandcollege.ca). **It will also indicate that your initial password is based on your birth date, but this is incorrect.** Your initial password was provided in one of the two initial emails received. Note also that receipts are emailed; the print prompt will not work.

If you get stuck, call us at 250-334-5005

Moving from Summer to Autumn



SMILE!

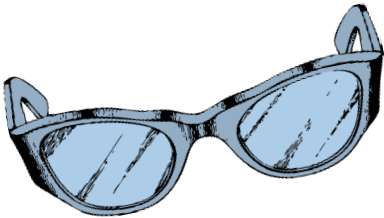
The value of a smile is priceless, yet it is the cheapest, easiest, most rewarding and most sincere gift to anyone who crosses your path.

A smile makes a person's day, anybody's day even a stranger's day. A smile is infectious. Start infecting people with your smile today.

A smile is nature's best antidote for discouragement. It brings rest to the weary, sunshine to those who are sad, and hope to those who are hopeless and defeated.

A smile is so valuable that it can't be bought, begged, borrowed, or taken away against your will. You have to be willing to give a smile away before it can do anyone else any good.

So, if someone is too tired or grumpy to flash you a smile, let them have one of yours anyway. Nobody needs a smile as much as the person who has none to give.



**HEY -
GOOD
LOOKING!**

My face in the mirror isn't wrinkled or drawn.
My house isn't dirty. The cobwebs are gone.
My garden looks lovely and so does my lawn.
I think I might never put my glasses back on.

Where do bad rainbows go?

To prism.
It's a light sentence,
but it gives them time to reflect.



WHAA-TT??

I'm so old that I've seen 5/5/55, 6/6/66, 7/7/77, 8/8/88, 9/9/99, 10/10/10, 11/11/11, 12/12/12, 2/2/22 and 12/31/23.
(If you've seen 3/3/33 and 4/4/44, and if you've seen 2/2/22 twice - then you are REALLY old!)

REALITY CHECK



Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me. I want people to know why I look this way. I've travelled a long way and some of the roads weren't paved.

Eventually, you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and start bragging about it.

Maturity means being emotionally and mentally healthy. It is that time when you know when to say yes and when to say no, and when to say WHOOPPEE!

I don't know how I got over the hill without getting to the top.

One of the many things no one tells you about aging is that it is such a nice change from being young.

Age seldom arrives smoothly or quickly. It is more often a succession of jerks.

If you don't learn to laugh at trouble, you won't have anything to laugh at when you are old.