



BCHNS Sets up Display at the SPH Heart Centre Nursing Education Day 2025

The theme of this year's SPH Heart Centre Nursing Education Day, Merging History, Best Practice and Compassion in Cardiac Care aligns strikingly with the goals, objectives, and ongoing commitment of the BC History of Nursing Society to highlight and preserve our nursing history. So, it was easy to accept the invitation to set up a BCHNS display. With the able direction of Linda Quiney, our Display Coordinator, we set up a display that focused on the artifacts, books, and turn-of-the-century nursing uniforms that link our history of dedicated, professional nursing to the present-day practice of cardiac nursing.



[photo: Linda Quiney & Suzanne Nixon in front of display]

Dr. Martha Mackay, Clinical Associate Professor at UBC with 25 years as a Clinical Nurse Specialist in Cardiology, gave the keynote address. She spoke about cardiac nursing over the years and emphasized the significant role nurses have had through research, policy and guideline development, health care advocacy and the implementation of initiatives that have had a significant



[photo: Erin Tang, MSN RN, Clinical Nurse Specialist for THV and ACS at PHC Heart Centre]

impact on health care delivery. All of this can be traced back to strong nursing leaders of the past. Examples of innovative nursing leadership have been associated with cardiac nursing at SPH. These are found documented in a cherished book within the archives of BCHNS, *St Paul's Hospital, A Proud Tradition of Compassionate Care* (2007). As early as 1918 Sister Spinal, a graduate of the SPH School of Nursing,

patented her valuable invention, a machine to heat ether for patients undergoing surgery. Nursing leadership helped guide many firsts at SPH, including the invention of the first bypass heart-lung machine for open heart surgery, the establishment of the first ICU in the country, the establishment of a cardiac catheterization lab and the founding of the Heart Centre at SPH in 1994. Nursing has had an ever-growing presence in clinical research and the implementation of findings to improve patient care at the bedside.

The BCHNS display was well received by the participants who appreciated knowing the strong work of advocacy our Society has in preserving BC nursing history. The opportunity to adorn a turn-of-the-century nursing cape and gown was welcomed and added a bit of fun.

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newsletter committee

Frances Affleck and Lenore Radom.
The BC History of Nursing Society Newsletter is published 2 times per year.

SUBMISSIONS ARE WELCOME.

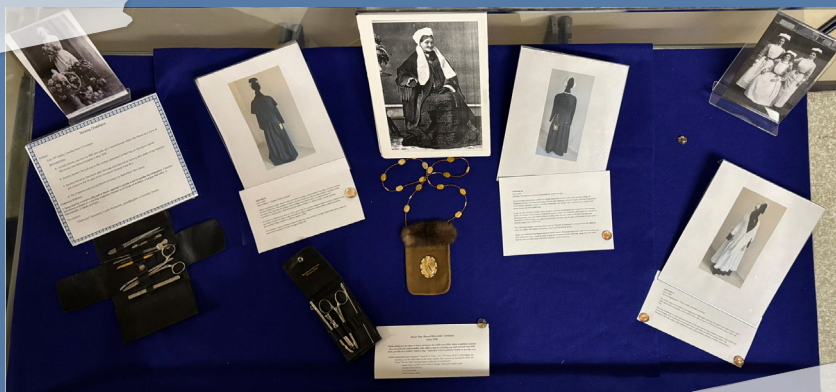
Deadline for the Spring Issue is March 1, 2026.
Please send submissions to:
Francesaffleck123@gmail.com

Archival Corner

The Charm and Utility of the Nursing Chatelaine

CHATELAINE: The word comes from the French term “chatelaine”, meaning the mistress of the chateau. The mistress would have worn a belt for her keys which is where the present term comes from. In the 19th century, as nursing uniforms became more distinctive and functional, pictures reveal nurses wearing a chatelaine. These chatelaines became a prevalent part of the nursing uniform worn by nurses in the 19th and early 20th century. It was fancy word for a small “utility belt” or “tool kit”. It was carried around their waist or in a little pouch in their pocket. It consisted of number of small instruments or “tools” that nurses believed they would need to handle any emergency, or in a moments notice on a daily basis. The chatelaine usually held five tools but could have up to twelve tools; for example tweezers, folding scissors, a thermometer, a tongue depressor, forceps, a pencil, smelling salts, laudanum for pain relief, a whistle, a metal syringe, and a needle holder.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Geertje Boschma

Hello Everyone!

It is my pleasure to welcome everyone to a new season of BCHNS meetings and activities. We opened our first meetings with a fabulous presentation by Margaret Scaia on the book "Ever A Nurse" by Catherine Floe, on September 16, with more presentations from members coming up. It was exciting to see many of you at the AGM and the 35th anniversary of the BCHNS.



I hope you have been enjoying the commemorative booklet on BC Nursing History which was sent out to all members, documenting the history of our society and its many accomplishments over the years. At the AGM, we gratefully presented an honorary membership to Lenore Radom, in recognition of her many contributions in support of the purposes of the BC History of Nursing society.

In last season's final meeting in June, we met with the board and all committee members and welcomed the new treasurer Cathy Ebbehoj who took over from Marg Gorrie. We are thankful for the capable leadership in this role, so vital for our organization. We presented the new Board in our Summer bulletin. Board of directors include Lenore Radom, Michelle Danda, Geertje Boschma, Cathy Ebbehoj, Linda Quiney, Margaret Scaia, Suzanne Nixon, Frances Affleck and Brenda Flynn. Our renewed website is now available to all to enjoy, capably led by Lenore Radom and her team.

This year we anticipate the move of the BC History of Nursing office and artifact collection in the UBC-V School of Nursing to the new building as the School of Nursing will move into the new Gateway Building on the UBC campus later this year.

On a final note, we welcome applications for the BCHNS Bursary: The upcoming due date is November 1. See our website: <https://bcnursinghistory.ca/bursaries/> – spread the word! We will keep you informed of our activities and events, and we are looking forward to an exciting and interesting season ahead.

Respectfully,

LENORE RADOM HONOURARY MEMBERSHIP

On behalf of Ethel Warbinek and board members, I am pleased to nominate Lenore Radom for Honourary Membership with the British Columbia History of Nursing Society. Lenore has been a longstanding member of the board in various positions, and lately as Vice-President and Chair of the Website Committee.

As Ethel Warbinek wrote, we recognize Lenore for the years she has diligently worked on the development and maintenance of multiple versions of the website. From its humble beginnings, it has evolved into an incredible site - viewed by many worldwide. The constant updates require hours of diligent work from adding blog posts and meeting updates, to adding new pages of History, Bio files and more. Lenore has spent hundreds of hours not only assisting our webmaster in developing new versions of the site, but also making sure it is up to date for our members and for the public. In addition to the website, Lenore has been active in other activities. For years, she managed Programs and distribution of the newsletter. Lenore has been a member from our early beginnings and a loyal advocate for the preservation of our history.

Lenore began her nursing career as an LPN and in 1972, graduated from Royal Jubilee Hospital School of Nursing. After graduation and subsequent employment at the Royal Jubilee Hospital, she worked at BC Children's Hospital and Richmond General Hospital for 10 years before becoming an assistant instructor with the Richmond School Board. Lenore served in many capacities during her seventeen years on the Richmond Delta Chapter of RNABC – was president for more than 12 years. She was awarded Honourary Membership in the RNABC in 1977. Her volunteer work includes teaching Breast Self-Examination. She is very proud of her aboriginal heritage and has her certificate of Indian Status.

Lenore's dedication and commitment to the BCHNS will continue to strengthen nursing history and honour its past. We wholeheartedly nominate you Lenore, in recognition of your many contributions in support of the purposes of the BC History of Nursing society!

Nomination written by Geertje Boschma, President BCHNS on behalf of Ethel Warbinek & board members.



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A Chatelaine, in good condition, was presented to BCHNS last year. Its provenance was established by a granddaughter of a nurse who lived and worked in BC for many years. Dorothy Martin, who was born in 1905 and grew up in Saskatchewan where she trained as a nurse at the Moose Jaw General Hospital. She graduated in May 1928. Dorothy Martin's first job was in the isolated settlement of Alert Bay on Vancouver Island. She later married and moved to Vancouver. After her husband's death she returned to nursing full-time. Dorothy worked in the TB ward of the Vancouver General throughout 1940s.

Dorothy's chatelaine and a graduation picture of Dorothy were put on display at UBC School of Nursing third floor reception area, along with other similar artifacts that have been acquired over the years. Among the artifacts in the display, was a picture of Amelia Douglas, a well known and influential nurse and midwife in BC. Amelia came to prominence as the wife of the first Governor General of the Colony of British Columbia. Beneath her picture is a the pouch that she used to hold her tools and is part of a replica of her beautiful nursing uniform worn ceremonially.

Fun Fact: Colney Hatch Asylum (later Friern Hospital) in North London had six miles of corridors including the longest single corridor in Europe. It took two hours to walk the wards so nurses would have been particularly keen not to forget to carry their equipment with them.

<https://www.wuth.nhs.uk/media/13893/nursing-100-postcards-card-5.pdf>

Submitted by Suzanne Nixon



BOOK REVIEW: EVER A NURSE

- BY CATHERINE FLOE -

WRITTEN BY MARGARET SCAIA

Catherine Floe's Ever a Nurse is a careful contribution to life writing and Canadian nursing history. It reconstructs the life of Lil Sheehan—Floe's mother—whose move from Ireland to Vancouver traces personal and professional dimensions of Twentieth Century nursing in Canada. The narrative is appreciative without sentimentality, grounded in sources, and attentive to the structures shaping her work.

Synopsis

The book follows Lil Sheehan's early years in Ireland, where domestic duties, community caregiving, and schooling together form a strong nursing identity. Drawing on letters, photographs, and family stories, Floe shows how nursing became her mother's calling and sense of belonging before any uniform marked it. The narrative then turns to migration to Canada, where hopes for a new beginning meet the realities of credential recognition, unfamiliar systems, and the need to re-establish professional credibility.

In Vancouver, where Lil settled, Sheehan rebuilds and refines her practice. Chapters focus on private duty and home care, the relational work of serving families in west-side Vancouver, Point Grey, and Dunbar, and the standards that guide practice across settings. Floe situates this work within postwar expansion, local hierarchies, and the growth of community health infrastructure so a single life illuminates a broader caregiving history.

Immigration, belonging, and professional identity

A central insight is that migration does not erase a nursing identity; it tests and re-creates it. Sheehan arrives with embodied expertise formed in Irish hospitals and homes. Immigration reshapes that expertise: credentials must be interpreted, references re-earned, and networks rebuilt. Floe captures this recalibration with attention to both confidence and doubt.



Settlement is both professional and geographic. Nursing becomes a practice of making a familiar identity in a new place—learning local standards, understanding employers' expectations, and building trust among physicians, families, and neighbours. The book underscores the ambiguous standing of the immigrant professional: experienced and capable yet asked to demonstrate competence again. It contributes to Canadian immigration history by emphasizing skilled women's labour and showing how credentials and practice travel with friction.

Vancouver as a landscape

Vancouver is mapped through the routes of a working nurse: stairs, buses, kitchens where decisions are made, and bedrooms where recovery takes place. By tracing assignments across west-side Vancouver, Point Grey, and Dunbar, Floe shows how neighbourhood and class shape home-based care. Cases range from post-operative support to infant care; each case situates Sheehan within household expectations and clinical judgment.

Floe also highlights the informal economy sustaining private duty nursing: reputation, word-of-mouth, and the ability to balance professional authority with household diplomacy. The book captures the flow of practice—assured competence, tact in others' homes, and the satisfaction of work done well—revealing an overlooked layer of city history: health sustained not only in hospitals but by nurses entering private homes.

Reviving a career: continuity amid change

The Vancouver chapters emphasize a consistent theme: immigration requires adaptation, but core practices endure. Routines learned in Ireland—attention to sterility, observation, note-taking, and ethical steadiness—anchor Sheehan's Canadian work. Floe shows how such continuities offer structure through change and reinforce that a nurse's

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identity is not confined to one jurisdiction or credential. At the same time, the narrative traces adaptation: new referral patterns, wider scopes of practice outside wards, and the work of teaching families to care between visits.

In this way, *Ever a Nurse* aligns with scholarship that treats nursing as portable knowledge whose values persist as circumstances shift. The book avoids nostalgia and emphasizes the practical judgment through which Sheehan fits her skills to new settings.

About the author

Catherine Floe writes as both daughter and researcher. Her method blends oral history, family archives, and contextual analysis. The result avoids hagiography and detachment: she foregrounds evidence—including a key letter from Matron Margaret Walsh—and places memory within institutional and cultural frames. The prose is clear and measured, and the stance—personally engaged yet analytically precise—will interest historians, migration scholars, and general readers.

Sources, style, and scholarly contribution

Floe's use of personal archives—letters, photographs, and training notes—gives the book documentary weight. Walsh's letter anchors Sheehan's early professional formation and signals standards that travel with her. The style is economical and precise: clinical details are accurate without jargon, and intimate scenes are narrated with restraint.

For scholars, the book offers three main contributions:

- 1) Close-up lens on migration and care. One life story illuminates post-war urban trends—informal care networks and the gendered division of health work.
- 2) Practical research method. It shows how to turn family memories into a well-sourced history, balancing personal archives with broader context.
- 3) New view of nursing history. By centering home and private-duty nursing, it complements hospital-

focused accounts and shows why out-of-hospital care matters.

Limitations

Readers seeking deep engagement with policy or labour regulation will find those contexts summarized rather than developed. This selectivity fits the project's scope: the aim is to render a life of practice, not to supply a comprehensive policy history. Where needed, Floe provides background without pulling the narrative away from lived experience.

Summary

Ever a Nurse is a clear and thoughtful study. It honours nursing as skilled labour and ethical practice; treats migration as continuity and adjustment; and offers a grounded account of Vancouver told through the work of a practicing nurse. For readers interested in Canadian social history, nursing, and migration studies—as well as those curious about how care travels and takes root—the book is a strong and worthwhile read.



[photo of author Catherine Floe]



PAGES OF HISTORY

RETIREMENT TRIBUTE



Retirement Tribute

Marybeth Booker

Mary Elizabeth Sherbino was born in Alliston, Ontario, and from the age of three was raised in the small community of Osgoode, just south of Ottawa.

She attended Osgoode Township High School from Grades 9 to 12, completing her final year of secondary education at Nepean High School in Ottawa, where she graduated from Grade 13.

Pursuing her passion for healthcare, Marybeth enrolled at the Civic Hospital School of Nursing in Ottawa, where she earned her nursing diploma. Upon graduation, she began her career on a surgical ward at the Civic Hospital. During this time, she married her high school sweetheart, David Booker.

Driven by a desire to specialize, Marybeth pursued further training in Operating Room Nursing through the Civic Hospital's specialized program. After gaining valuable experience in two Ontario hospitals, she and her husband relocated to Dallas, Texas. There, Canadian nurses were warmly welcomed, and Marybeth secured a position at Baylor University Medical Center in the Operating Room. It was a time of tremendous personal and professional growth, as she honed her skills in orthopedic surgery, advanced into leadership roles, and eventually was promoted to Head Nurse of Orthopedics and later to Administrative Supervisor of 33 Operating Rooms. In this demanding role, she oversaw patient care, collaborated with surgeons, anesthesiologists, and clinical staff, and managed the daily challenges of a high-volume operating environment, a responsibility she embraced with both skill and enthusiasm.

In the 1980s, Marybeth and her husband returned to Canada, where she took time away from nursing to raise two daughters. During this period, she broadened her expertise by completing courses in Occupational Health and Safety and working in that field.

In 2000, the family relocated to Vancouver, where Marybeth discovered the growing field of private surgical care, which was a service not available in Ontario at the time. She joined Cambie Surgery Centre, where she was delighted to return to the Operating Room setting that she loved. Her time at Cambie also included involvement in two Chronic Pain Research Projects, which expanded her understanding and appreciation for this specialized area of patient care.

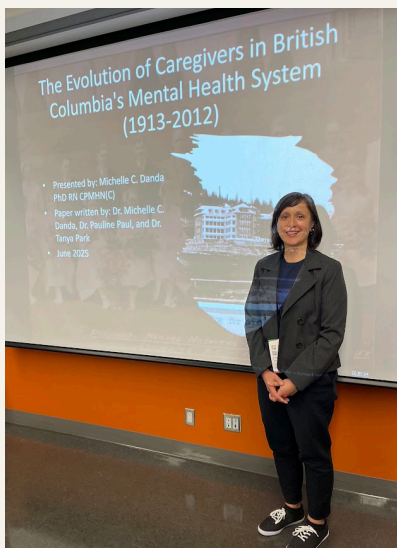
Marybeth retired from Cambie Surgery Centre in March 2025. She leaves behind a legacy of dedication, leadership, and compassion. She is deeply grateful to God for the opportunities she's had throughout her career, and for the privilege of working alongside exceptional colleagues and contributing to the delivery of quality healthcare.



2025 CONFERENCE OF CAHN-ACHN

The 2025 Conference of the Canadian Association for the History of Nursing (CAHN-ACHN), May 31-June 2, in Toronto

This year, the CAHN-ACHN held its annual conference jointly with the Canadian Society of for the History of Medicine (CSHM) during the Congress for Humanities and Social Sciences in Toronto, hosted at Brown College. It was exciting to connect with other nurses, nurse historians and history scholars, and to meet colleagues, students and members from the nursing history community, while learning about new work in nursing history. Participants joined from across Canada and internationally, including from the US and Germany. Special to this year's conference was the 75th anniversary of CSHM, which marked with a 75th anniversary round table and a **special Patterson lecture by Dr. Jacalyn Duffin**, Professor Emerita, Queen's University and CSHM Past-President, entitled "*Roots and Shoots: A Digital Archaeology of the SCHM/CSHM*." For a peak at the full program, visit the CSHM website: <https://schm-schm.ca/en/our-conference/annual-conference/>.



Several BCHNS and CAHN members presented at the conference. BCHNS Board member Michelle Danda presented on her doctoral dissertation, entitled "*Shifting Care: The Evolving Roles of Caregivers in BC's Mental Health System*" [See photo]. Geertje Boschma, Sonya Grypma, Esyllt Jones, and Lydia Wytenbroek gave a

Round Table presentation on their current book project on public health nursing history, entitled "*Pandemic Public Health: Exploring Public Health Nursing Influences in Canada Since 1918*." Lydia

Wytenbroek presented with a group of former and current graduate students, Kyra Philbert, Shams Al-Anzi, Cates Bayabay, Ismalia De Sousa, Atussa Shabahang, and Kerry Marshall a Round Table on their digital nursing history project: "*Reel Reflections: Digital Nursing History Storytelling as an Antiracism Intervention in Nursing*." Two CAHN members, Andrea McKenzie and Sioban Nelson presented on the respective projects, "*The Female First Contingent: Canada's First 100 Great War Nurses*," and "*The tale of the abandoned trunk: Rockefeller Foundation nursing fellows and the politics of a global vision for American nursing in the mid twentieth century*." All generated interesting discussions.

Dr. Kylie Smith, Director of the Center for Healthcare History and Policy, Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing and Associate Faculty, Department of History, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia, delivered the **annual CAHN Hannah Lecture** "*Race and Reparations in the History of Psychiatry*," which was a prelude to Dr. Kylie Smith's new book, *Jim Crow in the Asylum: Psychiatry and Civil Rights in the American South*, to be published in January 2026. Dr. Smith's thoughtful and well-argued presentation of the Black patient experience in mental hospitals in southern US created vivid dialogue. A truly impressive contribution to nursing and health care history.

A noteworthy student presentation given by Gabrielle McLaren, PhD student at York University, entitled, "*Mr. O'Brien Is Unwell Again, As He Was Before*": *Care, Disability, and Intimacy in Mary O'Brien's Journal*," received the Vicky Bach Prize for best student paper in nursing history. On Saturday evening, we enjoyed a lovely conference dinner, in the historic Hart House on the University of Toronto campus. We are indebted to the organizing team, led by Drs. Megan Davies, Annmarie Adams, and Peter Twohig, the CAHN president, for organizing a terrific conference and a most valuable event.

Submitted by Geertje Boschma

2025 Theatre BC Festival (Fraser Valley Zone)

Winner of Outstanding Ensemble

While this historical play's all too short run has completed, the power of the performance remains with several of our members who were able to attend. The three actors poignantly captured the heart of our nursing sisters' experiences, we felt as if we were there. For some we were moved to remember our own ancestors. Grounded on historical fact, Vern Thiessen tells the courageous story of the Nursing Sisters of Canada serving in the great war. Below is an excerpt from the program.

Affectionately referred to as "Bluebirds" for their blue and white uniforms, the Nursing Sisters of Canada have a long and impactful history with Canada's military forces. Over the centuries thousands have served at home and abroad, redefining the landscapes of military service. Today, Nursing Sisters fill the role of Nursing Officers who continue to provide patient care to members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Their origins can be found in the 1885 North-West Resistance. Nursing Sisters provided care to Canadian troops embattling Indigenous resisters in current day Saskatchewan and Alberta. After that, the nurses volunteered to serve in South Africa around the turn of the century alongside Canadian and British troops during the Boer War.

However, it was their actions during the Great War that really bolstered the Nursing Sisters' distinguished reputation as both courageous and compassionate individuals, working tirelessly to support troops in Canada, France, England, and the Mediterranean. By the end of that war, 3,141 had served in the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps (RCAMC), 2,504 of which were overseas.

World War I (WWI) was revolutionized by the creation of casualty clearing stations and hospital ships. The first is a military medical facility operating just behind the front lines to provide immediate treatment or evacuation to the injured and wounded.

Nursing Sisters working at Clearing Stations experience much of the same conditions within which soldiers found themselves while in battle.



[photo: Bluebird Nurses WW1;
Canadian Encyclopedia]

Regardless of their dangerous role, Nursing Sisters proved courageous and up to task. On the other hand, many nurses worked aboard the hospital ships, providing care to evacuated soldiers. While hospital ships were protected under the Hague Convention of 1907, this did not prevent the bombing and 1918 sinking of Canadian hospital ship Llandovery Castle by a German U-boat. Fourteen Nursing Sisters lost their life and 234 people died in total. Around 45 Nursing Sisters died while serving during WWI.

Member News

British Columbia History of Nursing Society Honorary Life Member Passes



Naomi Joan Miller (nee Allsebrook)
February 22nd, 1927 - February 15th, 2025

In Loving Memory ~

After a long and active life, Naomi Miller passed away on February 15, 2025, a week before her 98th birthday. Born to Alan and Lucy Allsebrook near Kaslo, BC, Naomi's independence led her to study nursing at Vancouver General Hospital and UBC before working in tuberculosis wards and marrying engineer Peter Miller.

Naomi and Peter lived in Alberta, Ontario, and Saskatchewan before returning to BC, living in Kaslo, Salmo, Riondel, Terrace, and Golden. They retired to Wasa, BC and became active in the community. Peter passed away in 2009. When driving became difficult for Naomi she moved into Cranbrook.

Naomi was a Kootenay historian. Active as a storyteller in costume at Fort Steele, she wrote the book "Fort Steele: Gold Rush to Boom Town" and co-edited "The Forgotten Side of the Border" with Wayne Norton. She was Vice-President, then President, of the BC Historical Federation, and Editor of the "British Columbia Historical News". She wrote articles for the BC History of Nursing Newsletter and for over a decade was the monthly author of "History Bytes" for the Tri-Village Buzz.

Among Naomi's many awards are Honorary Lifetime memberships from the Girl Guides of Canada, the BC Historical Federation, BC History of Nursing Society, and the Friends of Fort Steele Society. Other honours include the BC Heritage Award, an Award of Merit from the BC Museums Association for her role in developing the Golden Museum, and a UBC Nursing Award of Distinction. In 2017 she was named RDEK volunteer of the year for her service and commitment to the community.

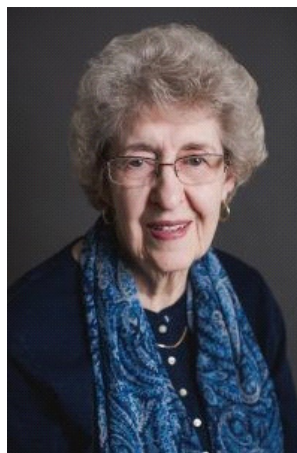
Naomi loved the outdoors, giving up skating at age 88, and continuing to cycle, swim, and cross-country ski into her 90s. She is survived by her 6 children (Verle,



Heather, Barbara, Joy, Murray, and Ruth), 12 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren. She will be missed.

A memorial service was held in April, at Christ Church Anglican in Cranbrook

Beth Fitzpatrick is on the Move!



Returning to Canada after many years in Connecticut with her husband John of 52 years, Beth now feels Canada calling. After the loss of John, Beth has decided to be nearer to her sister in Port Alberni. This move to Vancouver Island will also find her nearer her brother in Campbell River, a niece in Nanaimo who is a nurse & good BCHNS friends Glennis Zilm & Nan Martin. An active member of the BCNHS we welcome Beth back to BC!

Member News



Future Open Meetings with Guest Speakers followed by Board meeting

Tuesday Nov 18, 4 – 6 pm. Guest speaker Chris Lemphers will be discussing Primary Care Nursing on Haida Gwaii in the early 70's.

Tuesday Feb 10, 4 -6pm. Open meeting with speaker TBA.

Tuesday April 14, 4 – 6pm. AGM
A link to the meeting will be sent out the day before.

Marion Woodward Lecture & Symposium: The Future of Nursing in the Age of AI

Thursday, October 16, 2025; In-Person & Online,
5 – 8.30 pm (panel & lecture), or 7 – 8.30 pm for lecture only.

Registration is open [& free!]

<https://nursing.ubc.ca/community/events/2025/future-of-nursing-in-age-of-ai>

Do check out our new website.

Under the resources tab you will find the video of Symposium. BC Nursing History Celebrating 35 Years Dedicated to Preserving the History of Nursing in BC – 1990-2025, and Guest Speaker, Megan Davies, Presenting a True Example of Nursing History.

<https://bcnursinghistory.ca/>

PUBLISHED TWO TIMES A YEAR

Thank you to all who contributed to this issue of the BCHNS newsletter

BC History of Nursing Society

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www.bcnursinghistory.ca
www.facebook.com/BCHistoryofNursing

Special thanks to all who contributed to this issue of the BCHNS newsletter