

AJAKAJA

WINTER 2011 • ISSUE 35



ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY



Alberta Estonian Heritage Society, 2011

The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) was formally established on April 23, 2005 to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of Alberta's Estonian community, and to increase awareness of developments in Estonia.

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AjaKaja

AjaKaja is published semi-annually to inform members about Society activities and heritage topics. Publication and distribution costs are covered by membership dues.

Members and friends are encouraged to submit articles, photographs and heritage-related items to Eda McClung at emcclung@shaw.ca

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| Non-members may purchase AjaKaja for \$5.00 by contacting Eda McClung |
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Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) website: www.aehs.ca

Visit "Alberta's Estonian Heritage" website: www.albertasource.ca/abestonians

Cover photograph: 'Frosted Pine in Winter'



AjaKaja

Alberta Estonian
Heritage Society

Winter 2011
Issue Number 35

Editorial Message

As the year draws to a close, it is natural to think of holiday celebrations, to reflect on events of the past year and to make plans for the coming one. AEHS is now in the final phase of its heritage projects which were initiated five years ago. Remaining project is the development of a six panel historical traveling exhibit. The culmination of this massive historical documentation of the 112 year history of Alberta's Estonian community is truly a cause for celebration! It reflects the remarkable interest that this community has in its historical roots; the threads that weave this multi-generational family together are close. We are also fortunate to have many resourceful individuals who have worked diligently to accomplish this task. Interest by other Estonian centres is affirmation that AEHS has shown leadership in documenting its history and that it is available to a worldwide audience.

The coming year promises to be remarkable. AEHS with its unique pioneer past and our enthusiastic celebration of these milestones has caught the attention of Ööbik (Nightingale) Choir in Toronto. Over 30 members of the choir are coming to perform at Jaanipäev 2012 at Gilby. This promises to be an exceptional musical evening! Their repertoire ranges from classical, traditional Estonian music to cabaret-style, 'village whoop-up' entertainment. It is only fitting that AEHS respond with a truly western 'Home on the Range' welcome. Hence, plans are underway for western-style Jaanipäev with a Bison Roast, horse and buggy rides, and tours to historical sites to honour 'pioneers who made this land our home'. Online information and online registration forms will be available in early 2012.

Another significant project for 2012 is the re-organization of the AEHS member website www.aehs.ca. It will be a user-friendly site for those interested in AEHS and its activities. For instance, Jaanipäev registration will only be available online and through this site. Importantly, this site will also host the comprehensive heritage website 'AlbertaSource.ca/abestonians'. The Web is the tool of choice for interaction across distances, generations and interests. AEHS welcomes your involvement, support and input as it is rolled out next year.

This issue brings to light the important role played by the early Sylvan Lake settlement and later, the sponsoring by Barons-area pioneers of post-WWII Estonians. They formed a small, close community in Lethbridge, described elsewhere in this issue.

We thank all of you who took time to contribute articles, ideas and energy for this issue, as well as your support of AEHS activity throughout the year. As the year ends, we contemplate our blessings and freedoms. Best wishes to our readers for a wonderful Christmas and a very happy New Year.

Eda McClung and Dave Kiil

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President's Message

Tere!



A few weeks ago Annette and I were in a furniture store checking out the new designs and fashions. At one point the sound of a foreign tongue caught my attention, not so much because it was a foreign language, but because it rang with a lilt I couldn't put my finger on. Having had my attention drawn there, I realized it was a younger couple with young girl whom I'd guess to be about five years old. Absolutely nothing about their appearance or mannerisms would have drawn my attention to them and perhaps that was in part why I was taken a little off guard to hear this different language. I'm always cognizant of parent-child interactions, and I was reassured by the courteous and respectful way in which their conversation appeared to transpire. Obviously I had no idea what they were saying as they stopped periodically to study the individual pieces, but intonation and body language being what they are, it appeared to me that they were sharing one another's points of view equally and respectfully. As Annette and I moved into another section, the little girl moved ahead of her parents and entered this section of impressive tables glistening under the lights as we did. "Oh....my....God...!" she exclaimed in perfect English with that precise and delicate nuance of expression typical of our current crop of young people. That about sums it up, I thought, as the little girl switched to her parents tongue as they entered the room. We are and we aren't. It depends on which room we're in.

It is probably difficult for parents to see a part of their culture slipping away from their little ones, but it must also be reassuring to witness the dynamics of a young mind moving seamlessly from one culture to the next, absorbing, assessing, and adjusting.

Most of us have experienced this to one degree or another and we go beyond the obvious in appreciating the subtle intricacies of this interaction. What an advantage it is for us as Canadians who have retained and maintained various aspects of our culture. Perhaps we are demonstrating an attribute that goes beyond hard historic facts. Perhaps it is the appreciation of human complexity and the reality that

there are many more shades of grey in this world than there is simple black and white. Perhaps, and I'll subscribe to this, it is the presence of a dominant survival gene that has been nurtured and tested for thousands of years.

There has been some public discussion recently proposing that we change our national animal from the beaver to the polar bear. I have always admired the polar bear and I think that visually it could be very impressive. Personally, my experience leaves me with a beaver bias. I grew up on a farm that featured a creek, which meandered across the quarter section and flowed into the Medicine River. A family of beavers homesteaded on our creek and subsequently provided us with years of fascinating insight to the art of dam construction and the stubborn persistence required in repairing the damage wrought by spring floods. Witnessing this perfection and determination in building a home for his family builds a case for the beaver that cannot be matched by the big white nomad of the north. Paralleling that is the impressive progress achieved by our own society of beavers. Project by project, phase by phase the jumble of pieces is systematically laid into place and our dam is holding water. Head Beaver Dave Kiil and his assistants are topping off the last of our heritage projects. Few sticks have been left unturned and he and his crew are looking forward to giving their tails one last slap before sitting back and cleaning the mud off their paws. Dam good job folks!

We are embarking on our member website venture a little earlier than planned and we are motivated, in part, to provide hosting for our heritage component. The two sites will be merged under the wrappings of a new member website which will seamlessly host them both. Another factor in starting the new site early is to provide a new means of registering for Jaaniapiev 2012. We will advise you on the details as we progress.

I close with an expression that reflects the delight of our members when they saw the beautiful cover of the last Ajakaja featuring a photo by Leah Hennel. "Oh...my...God...!"

Tervitades

Bob Kingsep

Mark your calendars!

Jaanipäev 2012

Saturday, June 23, 2012

Gilby Community Centre
Medicine River Recreation Area & Campground, Central Alberta
(42 km west of Lacombe on Highway 12)

Plan to attend a western-style Jaanipäev in the recreational heartland of Alberta.
Enjoy historical Alberta and its Estonian pioneer traditions!

Afternoon displays, horse & buggy rides, tours, games, visiting and
much much more.

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SUPERB BISON ROAST DINNER

Accompanied by regional and heritage foods

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Evening musical program by Ööbik Choir from Toronto
♪♪♪♪♪

Dance to Garry Raabis, a descendant of pioneers, and his lively band

Enjoy a traditional Midsummer Eve bonfire

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PRE-EVENT REGISTRATION REQUIRED. IT WILL BE AVAILABLE
VIA WEBSITE www.aehs.ca
FURTHER INFORMATION WILL BE POSTED ON WEBSITE IN EARLY 2012

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Begin the celebrations on Friday with an evening cruise on Sylvan Lake
aboard the 'Miss Mermaid'

Plan to attend with family and friends!
EVERYONE WELCOME!



Bison, a memorable eating experience

Eda McClung, Edmonton, AB

Today, more than ever before, there is growing popularity in experiencing the sweet richness of bison meat. It has become more popular in restaurants and at dinner tables, with many western ranches specializing in bison and other game. Their websites feature information as well as tantalizing recipes which emphasize the healthful aspects of this cuisine. Jaanipäev 2012 at Gilby, in the Medicine Valley, is proud to feature a genuine Alberta food experience. The prairie meets the mountains, Old West traditions meld with the presence of First Nations and the setting is the beautiful valley which was home to the first Estonian pioneers.

Alberta, of course, is cattle country where succulent beef abounds and is part of its identity. Bison, once a major food source, is now the domain of specialized ranches with strict agricultural guidelines, marketing boards and distribution networks. The Bison Producers of Alberta has been working to ensure that the bison industry is effectively represented and controlled in both government and private sectors. Consumer information is widely available online, along with names of distributors, restaurants and recipes. Bison meat is highly prized by connoisseurs. Aged for 21 days, it becomes wonderfully tender, and has a fine grain and flavour similar to beef.

Rich in nutrients, bison meat is a lean red meat alternative.

Is it buffalo or bison? The terms have been used interchangeably to describe the North American icon. The majestic animals that dominated the landscape of the plains during the continent's early history were called "buefello" by the early settlers. They had a similar appearance to the African Cape buffalo and the Asian water buffalo. However the two groups are unrelated. The name 'buffalo' stuck but it is wrong. Bison is the correct name of these massive, shaggy beasts that inhabit North America and Europe.

Historically there were two sub species of bison in Alberta – wood bison in northeast boreal areas and plains bison in the south. Although there was some intermixing, the wild bison found in Alberta's far north are considered wood bison. They are North America's largest land mammals. The plains bison were eradicated as a free roaming species from their original range. Pure plains bison are currently found in Alberta only in a portion of Elk Island National Park, northeast of Edmonton.

The plains bison had nearly been hunted to extinction in the Bison Belt. Although their meat was an essential food source, their real

value during the settler's westward movement was the animal's large and plush hides. First Nations had always used the hides to make teepees, clothing, tools and decorative objects. Everything depended on the meat, fur, bones, hide and sinews. It is not surprising that the bison was a central figure in the cultural and religious life of the First Nations. Unfortunately, the animals were over-hunted and unable to sustain a large population. Their population has rebounded during the past two decades because of the diligent work of conservationists and ranchers. The North American plains bison is no longer an endangered species.

Most bison in captivity today are bred solely for their meat, a delicious and healthy alternative to beef. The emphasis is on a sustainable, quality and natural product which goes directly from ranch to restaurant. Fine restaurants across Alberta are featuring bison on their menu which has come to represent one of the flavours of Canada. A check of the growing number of websites featuring bison recipes attests to its versatility and popularity. Excellent suggestions for preparing bison can be found at www.ilovebison.com, www.carmencreek.com and www.bisoncentral.com. *Simple Treasures*

cookbook by Canadian Rocky Mountain Resorts presents western Canadian cuisine and underscores reasons why the region has become a popular culinary destination.



Bison BBQ roast

Jaaniapäev 2012 at Gilby will be an opportunity to showcase regional foods. Featured will be a Bison Roast catered by Big Bend Market in Red Deer, owned by Ivan Smith who has been raising bison west of Red Deer for many years. The Market carries a variety of different meats, primarily locally raised elk, pork, chicken, beef and bison. The Red Deer Advocate described the Market as a "hidden gem, brought to fruition by local minds and driven by local support". The Jaaniapäev evening celebration promises to be a memorable eating experience!

Bison BBQ Roast Recipe

Use a 4-6 lb. roast (cut doesn't matter)

1. Insert 4-5- half cloves of garlic in various places inside the roast. (use a paring knife to help).
2. Liberally sprinkle all surfaces with Lowry's seasoning salt, freshly ground black pepper and garlic POWDER (not salt).

Prepare the BBQ as follows:

1. Underneath the grill, on top of the coals, place a metal cake pan that is larger than the roast and fill approximately 2/3 full of water. This will prevent flaring of the roast and drippings, and prevent the roast from drying out.
2. Start the BBQ only on the OPPOSITE side from where you are cooking the roast. Start on HIGH heat and after searing the roast, turn heat down to LOW or MEDIUM.
3. During cooking, set the roast on end and turn ¼ turn every 15 minutes, doing the ends of the roast last. Generally cooking time is ½ hour per pound.
4. It is preferable to use a meat thermometer to determine how well done you like the meat. Enjoy!

Source: www.ilovebison.com

Toronto Estonian Academic Mixed Choir 'Õöbik' (Nightingale).

Mall Puhm, Toronto



The Toronto Estonian Academic Choir "Õöbik" has been invited to perform at the 2012 "Jaanipäev" celebrations at Gilby Hall.

"Nightingale of the Emajõgi" (Mother River), 1867. The nightingale is Estonia's most venerated songbird. Tartu is on the shores of the Emajõgi and for more than a century it has been the center of spiritual



Toronto Estonian Academic Mixed Choir "Õöbik", 2008

On December 29, 1994, Asta Ballstadt, Avo Kittask, Tamara Norheim-Lehela and Mall Puhm decided in favour of founding a new mixed choir. Soon they were joined by Charles Kipper, Rosemarie Lindau, Andres Raudsepp, Urve Soopere-Mitt and Elmar Tampõld to make this happen. Several meetings were held to prepare for a Candelmas Evening Singalong (Küünlapäeva Ühislauluõhtu) on Feb. 2, 1995 at Tartu College in Toronto and so the choir was officially launched. By the end of that evening there was a "world premiere", performed by the gathered singers, of C. Kippers' new composition, "Greeting" (Teretamine), created specifically for the event. From this piece the new choir found its name and motto (4th verse). The words of the song are from Lydia Koidula's anthology of poems

and academic life in Estonia.

The home of Estonian fraternities and sororities in Toronto is likewise called Tartu. The new mixed choir at Tartu College drew members from almost all of the Estonian academic organizations housed there and the Tartu College Cultural Arts Studies Program was established as an umbrella organization for the choir.

Music conductor Charles Kipper agreed to build up the new choir. In 2002, guest conductor Ene Üleoja from Estonia spent several months working with the choir. From 2003-2010 A. Ballstadt and R. Lindau shared the conducting duties. Presently R. Lindau is the sole conductor. Right after the founding the direction of the choir began to take shape. The main

underpinnings were put in place by Avo Kittask and Mall Puhm, with Andres Raudsepp and Tiina Coverdale often guiding the popular fund-raising stage productions which have almost become the choir's trademark. These fund-raising performances were based on a script which tied together a variety of songs, most of which tended to be familiar to the audience and not too serious. The academic side of the choir began to be realized at more serious performances at a multitude of Estonian Community events, in Toronto and nearby cities, where the repertoire was often familiar choir classics, both sacred and secular.

Although it is an amateur choir, because it has talented professional soloists, conductors, instrumentalists, several music teachers and most members have at some point taken piano lessons or played in their school bands, the choir has been able to provide quality entertainment and has become very popular with the public.

The word 'concert' seemed inappropriate for the Ööbik fundraisers, so Allan Liik created the word Simmaree from (simman + kabaree) [village dance + cabaret].

Generally the creation of the Simmaree is as follows. The choir generates ideas for a theme, and an original script is written to accommodate existing repertoire or new repertoire is found to suit the theme. The choir learns the songs, costumes are prepared and stage sets are made. More recently multimedia has been used in the productions. On show-day the tables in the hall are always creatively decorated. For the "Merepidu" [Sea Party] goldfish swam in bowls on the tables!

All of the scripts have been written by choir members: Anne Altosaar (5), Mall Puhm (2), Erik Purje (2), Avo Kittask (1),

Tiina Coverdale and Eve Bowder (1), Tiina Pedel & Rosemarie Lindau (1). From 1996-2011 Ööbik has produced 13 Simmarees with varied themes.

In addition to participating in two Song Festivals in Estonia, the choir has taken variations of their "Simmaree's" on the road to Baltimore, The Estonian Embassy in Washington, "Seedrioru", Ottawa, Chicago, New York and Florida. Over half of our 65 members have made a commitment to performing in Alberta and are very excited about it!

Ööbik is a truly multi-generational choir with members in their late 20's to mid-80's. Many of our members are also related to one another as spouses, siblings, aunts, uncles, parents or children.



Ööbik Beach Babes, 2009

Ööbik has a talent and appreciation for a range of music genres – from Classical, Opera, Estonian Classic and Folk as well as grooving to the Blues, Pop and Rock! Their program for Jaanipäev will include Estonian, Canadian 'roots' and Western themes, solos, duets, humour and audience participation.

Jaanipäev 2012 planning session in Red Deer

Pictured are dedicated and enthusiastic members of AEHS during planning session for 2012 Midsummer Celebration at Gilby Hall on June 23, 2012. The meeting was held at Kerry Wood Nature Centre in Red Deer, November 9, 2011. Details are presented elsewhere in this issue.



Photo on left: L to R: Toomas Paasuke, Dave Kiil, Allan Posti, Bob Kingsep, Helgi Leesment, Pärja Tiislar, Irene Kerbes (to immediate right of Pärja with arm showing), Deane Kerbes; Photo on right: L to R: Helgi Leesment, Pärja Tiislar, Eda McClung, Garry Raabis, Jan Paasuke, Toomas Paasuke.

Rein and Jan Pääsuke attend West Coast Estonian Days in Portland, Oregon



Jan and Rein represented the AEHS at this major gathering of Estonians on August 2-6, 2011. Pictured are singers and dancers in colorful Estonian folk costumes. A more detailed account of the event appears in this issue.

A celebration of the 60th anniversary of West Coast Estonian Days is scheduled for San Francisco from June 28 to July 1, 2013.

Websites in transition

Bob Kingsep, Redwood Meadows, AB.



Platform for development of a new AEHS website

Most of us have been around for a while and have come to appreciate the old adage professing that the only constant in this world is change. Probably nothing epitomizes that reality as much as today's information technology. Our two websites fall into that category and both are in the process of re-deployment.

The member website was started as we founded the AEHS in 2005. Two years later, with the encouragement of the Heritage Community Foundation, the Heritage website was implemented on the Alberta Source server as part of the greater Alberta Heritage Foundation entity. While the member website, aehs.ca, has been an interesting study of our organization, the technology has become dated and our experience with the demographics of our organization has determined that we need to upgrade the technology and revise the functionality.

By co-incidence, the Heritage Community Foundation and subsequently the albertasource.ca host for our heritage website has had the funding cut and have ceased to exist. The University of Alberta had agreed to host the site for an interim period but have no provisions to maintain or upgrade the heritage database.

We had planned to begin our new member website project after the completion of our current heritage projects. We knew we would have to locate a new server to host our heritage

database and we realized it would be expedient to use our member site as the host, however we hadn't made decisions on how we planned to proceed with our member site. Subsequently we went into overdrive on establishing some basic decisions for our new member site with provisions to host both sites on one server. The decision making could have been drawn out over a longer period of time except that the contract with our current member server expires at the end of December 2011, so we were further motivated to formulate and implement a plan.

As of Nov 25th 2011, our old member site was terminated and a new server has been set up to host both websites. This integration will actually merge the two under the aehs.ca website banner. Access to the heritage database will be a menu option on the aehs site. Existing URLs (ie albertasource.ca) will point to our new website so old documentation will still get viewers to our site. It is a logical transformation and gives us more flexibility and control of our information.

The member component will be implemented in stages and will be based on further study of our member requirements. Based on our past experience, the greatest challenge will be for us to establish the infrastructure necessary to maintain current content for the site. Until we have been able to establish an organized social maintenance group, the early stages will focus on our utility needs and functions, notably online member registration and registrations for events such as Jaanipaev.

The new software provides greater flexibility and the options for a smarter look and more intuitive navigation than we had before. You can view it at aehs.ca, but as of this writing, the functionality is limited. The screen image shown here is the platform for our development and it will take some time to flesh it all out. As I implied at the onset, the only aspect of it that we can predict at this point will be change, however, when you consider our reputation for innovation and adaptation, it is all too inevitable that we embark on yet another progressive step in the evolution of the AEHS.

Comprehensive virtual archive completed

The story of Alberta's Estonians

Dave Kiil, Edmonton

The history of the peoples occupying the landmass in northern Europe, including Estonia, spans thousands of years and many jurisdictions. Viking raids, battles between Estonians and the Sword Brothers, conquests by the Livonian and Teutonic Orders, Danish, Polish and Russian rule, and numerous invasions by Russian forces are indicative of the country's complex history.

novel Estonian Diaspora, and to preserve and communicate its legacy for future generations. All of this material is or will be preserved at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) in Edmonton.

The final phase of the project involves the availability of this historic material online in the form of a virtual archive.

The website is based on written material,



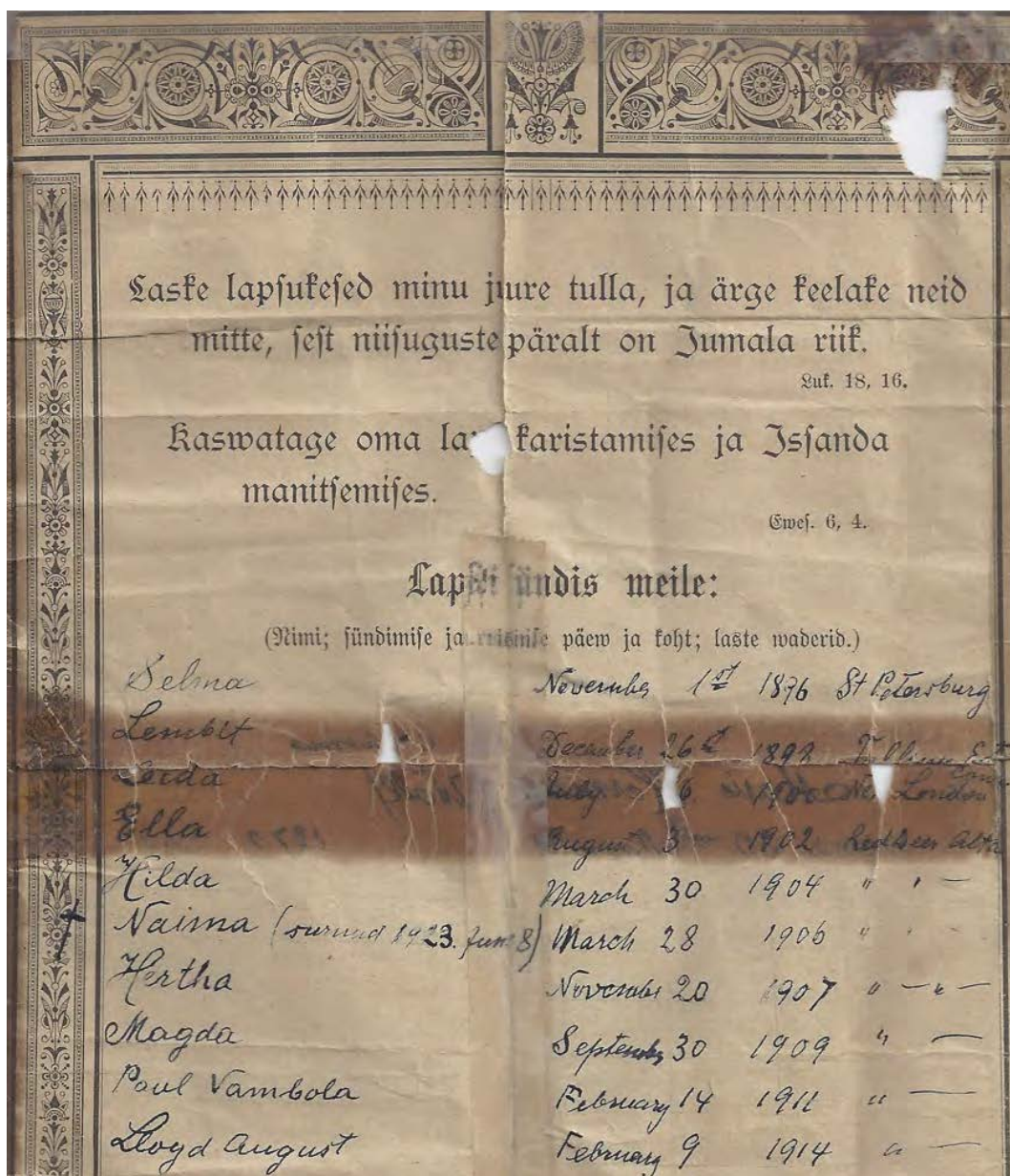
Timeline of Estonian History: From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

During the second half of the 1800s, serfdom had been abolished and Estonians gained some freedom of movement. Lack of money prevented them from owning land in Estonia. Availability of land in Russia and North America provided the motivation for tens of thousands of Estonians to settle far from their homeland. About five hundred of them took advantage of the freedom and land available in Alberta and settled here before the start of World War I.

A century after the arrival of the Estonian pioneers, the newly-formed Alberta Estonian Heritage Society decided to research and document the history of this

photos and videos submitted by descendants of the pioneers and later newcomers to Alberta, and various media sources.

The updated and completed virtual archive will be available for users by the end of January, 2012. The information is presented under the following main headings: History, People, Communities, Cultural Life and Multimedia Resources. The development of Estonian settlements in Alberta, articles about pioneer families, socio-economic conditions, and preservation of their cultural heritage and customs in rural and urban settings are covered by hundreds of pages of written material and illustrated with



An insert in the Herman Family's 1825 Estonian Bible. (now part of the 'Estonian Collection' at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton). The page contains the names and birthdates of the 11 Herman children born in St. Petersburg, Tallinn, London and Red Deer (Sylvan Lake). The Herman Family settled in the Sylvan Lake area in 1901.

about 1200 images and video footage. The archive also includes selected media clippings and AjaKaja articles. Thus the virtual archive provides a near-complete record of the history of Alberta's Estonian community.

The archival website and the entire 'Estonian Collection' at the PAA, assembled over the five-year period of the project, can be accessed online: AlbertaSource.ca/abestonians, and <http://hermis.alberta.ca/paa/>.

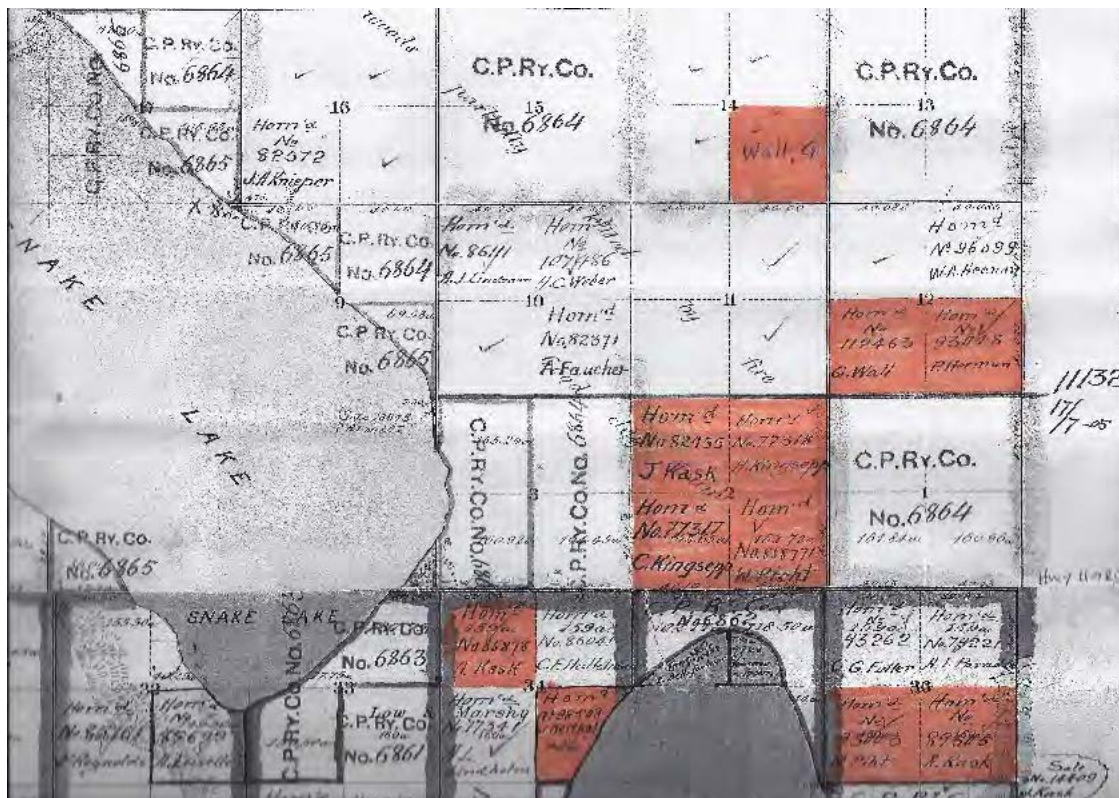
Sylvan Lake

First Estonian Settlement in Canada

Dave Kiil, Edmonton

When settlers started arriving at the end of the 1800s, Sylvan Lake (then known as Snake Lake) was surrounded by poplar forest. The earlier name was given to the rapidly-developing community by native people who found many garter snakes in the sand banks on the north shore. The lake is fed by underground springs which keep it clear and fresh. The overflow on the east end of the lake flowed into a creek to accommodate lumber and row boats en route to a small Red Deer settlement via Burnt Lake and the Red Deer River. Fish were so abundant that they could be caught with pitchforks!

Following an arduous journey by ship, train and wagon, Henry Kingsep and his family finally arrived at the lake in early 1899. They found an essentially virgin landscape with aspen forests surrounding a long but narrow lake covering about 43 sq. km. Henry's brother Kristjan, a seaman, and his family arrived a short time later. During the next couple of years, they were followed by other Estonian families, including Kask, Piht (Walters), Herman, Wall, Neithal, Oru (Oro), Rahu (Raho), Tipman and Wartnow (Vaartnou). They applied for homesteads within about 5 km of the lake. Amongst themselves, the Estonians



Schematic map of Sylvan Lake (Snake Lake) area, ca 1902. The following Estonian homesteads are shaded: Gustav Wall, Peter Herman, Hendrik and Kristjan Kingsep, Alex, Johan and Anton Kask, J. Neithal and Peter and Mihkel (Piht) Walters.

referred to their settlement as 'Livonia'.

These first Estonian settlers in Sylvan Lake arrived at the same time as Finns, Swedes and French pioneers. The Swedish settlement was south of Sylvan Lake whereas the Finns settled east of the lake.



*Alex Kask Family, Sylvan Lake, 1913.
L to R: Elizabeth, John, Anna, Sophia, Victor
and Alex.*

Even so, over 70 Estonians arrived in Sylvan Lake between 1899 and 1903. Most of the pioneers who settled here between 1900 and 1902 were from the Island of Saaremaa via the Tver region in the Russian Empire.

After a long crossing of the Atlantic, often on a schooner, their first priorities

included a job for one dollar per day and building a house from aspen logs with a sod roof. Working on the railroad and the coal mines in Blairmore, Canmore and Exshaw was commonplace. The settlers working in the mines even organized a men's choir.

It is noteworthy that other Estonians followed in their footsteps but soon ventured on to settle in the Medicine Valley and Stettler/Big Valley areas. Competition for contiguous blocks of homestead land by 1902 prevented the establishment of a larger Estonian settlement in the Sylvan Lake area, resulting in search for suitable land as far as the Medicine Hat and Barons areas in southeastern Alberta.

Starting in fall of 1902, many of the settlers from the Võru region of southeast Livonia/Estonia found suitable land in the Medicine Valley area northwest of Sylvan Lake and settled there. Sylvan Lake also served as a jumping-off point for settlers arriving mostly from Estonian settlements, including Tver and Simbirsk, established in the Russian Empire since the 1860s. They found suitable homestead land some 100 km east of Sylvan Lake and settled in the Stettler/Big Valley area.

One of the three Kask brothers, Johan, applied for a quarter-section of land (160 acres) in 1900, a couple of kilometers east of the lake. He contributed two acres on the west side of his homestead for the construction of a school in 1903. Built by neighbours, the school opened in May 1904 and closed in September as it was too cold for use in the winter months! It was variously known as Norma School (named after the Norma District), Finland School and later, Sylvan Lake School.

Alex Kask 's homestead was within one-half kilometer of Sylvan Lake. Pure black soil as far as you could dig produced excellent crops year after year. The creek running through his property was full of fish, and the woods were full of rabbits and prairie chickens. This original homestead site has been usurped by the eastward spread of the Sylvan Lake townsite.

Aside from the usual hard work to clear the land of forest cover and to find a job to earn enough income to provide food staples and materials for building of houses for their families, the settlers had to be prepared for the unexpected. One story relates to a group of gypsies travelling in caravans of covered wagons. Two women, with the younger one wearing a typical gypsy costume with long flowered skirts and bright red blouse, huge round earrings and dozens of strands of beads and bracelets, approached the home of one of the Estonian settlers. They demanded that the wife of the settler, alone with her children at the time, give them the fat pet hen feeding her chicks. She refused and persuaded the gypsies to come to the back of the house and managed to get rid of them by giving them a sack full of young roosters as well as butter, cream and vegetables.

On another occasion, a large group of natives came to an Estonian settlers home and took everything they had including some freshly-baked bread. With her husband away working in a mine, she fled with her three children to safety at a neighbour's house several kilometers away.

Another Estonian settler, Michael Wartnow and his family arrived in Sylvan

Lake in 1901 and built a two-story home near Burnt Lake, only to lose it when a grass fire burned it down. His wife, children and their cow ran into a nearby creek for safety! She was amazed that wild animals, big and small, survived the fire with them. The Wartnow's moved to Big Valley in 1907.



Early Estonian settlers in Sylvan Lake area. Back: Julie Walters, Sophia Wartnow, Michael Walters; Front: John Kask family: Minnie, Olga, Julia, Marie, John.

Nearly ten of the very early (1899-1903) Estonians to arrive in the Sylvan Lake area stayed for several decades, some as long as the last half of the 1900s. Several of the families were related by marriage even before they emigrated to Estonian settlements in the Russian Empire and then Alberta, or arrived in Sylvan Lake directly from Estonia.

The early Sylvan Lake community has not figured in discussions of early Estonians in Alberta. However, it deserves recognition for the role it played.

Estonians in Lethbridge

Some descendants of Barons and Foremost-area Estonian pioneers moved into the Lethbridge area following WWII. About 40 Estonian families, both second-generation Estonian-Canadians and post-war immigrants, lived here until the 1980s. A small group still reside in the area.



L to R: Eugene Seeman, Lilian Põhjakas, Linda Randma, Kärt Nirk, Kaljo Põhjakas, Harry Randma, 1980s

The post-war political immigrants mostly professional and business people, arrived via Germany. They were obliged to work for their sponsors, ie. Estonian pioneer families who had settled in south-eastern Alberta during the first two decades of the 20th century.

Lethbridge Estonian families did not form heritage or cultural organizations; however, they held frequent social gatherings. Few of the families remained in the area following the 1980s.

Canadian Estonians in Lethbridge area

Ralph and Katrin Erdman and their daughter
Kathrin (from Barons in 1951)
Viktor and Hilda Erdman (from Barons in 1950)
Lawrence Kotkas (from Barons in the 1950s)
Karl and Aime Lilleniit (arrived in 1950)
Helmuth and Kärt Nirk (arrived in 1950)
Arne and Vilma Nirk and their daughters Lisa,
Karin and Eda (arrived in 1955)
Alexander Liiv
Martin and Lucy Linderman (from Foremost)
Valfrie Luts (from Vancouver in 1980)
Leo and Herta Niilo (arrived 1951)
Kaljo and Lilian Põhjakas and their
daughters Lea and Tiina (arrived 1971)
Arnold Pukk (arrived in the 1950s)
Harry and Linda Randma (arrived in the 1950s)

Eugene and Laine Seeman and their
daughter Edamalle (arrived in 1948)
Endel Ups (arrived in the 1950s)
Uno Vann (arrived in the 1950s)
Kaljo Vann (arrived in the 1950s)
Aleksander and Stella Weiler (arrived in 1948)
Rein and Marga Weiler
Karen Suitsu
Laine Metz (1960)
Ain and Aista Lehtoja

Information Sources: Information about the Lethbridge Estonians was provided by Kaljo Põhjakas of Lethbridge. Kaljo was born in Tallinn in 1923, immigrated to Canada in 1947, and graduated from U.B.C's Faculty of Agriculture with BSA degree in 1951 and a MSA degree in 1959. He was employed as a Research Scientist with the Canada Dept. of Agriculture. He enjoyed several international assignments in Iran, Egypt, Indonesia and Cambodia. Kaljo married Lilian Luts in 1949 and they have two daughters, Lea and Tiina. Kaljo and Lilian continue to reside in Lethbridge.

We also acknowledge the contribution of Martha Munz Gue and several other Lethbridge-area Estonian descendants.

Estonian cultural heritage abroad

Baltic Heritage Network Summer School, Kääriku, Estonia

Dave Kiil, Edmonton, Alberta

Introduction

The Summer School, fourth in a series of similar gatherings, was organized by the Baltic Heritage Network (BaltHerNet) at Kääriku Leasure and Sports Centre near Otepää in southern Estonia on June 26-30, 2011.

Attendance approached fifty with participants from Australia, US, Canada, Great Britain, Russia, Czech Republic, Latvia and



Summer School participants from Canada, l to r: Dave Kiil, Vello Püss, BC, Piret Noorhani and Tim Douglas, Tartu Institute,

Lithuania. About one-half of the attendees were from various Estonian memory institutions.

Piret Noorhani, President of the Baltic Heritage Network, presided at the Summer School. Presentation topics and discussion focused on the collection of cultural heritage material, information exchange and co-operation needs and opportunities globally, and new project initiatives. Discussion topics included need for greater communication and coordination between memory institutions, and organizations and individuals involved in the development of archival collections for

expatriate Estonian Diaspora communities globally.

Dave Kiil made a presentation about the AEHS Heritage Project, focusing on our accomplishments (“Alberta’s Estonians” DVD, our heritage book “Freedom, Land, & Legacy: Alberta’s Estonians 1899-2009”, the Estonian Collection stored at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) <http://hermis.alberta.ca/paa/> and the archival website “AlbertaSource.ca/abestonians” scheduled for completion by the end of 2011.

Participants visited Valga near the Estonian-Latvian border and toured the local archive/museum/library. Another highlight was the visit to Sangaste Manor. It is perhaps the most impressive castle in all of Estonia, with a rich history of Swedish, Polish, Russian and Baltic-German conflicts over several centuries. A very progressive Baltic-German family, the von Bergs, developed a 500-species arboretum on manor grounds to test the viability of exotic trees and plants under Estonian growing conditions. Noteworthy also is the development of the Sangaste Rye crop following years of experimentation. The von Berg’s were highly regarded by the local Estonians and invited to many of their social functions.

Following the completion of the Summer School, I visited Võru County and toured Võru Museum to learn about the history of the area. In Tartu, I was given a very informative tour of the National Archives of Estonia (Eesti Rahvusaarhiiv). At the Ministry of Education and Research, the source of our grant funds to further collect and develop archival materials about Alberta’s Estonians, I met the administrator of the grant program

and left an additional two complimentary copies of the AEHS heritage book for his use. I was informed that the Minister responsible for the two grants received by the AEHS was pleased with the book's contents and appearance. Our book is now on sale at the Tartu University Bookstore and the large two-level 'Rahva Raamat' bookstore in Viru Centre shopping mall in downtown Tallinn.

The information system of the Estonian Archives (<http://ais.ra.ee/>) is based on an electronic catalogue containing titles, search data and documents stored in the National Archives. Descriptions about how to find information are available on the website.



Summer School participants during a visit to Sangaste Manor in south-eastern region of Estonia.

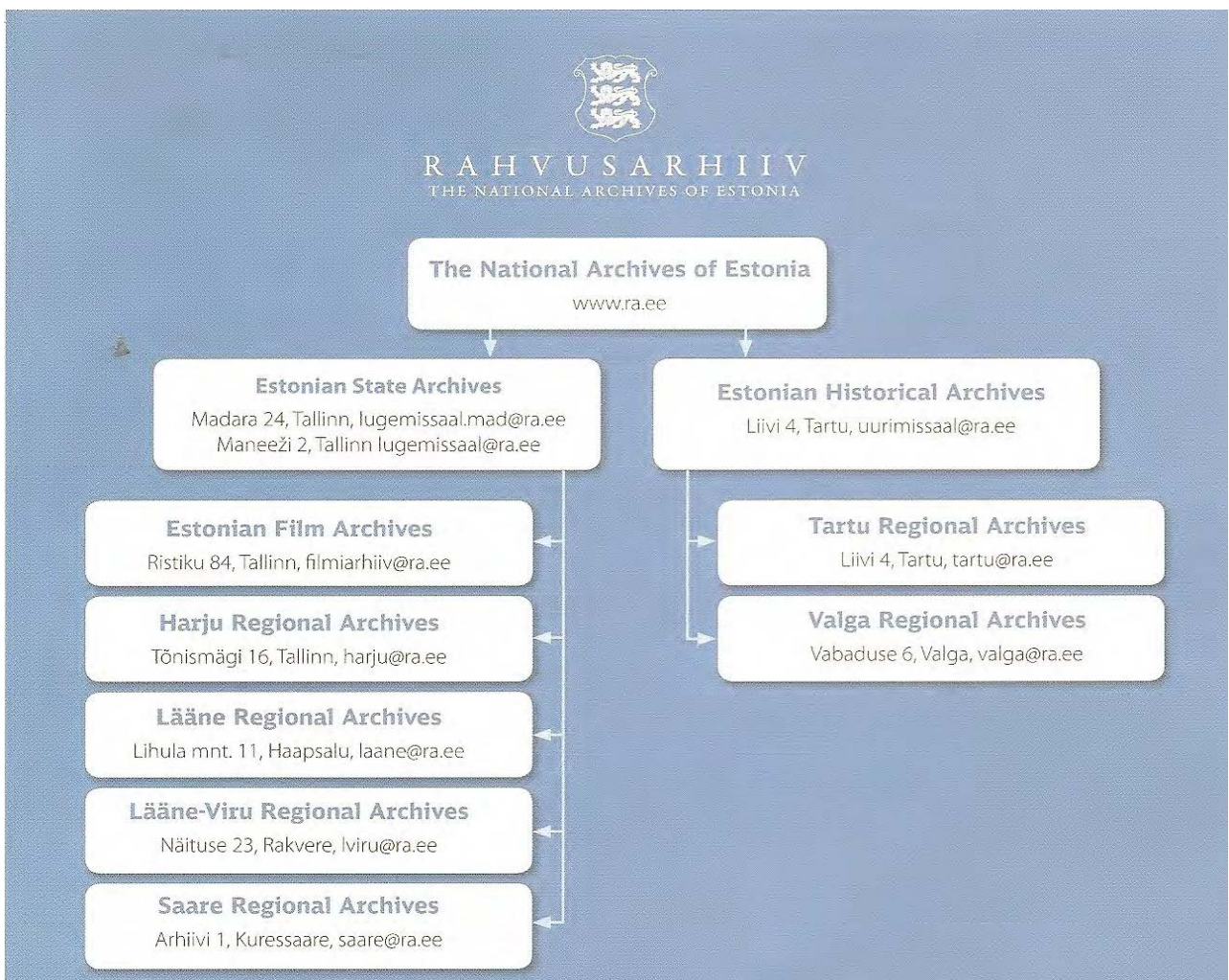


Chart showing the main branches and locations of the National Archives of Estonia

Kerbes family celebrate Centennial, 1911-2011

Irene and Deane Kerbes, Stettler

After many meetings, phone calls and thoughtful reflection, the organizing committee of Margaret (Kerbes) Pelto, Leila (Kerbes) Stanich, Hazel Kerbes and other family members hosted a gathering in beautiful sunshine at the Nevis Community Centre on August 19-21 to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Peter and Julia Kerbes family's arrival in Alberta. Five generations of Kerbes' travelled from points in U.S.A, BC, Saskatchewan and host-province Alberta to mark the occasion.



*Back row, l to r: Alyn Olive, Donna Sommerfeld, Bev Wasylciw, Eldon Kerbes, Margaret Pelto, June Ekelund, Leila Stanich, Gwen Hall;
Front row, l to r: Dick Kerbes, Deane Kerbes, Ken Kerbes, Ruth Kerbes, Judy Graham.*

Family story boards, photo albums and memorabilia were displayed in the hall all weekend. Friday's events included visiting, joking and preparations for Saturday. Socializing continued on Saturday and included a brisk horse-shoe tournament.

A bountiful pot-luck dinner featuring ham, roast beef, fried chicken, barley sausage and an endless array of salads was served on Saturday, followed by dessert of a large Centennial cake.

Leila (Kerbes) Stanich was the M.C for the evening and Ken Kerbes was called upon to ask

the blessing. Toasts and remembrances were given by Deane Kerbes, Judy (Kerbes) Graham, Alyn Olive, June (Kerbes) Ekelund and Gwen (Kerbes) Hall. Many other family members shared their remembrances and humorous stories were told. We toasted our ancestors with Viru Beer, homemade Nan-King Cherry wine and Champagne.

Ninety years old, Ruth Kerbes, widow of Carl Kerbes, and mother of Judy Graham, spoke of her happy and wonderful life in the Kerbes family. She was pleased to be able to celebrate the occasion with everyone present.

Deane Kerbes presented a rock from the Peter Kerbes homestead and conducted a raffle with the winner being Sherry Jackson-great granddaughter of Peter and Julia Kerbes. Sherry asked for all attendees to sign the keep-sake rock!



*Back row: l to r: Donna Sommerfeld, Bev Wasylciw, Margaret Pelto, June Ekelund, Leila Stanich;
Front Row, l to r: Deane Kerbes, Ken Kerbes, Eldon Kerbes*

Don Finch toasted Hazel and Ken Kerbes as they celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on September 25, 2011. A huge anniversary cake was cut and served by the bride. On hand to help mark the anniversary were two of the

original wedding attendants - June (Kerbes) Ekelund and Deane Kerbes. Cameras snapped and flashed the whole weekend.



*Back row, l to r: Bruce Graham, Ron Sommerfeld, Marcel, Irene Kerbes, Louanne Olive;
Front row, l to r: Bob Stanich, Hazel Kerbes, Donna Kerbes, Bob Ekelund, John Pelto*

The tables were cleared as Deane Kerbes started the taped music of the 4K's who were an important part of the 100 years. Young and older Kerbes' were soon dancing late into the evening.

A pancake breakfast was served on Sunday morning, complete with fresh B.C. peaches and cherries. Attendees departed for their respective homes with fond memories of a wonderful family weekend.

We celebrate family and are always thankful that Peter and Julia immigrated to Canada 100 years ago.

In Memoriam

Ruth Kerbes passed away on her 91st birthday on October 29, 2011. We will always remember her love of family fun and her smile.

In Memoriam

Ken Kerbes passed away on December 2, 2011 at the age of 84 years (1927- 2011). He will be sadly missed by relatives and friends.

Late News!

On November 19 (Election Day) Eldon Kerbes was elected to Peachland, B.C. Town Council. He is enthusiastic about serving the community!

Gift of Heritage!



FREEDOM, LAND, & LEGACY



Alberta's Estonians 1899 – 2009

“Freedom, Land & Legacy: Alberta's Estonians, 1899-2009”

This richly-illustrated book captures the history of Alberta's Estonians from the arrival of the first pioneers to their multi-generational descendants and later-arriving immigrants who made this land our home.

It tells the stories about communities they helped to build and their efforts to preserve their cultural heritage through societies and community celebrations.

The 300-page book is available at a price of \$40.00 (Cdn) plus applicable shipping and handling. Mail Order Form and instructions are posted on AEHS website: www.aehs.ca. Please send your order with payment to:

AEHS

14631 MacKenzie Drive

Edmonton, AB T5R 5W3, Canada

Note: The book may be available for pickup from AEHS local distributors.

Queries: E-mail: aehsbook@yahoo.ca

Estonian presence at a world gymnastics event

Helgi Leesment, Calgary



In July 2011, the small city of Lausanne, Switzerland hosted 19,000 gymnasts coming from all five continents, including 605 Canadians and 57 from Estonia. The event was World Gymnaestrada 2011, a non-competitive gathering of athletes performing all types of gymnastics. No judges, no medals, no losers, all winners. Ironically, this non-competitive event attracts more athletes than does the very competitive Olympics. World Gymnaestrada is held in a European city once every four years, under the auspices of FIG (International Federation of Gymnastics).

There has been an Estonian presence at all World Gymnaestradas, starting with the first one in 1953 and including WG2011. In 1991, the first time the Soviet Union participated, a rhythmic gymnastics group from Tartu, Estonia formed part of the team. Estonian rhythmic gymnastics coaches from Canada and Sweden were already acquainted with these colleagues, having network connections going back many years. There was a wonderful sense of togetherness and euphoria. None of us could have guessed that July that Estonia would become an independent country within a few weeks.

Since that time, teams led by Estonians from Sweden, Canada and Estonia have participated at every World Gymnaestrada, where, typically there are day-long non-stop performances going at nine custom-built halls, plus special evening events by individual countries or groups of countries such as English speaking nations, the combined Americas, Japan, Portugal with Brazil, etc., and sometimes a Baltics evening.

The most prestigious event of all at World Gymnaestrada is the Gala, whose performers are selected two years in advance. Over the decades, the Kalev Estienne group from Toronto, led by Evelyn Koop has been featured several times at the Gala. The other Estonian led rhythmic club in Toronto, Ritmika, with head-coach Anneli Riga, has been selected to represent Canada in the English speaking countries program. This year neither of these groups were present in Lausanne; however, Estonians were marvelously represented in other ways.

Out of hundreds of applicant gymnastics clubs throughout the world, only 21 formed the WG2011 Gala program. Piruett club's approximately 40 elite gymnasts from Tallinn were chosen to perform in the Gala in 2011, the first time Estonia as a country has been granted that honour. As part of Piruett's routine, they continuously tossed bright silver hoops high into the hockey arena ceiling, creating a kind of moonlight shimmer in the columns of the upward and downward motion of this rotating apparatus. The Malmö Flickorna (Malmo Girls) from Sweden, famous for delicate filigree-like unison in their two and three-ball technique, directed by Estonian Tiina Leesment-Bergh and her daughter Jessica, have performed at every Gala of every World Gymnaestrada. At the 2011 Gala, they created the illusion that some red balls were constantly hovering at a specific

height - so seemingly effortless were the gymnasts' precision skills. This group was further represented by two of their gymnasts appearing on the official WG2011 poster and by three photos inside the official souvenir program. That same program



Photo: Lindsay Cherer
NorGlen Rhythmic Gymnastics Club, Calgary

cover sported a photo of the other group from Tallinn, the LP Club, who was represented by 10 very talented ladies.



Photo: Lindsay Cherer

The “Press Play” presentation featuring the NorGlen Ladies from Calgary

NorGlen Rhythmic Gymnastics Club from Calgary banded together with two other Alberta rhythmic gymnastics groups plus an acrobatic club, CalgaryAcro, to produce a 15 minute routine “Press Play” which showcased a great variety of skills via the concept of the development of music technology. Gymnasts began their routines with vinyl records, cassette tapes, MP3s, etc, then moved on to more standard apparatus such as balls, hoops and ribbons. Estonian Helgi Leesment co-established NorGlen in 1979 and recently has been coaching the Ladies group who had their highlight moments within the “Press Play” routine at Lausanne. Among the talented CalgaryAcro members was Claire Kotkas, a descendant of Barons area Estonian pioneers. “Press Play” choreography by Lindsay Cherer and Rhonda Helmeczi of the NorGlen Club, was a unique combination, featuring 55 gymnasts ages 10 to, well -- various degrees over 45, all moving in harmony. At one of its three performances it received a standing ovation from the spectators who typically are highly knowledgeable members of the international gymnastics community.

Another Canadian item of pride - a group called “Momentum” from Winnipeg, also graced the WG2011 Gala with their acrobatics at great heights precariously linking themselves only to lengthy silk fabrics. Thus, in all, great honours for Canada, Estonia and Sweden



Claire Kotkas balancing on shoulders of fellow gymnast

All in all, WG2011 had excellent representation for a small ethnic group at a huge international event. The next World Gymnaestrada takes place in Helsinki, Finland July 12-18, 2015.

Photo: Claire Kotkas Private Collection

XXX Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad

Tere Tulemast!

Jan Pääsuke, Calgary

There was a wonderful warm welcome to Portland, Oregon, August 3-7, 2011 for the West Coast Estonian Days. From the first moments of greeting at the registration desk to the last moments of fond farewell, families and friends gathered to celebrate all of those things that make our heritage special. Most who came are Estonian by birth, but some are Estonian by marriage and some by friendship; it did not matter how we arrived at this celebration, there was plenty of welcome for all and enough English spoken that none were excluded. To be there was to be immersed from early morning to late at night in music and dancing and all things Estonian, with the help of special guests.

Representing the Tallinn singing club **Laulurõõm** (Joy of Song) were Ahto Nurk, main conductor and producer of the **Rahvamuusikapidu** (Estonian Folk Music Festival) and Virve Lääne (Estonian Director of Folk Music Orchestra) who led a wide range of songs for the sing-along club each day and evening, **Kajakas**: Pärnu folk dance ensemble performing Estonian folk dances as well as theatrical and choreographed dance performances, **Kihnu Poisid** (Kihnu Boys): a folk band with a special interest in old sailor songs from the island of Kihnu, **Kungla**: Toronto based dance troupe and several other music and dance groups from the west coast region of both the USA and Canada.

As the folk music of Estonia filled the hushed hall, a procession of West Coast Estonian Festival Emblems, signaled the

beginning of the thirtieth celebration. Lonnie Cline led the 100 voice choir and 32-member orchestra in Cyrillus Kreek's Estonian Requiem. Written as a memorial to his best friend, composer and organist, Peeter Süda, this is Estonia's first requiem and this occasion was its North American premiere.



Performers and Portland State University Symphony Orchestra on stage, West Coast Estonian Days, Portland, Oregon, 2011

Thursday morning, buses transported us to beautiful Alderbrook Park for the LEP 2011 **Rahvapidu** (Folk Picnic) - a great day of music, dancing, socializing, games, eating and drinking. You could choose to go to a cooking demonstration and learn how to prepare traditional kapsa kotletid (cabbage patties), you could listen to silversmith Arvo Vercamer explain the history of Estonian folk jewelry, showcasing his own creations using ancient patterns, you could travel with Mark Petersen to visit Estonia and experience everyday life in several parts of the country through the lens of his camera,

you could enjoy the Trillium Voices as they performed exciting and fun arrangements of folk-songs from across Estonia or you could sit under the wonderful shade trees and listen to the folk music of Kihnu Poisid, or watch the children play and enjoy the beer especially brewed for this occasion. After a mouth-watering BBQ, the evening concluded with performances by the Estonian dance troupe Kajakas and general folk dancing for any who still had energy left.

Friday afternoon the dance troupes, **Kajakas and Kungla**, performed the dances of their Estonian forefathers. This was really just a warm-up for the evening celebrations. Singers, dancers, musicians and children from Estonia, Canada and the West Coast all joined together in a musical interpretation of the wedding story and song, **Tuljak**. It was a wonderful presentation of the joyful gathering of Estonians to celebrate the marriage of two young people and a birds-eye view into village life at its best with lively singing by young and old alike, toe-tapping music, enthusiastic dancing and the rousing cheers of **Hõissa, Tuljak!**,

“The Grotto” is a beautiful, serene shrine on the ‘must visit list’ for Portland. This rock cave carved into the 110- foot rock cliff was the destination for the **Jumalateenistus** (worship service) on Saturday morning. This service was led by Bishop Andres Taul, from Toronto, Ontario and Pastor Hendrik Laur, from Olympia, Washington. Saturday afternoon, **Portlandia Celebrated Estonian Music**. Featuring works by Veljo Tormis, Heino Eller, Ester Mägi, Urmas Sisask and Gustav Ernesaks and performed by Trillium Voices, the Portland State University Symphony Orchestra, Unistus Kammerkoor, the Clackamas Community College Chamber Choir and the Oregon City High School Choir, this afternoon of

music truly signified the richness to be discovered in this part of Estonian culture.

Fitted into the other segments of the day, one could attend a variety of seminars. The topics ranged from Eesti rahva tervisest (Estonian Health), Estonian History and the Singing Revolution, Kalevipoeg’s Descendents: an overview of Estonian military history, experience a Kihnu Wedding, or meet the Estonian Ambassador to the United States, Väino Reinart. You could also shop, explore the city, play golf or chess, or enjoy a cup of coffee with new and old friends. If you had any life left in you at the close of the evening performances, you could retire to Kuld Lõvi room to listen to the music of Kihnu Poisid from Estonia, VAM from Vancouver, Canada, and Hapsala from Portland. At the Sunday closing, we were all invited back for **XXXI Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad, San Francisco, California, June 28 – July 1, 2013**. For more information on this event you can check this website: www.LEP-ESTO2013.com.

For 5 days we came together, from many places where most of us work and play as North Americans, into a special time and place where we could once again be Estonians. It was a time to celebrate, with joy and enthusiasm, the special elements of our culture that make Estonians unique. This was true even though some of us are only adopted Estonians. It may not be possible to visit Estonia and experience the culture on home soil, but a visit to the 2013 Lääneranniku Eesti Päevad will be the next best thing!

Editors Note: Jan and Rein Pääsuke attended the 2011 West Coast Estonian Days celebration in Portland and sold many copies of our heritage book, AjaKaja and documentary DVDs. Thank you!

Stanford takes Estonia's 'Museum of Occupations' under its wing

Cynthia Haven

"While the Cold War may be over, history goes on, and it is the role of universities, and very much that of their libraries, to serve as institutions of cultural memory," said Stanford Librarian Michael Keller.

Olga Ritso Kistler arrived in Estonia from the Ukraine as a malnourished, flea-ridden toddler in 1923, in the wake of the upheavals of the Bolshevik Revolution. Her mother was dead, her father imprisoned in Siberia. By 1940, her life was in turmoil again as the Soviets, then the Nazis, and the Soviets again, swallowed the small nation that had enjoyed a brief, interwar independence.

Now the Estonian American medical doctor continues her efforts so that the rest of the world remembers the plight of the Baltic states, crushed between the Soviet and Nazi totalitarian powers – and Stanford will help her do it.

At a Sept. 13 ceremony in Tallinn, Estonia's capital, attended by Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, representatives of the American Embassy and Estonian officials and academics, the museum announced a collaboration with Stanford to advance its mission and widen its message to a worldwide audience.

Ritso Kistler founded Tallinn's Museum of Occupations in 2003, at the request of the Estonian government.

"It's purpose is to show future generations how terrible the decades of Soviet rule were, a time when no one was allowed to believe in a free and independent Estonia," wrote Cambridge historian Peter Martland in a privately published volume on the family's history, *Footprints in the Sands of Time*.

The striking, modern building is located in the heart of Tallinn. The museum documents the three occupations of Estonia: the first Soviet occupation from 1940 to 1941, the German

occupation from 1941 to 1944 and the second Soviet occupation from 1944 to 1991. Through its exhibition of thousands of items from the three occupations and a modest research program, the museum has informed tens of thousands of visitors each year of the deprivations, arrests and deportations and daily control of even minute details in the everyday lives of Estonians and others in the Baltic region.



Estonian political prisoners in the Ivdel camp in Ural Mountains on Aug. 14, 1954

The Stanford University Libraries will expand its collecting program in Estonia and the Baltic region as well as collaborate on exhibitions with Estonia's Museum of Occupations, thanks to a \$4 million endowment from Walter P. and Olga Ritso Kistler. The foci of the collecting program will be wider than occupation, however, involving in addition the Estonian resistance, the many aspects of the so-called Singing Revolution that led to freedom and the modern renaissance that has occurred in Estonia since the early 1990s as the society, government and economy have recovered from the occupation by Soviet Russia.

"While the Cold War may be over, history goes on, and it is the role of universities, and very much that of their libraries, to serve as institutions of cultural memory," said Stanford University Librarian Michael Keller.

At least two Stanford history professors, Norman Naimark and Amir Weiner, are already engaged in research on the Estonian experience.

"The struggle of small nations for autonomy in the shadow of empires is something we should all remember and recognize as an ongoing concern. The 9/11's and December 7ths do not need our help being remembered, but the fate of the Baltics – at least from this distance – certainly does," according to Keller.

Stanford will appoint an Estonian curator to be based at Stanford; the new curator will collect and prepare exhibitions for U.S. and Estonian audiences. According to the agreement, the museum in Tallinn also will promote scholarship and appreciation of the human spirit in the direst circumstances.

Keller and his successors will represent Stanford on the board of the Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation, founded by Olga Ritso Kistler, which currently operates the museum. He also will appoint an advisory committee for the museum, including at least one Hoover Institution fellow and several Stanford faculty, among other experts.

The average Westerner is likely to think there is plenty of material documenting the occupation – but not so. State institutions charged with such research are strapped for cash and other resources. Much research and synthesis of findings remains to be done. Moreover, time is running out, as a generation of memories dies.

The museum includes a row of prison cell doors, suitcases from deportees, a Soviet era telephone booth, books, posters, badges, pins and even bugging equipment.

The [website](#) itself is a virtual museum of its own, including photos and films.

Olga Ritso Kistler was born in Kiev in 1920. Her mother, weakened by hardship, died when Olga was 2; her maternal grandparents

were among the millions who starved to death [in the 1921 manmade famine](#). Her father, an Estonian patriot and physician, was a fugitive from the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine but was later arrested in Moscow in 1922.

Raised as a foster child in Estonia, the young girl was reunited with her father only in 1931. Dictating his memoirs to her, he recalled the Soviet and Nazi deportations and the Holocaust that, altogether, resulted in the loss of about a quarter of the Estonian population.

After the Soviet invasion of 1939-40, she recalled: "It was such an awful, horrible time ... the Soviets started killing everyone who was anyone ... there wasn't a single family that didn't have a relative or friend taken away." As a young medical student, she stayed with different friends each night to avoid deportation to Russia.

To flee the Soviets, she escaped from Estonia in 1944. In postwar Germany, she was a medical officer in a displaced persons camp. She immigrated to the United States in 1949.

Her story had a happy ending. At age 40, the eye surgeon married entrepreneur and inventor Walter Kistler, who developed instrumentation for NASA and the industrial world. The nonagenarian couple now lives near Seattle.

Their daughter, Sylvia Thompson, president of the Kistler-Ritso Estonian Foundation, and son-in-law, Andrew Thompson, are both Stanford alumni, each with two Stanford degrees.

With Stanford's help, Olga Ritso Kistler is realizing the dream that began over a decade ago when she created a foundation to gather, collect and study the consequences of the Estonian occupations. As the museum's website states: "Our dead will remain unburied until the memories of those that perished are immortalized."

Stanford Report, September 21, 2011

Is the “Estonian miracle” just smart management?

Richard Warnica, November 15, 2011, Macleans

Miracles are always more complicated than they first appear. Even the word itself—miracle—is a kind of hedge. It’s a guard against deeper scrutiny, a way of pointing to the wonderful without probing too deeply into the details. Such is the case with the economic miracle in Estonia. The tiny tiger of the Baltic is being hailed as the anti-Greece, both for its fiscal austerity and stoic acceptance of such. But the story of how

this nation of 1.3 million crawled out of the 2008 crash, gained entrance to the eurozone and set itself on the path to, fingers crossed, prosperity is both messier and more pragmatic than “miracle” implies. Beginning in 2009, the Estonian government undertook a policy of “fiscal retrenchment”—it tanked its own economy, basically, cutting spending and raising taxes even as the rest of the West indulged in a binge of Keynesian excess. Between 2000 and 2007, Estonian GDP climbed an average of eight per cent per year. In 2009, it tumbled 14 per cent. Unemployment hit 19 per cent that year, and wages, in the private and public sectors, were slashed, in some cases by



as much as 40 per cent. And for all this, the government was praised. There were no mass protests, no legislative walkouts, no rioters tearing up the cobblestones in the streets of Tallinn. “If you look at what the [polls] said in spring of 2009, before they made the cuts, and what they were in October, November, they actually went up,” says Ringa Raudla, a senior researcher in public administration at the Tallinn University of Technology. In March 2011, the

same parties that implemented the austerity plan were re-elected to another term. “People actually supported cutting the budget rather than taking out loans,” Raudla says. By a lot of measures, the pain-for-gain strategy worked. After collapsing in 2009, the Estonian economy bounced back in 2010, growing by a modest 2.3 per cent. Unemployment has since edged down to 13 per cent—although Jüri Kivimäe, the head of the Estonian studies program at the University of Toronto, warns many Estonians don’t trust those figures—and GDP is expected to grow by 7.5 per cent this year, according to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. All that parsimony hasn’t

gone unnoticed. Today, government debt in Estonia sits at a meagre 6.7 per cent of GDP (compare that to 80 per cent for the United Kingdom, 93 per cent for Portugal or a whopping 145 per cent for Greece) and the national budget should be balanced or near to it this year. In July, the ratings agency Fitch upgraded Estonia's credit to A+ status. That same month, The Economist praised Estonia as a paragon of the "virtues of flexibility and austerity." More recently, Der Spiegel called the country "a model EU nation" in a time of crisis. Most importantly, for Estonians at least, the harsh austerity measures helped the nation satisfy the Maastricht criteria and gain entrance to the eurozone in January. It was partially that promise—of swapping the kroon for the euro—that allowed politicians to sell their people on the harsh cutbacks. "It was such a clear focal point, it made it easier for the government to explain to people: 'This is our exit strategy from the crisis,' " Raudla says. But of course there's more to it than that. For one thing, the government was smart about its cuts. Departmental spending was trimmed by seven, then eight per cent in two waves in 2009. But payments to pensioners still went up, by five per cent. For another, unlike in other European countries, organized labour in Estonia is almost paralytically weak. When government wages were slashed and jobs cut, there was no union movement ready and waiting to take to the streets. Maybe most importantly, Raudla believes, there's a cultural sense in Estonia that it is inherently virtuous not to have high government debt. If there is an operating principle within the current centre-right government, it might be this: **don't spend money you don't have. (It would be great to have wonderful health care**

and a robust social safety net, Economic Affairs Minister Juhan Parts told Der Spiegel recently. "But you have to have the money. We don't have it.") Still, it's too simple to call what's happening in Estonia a miracle, economic or otherwise. Average monthly incomes remain well below the EU average; the economy is still over-dependent on volatile foreign direct investments, and the export sector relies on a Europe that isn't exactly in a buying mood. And then there's the euro. By opting in when they did, Estonians earned themselves the right to help bail out Greece. If things continue as they are, they might be bailing out the Italians, too. For a country that remains much poorer than its indebted partners, it could be a bitter pill. But Estonians are used to sacrifice. "People are saying, well, do we really want to be in that club?" Raudla says about the eurozone. "But on the other hand, for Estonia, there is no real other option."



Pictured are youthful participants in traditional costumes during the Youth Song and Dance Festival in Tallinn in 2011. The triennial festival, one of Estonia's biggest traditional cultural celebrations, attracted tens of thousands of young performers and visitors from across the country and internationally.

Spirituality in Estonia - the World's 'least religious' country

Tom Esslemon

When Estonians were recently asked whether religion played an important part in their life, only 20% said yes. It suggests the Baltic country is, statistically, the least religious country in the world.



Pagan traditions are embedded in the culture of Estonia

The windy streets of Tallinn offer a misleading picture of Estonia's religiosity. Spires decorate the old town, bells ring out on Sundays and song emanates from churches as visitors walk in and out. A closer look reveals that many of these visitors are tourists.

When I went to the city's large Lutheran Dome Church one Sunday almost all of the 70 congregants turned out to have travelled from the Netherlands. A handful of people standing at the back - 15 at the most - were the sum total of regular Estonian church-goers.

As the dean of the church, Arho Tuhkru explains, it is not a new problem: "People believe, but they do not want to belong to the Church. We do not have such a tradition where the whole family comes to the church."

Historic hostility

Nationalist symbols are more important than churches to some. Although the Lutheran Church is the largest in Estonia, it accounts for only 13% of the population, Rev Tuhkru says.

There is, however, a more telling statistic: fewer than one in five Estonians say any religion plays an important part in their lives. It is a trend visible at every level in society. Even in schools religion does not feature on the curriculum in its own right. Instead, in

history lessons, young Estonians learn about the waves of invasion led by the Germans and Danes who brought Christianity to the country. It came to be seen as the faith of the colonisers, one rejected by the majority.

"I think one of the main reasons why we can today speak about Estonia as a secular society is that the national and religious identities do not overlap," says Ringo Ringvee, an adviser at Estonia's department of religious affairs.



Nationalist symbols are more important than churches to some

Another problem is language. Many Estonians did not understand the foreign missionaries who came to preach to them. "The Lutherans spoke German," explains Mr Ringvee. "The Russian Orthodox came in the 19th Century and until the early 20th Century they were still speaking Russian."

With the establishment of an Estonian Orthodox Church in the 1920s (its leaders look to the patriarch in Constantinople rather than in Moscow) services were soon held in Estonian, yet by 1940 the Soviet Union had invaded and annexed Estonia. For almost the entire duration of Soviet rule - which ended in 1991 - public worship was not encouraged.

While in other former Soviet states there was an immediate revival of Christianity at the point of independence, in Estonia it never really came. But that does not mean Estonians do not believe in anything at all.

Nature worshippers

Aigar Piho is a proud pagan. It is one in a chain of events that led the majority of Estonians away from God, but that does not mean they do not believe in anything at all. About 300 km from Tallinn I journey to the forest to meet a group of nature lovers - nature worshippers you might call them. "We are pagan," says Aigar Piho, father of eight children from the village of Rouge in southern Estonia. Sitting on a log in a forest clearing he tells me: "Our god is in nature. You must take time, sit down and listen."



Aigar Piho is a proud pagan

Like many Estonians Aigar is spiritual. He defines his religion as Maausk - a form of Estonian nature spirituality - in which the trees and earth are cherished objects that possess power. Aigar says his place of worship is the forest yet with neither ceremony nor routine nor religious text, it is hard to say it is an organized religion. His daughter, Kotre, 22, chips in: "Most of us say, yes, we're Maausk but we don't go into [detail]. We just know that it is in harmony with nature and our own souls."

I am invited to a midsummer festival with Aigar and his family at which they dance around a huge bonfire, mount a giant wooden swing and sing songs. Young girls pick wild flowers and make crowns, which,

apparently, according to ancient beliefs, they must put under their pillow at night in the hope it will bring them a husband. Traditions like these are deeply embedded in the Estonian culture: well over 50% of Estonians say they do believe in a spirit or life force, however ill-defined.

There is some dispute, however, as to how old they are. "They're usually based on folklore...collected from 19th and early 20th centuries," says Tonno Jonuks, an archaeologist specialising in pre-historic religion in Estonia. "It is something they believed and used. It is not something from medieval times or before Christianity."

Tree talk

Others disagree and have founded an organization based on what they describe as ancient runic calendars dating back centuries.

It is called Maavalla Koda and has some three or four hundred members. Among them are Andres Heinapuu and his son Ott.

For them earth spirituality remains intensely personal - it is all about how you relate to the living things around you:

"The tree doesn't have ears. I think the question out loud in front of the tree. And then I feel somehow the answer be sent back. So, I ask, you are actually having a conversation with the trees? "Of course," says Andres.

I tell him that I would love to have a conversation with a tree, but how, I ask, can I talk to a natural object? Ott explains that "the tree is a subject not an object" before telling me how the oak is judgmental while the rowan can be discerning at times.

In leaving Ott and his father I get the impression that, although many Estonians love the nature around them and want to protect it, it is also true that a minority take things to the extremes of Ott and his father. However I also leave with a sense that they, like all Estonians, are passionate about their country - it appears as a gentle, dutiful kind of nationalism.

But it is one which leaves the Church struggling to define its role in a place where Christianity, and organized religion in general, come bottom in most people's list of priorities.

BBC News, Estonia

National Geographic Magazine publishes in Estonian

One of the world's biggest non-profit scientific and educational organizations, the National Geographic Society National Geographic, has started publishing the official magazine of the society, National Geographic, in Estonian.



Front cover page of the first issue of National Geographic in Estonian, October, 2011

The Estonian version of the National Geographic will be brought out on the basis of a National Geographic Society license; its contents will be based on the English original and it will have the same format and the same distinctive



The feature article in the first issue describes the traditional herding of caribou by Laplanders in the Far Northern regions of Scandinavia.

front cover in a yellow frame. The magazine is published by AlmaliEst, a subsidiary of the Lithuanian publishing house Alma Litera.

Erkki Peetsalu, the Estonian editor-in-chief of the National Geographic, has operated 20 years on the local media and communications scene. He is a journalism graduate from Tartu University. In recent years he has contributed to initiatives promoting development of the civic society and awareness of the environment.

The National Geographic, which was first published in 1888 in English, prints articles on culture, nature, science and technology. The magazine has 60 million readers throughout the world. Estonia is the 33rd local language in which the magazine will be published.

25 August (BNS), 2011 Estonian Review

Historical travelling exhibit about Alberta Estonians

Dave Kiil, Edmonton

Our heritage project is nearing completion. The final phase of this project is the production of an exhibit depicting the fascinating history of Estonian settlers and later immigrants who came to Canada in search of freedom and a new life.

“It’s a story of pioneers and refugees, adventurers and scholars; a story of courage, renewal and assimilation; a story of success.”

The purpose of the exhibit is to inform Canadians and Estonians about the history and cultural heritage of the Estonian Diaspora in Alberta.



Unveiling of plaque containing names of pioneers buried in original Gilby Cemetery, 2001. Pictured are (L to R) Allan Posti, Garry Raabis, Arnold Mottus.

The exhibit will highlight the story of Alberta’s Estonians from the late 1800s to the present time. The storyline of each of six panels will feature a theme, followed by a mix of short stories and photos with descriptions. Reasons for emigrating to Alberta, beginnings and settlements, cultural heritage, and influx

of Estonian immigrants during the second half of the 20th century will be featured. Each display panel will have attractive Estonian designs such as brooches and belts.



Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton

Final design and layout of display panels is ongoing and production of the panels will be completed by mid-February, 2012. “Alberta Estonians” exhibit will be on display at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton from the beginning of March to the end of May, 2012. The display will also be featured during the 2012 Jaanipäev celebrations at Gilby Hall on June 22 and 23. Other archives, museums and libraries in Alberta and elsewhere will be informed of the exhibit’s availability.



The six display panels for the Alberta Estonians exhibit will be similar to the panel held by Dave Kiil during a recent AEHS planning meeting in Red Deer

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

Membership, November, 2011

Allen, Dianne- Spruce Grove, AB
Armstrong, Bev-High River, AB
Asmus, Peter & Jeanette-Airdrie, AB
de Launay, David-Peterborough, ON
de Launay, Jeff- Kanata, ON
de Launay, Leon-Perth, ON
de Launay, Randy-North York, ON
Derksen, Colin & Linda-Edmonton, ON
Dinning, Shirley & Leonard-Edmonton, AB
Doherty, Linda K-Big Sandy-TN, USA
Erdman, Evelyn-Calgary, AB
Erdman, Thomas-Barons, AB
Farry, Phillip & Donna-Sidmouth, Tasmania, Australia
Fodor, Evelin & Steve, Mitchell, Jasmine-Calgary, AB
Gue, Anita-Calgary, AB
Gue, Brian-Edmonton, AB
Gue, Kevin-Edmonton, AB
Gue, Lisa-Ottawa, ON
Gullickson, Barbara-Barons, AB
Hall, Gwen-Boyle, AB
Hark, Lorie-Nelson, BC
Helenurm, Kalju & Margot-Calgary, AB
Hempstead, Shelley-
Hennel, Daryl & Gloria-Myrnham, AB
Hennel, Lorne & Ilea-Calgary, AB
Hennel, Rodney & Liz-Stettler, AB
Hennel, Ron, W.F-Stettler, AB
Herman, Derrill & Liia, Kirstie Peterson-Innisfail, AB
Huhtala, Lynn, Chris Wiffen, Emily-Epsom, Auckland, New Zealand
Jaako, Harry-Vancouver, BC
Kalev, Tiit-Eckville, AB
Kalvee, Willy G.-Calgary, AB
Kenzle, Alice-Creston, BC
Kerbes, Deane & Irene-Stettler, AB
Kiil, Dave & Betty Ann-Edmonton, AB
Kingsep, Bob & Annette-Redwood Meadows, AB
Kivisild, Livia-Calgary, AB
Kraav, Jüri & Helle-Calgary, AB
Kruuv, Riho-Ottawa, ON
Kuester, Matt F.-Edmonton, AB
Langeste, Helmut & Airi-Edmonton, AB
Leesment, Peeter & Helgi-Calgary, AB
Leilop, Aino-St. Albert, AB
Leffler, Edna-Manson, WA, USA
Love, Gloria-Erie, Pennsylvania, USA
Luik, Avo-Edmonton, AB
Maddison, Anneliese-Edmonton, AB
Madill, Anita & Wallace-Calgary, AB

Magi, Enzo & Maimu-Calgary, AB
 Marshall, Silvia-Vancouver, BC
 Matiisen, Arne, Janet, Melanie Dewar
 McClung, Eda-Edmonton, AB
 McElroy, Elve-Camrose, AB
 Mottus, Arnold & Vera-Red Deer, AB
 Munz, Lillian-Calgary, AB
 Munz Gue, Martha-Medicine Hat, AB
 Nicklom, Otto & Gladys-Stettler, AB
 Pääsuke, Elizabeth-Edmonton, AB
 Pääsuke, Mark-Vancouver, BC
 Pääsuke, Rein & Janice-Calgary, AB
 Pääsuke, Toomas-Canmore, AB
 Pallo, Jack Henry-Red Deer, AB
 Pastewka, Astrid-Calgary, AB
 Pastewka, Peter & Tina, Calgary, AB
 Peet, Ethel-Edmonton, AB
 Pelto, John & Margaret-Sherwood Park, AB
 Pihooja, Ralph & Nella, Liz Tardie-Whitcourt, AB
 Pilt, Shirley-Edmonton, AB
 Põhjakas, Kaljo & Lilian-Lethbridge, AB
 Posti, Allan & Maria-Eckville, AB
 Robertson, David & Christine, Brendan, Karl, Travis, Leduc, AB
 Ruus, Ivar & Lea-Calgary, AB
 Saar, Lembit & Iris-Calgary, AB
 Saar, Rein & Patricia-Calgary, AB
 Sandre, Ülo-Calgary, AB
 Sastok, Laine-Edmonton, AB
 Shongrunden, Astrid-Penticton, BC
 Silverton, Ernie-St. Albert, AB
 Simm, Nurmi-Edmonton, AB
 Songster, Giuliana-Sierra Madre, CA, USA
 Tiislar, Enn & Pärja-Canmore, AB
 Timma, Olev-Calgary, AB
 Tipman, Bob & Kathy-Calgary, AB
 Ustina, Astrid, Holly & Brooklyn Idenouye-Edmonton, AB
 Ustina, Judy K-Edmonton, AB
 Virak, Viktor-Toronto, ON
 Visser, Mari & Igor-Cochrane, AB
 Wartnow, Floyd C-Delta, BC
 Watson, Maret-Spruce Grove, AB
 Weiler, Roland-Dundas, ON
 Zach, Inge-Calgary, AB
 Zielinski, Michel & Kristine-Spruce Grove, AB
 Zoumer, Anne- Calgary, AB



*Kaunist jõuluaega!
Head uut aastat!*

*Merry Christmas!
Happy New Year!*