

AJAKAJA

WINTER 2012 • ISSUE 37



ALBERTA ESTONIAN HERITAGE SOCIETY



Alberta Estonian Heritage Society, 2012

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

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

Non-members may purchase AjaKaja for \$5.00 by contacting Eda McClung

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society (AEHS) website: www.aehs.ca

Cover page photo: Hay bales in winter, Alberta (istockphoto.com)



AjaKaja

From the Editor's Desk

Alberta Estonian
Heritage Society

Winter 2012
Issue Number 37

As 2012 comes to a close, AEHS members can reflect on a year of significant accomplishments. The culmination of the six-year Heritage Project was the multi-panel 'Alberta's Estonian Exhibit' at the Provincial Archives of Alberta which received positive reviews. Our Heritage Project has set a benchmark for those who are pursuing similar goals. Jaanipäev 2012 was one to remember: idyllic, historic setting of Gilby Hall, pioneer games, horse and wagon rides, bison dinner (leaving many wishing there had been more!), a sky-reaching bonfire and the 30 member Ööbik choir from Toronto with their classical Estonian songs and sentimental Alberta favorites. All made for an event to remember.

The smooth registration process for Jaanipäev, and access to other Society news and services, was facilitated by a re-designed www.aehs.ca user website. This functional, user friendly site enables online membership registration, provides links to the Heritage database and archival collections, and offers other contact information. You are encouraged to visit, and provide comment and feedback. Our website offers immense potential to connect provincially, nationally and internationally. This is essential since nearly one third of AEHS members reside outside Alberta.

The coming year will bring more opportunities to showcase our history and be part of the larger west coast Estonian community. The six panel historical exhibit will be featured at Toronto's Tartu College, beginning in January, and in Ottawa, possibly during Estonian President Ilves' visit. At the time of writing, discussions are underway for the display to travel to San Francisco for West Coast Estonian Days in late June. Our members are encouraged to attend this lively event, to represent our community and enjoy this international cultural experience in a glorious setting.

On another note, at the recent AGM, there was discussion of anticipated changes to our Executive and revision to our By-laws. The latter discussion looked at eventual dissolution of the Society if and when it can no longer fulfill its mandate to promote the cultural heritage of Alberta's Estonian community. We are at a crossroads. Membership has remained steady but our longstanding planning/program volunteers are seniors. Recruitment of younger members with a desire to connect with their Estonian heritage is essential. It is wonderful to include in this issue articles by younger Estons who feel this connection. Our website would love to hear from you. AEHS needs you!

We thank all who took time to contribute articles for this issue! Your comments and feedback are invaluable. Best wishes for a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Eda McClung and Dave Kiil

In this issue:

From the Editor's Desk	3
President's Message	4
Jaanipäev Celebrated	5
Jaanipäev: Two Countries	8
Heritage Project complete & AGM Highlights	11
Well-travelled Bible	13
Travel Time: Esto style	15
Triathlon athlete	17
Young Estonian wrestler	18
Lillian Munz	19
Enzio and Maimu Mägi	22
Anna (Tipman) Posti	23
Linda Hall and Estonian Cemetery renovations	26
A winning team	27
LEP-ESTO 2013	28
Darkest corner of the world	29
Puzzling questions, & YouTube videos	30
Tallinn transformation	32
AEHS Membership list	34

President's Message



Tere!

At the completion of the Alberta Estonian Centennial celebration in Stettler in 1999, we entertained options that we could pursue with the funds remaining in our bank account. One of the possibilities discussed was the creation of a book to commemorate the Centennial. That particular project never got beyond the proposal stage. At the time I think many of us believed that it was too ambitious a venture for our small organization. Today, in retrospect, the magnitude of the accomplishments that have transpired in place of that little book are so dramatic that it is almost beyond belief.

We have evolved from local Estonian groups to an active provincial organization with national and international connections. As I look back over my messages from the last six years, I am reminded that many of them are toasting the completion of yet another project. Fittingly, a heritage book did become reality, not in the form we initially envisioned, but rather as a comprehensive work that was essentially a by-product of other projects.

The contributors to the various phases of the Heritage Project, the organizers of our Jaanipaev celebrations, and the Board and Executive of the AEHS, must be commended for seeing us through this continuum of events.

I anticipated the completion of each of these phases with mixed emotions. On one hand it would provide a much-needed break, but on the other hand, if we ran out

of projects, I wondered if it might be the beginning of the end of the AEHS.

If you subscribe to the domino effect, where the motion of one leads to the motion of another, it appears we're in this for a while yet. For example when the Heritage Community Foundation folded, we lost the web host for our Heritage data. The University of Alberta temporarily hosted it, but it was obvious we would have to find a permanent site. To avoid the potential waste of time and energy of moving the heritage data to other temporary sites, we elected to escalate the development of a new AEHS website. We are pleased to report that the new website is up and delivering everything we aspired to achieve at this time.

The esthetics and functionality of the totally re-designed site immediately demonstrates the progress that has transpired over the years. In addition to hosting our Heritage database and linking it with the Estonian archival collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the new site provides on-line ordering for our book and DVD. It also provides for AEHS membership registration and contact information.

The Heritage Project has evolved into a legacy of which all members of the AEHS can be proud. In one way or another, everyone has contributed, and we all share ownership. The dust from this journey has yet to settle, but it is time to review, reset and look to the future. As before, future success lies in our membership.

A key element in our next series of projects will be the establishment of more direct member involvement. We believe the new website will play a pivotal role in bringing that to fruition. A series of discussions and interactions with our regional and demographic groups will be set up to define a 'wish list' for member involvement. Perhaps the preservation of our personal experiences should be on that list.

Some fifteen years ago, beginning with the planning sessions for the Centennial, I marveled at the potential seated around me. Since then I have witnessed our talented and motivated members reach their goals and accomplish our objectives. That potential is now, literally, history. Fortunately for us, potential is genetic and perhaps regenerative.

The folks upstairs have to be smiling!

Tervitades, Bob Kingsep

Jaanipäev celebrated in Alberta

Helgi Leesment

2012 was once again the year to celebrate Jaanipäev in Alberta. The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society organized the event focusing on the bonfire (ancient Estonian tradition) in the Gilby location (one of areas originally settled by Estonian homesteaders at the beginning of the 20th Century), on the pioneer games (Alberta Estonian pioneer tradition), a heritage meal of roast buffalo, and an Õobik performance (Estonian Nightingale choir from Ontario).

The evening before Jaanipäev, folks gathered by the waters of Sylvan Lake where all were cordially greeted by the mayor of the Town of Sylvan Lake. Susan Samson was aware that this was the area where the first Estonian pioneers to Canada settled in 1899.

Her welcoming speech received heartfelt applause by 30 members of the Õobik choir who had joined us to celebrate Jaanipäev out West. She in turn was presented a copy of the DVD *Alberta's Estonians* for the town's public library and archives.

Later Alberta Estonian Heritage Society president Bob Kingsep, wearing a white shirt with blue and black on the shoulders, adopted the bearing of ship's captain as he collected tickets for the two-hour private dinner cruise on Sylvan Lake. Albertans mingled with choristers and all 80 had a good time becoming acquainted.

Jaanipäev activities began next day, June 23, at Gilby Hall, approximately 30 minutes

drive northwest from Sylvan Lake in central Alberta. Also historical terrain for Alberta Estonians, this district has descendants of Estonian pioneers currently farming on land originally homesteaded by their forefathers over 100 years ago. Volunteers set attractive tables inside the hall while others barbequed smokies sausages for lunch on the outdoor patio. Local horsemen, organized by Jim Lawton, offered horse and mule wagon and buggy rides, a much appreciated highlight of the afternoon

activities. There was a bus tour of near-by

Estonian-related locations, including two historical cemeteries. The 160 Jaanipäev participants could also view the six panels and nine photos depicting the story of Estonians in Alberta. These had recently been on display

at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton. Copies of the book *Freedom, Land & Legacy: Alberta's Estonians 1899-2009*, the DVD *Alberta's Estonians* and the AEHS magazine *AjaKaja* were available for purchase.

This year's Jaanipäev celebrants came from Saskatchewan, Ontario, Estonia, USA, New Zealand and of course, from many parts of Alberta. There was much friendly meeting and chatting throughout the afternoon, with various individual becoming more aware of their Estonian roots, while enjoying coffee and a slice of the seven kringels baked by Pärja Tiislar.

Everyone enjoyed the pioneer games, including the log sawing and nailpounding.



Jaanipäev celebrants onboard Miss Mermaid

For the out-of-province visitors, these were unique and entertaining. Jim Curtis of Edmonton and Gloria Hannel of northern Alberta pounded their way to championships in the nail-pounding event. Jim's son Gavin was the best nail pounder among the children's group. The „Queen of 4:00 AM“ contest garnered interest from all ages. In this game, the ladies toss a rolling pin at a stuffed figure of a man whose early morning activities are presumed to be in question. The final round resulted in a tie with Tiina Coverdale and Eda Oja, both Ööbik Choir members, who strutted off with victorious Queen's crowns.

As part of the program, Dana Kreil, counselor, representing Lacombe County, and Helen Posti, Mayor of Eckville formally greeted the gathering. Each was presented with a copy of the DVD *Alberta's Estonians* for the archive and library in their jurisdiction. Bob Kingsep made valiant efforts to properly pronounce the name of the guest choir. To not much avail. In a chance conversation with Peter Leesment, they hit upon the solution. Anytime Bob needed to use the word „Ööbik“, he would instead point towards Peter who would stand up and say the word, then immediately sit down. Bob would then continue with his commentary until the next time he needed to use the choir name. So it went. Peter resembled a Jack-in-the-Box, popping up and down during the opening

ceremony, much to the delight of all present. Bob explained his predicament by stating tongue-in-cheek „They voted me for AEHS president before they found out I cannot speak Estonian“.

The Ööbik Choir presented a much anticipated afternoon concert of songs in both English and Estonian. They were directed by Rosemarie Lindau, accompanied by Charles Kipper on an electronic keyboard. Solos, duets and trios rounded out a wonderful program which included recognized tunes like *Four Strong Winds*, *Rahu/Peace*, *Kaugel Kaugel/Red River*

Valley, *Dancing Queen* and *Tuljak/Wedding Dance*. We also heard *Mats Alati on Tubli Mees*, a kind of protest song reflecting 19th century relations between Estonian serfs and their Baltic-German landowner masters. It is particularly relevant to Albertans as many are descendants of Estonian serfs who left some 150 years ago to escape the type of unkind masters depicted in this song. Overall, the musical selections reflected a warm effort to focus on Canada and Alberta in particular. During *Alberta Bound*, the choir even wove

„Gilby“ into the lyrics.

After the heritage-style bison dinner provided by a caterer, celebrants could dance to the Triple Nickle, a band led by Garry Raabis. They gathered around the largest Jaanipäev bonfire yet seen in Alberta.



Eda Oja and Tiina Coverdale, winners of the “Queen of 4:00 AM” contest, with their ‘trophy.’

Logs had been gathered, piled very high and dried for a year. There was singing and reminiscing around this spectacular scene. The bar was kept busy and ably handled by Lauri Carrit and Lorne Hennel.

AEHS members reminisced of Allan Posti who passed away last December. He was to be our local contact for the 2012 Jaanipäev gathering. The entire board and Jaanipäev organizing committee miss Allan, a thoughtful and gentle soul, a quiet leader, and integral contributor to all Estonian-related events by the AEHS.

Alberta Jaanipäev 2012 director Eda McClung, was assisted by Toomas Pääsuke, Bob & Annette Kingsep, Enn & Pärja Tiislar, Rein & Jan Pääsuke, Dave Kiil, Lorne Hennel, Christine & David Robertson, Arnold Mottus, Bob Tipman, Lisa Kiil, Arne Matiisen, Janet Matiisen, Ingrid Kiil, Peter & Helgi Leesment, Otto Nicklom, Jim Lawton and others. August Liivam, chairman of the Gilby Hall Board and



Ööbik Choir during performance at Alberta Jaanipäev celebration, Gilby Hall, 2012

descendant of Estonian pioneers, took charge of the Jaanipäev bonfire. On behalf of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society, organizers of Alberta Jaanipäev also extend a sincere thank you to the Estonian Foundation of Canada for their financial support of this highly successful midsummer celebration.



Thanks to volunteer efforts by the above named plus many others, Midsummer, the longest daylight day of the year, once again brought together people of a common interest and accorded this ancient event its traditional due.

The next Alberta Jaanipäev is scheduled in two years' time, June 2014.

The Trickle Nickle Band, led by Garry Raabis, performing at Gilby Hall

Jaanipäev: One Celebration, Two Countries

Colleen Renne - Grivell and Kathleen Renne

Ever since I can remember, I was fascinated by my ethnic heritage: Norwegian and Swiss on my mother's side, Estonian on my father's side.



Traditional bonfire at Pikva Jaanipäev

As a child, in the 1980s, Estonia (unlike Norway and Switzerland) seemed something of a mystical land, shrouded by the Iron Curtain, and denied statehood, a place from where many of my relatives had fled.

At the time, my father, Toomas Renne, was not connected to the Estonian community in Calgary, so the only place I heard the language spoken was when we went to visit relatives, elderly folk who longed for their homeland, vowing they would return one day, if only in a "pine box." So, Estonia – and its customs – seemed very far away through my young eyes.

Fast forward a couple of decades to Gilby, Alberta, on June 23, 2012. I, along with my mother and father (who, after leaving Estonia, grew up in Eckville, next door to Gilby) came to celebrate Jaanipäev right here in Alberta.

As a child, I never would have dreamed this possible.

Meanwhile, my sister, Colleen Renne-Grivell, was residing with a farm family in a small Estonian village - Pikva - part of a month – long stay in the country to learn about our roots, visit distant relatives and do some genealogical research.

By happy circumstance, she was there during June and got to see, firsthand, how Estonians in Estonia celebrate St. John's Day (Jaanipäev), one of the most important holidays of the Estonian calendar, marking the summer solstice. "As we were at the 59th parallel, it never got really dark throughout the entire night, something I had never experienced before," Colleen recalls.

In Gilby, festivities began around noon whereas, in Estonia, celebrants started gathering around 6:00 PM. As the weather was beautiful in both locales, most of the action happened in the great outdoors, though the hall in Pikva was decorated with young birch trees (*kask*) – a Jaanipäev tradition – and the Gilby Community Centre was ornamented with an Estonian flag.

As with any celebration, whether here or in Europe, food plays an important role. Following an informal smokie lunch in Gilby, dinner was a sit-down affair in the very crowded Community Centre. Who knew there were so many Estonian pioneers (and their descendants) in Alberta?!

Guests had the option of either the more traditional ham or the less traditional bison. (A true nod to Alberta heritage!) An interesting casserole of pearl barley and cheese accompanied the meal. I could not ascertain if that was an Estonian specialty or a Gilby special.



*Members of Õõbik Choir proceeding to the stage.
Left front: Conductor Rosemarie Lindau*

In Pikva, by comparison, a couple of informal concessions provided the evening's gustatory delights which included sausages, pork shish kebabs (*saslokk*) and rhubarb cake

(*rabarberikook*). The most interesting menu item my sister experienced – and a must at traditional Jaanipäev celebrations – were the partially pickled

cucumbers (*värške hapukurk*), fermented in a crock. Locals explained to Colleen that, as they are the first cucumbers of the season, and do not need to be preserved over the winter, they are eaten before they are fully soured.

Colleen and I grew up eating my father's crock pickles, something which has made me always on the lookout, wherever I go, for that perfect pickle. Had I been fortunate enough to sample those *värsked hapukurgid*, I'm sure they would have been the dining delight of my entire Estonian experience. (Unfortunately, packing pickles in a suitcase is a recipe for disaster, so I can only taste them vicariously through my sister's description.)

As a child, I heard rumours that Estonians enjoy their alcohol, and Colleen certainly noticed supporting evidence of this at the Jaanipäev festivities she attended. "One guy came with a shopping cart full of alcohol," she says, adding that, last year, when one organizer tried to make the local Jaanipäeva celebration alcohol free, she was met with plenty of resistance.



Boot throw competition for children at Pikva

In Gilby, guests had the opportunity to tap into their inner child via some traditional games which involved nail pounding, log sawing and hurling a rolling pin at a scarecrow. Not being much of a games person myself, I sat out on the "fun," choosing instead to listen to my father speak in his native tongue – a language I love - catching up with people he knew from his childhood.

Evidently, traditional games are also key to Jaanipäeva celebrations in Estonia. While the children participated in events like potato sack races, a boot throw and a game called "*vägi kaika vedu*" - where two people sit opposite one other, jointly holding a stick, and see who is the first to pull the other up off the ground - men participate in strength tests. For example, they see how many

times they can lift a 24 – kilogram weight in 30 seconds (*sangpommi tõstmine*).



Pictured is tug-of-war between Pikva and guest females. Colleen Renne-Grivell is on left

Colleen got in on the action by participating in a tug-of-war between the females from the village (her team) and the guest females. Despite her team losing, she says the Estonian woman with whom she was staying told her she was "accepted" by the locals after her hearty efforts with tug-of-war.

Another important Jaanipäeva tradition is the bonfire. "The practical reason for a bonfire is to burn all of the rubbish from the winter," explains Colleen. "Traditionally, people are supposed to jump over the fire as it starts to get smaller in size," she says, adding that a member of Estonia's reserve army ceremoniously lit the pile of tinder with a torch.

Likewise, Jaanipäev in Gilby ended with a bonfire, accompanied by a few folk linking arms and singing traditional Estonian songs around the flames. The only drawback to this otherwise homey tradition were the hoards of mosquitoes who also decided dusk was an apt time to come out and play.

In Gilby, afternoon horse – and - wagon rides were a feature attraction of the Jaanipäev celebrations, courtesy of the local farmers and horses. Not so in Estonia. Perhaps there, in Pikva anyway, horses are still a part of daily life, not for the idle recreation of gawking city folk.

Estonians are renowned throughout the world for their musical talents so, naturally, there was music at both the Pikva and Gilby celebrations.

In Gilby, in fact, an Estonian choir came from Toronto – the Ööbik Choir – to perform traditional Estonian songs mixed in with some North American hits.



Member of Estonia's reserve army lighting bonfire at Pikva

In Pikva, a musician provided entertainment throughout the evening. He played the keyboard and sang a range of tunes including traditional numbers like *Saaremaa Valss*, *Jaanipäev* and *Õllepruulija*, as well as waltz and two – step pieces. Before the night was out, Colleen, along with her husband, Nathan, finally had a chance to make use of those ballroom dance lessons they took back home at the University of Calgary! Unlike in Gilby, their dance floor was outside, in nature.

In Gilby, the Community Hall converted to a dance hall after all the dinner tables had been pushed aside, with a local band providing the music. However, as is often the case with these sorts of events, people seemed more interested in visiting with one another than in tying on their dancing shoes. “It felt like a real gathering of family and friends, as people all were clustered around in groups, sharing stories, laughing and talking,” Colleen says, of her Jaanipäev experience.

For me, the Jaanipäev celebration in Gilby provided a very real way to get in touch with my Estonian heritage. I had that rare feeling of belonging to a community, a community with which I share a similar history. Corny as it may sound, I felt so much pride standing up as the

Õöbik Choir **led** everyone in singing the Estonian national anthem.

Whether here, or in Estonia, if Estonian blood flows through your veins, Jaanipäev is a cultural tradition you should attend at least once in your lifetime.

The authors:



Left: Sisters Colleen Renne-Grivell and Kathleen Renne

Kathleen Renne lives in Calgary where she works as a writer and arts reporter for CKUA Radio, FFWD, and the Calgary Herald Neighbours section. She loves reading and making jewellery and plans on finally learning Estonian!

Colleen Renne-Grivell currently resides in Canmore with her husband Nathan. She is an Urban Planner by profession and is enjoying the recreational amenities life in Canmore has to offer. Most recently, she and her husband did some extensive world travel, visiting 14 different countries. Some of Colleen's favourite experiences were in Estonia, as she finally got to visit the birthplace of her father. Although she enjoyed her travels, she is happy to be back in Canada, looking forward to the next adventures life will hold.

Alberta's Estonian Heritage Project is Complete

Dave Kiil and Eda McClung

“Heritage is what we inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations.” (Wikipedia)



The Alberta Estonian Heritage Society's Heritage Project evolved within the framework of the above definition - the past, the present and the future – and is now complete. Three highly successful centennial celebrations, marking the arrival of Estonian pioneers in Alberta, raised awareness about the fascinating history of Alberta's Estonian community by bringing together descendants of Estonian pioneers and later immigrants. These celebrations, coupled with a visit by Estonian President Lennart Meri in 2000, provided the impetus to more fully explore the cultural heritage of Alberta's Estonian community.

The history of Alberta Estonians was captured in a 30-minute DVD entitled *“Alberta's Estonians”* and presented to audiences at the West Coast Estonian Days in Los Angeles and the EstDocs Film Festival in Toronto in August and October, 2007, respectively. The availability of historical material,

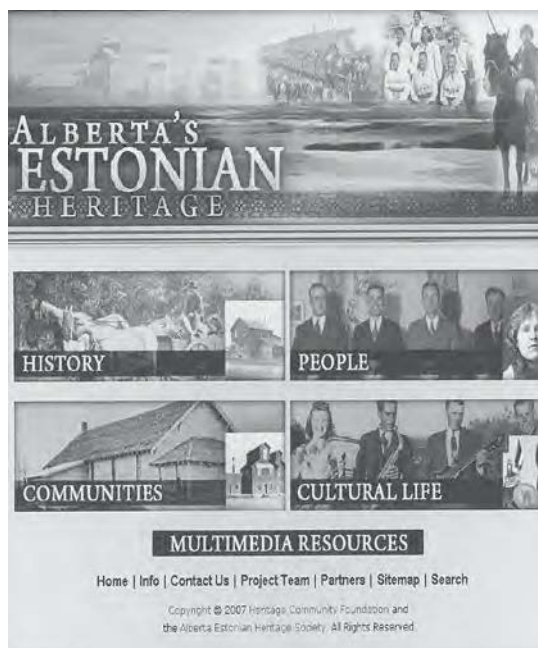
combined with a desire to more fully document the cultural heritage of Alberta's Estonians, resulted in the development of a website *“Alberta's Estonian Heritage.”* The website was designed and produced over several years as additional information became available from various sources.

Another major phase of the project involved the production and publication of a 300-page illustrated book *“Freedom, Land & Legacy: Alberta's Estonians, 1899-2009.”*

All archival material collected during the six-year heritage project has been donated to the Provincial Archives of Alberta for storage and preservation in perpetuity. It is known as the *“Estonian Collection”*.

The final phase of the AEHS heritage project is the *“Alberta Estonian Heritage Exhibit,”* consisting of six large framed panels, nine historical photos, and other artifacts which tell the story of Alberta's Estonian pioneers and immigrants.

Many Society members, friends and granting agencies contributed to the success of the project. We can all take pride in this accomplishment.



Home page of “Alberta's Estonian Heritage” website

For further information about the Heritage Project

Go to AEHS website: www.aehs.ca and select Menu Option ‘Heritage.’

- The Heritage Option provides detailed information about the deliverables (heritage website, book, DVD, archival materials) under the Heritage Project, including ordering procedures for the book and the DVD, and login addresses for the heritage website and the Estonian Collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.
 - The “Alberta’s Estonian Heritage” website is preserved as part of the University of Alberta’s “Archive It” site and can be accessed directly by logging on to the archival site www.Albertasource.ca/abestoni-ans/. “Alberta’s Estonian Heritage” website will be updated at end of 2012.
 - Description of the Estonian Collection of materials used in the Heritage Project, stored at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton, can be accessed on: www.hermis.alberta.ca/paa. Type “AEHS” in Search box to view file descriptions of Estonian archival materials stored at the PAA.
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AEHS Annual General Meeting Highlights, September 15, 2012

President Bob Kingsep reviewed projects and activities in 2011-2012, including:

- AEHS embarked on the development of a new website to meet member requirements and to preserve Alberta’s Estonian Heritage website. The new AEHS website address is: www.aehs.ca and includes a Menu Option for accessing the Heritage website.
- Our Heritage Collection of archival material was donated to the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) for storage and preservation.
- The Alberta Heritage Exhibit was on display at the PAA and during Jaanipäev at Gilby Hall.
- President Bob Kingsep will likely be relocating to Vancouver Island by the end of 2013.
- AEHS elects to continue as a member of the Baltic Heritage Network.

Other discussion topics:

- The Society’s financial situation is satisfactory; new projects may require additional funds.
- Bob Tipman and Rein Pääsuke presented the results of their review of the AEHS By-Laws. Following discussion, including directives for dissolution of the Society, the revised By-Laws were approved and will be submitted to the Provincial Government.
- The Alberta Estonian Exhibit will be shown in Toronto and Ottawa in 2013, and possibly in San Francisco during the WCED/ESTO Festival.
- Rein Pääsuke was appointed as Calgary representative on the Board of Directors.
- The selling price of ‘Alberta’s Estonians’ DVD was reduced to \$5.00.

A well travelled family Bible finds a permanent home

Helgi Leesment

The old Bible on view at the Provincial Archives of Alberta's Estonian display in 2012, has passed through three generations, a harrowing escape and some independent travel among its many adventures. And that covers only the known part of its story; nothing is known about its earlier years.



Photo: Helgi Leesment

Front page of Estonian-language Bible published in Saint Petersburg (Petersburg), 1825

Published in the Estonian language in 1825, this Bible has been in Sylvia Boehrnsen's family for at least 120 years, possibly longer. Sylvia remembers spending childhood summers at Estonia's north coast seaside village of Salmistu near the Valkla Manor House which may have some special connection with the Bible, her mother Leontine Boehrnsen, and grandmother who is buried in the Kuusalu Cemetery.

For Sylvia's mother, that Bible was so precious she packed it along with few personal items and



Photo: Helgi Leesment

Sylvia Boehrnsen,

minimal furniture in January 1941 when her family obtained rare permission from the occupying Soviet government to leave Estonia. They unpacked their crate while staying with friends in Gdynia/Gotenhafen (Polish and German names for the same place on south Baltic coast). Soon after,

Sylvia's parents divorced and her older brother was killed at war, age 19 in 1942. By January of 1945, all the refugees in Gdynia/Gotenhafen became aware of advancing Soviet forces from the East, and made plans to head westward if at all possible. The fastest way would have been on the ship *MV Wilhelm Gustloff*, but Sylvia's mother simply stated that she and her teenage daughter were not boarding that ship. As it turned out, the *Gustloff* was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine and sank on January 30, 1945 with the loss of thousands of lives. Thus, the Boehrnsens and their few belongings, including the Bible, escaped a tragic end by remaining on land. Feeling desperate, Leontine and Sylvia quickly packed small belongings, including the family Bible, and shipped them westward by train, not knowing whether they would ever encounter these items again.

At that time, European trains did not run on schedules; people simply boarded and departed various trains as they typically travelled only short distances before stopping in the confusion of World War II. By this chaotic means, the two Boehrnsen women eventually arrived at Schwerin, Germany. Much to their surprise, after a series of chance events, they were reunited with their suitcases and the family Bible.

Immigrating to Canada in 1950, mother and daughter initially lived in Brooks, Alberta. Later Sylvia worked in Calgary, meeting local Estonians and participating in social events. Her mother worked as a cook at a provincial government survey crew camp near Medicine Hat, keeping the Bible with her in the trailer that was her home.



Upon the passing of her mother in 1955, the Bible became Sylvia's. She took care of it during all her years of various

jobs, university education and extensive travel, focusing on her chosen career as a professional artist. In 2011 she donated the Boehrnsen Bible to the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society who in turn, arranged for it to become part of the Estonian Collection at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in Edmonton. Sylvia Boehrnsen is elated in the knowledge that the Bible which had been so very important to her mother, is at a place where it is well cared for. She was especially delighted to find out that of the several older Estonian Bibles in the collection, hers was selected for the display March-June, 2012.



Display case with Estonian handicrafts and books during Alberta's Estonian Exhibit at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in 2012. The Estonian Bible is shown in the top-right corner of the display case.

Travel Time...Esto Style!

Napa Tour 2012 of the Venice Lands

Christine Robertson, Leduc, Alberta

OK, I've heard about these Napa Tours before, organized by Tom Napa of Seattle, Washington, and they've always been in Ireland (2001, 2005, 2008). Then there's been Tom's ability to cycle around the world, which included a summer trek across the USA. I think in 2010 he cycled over 11,000 miles and nearly 670 hours (just over 27 days) on a bike. So, would a family like ours measure up to a tour organized by Tom??



Robertson family (left to right): Brendan, David, Travis and Christine during Napa Tour 2012

Four from our family signed up, including Brendan (23), Travis (15), my husband David and me. To our surprise, Cycling Safaris, the company Tom chose to organize the Venice Lands Tour 2012, provided a route that could be challenging for him and my triathlete son Brendan, but also suitable for the family. The family route, rated as mild-moderate in difficulty through well marked trails and level secondary roads with low traffic volumes, was super FUN to navigate. Besides that, Tom was able to take Brendan on huge cycling adventures to places like Asiago and Mount Grappa, in addition to completing our seven day journey.

Our group of 26 included 15 Estonians. Most live in the Seattle, Washington area; others were from

Texas and Colorado. We were the only Canadians, from Leduc, Alberta.



2012 Napa Tour participants

Our 300 km trek explored the Veneto (Venetia) region of northern Italy. This area has key strategic significance as its location forms a gateway between the Mediterranean region, Northern Europe and Eastern Europe.

Our round trip key cities included: Castelfranco (meeting spot north of Venice before the cycle portion began), Mestre, Venice, Chioggia, Padova, Vicenza, Marostica, Bassano del Grappa, Asolo, Treviso and back to Mestre. It involved pedaling through vineyards, mountain backdrops, crossing two tiny islands off Venice, cycling along lagoons, rivers and canals, passing through quiet and urban towns, marketplaces, touring villas, sampling food, beer and wine, and experiencing a unique fusion between the old and new Italy.

Although there were lots of memorable spots, a fond one for me included a Sunday afternoon in Asolo. We were dressed in our cycle gear and mixed with exquisitely dressed Italians. Their dress style was most impressive for young and old alike! North Americans do not dress the way the Italians do! We felt OK as we were cycling with

so many other cyclists, including Italians, out on a Sunday, but still, you couldn't help but gawk at the impeccably well dressed people we saw that Sunday.

Our trip also included visits through villages influenced or built by the 16th Century Venetian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580). The term "Palladian" normally refers to buildings in a style inspired by Palladio's own work. Palladio's work was strongly based on symmetry, perspective and values of the formal classical temple architecture of the Ancient Greeks and Romans. Villa Barbaro was one stop we decided to make as it looked so grand up on the hillside. It featured decorative stuccos, sculptures and fountains. Insides were painted with frescos on all four walls and ceiling. The corners of the rooms were painted, as opposed to having real pillars, giving it a grandiose effect. This region is known for the grapes used to make Prosecco wine, a dry to extra dry sparkling wine. Prosecco grapes are grown in the hills between Asolo and Treviso. Did you know that Prosecco is the main ingredient of the Bellini cocktail?? At the Villa Barbaro we had an excellent 'typical' pub style lunch that included a sandwich board filled



with cheeses and deli meats typical to the area and a large tuna salad to accompany the meal. David and I

tried sampling grapes, only to notice afterwards that we could have been fined for trying them. However, they did taste delicious!

The biggest highlight each day was finding the next



Left to right & closest to camera: Travis and David Robertson

gelato stop. Croissants were great for the morning breakfast, but homemade gelato was always the highlight. I loved ordering Café Americanos, as it was made differently everywhere I ordered it! Espresso was the norm and lattes were great, except in both Italy and Germany (our step before cycling). I was told their countries do not make or carry non-fat milk!!! Go figure?

The drink from Northern Italy is actually a Spritz – a combination of Prosecco wine, a dash of bitter liqueur like Aperol or Campari

and topped with sparkling mineral water and a garnish of orange, at \$2-3 Euro a glass. So, at the end of our cycling day – usually after a good 7 to 8 hours on the road, everyone celebrated with Spritz.

Travis celebrated his 15th birthday in Treviste. After having bought a chocolate mousse cake, the hotel agreed to light the candles and bring it out with the dessert. Everyone sang Happy Birthday, followed by several verses of *Ta Elagu*. The waiters piped in by singing Happy Birthday in Italian. Great night!

Each city has its own charm and the only regret was not being able to spend a bit more time in each city. Overall... great food, great sites, great souvenirs, made good friends, and would recommend everyone try a cycling holiday!

Triathlon athlete Brendan Lepik Robertson

Proud Mom Christine Robertson, Leduc, Alberta

Triathlon is one of the fastest growing multi sport events in the world, involving swimming, cycling and running over various distances. The sport made its debut at the Sydney Olympics over the Olympic Distance in 2000. A standard Olympic Distance Triathlon involves swimming: 1,500 m (1,600 yd), cycling: 40 km (24.9 mi) and running: 10 km (6.2 mi). In Canada there are over 20,000 Triathletes.

Brendan Robertson (also known as: **Brendan Lepik Robertson**), 22, has been training and participating in triathlons for the past three years. He is a member of the Edmonton Triathlon Academy (ETA) and founder of the Triathlon Club at Grant McEwan University. While studying abroad in Lucerne, Switzerland, he had the opportunity to compete



internationally. While he has been competing in his age class category (Male 20-24) in the Olympic Distance, he will be moving up to the U23 Elite category this coming summer. A typical training week involves between two and four hours a day with the Academy. Monday and Friday sessions consist of a three to five kilometer morning swim and a gym at the Kinsmen Pool in Edmonton. This is followed by an evening cycle or run at Hawrelak Park lasting just under two hours. Weekends consist of a long ride lasting up to three hours and long runs between 1 and 2 hours. During winter months, training moves indoors where the team spins on bike trainers. The ETA also hosts a number of Aquathlons, or swim-run races of various distances, to keep the athlete's racing skills sharp. These are open to the public.



Brendan qualified to attend this year's World Championships by placing in the top two at Alberta Provincials last year in Canmore, Alberta. He has also qualified for next year's World Championships in London, England by placing in the top 10 at this year's Nationals in Edmonton, Alberta.

While not racing to the best of his ability this year in Auckland, New Zealand, he is already excited and preparing for next year's world championships in London. His ultimate goal is to qualify as one of Canada's Elite Athletes and continue racing.

We'll keep our eye out for you Brendan!

Young Estonian Competes at 2012 Women's World Wrestling Championships in Alberta

Epp Mäe was the sole Estonian participant at the Women's World Wrestling Championships held at Millenium Place in Strathcona County near Edmonton on September 26-29, 2012. She is a 20-year-old wrestler with an impressive record of achievement at numerous wrestling venues globally. Epp won the Gold medal at the 2012 European Championship (Juniors category) and the Silver medal at the 2012 World Championships in Beach wrestling.



Epp Mäe won the Junior European Women's Wrestling Championship in 2012

During our interview, Epp stated that she was born into a family of wrestlers in the small community of Tudu, southeast of the City of Rakvere in northern Estonia. Tudu is a small town with limited opportunities for organized sport. Her grandfather was a wrestler and her father Riho was her trainer at the Sakura Sports Club.

At 16 years of age, she moved to Tallinn and enrolled in Estonia's elite Audentes Gümnasium (High School) to continue her training and wrestling career. Following graduation, Epp has continued as a dedicated athlete and is training as massage therapist for a future career in sport.

Seventy-four wrestlers from over 30 countries participated in the championships at Millenium

Place. Ms. Mäe was accompanied by her trainer Arvi Aavik and Mehis Kard, Secretary General of the Estonian Wrestling Federation. She lost a close opening match against Brazilian Aline Da Silva Ferreira and placed 13th in the 72 kg. weight class.



Epp Mäe during her first-round match with Brazilian opponent at 2012 Women's World Wrestling Championships in Edmonton

During the past two years, Mäe has participated in about 20 women's wrestling competitions worldwide, including Beach and Sumo wrestling, in Germany, Finland, China, Thailand, Taiwan, Sweden, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria and Serbia.

She expressed a positive outlook for future competitions because of her youthfulness and desire to compete. We congratulate Epp on her accomplishments and wish her continued success on the world stage.

Dave Kiil and Eda McClung

In Memoriam
Lillian Margaret Munz
Martha Munz Gue



Lillian Margaret Munz, sister of Martha Munz Gue and Albert Munz (1937-1998), lived in Calgary most of her adult life. She bravely and dutifully adhered to schedules of tests and chemotherapy for cancer since 2004, when, after a 16-year reprieve from breast cancer, it returned with renewed vigor. On June 1st, 2012, at home, with Martha and David close by, Lillian breathed her last breaths. She was 77.

Over the years, she did not let the disease stop her creative and helpful nature. During those many years, when life was uncertain, Lillian took on many challenges which helped her friends, family and the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society. She was an experienced writer, artist and teacher. She also enjoyed renovating real estate projects. She especially loved tending her garden in her

Calgary home in the Brentwood district. She valued her present and past communities: home town of Barons, extended family of dozens of cousins near and far, nieces and nephews, and especially her artist and teaching friends and colleagues. For her it was always a special treat to gather with former classmates from Barons Consolidated High School, family and home town reunions, or with former colleagues and students from the various schools where she taught.

Among her writings are poems, stories, memoirs, and compilations of family and community stories which augmented the collection of stories of Southern Alberta families of Estonian descent which were collected by AEHS. She also helped several friends write and publish their family histories. Family story boards were encouraged to be created and displayed at the Barons 2004 Centennial of Homesteading. Lillian created the story boards for the Silberman/Silverton and Munz/Gue families. Since then she has taken the story boards apart and recreated them on separate boards which we can use for family reunions, assuring that at least some of those stories and pictures from the first generations in Alberta can be shown to next generations who may be scattered again.

Probably her most widely known writing is "Thrice Pioneers", a readers' theatre piece describing our great-grandparents' life, which began in Estonia, before the 1861 trek to Crimea (they were about 10 years old on the trek).

Helgi Leesment arranged two events where the play was performed in concert

with my slides from Crimea of the celebration of 140 years since Estonians trekked to the Crimea. In Calgary a lovely heritage event was hosted by the Calgary Estonian Society. Subsequently, Helgi contacted the Vancouver Estonian Society and an invitation came to show the slides and read the play at Meie Kodu. Each time the play was performed, a different cast represented Jacob and Mari as children, adults and finally elders, so new people became intimately acquainted with the story.

Lillian enjoyed “smoothing out the English” of translations sent from Simferopol, Crimea, by our cousin Leongard Salman. First, he sought to fill the gap left in the book “Juri’s Children; the story of the Erdman Family” (edited by Barbara Gullickson). He determined to write the story of his grandparents and their descendants, when he saw that not much



Left: Lillian Munz, Martha and Anita Munz Gue



L-r, standing: Helgi Leesment, Peter Leesment, Liia Herman, Evelyn Erdman, Juri Kraav, Helle Kraav; l-r, sitting: Lillian Munz, Jüri Tint (Los Angeles), Livia Kivisild, Calgary, 2006.

was known about the one child who remained in Crimea when Jacob and Mari left with their other seven children to start

afresh in America. Since accomplishing that big task, painstakingly translating word after word using a dictionary, Leongard has written about the eight Estonian communities in the Crimea. With the help of Google, and Lillian’s “smoothing out” and typing skills, some more of his writings have been translated into English and are now accessible to us. We are thankful for both Leongard’s and Lillian’s dedication to that project.

Her most recent project was to help with an English translation, done collaboratively with Livia Kivisild. While living in exile in Switzerland, Livia’s grandfather had written a history of Estonia in late 1800s. Livia’s children wanted it translated into English so their children could know some of their heritage. While Livia is a linguist with fluency in five languages, the task of translating the work of her grandfather loomed too great for her. When

Lillian heard of this, her teacher skills kicked in. She said we just need to break it into small “doable” tasks. So, every evening at eight pm a phone call between the two Calgary homes was made. For an hour (sometimes more) Livia would read her grandfather’s book which was written in German, speak on the phone the English translation, which Lil (with phone on “speaker”) typed the English translation and emailed it back to Livia. Together they would work the phrases until the meaning was clear. This routine continued for many months, perhaps over a year. The English version is now at the publishers. What a progression of phenomenal accomplishments! First of Livia’s grandfather to have written the book and have it published, then of Livia and Lillian to have accomplished the English translation!

While Lillian was skilled with the pen and computer keyboard, she was equally skilled with a paintbrush. Her art included works in watercolor, pen-and-ink, and acrylic. She was instrumental in the formation of two art groups in Calgary, to which she was a dedicated participant. The Riverview Art Group shows their work in monthly exhibitions in downtown venues. The Chillax Art Group rents space in a one room school house west of Calgary. She also is a former member of the Federation of Canadian Artists. Before packing up all the art left in her Bentwood house Martha hosted an art show of some 70 works by Lillian.



Lillian Munz pictured with her paintings

From where comes this intense interest and exceptional skill in writing and art-making? As children, in 1949 and then in 1954, for six weeks each summer, (after good returns from crops in Barons) the whole family attended Banff School of Fine Arts. Subsequently, as a young adult, Lillian took several summer courses in art alongside our mother, Helmi, at University of Washington in Seattle.

At the University of Alberta her Education degree was slanted towards art and English literature; much later she completed a BA at the University of

Washington in Seattle. Furthermore, in her 35 years of teaching in junior high schools in Calgary, she alternated between teaching art, typing (and other business courses), and English language arts. She both inspired, and was inspired by the next generation of artists and



Greystone image of Lillian's artwork created by her brother-in-law David Gue

writers. In retirement from a full career in teaching, she continued to the very end to hone her skills of writing, keyboarding, and art making.

AEHS extends its condolences to Martha and the Munz family. Lillian was a longstanding member of Alberta's Estonian community, and contributed ideas and inspiration to its events and programs. Her quiet creativity will be missed by all.

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

In Memoriam

Enzio and Maimu Mägi

Helgi Leesment & Livia Kivisild, Calgary

The year 2012 sadly marks the end of the lives of two stalwart members of the Estonian community in Alberta. Maimu Mägi passed away on February 4th and her husband Enzio on September 25th.



Maimu and Enzio Mägi pictured on their 50th wedding anniversary in December, 1993

They were high school sweethearts in Tõrva, Estonia and married on Christmas Day 1943. Enzio studied agriculture at Tartu University but before graduation, WWII arrived with all its danger and confusion. By horse and carriage Maimu and her parents escaped southward out of Estonia in 1944, getting separated along the way. By some miracle, Enzio, Maimu and her parents were eventually all reunited in Austria where son Enzio Jr. was later born. Immigrating to Canada in 1949, the Mägi family's first home here was in Eckville, Alberta where Maimu's sister Emilda Moro sponsored them (Note: up to 1950, the Canadian government required a one-year sponsor for all refugee immigrants).

By 1949 the family moved to Calgary. Like other refugee immigrants, they did what they had to in order to establish themselves. Enzio learned the commercial woodworking business from the ground up. Several of Calgary's public and commercial spaces have interiors and furnishings that reflect his skills and designs. Maimu enrolled at the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology and qualified as a nursing aide working in maternity at the Calgary General Hospital. Maimu's parents, Emelia and Alexander Raie were an integral part of

the family and lived with them until they passed on. Typical of Estonians, Enzio and Maimu valued education highly and worked hard to support their son's academic studies until he became a medical doctor. Three Estonian families including the Mägis became neighbours living in three houses in a row on an avenue that had just four houses at that time (the other two families were Holtswell and Kirch). Over the years, the Mägi home was a gracious host to many social gatherings, including unannounced drop-in visitors, as was the custom in mid-20th Century. Enzio's accordion regularly accompanied energetic dancing at various Calgary home parties. He was also an accomplished pianist.

Both Maimu and Enzio were especially active members of the local Estonian community in the 1950's and 1960's. Enzio was an executive member of the South Alberta Estonian Society which preceded the establishment of the Calgary Estonian Society in 1950. Well regarded, he was often nominated for the position of president of the Calgary Estonian Society (CES) but always declined, accepting instead the position of vice-president and other leadership designations. Because of their connection to the Eckville area, the Mägi family participated in Suvepäev and other province-wide Estonian gatherings at Eckville in the 1950's even though transportation from Calgary was not easy during those years. The Mägis regularly donated funds to various Estonian causes in Canada and to destitute Estonians confined in post-war Europe. Maimu was a CES board member in 1957 and over many years, a cheerful contributor to wider community events such as citizenship ceremonies, the International Food Fair and the tree planting project at Calgary's Centennial Park commemorating the Canadian Centennial in 1967. Enzio and Maimu were members of the Alberta Estonian Heritage Society from its inception in 2005, attending various Jaanipäev and centennial events.

They are mourned by their son Enzio, his wife and their two children and missed by many friends and acquaintances.

Anna (Posti) Tipman

Edna (Tipman) Steffens, Sunnyside, Washington State



Anna Posti in Normal School, Calgary, 1920

Anna Posti was born July 12, 1900 in Tallinn, Estonia to August and Miili (Marie) Posti.

August Posti, his wife Miili and their two small children, Hugo and Anna, came to Canada in 1902. They

had been living in Estonia on his father's farm, who owned his "small holding". This tract of land was too small to be divided among his sons. So August Posti, not wanting to live on a Baltic Baronial estate, decided to come to Canada where free land was to be had.

Anna immigrated to Canada with her parents in 1902, at the age of 2 yrs. Their ship docked in Halifax and from there they proceeded by train to Sylvan Lake, Alberta. Her father and his friend took their shotguns, and on foot went looking for a homestead. When they arrived at Medicine River, which was in the vicinity of Eckville,

they liked the area and set up a 25- acre homestead. This is where Anna spent her early years. She attended Estonian School in the Eckville area, and also in Red Deer, where she worked for a family to earn her room and board. She was so conscientious, that when the family moved to Edmonton, Alberta, they requested that she move with them. She graduated from Victoria High School in Edmonton in 1919. Anna loved children, and chose teaching as a profession. She graduated from Normal School in Calgary in 1920, with a Teacher's Degree. For six years, Anna taught in one room schools in Golden Heights and Leslieville in the Medicine Valley area.

There were several Estonian settlements in Alberta. The Eckville and Stettler areas met frequently to socialize. The fellows from the Stettler group found interest in the girls from the Eckville settlement. This is how Anna met John Tipman. They dated for six years, as Anna wanted to teach for a while. They were married in Red Deer on August 12, 1926, at a double wedding which included Anna's younger sister Olga, and John's friend Alex Mottus. The two couples honey-mooned in



Left: John and Anna (Posti) Tipman; right: Alex and Olga (Posti) Mottus, double wedding, 1926

Banff. In those days, the roads were gravel and the cars were not made for long travel on rough roads. John and Alex spent most of the time repairing the car, while Anna and Olga went sight-seeing. They enjoyed telling stories of those memorable days together.

The Tipman newly-weds made their home on the Tipman family farm near Stettler. John's parents were young when they passed away. His father died in 1913, and his mother in 1920. John, the oldest at age 18, had the responsibility for his seven younger siblings. By 1926 the older siblings had left home for schooling. Therefore, in the early years of their marriage, Anna helped John provide a home for his brothers and sisters. In 1929 John and Anna, with their first two children, moved to their own parcel of land. They had much incentive now to work for their own home and growing family.

Anna and John had a loving, understanding, cooperative relationship, often discussing issues into the wee hours of the night. Anna did not drive and John gladly drove her to the meetings, lectures, etc... often staying to listen, and then discussing at length what they heard.

John and Anna worked well together. While John attended to planting and harvesting the crops, Anna was in charge of planting huge football field size gardens. Potatoes, cabbage, peas, beans, corn, carrots, beets, onion, cauliflower, etc... grew well.

Enough produce for home canning, and some to sell. In time they herded milk cows, two to eight animals which were hand milked, with the

cream being separated to sell. Chickens were raised to sell the eggs, and turkeys were purchased to raise for holiday time.

Unfortunately, the turkeys were not very smart birds. The hens would lead their young away from the safety of the barnyard, to nearby fields where the coyotes would catch them easily. We (Anna's children) had to find the turkeys, and then chase them home, almost daily. Later, incubators were purchased and eggs were carefully watched. When hatched, the young turkeys were penned up in the barnyard. When Anna tended to them, they followed her like she was their mother.

Linda Hall was the Estonian community's meeting place. The men's committee discussed their agricultural and political problems plus maintaining the building itself. The Linda Ladies Club assisted in the planning of social events, such as dances, concerts, plays, preparing food and arranging clean up. Both the men's and women's groups met monthly. Anna was an active member, and when her turn came to be President, Secretary and Treasurer, she gladly accepted the challenge. Anna was a member for over 70 years ! As time passed, new members did not speak or read Estonian. Anna was asked to translate all the old minutes, of many years, into English.

In 1942 the Co-op Grocery Store was established in the town of Stettler. The idea was to make groceries and sundries available to the farming community at wholesale prices, (thereby eliminating the middleman). Shares were available to be bought by the people. If sales went well, then the shareholders would



*John and Anna Tipman's 50th
Wedding Anniversary, 1976*

receive dividends. Anna became involved with the operation and was a valued Board Member, as well as secretary, for many years. This involved many meetings and much time to record the minutes, and take care of correspondence.

Anna was very interested in education and was busy with the school activities of her five children. She was 'ahead of the times' as she 'home schooled' her children. They were taught to read starting at age 4, so they could read and know their numbers before starting school at age 6. She visited the teachers, the school inspectors, and made herself available to help in any way. A final review of Anna and John's children:

- Rudolph - B.S. Degree in Chemical Engineering;
- Myrtle and Edna became Registered Nurses;
- Sophia, an Agricultural Laboratory Technician, and secretary; and

- Victor, an Electronic Engineering Technologist who worked as a Radar Systems Specialist for Nav Canada.

Anna celebrated her 100th birthday on July 12, 2000, in Stettler, with family and friends. Coincidentally, the President of Estonia, Lennart Meri, visited Canada in July, 2000 and the Stettler area on July 12th. Evelyn Shursen met him at the airport, and President Meri gladly signed a birthday card for Anna wishing her a Happy Centennial Birthday. Anna also received greetings from the Queen, the Premier of Alberta, the Governor General of Canada, and the Prime Minister of Canada.

Anna Tipman, my Mom, is fondly remembered by her family, as a morally strict, kind and loving mother, with a great sense of humor and always a true lady herself.

Anna was pre-deceased by husband John, and Daughter Myrtle, both in 1979. Anna passed away on August 26, 2001 at age 101.



Left to right: Victor, Anna, Edna, Sophia and Rudy Tipman

Venerated Linda Hall receives a facelift

Many of our reader's are aware that Linda Hall was built by Stettler-area Estonian pioneers and opened in 1911. Following a devastating fire the Hall was rebuilt in 1931. Recently, Linda Men's Society and Linda Ladies Club, along with the entire Stettler-area community, installed \$30,000 worth of new playground equipment adjacent to the Hall. A Family Supper, Dance and Silent Auction, held in Spring 2011, facilitated this venture.



New playground equipment was installed at Linda Hall in 2011



Deane Kerbes (left) and Allan Hennel pictured at Linda Hall fundraiser

In April 2012, a fund-raiser silent auction, "Raise the Roof", helped raise funds for a new ceiling, wiring and lightning. The work has been completed.

Today, Linda Hall serves as a gathering place for a variety of functions and events, including the celebration of Jaanipäev, for the entire community, young and old members alike.

Historical Estonian Cemetery has new fence

The Stettler-Big Valley Estonian Chapel and Cemetery was established in 1906. It is the oldest place of worship built by Estonian pioneers in North America. Joseph Tipman Jr., who maintained the burial records until his death in 2000, recorded three burials in 1907.

The 10-acre piece of land was acquired from Christian Hennel's homestead. Beneath the iron crosses and headstones rest approximately 100 Estonian pioneers and their descendants.

Testimony to the importance of the Estonian Cemetery and the legacy of pioneers and their descendants was provided with the installation of a new vinyl chain-link fence during the summer of 2012.

Two descendants of early pioneer families-Deane Kerbes and Allan Hennel - removed the old fence, repainted the old posts and installed new fencing. The Estonian Chapel and Cemetery Committee consists of Jay Tipman, Chair, Deane Kerbes, Treasurer, and Allan Hennel, Secretary.



Deane Kerbes and Allan Hennel pictured in front of newly-installed fence at Estonian Cemetery, 2012

A winning team!

Mari Visser's four-year-old son Constantine drew the winning ticket for his Mom Mari in the 50/50 draw at Gilby Hall. He also won the 'Alberta's Estonians' documentary DVD.



Constantine and Mari Visser enjoying a cruise on Sylvan Lake during Jaanipäev, 2012

Mari lives with her husband Igor and their son in Cochrane, Alberta. Igor is a Business Analyst with Savanna Energy and Mari manages the Rocky Mountain View Bed and Breakfast.

Son Constantine loves pre-school and goes swimming with his grandmother several times every week.

Nearly 200 Albertans still understand Estonian, their mother tongue

Statistics Canada released information from the Canada 2011 Census in October, 2012. The Census is a detailed enumeration of the Canadian population on May 10, 2011 and is conducted every five years.

The Canada 2011 Census includes information about **Mother tongue** (first language learned at home in childhood and still understood by the individual on May 10, 2011). A total of 6,390 Canadians listed Estonian as their mother tongue. Some 5,845, or over 90%, of the respondents live in Ontario and British Columbia. The corresponding total for Alberta is 195 individuals, or about 3% of the Canadian total.

Similar information about **Language spoken most often at home** relates to over 1,600 individuals in Ontario and British Columbia, compared to 25 in Alberta.

Source: Statistics Canada; 2011 Canada Census

Estonia in Brief

“According to Statistics Estonia, there are permanent residents of 192 ethnic nationalities in Estonia, based on the preliminary results of the 2011 Population and Housing Census (PHC 2011), reports LETA. The biggest ethnic groups are Estonians, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Finns. According to the preliminary data of PHC 2011, 68.7 percent of Estonia's permanent population are Estonians (889,770), 24.8 percent are Russians (321,198) and 1.7 percent are Ukrainians (22,302). The share of Belarusians (12,419) and Finns (7,423) is less than 1 percent. In total, there are 37 ethnic nationalities that have more than a hundred representatives in Estonia. Compared to the previous census of 2000, the share of Estonians has increased two percent, but the population of Estonians has decreased by 40,449 over 12 years.”

Excerpt from Baltic Times, September 20, 2012



LEP-ESTO 2013 in San Francisco – celebrating 60 years!

June 28 – July 1, 2013

The Estonian League of the West Coast invites you and your family to San Francisco for next summer's 31st West Coast Estonian Days, which celebrates 60 years of this remarkable bi-annual LEP festival, and for the first time is happening in conjunction with the worldwide ESTO festival. The San Francisco Estonian community is looking forward to welcoming you to the many events we are planning. We also invite you to explore our very special city with its cable cars, urban charms, world-class setting and nearby recreational opportunities. You can look forward to reuniting with old friends (or meeting new ones!) while keeping our Estonian culture vital and alive.

We are planning for all of the traditional LEP activities that our community has come to know and love – the song and dance festivals, the folk festival/family picnic which will be at Castle Rock Park in the foothills of Mount Diablo, interesting seminars, church service, evening pub, and elegant ball which will be held at our conference hotel, the Grand Hyatt at Union Square. There will also be some new additions to the program – an opening ceremony that will include the Estonian Ballet and SF Ballet dancer Tiit Helimets at the San Francisco's Palace of Fine Arts. The opening ceremony will be preceded by an Expo to celebrate Estonian accomplishments in business, technology and culture. Entrepreneurs will be invited to a business event in the nearby Silicon Valley. Other highlights: our song and dance festivals

will include performers from Estonia. Jim Tusty will premiere his sequel film to "The Singing Revolution." Chess players will be invited to play against Estonian chess celebrity and grand master Jaan Ehvest. Throughout the four days, we will have childcare, as well as programs designed for children and teens.

ACCOMMODATION UPDATE:

It is important to book your accommodations soon. Our first block of rooms has already sold out, surpassing the number of reservations we originally reserved for the event. San Francisco is a popular travel destination and with the high demand, rates can easily run over to \$400 USD.

We are glad to be able to tell you that we have worked hard and now have more rooms available at the reasonable rate of \$169.00 USD (plus applicable taxes) at the San Francisco Marriott Union Square, which is very conveniently located just across the street from the host hotel Grand Hyatt Union Square. These rates will apply three days post and prior to the event (June 25 to July 5), so you can plan to spend additional time in San Francisco as desired. The cut-off date for bookings is June 7, 2013, but the number of these room is limited. You can make your reservations directly with Marriott reservations at 1 (800) 228-9290 or (415) 398-8900 or online at the link (www.lep-esto2013.com). Don't wait too long!

See you next year!

The Darkest Corner of the World



Cover page of Urve Tamberg's first novel

This stunning debut from Urve Tamberg takes readers to World War II in Estonia, a country that vanished from world view for almost fifty years. It's 1941, and fifteen-year-old Madli is struggling to survive and keep her family together against all odds. She hopes the Soviet occupation is temporary, but when the neighbours and

thousands of others are deported, she knows lives are in danger.

Every day brings new dangers and unimaginable decisions — soon, the Nazis invade Estonia. Friends and family find themselves divided as they try to choose which dictator they'd rather live under: Hitler or Stalin. Madli is horrified by either choice, but how long can she remain neutral?

“In the last twenty years, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Estonians have finally dared talk about their experiences,” Tamberg says, about her inspiration for the novel.

“I was an adult when my father told me about two brothers I never knew he had. Both were in their twenties when they were deported to Siberia. I still don't know the reason. There are so many stories still buried in memories because people don't think that their personal tales are important. But they are.”

*The above press release was prepared by Meryl Howsam, Publicist with Cormorant Books/Dancing Cat Books.
208 pages; \$14.95*

Tamberg's book is available at Chapters-Indigo stores, independent bookstores, as well as on-line at Chapters.ca and Amazon.ca.

Author Urve Tamberg

Urve Tamberg grew up in Toronto as the daughter of Estonian immigrant parents. With a B.Sc. (Physical Therapy) and a M.B.A., her management career spanned both the public and private sectors of health care. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, travelling, spending time with family and, of course, reading. Urve lives in Oakville, Ontario.



Urve Tamberg during the launch of her book at Tartu College in Toronto on September 29, 2012.

According to Urve, the launch of the book at Tartu College went extremely well and was sold out. The audience was very diverse, with a mix of older and younger generation Estonians in attendance.

The novel garnered a “highly recommended” rating from CM Magazine, reviewer of Canadian children's literature. A couple of quotes from the review are:

“A worthy addition to the historical fiction collection of any library, The Darkest Corner of the World may also be an appropriate selection for use in the classroom, ideally as a supplement to more traditional materials and teachings of World War II history.”

“Wisely, a great deal of effort is invested in building up Estonian culture, customs, and traditions, much of which is lovingly dispensed through the advice and folklore of Madli's grandparents. In a similar manner, Tamberg's development of physical setting, that of the Estonian countryside and wilderness, works wonderfully to breathe life into the story.”

Puzzling questions from a Baltic Tour

Gwyn Morgan, The Globe and Mail, October 19, 2012



Gwyn Morgan from Calgary, Alberta is a nationally-recognized business leader and director of several large corporations in Canada, including Encana. He has been recognized as Canada's Outstanding CEO as well as Canada's Most Respected CEO, and is a member of the Order of Canada.

My wife and I recently returned from a Baltic expedition arranged through the Smithsonian Institution in co-operation with the National Geographic Society. The trip began in St. Petersburg, Russia, where our group spent two fascinating hours with former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, whose negotiations with former U.S. president Ronald Reagan ended what he termed the "insane Cold war nuclear weapons race" and whose *glasnost* policy for democratic reforms unleashed the pent-up yearnings for freedom that ultimately led to the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Mr. Gorbachev chillingly described how close the world came to nuclear

Armageddon: "Less than 10 per cent of our nuclear arsenal could have ended all life on Earth at the push of a button." He also recounted that the American penchant for always needing to be seen as the "winner" almost killed support among his Kremlin colleagues for a nuclear weapons reduction treaty with Washington. This reminded me of the business principle that, in any negotiation, you need to give your counterpart some wins.

Tellingly, Mr. Gorbachev avoided venturing an opinion of life under the current Russian president, Vladimir Putin. Other Russians we spoke with weren't so reticent. Struggling shopkeepers and restaurant owners complained about being forced to pay police for "security," and Russian workers painted a depressing picture of corruption and crony capitalism that has fostered cynicism and shattered hopes of Western-style prosperity.

After Russia, we were bound for the former Soviet-controlled Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. After declaring independence in 1918 and fighting off invading Bolsheviks, they enjoyed a rare 20 years of freedom, ended by the Red Army occupation of 1940, followed by Hitler's forces a year later. Hopes of a return to independence after the Second World War were crushed as the Iron Curtain fell across Europe. Thus began a long period of Russification, in which senior business, community and military figures were either executed or shipped to Siberian gulags. Large numbers of Russians moved in to the three states and were given the best jobs.

After decades of repression, more than a million people demanding independence joined hands in 1989 to form a 600-

kilometre chain crossing all three countries. The economic progress made by these people in the two decades since then is astounding. In the Estonian capital of Tallinn, a perfectly preserved 12th-century town sits on a hill overlooking a thriving modern city. High-end vehicles travel along new highways and city dwellers are served by first-rate public transit. Attractive new structures now outnumber depressing Stalinist-era apartments and public buildings.

In Latvia, an array of Art Nouveau buildings mark the magnificently restored city centre of Riga. As in Estonia, the transformative economic progress is remarkable.

In the southern-most Baltic republic of Lithuania, we found significant, but slower, economic progress, probably because so many citizens either died or escaped during Russian occupation. As one resident put it, "There are no old families here." Combined with Russian immigration, this reduced ethnic Lithuanians to less than half the population. In Estonia and Latvia, Russian immigrants have generally integrated harmoniously. But in Lithuania, Russians hold celebrations marking Russian rule, fuelling an ethnic divide similar to that now plaguing Ukraine.

All of this raises perplexing questions. Why has moving from socialism to capitalism proven so disappointing for Russians, and so successful for Estonia and Latvia? How can it be that these long-traumatized people could lift themselves up and make so much impressive progress in such a short time?

Editor's Note: Ethnic Russians comprise about 5 per cent of the population of Lithuania, one of the fastest-growing economies in the European Union. The above column contains incorrect information.

YouTube videos

1) "Kati and Me"

A Canadian film clip introducing Estonia has become the focus of the nation's YouTube watchers, earning an unusually high number of views late this week.



Screen shot of the opening scene in 'Kati and Me' (Image: YouTube)

Produced by Toronto couple Kim Bagayawa and Mike Dell, "Kati and Me" is a seven-minute film that follows the pair's discovery of Estonia by virtue of befriending their Estonian housemate and later traveling to the country. In a simple and endearing style, it presents basic information about Estonia, painting it in a highly positive light.

www.youtube.com: Search: "Kati and Me"

Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) News, November 2, 2012.

Also: Read the fascinating story behind Kati and Me - adventure, friendship and meeting Canadian Estonians.

2) "Rock Estonian Presentation"

This video provides an excellent rock-and-roll introduction to Estonia. "Estonia is full of surprises and fascinating experiences"

www.youtube.com: Search: Rock Estonia presentation, 3.01 minutes

Tallinn, land of startups and Skype, is making an epic transformation

Kalpana Sunder, Firstpost, Life, October 28, 2012



Old Town Tallinn

I walk through the medieval gates, treading on narrow cobblestone lanes and arrive at a surreal scene out of a picture book: red roofs fighting for space, ornate weather vanes, a maze of turrets and spires, and the haze of the distant harbour.

I am in Tallinn, Estonia, now firmly on the tourist map with more than 3 million people visiting Estonia every year. Pint sized Estonia was under foreign rule for centuries, first the Danes, then the Swedes, Germans and finally the Soviets. Tallinn used to be a member of the Hanseatic League (an association of trading cities which maintained a monopoly) at the end of the 13th century and today the colourful guild and merchant houses lining its streets have been converted into lovingly restored museums, hotels and embassies.

Tallinn has been long known for its epic party scene and casinos, and most famously as the capital city where Skype originated — a kind of Las Vegas of the Baltics — but today it seems determined to shake off that image with new museums and gentrified localities fitting into its image as the European Capital of Culture 2011. To counter the economic downturn, the resilient Estonians have endured harsh austerity measures and bounced back. Since joining the Euro zone in

2011, the economy is booming — it is the only eurozone country with a budget surplus.

Our hotel The Three Sisters is an amalgamation of three 600 - year atmospheric merchant houses, with wooden beams, restored frescoes and plush furnishings, converted into a contemporary boutique hotel. I walk around the Old Town, with its gabled houses, half hidden courtyards and grandiose churches inside the protective girdle of ancient defensive walls.

Young Estonians in medieval costumes sell sugared almonds from wooden carts and incongruously text on their mobile phones. I travel through time at the candle- lit Olde Hansa medieval restaurant where waitresses in medieval costumes serve wild elk and boar, and minstrels play the tambour. I pop into the Old Town pharmacy that has been dispensing cures since 1422— among the exhibits in its museum are sun dried dog faeces and deer penis. I chance upon a McDonald's, raucous sports bars and countless cafes near the Viru city gates and it's this eclectic mix of new and old that enchants me.

One of the most interesting counterpoints to the medieval atmosphere that Tallinn is steeped in is its tech savvy culture and reputation as the 'land of start ups'. It has been rated as 'one of the seven most intelligent cities in the world'. They say that you can establish a company in 15 minutes over the internet, in Estonia!

We have dinner with Lindsay Roberts at the hip tapas bar *Alter Ego* in the Rotterman Quarter, an upmarket shopping and restaurant complex with some avant garde architecture. The Rotterman quarter gave a fresh lease of life to disused industrial warehouses, between the Old Town and the passenger port. Lindsay moved from Australia

to work for the most famous local start-up Skype which after changing hands a couple of times, was recently acquired by Microsoft at a whopping \$8.5 billion...I am intrigued as to why Lindsay made this dramatic change to Estonia and he says that it was the opportunity to work for a dynamic company like Skype as well as the adventure of the unknown. In the next few days, the omnipresent motif is technology...I find that Tallinn is one of the most wired places that I have been up to.

Locals pay for parking by sending a SMS, more than 80 percent of the population files taxes online, 98 percent of the country's bank transactions are done online and anywhere I go in parks, restaurants and even buses there is unlimited free wifi financed by the state.



The new Seaplane Harbour maritime museum built in an old 1916 hangar. (Image by Kalpana Sunder)

I am impressed by the amazing ability of this town to constantly re-invent itself: old buildings morph into new attractions: I visit the newly refurbished TV tower in Pirita which has re-opened after a whopping 6.6 million euro overhaul... it is the tallest building in Estonia now at 314 metres. I start with a hands-on overview of the history of Tallinn TV Tower- from its building for the 1980 Olympic Regatta to its unveiling in 2012. A high speed lift takes me in just 49 seconds to the 22nd floor. Technology is again at play here; from the interactive multimedia that allows you to gain knowledge about different facets of Estonia to the mushroom- like monitors. I learn about Estonia's

achievements ranging from high research work on the Baltic to the spy camera that made James Bond a legend. I am impressed by their initiative called 'Let's do it. World Clean up Movement' which is a litter cleanup initiative started in Estonia. More than 80 countries participated in this initiative in 2012. I gain a completely new perspective on Tallinn and its surrounding areas with the view from the 360 - degree viewing platform. The multimedia screens enable me to both magnify the wondrous panoramas as well as see what the different areas looked like in different periods of history. Built- in glass panels on the floor give me a view of the ground below as if I were suspended in space...

I walk on the new 'Culture kilometre', a disused railway-turned-path that is 2.2 kilometres in length filled with derelict warehouses and factories, that will be converted into new avatars. I visit the swish Seaplane Harbour, a new maritime museum built out of a 1916 concrete hangar, in the upcoming artsy locality of Kalamaja, with its old wooden houses. The futuristic museum built on three different levels showcases equipment above, below and under the water. I watch adventurous adults and kids getting down into the bowels of a British made submarine, climbing a steep humpback bridge for a up- close look at a stunning replica of a seaplane, riding a flight simulator above a panorama of Tallinn, and having their photographs taken in naval uniforms. What I love is technology at play again: if I need more information about the exhibits, I simply have to scan my entrance card and fill in my details. The museum would e- mail the necessary details to me! I have my picture in naval uniform taken, and sure enough, it is sent to my email account.

On my last day in Tallinn, I walk past tumescent towers to the old Town Square all lit up, casting mysterious shadows on the sprawl of open air bars. I sip on a mulled wine and I realize that fairy tales never get old: they are re-invented and told with a modern twist...Tallinn is just that – a fairy tale re-told.....

The author is a Japanese language specialist, blogger and travel writer based in Chennai, India.

Alberta Estonian Heritage Society

List of members, November, 2012

Allen	Dianne	Spruce Grove	AB
de Launay	David	Peterborough	ON
de Launay	Geoff	Kanata	ON
Clark	John	Denver	Col
Derksen	Colin & Linda	Edmonton	AB
Dinning	Shirley & Leonard	Edmonton	AB
Elvey	Ruth	Sidney	BC
Erdman	Evelyn	Calgary	AB
Erdman	Thomas	Barons	AB
Fodor	Evelin & Steve	Calgary	AB
Franchini	Karen	Burnaby	BC
Gue	Anita	Yellowknife	NWT
Gue	Brian	Edmonton	AB
Gue	Kevin	Edmonton	AB
Gue	Lisa	Ottawa	ON
Graham	Judy	Surrey	BC
Gullickson	Barbara	Barons	AB
Hall	Gwen	Ashmont	AB
Hempstead	Shelly	Wadmalaw	SC
Hennel	Daryl & Gloria	Myrnham	AB
Hennel	Lorne, Leah	Calgary	AB
Hennel	Rodney & Liz	Stettler	AB
Hennel	Ron W. F.	Stettler	AB
Jaako	Harry	Vancouver	BC
Kaert	Mati & Linda	Edmonton	AB
Kalev	Tiiu	Eckville	AB
Kaljuste	Truuta Kai	Calgary	AB
Kalvee	Willy G.	Calgary	AB
Kenzle	Alice	Creston	BC
Kerbes	Deane & Irene	Stettler	AB
Kerbes	Richard	Saskatoon	SK
Kiil	Dave & Betty Ann	Edmonton	AB
Kiil	Glenn & Ingrid	Edmonton	AB
Kiil	Lisa	Edmonton	AB
Kingsep	Bob & Annette	Redwood Mdws	AB
Kivisild	Livia	Calgary	AB
Koper	Donna	Cochrane	AB
Kraav	Jüri & Helle	Calgary	AB
Krasman	Leslie	Champion	AB
Kruuv	Riho	Ottawa	ON
Kuester	Matt F.	Edmonton	AB
Leesment	Peeter & Helgi	Calgary	AB
Leilop	Aino	St. Albert	AB

Leffler	Edna	Manson	WA
Lepnurm	Marje	Saskatoon	SK
Letourneu	Loree	Edmonton	AB
Liikane	Epp	Everett	WA
Maddison	Anneliese	Edmonton	AB
Madill	Anita & Wallace	Calgary	AB
Maki	Jean	Eckville	AB
Matiisen	Arne	Calgary	AB
Marshall	Silvia	Vancouver	BC
McClung	Eda	Edmonton	AB
McElroy	Elve	Camrose	AB
Mottus	Arnold & Vera	Red Deer	AB
Mottus	Brian	Whitehorse	YT
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
Peet	Ethel	Edmonton	AB
Pelto	John & Margaret	Sherwood Park	AB
Pihooja	Ralph & Nella	Whitcourt	AB
Pilt	Shirley	Edmonton	AB
Robertson	David & Christine	Leduc	AB
Ruus	Ivar & Lea	Calgary	AB
Saar	Lembit & Iris	Calgary	AB
Saar	Rein & Patricia	Calgary	AB
Shongrunden	Astrid	Penticton	BC
Silverton	Ernest	St. Albert	AB
Songster	Dr. Giuliana	Sierra Madre	CA
Tiislar	Enn & Pärja	Canmore	AB
Timma	Olev	Calgary	AB
Tipman	Liisa	Calgary	AB
Tipman	Bob & Kathy	Calgary	AB
Ustina	Astrid	Edmonton	AB
Ustina	Judy K	Edmonton	AB
Ustina	Stephanie	Victoria	BC
Virak	Viktor	Toronto	ON
Visser	Mari & Igor	Cochrane	AB
Wartnow	Floyd C	Delta	BC
Watson	Maret	Spruce Grove	AB
Zach	Inge	Calgary	AB
Zielinski	Michel & Kristine	Spruce Grove	AB

***Kaunist jõuluaega!
Head uut aastat!***

***Merry Christmas!
Happy New Year!***

