

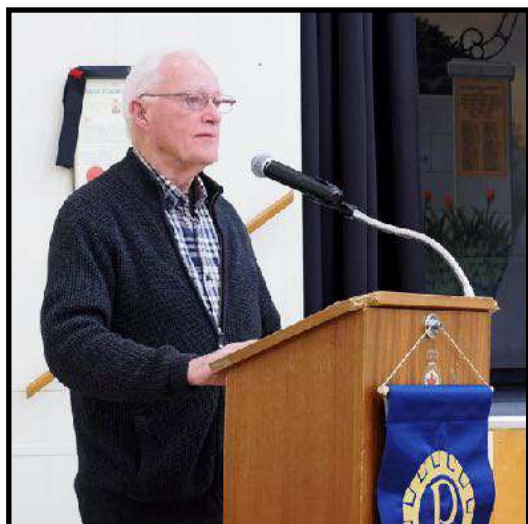


# The Probian

Probans Club of Perth

December 2025

## President's Message



**C**hristmas and the beginning of a New Year; what does it mean to us and our families? I trust that we are gathering from far and wide as much as possible. For those unable to shrink geography, most of us can, and will, make the best of modern communications, and binge on food and the latest electronic entertainment. I suspect

many of us will do our best to ignore the world and its tensions, giving thanks that Canada has thus far managed to retain a cautiously optimistic outlook about the future despite the evidence of unrest in parts of civic life in many areas of the western world.

Our club activities have successfully met our need for quality social discourse, for participating in a wide variety of special events, and for listening to excellent monthly speakers. Meanwhile, we are edging closer to a solution to our pressing requirement to replace Colin Stephenson in his role as Webmaster, an essential internal communications service to our membership.

Thank you for your continuing interest and support of the Club and its program. On your behalf, I wish you a Merry Christmas and good fortune in the year ahead.

George Braithwaite

## January Meeting

Wednesday, January 7  
10:00 AM  
[Perth Legion](#)

### Reminders

Bring your own *coffee mug*; help the environment.

### Book Exchange

Bring no more than FOUR books, take as many as you want.

### This Month's Guest Speaker

**Victoria Gibb-Carsley**

Executive Director of  
the Perth and District  
Community

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## Membership



We are delighted this month to welcome the following new members: **Mark Budd** and **Angela MacKenna**. With their memberships, we have again reached our membership limit of 205, with one person on the waiting list.

As we move from one season into the next our membership, not surprisingly, evolves. Some members opt not to continue while others eagerly join. There seems to be some confusion, indeed misunderstanding, regarding what constitutes membership of our club. When you take out a membership and pay your fees, this entitles you to attend the monthly meetings and the social events. Some choose to do both, some attend only monthly meetings, and some choose to participate in only the social activities. The choice is entirely up to you.

No matter which you choose, it is necessary to have a paid membership, as it also includes insurance coverage for all Probus events. Do let me know if you have any questions regarding this or any other membership issue.

*Mary Vandenhoff*



*L-R: John Byers (Speakers' Committee), David Brady (Director at Large), Gail Reid (Social/Special Events Chair), Maggie Foot (Vice President), George Braithwaite (President), Doug Porter (IT) Colin Stephenson (Webmaster), Mark Kennedy (Secretary), Graeme Rutledge (Treasurer) Tony Thompson (Assistant Treasurer)*  
*Missing: Mary Kilgour (Past President), Yvonne Powell (Editor behind the camera), Mary Vandenhoff (Membership, above)*



## New Members in November



L-R: George Braithwaite (President), Jackie Boyer, Jane Connelly, Lois Perreault, Ted Hill, Betty Lorimer, Tui Noonan, Pauline West, Glenn West

## Speakers' Corner:

### Probud Speakers Schedule for 2025 / 2026 Season as at **December 21, 2025**

Status	Date	Speaker	Topic
Completed	2025 Sept 3	Dr. David Philipp	How Angling is reshaping Ont's bass population
Completed	2025 Oct 1	Pauline Witzke	Extraordinary events cause global warming
Completed	2025 Nov 5	Jeffery Simpson	Globe & Mail Journalist -Donald Trump
Completed	2025 Dec 3	Allison Margot Smith	Two Rideau Canal related documentary films
Confirmed	2026 Jan 7	Victoria Gibb-Carsley	Perth & District Community Foundation
Confirmed	2026 Feb 4	Brandy Lockhart	Parks Ca. Underwater Archeologist
Confirmed	2026 Mar 4	Noelle Reeve	Tay Valley Planner -Land Use Planning
Confirmed	2026 Apr 1	Roy MacSkimming	Topic -Roy's research on Sir John A. MacDonald
Confirmed	2026 May 6	Gaston Barbon	What a diplomat really does...
WIP	2026 Jun 3	Peter Katz	Singer/Motivational Speaker

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## Our Speaker for January:

### Victoria Gibb-Carsley

Victoria Gibb-Carsley is the Executive Director of the Perth and District Community Foundation. She feels like she has the best job in the whole world and knows how lucky she is to be serving the community where she was raised.

Before moving back to her beloved hometown of Perth in 2021, she worked in Ottawa for 14 years at the Public Service Alliance of Canada leading the union's National Education Program.

Victoria was both Director of Organizing, and Director of Campaigns and Communications, at The Council of Canadians. She was first hired in 1997 to build volunteer chapters across the country. These chapters raised issues of national significance (such as the impact of neoliberal trade deals, the privatization of healthcare, and the right to water) at a local level and encouraged their communities to take action to create positive change.

Victoria originally trained as a high school teacher and taught in Ottawa, Perth, and Abu Dhabi. In the early 1990s, she was a Group Leader for Canada World Youth on the Ontario-Costa Rica and Alberta-Venezuela exchanges.



Victoria has a Master's of International and Intercultural Management and Training from the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. She is a lifelong learner and takes workshops and courses, whenever she can, to improve her skills in working with complex organizational and human issues. She is passionate about using her expertise in facilitation, Popular Education, and strategic thinking to help organizations and communities evolve and thrive.

Victoria last spoke to the Probus Club of Perth in October of 1999 and she is delighted to have been invited back. As well, she will be accompanied by Shannon Bailey.

## Our December Speaker: Allison Margot Smith

### Historic Rideau Canal in Two Short Films:



Historical documentary film maker Allison Margot Smith, presented two of her short films to Probus members at the December meeting. She spoke about the importance of imagery in historical films, and the difficulties in finding recorded imagery before the days of photographs and film.

Allison, who divides her time between Ottawa and Rideau Lakes, was assisted by the Township of Rideau Lakes in making the films we viewed: “The Rideau Canal The Big Breakthrough” and “Fettercairn: WWI on Indian Lake”.

The first film documents the *raison d’être* behind the building of the Rideau Canal and the choosing of military engineer Lieutenant-Colonel John By to head up the construction.

The film focusses on the “crossing of the isthmus” around Newboro from the Rideau to the Cataraqui watersheds. This isthmus is the highest point of elevation and divides the entire Rideau canal system. Excavating this 1.5 km stretch was a major engineering challenge.

Lieutenant-Colonel By solved the dilemma by using a slackwater system which involved raising the water-level and taking boats **over** the barrier, rather than tediously digging trenches through bedrock, thus overcoming the dangers of blasting - as well as the danger of losing more men to malaria, which was rife at the time.

The film’s imagery includes evocative water colour paintings by Thomas Burrows, who worked along side Col. By during the canal’s construction (1826-1832.) These paintings were discovered in 1907 and donated to the Archives of Ontario in 1948. These coloured paintings of Miners and Sappers, showed their red military uniforms and their changing details which were dependent on the soldiers’ differing projects. The paintings also captured and documented the activities of the soldiers at work, and the progress of the canal work being done.

*Cont’d on p.6*

*...Rideau Canal, Cont'd.*

The second film, "Fettercairn: WWI on Indian Lake," is set just north of Chaffey's Lock, in the Township of Rideau Lakes. It documents how the island inherited by Agnes Etherington (nee Richardson) became a successful hospital for returning soldiers from WWI - The Great War; 1914-1918. These soldiers suffered from PTSD, which at the time was called Shell Shock.

Called Fettercairn, the hospital was first established in the family cottage on Indian Lake, and was later expanded. Inspired by her brother who died in Flanders, Agnes Richardson turned the cottage into a convalescent home for returning soldiers with severe neurological problems.

The imagery in the film made use of original black and white photographs, family documents, and films of the lake, through which we see the life of the soldiers during their stay.

Both these films and others by Allison are easily accessible for viewing on the Historical Society of Ottawa's website:

<https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/resources/bytown-200/allison-margot-smith-the-rideau-canal-films>

Although retired, Allison plans to continue working on historical films, including those that have links to the Rideau. We thoroughly enjoyed Allison's presentation - learning more of our local history in a unique and interesting format.

The Richardson family was one of Canada's wealthiest at the time and known for their philanthropy.

Hiring doctors, nurses and psychologists, Agnes ensured that the soldiers' treatment was caring and humane. It included relaxation and outdoor activities such as canoeing, swimming, golfing, and farm animal care. Over the duration of the war, the hospital was expanded onto neighbouring islands. So successful was the hospital that six out of seven patients were able to rejoin society and their families after just a few months. Three hundred soldiers were treated at Fettercairn by the time it closed in 1919.

*Submitted by Susan Freeman*



Probus Club of Perth

December 2025

## Random Shots

*Below: Ian, our expert IT person, helps keep our sound system working.*



*Above: Our Social Committee sign-up table —always a busy spot before meetings and during break time.*

*Left: Allison Smith, presenting her interesting film, “Fettercain: WWI on Indian Lake.”*



*Browsing the Book Table for an interesting read....*





**Perth Probus  
Management Team  
2025 - 2026**



**President:** George Braithwaite

**Vice President:** Maggie Foot

**Past President:** Mary Kilgour

**Treasurer:** Graeme Rutledge\*

**Alt. Treasurer:** Tony Thompson\*

**Secretary:** Mark Kennedy

**Speakers' Committee:** John Byers

**Membership Coordinator:** Mary Vandenhoff

**Social/Special Events Chair:** Gail Read

**Webmaster:** Colin Stephenson

**Probian Editor:** Yvonne Powell

Photographer: Tony Thompson

**Director at Large:** David Brady  
(Assisting Graeme Rutledge)

The Perth Probus Club meets  
at the Royal Canadian Legion,  
26 Beckwith Street, Perth,  
on the first Wednesday of the month,  
September through May.  
Our June meeting is at an alternate location.

President - George Braithwaite

Further information on the club,  
and contact details for other members  
of the Management Team  
can be found at:

[www.probusperth.ca/board.htm](http://www.probusperth.ca/board.htm)