



NEWSLETTER

PROBUS CLUB OF VANCOUVER

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Enriching members with topical, entertaining speakers and social activities

www.probusvancouver.com

January, 2015

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Next Meeting: Tuesday, January 13th
Time: 9:30 am
**Location: H.R. MacMillan Planetarium
and Space Centre, Lower Level**
Speaker: Professor David Helfand
Topic: Quest University in Squamish

Future Speakers

February 10th: Don Lindsay
Topic: to be confirmed

March 10th: Jim Chu—Chief of the VPD
Topic: to be confirmed

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Professor David Helfand, BA, PhD



David Helfand joined Quest University Canada in 2005 as an advisor to the University. He was a visiting tutor during the University's inaugural semester in the Fall of 2007 and, in September 2008, was appointed President and Vice-Chancellor. He spent 37 years as a Professor of Astronomy at Columbia University where he served as Department Chair and co-Director of the Astrophysics Laboratory for more than half that time. He has also been a visiting faculty member at the University of Copenhagen and spent a year as the Sackler Distinguished Visiting Astronomer at the University of Cambridge.

He is the author of nearly 200 scientific publications covering many areas of modern astrophysics, including radio, optical, and X-ray observations of celestial sources ranging from nearby stars to the most distant quasars. He recently completed a major project to survey the Galaxy with a sensitivity and angular resolution a hundred times greater than previously available. The goal is to obtain a complete picture of the birth and death (for stars) in the Milky Way.

David has mentored 22 PhD students, but has primarily taught undergraduate courses for non-science majors, including one of his own design which treats the atom as a tool for revealing the quantitative history of everything from

human diet and works of art to the Earth's climate and the Universe. In 2004, he implemented a vision he began working on in 1982 that has all Columbia first-year students taking a science course as part of Columbia's famed Core Curriculum. He received the 2001 Columbia Presidential Teaching Award and the 2002 Great Teacher Award from the Society of Columbia Graduates.

In 2011, he was elected President of the American Astronomical Society, the professional organization of astronomers, astrophysicists, planetary scientists and solar physicists in North America. He will serve in that role until 2015.

More than a decade ago, David appeared weekly on the Discovery Channel's program *Science News*, bringing the latest astronomical discoveries to the US television audience. More recently, his television appearances have been limited to more serious matters on Comedy Central's *The Daily Show* and National Geographic's *The Known Universe*. David believes he is a better cook than astronomer and, ambiguously, colleagues who have sampled his gastronomic undertakings agree.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES TEAM

Greeters—John Gemmill & Tremayne Perry

Cashiers—Andrew Hames & Ian Paterson

Report of the December 9th Meeting

Attendance: 115 Members and Guests

The meeting was chaired by **President Scott. John Gunn** acted as Secretary of the meeting. In his opening remarks Mr. Scott announced the recent passing of Bette Cotton, the wife of one of our founders, Fred Cotton. Three new members were inducted by **Orrin Webber** (see "Welcome New Members")

Doug Jones (Activities) advised us that we will have special seats for the Baseball game on July 22, located in the new "Porch". The seating area is covered and food services should be excellent.

George Cook encouraged more members to join the Fred Cotton Book Club (see notice on page 3).

Congratulations were extended to **Norm Leach** for persuading Conrad Black to be our special guest on Dec 1st.

Tony Weall introduced our guest speaker Michael Clague, a recipient of the Order of Canada for his various public good services, and who was previously the director of the Carnegie Community Centre at Hastings and Main, the focal point of the Vancouver Downtown Eastside, which was the subject of his talk. They recently celebrated the 100th anniversary of the building itself.

For those of us in Probus who live well above the poverty line and who may have merely driven quickly along Hastings Street from about Cambie St. to a block or two east of Main, our concept of the "Downtown Eastside" area may be quite wrong: we may well think of the area with very negative ideas, if indeed we think about the district at all. Michael's intent was to correct our conception and he did so with great feeling and sincerity. His message is that, while many of the roughly 18,000 people (mostly single men over 45) may have some drug or alcohol problems, they are not simply drifters or lazy addicts. His message is clear, that this is a real community and that generally these people have talents and a sense of who they are and where they are living. While most are poor, they are, not despondent and hopeless. Wonderful help is given by such groups as the Union Gospel Mission and other church-affiliated sponsors, and much is done through the services provided by the Carnegie Centre, a City of Vancouver Community Centre like others. The fee for these people to join this centre is ONE DOLLAR! Here they can get a very thrifty meal, use the library, and in particular, they can use the theatre where, at various times, there may be parts of the current opera being put on by Vancouver Opera Society, with UBC students helping out; shows being staged by some of the local resi-

dents, many of whom are talented performers down on their luck; a memorial service for one of the local residents who has died; and many other activities. Admittedly, there will be found about 300 people in this area with severe mental problems and they probably should not be there - in a previous era they would have been lodged in Riverview, and there are some discussions on re-activating this facility for just such people. Surveys done by the city as to the residents' most pressing concerns are: housing, a job, safety and health services.

At present the allowance from the Province for housing is \$375 per month, which is inadequate and should be adjusted. The numbers of SROs (Single Room Occupancy rooms offered at rates less than the market figure) are insufficient, and gentrification of some of the buildings in the area means that such rooms become beyond the range for those on this meagre allowance.

While Michael encouraged people to support their favourite charities, he seemed to endorse the United Way as one of the best ways to make sure your donations are wisely allocated and well spent. He also encouraged the trend to provide affordable housing for those in poverty in locations other than the Hastings and Main area, and encouraged people living in those other areas to accept such housing and not oppose it.

Michael Clague is currently the Past President of the Community Arts Centre, which he feels is vitally important to the welfare of those who live in the Downtown Eastside. This organization, through a program called SWITCH, has raised a remarkable fund and promotes dozens of community arts events, be it musical, drama, educational or other pursuits. This was a wide-ranging talk and space does not allow us to do justice to the whole message, but Mr. Clague confirmed how important it is to support all efforts to improve not just the housing but the services for these people and to recognize their own efforts to improve conditions and to find meaningful work. Ken Yule thanked the speaker.

Welcome New Members

Ray Dujardin—Mining Engineer
Bob Chown—Teacher and Realtor
Billy Ellis—Mechanical Engineer

We were saddened to learn that Bette Cotton had died recently, after a lengthy illness. Bette was the widow of Fred Cotton, who was one of the Founding Fathers of our Probus Club. He also started the Probus Book Club which is named in his honour. Bette was a strong supporter of Probus and will be missed at our Annual Presidents' Luncheon, where she has represented Fred since he died several years ago.

THE PROBUS FRED COTTON BOOK CLUB SEEKS NEW MEMBERS!



Membership of the Probus Book Club, founded by Fred Cotton in 2008, has remained virtually unchanged over the last seven years and it's time to get in some new blood! Accordingly, Probus members who enjoy reading books are cordially invited to join the Book Club and to participate in our enjoyable meetings. The year ended with Khalid Hosseini's "And the Mountains Echoed" and Matt Ridley's "The Rational Optimist". Our January choice is "The Book Thief" by Markus Zusak and in February we will read "I am Malala" by Malala Yousafzai, the recent Nobel Peace Prize winner. We meet at 9am on the first Wednesday of each month at the White Spot at Georgia and Cardero. Our meetings normally last about an hour and a half. If interested, please contact George Cook (604 926 9545) or (george.cook@telus.net)

A MUSICAL OPPORTUNITY

The Probus Club of Vancouver West has arranged a special deal for tickets to the VSO Yevgeny Sudbin Concert on Monday, March 23 at 8 pm at The Orpheum.

The programme is:

Mussorgsky—Khovantchina (Dawn of the Moska River)
Tchaikovsky—Piano Concerto No 1 in B-Flat minor
Stravinsky—Symphony in three movements
Ravel—Rhapsody Espagnole

Ticket prices are \$31.00 each, reduced from \$69.00

Anyone who is interested can contact:
Estelle Jacobson at edjacobson1@shaw.ca
604-259-1091

**TICKETS MUST BE ORDERED THROUGH
ESTELLE AND PAID FOR BY JANUARY 15**

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Our speaker on January 13th will be David Helfand, President of BC's Quest University. The relative rank of a university is often heavily weighted by the recognition it receives for leading edge research. But in their haste to receive favourable ratings for their research, are universities neglecting their role of teaching undergraduates? Helfand has views about this and you should hear them. What defines a great university? Is it a reputation for great research, or is it teaching undergraduates? What is the university's prime purpose?

These are some of the questions our January speaker will talk about in his famously provocative style. David Helfand is an astronomer with an international reputation and former Head of the Department of Astronomy at Columbia. But he is also President of BC's Quest University, and an unapologetic advocate for excellence in teaching at the undergraduate level. How does Quest pursue this goal? How does it survive without government support?

These are some of the topics Helfand will touch on and we guarantee he will hold your attention!

Plans for 2015

As the New Year begins, work continues, to make our website even more friendly; Hugh Lindsay has taken over responsibilities for making it both informative and easy to navigate. Following an outstanding autumn, Norm Leach is swinging his Speakers Committee into action to fill the remaining gaps in our 2015 schedule. Doug Jones has great plans for activities, including a baseball afternoon at Nat Bailey Stadium with the Vancouver Canadians on July 22.

To all our members, warmest wishes for a very happy 2015!

David Scott

IN MEMORIAM

*It is with regret we announce the passing of
Herb Hornstein on November 15, 2014
Our condolences to his family.
The Probus Club of Vancouver will make a
donation in Herb's memory to
The North Shore Hospice.*

UPCOMING EVENTS



VANCOUVER CANADIANS BASEBALL GAME AT SCOTIA BANK FIELD IN NAT BAILEY STADIUM AGAINST THE EUGENE EMERALDS WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2015



OPEN TO MEMBERS, GUESTS AND FAMILIES

We have booked seats in the brand new facility called The Porch. Located just beyond the left field fence, The Porch is a new covered section at Scotiabank Field, designed for groups who are looking for a fun, laid-back area to enjoy a C's game. You will get a never-before-seen vantage point of the Canadians as they fight toward a fourth Championship and enjoy some of these exciting benefits:

- Luxurious, covered seating in "Club style" seats complete with a tray/counter for your food and beverage;
- Thrilling views from home run territory;
- Exclusive area, ensuring privacy;
- Special all-you-can-eat buffet menu with all your ballpark favourites, chicken, hamburgers, hot dogs, corn-on-the-cob, salads, desserts, ice cream, water and pop;
- Walk-up service bar.

11:30 am: Pick up tickets (the time that the box office opens will be confirmed next month)

12 noon: Lunch buffet opens

1:05 pm: **PLAY BALL!!**

Car pooling is suggested

For directions to the ballpark, go to www.canadiansbaseball.com, click on "CLUB INFORMATION" and go to "Directions to Scotiabank Field".

(cut along the dotted line to mail)



Registration: At the Activity Desk at the Probus Meetings on March 10th and April 14th.

1. Mail Registration form and payment (**\$50 per adult; \$35.00 per child aged 4 to 12**) to: Doug Graham, 2068 W. 35th Ave., Vancouver, BC, V6M 1H9. Email: dougraham@telus.net
2. Make checks payable to the **Probus Club of Vancouver**.
3. Remember - you will not be registered until payment is received.

I plan to attend: Name _____ E-Mail _____

Phone number _____

Number of Attendees _____ Adults _____ Children (???? Years old and under)

Check enclosed for _____

Guest Names _____

A NEW & EXCITING SPECIAL EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT!

Your Activities Committee has arranged for guided tours of the Pacific Museum of the Earth and the brand new Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Science Building, at UBC. Included in the tour is an exhibit, the first of its kind in Canada called the "Omniglobe", which projects on a globe, spectacular interactive images of planets, real time weather, ocean currents, tsunamis, forest fires, past ice coverage, plate tectonics and much more. After completing this tour you will be eager to recommend the exhibits to friends or grandchildren.

This fascinating event will be held on

Tuesday, March 17 at 9:30 am, open to members only, as we are limited to 40 people.

More details will be in the next Newsletter.

**Report on the Special Meeting with Conrad Black
Held on December 1, 2014 at The Academy of Music**



The special meeting was opened by Past President Bill Sexsmith. John Gunn acted as Secretary of the meeting.

After some brief remarks, Mr. Sexsmith introduced our speaker, alluding to the recent Black Friday and designating today as our “Black Monday”. It so happened that his requisite joke for the day was about a talking frog, and Mr. Black ran with this and opened his remarks by pointing out that, as he himself had been born in Quebec, he could therefore rightly be labelled “A talking Frog”. He then got serious in proposing his main theme, that Canada is underrated, both by the outside world and

possibly by its own citizens. “Rise to Greatness” is the title of his new book, which expounds this theme. He mentioned how gruelling a job it is to write a book – so, why write this one? Well, there are very few single-volume complete histories of Canada and the most recent one is already 25 years out of date and slightly flawed. The teaching of history in Canadian schools in his day (and maybe still) is boring in the extreme with names and dates and no analysis.

Our position as immediate neighbours of USA, with its “exceptionalism”, “star-system”, bravado and boastfulness, has given us a perverse feeling of antipathy to these traits and we end up being overly modest and even derisive about ourselves. We say that we are just a young and not very significant country. Actually, we are one of the oldest countries in the G8, most of the others having changed remarkably in recent years. We are the 11th biggest economy in the world and have one of the highest GDPs per capita. Our history is a good history and we have no huge flaws of which we need to be ashamed - certainly not flaws to be compared to those of the other G7 states.

Mr. Black noted that the US founding fathers, Washington and Franklin, had the brilliance to persuade the British to evict the French Government from Quebec, and then encourage the French to help the Americans evict the British from their country. Meanwhile the British, with their command of the Atlantic Ocean because of their huge navy, made it impossible for France to re-take Quebec so the British had to make a workable state out of what was left - the French in Quebec, the United Empire Loyalists who came up from the USA and the Acadians in New Brunswick.

Fast forward to today: when we look at the USA in the last 15 years, we must conclude that we are better governed than they are, in spite of the flaws in our own government, and for this we should be proud. We can have some sense of accomplishment in this country - not to become boastful or arrogant as the USA tends to be, but neither obsequious nor overly self-critical. We should consider that in 400 years, since a handful of people settled in what is now Quebec City, we have come to create this country as we find it today. It is no small achievement. Black feels the community of nations would welcome more assertion from Canada and that we would be listened to seriously in such places as UN, NATO, IMF and others. Unfortunately, he thinks there is diminished credibility in such Canadian posturing since it is not backed up with any significant military might. He was derisive about our six fighter planes sent out against the Islamic State and about our Navy, which is the same size as it was in Laurier’s time and is expected to defend us on three oceans. Black then took questions, which can be viewed at www.probusvancouver.com.