

# YCA Newsletter

A Publication of the Yukon Council of Archives

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## GRANT PROFILE - MACBRIDE MUSEUM ARCHIVES

The MacBride Museum Society was incorporated on March 15, 1951. The current museum building was built in 1968 and added on to in 1976. Originally the museum was housed in the telegraph office which is still located on the site of the Museum grounds and dates from 1900. Volunteer curator and historian, Bill MacBride, had a special regard for the photographic and documentary history of the Yukon, and he began collecting archival material for the Museum from its inception. The Archives is located in a room in the Lower Centennial wing of the Museum and is comprised of letters, diaries, business records, rare books, maps, sternwheeler charts, photographs, newspapers, and original drawings.

The MacBride Museum has been an institutional member of the Yukon Council of Archives since its inception in 1987. Over the past few years, the Museum has received money from the Canadian Council of Archives to improve the storage systems for the archival material, to arrange and describe portions of the photographic collection, and to copy the photographs to create negatives for preservation purposes.

In 1994, the Museum received money under the Conservation Plan for Canadian Archival Records (CPCAR) to complete two small projects. Melanie Needham was hired to upgrade the storage of the oversized photographs and other

large items. Over seventy items were re-boxed or had acid-free folders made for them. The resulting storage system takes up more room but is preferable for the long-term preservation of the material. Lesley Buchan was hired to complete the preservation assessment on a portion of the textual material which had never been described. The documents were examined for deterioration, listed, and re-housed in acid-free folders and boxes.

The museum also received money under the Arrangement and Description Backlog Cost Shared Cooperative Program to create a finding aid for the Herbert Wheeler Collection. Melanie Needham was hired to complete this project. Wheeler was the former General Manager of White Pass and Yukon Route Limited, and his collection includes an album of photographs of the Overland Trail taken by H. Barley, White Pass photographer. The photographs document the winter road to Dawson, mainly over the Yukon River, circa 1902. Most of the photographs are in good condition and they will be copied for preservation purposes.

As women are under represented in the photo documentation, three photograph collections portraying women were also selected for arrangement and description purposes. They contain photographs reflecting life in Whitehorse in the mid-1940s, showing some popular social activities of the time. Reproduction of the representative images from each collection was recommended.

Lesley Buchan and Melanie Needham

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## CCA GRANTS DEADLINE APPROACHING

The deadline for CCA applications is quickly approaching. The completed forms must be received by the YCA no later than January 6, 1995. All institutional members should have received a package of the forms for the various programs. If you have not received your application forms please contact the Grants Committee at YCA.

## YUKON COUNCIL OF ARCHIVES EXECUTIVE 1994-1995



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nity; there has been a reluctance to confront and control change in favour of an avoidance of the issues in the hope that they will disappear. Diane Chisholm usefully highlights the position that archivists need to re-invent their role, to be more innovative and free-thinking in their attitude towards change – only then can we be positioned to successfully move archives into the age of electronic records.

My own thoughts on the Internet were prompted by a speaker at the recent Libraries and Archives Division workshop who claimed that "Internet is going to change the world". This statement provoked strong reactions from several of the workshop participants and led to much thoughtful and inspired discussion. In the next issue of the YCA Newsletter another contributor will present the position that Internet will indeed change the world.

Ian Burnett  
Editor, YCA Newsletter

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## CANADIAN COUNCIL OF ARCHIVES GENERAL MEETING

On October 21-22, I represented the Yukon Council of Archives at a General Meeting of the Canadian Council of Archives. The following report details some of the highlights of this meeting.

### *A. Reports from Provinces/Territories*

Most provinces and territories submitted written reports. Here are some highlights of the verbal reports made.

- Quebec is designing a brochure and creating a bulletin to highlight the Council's activities. They are also preparing a manual on preservation.
- New Brunswick highlighted their new approach to conservation following a team approach among their member organizations.
- Newfoundland and Labrador has created a two year term position for the cca representative to ensure continuity.
- Alberta is evaluating the needs of its members and will be hiring a Development Officer to carry out the policies of the Board.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Much of the content of this second issue of the YCA Newsletter reflects the immense change with which the archival community is currently being confronted. Electronic records and communications technologies such as the Internet pose serious challenges to archivists in their attempt to preserve and make accessible the documentation of the actions, the decision-making mechanisms, and the administrative and operational processes of late twentieth century organizations. Unfortunately, these challenges have often been considered as more of a threat than an opportu-

- Manitoba highlighted the acquisition of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives by the province.
- Nova Scotia described a project to create a subject heading list for the Maritime provinces. They are also involved in advocacy activities, developing links with heritage and cultural groups. A concern about a lack of recognition and financial support for the provincial government was expressed.
- Ontario described the liaisons being formed with heritage and cultural groups and indicated a joint conference with these groups was planned for 1995.
- B.C. described several projects including the ongoing preparation of the union list which should include listings for between 140-150 institutions by next year. The listing is available online on the Internet and repository guides have been sent to participating institutions.

### *B. National Archivist's Report*

Jean-Pierre Wallot described the Program Review occurring throughout the Federal Government. He anticipated budget cuts between 20-32% over the next three years, which could mean keeping only current holdings and becoming a Federal Government repository with no extras. It could also mean staff layoffs of around 200 employees. As part of the Program Review, the National Archives has been examining what is essential, and looking at the rationalization of service, which may include privatization and contracting out. Wallot emphasized that the outcome of this exercise will be determined by others, and the National Archives is "totally in the dark" about what will occur. They may not know until February what the budget cuts will be. He described the current situation by saying "Archives are not well off, and will not be better off."

With respect to International Congress of Archives meetings, he described his recent participation at a meeting in Paris. He noted that the Canadian presence is important and that the work of Canadians in the area of descriptive standards is receiving international attention.

The National Archives is also looking at the National Library's Amicus project for possible archival applications. They are investigating the use of the system for archival descriptions at the fonds level.

### *C. CCA Funding Programs*

New application forms have been produced in booklet form. Lists of outstanding project reports were given to each

council representative. The Yukon has four outstanding, with these archives ineligible for funding until reports are received. This year's application deadline for receipt by cca is February 1st. The following are changes to grant programs.

#### *1) Control of Holdings*

- replaces Arrangement and Description
- allows additional activities including retrospective conversion projects such as the creation of fonds and series descriptions following *RAD*
- allows creation of thematic guides
- applicant's contribution can include prior contributions made up to two years previously
- *RAD* descriptions are not mandatory, but favoured

#### *2) Professional Development and Training*

- \$15,000 is max. available for a project, except for projects for a whole province/territory
- increases made for meal and accommodation allowances

#### *3) Special Projects*

- format change for form

#### *4) Preservation management*

- flexible criteria developed so grants can meet requirements in each province/territory
- can do needs assessment first, identify areas for protection, projects where "specialized care" is needed (reboxing, refolding, etc.) Projects for conservation treatment are possible when justified. No examples of "when justified" were provided. Emphasis is on having first components in place before conservation treatment projects are approved to avoid piecemeal projects

#### *5) Preservation Training and Information*

- financial support based on application with no division by province/territory

### *D. Bylaw Change*

Changes were made to allow two additional representatives to attend cca meetings to serve as representatives for the cca Chair and Vice-Chair. Current board members stated they felt it was difficult to represent their Council, and the national interests of the Association, raising accountability issues. Following a question from Diane Chisholm, I asked about whether the additional costs of this change were considered and the response was they had been.

An additional change was made to ensure continuity by

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having a previous board member sit on the cca board. I suggested a wording change to specify a "recent" board member, but was told this would be too restrictive.

#### *E. Preservation Committee*

Contacts have been established in each province/territory. A written report of the activities was distributed. cci reports were also distributed. There were no questions because no one had the chance to read them.

#### *F. ALARM*

Only twenty-three responses were received from the archival community although 300 copies of the report were sent out. A second draft by the consultant will be made available for the Steering Committee's review. Another draft may be available for review by the archival community.

#### *G. Budget*

##### 1994/95 Revised Budget

- the approximately \$56,000 surplus is the smallest one the organization has had.

##### 1995/96 Preliminary Budget

- This is the first time a budget has been presented.
- draft, very preliminary, not aware of funding level for next year
- archival internship program cancelled
- no additional financial support for Acquisition Committee
- goal of creating a surplus this year so money is in place for special projects at the national level
- anything not in the preliminary budget will come before the Board for approval

Donna McBee

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## ISSUES IN MANAGING THE ELECTRONIC OFFICE

The colloquium on "Issues in Managing the Electronic Office" sponsored by the Archives Society of Alberta and the University of Alberta Archives brought together archivists and records managers from institutions in B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, NWT and Yukon. The speakers were Margaret Hedstrom from the New York State Archives & Records Administration and John MacDonald from the National Archives of Canada. This duo has extensive experience in the field of electronic records, both in identifying issues and in providing guidance on the manage-

ment of electronic records in the office systems environment. The symposium focused on changes in organizational and recordkeeping practices, technology and policy trends in information management, and strategies to keep the archival world in step with these information changes.

Erosion of conventional office practices has been escalating since the 1950s with the increasing volume and complexity of recordkeeping and the introduction of new technologies, such as photocopy machines and computers. Offices have had to cope with masses of paperwork, the availability of many new and different technologies, staff with less training in conventional office practices, and the pressures of providing fast and competitive customer service. They have looked to the implementation of electronic record systems as solutions to these mounting operational pressures. Electronic record systems in turn have created their own set of problems for those interested in being able to maintain a good record of the operation and decisions of an organization. Described as a crisis of accountability and recordkeeping, the implementation of electronic record systems has challenged archivists and records managers to re-think the old issues of determining what records are needed, who is responsible for them, how should they be created and managed, and how to ensure appropriate continuity and accountability.

Technological changes, from mainframe to PC, from punch card to multi-media carriers, have created new challenges in office and recordkeeping settings. The concept of people working at a mainframe with centrally located corporately imposed procedures versus individuals working at a PC in an autonomous situation without corporately defined procedures helps illustrate the nature of the problem of lack of standards and defined business procedures. The longevity of new carriers (i.e., optical disks), the difficulties in defining a record if the figures (as in financial records) are constantly changing, all contribute to the concern about the survivability of the corporate memory. The questions of what hardware and software environments to maintain with changing technologies, how to retrieve information in the future, how to understand it when it finally arrives at an archives, how to build in a process for disposing of unwanted records at a particular time, who is responsible for this process, and who provides guidance are all questions that need to be addressed in situations of such fast changing technology.

Not only are organizations faced with changes in technology but also changing policy trends. Whether it be a movement from records management to management of information holdings, or electronic data processing to informatics, all highlight a new awareness of the value of data and its use as a competitive weapon for strategic positioning. Trends towards re-engineering and restructuring focus on direct service to clients, value added service, standardized & interconnected tools, shared solutions and infor-

mation. All are based on an efficient and effective use of resources, especially that of information resources. Standards become an important aspect of efficient use of resources. Types of standards being developed and in use are those defining corporate systems and records keeping, certification processes, electronic imaging standards, application portability, data standards and information locators, etc.

Major issues needing to be addressed in managing the electronic office are

- lack of assigned accountability (the organization has to set up a process and responsibility for records. It needs to implement corporate rules across the organization.)
- lack of policy (responsibility and accountability need to be defined as a part of the operation of the agency)
- absence of business rules for record keeping
- no requirements definition (must indicate what's needed when keeping records)
- few standards and practices available
- few technology solutions available (need to cope with the context and content of records)

Some of the strategies discussed by Margaret Hedstrom were adaptations from a book by K. Osborne on *Re-inventing Government*. A step in the process of "re-inventing archives" was changing how archivists think – being open to radical thinking; being innovative, customer driven and outcome oriented; and being in a "guiding" position rather than a "doing" position. An example used was an archivist/records manager setting the standards and guidelines for recordskeeping and assigning departments the responsibility for carrying it out; rather than taking the role of going in and listing files. Another step was looking at incentives for recordkeeping. There is usually a clear, legal requirement that records be kept; there are program needs for records and outside research interests in access; there are demonstrable benefits; there is a visibility of functions; and a high degree of risk in poor record keeping. Some of the desired outcomes for archives and records programs were 1) that adequate, reliable, purposeful and usable records be created in the normal course of business, 2) records be identified and protected so that they remain accessible as long as needed, and 3) archival authority is known and respected. Key changes to be incorporated are listed below:

- records management should be integrated into the normal course of business.
- the value of records as an organizational asset should be stressed.
- there should be no distinction between records and archives. (If there isn't a system for records keeping that produces records for evidence then an archives doesn't exist!)
- enforcement and compliance should be linked to existing monitoring processes. (You don't want to be records police – tie it to auditing or program evaluation proc-

esses)

- there should be a shift to facilitation and service delivery.
- there should be reduced emphasis on economy and efficiency. You may not be able to back up a statement on efficiency; the economy is in keeping records better not in keeping fewer records.
- demonstrate the impact on management and service delivery goals.
- utilize the opportunity around visible scandals to promote your program.
- assume authority and act upon it; after all, you are the one responsible for the institutional memory.

Are there solutions to any of these issues in managing the electronic office? Some of the solutions offered by John MacDonald were based on a broad vision of records keeping that would incorporate business needs, user needs, and workflow management. Short term solutions would be to provide general guidance on the electronic work environment and the recordkeeping component. Specific guides/publications would be produced for computer directories, shared space and automated records management systems (e.g., a system that might have an "A" component indicating archiving, for instance). On a long term basis, automated processes would have to be incorporated. They would include integrated utilities that support business applications, recordkeeping rules that would be in line with accountability and access/retrieval requirements, records keeping that would occur behind the computer screen, and access/retrieval that could occur via information locators, maybe on the screen itself. The challenges will be to tie the content of records with the decision making and work flow management; to tie tools (i.e., software and screen icons) with actions and transactions in the decision-making and recordkeeping process that include content, context, & reliability/evidence for accountability; to build in functional, program and activity functions into an automated system tied with records management. John MacDonald envisions an automated system where the framework is the function of government departments and agencies; a separate icon on the computer screen would relate to the different program activities; a filing icon would operate automatically behind the scenes, as would a locator icon. This type of system would ensure that the evidence of the content of the record would be automatically built in. Then different actions (for example, review/approve) or different transactions (such as create/transmit) could be incorporated into the same system.

Margaret Hedstrom described the solutions that have been put in place in the New York State Archives and Records Administration, Centre for Electronic Records. They have taken a non-custodial approach. They will take custodial care of electronic systems only when an agency ceases to exist. Otherwise, they will not insist on physical

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custody, but rather will negotiate an agreement for care with the agency involved. The agreement will establish the department's responsibility for the transmigration of information through succeeding changes in technology. The department will maintain the information and the security of the system to ensure that accurate, accessible and reliable documentary evidence is available for the government and the public. The Centre for Electronic Records puts its efforts into providing guidance and standards for new systems as well as providing necessary training. It is also building the tools for access to different electronic systems by creating a locator system so that users will have access in one site to the location of records and information in other on-line systems.

The management of electronic record systems is very important not only for the preservation of an institution's/government's corporate memory, but also to guarantee that a legal record of decision making is maintained for the public's use. As a recent U.S. court case attested, there are also legal responsibilities for maintaining information. The court determined that the National Archives (U.S.) was negligent in not taking action when it knew that records were being destroyed and in not providing proper advice and guidance to departments in dealing with their records.

Diane Chisholm

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## WHY INTERNET WON'T CHANGE THE WORLD

In Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* the character Marlow makes a brief excursion from his steamboat into the jungle alongside the riverbank. There, in an abandoned hut, he discovers an old, worn, and lovingly crafted book on seamanship. What he finds even more wonderful than the book simply being there, in so remote a location, is that an earlier traveller had cared enough to bring it to that "nowhere" to study. It is, he says, an "extravagant mystery".

In Conrad's anecdote, there are two instances of communication: first, between the author of the book and the reader who brought it into the jungle; second, between the reader who left it in the jungle and Marlow. In the first case, what is of paramount interest is the difficulty with which it was brought into the jungle – its original owner must have had a tremendous desire to read about seamanship and went to extraordinary lengths to do so. Valued knowledge is an achievement. In the second case, what is significant is that the form of communication (book), the subject of the communication (seamanship), and the circumstances of communication (spatial and temporal isolation) do not necessarily have any bearing on the meaning of the message

being communicated (the relationship between civilization and wilderness). I suggest that these insights should be kept in mind when reading or listening to grand pronouncements on the inevitability of Internet "changing the world".

I do not think it unreasonable to propose that the quality and relevance of information is inversely proportional to the ease with which it is acquired and reproduced. I consciously use the term "information" here rather than "knowledge" because I think there is an increasing ability and tendency to use technology to separate the two. Facts are being extracted, compiled, circulated, re-extracted, and pronounced upon without an in-depth appreciation and understanding of what they are about. Quantity of information is being emphasized at the expense of quality of knowledge; the assembling of data is being valued at the expense of the research and analytical skills which can make these data relevant. The traveller who left the book for Marlow to find would have had an extraordinary knowledge of seamanship, not simply because he read a book about the subject, but because he had the will and the commitment to make his reading a study.

I also do not think we should be misled into believing grand statements on the significance of Internet simply from an infatuation with the technology, its ability to connect remote locations, and the messages it may carry. As Conrad shows us, while these are integral components of the communication event they do not necessarily constitute its meaning. Meaning is a human value, created and sustained by persons acting in and upon the world in particular circumstances. It is not dictated or circumscribed by material constraints or possibilities. To argue that "Internet will change the world" is, therefore, to commit two fundamental errors: first, it is to promote one version of the world as THE true interpretation; and, second, it is to use that version's understanding of historical process to attribute a false inevitability and rationality to technological change. In sum, this argument postulates that not only is there one meaning but there is one dynamic for the production of meaning. I do not deny that Internet will reach the most isolated communities, the simplest and most backward nations – indeed, I am certain that it already has. What I do deny is that for anyone to argue that it will change these worlds is both inaccurate and, worse, a naive form of intellectual snobbery. Since meaning is continually created and recreated in context, the assumption should not be that Internet will change the world but rather that societies will change and adapt Internet to accommodate their own need for manufacturing and sustaining significance.

In conclusion, I believe that the study of a book in the jungle and the meaning this has for Marlow constitute two instances of communication which should cause us to discount all claims for the invincibility of Internet.

Ian Burnett

## ARCHIVAL APPRAISAL WORKSHOP

On November 4 and 5, the Yukon Council of Archives sponsored its 'Archival Appraisal' workshop held at the Yukon Archives. The workshop was facilitated by Rick Klumpenhouwer of the Alberta Society of Archives and drew participants from the Dawson City Museum, Dawson First Nation, George Johnston Museum (Teslin), Y.T.G.'s Heritage Branch, YHMA, CYI, Yukon Indian Cultural Education Society, MacBride Museum and the Yukon Archives. Funding for the workshop was generously provided by the Canadian Council of Archives and the Yukon Council of Archives.

Participants were immediately confronted with hands-on archival decision making in the form of an early morning appraisal exercise. In small groups, participants assessed the merits of a number of different items representing various media and attempted to come to a 'to keep or not to keep' consensus. Results were brought forward to the larger group and further discussion ensued. This exercise clearly demonstrated the wide variety of issues that can arise in the process of appraisal and thereby introduced the focus of the workshop.

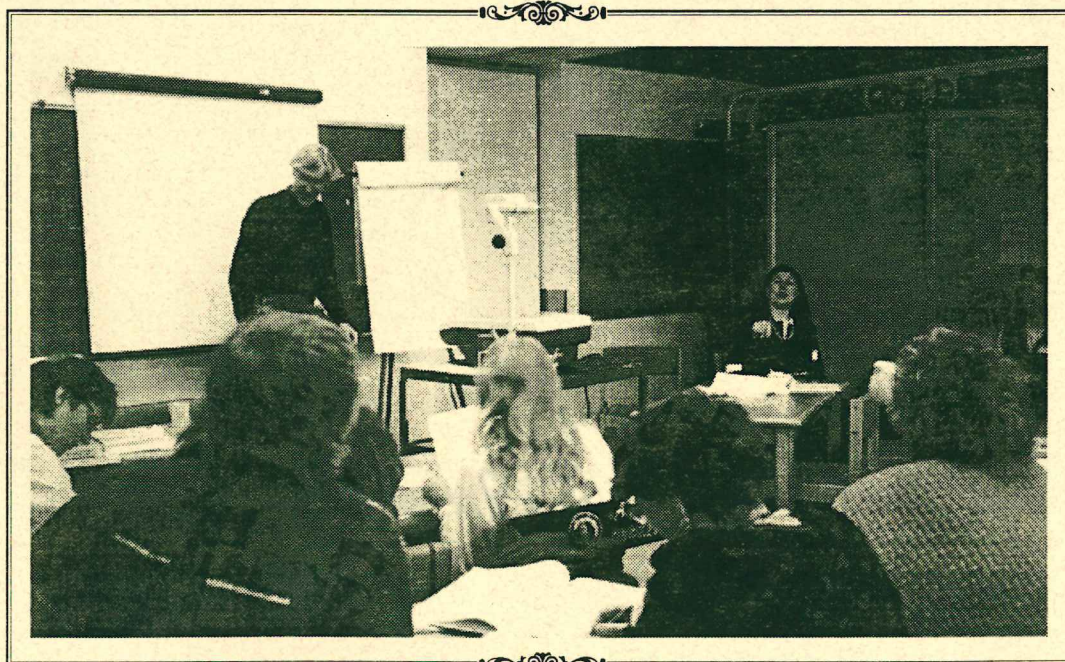
A history of appraisal theories was presented to illustrate the evolution of the role of the archivist from record-keeper to that of documentor. It was explained that as records became more voluminous, a more complex means of managing them became necessary and it followed that appraisal criteria also became more refined. To maintain the integrity of the premise that an archives documents society (and trends in historical research provide the guide for such

documentation), evolving Archivists had to heighten their awareness of changes in research trends as a fundamental criterion for appraisal. This leads to the development and eventual implementation of a 'Documentation Plan'...and Day 2 of the workshop.

Participants set out to develop a Documentation Plan for the Yukon. The theoretical means of accomplishing this involves various representatives of society coming together and identifying subjects to be documented. These "subjects" are then ranked according to the values of the time for that society and resources for documentation are then identified. This is not an easy or necessarily appealing task...and one that rarely reaches completion, as experienced by workshop participants.

The workshop continued with an information session on the selection of fonds by way of acquisition policy/technique and a look at records management as an acquisition activity from an archival perspective. This led to a discussion about guidelines, methods and techniques for selecting from within fonds. The process of accessioning was touched upon briefly and the workshop came to a close with a series of appraisal and acquisition exercises. Participants were given the opportunity to apply knowledge acquired through the workshop (or refreshed by the workshop), in making the "to keep or not to keep" decision around very specifically defined acquisitions...Consensus appeared to be easier reached and reasoning more insightful than during the previous day's first exercise, demonstrating the value of the two day workshop.

Heather Jones



Rick Klumpenhouwer and workshop participants at the Yukon Archives during the recent YCA Appraisal Workshop. *YCA photograph.*

## YCA LOGO

The YCA recently selected a logo from a number submitted to the Board. Members of the Board voted and accepted the logo represented below designed by Blair Taylor. The logo will appear on letterhead and other official YCA documents.



## PEOPLE & PLACES

Lesley Buchan and Jonathan Parker had a daughter on September 28, 1994. Eleanor Buchan Parker was born weighing 10 lbs 5 oz and was 21 1/2" long.

Ian Burnett will be attending the ACA National Education Forum in Winnipeg on February 3-5, 1995. He will be the YCA's Education Committee Representative.

## SUBMISSIONS, COMMENTS

The YCA Newsletter is the official publication of the Yukon Council of Archives. The Publications Committee welcomes articles, project reports, and announcements for publication in upcoming issues. Articles printed in the YCA Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Yukon Council of Archives.

The YCA Newsletter is published three times per year: August 15, December 15, and April 15. Material for publication must be received at least one month prior to the date of issue; comments and questions are welcome at any time. Write or fax to:

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## MEET YOUR EXECUTIVE



Members of the YCA Executive: (l to r) Blair Taylor, Director; Clara Rutherford, Secretary/Treasurer; Lesley Buchan, Vice-President; Donna McBee, Director; Joanne Meehan, President; Ian Burnett, Director. Not present: Fay Tangermann. *YCA photograph.*