

Arts teacher helped natives gain equal rights

By Randy Blazina
Osoyoos Times

The work of a white South Okanagan school teacher 70 years ago helped natives gain citizenship and equal rights in Canada, says an anthropologist from Victoria.

Professor Andrea Walsh of the University of Victoria told an inspiring, but true story to the six people who attended the Osoyoos Museum Society's annual general meeting in the upstairs loft on Saturday.

The museum society has a three-year, \$10,000 research grant gained in cooperation with the university to study the work of Anthony Walsh (no relation to Andrea) at the Inkameep day school located near Oliver during the 1930s.

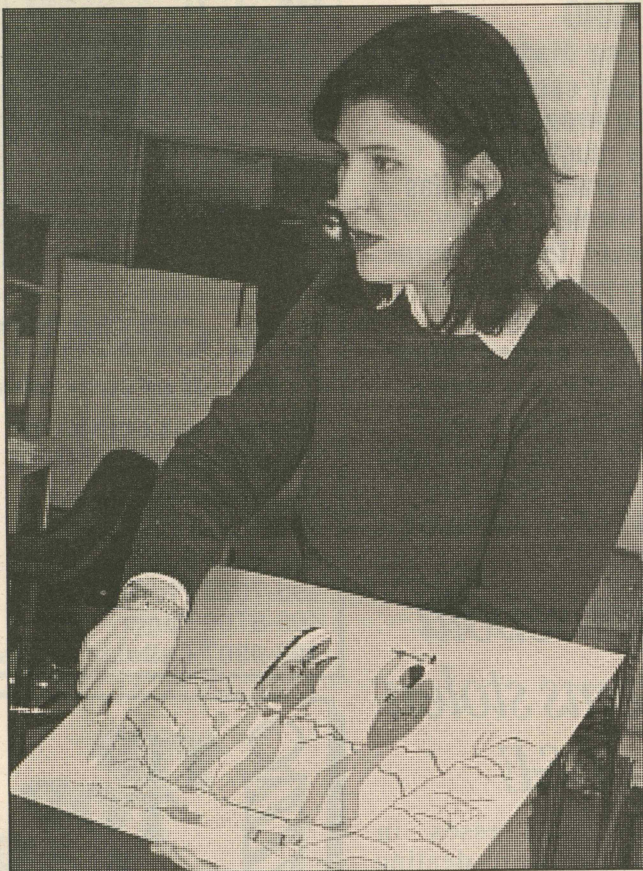
The art work the native children created under Walsh's inspiration would get purchased by European royalty at the same time as he was lobbying for citizenship and equal rights for natives, which they wouldn't gain until almost 30 years later in Canada.

Andrea Walsh describes the work in preserving the native children's art and in detailing Walsh's work on behalf of the natives as of "national importance."

"What was going on here 70 years ago had rippling effects in Europe and in Washington, D.C.," says Walsh. "He believed a more democratic society could be achieved through the exchange of arts and ideas."

One of the pieces of art work from the native children was purchased by English royalty at Buckingham Palace. Walsh says she is still trying to find out what happened to the artwork.

She says the Indian affairs department in



Andrea Walsh gave a talk at the Osoyoos Museum last weekend at the group's AGM.

Ottawa sent someone to find out what Walsh and the children were doing with artwork.

The project is also breaking new ground in research. Walsh explains that anthropological work always involves studying adults to see how a society functioned. But the research in this case is focusing on children and their artwork and she says it is providing insight into how the native youth viewed their own identity.

She says the Osoyoos Indian Band are partners in the project. "I really see this as an opportunity to not only work with the museum but to bring in the Osoyoos Indian Band," she says.

Walsh also expressed her concerns about B.C.'s upcoming referendum on native treaty principles.

She asked if the "majority has the right to vote on minority rights."

She says government provides the structure, but it is the citizens who have to scrutinize what

is happening.

"We have to as citizens say is that working for us?" Walsh asks.

She says that goes back to the idea of "transparency."

"What we have to do is talk to each other and that is what we have learned in this project," says Walsh.

Transparency in government has become a key phrase of the B.C. Liberal government but Walsh later explained what she meant in using the term.

"We are all citizen's here and we have to speak to each other on the issues that affect us all," says Walsh.

His work 70 years ago recently became a feature article in the Victoria Times Colonist newspaper.

Anthony Walsh left the South Okanagan in 1942 after 10 years here to serve in the war, fighting first for Ireland and then for Canada.

After the war he went to Montreal where he started a house for derelict men in 1952. That and other charitable acts earned

him the Order of Canada. He died in 1994 at 95 years of age and at his request was buried in a Montreal cemetery for the homeless.

The research on Walsh's work will continue this year after the museum society employed a student for \$5,000 last summer to help document the project.

Museum secretary John Cooper, the former mayor of Osoyoos, noted the building is helping to destroy the collection because of dampness and leaking. The museum society has lobbied for years to replace the building.

Meanwhile, another grant the society had for another project last year has been lost due to government cutbacks.

Treasurer Marlin Clapson gave his report and he says the society finished the fiscal year with a \$3,000 balance.

One of the society's major project's last year was employing consulting curator Roger Boulet to modernize displays and cataloguing in the museum. The society has paid him about \$6,000 so far, with about \$1,000 still owing.

Meanwhile, the around 25 volunteers who helped with the cleanup of the museum and in keeping it open to the public were praised at the meeting.

The annual election of officers saw the board returned from last year and they will choose a president and other executives from among themselves.

Leslie Plaskett, who has a deep family history in this area, indicated she will return for another year in the post. Other incoming board members are Clapson, Mary Englesby, John Matthews and Bob Ritchie who was vice-president last year.

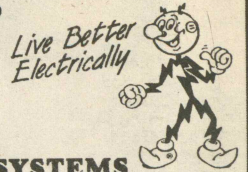
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MAUNDY THURSDAY, MARCH 28
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GOOD FRIDAY, MARCH 29
10:30 A.M. "SUBMISSION thru SUFFERING"

EASTER SUNDAY, MARCH 31
9:00 A.M. "COME and SEE; GO and TELL"

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March 25, 2002 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

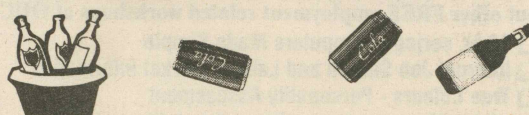
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