

## MISSION STATEMENT

The IDRC Alumni provides opportunities for former IDRC employees to maintain personal and professional links, and supports continuing dialogue on development issues.



*James Pfeifer, Alumni Chairman*

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## From the Board

### ***Preparing for the Centre's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary***

As you will note from various pages in this newsletter, we had another successful get-together last October. As usual, the event was a blend of the serious and the sublime – the hallmark of the IDRC Alumni. On your behalf we are still engaged and concerned with IDRC's unique mandate to support research for international development.

Please mark your calendars for this year's Alumni annual general meeting. The AGM will take place at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, October 27, in IDRC's Ottawa headquarters, 150 Kent Street, 8th floor. We are still working out details of the various events with the IDRC committee that is coordinating the Centre's 40th anniversary celebrations.

The current plan is that our joint representatives will, at a reception, merge our efforts with the launch of a book on the history of IDRC, 40 years of Ideas, Innovation and Impact. The reception will feature a panel of current and past presidents of the Centre. After the launch, we will announce details of this year's Alumni Awards for young researchers in the Asian Regional Office (ASRO) which is being honoured by the Alumni.

And, of course, we shall set aside time at the AGM to bring members up to date on our Board activities and finances. There will also be other activities to salute IDRC and celebrate the anniversary. There may even be a little comic relief in the latter part of our get-together....

Visit the Alumni website at [www.idrc.ca/alumni](http://www.idrc.ca/alumni) / [www.crdi.ca/anciens](http://www.crdi.ca/anciens) to see the latest news on the program for October.

Best wishes for the summer. We look forward to seeing you in October.

*James Pfeifer*

*Alumni Board Chairman*

## *IDRC Alumni Seminar, 2009*

# Food security: Past & present

*By Chris Smart*

Alumni and several current IDRC staff members gathered last October 30 to hear Hubert Zandstra recall past IDRC achievements and Jean Lebel report current efforts and discuss future prospects for food security in IDRC programming.

Hubert was the second director of the Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Sciences Division (AFNS). He went on to have a distinguished career in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), including the position of director-general of the International Potato Center (CIP), based in Peru. Jean is the director of IDRC's Environment and Natural Resource Management program area. The session was chaired by Gerry Bourrier, former deputy director of AFNS, and member of the Alumni Association's executive.

Hubert reminded us that research to solve the problem of 'food insecurity' among rural families was the business case for the AFNS division from the first days of IDRC. With smallholder farming as a priority, IDRC focussed efforts on marginal rainfed agriculture in the Sahel, on basic food crops (sorghum, millets, cassava and oilseeds), and on goats and other livestock.

### *Innovative research methods*

IDRC stretched the prevailing boundaries of agricultural research: it took an interdisciplinary approach and recognized the importance of understanding the broader ecological settings if production systems and chains were to be better managed. AFNS supported research that linked the farming environment to human health and valued common property for the carbon and water cycles on which agriculture depends. It also supported



*Hubert Zandstra (left), Jean Lebel and Gerry Bourrier. Photo: Catherine Shearer.*



*Hubert Zandstra, former director of AFNS, makes a slide presentation on food security. In the background, centre of screen, Hubert's former boss, Joe Hulse. Photo: Catherine Shearer.*

research that emphasized the need to ensure markets for farm products and that used new methodologies such as participatory on-farm design, testing and evaluation.

These innovative approaches were met with some scepticism by the agricultural and development research community of the day. Time proved that AFNS projects were successful in changing production, market and policy aspects of food systems and in training researchers from developing countries. Many of its practices were adopted in one form or another as the CGIAR launched its specialized centres – ICARDA, ICRAF, and ICRISAT, to name three in which IDRC had a role in founding.

An anecdote highlights the value of the early work of AFNS, underscoring the slow flight of time's arrow where development is concerned. AFNS associate director Hugh Doggett, a renowned sorghum specialist, formulated several sorghum projects from 1973 to 1983. Dr. Gebisa Ejeta, a young sorghum breeder, benefited from the early IDRC grants to Addis Ababa University that allowed him to initiate research on genetic improvement of sorghum. He continued this work as a staff member of ICRISAT and Purdue University. Almost three decades on, in 2009, Dr. Ejeta won the World Food Prize for developing a drought-resistant and

striga-resistant sorghum variety. Drought and striga (a parasitic weed) are two key factors that reduce sorghum yields in both sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

#### Food insecurity and IDRC today

Although the terminology has changed with the decades, Jean Lebel confirmed that what matters – the food insecurity of 1 billion of the planet's poorest people – remains the focus of

IDRC programs. Rather than signaling discontinuity, the name change, from AFNS to ENRM, indicates evolution. In the first days of IDRC, "agriculture, food, and nutrition" were text-book terms that would attract support, funding and credibility from peers with credentials earned in the first half of the 20th century. Environment as a critical factor in understanding food security was new thinking that had to win its place.

At IDRC today, with its professionals and their peers trained in the last half of the 20th century, research into the causes of food insecurity mobilizes the full range of environmental sciences. This is exemplified in IDRC's support for research into urban agriculture where vacant plots of city land – often dumping grounds for refuse and breeding grounds for disease – have been converted into small-scale market gardens. These attractive green spaces produce high-value crops, supply local people with affordable and nutritious food, and provide livelihoods for the poor. What was an innovative approach to tackling urban poverty has now become a major program for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

Jean concluded his presentation with news that very neatly linked IDRC's history of research on food security to its future. CIDA and IDRC will support a new Canadian International Food Security Research Fund with \$62 million over five years, allowing for research partnerships between Canadian and developing country organizations. Research activities will focus on applied research to address food insecurity, crop resilience, the nutritional value of crops, and infectious diseases related to crops and animal production.

AFNS colleagues will hear the echoes of their era in the synopsis of what the new food security fund will do and may be forgiven a gleeful moment at the thought that the new generation is finally catching up with them. Once more with feeling: "What is it about having enough to eat that needs to be explained?"

*Chris Smart is Secretary of the IDRC Alumni.*

*Visit your website: [www.idrc.ca/alumni](http://www.idrc.ca/alumni)*

Two new features have been added to the Alumni website:

Staying abreast of IDRC programs, policies and practice. IDRC Alumni are often asked for advice on applying to IDRC for support. There are now links to the appropriate places on the IDRC's website

Alumni on the Internet.

From time to time we hear that Alumni who are active in the blogosphere. The Alumni site is ready to make links to Alumni blogs and websites. Let us know if you want a link to your blog / website from the Alumni website

An electronic membership application form is also available on the Alumni site. Please mention this to other former IDRC staff and governors who haven't yet joined.

## Alumni then and now

### *Nagla Rizk*

From 1983-1987, I worked as program assistant to Fawzy Kishk, the director of IDRC's Middle East Regional Office (MERO) in Cairo. I was fortunate to visit the Ottawa office and develop wonderful friendships with many members of the global IDRC family. I left IDRC in August 1987 to live in Canada and pursue a PhD at McMaster University.

I am now back in Egypt as tenured associate professor of economics at the American University in Cairo (AUC) and founding director of the Access to Knowledge for Development Center (A2K4D) at AUC. In 2004, I was voted chair of the department. In 2006 I took a sabbatical and came back to Canada for a semester, teaching at the University of Toronto while working on my research.



I teach and do research on the economics of knowledge, technology and development, with emphasis on intellectual property and business models in the digital economy. I work in collaboration with the Information Society Project of Yale Law School, of which I am an affiliated fellow. Our research team at AUC has developed into a research centre (A2K4D), and last February we launched our first publication, *Access to Knowledge in Egypt: New Research on Intellectual Property, Innovation and Development*, a book published by Bloomsbury

Academic, which I co-edit and contribute to along with my research team at AUC and Yale. At A2K4D, we are also founders of the Access to Knowledge Global Academy, along with Yale Law School and other partners.

I am married to Khaled El Chiati (architect) and have two children: daughter Alya 19, studying art in Paris, and son Hatem, 14, 10th grade student.

I have always considered IDRC my home. I miss my IDRC friends. While I continue to keep in touch with some, I have lost contact with others. Khaled, myself and the kids got to meet a few of my IDRC friends when we lived in Canada. I also did some part-time professional work with IDRC on occasion, and never really lost touch.

I treasure the precious friendships I made at IDRC. I also owe a professional debt to IDRC for triggering my interest in R&D and, more generally, knowledge and development.

I would love to hear from all of you.

*April 2010*

Contact: [naglarzk@gmail.com](mailto:naglarzk@gmail.com)

*Alumni then and now, cont'd*

## ***François Bélisle***

Many alumni will remember François Bélisle from his days as a program officer and later as associate director, responsible for the urban development program of the Social Sciences Division, during the 1980s. For the past year François has served as executive director of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB), based in Ottawa. CCLB promotes excellence in the teaching and learning of English and French to and by adults in Canada.

But let's backtrack a little.... François, who has a PhD in social sciences (geography) joined IDRC in 1980 and left in 1991 on secondment to Environment Canada to work on global environmental issues. He returned to the Centre in 1993 for a year, as senior environmental advisor. Maintaining the international focus of his career, François then joined the Coady International Institute in 1994 where he served as director for two years. The Institute is housed



at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia, in eastern Canada. In 1996, he returned to Ottawa to take up a senior post with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), two minutes' walk from his old IDRC stomping grounds. He served as director of AUCC's International and Canadian Programs until 1998.

That was a watershed year for François, both professionally and personally. Besides leaving AUCC, he married Gabriela Prada, a Venezuelan medical doctor. He also decided to shift the focus of his career from the international arena to the Canadian scene. An MBA degree from the University of Ottawa, earned during 1999 and 2000, helped him establish a base for that shift.

Over the past decade, François has held senior positions with several national organizations, including the executive directorship of the Royal Society of Canada. Re-focussing his career on service to such domestic organizations was a deliberate strategy to reduce international travel commitments so he could devote more time to family life. That strategy, François reports with enthusiasm, has had its intended benefits. He and Gabriela, who heads the Conference Board of Canada's health policy program, now have two daughters, Oriana, age 9, and Sofia, 5, "the pride and joy of our life". The family lives in the rural municipality of Chelsea, in the Gatineau foothills of Quebec, a short drive from the national capital, Ottawa.

Despite the shift to things domestic, the Bélisle family makes an annual trip to Venezuela to visit Gabriela's family. And, perhaps to keep the Canadian-Latin connection strong, François heads a private wine tasting club, the Canadian and Latin American Wine Society. CLAWS, he said, is an outlet for his hobby as well as a social network – a way to keep in touch with old friends, including former IDRC colleagues who share his love of fine wines.

*July 2010*

*Contact: francois.belisle@sympatico.ca*

## *October 2009 reception with a Latin theme*

The Alumni meeting on Friday afternoon, October 30, last year was full of good conversation with friends and former colleagues, lots of tasty finger food, great music and *mucho* laughter. It was a fine way to end the day. The theme was Latin American culture.

The annual general meeting and social gathering were held at IDRC headquarters on Kent Street in Ottawa. The event drew about 70 participants, including a few guests of alumni. The meeting included a super-short business meeting and report from the Board, with our Alumni chairman, James Pfeifer, bringing the "official" proceedings to a close in about 5 minutes!

If the repeated applause was any indication, the live music, with its strongly Argentinean flavour, was well received. It was provided by Alicia Borisonik and an accompanying musician.

Below, you'll find several photos from the reception, courtesy of IDRC's Catherine Shearer.



*Louise Behan, Robert Auger, Erin O'Manique*



*Kim Daley (IDRC liaison), Donna Bickford*



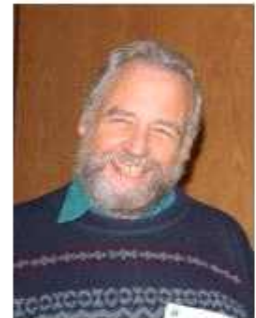
*David Balson*



*Caroline Pestieau*



*Angie Anton*



*Ed Brandon*



*Ilse Zandstra*



*Vepe Percival*



*Anne Whyte, Ray Audet*

October 2009 reception, cont'd



Chris Smart



Tony Pan



Andrew Ker



Ken Riley

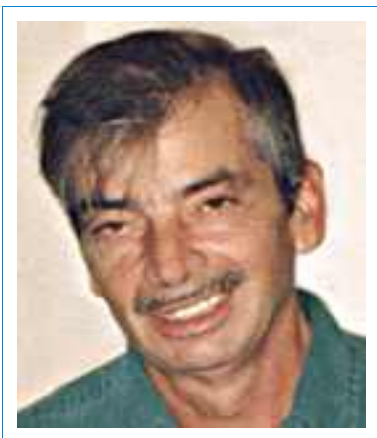


Barbara Davidson, Dan Davies

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## In memoriam

### Jean Paul Joly



Jean Paul Joly passed away on March 3, 2010, at the Ottawa Hospital General Campus, after a brief but aggressive battle with cancer. He was 66 years of age. Jean Paul worked with IDRC, on the financial side, from 1974 to 1998. This included three overseas postings: Dakar, Senegal, 1981-1984 and 1992-1998; and Nairobi, Kenya, 1987-1990. He is survived his wife, Lorraine (née Hébert), to whom he was married 42 years, and by sons Marc and Erik.

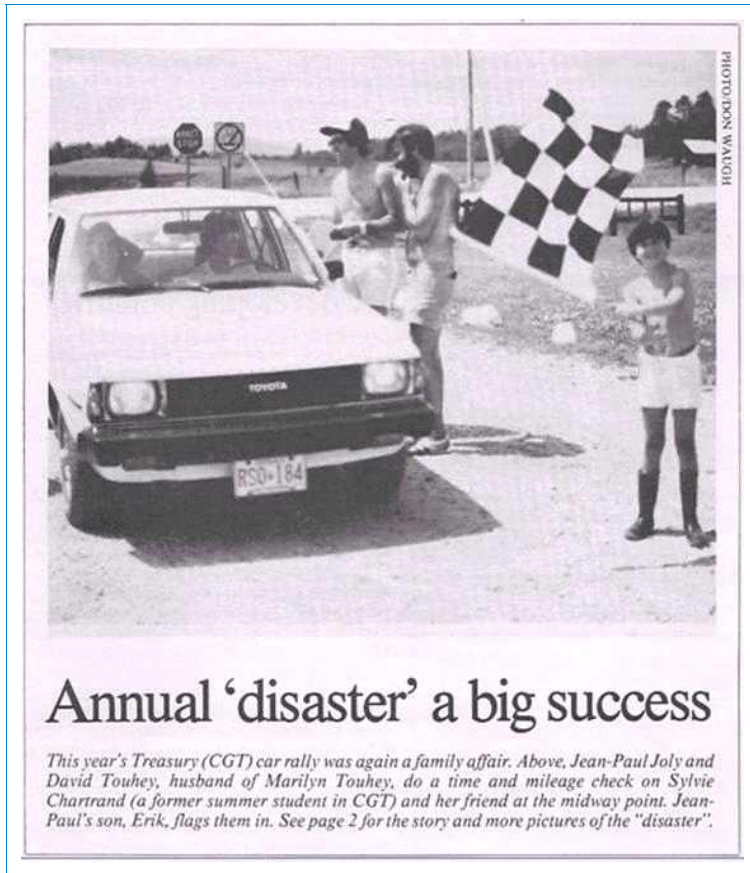
Here's an excerpt from the obituary by the family: "Jean Paul retired from IDRC 11 years ago, which gave the family the opportunity to travel to 3 different postings to West and East Africa.

The family wishes to thank the staff at the Ottawa Hospital General Campus, 6th floor West, for the wonderful and compassionate care they gave to our Jean Paul."

The Board of the IDRC Alumni expresses sincere condolences to the Joly family.

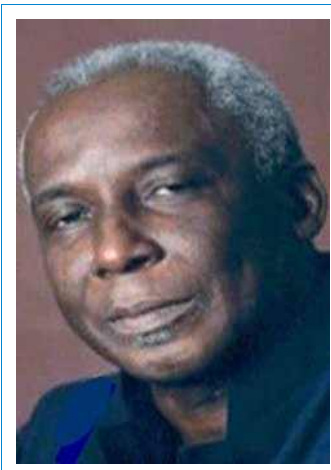
See photo next page.



*In Memoriam, cont'd*

*Jean Paul Joly, left of flag, and son Erik, holding flag, during the IDRC Treasurer's Office Annual Disaster, the infamous "TOAD" car rally, summer of 1981. The picture is from Echo, the Centre's staff newsletter of the time.*

\* \* \* \*

***Rex Nettleford***

Rex Nettleford, a founding IDRC governor, passed away on February 2, 2010, in Washington, D.C. A renowned Jamaican scholar, social critic and cultural icon, Professor Nettleford was appointed to the inaugural IDRC board in 1970 and served as a governor until 1984.

Born in Trelawny Parish, Jamaica, Rex studied at Cornwall College in Montego Bay and the University College of the West Indies (UCWI) before receiving a Rhodes scholarship to study politics at the University of Oxford. He eventually became vice-chancellor of the renamed University of the West Indies, serving from 1998 to 2004. He co-founded the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica and played a leading role in the organization for almost half a century. He was also a cultural advisor to three Jamaican prime ministers and the Caribbean Community.

In an interview commemorating IDRC's first decade, Rex Nettleford commented: "I believe very strongly that, in the final analysis, it is the capacity of the human being to act, to think, to do, that will make anything work."

The Board of the IDRC Alumni expresses sincere condolences to the Nettleford family.

*In Memoriam, cont'd*

## ***Marjorie Whelan***



An 18-year information services veteran of IDRC passed away on May 20, 2010, after a three-year battle with cancer. Marjorie Whelan was born in Edmonton, Canada, but grew up in several communities across the country, moving with her father who had dual careers as an Anglican priest and history professor. She attended the University of Waterloo and graduated with a degree in political science. She received her master's degree in library science from the University of British Columbia.

Marjorie worked at New Westminster Public Library for several years. She then moved to Ottawa in 1984 where she worked for Canadian Astronautics Limited, after convincing the young technology firm to establish a library to meet their engineering and scientific needs.

After joining IDRC in 1992, Marjorie was later named Director, Research Information Management Services. In his eulogy, Marjorie's son, Daniel, said that IDRC was her career destiny: "It was the perfect match of her training as a librarian and her passions for learning about other cultures and public service."

The Board of the IDRC Alumni expresses sincere condolences to the Whelan family.

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## ***Down memory lane...***

### **From IDRC's 10th anniversary**



*October 1980:*

*10-year veterans accompanied by then president Ivan L. Head.*

*Left to right:*

*Geoff Oldham*

*Rose Wood*

*Jim Pfeifer*

*Ivan Head*

*Mary (Baker) Blackwell*

*Joe Hulse*

*Wanda Green*

*Ray Tremblay*

*Alison Craig*

*John Comeau*

***Final note: A BIG thank you to Bob Stanley for serving as editor of the past 17 issues of the IDRC Alumni Newsletter.***