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

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## ***Bulletin***

No. 62, October 2020

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Thanks to Michèle Wilson for Translation

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Wish to support the IDRC Alumni Association? Contributions can be made annually or over a three-year period:

1 year	\$25
2 years	\$45
3 years	\$65

Cheques payable to the **IDRC Alumni Association**.

**Return to:** Kim Daley, 452 River Rd, Ottawa, ON. K1V 1E7

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<<mailto:bici@sympatico.ca>>

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## From the Chair

Rob Robertson

### The Vaccine Wars

The most frightening times in the 1950's included vaccination days at school as society protected its youth from polio and other childhood scourges. With the early morning smell of strong antiseptics pervading the halls, kids would form reluctant lines, squirming and crying and even fainting at the sight of a needle. But nobody really opposed getting a shot.



But despite the incredible progress that vaccines have achieved for public health, the anti-vaccination movement continually poses both (pseudo)-scientific and legal challenges to accepted wisdom. As we await the development of a COVID vaccine, the movement has begun a full-throated attack on the underpinnings of the public health response to the pandemic. In our country, Vaccine Choice Canada has

launched a legal challenge to compulsory face masks, the closure of businesses and enforced physical distancing, saying such measures are “unjustified and extreme...causing physical and psychological harm.” And of course the vaccine will be the next target.

For decades IDRC was in the middle of a debate about the ethics of vaccines and vaccine trials due to its support of contraceptive research in India. The Centre's authorized history *IDRC: 40 years of Ideas, Innovation and Impact* recounts the internal concerns this way: “Given the subject and the vulnerable position of the women participants, some Centre governors demonstrated a level of discomfort. Liliane Filion Laporte, the Board Vice-Chair and a physician, claimed it to be ‘science fiction’ and was very concerned about the ethics of testing the product. John Gill, the director of Health Sciences, thought it would be a major breakthrough:

*‘If you look at the amount of female sterilization that is going on in the world today with women who have reached thirty and have four or five children and don't want any more, I think the possibility of a vaccine is far more acceptable than sterilization.’*” Another layer of debate existed because the control on reproduction was said by some to be technically abortive in nature.

For decades the controversy raged with allegations that the Indian researchers had tested the vaccine on women before it was tested on animals, and that other vaccine research in the Philippines included tetanus vaccine tainted with abortive elements. In the end, the Centre ceased its funding and allowed its patents on the vaccine to lapse. Vaccines against infectious disease were one thing; vaccines involving only women that raised moral and religious issues were something else entirely.

But the war against contraceptive vaccines kept raging, including allegations even in recent years that WHO, the Gates Foundation and national governments have promoted tainted tetanus shots for women of child-bearing age. Pro-life advocates in many developing countries have condemned the programs, claiming the shots contain the elements of the contraceptive vaccine developed so long ago in India, leading to the “sterilization” of the women. WHO responded that the criticism was all based on false science saying that thanks to its immunization program in a quarter century it has seen the number of babies dying from tetanus reduced by over ninety percent. And in over a half century I've never seen a person crippled by polio.

Rob's thoughts on vaccination invoke two memories, one from childhood and one from last week.

I have two indelible memories from childhood in post war Wales, the bombed houses my Nan and I would pass on the Saturday afternoon walk to the library, and classmates with an iron brace for a leg lost to infantile paralysis. The latter was the perpetual concern of my mother whenever I wanted to do something unexpected...a swim in the Humber River, perhaps, once established in Canada.

And last week in conversation with one of my wife's U of T pals we learned that as a child she had spent time in an iron lung. She survived that incidence of polio only to learn in her 70s that she is dealing with health issues considered post polio. Her younger sister 'did not have polio' but now, in her early 70s, has to use a walker and to accept a future with a wheelchair.

That news underlined for me the lingering tragedy of that pre-Salk vaccine era for a hidden cohort in my age group and came in the same week that science is telling young people being symptom free of COVID-19 now is no guarantee that they will not have deal with post-COVID-19 infection health issues.

The next 70 years need the vaccine we search for now....



Chris Smart

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## Alumni News

### Your Alumni Executive

Chair: Rob Robertson

Treasurer: Gerry Bourrier

Bulletin: Chris Smart

IDRC reps: Tavinder Nijhawan

Members at large: Donna Bickford, Michèle Wilson, Claude Paul Boivin

Secretary: Pauline Robert-Bradley

Membership Support: Kim Daley

Social Media Animator: Shaun Bona

Web: Ed Brandon

Other Alumni who have served on the Executive: James Pfeifer, Jean-Marc Fleury, Angie Anton, Alison Craig, Mary Blackwell, Maria Williams, Chantall Fortin, Barbara Davidson, Bob Stanley, Eyra Edington.

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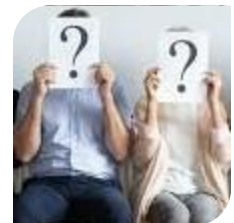
### Where is ? these days

Alumni often seek Alumni...noticeably more with COVID-19.

To address privacy concerns the IDRC Alumni Executive do not share the Bulletin distribution list.

So... if you wish to contact a former colleague send the request to

[idrcalumniencienscrdi@gmail.com](mailto:idrcalumniencienscrdi@gmail.com) and I'll pass it to the person you want to contact and let them decide if they want to be in touch.



Ed

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**Food Security for many threatened by  
COVID-19:**

CBC's Ottawa Morning, June 1

Erin O'Manique



[Radio Clip](#): How we get to being food secure in Ottawa: lessons learned during COVID-19.

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**Going to the dogs...ever the scientist**

Don De Savigny

In the course of helping find the HS Canoe trip photos Don and I did a bit of catching up....

In their travels Don and his wife, Jenny, always had African street dog rescues, but later, living in Europe, the last of them died from old age and they started to look into their origins.



Limestone statuette of Anubis in ancient Egypt



Don explained it seems they evolved from isolated Mediterranean island breeds so he and Jenny started to see if they could rescue the rarer, primitive breeds (not man made breeds of the last few centuries).

They now have six Cirneco dell'Etna (Sicilian Hounds) (ancestor of the pharaoh hounds) and one Ibizan Podengo (from Ibiza) and one Andalusian Podengo from Spain. The Sicilian and Ibizan hounds are easily recognized in the images of the hunting dogs in ancient Egypt, Greek and Roman art and artifacts.

As primitive breeds they are quite single-minded, but great pets, and extremely athletic (natural rabbit hunters).

Don has semi-retired as Professor of Health Systems Research at the University of Basel, Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, and is back home, living (and working virtually) in Merrickville.

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**In the news**  
Firoze Manji

Spotted in the Globe & Mail, Sept 28, 2020 p. A4

[We Charity controversy prompts examination of group's overseas footprint](#)

“Firoze Manji, the former Africa program director for Amnesty International, said one of the big problems with groups such as WE is that they aren’t accountable to the people they claim to serve. “They are accountable to self-appointed boards,” said Mr. Manji, who is originally from Kenya and is now a professor at Carleton University’s Institute of African Studies. “The mythology is that they are going to fight poverty. The problem with that proposition, although it sounds very good, is that they don’t deal with the causes of impoverishment.””



For the past two years Firoze has been an Adjunct Professor at Carleton in the Institute of African Studies, from time to time teaching an introductory course on African Studies, and giving the occasional lecture.

Firoze writes...

Most of my time I am a publisher of [Daraja Press](#) which was selected as [one of six publishing houses filling a niche!](#) Folks at IDRC might be interested in our latest publication [Decolonization and Afro-Feminism](#) by Ugandan Professor of Law, Sylvia Tamale. And I have been running a series of more than 100 interviews with activists and intellectuals at [Organising in the time of Covid-19](#).

**Alumni in Print**  
Neill McKee

***Finding Myself in Borneo* has won the 2020 Bronze Medal in Independent Publisher Book Awards in the Non-Fiction regional category for Pacific Rim, including Australia and New Zealand.** Conducted annually, the “Ippy” Awards honor the previous year’s best independently published titles from around the world. The awards are intended to bring increased recognition to the books of thousands of exemplary smaller publishers, university presses, and self-published authors.



This is Neill’s third award for this book, which can take you on an entertaining journey to a different time and place, if you need relief for a few hours from world events these days.

It's available in **paperback**, **ebook**, and **audiobook** through many outlets: [Buy the Book](#)

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## **Rachel DesRosiers Alumni Award**

COVID and events in Lebanon obliged MENA to stay the 2019 Award.

The award for 2020 will go to the IDRC's recently reopened WARO with selection proceeding when COVID permits.

### **Our Support**

The Alumni's contribution to the Rachel DesRosiers IDRC Alumni Award comes from the contributions of Alumni supporters.

Customarily the November gathering and Luncheon provides an opportunity to gather contributions. COVID intervenes. We cannot gather in November.

Please consider keeping up your support for the Award by sending a contribution.

Contributions can be made annually or over a three-year period:

1 year	\$25
2 years	\$45
3 years	\$65

Cheques payable to the IDRC Alumni Association.

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**\*The COVID option?**

Gerry's Financial Report for 2019-2020 is on Page 10.

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## Gallery

HS Canoe trip ca 1990

### Missed moose memories and connections...



In the photo where Richard is in a canoe on the left and I am on the right, I am quite certain that is Akwasi Aido\* in the centre.

I believe there were two portages on the way to the campsite. One was a bit strenuous and we took a rest. Akwasi came up and said to me, "Pat, is this *really* what Canadians do to relax? It still makes me smile.

Another (not very elegant) memory of that trip is sitting on a box latrine that afternoon and hearing steps approaching. Subtle throat clearing, then a series of hacking coughs did nothing to deter my approaching visitor. Try looking dignified and composed in that position! Suddenly, and sort of to my relief, from out of the brush emerged a moose. It wasn't a towering bull moose, more like a yearling cow that sauntered on by. When I returned to the site everyone said, "Oh Pat, you missed the moose, it came out from the woods and swam away from the island." I assured them that I too had caught a glimpse of it.



\* [Dr. Akwasi Aido](#) is a current member of the IDRC's Board of governors.

Pat Trites (text) and Don De Savigny (photos)

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## Letters to the Editor

Thanks once again to all involved in putting together the IDRC Alumni Newsletter. Wonderful reading. I was saddened to learn about Richard Wilson's passing. What a character he was! And, I mean this in a positive sense - as Gilles expressed in his tribute, Richard arrived in HSD after...turbulence... and brought us back into focus. I was also saddened to learn about Martha Stone's passing - another incredible individual.

Cheers, and hope all's well with you and yours. We're living in strange times and, hopefully, there's light at the end of the tunnel on several fronts.

Jim Chauvin

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### Remembering Richard Wilson....

I was surprised and saddened to learn of the death of Dr. Richard Wilson in the June 2020 IDRC Alumni Bulletin.



We met in 1989 when he was Director of the Health Sciences Division at IDRC. I came to an interview for a health economist position. Our meeting was very cordial and inspired by good humour.

After the usual questions and my answers which seemed to satisfy him, to my great surprise, we talked about a subject that was close to his heart: the wines from the southwest of France that he particularly liked. I was surprised and delighted

with the turn of events. I gladly accepted the position he offered me on the spot.

He was always for me a competent, fair Director, full of enthusiasm, communication leavened with humour, having a vision for the Division he wanted to reform and listening to his employees in whom he had complete confidence. An iron fist in a velvet glove.

We sympathized and met socially on many occasions. I saw him a few times after he left IDRC while he was with WHO in Geneva. I found him at his home in Ferney-Voltaire, a French town on the Swiss border, where he had set up his home.



In the summer of 1998, during a stay in the south-west of France, my wife Monique and I spent two days in the magnificent residence he occupied with his wife Geneviève in the village of Laurens, near Béziers.

He loved to garden and swim in the property's beautiful pool. He was enjoying life to the fullest. He showed us around his "part of the country" in his Citroën 2CV which he was so proud of and which turned heads. A real *Français*! All he needed was the beret and the baguette to blend completely with the landscape. We went to taste the delicious pies of

Pézenas, discover the nine locks on the Canal du Midi near Béziers but also the famous vineyards of Faugères which produce high quality wine. He had, over the years, become an international expert. It



was a very pleasant stay. In 2006, my wife and I saw him again in Laurens with Geneviève for another stay full of warmth and friendship.

We stayed in touch after he returned to Canada. We last saw each other 4-5 years ago at a gathering of IDRC Alumni.

I will keep fond memories of Richard of respect and friendship.

Daniel Letouzé

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### The IN MEMORIAM book on line

The Alumni IN MEMORIAM feature has been digitized. [Click](#) here to find photos and remembrances.



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### Bulletin Archive on Line

[Past issues of the IDRC Alumni Bulletin](#), from the first edition in January 2003, are available on the [IDRC Alumni website](#). Bulletins for 1 to 26 are either English or French. From 27-39 they are bilingual and from 40 on, either English or French.



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at "IDRC Alumni" group and / or "IDRC" page.*



<https://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/556623107712593/>

**IDRC ALUMNI  
STATEMENT OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES  
FISCAL YEAR 1 SEPTEMBER 2019 – 31 AUGUST 2020**

Revenues

Membership Fees (2019-2020)	600.00
Memberships – prepaid (2020-2022)	700.00
AGM/Reception	1,320.00
	<b>2,620.00</b>

Total Revenues

Expenditures

AGM/Reception	1238.91
Office supplies, website, misc	160.85
Bank charges	227.95
Award – MENA	1,000.00
Bulletin translation	300.00
	<b>2,927.71</b>

Total Expenditures

Excess of Revenues over Expenditures

<307.71>

Balance carried over from 2018-2019

**2,303.55**

Bank Balance at year end (31 August 2020)

**\$ 1,995.84**

**Approved on behalf of the Board**

Gerald R. Bourrier _____	Treasurer
Robert Robertson _____	Chairman

**31 August 2020**

Since 2014, the IDRC Alumni received donations totaling **\$40,500** in support of the Rachel DesRosiers Award program, with the last gift of \$10,000 received in 2019. During FY 2016-17, Ramesh and Pilar Bhatia donated in excess of **\$100,000** in support of awards for developing country and Canadians students – the Hopper-Bhatia Award program. In addition, Ramesh and Pilar will make annual contributions of approximately **\$15,000** towards the latter program. *Both programs are administered by IDRC.*