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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.

Bulletin

No. 68 April 2022

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Thanks to Michèle Wilson for translation

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
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Alumni Event

A Conversation between IDRC Alumnae and current staff on Education Research then and now

The Centre and Alumni are offering a ‘back to the future’ moment. This event is urged by two other moments in time:

Alumnus Carlos Sere, former RD for LARO, wondered if the Alumni had thought of asking if there were ways in which IDRC Alumni might be able to help the Centre with current challenges.

Following the zoom Alumni AGM in May 2021, colleagues from the Education Programme at the dawn of IDRC organized their own zoom event. All agreed that they had ‘failed retirement’! All are still engaged in education research.

Your Alumni Bulletin editor sat in on the Education zoom and, when preparing the [IDRC Today](#) feature of the Alumni website, learned that the Centre’s [Strategy 2030: A more sustainable and inclusive world](#) has Education as one of its priorities again.

Then there are the frequent headlines, for example: “Access to basic education: Almost 60 million children in primary school age are not in school” --with a telling synopsis: “The world has made a lot of progress in recent generations, but millions of children are still not in school.”

[Max Roser November 02, 2021](#)

Discussions with Centre staff determined that we have a unique opportunity to follow up on Carlos’s prompt and on the collegiality between Alumni and current staff concerned with ensuring that developmentally-relevant and methodologically sound education research remains a hallmark of IDRC’s work.

IDRC Alumni Dr. Kenneth King and Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, both former Associate Directors of the Centre’s Education Programme will have a conversation with two staff from the Centre’s Education and Science Programme..

Though taking the form of a Zoom-enabled webinar, this Alumni event will not be a seminar in the usual sense of papers and discussants. Rather, we look forward to a more informal *conversation* with the Alumni and current staff sharing their experiences of the Centre’s efforts – past and present -- in this critical domain of development research.

So! reserve
Thursday, May 26
at 10:00 am., Ottawa time

We need to know numbers; an invitation to register for the event will be sent to the Alumni on Thursday, May 12, 2022.
Thursday May 19 will be the deadline for registration.

A link will be emailed to Alumni who register.



Alumni News / Nouvelles des anciens

Searching for an Executive Secretary

Hear ye! Hear ye! Hear ye! ... the Alumni is looking for an Executive Secretary.

Put aside winter drudgeries by considering a prominent role with IDRC's Alumni Executive.

If you do not laugh, you might cry with glee to know that the Executive Secretary position is distinctively non-traditional, serving as a focal point of communication, occasionally conducting research, participating in decision-making processes, and ensuring virtual meetings are effectively organised and minuted.

Imagine no cubicles, no endless meetings, no heavy-duty bureaucracy, and an environment of coequality.

Come and join us.

Captivated candidates should communicate their interest via idrcalumniancierscrdi@gmail.com



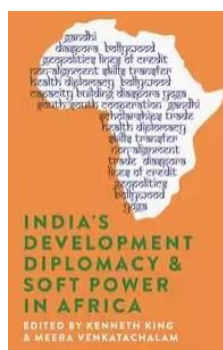
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Alumni in Print

Kenneth King

India's Development Diplomacy & Soft Power in Africa: Edited by Kenneth King and Meera Venkatachalam: Boydell & Brewer: ISBN 9781847012746, 2021

Unpacks the histories, actors and geopolitics of India's soft power and evolving engagements with Africa.



“Since independence India has deployed its soft power in Africa, with educational aid and capacity-building at the heart of its Africa policy. However, following economic liberalisation and in a quest for greater global influence, India's geopolitics have changed. The country's discourse on Africa has shifted from the mantras of post-colonial solidarity and South-South Cooperation, and there is now a growing sense of Indian exceptionalism, as the country reimagines its past and future against the growing influence of the political right. In this book scholars from India, Africa, Europe and North America show how India's soft power has been implemented by the diaspora, government and private sector. Research documents how India's 'aid' has been re-thought in major schemes such as e-global education and health, Gandhi statuary and Covid-19 diplomacy in Africa.”

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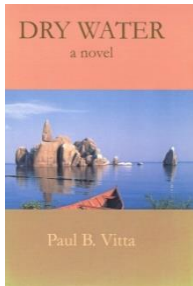
Paul B. Vitta

News of Paul's passing is found in this issue's IN MEMORIAM. Paul was a friend and colleague first met when he was based in Senegal with the African Centre for Technology and we worked together on the IDRC funded Technology Policy Workshops.

I knew Paul had written the novel *Dry Water* and have to think that Paul's innate modesty kept news of later books reaching me. This presentation of his three novels is in remembrance of a man both deeply connected and concerned for Africa.

Ed.

Dry Water. Protea Publishing. ISBN: 1-59344-02-0, 2003.

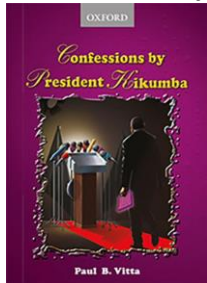


"Two brothers grow up in Africa together and then part to study overseas: Michael in America, Robert in Europe. When they return, Michael goes into politics, Robert into teaching. In the years that follow, Michael will become president. Four years into his presidency, the army will depose him. Robert will rescue him from execution and Michael will recapture the presidency. But this triumph will be marred when desire and opportunity lead to a scandal so vile that all bonds between the two brothers and their wives - Anna and Lisa - are tested to their limits."

"Dry Water" is a hilarious and captivating novel with a beautiful blend of African flavour! Though set in three continents, Paul Vitta has succeeded in vividly depicting the typical simple life of an African child in an African village, that renders one nostalgic of the beautiful carefree childhood within a protective society. This, however, as he shows through his character Mike Misana, does not inhibit the individual's innate desire for power and leadership. A perfect blend of African beauty and politics!"

[Review](#)

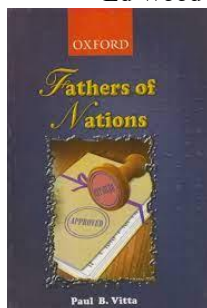
Confessions by President Kikumba. Oxford University Press. SBN: 9780195744095, 2016.



President Kikulé Kikumba, a president of an important African country has written a book to confess all. He intends to set the record straight. He says being president in Africa is no holiday on an island. Dumping allies for wavering, cutting friends at the knees for dissenting, and mowing opponents down for standing in the way, are all in the day's work. Africa's presidents, he confides, are in office not to lead but to crush rivals and accumulate wealth.

"Paul is deep in his second career of writing, after retirement from his United Nations economic development work in Nairobi, Kenya. Hours of wide-ranging chats gave [Ed] a wonderful view of East African life and politics through the eyes of a keen observer. Paul's latest novel, *Confessions by President Kikumba*, was a captivating read on [my] return flight to North America".

Ed Wood (class of 66) on a visit to Paul and Necta in Tanzania 2016 [Harvy Mudd College Magazine, Fall 2017 p.35](#)



Fathers of Nations. Oxford University Press. ISBN: 9780195737745, 2021.

"Yet Africa is Africa. It comes at you from both directions: from right and from wrong. As if to confound you, it confronts you with both opposites on every issue—good and evil, Nelson Mandela and Idi Amin, wealth and poverty, peace and war, but especially yes and no."

“The highlight of this book is a summit attended in Gambia by African Heads of State. They are there to discuss Way Omega, a way to develop Africa, but one thing is certain; since when have heads set aside their self-interest for their citizens and this book gives us insight on what ails Africa; the corruption and the impunity that urges it, fanning its flames.

There are 4 people: Professor Kimani from Kenya, Pastor Chiamaka from Nigeria, Melusi from Zimbabwe, and Engineer Tahir from Libya. Each has suffered for speaking up against their states and each holds a grudge, a clear view and understanding of impunity and what it means to be on the losing side when battling a government. They are approached with a new outlook, a proposal that rivals Way Omega and it's called Path Alpha.

The symbolism in this book is enough to make you sit back and marvel at how, as Africans we have accepted the status quo. It's an enjoyable read and above all, it speaks to the frustrations we still experience in Africa under corrupt leadership.”

Dora Okeyo [Goodreads](#)

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Rachel DesRosiers Alumni Award 2021 WARO

Changes

The Centre has several donor-funded awards for young researchers: the Bene (Agroforestry), the Bentley (Climate resilience and sustainable food systems) and the Hopper-Bhatia Awards (for India and the Philippines) and the DesRosiers Alumni Award.

With the approval of the families of the donors the Centre has changed its approach for the administration of the donor-funded awards.

“The aim is to improve the Centre’s impact, including the impact of the Centre’s activities funded through private donations by redirecting private donations in support of IDRC’s Research Awardee and Internship Program. Awardees will have hands-on experience in managing and supporting research and programs, administering grants, and creating, disseminating and using knowledge from an international perspective. The Ottawa-based Research Awardees will benefit developing countries as Awardees must undertake research in the field in one of the five research themes outlined in Strategy 2030.

The IDRC Research Awardee and Internship Program will offer greater visibility for the individuals supporting the program while allowing the awardees to become ambassadors for the Centre when they are in the field. The program has proven to be transformative for awardees as many of them go on to exciting careers in international development.”

IDRC will recognize contributions received from individuals as well as the Alumni Association in its annual report on a yearly basis.

The Centre will use the 2022 donation in support of the cohort of Research Awardees that will join the Centre in the new fiscal year.

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Webinar: Africa and COVID-19: Disinfodemic

Letter from Asaah Ndah Asomgwed



I want to thank you immensely for your patience and support. The Rachel DesRosiers Award provided me with a very exciting and enriching research experience, which I intend to build on going forward. In fact, I was recently added to the roster of peer-reviewers of the Harvard Kennedy School (HKS) Misinformation Review - an online journal dedicated to research around misinformation. I strongly believe the research I did through IDRC (which is now on my resume) was instrumental in this regard. I also plan to reorient my Ph.D. thesis to take into account this study, and to continue exploring more professional/research/academic opportunities around the topics of disinformation and misinformation. This has been a great opportunity, which could lead to my first publication and open new doors. I am very grateful to you and to IDRC for the opportunity.

Asaah was a panelist in the WARO Disinformation COVID 19 Webinar.

Geoff Oldham Memorial Scholarships 2021-22

Anne Kagota



Dear Supporters of the Geoffrey Oldham Memorial Scholarship,
It is spring already! It feels like just the other day I arrived at the University of Sussex, and I am already in my second Semester. Time flies, especially when you are enjoying every second, being intentional about this once-in-a-lifetime student experience.

The first Semester was both challenging and rewarding. The lectures and seminars surpassed any expectations I had coming into the course. I got to make presentations, individually and as part of a group, and wrote essays on ongoing climate risk challenges. The best part about SPRU modules is the freedom to explore different perspectives on energy and climate policy. Students get the space to research and discuss their opinions.

Overall, it was a great Semester at the University of Sussex and I am energized for the second semester. I have started to brainstorm ideas for my dissertation. Thanks to the support I am receiving from my course convenors and Academic Success Advisors, I am confident that I will narrow it down to a topic of interest soon. I hope to share some more with you in the next letter.

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IN MEMORIAM



Dr. Brent Herbert-Copley
1960-2022

Brent died on March 17, 2022.

Jean Lebel's tribute to a remarkable colleague

It is with a heavy heart that we announce the passing of a former IDRC colleague, Brent Herbert-Copley.

A colleague with more than 22 years of service at IDRC, Brent is remembered for his genuine and dedicated leadership as well as his pioneering contributions to IDRC programming, many of which have left lasting impacts on the work of the Centre today.

Brent joined IDRC in 1987, spending his first ten years as a Program Officer and Senior Program Officer working largely on economics and innovation. He took on the role of Program Leader of the Small and Medium Enterprise, Innovation and Technology Program in 1998 before becoming Director of IDRC's Social and Economic Policy program. This was an innovative and diverse program area that covered economic policy, health systems, conflict studies, gender, women's rights and more, laying the foundation for much of the work now being advanced by the Democratic and Inclusive Governance, Global Health, and Sustainable Inclusive Economies programs. One of the visionary architects of the Think Tank Initiative, Brent's foresight in bringing together multiple funders to strengthen the capacity of independent policy research institutions in developing countries was an example of a ground-breaking partnership development that continues to shape the Centre's governance of funding partnerships today. Throughout his service at the Centre, Brent demonstrated professionalism and excellence, often working on the forefront of issues that shaped and continue to shape IDRC today.

In 2009, he left the Centre to become Vice-President, Research Programs and later Executive Vice President at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). Yet his relationship with IDRC and its work remained strong. As a distinguished member of Canada's international development community and long-time friend of IDRC, he served on the selection committee for the *David Hopper Prizes for Leadership in Research for Development*. Even after taking his well-deserved retirement from SSHRC, he continued to be generous with his time, sharing his expertise, and collaborating with IDRC. This very month, he was serving as an External Reviewer in IDRC's research call on Inclusive Science, Technology, and Innovation Systems in Latin America.

In addition to his contributions to the programming of the Centre, Brent is remembered for being an inclusive leader and mentor, someone who dedicated his time to supporting their colleagues with

kindness, understanding and a keen intellect.

His passing marks a loss for the science policy and research community in Canada. The IDRC community was deeply saddened with the sudden passing of our former colleague. As such, we have included testimonials from colleagues who worked closely with him through the years. As a Centre, our thoughts and best wishes go out to his family. Rest in peace, Brent.

Colleagues Remember

“When I started my career at IDRC in 1997, I was ordered to expand my area of knowledge as an environmental health specialist to other areas of the Centre’s work. I found myself on Brent’s team, working on small, micro and medium enterprise innovation and technologies. I must admit that during my tenure I did not contribute much to the field, but I learned a lot from my leader. I witnessed first hand what was and would continue to be for his whole career the main comportment of Brent: that of a gentleman.

Brent was a gentleman in a truly modern sense, a person who held himself to high standards of conduct and who demonstrated a true sense of respect, intellectual refinement and delicatessen. He treated his colleagues with a certain kind of elegance, owing to his superior ability to listen and care. He was able to grasp complex issues and build consensus without forgetting the need to acknowledge the contributions of all.

The Centre owes him particular recognition for pioneering work: the innovation system exploration that led today to the Science Granting Councils Initiative; the empowerment of women through the recognition of policy specificity in labour and justice, which is now at the heart of our work on the care economy; and his unique contribution to one of the Centre’s first major co-funding partnerships: the Think Tank Initiative. On this last one he left a lasting mark on the Centre, having posed the fundamental governance principle of these large endeavours by ensuring that all funding partners participated with equal footing as they worked together to guide the development of work. To this day, this model stands at the helm of IDRC’s partnership governance principles.

While Brent’s work was guided by a blend of renaissance and post-modern sciences and attitudes, the best translation of his erudition was in his legendary skits at the IDRC social events. His talent was unparalleled. I remember him citing the Hawthorne effect in a debate between natural and social scientist colleagues. There he was, a political scientist, telling the “hard” scientist that he had an observer bias – and seeing that most had never heard of Hawthorne! Another hilarious moment: when he personified the United States’ Vice President Dick Cheney, donning full makeup and coloured hair for his impersonated talk about IDRC’s scientific approach. The list goes on.

First impressions are lasting, and this was true for Brent. I witnessed his gentlemanly attitude during a state visit to Chile where we were part of the Governor General’s accompanying delegation while he was an Executive Vice President at the Social Science and Humanities Research Council. It was so obvious to me that he was a true diplomat, with his ability to make all participants comfortable, and his capacity to interact in a truly genuine spirit with dignitaries as much as researchers and people in the field.

Most importantly, Brent was a family man. Every time we met, we asked each other how the kids and our spouses were doing. I watched him in the Khan el-Khalili market searching endlessly for the perfect

gold bracelet upon which to have his wife's name engraved. A gentleman.

Years ago, I was running by the Rideau Centre in preparation for the Ottawa Marathon. A car passed by me with an open window and the driver yelled to me, "Go Jean, Go!" It was Brent, showing true enthusiasm and friendship that surely gave the boost I needed to achieve a personal best the next week. It's now time for me to shout out to you, Brent. Said far too soon, but now with even more gravitas: Well done, Brent. Very well done. May you Rest in Peace."

Jean Lebel

"Brent's early and unexpected departure fills me with sadness and memories of so many years sharing experiences, work and friendship. Brent was a colleague always willing to lend a hand to others, to dedicate his time to collaborating in each activity that represented a contribution to the work at the Center, to the well-being of all colleagues, and to enjoying life together with others. His contributions to the work of the Center in LAC are innumerable. Brent dedicated his academic training to work in LAC, to the analysis of forms of collaboration in scientific research systems in countries with emerging economies and in transition processes towards the generation of open, pluralistic societies. This interest and special knowledge of these contexts, led him to be the person most early committed to the creation of the Consortium of Social and Economic Research of Peru, CIES; one of the most successful stories of IDRC's participation in the transformation of the social sciences and the generation of effective channels to inform public decision making with evidence in collaboration with actors from the public system, civil society and the private sector, and in the orientation of regional development policies within Peru. Brent's work at CIES later inspired the agenda of more than forty think tanks globally for more than ten years of programming at the Center. In more recent years, we returned to work together in the generation of the first scientific collaboration agenda between Canada and Chile with the inclusion of criteria to promote inclusive research projects from the territorial, social and ethical perspective in both countries. That legacy, today eight years after its creation, remains valid and clearly relevant. Brent has always been a source of inspiration for me, of intellectual and human trust, of joy and of friendship. The memory of him will remain forever alive in my person. Rest in peace dear friend."

Federico Burone

"Brent's kindness, empathy and sharp wit are what really stood out in my mind. He was an inspiring coach and supportive mentor who always had time to listen; he did that with the utmost patience and respect. I will miss going out for coffee to exchange jokes and ideas."

Colleen Duggan

"I had the privilege of working with Brent at IDRC over many years. Witnessing his career progression from Program Officer in the Social Sciences Division to Program Leader of the Small and Medium Enterprises Program Initiative to Director of the Social and Economic Policy Program, Brent always brought compassion, humility, integrity, intellect, and the utmost professionalism to his strong leadership. He had an amazing ability to make people feel comfortable and heard. He was a mentor to many, with down to earth and practical advice and a subtle sense of humour. Brent left us all too soon, but has left a deep personal and professional legacy his family will be proud of as we all keep him fondly in our memories."

Tavinder Nijhawan

"I had the opportunity to witness Brent's contribution to the Centre during my years in our policy group, both sharing in the minute taking of senior management committee and through our team's support to the President and to programs. Brent personified a humility and quiet leadership that brought out the best in others.

Beyond IDRC, he was pioneer in partnering with other funders, at a gathering in 2008 laying out the vision of what became the Think Tank Initiative. In so doing, he catalyzed the evolution of what had been fireside chats among heads of agencies into a more dynamic forum.

Within IDRC, he built and lead our most diverse program area, spanning not only economic policy, but health systems, conflict studies, gender, women's rights and more. Substantial parts of Strategy 2030 can trace their legacy back to this work (DIG, GH, SIE, and GEI framework).

In so doing, Brent nurtured teamwork, creating an atmosphere that encouraged everyone to bring forth their ideas and passion, crafting together something that was greater than the contribution of any one person or program. He was particularly proactive in supporting the growth of, and opportunities for, early-career professionals. In this way, he was paying forward the fruits of his own journey through IDRC.

We all have mentors and people who exemplify excellence and the best attributes of an organizational culture – for me Brent was one of the handful of people who embody the spirit of IDRC at its best. In that sense, his energy and contributions remain present and motivate those of us who were fortunate enough to share time with him.”

Bruce Currie Alder

“I am deeply saddened by the news about the passing of Brent. I had been blessed to work under Brent's leadership for many years. Brent has had a profound impact on my career at IDRC and modelled remarkable leadership. He was incredibly smart and yet humble. He believed in people and gave his time generously. I always left a meeting with him with a deep sense of being valued, heard, and inspired. He would walk the corridors of our floor to check how we are doing and to simply listen. I remember he would ask me how my PhD is coming along and encouraging me – and he was genuine. He always put others first and supported young professionals. He was a truly remarkable person, mentor, and leader. I feel very lucky I got to know him and to have a great role model in my early career. The light he shone will continue to glow, and his warm memories will remain etched in our hearts forever. Rest in peace our beloved colleague and friend.”

Martha Melesse

I met Brent early in his IDRC career when he joined the Economics program during one of the Centre's re-organizations. It was not an easy time and I was grateful that I could rely on his calm collegiality, intellectual curiosity and good humour. He was liked and respected by everyone he worked with and it came as no surprise when promotion followed promotion. Successful and happy at work and at home, he lived a good life.

David Glover

Brent and I joined IDRC in the same year but did not get to know each other until we both started to climb the corporate ladder. Even after Brent's move to SSHRC, we would cross paths in the building lobby almost daily.

I am probably as stunned as everybody else by Brent's early demise. Suffice it to say that I cannot find any words to describe his great contributions to Canada and the world, driven by a quiet passion and outstanding professionalism.

Sylvain Dufour

I am in Australia this semester and heard the surreal and sad news from many friends in Canada. I have such warm memories of many years working with Brent at IDRC from 2000 to 2009. What an extraordinary person and leader! His generosity, curiosity, incisiveness, collegiality, and terrific sense of humour and fun are so very needed in this world. What a great loss, but what a great gift his life and example make for us to follow!

Christina Zarowsky

Brent was a senior member of IDRC who was kind and gracious to peers and junior staff alike. He used his intellectual "superpowers" for the betterment of the world, and the legacy he leaves behind is an important one.

Sachiko Okuda

I first met Brent all those years ago at NSI, and then on and off over the years, including more recently in the corridors and cafes between IDRC and SSHRC. Brent always made time for a chat whether about work, friends and family, or the world at large. I will always remember his kindness and thoughtfulness.

Ann Weston

Brent was my colleague for many years at IDRC. Generous of his time, always willing to help, and ready to share his knowledge and experience, Brent was a true professional, respected and appreciated by everyone who had the privilege of working with him. He made IDRC a workplace of choice and improved the lives of people the world over.

Chantal Schryer

I first met Brent when he was completing his BA at Carleton. He was organizing a WUSC campus event on international development. We next met when he was a summer student with IDRC and after a time with the North South Institute he joined the Economics Programme in the Social Sciences Division.

I can now share something Brent would never think of doing. Brent was working full time and studying for his PhD with Prof. Lynne Mytelka at Carleton University. As Deputy Director of the Social Sciences Division I had to sign the paper Brent submitted for the Centre's training support. I was witness to Brent's receiving stellar assessments from the university.

Christopher Smart

Many more tributes for Brent are found on the Obituary site [Obituary, Ottawa Citizen March 19, 2022](#) and on the [IDRC Alumni Facebook page](#).

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Dr. Bertha Mo
1948-2022

Dr. Bertha Mo died on February 2, 2022.

Bertha did undergraduate studies at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon, and received her BA

in Sociology at the University of California, Davis, a Masters in Public Health and Ph.D. in medical anthropology at UC, Berkeley.

Bertha joined IDRC as a senior programme officer-medical anthropologist. She funded mixed methods research in the areas of tropical diseases and ecosystem approaches to human health and was active on the Centre's gender committee, Research in International Tobacco Control, and the Ethics Committee.

With colleagues and the California State Department of Prevention, Bertha is credited with pioneering work on cultural competency, mental health, and substance abuse.

Bertha had extensive experience in higher education and served on the Minority Admissions Committee of the School of Public Health at the University of California, Berkeley, and was the director of the Collegiate Science and Technology Entry Program for women and students of color at the State University of New York, Potsdam.

Bertha volunteered with the United Church of Canada's Right Relationships Initiative, with the December 6th Indoor Vigil for Preventing Violence Against Women and with interfaith [Kairos Canada](#). She was a volunteer with Ottawa Community Immigration Services Organization ([OCISO](#)) and with World AIDS Day (1 Dec), organizing events to increase awareness of the disease.

Bertha was an adjunct faculty member at Carleton University's Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

Colleagues Remember

Bertha, who preferred to be called Bertie, impressed me with her confidence, her belief in her skills, her determination and her certainty of getting results. She was also, I think, driven by a sincere and deep desire to help others, especially immigrants.

I called her in the last year about the Chinese dissident I took in because I thought she spoke Mandarin, but no, she spoke Cantonese - two languages, not two dialects, she said. It seemed to me then that this desire to help was intact. She was willing to use her large network of professional knowledge to offer me the best advice.

She even told me that she would ask her endocrinologist, who speaks Mandarin, to take Mr. Liu as a patient to monitor his diabetes. I didn't really believe she would do it, but she did. I should have believed her because it was Bertie!

Michèle Wilson

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We are so very saddened to have learned of the loss of Bertha Mo, a good friend and colleague. Bertie's compassion, dedication and collegiality permeated everything she did.

At work, we had occasion to witness her efforts to give young people a leg up at the start of their career. She also ensured that World HIV/AIDS Day was recognized, organizing events to increase awareness of the disease.

Bertha went above and beyond her duty in helping out with the unexpected visit of four representatives of the Chinese Ministry of the Environment in the early 1990s. In addition to advising on protocol, she arranged with her husband the preparation of a celebratory dinner in their honour at a Chinese restaurant in centre-town. As luck would have it, an electrical power outage occurred on the afternoon before the dinner. Bertha and her husband saved the day by finding another restaurant in an area of town not

affected by the power outage, and seamlessly arranging for transport of the food and its preparation in the new location.

She was also a fine friend beyond the confines of IDRC, in particular through her participation in a group of current and former women staff who met fairly regularly for after-work drinks. This is how we learned that Bertie favoured French cuisine; we appreciated her talent as a good listener as well as her dry sense of humour. We were not at all surprised to learn that her daughter had chosen to study social work. Later on, when some members of the group became involved in the resettlement in Ottawa of four Chinese dissidents, she helped out by being a go-to person for advice and assistance in identifying Mandarin-speaking resource people.

We cherish our memories of Bertha and send out our affectionate thoughts to her family.

Gisèle Morin-Labatut
Lyse Lavictoire
Jean-Michel Labatut
Marie Saumure

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Valerie Monkhouse
1921 – 2022

Valerie died on March 25.

“Valerie’s early life was highlighted by travels to and from England, residing in Shanghai, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. After the Second World War, her family emigrated to Fredericton, New Brunswick where Valerie attended the University of New Brunswick, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1951, and met her future husband, Ben. Ben’s work took them to Toronto where the family expanded with two boys. A job change for Ben took the family to Ottawa in the early 1960’s where Valerie started her librarian career, first at the Collegiate Institute Board then Health and Welfare Canada. Valerie advanced within Health and Welfare Canada’s libraries and then moved to be the Director of the National Museums of Canada’s Libraries. She finished her career as the Head Librarian at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).”

[Ottawa Obituary](#)

Colleagues Remember

Among all the people we meet in our lives, there are few with whom we sympathize and whose company we really enjoy, at least that is my case. Even without knowing them, they strike a chord in us that draws us to them. What that attraction is, I can't say. Valerie was one of those people for me. I loved and admired the calm and seemingly detached way she looked at life, at her life.



I didn't see much of her, but whenever I did, I enjoyed her company. I saw her at the weekly meetings of the small group of women at IDRC. These meetings became less frequent after each of us left IDRC, but they continued. This is the only photo from one of the WAD meetings (Women and Drinking - a nod to IDRC's Women and Development program). From left: Michèle Wilson, Jenny Cervinskis, Bev Chataway, Valerie Monkhouse; front: Marie Saumure, Gisèle Morin-Labatut.

Photo taken at Bev's place in 1991 or 1992

Our penultimate meeting was in Victoria, BC, I don't remember the year. My husband and I were finishing our trip to Western Canada in Victoria. One evening in the hotel dining room, I noticed a couple sitting at a table near us, the man and woman each holding a newspaper. The woman's back was to me, but I thought I recognized Valerie and went over to check. It was Valerie with her husband Ben, whom I did not know. She invited us to eat with them. To my husband, who was hesitant, she said, "No, no, come on! You see, my husband and I have been together for so long that we have nothing to talk about. We read the newspaper instead of talking to each other." The four of us had a great time together.

The last time I saw her, she and her husband were about to leave Ottawa for a retirement home in Toronto. When I asked her what made them decide to move, what struck me about her answer was her calm realization and acceptance that it was time to make that choice.

We stayed in touch by email after she left for Toronto.

Here is an excerpt:

Hello Michele,

How lovely to hear from you. I still miss those wonderful WAD gatherings especially in your home which you were so generous in opening for us. I found your experience with Mr. Liu most interesting. Given my experience and that of my parents, I have a special feeling for the Chinese on an individual basis so I wasn't surprised that you get along so well. My Dad taught Chinese engineering students in Shanghai in the 30s. and when he was 90 some of them still kept in touch with him every Christmas. I spent one Christmas sending cards to them with a message that my father dictated to me, as he was unable to write legibly, as he remembered them as they had been in touch all that time ... I really like hugs so a hug for you too.

Valerie (December 10, 2019)

I feel lucky to have known a person like Valerie who has passed on to me, at least I hope, some of her wisdom.

Michèle Wilson

In my conversations with Valerie, I understood that her father's experience as a prisoner in a Japanese internment camp in China during WWII, and his subsequent return to his family as a changed man, had a profound influence on Valerie's life. She wrote an article about the camp (Lunghua, A Civil Assembly Centre, in Anglo-Celtic Roots, Volume 14, Number 4, Winter 2008, ISSN 1201-3072). I was surprised to find that the article was a rather dry description of life in the camp and its administration by the prisoners. Valerie's dad never talked about the really bad stuff, even though he must have been deeply

wounded emotionally. It was pretty much the way of the time, I think. The family tried to have a normal life after his return, but must have lived in the shadow of things unsaid. I hope Valerie came to terms with this in her later years, and was able to find peace.

Marie Saumure

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Dr. Paul B. Vitta
1942 – 2022

Dr. Paul Vitta died on February 4, 2022. The funeral took place February 10 in Tanzania where he was born and grew up and where he spent his final years.

Paul studied for his BSc at Harvey Mudd College, in Claremont, California and received his PhD in physics, from Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia. He was Professor of physics at the University of Dar es Salaam.

IDRC made first contact with Paul when he was with the African Centre for Technology in Senegal and helped with month-long Technology Policy Workshops in Liberia and Senegal. Following the workshops, Paul became an IDRC-supported researcher and deepened his ties with Ottawa-based staff.

In the mid-1980s Paul joined IDRC as a Senior Programme Officer with the Science, Technology and Energy Policy (STEP) Programme in the Social Sciences Division in Ottawa. In the late 1980s, he relocated to EARO where he became Deputy Regional Director.

Paul was greatly valued for his quiet-spoken and insightful understanding of the development of science and technology in Africa. He published a number of articles on the topic and was highly respected by STEP researchers all over the continent. After IDRC, Paul became Director of the regional office for UNESCO, based in Nairobi, where his work covered countries in Eastern Africa with a thematic focus on science and technology. He continued to have collegial interaction with the IDRC office there.

Paul was a prolific author, first publishing many articles and books on his academic interests, and later writing fiction. He was an astute observer of African development and he leaves behind friends everywhere.

Paul's catalogue of publications is displayed under the Bulletin's *Alumni in Print*. His unique blend of scholarship and storytelling is captured in this quote from his last novel, *Fathers of Nations*.

"Yet Africa is Africa. It comes at you from both directions: from right and from wrong. As if to confound you, it confronts you with both opposites on every issue - good and evil, Nelson Mandela and Idi Amin, wealth and poverty, peace and war, but especially yes and no". [Review](#)

Paul's books will teach as well as entertain; *Fathers of Nations* is a set book for the 2022 Kenyan Certificate for Secondary Education.

Eva Rathgeber, Hartmut Krugman, Christopher Smart

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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