Imperial Oil Review

Winter 1999  Volume 93  Number 415

2  A RURAL TRADITION by Judy Warinsik
8  A BOY ON BOB SKATES by Al Pundy
12  A HISTORY OF INNOVATION by Gordon Wong
20  AN ELEGANTLY SIMPLE IDEA by Larry Koert
24  JOSEPH AND MARIA SHAW by Wynne Thomas
26  AN ARTS DREAM by Wayne Schmaltz
31  IN CLOSING

EDITOR/Sarah Lawley
ART DIRECTOR/Carel Young, Janet Ireland Design Inc.
PRODUCTION ASSISTANT/Donna Berger
RESEARCH/Charles Rowlands
COVER ILLUSTRATION/Laura Biegenhofer

Published in English and French by Imperial Oil Limited, 311 St. Clair Ave. W.,
Toronto, Ontario M4S 1E5. Permissions to reproduce articles, photographs and illustrations
must be obtained. The contents of the Imperial Oil Review are listed in the Canadian
Perishable Index, ISSN 0705-5158. Typesetting by The Innovative Word Limited. Colour

This paper may contain 100% recycled paper, including
20% post-consumer waste, and is 100% chlorine free.

IF UNDELIVERABLE, RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED.
CHANGE OF ADDRESS: RETURN LABEL BELOW WITH YOUR NEW ADDRESS
Agreement number 14186107
A Rural Tradition

With roots going back to the early part of the century, the 4-H organization helps young people across the country build life skills.

By Judy Waytuk

A GIANT ORANGES PUMPKIN PERHAPS the correct word running off Provincial Highway 23 into the village of Roland, Man., about 100 kilometers southwest of Winnipeg. A little to the side of the three-metre-wide artificial pumpkin, its stem fashioned from the base of a grain vacuum, a painted wooden sign proclaims Roland the official birthplace of Canada's 4-H clubs.

Those seemingly disparate markers are, in fact, closely connected. The giant gourd represents one that a local farmer, Edgar Van Wyck, grew in 1996, having learnt farming skills as a member of the first Boys' and Girls' Club, a national organization that began in Roland and was the forerunner of 4-H in Canada. Van Wyck's Guinness Book of World Records pumpkin weighed 992 kilograms when it was officially declared the world's largest ever — but that was only one of the many events that followed.

Van Wyck had begun setting records in 1918. It was then that a 13-year-old Edgar raised record-setting pigs for a Boys' and Girls' Club project — the pair weighed 152 and 154 kilograms at the tender age of six and a half months. "The main feed was potatoes and earth," read an account of the impressive feat. The pigs "were kept clean, well bedded and were washed occasionally with soap and water."

Van Wyck went on to become a respected local farmer, and the Boys' and Girls' Clubs, having taken the 4-H name, grew to encompass 2,651 branches (which now include 106,235 young people and 16,322 adult volunteers), all of which are funded principally through combinations of contributions from government and corporations, such as Imperial Oil. (A former vice-president of Imperial, Merley Hardford, has recently been appointed president of the Canadian 4-H Council.) Today, fewer than 60 percent of 4-H members live on farms. As a result, the organization has taken its projects beyond the farm gate to include horticulture, tourism and recreation, its agricultural-oriented programs have also changed with the times, reflecting the fact that farming is now far more complicated than it was when Van Wyck nurtured his huge gourd. And today, young members have the opportunity to visit Canada, the United States and Great Britain to learn about the farming practices of these countries.

The goal of 4-H is to use the process of learning about agriculture to develop the talent, confidence
and leadership skills of young people like Stephanie Dueck. The self-assured, articulate 14-year-old from Roland credits her 4-H public-speaking experience with honing communication skills that have helped her in school. “When we have to do presentations, a lot of people are scared of standing up in front of an audience,” says Stephanie, “but I’m not.” Then she adds with a grin, “But I also like talking a lot, so that might have something to do with it, too.”

BACK IN 1913, WHEN THE BOYS’ AND GIRLS’ Club was established in Canada, the organization’s purpose was simple: to develop agriculture through young people.

Eager to get Manitoba’s pioneering agricultural industry off to a strong start, William John Black and Edgar Ward Jones wanted to encourage the propagation of better quality seed and animal stock and to ensure that young people were taught farming methods that would serve them as adult farmers. Black was director of Canadian National Railways’ department of agriculture and coeducation and also served as Manitoba’s deputy minister of agriculture. Jones was director of the extension service at the Manitoba Agricultural College in Winnipeg and had grown up in Roland, a bustling town smack in the middle of Manitoba’s richest crop land. The men decided the place to start was Jones’s home town.

So it was that a representative from the agricultural college came to Roland in the spring of 1913 and rounded up 106 children from eight rural schools to form a club for aspiring farmers. The children were given fodder corn seed, seed potatoes and fertilized eggs and over the summer grew corn and potatoes and tended the chicks that hatched from the eggs. At a full competition, adult volunteers judged the results. Through this process, larger amounts of quality seed and chickens were produced at very little cost. Project yields were sold to local farmers or used by the children’s families. This small government investment was to have a wide-ranging, permanent impact on farming practices and crop quality on the Prairies.

Astonishingly healthy until his recent death at age 97, Walter McDonald had a lifelong record of public service, including 50 years as a 4-H leader and decades spent in local and provincial politics. He was one of the first schoolchildren to join the Roland club. Ten-year-old Walter had been growing a flower garden when the agricultural college representative showed up in 1913 and invited him to join the new club. Joining it enabled Walter to amass an impressive collection of seed ribbons. “The projects were to be the work of the child, no one else,” he recalled the summer before his death. “I remember one time when my mother was showing someone through the yard and the visitor saw a weed and plucked it up. My mother grabbed the weed, planted it again and said, ‘No, Walter’s supposed to do that.’”

In 1990, a 4-H museum was opened in Roland, with McDonald’s ribbons forming part of the collection of memorabilia from all over North American trophies, uniforms, banners, records, scrapbooks and articles of clothing made as 4-H projects.

The Boys’ and Girls’ Club model developed in Manitoba spread across Canada faster than weeds in a neglected potato patch. The range of project areas expanded, incorporating farm-related subjects from mechanics and farm vehicle repair to cooking, sewing and home decorating. Each club had a particular focus, such as calves, potatoes or clothing. Members met regularly to talk, work on projects and organize group activities.

Volunteer leaders worked with club members, each of whom was responsible for completing his or her own project. In the autumn, when the projects were judged by the volunteer leaders, the children received achievement tags, with the best projects being sent to wider competitions or displays. When they had collected enough achievement tags, members were rewarded with special field trips to big cities, where they toured cookie factories or meat processing plants. Sometimes, there were even train trips to Ottawa for a visit to Parliament.

By 1924, provincial delegations were travelling by train to Toronto to compete at the annual Royal Agricultural Winter Fair. In 1931, a national body of government and business sponsors was formed to “foster, promote and develop” the club members’ work, to coordinate club work and to arrange for trips, prizes, scholarships and programs at the national level.

Almost from the beginning, public-speaking competitions were an important aspect of the club, helping young people learn how to handle themselves confidently in front of audiences. Junior leadership training programs sprang up to foster future leaders, and the results were obvious: professors at agricultural colleges could effortlessly pick out the articulate, confident former club members in their classes of would-be farmers.

Boys’ and Girls’ Club membership became a Canadian rural family tradition. Erieh Phillips’s family was typical. Living in the small village of Ama- ranth, Man., Phillips led clothing projects for nine years in the 1930s, teaching sewing to club members, including her daughter Myrtle.

At 14, Myrtle took over leadership from her mother and taught for three years. Later, Myrtle married a blacksmith, Eric Rudd, moved to Roland and raised two daughters, both of whom joined the organization. The daughters, Susan and Jody, eventually became leaders. Susan had one daughter and Jody had four — all became members.

Today, in between tending grandchildren not yet old enough to join 4-H, a wiry, energetic 72-year-old Myrtle still handles odd jobs for local 4-H clubs and is on the museum’s board of directors. “The organization has been a big part of my life,” she says. “I try to stay involved and help out wherever I can.” Myrtle’s 4-H-garnered sewing expertise is visible in the huge quilt she made from men’s ties, which now hangs in Roland’s 4-H museum. Each quilt square is made of ties from a local 4-H family.

It was 1957 when the Boys’ and Girls’ Club adopted the 4-H name. The name change came from William Bouchier, president of the Northern Educational Association of Iowa, where 4-H put down roots in 1902. Bouchier described the organization as “building up the character of the children... by means of the three Hs — head, heart and hand.” Head ("think, plan and reason"); Heart ("be kind, true and sympathetic"); and Hand ("be useful, helpful and skilful") were joined by a fourth, "Health ("fight disease, enjoy life and make for efficiency")."

In 1989, Canada’s Centennial year, 94,527 young people across Canada were busy working on 4-H projects, their collective motto “Learn to do by doing.” One of them was 10-year-old Dwanye Grover of Beeton, Alta. (population roughly 40). As a proud member of the beef club, Grover raised a calf every year for more than a decade. Then, at 21, rekindling a childhood interest in horses, he became a leader of the Rainbow Riders 4-H horse club in Beeton. Today, he leads the province-wide 4-H equine advisory committee. “It’s a great thing for kids and a fantastic thing for teenagers,” he says of 4-H. “With other activities you often need to have a talent to belong. With 4-H, you may..."
never get your horse ready for competition or finish your sewing project, but you’re still going to be able to belong, to be part of something.”

Grower, whose 10-year-old son, Lucas, is currently in 4-H, is not surprised that membership in the organization is on the rise again, having declined after peaking in 1972. “People need a sense of community,” he says, “and communities need leaders. We look around at people who are on town councils or running the parent-teacher associations — they’re often, particularly in small communities, people with 4-H backgrounds. Communities need that.”

The national and international exchange programs are proving extremely valuable in building people’s leadership skills.

Amy Dickerson, who lives on a farm near Palmerston, Ont., went to Saskatchewan seven years ago and was “boggled” by the size of farm equipment used on huge Prairie spreads. In 1997, she was among 45 young people from all over the world to visit Great Britain through 4-H. With four other Canadian delegates, Dickerson met young people from Ireland, Austria, New Zealand, central Europe, Sweden and the United States during the initial week they all spent together attending an international 4-H rally in Edinburgh, Scotland. Then, over the course of six weeks, she lived with five different families in the south of England.

“It was a wonderful way to see the country,” she says. “And I learnt a lot about agriculture.” But she learnt even more about herself and the world. “I’d just finished my first year at university and was looking to find out more about the world and about how people communicate. It was a great experience, because everyone else there was looking for the same thing.”

Now 21, Dickerson feels her future doesn’t lie on the farm, but she says the skills she learnt through 4-H will serve her no matter where she goes in life.

“I’m a firm believer in 4-H,” she says. “The whole goal of it is to teach people about themselves and to make them feel confident. It’s really empowering for young people heading out into the world, trying to find jobs.”

Lucy Duke discovered 4-H when she and her family moved from the city of Markham, Ont., to the small rural community of Thornloe, Ont., in 1975. She became a leader in life-skills projects like cooking, sewing and crafts and then became the Ontario 4-H Council’s full-time manager. Duke believes the support of organizations like the Imperial Oil Charitable Foundation is essential to the future of 4-H and that what is particularly important to the organization’s success in the future is skilled leadership. Says Duke: “I always say, if you find leaders, the members will come.”

Imperial has supported 4-H programs since 1946 and for more than a decade has provided annual seed funding for the 4-H Technical Knowledge-Opportunity (TKO) program, which offers training forums and seminars designed to sharpen 4-H leader’s skills and teach them more effective ways of passing knowledge on to the young people they lead. “Leaders don’t necessarily have all the knowledge or skills required by their role,” says Duke. “They need training to understand how to teach material to young people and they need to have a good understanding of the material itself.” The program offers seminars that touch on a range of subjects from how to judge projects to the maintenance and repair of high-tech farm equipment.

Michael Ornstein operates a small Charolais cattle breeding operation near Lindsay, Ont., and has been a 4-H leader for 13 years. In 1999, he attended a TKO program in Ontario developed to take leaders through 4-H’s new, 6-centimetre-thick manual on state-of-the-art techniques for raising beef cattle. “There were about a dozen of us at the seminar,” he says. “We got walked through the manual and traded tips on new ways to keep the kids interested and involved.”

On a warm southern Ontario summer evening, Ornstein has finished baying for the day and is preparing for a field trip with his 4-H group (he heads a number of 10- to 20-year-olds) the next day. They will visit a cattle auction and a feedlot. “The program’s not just about raising calves anymore,” he says. “You raise the calf, all right, but through that you learn all about the industry — marketing, economics.”

The TKO program “represents important investments in the future of young people, in Canadian agriculture and in society,” says John Mathers, corporate contributions associate for the Imperial Oil Charitable Foundation. “What better way is there to invest in the future than by supporting programs that develop the adults who are helping to nurture tomorrow’s leaders?”

STEPHANIE DUCK AND MISTLE RUDD continue to live in Roland (pumpkin king Edgar Van Wyck died in 1994, and Walter McDonald, active and happy to entertain visitors until his last days, died in November). Rudd is as busy as ever. And Stephanie is exuberant about life, stepping into the future a wise and confident young woman, thanks in part to her 4-H experience.
A Boy on Bob Skates

A Canadian poet remembers the days of his youth
BY AL PURDY

There is a time in our lives when we are neither old nor young, but can float between the two ages and live mentally in either one or the other. For both are real, because things that happened once are real for ever; they still exist somewhere back in time and cannot be changed or altered.

In 1921, when I was three years old, I had my photograph taken by a professional photographer. He seated me at a little table on which sat a white stuffed rabbit. The rabbit looked at me as if it yearned for its mother, then fell off the table. My own mother had dressed me for this occasion in a Little Lord Fauntleroy suit, which I hated. It had a ruffled collar and sleeves. I was afraid other kids would see me dressed like that and I would never hear the last of it. But nobody saw me except my mother, the photographer, the cameraman, and me. I still have that photograph; it represents my first memory.

On the other side of that little boy with bare knees is an uncomely blacksuit. White barbershop slides floats between me and something else, but I don't know what that something else is. It's still there, if I could just remember. The photograph is a doorway I can go beyond.

Trenton, Ont., in the 1920s: a town of nearly 6,000 people, east and west separated by a wide, wide river. Rainbows floated over the water from a cre- ceate works upriver. Travel on the dirt roads was a mixture of early motor cars along with horse-drawn sleighs and heavy sleighs in winter, and buggies, carts and wagons in summer. Coal oil lamps were still used to light some houses. The streetlights had just come to our neighbourhood. Each had an aureole of moths and flying insects; the surprised birds sang all night, not knowing when bedtime was.

Trenton had been a logging centre in the 19th century and still had shipyards, a cooperage mill and harbour facilities when I was a boy. Across the road from our house was a pump maker's shop. Inside, a very old man made wooden pumps for farmers' wells. I don't suppose the "old man" was more than 40, but he had a bad temper and seemed much older to me.

A block away on the land side of the river was a little bakery; on certain days you could follow the delicious odors out to their source and might even be lucky enough to receive a taste of sticky buns.

Yoore's blacksmith shop was a block away from our house on the river side. Sometimes getting in the way of grown-ups, I used to stand in the doorway watching horses being shod, seeing sparks like fireworks in the dark darkens.

And the beautiful horses—did I think of them as animals, but a different sort of resident in this place where I was still a stranger.

During winter, the river ice was my playground. At six years old, I owned a pair of bob skates, the like of which I've never seen since. They consisted of twin metal blades, which were strapped onto your boots. Those double blades on each foot made turns and stops difficult.

Later on, I wore toe skates and played pick-up hockey with other kids. We used rocks or tree branches to mark the goal posts and rocks or frozen horse droppings for pucks. Sometimes snow had to be removed from the ice, but often it was a sheet of clear silver black. On very cold, bright days your breath was a white cloud in front of you, your shadow on the ice twisting and turning to follow the sun.

I never did learn to make the ankles turn and stop in a shower of ice chips that pro hockey players and some of the other kids could execute so easily. Even when older I couldn't stop quickly, sometimes not at all. And it might as well be admitted, I was a lousy hockey player. When the captains chose up sides for a pick-up game, nobody wanted me.

Later on, when I added weight and height, I tried to bodycheck like Red Horner of the old-time Toronto Maple Leafs and generally missed altogether.

Being mostly a one-way skater as a young boy, I sometimes went long distances in one direction, whizzing down the Trent River to the bright unknown world of the Bay of Quinte.

When winter was far advanced and the ice clear of snow, I'd skate south towards Prince Edward County, five kilometres away. The sun was strong enough to burn your face if it was left exposed. And great wandering clouds were reflected on the ice, as if the sky was turned upside down and you were gliding among great cloud counties. Far out in the silence, blood whispering in the cold, the dream of yourself slowly coming awake.

In late January and February, when the ice was strongest and thickest, the ice-cutter saw huge chunks of frozen water from the Bay of Quinte, loading it onto massive sleds destined for a big ice house in Trenton. (All this, of course, was in the days before home refrigerators.) A privileged kid, I'd ride the sleds, their bells jingling, behind rhythmic, clumping teams back and forth to town, perched proudly on a block of ice, while the bored trans- porters set new long-distance tobacco-selling records.

At the ice house, across the road from where I lived, the chunks of ice were levered onto steel conveyer rollers and imprisoned in elevator cages while horses supplied motive power to haul them up to a dark cave inside the building. And small neighbour- hood boys watched with rapt faces as massive glittering diamonds disappeared in swift darkness to await the housewives' summer.

In deep surreto weather, the ice would speak to me in an awesome voice, much different from the sky voice of thunder and lightning. Late at night, I'd sneak out of the house and go to the river, cold fire burning in my bones, my half-Italian dog, Gyp, accompanying me, over past the ice house to Bron- son's dock—and listen, listen, listen while the ice voice spoke to me (as the dog grew more and more uneasy). Standing on the ice, you feel a deep quiver of less than stillness and more than sound. Some- thing ripples from a far shore that may be some other
country. Or another world? Ice splitting in agony and ecstasy. When I was six, seven and eight years old, I was scared of that ice voice, but deeply attracted to it as well. I didn’t want anyone to explain it to me either; I didn’t want to know any more than I did.

How old was I when I fell into that sewer outlet? Not more than eight, it seems to me now. A grey pond about six metres wide, the outlet was some three blocks from our house. It never froze over, even in the coldest winter, and the ice around the pond’s edge was kept thin by the moving water pouring from a big metal pipe. One day I was standing on this ice; it broke under my feet, and I was pitched into the water. Most of a century later, I still say, "GAHSH!!"
The striking thing was that sewer outlet was over my head, but not very much. I’d stick, my feet would touch the bottom, and I’d give a little jump, raising my head above water. I’d glad a quick breath and make a grab for the ice edge at the same time. Three or four times I grabbed the ice where it was too thin; it broke off and I had to try again. Eventually, I was able to kick my feet high enough to either sidestep onto the ice, and I crawled out, dripping and freezing, onto the nearby street. Maybe it sounds as if I was calm and collected—but, no, I was scared to death. I can’t remember my mother’s face when she first saw and sniffed me, which is just as well.

In the early 1930s I fell in love with hockey and the Toronto Maple Leafs, especially the "Kid Line"—Jackson, Primeau, Conacher—and the lustily body-checking defenceman Red Horner. As a direct consequence of this adoration, I spent my spare moments at the Trenton garbage dump on the Bay of Quinte shoreline. I went there at least a couple of times a week, searching for Bee Hive Golden Corn Syrup labels. The syrup manufacturer would send you hockey players’ photographs if you mailed in labels. I must have had pictures of every player in the old six-team National Hockey League; not tiny snapshots either, but life-size photographs with cardboard backing. One of the town characters, Crazy Joe Brill, lived in a one-room shack amid the garbage. A strange-looking man with a lantern jaw and a seemingly permanent week’s beard, he’d built the place himself with scrap lumber and flattened tin cans. Sometimes kids would follow him down the street, yelling derisively, "Crazy Joe, Crazy Joe." In response he’d go, "Aw-aw-aw" maquaquely.

Was he crazy? I don’t know, but when a film comes from the big city was making a movie called Carey On Sergeant, Joe got a job as an extra.

During my first year of high school at Trenton (after a year at Alberni College), I was the only student at the school in Belleville, Ont., because my mother didn’t think I’d escape grade 8 otherwise. I took part in track and field sports and played football. I was also writing poems and going to female students with mooncolored eyes. I wasn’t much of a runner, but I could jump.

At age 15, I was one of the two largest players on the football team but weighed and cameraderie from fast growth—I’d shot up suddenly to more than six feet. My position on the team was centre. I’d snap the ball to the quarterback, then leap forward to meet the charging enemy.

Two occasions remain especially memorable to me. When we were playing another high school from a town north of Trenton once, the fullback on the opposing team aimed himself directly at me several times. I suppose his thought was that if he knocked me out of the game, we wouldn’t be able to score until the next kick, which was a moment. I’d see him coming. We’d meet at the line of scrimmage; the force of this guy’s charge was enough to drive though right out of my head. We’d stand there facing each other for a moment after the collision, shocked and unsteady on our feet. He hit me so as he was bowling off. Of course, I felt some pride that I stopped him after three such meetings, it seemed to me that he was stupid not to attempt to ram a weaker spot in our line.

The game with Belleville was the most important contest of the Trenton year. Their players were larger than ours and probably better, since they had more students to choose from. This particular year, it had rained for a couple of days before the game. If we stepped on the wrong spot, our boots picked up huge mud pies. As a result, the game seemed to be played in slow motion, players staggering around with great clumps of mud on both feet. Everyone was exhausted.

By half-time I think we expected to lose—the score was already lopsided. That’s said to be the wrong attitude. Perhaps, but it’s realistic. I think Belleville went undefeated that year, playing mostly smaller schools. One of the teachers accused me of not giving my utmost, and I wondered if I was right. I pointed to some blood on my face; blood appeared to satisfy him. Strangely, this guy died suddenly a week or so later. I’ve forgotten his name now and the reason for his death.

I suppose the foregoing sums up my athletic career; but it doesn’t tell the whole story, really. Only in football did I have much sense of competition with anyone. Usually, the game was simply the game and was happy failing that grade 10 exams allowed me to play an extra year of high school football. There was a nearly mindless exhilaration to it; meeting that big fullback at the line of scrimmage, the collision, then staring at each other’s strange faces while the world grew silent, as if we were close friends. Then never meeting again.

Standing on black ice in the middle of the Bay of Quinte while the sky floated upside down under my feet, I could hear the crack of explosive ice language—a sound like artillery. Ice language. On the river it was muted and different than at the bay. Sometimes the river ice would split, the sound coming directly under your body, as if unseen beings were surrounding you. There was fear, but also delight in being there, a boy encountering earth voices and ice music.

The crash and bang of thunder and lightning also attracted me. Sometimes I stayed on the house veranda during storms at night in order to be struck somehow like a pie or butterfly or bee buzzing on bone and flesh. Nothing I say about the river’s voice satisfies me; it’s as if I haven’t understood something that was trying to speak to me.

I recall, when I was more or less an adult, being on my knees at night with a flashlight, crawling along the rocky shore of Robin Lake, seeing transparent ice crystals being born. A freezing wind I hadn’t felt in my absorption attacked my weak flesh, until I scrambled shivering into the house. And at the early Nineties, when the earth was still fairly warm, I remember large snowflakes like small white boats drifting down to earth at midnight. I was alone. Ice was lying precariously close for bed. On sudden impulse, I rushed outside naked into the warm cold, feeling snowflakes tugging on my shoulders.

Was it curiosity about what things feel like? I suppose so. But questions became answers, and answers more questions.

When I was 15 or 16, I started to swim across the river in midsummer. Halfway across, I once met this girl swimming towards me. She turned around and came with me. All the way to the other side. Both schools lined the water’s edge; we went into one of them and set on a narrow wooden ledge, scarcely saying a word. I really don’t know if we spoke or not, but suppose we must have. We stayed there for half an hour, sitting side by side as if under a spell, aware that something strange was happening. The girl was probably a year or two younger than me. She wore a cotton bathing suit, the kind that stuck to you when wet like another skin. We were children, but not children. Both of us enthralled by the other’s presence. After a while, the continued silence on the narrow wooden ledge became uncomfortable. I swam back across the river, still slightly hypnotized.

All these childhood episodes still exist somewhere in time. They are listed with invisible ink in record book that does not exist. The paradox is deliberate, since I can still return to that other country. And my curiosity about things, comprehensiveness, is transformed by an awareness that they only happen once and cannot be repeated, only remembered.
A History of Innovation

Joining Imperial Oil in 1924, Reginald Stratford established the company's research department. The Sarnia Research Centre is now the oldest and largest petroleum research facility in Canada.

BY GORDON WONG

Reginald Kelmarsh Stratford was frustrated. Seven months of hard work had to be thrown out the window because of a silly clerical error. It was an honest mistake, the type that probably happened every day in libraries all over the world, but that still didn't make the doctoral student feel any better.

It was 1922, and Stratford, then in his mid-twenties, had spent seven months doing research for his PhD in chemistry at the Université de Lyon in France under Victor Grignard, winner of the 1912 Nobel Prize for chemistry, when he discovered a thesis almost identical to the one he was planning to submit. The paper had been mailed and therefore hadn't shown up at the university library when he'd done his initial search.

Because every PhD thesis must involve original research, Stratford was forced to find a new topic and start from scratch.

Eventually, the intense young man decided to do his doctoral thesis on the catalytic cracking of pure hydrocarbons, an abstract idea from which the French chemist Eugene Houdry would develop, in 1936, the first catalytic cracking process for crude oil, which is still in use around the world today.
By 1951, Stratford had expanded his one-man operation into an 83-person technical and research department.

“Every improvement that was developed during this period resulted in reducing the cost to the manufacturer and at the same time improving the quality of the product,” explained Stratford. As recognition of the value of research grew, so too did Imperial’s research department. By 1951, Stratford had expanded his one-man operation into an 83-person technical and research department.

“Dr. Stratford had very high standards and expectations,” says Clark Henry, current manager of the Sarnia Research Centre. “He set the culture and standards for the researchers who were to follow him. Over the last 75 years, these high standards have endured. Take safety, for example – our record is among the best in the industry.”

Today, the research centre’s staff comprises about 700 people, including 150 research scientists with advanced academic degrees.

The Sarnia Centre is one of two research facilities operated today by Imperial. With a focus on the company’s business goals, the Sarnia Research Centre concentrates primarily on the development of lubricants and specialty products, such as engine oils, greases and asphalts, and on providing technical support to Imperial’s operations. Imperial’s western facility, the Calgary Research Centre, focuses its efforts mainly on developing improved methods for recovering heavy oil. In 1998, Imperial’s expenditures on research and development in Canada amounted to $45 million.

Located in three buildings and including more than 11,000 square meters of laboratory space, the Sarnia Research Centre is equipped with some of the most modern and complex scientific equipment in the country and has a technical library that includes more than 16,000 books and journals and is linked electronically to scientific information sources around the world. Built at a cost of $40 million, the Sarnia Process and Automotive Research Centre, or SPARC, as it is more commonly known, is part of the overall research centre. It is one of the most comprehensive facilities of its kind. Here, researchers perform a wide variety of tests on lubricants used in gasoline, diesel and alternative-fuel engines.

In the darkened control room, a bank of computers and monitoring equipment throws off a greenish glow. On one side of the room, a broad window overlooks a testing area where the engine of a large diesel truck can be heard idling. This is the home of the all-weather chassis dynamometer. One of the most sophisticated pieces of equipment at SPARC, it is unique in Canada. The dynamometer is used to test products like fuels and lubricants under controlled road conditions. From the control room, evaluators can test products in vehicles ranging from small passenger cars to large diesel trucks running at speeds of up to 150 kilometres an hour and at temperatures ranging from -40°C to 45°C without ever leaving the building or waiting for the weather to change.

Today, the truck, minus its trailer, is scheduled to test the cold-weather performance of a new diesel fuel formulation. At the centre of the control room, Patrick Lai, head of the automotive test section of SPARC, is deep in conversation with a man dressed in a winter parka.

When Lai was first hired 17 years ago, he was unlike many of the other research scientists at the centre in that he was not a chemist or chemical engineer but a mechanical engineer. Hired to perform automotive testing of products in the research and development stage, Lai is now widely regarded as one of the world’s leading experts on engine test procedures.

“Our product at this centre is information,” he says. “The data we collect will help our researchers develop better and more cost-effective products.”

[AT LEFT, ABOVE] THE ALL-WEATHER CHASSIS DYNAMOMETER TESTS FUELS AND LUBRICANTS.

(RIGHT) CLARK HENRY, MANAGER, SARNA RESEARCH CENTRE.
The development of lubricants and fuels is one of the great untold innovation stories of the 20th century.

Sarnia have played a key, although often unrecognized, role in the industrial and social growth of this country. The development of lubricants and fuels is one of the great untold innovation stories of the 20th century.

While many accept the convenience provided by modern machinery, very few people probably think twice about the fuels or lubricants that allow it to operate. High-quality fuels that enable vehicles to run trouble free and lubricants that grease the heavy machinery used to perform all manner of operations, from mining raw materials and running assembly lines to generating electricity, generally seem to be given little consideration.

But without lubricants or fuels, the Wright brothers would never have been able to develop the Model T automobile or the assembly line that enabled it to be mass-produced. Indeed, without these products, much of modern everyday life would literally grind to a halt.

Since 1924, Imperial researchers in Sarnia have been awarded 720 patents for inventions that have ranged from Unioil, Canada's first fuel-economy motor oil, to Esoluble HPM, a high-performance diesel lubricant, to Canada's first premium unleaded gasoline. These innovations have also included a number of processes widely considered to be landmark developments in the refining and manufacturing of petroleum products.

Processes such as phenol extraction and suspended cracking, whose names are hardly known to us, were developed by Imperial scientists and have been instrumental in the evolution of higher-quality lubricants and better grades of gasoline.

Phenol extraction was developed in 1929 by Sarnia and was considered the most important technological advance of its time. The process involves using phenol to remove unwanted components from feedstock used to manufacture lubricants.

The new process gave Imperial the ability to produce high-quality lubricants on a large scale. For consumers, one such early product was Marvelube, the first lubricant specifically for automobiles. "The new Marvelube developed in Imperial Oil research laboratories is engineered for the faster, hotter running engines of today," touted advertisements in the 1930s.

Until the development of the phenol extraction process, lubricant manufacturing processes often resulted in thick green oil that, more often than not, contained deposits that caused engine wear, particularly on the cylinder walls. The average life of an automobile engine in those days was less than 50,000 kilometers.

Stratford's phenol extraction process left the oil a rich amber color. As George Guir, who succeeded Stratford as head of the research department, stated in a 1956 interview, Imperial had a difficult time convincing the public of the quality of its new motor oil. "The strange part of the story is that we had the devil's own job selling it," said Guir. "The motorist was suspicious of the high color and maintained that it looked too thin to lubricate."

The phenol extraction process developed by Stratford would remain a key aspect of refining for more than 40 years and by 1970 would be used in the manufacture of about 40 percent of the world's lubricants. Today, the phenol extraction process is still in use around the world.

Researchers at the Sarnia facility would also play an important role during the Second World War, developing suspended cracking, a process that produced a component crucial to the production of synthetic rubber. With traditional sources of rubber unavailable, the process helped Canada meet most of its "rubber" production requirements during the war.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, scientists from the research centre responded to a demand by customers for a single lubricant that would fulfill the requirements normally met by two or more products. One grease, for example, that would work well on machinery that operates at high temperatures and also be resistant to water.

Research at Sarnia became focused on meeting this demand, and in 1952, Imperial patented Esso Multipurpose Greases, which were quickly adopted and sold throughout the world.

In the 1950s, the tradition of innovation has continued with the development of a lubricant for the American space program. "We received a call from a customer asking if we could develop a special grease for the reaction wheel assemblies used in satellites," says Henry. "The product would need to meet extremely rigid specifications. Not much was needed – about 20 kilograms in total. Imperial scientists got to work and were able to develop the needed lubricant."

Although not always as exotic as creating lubricants for satellites, product development continues to be the central activity at the Sarnia Research Centre. Every year, new industrial oils, greases and engine and drive train lubricants are developed. In the past decade alone, Imperial researchers have created a new generation of lubricants for natural-gas-powered engines; all-weather drive train and hydraulic lubricants; a premium unleaded gasoline that reduces intake-valve deposits; and a range of improved synthetic greases. In fact, today Imperial markets more than 500 lubricant and specialty producers to meet Canada's diverse needs.

Jason Gao is a little nervous this morning. He's not used to being in the spotlight. Gao is one of the new generation of researchers at Imperial's Sarnia facility. With a PhD in polymer and colloid science from Nova Scotia's Dalhousie University, Gao joined the department after postdoctoral work.
Without lubricants or fuels, Henry Ford would never have been able to develop the Model T automobile or the assembly line that enabled it to be mass-produced.
An Eleganty Simple Idea

From the rail gangs and lumber camps of the early 1900s to the inner cities of today, Frontier College has been fighting illiteracy for a century.

BY LARRY KROTTZ

On a frosty afternoon early in 1903, the story goes, at Hal's Lumber Camp on the rugged coast of Georgian Bay, a young teacher named Angus Gray became bored waiting for the lumberjacks to finish their day's work and come to the reading class he offered each evening. Gray was engaged by a fledgling organization called the Canadian Reading Camp Association. Through the work of volunteer teachers and travelling libraries, the association's founder, a Presbyterian minister named Alfred Fitzpatrick, was determined to bring the light of learning to the mainly immigrant workers who populated the lumber camps and made up the rail gangs. But Gray decided that rather than wait patiently all day in his empty classroom, it might be more useful if he were to join the men at their work. So he found an axe and marched off into the forest to cut timber.

For the four-year-old association, Gray's gesture solved two problems. It created a natural connection between the instructor and the workers, who at the end of the day were supposed to become his students. And it offered the means by which an organization with a shoestring budget might ensure its teachers got paid—the lumber companies could pay them for cutting timber, leaving Fitzpatrick and the church congregations who supported him one less thing to worry about. Gray had made his mark on Canadian education history, creating the role of the labour-teacher.

On a searing July day in 1999, Brent Poultton, coordinator of labour-teachers for Frontier College, is driving along the busy Queen Elizabeth Way towards a fruit farm on the Niagara Peninsula. With him is Anita Herron, a 28-year-old University of Toronto physics student. By late afternoon, after dropping her bag onto a lumpy bed in a stuffy trailer that will be her home for the next three months, Herron finds herself picking peaches. As in 1903, the other workers are largely foreign born. Herron will be joined later by another labour-teacher, Carol Stron, from the Université de Québec in Montréal, and like Angus Gray a century ago, when the day's work is done, they will give classes to their co-workers.

This year, the Canadian Reading Camp Association, which since 1920 has been answering to its much better known name, Frontier College, reached its 100th birthday. The dream of its founder to bring reading, writing and education to the Canadian frontier has been fulfilled beyond his most optimistic expectations. Into the Depression relief camps of the 1930s, Frontier College sent 200 volunteers a year, who were instructed by principal Edward Bradwin not to "enlarge unduly in your talks upon unemployment which boests so closely the men and women about you. Align yourself in your thinking with... responsible men and women of the country who are sincerely endeavoring to better things."

In the 1970s, the organization had unabashedly set out to "combat Bohemianism" by preaching the glories of Canadian values and proficiency in English and French to the largely immigrant populations working in Canada's mines, on rail gangs and at construction sites. In 1977, the college's work was recognized when it was awarded a prestigious literacy medal by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Since the days when Angus Gray unwittingly introduced the idea of the labour-teacher, Frontier
College has continued to place university students alongside whatever is doing the hardest, dirtiest work possible, expecting them to have enough stamina left at the end of the day to think of anything from English or French to the classics.

Over the years, there have been some famous volunteers. In 1911, a young Benjamin Spock, who came from Yale to work on a rail gang near Kenora, Ont., almost allowed a freight train to run over his workmates when he let his job as aignuma for an early hunch. However, as the years have passed, and the number of 700 union teachers fulfilling their contract terms, who himself worked on rail gangs in the 1980s, calls "this elegantly simple idea." Things have changed a bit from the lumber camps of Finntar's day. With the exception of six who were assigned to prisons in Saskatchewan, 1999's labour-union teachers found themselves not on rail gangs or in lumber camps but on farms near Brantford, Ont., or in Manitoba, Quebec and Nova Scotia. (Programs do exist in the Far North, but they are staffed by professional teachers rather than university students.) Despite the change in work venues, Frontier College still brings with it a kind of passionate urgency.

Consistent with its endrun, the college continues to squeeze by on a modest budget (about $2.5 million supports 50 staff members and all its programs). Its headquarters are in an old house in midtown Toronto; its president is John O'Leary.

The free time O'Leary devotes to face to what people handicapped by their inability to read and write was in the mid-1970s. The young Carleton University graduate had taken a summer job teaching in a prison near Ontario. "It wasn't that anybody wanted to read simply for the sake of reading," he recalls now. "A guy I remember was an alcoholic who wanted to become sober, but he couldn't read the AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] handbook." A couple of years later, O'Leary heard about Frontier College, signed up and was then placed at another time in Manitoba. In 1991, he became the college's sixth president.

We might ask why we need Frontier College when there is universal public education. Three studies in the last 12 years, says O'Leary, peg the number of Canadians who can't read or write well enough to participate more easily in the world around them at 20 percent. "Illiteracy correlates with poverty," he states bluntly. "And child poverty is going up." This explains why Frontier College is now doing a lot of other things besides sending labour-teachers to work. It is not just in the heart of Canada's cities.

O'Leary explains that three profound changes over the last 25 years have affected Frontier College's outlook. The first has been a large-scale disappearance of the kind of work that doesn't require a formal education: fishing, surfing, agriculture and mining. Second, many of the young men and women who grew up through the cracks of our education system, she says, "so the need is still acute for literacy organizations that remain close to the ground and can reach out to people in every walk of life."

Throughout its 100 years, Frontier College has undoubtedly benefited its students greatly. But it has also done its own share of good and women and workers dark with some of the old-fashioned value, altruism. Anyone despairing about the values of the young can put such concerns to rest with one look at Frontier College. Each volunteer participates for his or her own reasons. For Susannah Van Damme from the University of Toronto, it was simple: "I really enjoy reading, and I couldn't imagine my job not being able to have that pleasure." Fellow student Peter Jan's motivation was more dramatic. On a trip to Germany, he had what he calls "the frightening experience of language study in a world where everyone speaks another language or can communicate. But Van Damme dismisses suggestions that she and others are doing anything noble or self-sacrificing. "Students are not that busy. If you have time to watch The Simpson one day a week, you have time to come out and help somebody else read." 22 Words 1999

"You don't learn to read and write just sitting at a desk in a classroom. You need support in your home and your community"
thought Kommos had the potential to shed a great deal of light on the extent of Minosian trade with its eastern and western neighbours—places like Sidrmos, Egypt, Crete and Syria. "The Shawos realized that excavating the site would be a costly, time-consuming exercise, but they sensed that the scholarly rewards would more than justify their efforts. Before excavation could begin, however, there were many obstacles to overcome. First, there was the problem of acquiring the site and obtaining the necessary approvals from the Greek government. That took 10 years," recalls Joseph Shaw.

"The landowners had planned to build a large hotel and bungalow development on the site and refused to allow us to conduct test excavations." Eventually, with the help of the Greek Archaeological Service, the property was expropriated.

Finally, in 1976, field work began at Kommos. Initially, the project was sponsored by the American School of Classical Studies at Athens (there being no Canadain archaeological institute in Greece at the time), but it has since been jointly funded by the University of Toronto, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

"Assisted by a team of local workers, the Shawos worked away at this massive undertaking, finding traces of a wall and some pottery. It soon became clear that they were excavating an extensive site. Annual excavations over the next decade or so were to reveal just how extensive. First there came to light a Minoan town built on a small hill overlooking the sea. It had owed much of its prosperity to its role as the major town of the nearby centres of Phaistos, Agia and Trona and of the vast Mesara plain. Then the excavations uncovered the harbor itself, which, clues provided by pottery recovered, had enjoyed widespread commercial connections throughout the Aegean.

Bordering the shore, the remains of three enormous structures were uncovered. Two of these were large, rectangular buildings, each with wings and a central court. The purpose of the third, a building with a series of long parallel galleries, remained a mystery, however. Until now, until Kommos suggested that the galleries could have been used to store local ships during winter. If this hypothesis is correct—and, although widely discussed, it has not been challenged by other archaeologists—it would make this structure unique in the archaeological record.

But one of the Shawos most exciting and significant discoveries was on a much smaller scale: the remains of a Greek religious sanctuary built around 1020 BC, after the Minoans had deserted their town. In fact, during the Greek and Roman period (1025 BC to AD 250), three temples were built successively on the site—the ruins of earlier Minoan buildings. "Together," says Joseph Shaw, "these temples, and the underlying Minoan palatial walls, represent an architectural assemblage unique on Crete, one that must be preserved intact."

And that, in fact, is precisely what the Shawos were determined to do. They have developed detailed plans for the establishment of an archaeological park at Kommos. The project will provide adequate facilities for visitors to the site, while at the same time ensuring the natural qualities of the environment and protect the excavations themselves from sand and erosion. As usual in these cases, finding remains a problem, but the Shawos are determined to see the park become a reality. "We simply cannot allow such important structures to be lost to future generations," says Joseph." As professional archaeologists, we have long passed the stage when individuals could dig up a site and perhaps help themselves to a few choice pieces. Every single artefact we have discovered at Kommos belongs to the Greek government. We are merely the temporary custodians and interpreters of what we find."

Archaeology is a demanding profession but a rewarding one. Ask Marie Shaw, who, in the process of re-collection and she restores. Perhaps it was the moment when she was the first person in 3,000 years to stand on a Minoan road worn smooth by the feet of travellers. But, no, she decides, it was finding a wall painting in a Minoan house. "I was excavating a close-sized space, one that had gone out of use while nearby rooms continued to be lived in. Suddenly, in the earth, I discovered plaster remnants with painted patterns: white lilacs gracefully bending their petals against a deep-yellow background, their petals drawn in fine red lines. I had been praying for such a find ever since excavation started. It was a magical moment."

The Shawos are noticeably modest about the project that has absorbed a great part of their lives. "Archaeology is very much a cooperative effort these days," says Joseph, "and requires many different disciplines. Kommos is a typical example of a multidisciplinary undertaking—many experts have contributed to our findings."

It is Joseph and Maria Shaw, however, who, in archaeological circles, have become inextricably linked with Kommos, a site that has embraced an idea of great Cretoan discoveries. As international interest in the site increases, the Shawos, more and more, are coming to be recognized for their contributions to the knowledge of the many Minoan puzzles that still confront archaeologists. - Wayne Thomas
Nineteen forty-eight started out as a good year in Saskatchewan. The prices that farmers were receiving for their produce were at all-time high: wheat, for example, was selling for $2 a bushel; a pound of butter brought 60 cents. And because most people in the province were in one way or another affected by what happened in agriculture, this was good news for everyone. Eager to take credit for the healthy situation, the federal minister of agriculture proudly proclaimed that under his administration farmers were enjoying their highest returns in the history of the country. Scarcely were the words out of his mouth, however, when the grain markets took a nose dive. In February, prices dropped more severely in one week than during the market crash of 1929. And to make matters worse, the federal entomological laboratory forecast a grasshopper plague worse than anything Saskatchewan had seen in the previous decade. Such was the nature of life in a province governed by the cyclical fortunes of farming.

Given the ominous signs of a black year ahead, it was perhaps understandable that not many people paid attention to a little bit of government business that was taking place at the provincial legislature in Regina. There, on February 3, 1948, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) government of Tommy Douglas passed an order-in-council creating the Saskatchewan Arts Board. The following year, it passed an act that entrenched the board in provincial legislation.

The Saskatchewan Arts Board was unlike anything else in North America at the time. A public institution providing support to the arts, it predated the Canada Council for the Arts by nine years and to some extent may have helped to shape that agency. It also offered a template to other provinces, which in time would form their own organizations or government departments designed to support and encourage the arts.

The purpose of the arts board was "to make available to the citizens of the province greater opportunities to engage in creative activities in the fields of drama, visual arts, music, literature, and crafts, with qualified guidance and leadership, and to establish and improve the standards for such activities in the province." The minister of education, Woodrow Lloyd, who would later serve as premier of Saskatchewan and whose department was responsible for the new organization, expressed his hope that the arts board would pay particular attention to smaller communities, where the need for cultural experience was the greatest.

There was good reason for Lloyd’s concern. Nearly three-quarters of the population lived in rural areas, mostly on farms. Even if these people felt they could spare time from the incessant demands of their work to attend a concert or a play, they faced the daunting task of travelling, often great distances, over poor roads to a city where such a performance might take place. For most rural residents, experience of the arts was limited to what could be heard on the radio.

In the mid-1940s, a group of Saskatchewan artists and teachers had begun organizing to bring the arts to a wider audience within the province. And it was in that context that David Smith, then director of adult education for the Department of Education, conceived of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, using as his model the British Arts Council.

More than 50 years later, Smith is still very precise about the principles on which the arts board was based. "In my view, aesthetic experience and artistic activity are very important in the life of individuals and communities," he explains. "The arts are an essential part of communication; they are a way of expressing ideas and points of view. So in designing an adult education program, I felt very strongly that it should include artistic activity and that this activity should be directed by the people themselves. Decisions about what would take place would be determined by a board made up of people who wanted the arts to flourish. The public authorities, in turn, would provide the money to enable the board to function. The arts board would be a citizen-run, publicly funded institution."

Smith saw the arts as a basic human need. And in a public document prepared during its first year of operation, the arts board linked this need to the vitality of the country. "As in many other things, the quality of life of the people in the small towns, communities and cities of this country is the determining factor in cultural growth. If the cultural experience of the people in cities, towns and villages is thin and bare, no vigorous cultural life in Canada will be possible."

Recently, the Saskatchewan Arts Board celebrated its 50th anniversary. Although its budget has risen substantially (from $4,480 in 1948 to close to $4 million today) and it has broadened the scope of its activities over the years, the principles that guide the organization have remained essentially unchanged.

Today, the arts board provides grants to individual artists and to organizations such as theatre companies, orchestras, galleries, book publishers and film and video groups. It also supports a variety of activities, such as festivals and an artist-in-residence program, reaching into all areas of the province. Run by a board of 12 directors, it is governed by provincial legislation and receives its annual budget from the province.

Many of the things the arts board does today may, in fact, be based on precedents set during that very first year of operation. In 1948, for example, a young Saskatchewan pianist, Thelma Johanns, who had won a French government scholarship to study in Paris, was commissioned to give recitals in a number of rural communities. A group of drama students from the University of Saskatchewan was given a grant to perform in 80 towns and villages. An expert from Nebraska was brought in to give a series of lectures on art education. The arts board...
The grants are important, but equally significant is the psychological boost you get when your work is recognized by your peers.

Robin Schlacht, filmmaker

also began publishing a radio listening guide, which drew people’s attention to programs it felt included good cultural and educational content. It began investigating the possibility of creating arts scholarships for young people. It set up a committee to purchase local art in order to build up a permanent collection of work by Saskatchewan artists. And it actively encouraged the provincial government to support artists by purchasing their work for public buildings.

In addition, the arts board operated a kind of lending library, providing recordings to schools and community groups that couldn’t afford to buy their own. It was a service that proved to be very popular.

“This is that pest, Mrs. Dyckman, again,” begins one letter the board received in 1950 from a teacher in a small town. “We would like to have a social evening soon, possibly a whist drive and a little program, and I remembered the records that might be borrowed from the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Please send us anything suitable for some people who never listen to anything but cowboy music or Ukrainian songs. Not what they want but what they should have.”

At the arts board’s budget increased and its operations became more firmly established, programming expanded. In 1952, the board contracted W.O. Mitchell to run a summer writing workshop.

“Writing on your own back door step about your own region and your own people is the best piece of advice a writer can get,” the Prairie author told participants. Mitchell would continue these summer workshops for the next five years, and in turn, they would spawn workshops in other areas. In 1967, the arts board created a permanent summer program known as the Saskatchewan School of the Arts, which would operate for more than 20 years in the Qu’Appelle Valley.

The arts board has influenced the development in Saskatchewan of virtually every art form, and there is widespread acknowledgement that it has played an especially important role for writers. Guy Vanderhaeghe, who has twice won the Governor General’s Literary Award for Fiction, says, “When I started writing I was living hand to mouth, getting part-time jobs. So the grants were enormously important to me. I’m not saying I wouldn’t have become a writer without them – it’s just that the struggle would have been much more perilous and fraught with difficulties. Many things, like publishing houses, wouldn’t exist in the province today were it not for the arts board. In fact, the growth of the arts in Saskatchewan is almost commensurate with the amount of arts board support.”

Bonnie Burnard, who has won the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Best First Book and the Marion Engel Award, and who recently won the Giller Prize for A Good House, says briefly, “I wouldn’t be writing at all if I hadn’t been living in Saskatchewan when I was. She is currently living in London. [Ont.] The arts board helped me when I needed it and made writing a legitimate thing to do. For me, the arts board represents an important concept – that the arts are an important part of a community, just like health care.”

Similar sentiments have been expressed by artists in other disciplines as well. Says Robin Schlacht, a filmmaker: “The grants are important, but equally significant is the psychological boost you get when your work is recognized by your peers.

Awards to individual artists are based on recommendations from juries that are made up of artists in that field. That part of the award is as valuable as the cash itself.”

Elizabeth Raum, a composer who has received a travel grant to attend a premiere of her work in Nova Scotia, says, “The arts board is a terrific thing. It allows performance of new music to take place, and it gives you an opportunity for personal contact.” Another great thing about the arts board, says Raum, is that an organization wanting to commission a piece but without sufficient funds can apply to have the board cover the cost. She also applauds the fact that a consultant, with whom artists can discuss problems, progress and other matters, is available to them.

There is little doubt that over the years the arts board has served many people extremely well. It still has some work to do, however, in involving members of minority groups, particularly those belonging to First Nations and Métis communities.

In recent years, there has been a special effort to encourage more involvement by these groups. For example, an indigenous advisory panel has been set up.

“There certainly isn’t a widespread awareness of the arts board in the Aboriginal community,” says Gail Paul Armstrong, a literary and multidisciplinary arts consultant and one of three Aboriginal arts board employees. “But we are working hard to change that.”
In vaults at the Saskatchewan Centre of the Arts and displayed in a variety of locations around the province are the more than 2,400 pieces of art that constitute the board's permanent collection, an astounding array of paintings, sculptures, crafts (such as tapestries, ceramics, woodwork and jewelry), photography and video works, and almost every other kind of visual art imaginable. There are early works by painters Art McKay, Reta Cowley, Dorothy Knowles, Kenneth Lochhead and Wynona Mulcair, by sculptors Joe Fafard, Vic Cicakovsky and Robert Murray, and by a host of other artists who have made their mark in provincial, national and even international art circles.

The arts board began the collection in 1950, when it organized its first competition and bought three of the winning entries. Every piece in the collection has been catalogued in a data base that researchers can consult to get details about artists and their work. Most of the pieces are available for galleries and museums to exhibit, and for a rental fee, they are lent to government offices, public institutions and some private companies. Last year, works from the collection could be found in 55 different exhibition venues, principally galleries, arts centres and schools throughout the province.

In a small way, the permanent collection represents a glimpse into the changes in artistic tastes and values that have taken place in Saskatchewan during the past 50 years. "The early paintings are dominated by studies of landscapes, of still life, of human faces," says Ryan Arnott, who serves as the collection's preparator. "As the years went on, there was a shift from oil to acrylic. And then contemporary social concerns started to take over – native issues, feminism, gender issues. The art lost some of its specific Saskatchewan character and became more international."

The arts board has also played an important role in developing local audiences and, indeed, in creating a national willingness to support the arts.

In 1949, when the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (commonly known as the Massey Commission) came to Saskatchewan, it received a brief from the arts board explaining how it was constituted and its philosophy. The arts board also urged the federal government to form a national cultural agency. "The establishment of a National Arts Board is essential," the brief stated. "If balanced and integrated cultural development is to take place in Canada. The commission agreed, and eight years after that presentation, in 1957, the Canada Council was created.

Looking back over the history of the Saskatchewm Arts Board, one can't help but marvel at the commitment it took to get the organization started; a commitment that promised to give people more than just the bare necessities of life at a time when those necessities were in short supply. And today, when there are all manner of worthwhile causes, it's heartening to know that the arts board is still deemed worthy of support. Through its various programs it has not only enriched the lives of people inside and outside the province, but has set an inspiring example.

The EARLY PAINTINGS ARE DOMINATED BY STUDIES OF LANDSCAPES, OF STILL LIFE, OF HUMAN FACES.