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TALK chair Al Sabey, left, thanks former KPU Chancellor Arvinder Bubber for his inspiring talk at the AGM.

photo credit: Gerald Horne

AGM: TALK celebrates another successful year

Thanks to the dedicated efforts of volunteers and the generous support of KPU, TALK chalked up another successful learning experience in 2013–2014.

An inspiring talk by outgoing Chancellor Arvinder Bubber, the year in review and election of board directors were the key elements at the Annual General Meeting on Oct. 18.

As Gerald Horne, marketing chair and KPU instructor summed up: “TALK is good for our community, it’s good for us as individuals and KPU supports our efforts because it’s good for the university as well.”

Interesting courses abounded in 2013–14, membership held steady at nearly 400, special events were enthusiastically attended and the word was out about TALK.

Generous instructors from Kwantlen and the wider community who provided their expertise and enlightenment at no cost means that TALK is still cheap.

There were 18 courses presented in the fall and 23 in the spring session. History repeated itself during both terms with the most well-attended courses being Why Don’t We Learn From History? by perennial favourite Jake Newton in the fall and The Great Encounter: China and the West with Frank Abbott, another favourite, in the spring.

Other popular offerings included Benefits of Brain Training, Vancouver Noir, A Cruiser’s Perspective, Foot Health, Mindful Movement and Natural Health.

Philosophers’ Cafes in both Richmond and South Surrey continued to provide thought-provoking discussions for everyone possessed with a love of wisdom, ample good humour and healthy scepticism.

An entertaining luncheon concert in Richmond by the 45-member Delta Concert Band attracted 88 spectators. Due to popular demand, the band will perform another concert on April 18 at the Surrey campus.

The TALK board was also pleased to hold a Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in June to herald the hardworking volunteers on the Program Committee, the Philosophers’ Cafe committees, the Marketing Committee and KPU staff Shelley Strombold and Trina Ojo, among others.

Talking up TALK was a major impetus over the past year. Board chair Al Sabey made presentations to several community groups and marketing chair Gerald Horne implemented new initiatives including display ads in community recreation guides, Facebook ads to people aged 50-plus, ‘Eagle Eye’ video ads at KPU campuses and postcards for widespread distribution.

Hopefully, more people will tick TALK as part of their lifestyle than ever before.

Election of Officers

Al Sabey agreed to serve as chair for a third year.

Re-elected to the board were: Linda Coyle (treasurer), Jean Garnett, Janis Foster (newsletter), Gerald Horne (marketing), Liz King (secretary), Phil Warren. Newly elected were: Robin Heath and Karen Jensen. TALK extends its thanks to retiring board members Selma Swaab and Bhree Young.

There are several vacancies on the board which may be filled by appointment during the year.



Arvinder Bubber, centre, was awarded an honorary degree by KPU Chancellor Dr. George Melville, left, with President and Vice-Chancellor Dr. Alan Davis at the fall convocation. Other honorary degree recipients included Jane Adams, CEO of Surrey Memorial Hospital Foundation; retired Surrey School District Superintendent Mike McKay and Surrey Mayor Dianne Watts.

photo credit: KPU media

Bubber recounts KPU's milestones at AGM

At its Annual General Meeting on Oct 18, TALK was pleased to have Arvinder Singh Bubber, Chancellor of Kwantlen Polytechnical University as guest speaker. Mr. Bubber stepped down from his position as the first Chancellor of KPU in October. He presided at convocations and conferred all university degrees from 2008 to 2014.

In his talk Bubber reflected on his long association with Kwantlen dating back to 2001, the changes that took place during his tenure, the feedback relationship between Kwantlen and the communities it serves and the issues to be faced in the future.

Bubber, who has often said that education is his passion, witnessed a major step in Kwantlen's history—the attaining of full university status in 2008. KPU now has more than 17,500 students enrolled at its four campuses, 40,000 alumni and a \$130 million operating budget. KPU now offers bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, certificates and citations in more than 200 programs.

Prior to the opening of Kwantlen College in 1981, the region south of the Fraser River was underserved in terms of post-secondary education options. In addition to providing the region with accessible educational opportunities, KPU established a policy of being open to anyone who wanted to learn regardless of background and reached

out to the marginalized and those with disabilities. Bubber said that one of his greatest sources of gratification was graduating students with disabilities.

Bubber described how KPU and the local community have been mutually transformative. For example, the KPU Sparks Program identified at-risk Grade 11 students, met with their parents, brought the students to KPU one night a week and provided scholarships. The program started with 25 students.

As successive waves of students proceeded through the program, graduated from KPU and established professional careers, the concept and value of post-secondary education began to filter into the recent immigrant and marginalized communities. Encouraged by the success of the Sparks students, increased numbers from immigrant and marginalized communities started to enrol at KPU. The influx of non-traditional students presents “difficult and complicated work for the educators” as their needs are different from those of traditional students, Bubber said.

At this fall's convocation ceremony on Oct. 6, KPU presented an honorary degree to Arvinder Bubber. Honorary degrees are awarded in recognition of dignified achievements or outstanding service to the public.

Robin Heath | robiheath@gmail.com

Philosophers reflect on mad men

There was ample food for thought when a wrangle of philosophers gathered over lunch on Sept 11 at ABC Country Restaurant to chew on the question: “Have we moved forward or backward in the treatment of mental illness?”

Surrey Philosophers' Café facilitator of the day, Jane Diston, provided a comprehensive history of mental health, its criteria and cures throughout the ages.

Madness has been recognized and treated since ancient times, she noted. The Chinese viewed mental illness as an imbalance of yin and yang and treated it with herbs, acupuncture and emotional therapy. The Romans identified paranoia, mania, epilepsy and melancholia and treatments included baths, drugs, music and physical activity. Christian missionaries in Canada viewed mental aberrations as a spiritual dilemma requiring fasting, prayer and perhaps exorcism. For hundreds of years the mentally ill were locked away in asylums and possibly sterilized.

Psychoanalysis was developed by Sigmund Freud in the late 1800s. Lobotomies were a popular form of treatment from the late 1930s to the '60s. Electroconvulsive therapy (formerly electroshock) has been used to treat depression since the '30s.

“Mood” drugs, or antidepressants have been at the forefront of treatment for mental illnesses since the 1970s. Mental hospitals have been shut down and the mentally ill are now often homeless, penniless and self-medicating.

Participants weighed in on the current treatments for mental illness, the lack of funding, housing and accessible services.

“It's getting worse and not better.”

“It cost so much money to be inefficient.”

“We still like to put the mentally ill out of sight.”

“No one seems to be streamlining services.”

“I'd gladly pay more taxes. And if I need services I'd like them to be reasonably accessible.” “It's not a matter of pulling up your socks and going and getting a job.”

“Is it possible that our society is making us mentally ill? Society is still very violent – maybe it's endemic in our society that it will always give birth to insanity.”

As is always the case with Philosophers' Cafes, participants enjoyed stimulating dialogue without fear of judgment. Hesitant newcomers might heed the advice of bona fide philosopher Bertrand Russell: “Do not fear to be eccentric in opinion, for every opinion now accepted was once eccentric.”

Or, as Plato noted: “Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something.”

Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference.

Surrey Philosophers' Cafes are held on the second and fourth Thursday of the month at ABC Country Restaurant, 2160 King George Boulevard. Richmond Philosophers' Cafes are held on the first Thursday of the month at Steveston Hotel, 12111 Third Ave. Check the brochure or website for upcoming topics.

Janis Foster | janis.f@telus.net



It might be time to revisit your will

If there's a will, there's a way. Your way.

Your will is perhaps the single most important document you will ever sign.

"When you have assets or a spouse, you're never too young to have a will," said Notary Public Amarjit Kler. "A will gives you control over who, how much and when. If you have no will, the courts will decide how your estate is divided. It will not be your choice."

Kler was one of the speakers at a recent talk in White Rock titled 'Taking Care of Final Matters' and judging from the barrage of audience questions, it was a timely topic. The best time to prepare a will is now, before a crisis occurs, she noted.

A new Wills, Estates and Succession Act (WESA) came quietly into effect in B.C. on March 31, 2014, repealing previous legislation. You can now write a will at 16 years of age but a witness to a will must be 19 or older.

Among the most significant changes is that marriage no longer revokes a will. Previously in B.C., once a person re-married their will and the wishes it contained became void. Their will that might have designated their children as sole heirs would automatically change so that the first \$65,000 of assets would go to the new spouse with 2/3 of the remainder going to the children and 1/3 of the balance to the new spouse.

The law has been changed because too few people were aware of it. Now a marriage that occurs after the drafting of a will no longer revokes the will.

WESA also clarifies spousal relationships. A spouse is someone who is legally married or who has cohabited for two years in a "marriage-like" relationship. A spousal relationship ends when spouses live separately and apart for at least one year and when one has the intention of permanent separation.

Another new twist to WESA noted by Kler is that you must treat your spouse and children fairly in your will. If anyone feels unfairly treated in the will—even if the reasons have been documented—he or she has the right to contest the will.

An important consideration when making your will is designating an executor – this is the person responsible for administering your estate, arranging your funeral, proving the will, liquidating the estate, paying debts and taxes and distributing assets as the will directs. A spouse has first rights to be the executor. The person must be 19 years or older, be mentally capable and understand what it means to have power of attorney.

Kler suggested that it can be a good idea to appoint more than one executor, or alternatively, to appoint one and have an alternative if the first is unable or unwilling. An executor is entitled to be paid up to five per cent of the gross value of the estate.

If you designate a professional executor such as a notary, accountant or trust company, their professional fees will be deducted from the estate.

Tax reduction strategies are something you should discuss with your financial planner. However, Kler noted that joint ownership is good estate planning as the asset goes automatically to the survivor. Designate a beneficiary for your RRSPs and life insurance to bypass probate. Note that if you name your estate as beneficiary, it will involve probate fees. However, probate fees are lower than taxes.

Your advance planning documents should also include Power of Attorney, a Representation Agreement and Advanced Directive – and they should be completed while you are still capable, Kler said.

Power of Attorney allows a person appointed by you to manage your financial affairs. A Representation Agreement allows your appointed representative to make health care decisions for you. An Advanced Directive dictates your wishes for your healthcare when you are no longer able to communicate.

For more information on B.C.'s revised WESA contact a lawyer or notary public.

Janis Foster | janis.f@telus.net

If you die without a will

- Your estate may be divided in a way you may not have wanted.
- Someone will be appointed to administer your estate, rather than you choosing the person you want.
- Your assets may be frozen, which means no one has access to money or property until your estate is settled.
- A minor's inheritance may be frozen until he or she reaches the age of majority.
- Your estate or your heirs may have to pay taxes.

To volunteer with TALK contact

Al Sabey, Board Chair	604.538.3209	alsabey@shaw.ca
Jean Garnett, Program Committee	604.277.1130	jeangarnett@shaw.ca
Selma Swaab, Philosophers' Café	604.572.0682	selmaswaab@shaw.ca

TALK

Third Age Learning
at Kwantlen

Third Age Learning at KPU Newsletter

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