



## XVI SEMINAR FOR YOUNG DIASPORA RESEARCHERS IN VILNIUS

Growing up in America, diversity was inescapable. I was taught to celebrate the melting pot of cultures that makes up America today without ever realising that distinct and individual flavours can be lost in the melting process. My situation was not helped by the fact that I was a fourth generation American mutt, only realising my last name was distantly German, but potentially Slavic in origin. As far as I knew, my connections to the homeland were in Kentucky, not anywhere in Europe.

I often reflect on this question of my roots since so many people in Northern Europe ask if I have familial ties here – whether in Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania, everyone assumes I am some sort of Baltic-American. If I don't feel like explaining my convoluted path that led me to a Fulbright Fellowship in Estonia and Latvia this year, I simply answer, "Yes, my mother was Estonian," or some such. In fact, the majority of my relations with Balts in the States have been with

Baltic-Americans, who always prove to be formidable language partners. Like many of them, my primary interest in Baltic cultures was in the native lands themselves, not in the diaspora population. After all, Baltic-Americans were people I interacted with often. Balts living in their native countries were far off and could be easily romanticised in my head.

From November 7 to 9, I participated in the XVI Baltic Heritage Youth Seminar in Vilnius, Lithuania, an experience that markedly transformed my interest and opened my eyes to the richness of the culture, heritage, history, and significance of the Baltic diaspora. I am an art historian, focusing primarily on art in the Baltic and Nordic countries ca. 1890-1915. For the Vilnius seminar, Kristina Lupp and I presented a paper on the first ethnic Estonian artists living and working in America and Canada from 1900-1930. The overwhelming majority of scholarship on Baltic diaspora focuses on the post war era, and with good reason, as it witnessed the largest emigration of Balts in history. As such, we were particularly keen to find out more about how Estonian artists integrated

### IN THIS ISSUE:

- VEMU'S first contest "Preserving Our History" concludes in Toronto
- Estonians and Latvians from the Vologda-Vjatka Region – Irina Truškova
- Grand opening of the new season of the VEMU/Estonian Studies Centre
- English Speaking Life Stories Group Founded at Tartu College
- Estonian Studies Library Celebrates its 10th Anniversary
- Cultivating Remembrance – European conference puts Poland at the centre of Europe

### A Note from the Editor:

The submission deadline for the next issue is February 14, 2014. We welcome news articles, conference information, calls for papers, new publication information, and images. Please send articles in English with high quality images to:

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The Non-Profit Association Baltic Heritage Network was founded in Tartu on January 11, 2008. NPA BaltHerNet was established to foster cooperation between national and private archives, museums, libraries, and institutions of research, public associations and organizations collecting and studying the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora. It aims to facilitate the preservation and research of the historically valuable cultural property of the Baltic diaspora, as well as to ensure accessibility of these materials to the public. NPA BaltHerNet is also committed to the organising of conferences, seminars and workshops, and to developing and administering the electronic information website Baltic Heritage Network, a multilingual electronic gateway for information on the cultural heritage of the Baltic diaspora.

The Baltic Heritage Newsletter is distributed quarterly, on-line. The newsletter is compiled and edited by Kristina Lupp. Please send all related enquiries and submissions to Kristina Lupp: kriss.lupp@me.com  
www.balthernet.net  
ISSN 2228-3390

into North American cultural spheres and their success with American and Canadian artists. For instance, Andrew Winter (1892-1958), an Estonian-American painter, became particularly well known for his genre scenes of fishermen off the coast of Maine and imbued his paintings with subtle details that expressed both his Estonian heritage and his new-found New England identity.

Maarja Merivoo-Parro was the next presenter, discussing experiences of American-Estonian youth who were able to study primarily in Finland in the 1950s and 1960s. Particularly interesting, at least for me, was her discussion on conceptions of Estonia and Estonianess as perceived among diaspora communities in America, and how they changed and/or transformed throughout the students' experience in Finland, and, even, Estonia.

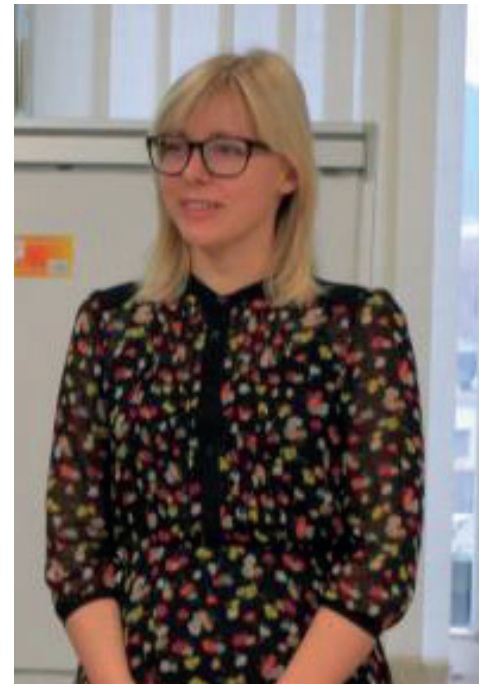
Methods of communication and contact between Estonians in the Soviet Union and those residing in the Vancouver area was the subject of Ann Aaresild's presentation. Her presentation was particularly insightful as the Vancouver Estonian community has certainly received less scholarly attention, despite its formative role in the Estonian diaspora on both a global and national Canadian plane. Aaresild's presentation was particularly fruitful in inspiring discussions about the importance of deliberateness—whether in what is said, particularly avoided, or communicated through a complex network of codes and secret meaning, again, an aspect applicable to analysing all diaspora connections with the USSR.

Three of the presenters from Latvia, Guntis Švitiņš, Inese Kalniņa and Laura Millere,

discussed Latvia and its diaspora in relation to DP Camps in Germany. Švitiņš gave a preview of what promises to be a truly unmatched resource for research concerning the Baltic diaspora in DP camps: a virtual exhibition entitled "Camps in Germany for Refugees from Baltic Countries, 1945-1950." The exhibition provides lengthy and painstakingly detailed texts in English, Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian about the everyday life and culture of Baltic DP inhabitants. Perhaps the greatest value of this forthcoming virtual exhibition is not its sheer scope and availability of hard to access resources—a factor itself which will surely earn numerous accolades—but rather the way in which it represents Balts' struggles to create a normal life—with high-standard schools, universities, plays, and even art exhibits—a factor which, at least for someone rather unfamiliar with DP camps, creates an entirely different picture than the arguably typical image of displaced peoples in immediately post-war Europe.

As many of you know, Latvia recently changed its citizenship laws in order to facilitate the acquisition of Latvian citizenship by people with (demonstrably) Latvian roots, whose relatives were displaced in the tumultuous events of the 1940s and 1950s. Claiming such roots, however, can often be difficult. It is for this reason that Kalniņa's and Millere's presentation on the central file cabinets of Latvians in Germany, ca. 1945-1950 was so timely and interesting.

**Bart C. Pushaw**



Maarja Merivoo-Parro





## VEMU'S FIRST CONTEST "PRESERVING OUR HISTORY" CONCLUDES IN TORONTO

On December 7th, all those who were instrumental in the triumph of Estonia's Heritage Year gathered in Viljandi, Estonia's Heritage City for a celebration. The year was a success, as evidenced by the 400 events that made it into the official calendar. In reality there were probably many more. Not all these events took place only in Estonia. Those who have lived abroad for many generations understand that one cannot retain nationality without culture or heritage. In addition to its regular activities, VEMU/the Estonian Studies Centre held its own Heritage Year events, such as lectures, workshops and exhibitions. At the start of the year, VEMU announced its first competition, where it hoped to receive submissions reflecting the food culture of Estonian Canadians and the history of their food shops and businesses.

Thirteen submissions were received for the competition, and eight of these came from the Toronto Estonian School. The results of the competition were announced on December 10th at the Bibliography Club's Christmas luncheon at Tartu College and that same evening at the Estonian School's Christmas party held at Toronto's Estonian House.

The jury members were: the chief archivist for VEMU, Piret Noorhane; the Toronto Estonian Secondary School Principal, Silvi Verder and VEMU's archival assistant Kadi Kuivits. What were the criteria used for judging? Substance and scope, of course, but also presentation, choice of additional materials (photos, recipes, and so on) as well as collaboration with family members. The submissions were reviewed as two distinct groups: students (all 14 – 16 years old) and adults.

Three monetary awards were given to students, as well as books. As the best submissions were equal in quality, the jury decided they should share the first and second prize. Nicole Pedé's work "An Ordinary Christmas" was based upon her grandmother Vilme Pedé's memories of Christmas on a farm in Estonia during the 1930s. Mark Pettinen's submission was titled "The Pettinen Family Food Customs and Traditions in Canada. Third prize was awarded to Liina and Erik Sadul for their submission "Preserving Our History" - a reflection on various aspects of Estonian life: camps, scouting, Estonian school, and customs associated with saunas, birthdays, and food, of course.



The remaining student submissions were rewarded with books. Maili Vessmann was commended for her well chosen illustrations of food, table manners and Christmas customs. Robi Cyrwus received a special award for the exemplary presentation of his family's food traditions. The work of Merike Hess was acknowledged for her collaboration with her grandmother Ivi Kiilaspea, whose recollections of life in Estonia, refugee camps in Germany, and the United States were included in her report. A special award was given to Silvi Raud for the originality of her chosen topic: How technology and changes in world politics have influenced how Estonians in Canada and Estonia communicate with one another. Annaliisa McConnville also received a special award for her presentation on camping. She examined the impact camps at Jõekäär, Seedrioru and Kotkajärve have had on her and her friends, as well as on other Estonians. Since all of the student submissions were from class #3 of the Secondary School, their teacher, Erika Kessa, received a thank you in the form of a book for the inspiration and guidance given to her students.

Five submissions were received from adults. Aino Müllerbeck wrote of her memories of time-honoured holiday and food customs in Estonia as well as in Canada. Some of these are very personal and are applicable only to her family. Her submission was illustrated with well-chosen photographs. Thanks also went to Reet Petersoo, who had gathered photos and facts relating to her father's, Felix Krabi's, food business, which operated under the names ESTO Bakery, ESTO Bakery Limited and ESTO Specialties Limited. This submission offered a lot of

The exhibition relating to Estonian food stores will be completed in 2014.



valuable information for the exhibition relating to Estonian food stores that will be completed in 2014. Further information for that exhibition was included in Kristiina Mai Valter McConnville's remembrances of working at Rooneem's Bakery as a young student. Maie Ilves offered memories of various Estonian food stores in Toronto. Also noted was the most original submission: Ellen Valter brought VEMU a bottle of ESTO beer.

As a thank you for its participation, the school's library also received gifts: a language game that should be useful in Estonian language classes and books of historical studies done by students from Estonia, which can serve as examples for participants in future competitions. A new contest with the prizes once again being provided by Tartu College will be announced early in 2014. The topic will be "70 Years since the Great Escape to the West".

Piret Noorhane



## ESTONIANS AND LATVIANS FROM THE VOLOGDA- VJATKA REGION – IRINA TRUŠKOVA



Вологодско-вятские прибалтийцы: этнокультурные очерки», Киров, 340 С.

Irina Truškova's monograph contains interesting data concerning Estonian and Latvian emigration to the Vologdo-Vjatka area during the Stolypin era, including the process of settling and further courses of action thereafter. The author's extensive fieldwork with Estonians and Latvians

took place in various inhabited areas of the current administrative division of the Kirov region in the Oparino district.

The monograph analyses the unique findings of the expeditions together with archival sources from the Republic of Estonia and the Russian Federation. The monograph is comprised of three chapters, of which the first is devoted to the Baltic ethno-cultural situation and economic condition, which elicited an agrarian peasant migration. The author stresses that the Baltic peasants' fate was affected significantly at the beginning of the 20th century with Stolypin agrarian reforms that were carried out; this was established on the basis of the population of the Eastern countries of the Russian Empire, including the Vologda-Vyatka region. Bearers of ethnic culture brought with them livestock, furniture, tools, books, and so on. They

cultivated forestland that had up until been untouched, and established a farming system. During the 1920s, in the railroad area of the Oparino district of Perm-Kotlas, this farming area transformed into one of great success.

The second chapter pertains more to the emigrants and the traditional culture of their descendants.

The third chapter focuses on the socialist transformation (collectivisation, repression), the effects over time due to the surrounding multiculturalism and the cultural changes that took place. Concentrated inhabited areas of Estonians and Latvians can no longer be found in the area, but the Estonian and Latvian cultural influences are still discernible.

**Anu Korb**



## GRAND OPENING OF THE NEW SEASON OF THE VEMU/ESTONIAN STUDIES CENTRE

A series of events took place at the end of September at Tartu College to celebrate Tartu College's 43rd birthday and the opening of the new VEMU/ESC season. Many interesting cultural figures from Estonia were invited to present. The events were devoted to the Year of Cultural Heritage, which was celebrated in 2013 in Estonia.

A symposium *Small Cultures in a Big World* was held on Friday, September 20 at Tartu College. The event was organised

by VEMU/the Estonian Studies Centre in collaboration with the University of Toronto's Elmar Tampõld Chair of Estonian Studies. Speakers were from both Toronto (Jüri Kivimäe *Between Orality and Literacy: Some Thoughts on Estonian Culture*, Dace Veinberga *Big World, Small Culture, Different Ontology: Animism and the Eastern Balts*, Antanas Sileika *Long Ago and Far Away – Big Stories from Small Countries. Baltic Stories in a Global context*), as well as Estonia (Kristiina Ehin *How to Explain My Language to You* – *My Poetry in the Wider World*, Sirje Olesk *Small Literatures in a Big World*, Anu Aun *Universal Language of Film*).

On the evening of September 20 the floor was given to writer Kristiina Ehin and her musician husband Silver Sepp for a fascinating evening of poetry and music entitled *Every Moment is a Well*. Their literary/music tour of North America began in Toronto, where they introduced Kristiina's English and Estonian poetry collections *1001 Winters* and *In a Single Breath*, and Silver's CD *Mis asi see on?*.

The next day, on Saturday, September 21 the Estonian Literary Museum's photo exhibition *Half an Hour With a Writer* was opened at TC. Photographs of Estonian writers, translators and literary scholars were taken by Alar Madisson. The opening was followed by Dr. V. Soots memorial lecture held by Dr. Sirje Olesk (*Modernism and the Traditions of Estonian Literature*) and a workshop by Kristiina Ehin and Silver Sepp (*Estonian Folk Music (regilaul) and Dance from Past to Present*).

On Sunday, September 22 the screening of Anu Aun's short films (*Shift, 2010 and Indigo Room, 2007*) and documentaries (*Scout by Nature, 2012 and Clayhouse, 2007*) took place at TC. Anu Aun was in Toronto with her film crew to shoot a documentary about Kristiina Ehin. They were following Kristiina in Toronto, including her performances at the nursing home Ehatare and Estonian School.

**Piret Noorhani**





## ENGLISH SPEAKING LIFE STORIES GROUP FOUNDED AT TARTU COLLEGE

The Life Stories group for English speaking Estonians held their first session at Tartu College, in Toronto on October 10th. Eleven people gathered together to introduce themselves, share stories and begin the process of writing them down.

Maie Ilves (Estonian Speaking Life Stories Group) and Piret Noorhanni (VEMU Chief Archivist) were there to share their expertise. A light lunch courtesy of Tartu College was a special first meeting treat.

The group has had three meetings so far. New members are very welcome. For those that are interested please contact: Kaja Telmet, ktelmet@sympatico.ca

## ESTONIAN STUDIES LIBRARY (LAENURAAMATUKOGU) CELEBRATES ITS 10TH ANNIVERSARY

On September 25th 2013, the Estonian Studies Library (Laenuraamatukogu) celebrated its 10th anniversary with the opening of a new reading room at Tartu

College in Toronto. The library lends recent Estonian publications on history, biographies and memoirs, fiction, literature, poetry, art, music, and reference books. The library runs entirely with the help of volunteers, among which some are professional librarians. The Estonian Studies Library collection has over 1200 books. The library also has about 180 patrons. Learn more about the library at: [www.eesti.ca/library](http://www.eesti.ca/library)



Gita Kalmet, the first Estonian Ambassador to Canada visits the new Estonian Studies Library

## CULTIVATING REMEMBRANCE – EUROPEAN CONFERENCE PUTS POLAND AT THE CENTRE OF EUROPE

*November 15 and 16, nine scientists from five European countries met at the “Evangelische Studierendengemeinde” (student community) Muenster (ESG). Pastor Laqueur (ESG) and pastor Franzenburg had sent out the invitation to the conference titled “Cultivating Remembrance” to find out which challenges are involved when working with remembrance and what chances there are for the future of such a process. At the end of the conference, a network was founded unanimously to make not yet published knowledge accessible and deal with new tasks for research and interdisciplinary projects using a virtual classroom for discussion.*

In his introduction Winfried Nachtwei, former member of the German Bundestag and co-founder of the Riga-committee Muenster, spoke of his experience and research of the last 30 years. He said that collective recollections of societies need a lot of time and distance in order that Europe, formerly a continent of wars, can become a continent of peaceful co-existence. Muenster, the city of the Peace of Westphalia, shows – as Berlin does

– the huge ambivalence connected with building bridges of remembrance from the past into the future. There is still so much to do! A great many “we should...” and “never again” – affirmations hinder real recollection and reconciliation processes, but Nachtwei believes that especially the young generation will keep on building these bridges.

The lectures of this conference deal with three topics: “Reconciliation”, “Ethnic groups and diaspora”, and “Culture and remembrance”. All talks focus on overcoming prejudice and stereotypes.

At the beginning though, on Friday the focus was on the question: Which role does moral conscience play in the processes involved in remembrance?

Professor Przemyslaw Kantyka of the Catholic University of Lublin (Poland) gave a historical overview of the joint initiatives of the churches in the process of reconciliation between Polish, German, Russian and Ukrainian victims and criminals after World War II that were especially successful where politics failed. Especially the Christian religion has the power to heal hate and violent experiences and to reconcile people, as long as at least one person begins asking someone's forgiveness, as long as only one single person expresses the wish to be forgiven, according to Kantyka.

Dr. Piotr Kopiec complemented and extended Kantyka's conclusion by saying that the churches in particular keep the process of reconciliation alive, by presenting his research on the Benedictine monastery Padlasic, which is situated near the border to Belarus, and to this day brings about identity concerning the different Christian confessions and traditions in that region.

How can ethnic conflicts become reconciled?

With the help of the example of Ukrainian Oleksandr Svyetlov (Minsk, at the moment LU, Riga) showed in detail how and why killing functions as a means of settling a conflict, how nations become a plaything of politics and war interests, how a nation's self-confidence, her feeling of solidarity, can be systematically destroyed.

He explained why in comparison to Poland Ukraine makes varying efforts in reconciliation. Moreover, he made clear how limited our knowledge of Eastern European countries is, especially our knowledge of the complexity of the conflicts to be resolved.

Which meaning has identity?

Going on from Dr. Kopiec's talk, Maarja Merivoo-Parro from Tallinn presented her research on identity. She investigates the “being Estonian” of Estonian emigrants in the USA compared to Estonians in Finland



and Estonia with the help of letters, other autobiographical material, and historical documents.

A perplexing variety of self-concepts and definitions dates back to the DP Camps and to this day forms itself into a tolerant and cosmopolitan unity. In a world of cultural diversity, her findings show that the process of “Beheimatung” (in the same way as the development of an ethnic culture) is not necessarily bound to a distinct geographic area but to places of remembrance and symbolic knowledge, songs and tales and – astonishingly so – not necessarily to the language of the ethnic group.

So for example, Estonian emigrants of the second generation born in the USA and Finland feel distinctly

“Estonian”, though their mother tongue is English and some of them hardly speak any Estonian at all. They met the challenges of the dialectical processes in between established culture and growing into it, learning it as well as the vivid growth and further development of a culture with their very individual self-concepts and with more open-mindedness and tolerance as their contemporaries in the home country.

On Saturday – beginning with further information on projects and research findings – the main focus was on the question: What do the presented results and findings mean, concerning building bridges into the future? How does remembrance become a future capability? How can an “against each other”, and a “side by side” change into a lasting “together”?

Seta Guetsoyan of Bochum University asked, how despite suppression and oblivion, how among silence, aimless talk

and media commercialisation, up-to-date remembrance work could look like – especially if it was done by theatre: Not in the sense of a didactic play, but as a contribution to find the truth, as a complex frame of reference.

The example of E. Jelinek’s play “Rechnitz (Der Würgeengel)” from 2008 shows that theatre has the opportunity to present transparency (and catharsis) considering the overkill of pictures in the media. The play charges the mass execution of 180 forced labour convicts shortly before the end of the war. The massacre, that has not been cleared yet and is unattended for, took place when there was a party on the premises of Thyssen’s sister Margit Batthyány’s castle, and the play puts the criminal act in a context of cannibalism and a frenzy of blood lust. Jelinek’s choir of messengers, who report on what is happening, creates a polyphony of voices and perspectives that causes confusion, explores and crosses borders, and shakes and upsets the audience badly – intensified by referring to Euripides’ drama “The Bacchae”.

Based on the analysis of camp newspapers and interviews, Dr. Thomas Rahe, from the memorial site Bergen-Belsen, gave a very concrete insight into the everyday life of the Jewish refugees in the DP-camp very close to the former concentration camp. The DPs there were mostly young Jewish men (ca. 60 %) who for the time being could not depart for Israel, because no country wanted to assist the forming of a Jewish state. Besides being frightened of the future and being without any perspective, the camp inmates had to cope with their personal traumatic experiences. In addition, the feeling of deep guilt tormented them because they had survived and were also haunted by the predicaments used in the concentration camp to torture them. Additionally, a lot of them experienced even more, new bereavements as ca. 20% of the freed (and often their relatives too) died as the result of the time spent in the concentration camp or of typhoid fever that raged in the camp. Because of the rigid medical and hygienic measures (burning all things and clothes from the camps), they even lost their very last pieces of remembrance.

Out of the misery, a unique community of remembrance was formed in the camp, a community that made processes of self-understanding, therapy and even healing possible, that organised itself and politicized, and that could experience the

time in the camp as a time of transition because it was rooted in the Jewish belief.

How does a culture of remembrance develop, how do rituals form? Laila Moreina from Ventspils University also dealt with this question. With the help of the example of the recent controversy over the Soviet Victory Monument in Riga, she compared the histories of meaning of different Latvian monuments since the First World War. In the course of Latvia’s history, which is full of changes, there are very controversial monuments and celebrations of remembrance (and counter celebrations) that are still holding a lot of tension and are filled ideologically. She advocated the preserving of the hotly debated monument mentioned above because it offers an opportunity of identification for the Russian minority in Latvia and therefore a chance to de-ideologise.

At the end of the conference Geert Franzenburg summarized once more the overall concern of the participants: each lecture, as well as the ensuing discussions had shown a distinct commitment, especially concerning the overcoming of stereotypes. So it became obvious, for example, how limited our knowledge of Eastern European countries is, and that more than 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall many people still think that Poland is situated “in the East” instead of in the middle of Europe!

In his lecture, Franzenburg indicated different possibilities of actualization and – like Dr. Rahe before – mentioned points of contact for the practical remembrance work with young people. The refugee fate of emigrant children or the fate of street children in Germany, as well as the everyday social exclusion in schools and at work, experiences with mobbing, role plays in the internet can be witnessed and reflected from the perspective of communication and reconciliation, post-war Germany being in the background. In addition, the fear of assimilation, of the disappearance of one’s own culture in the new home country can be overcome – when past as well as present are perceived.

The examples and research findings of this conference (weekend) showed that an intercultural discourse lets remembrance work become reconciliation work, that communication and narration are key instruments to success in being rooted and feeling at home anew – and at the same time a powerful instrument against manipulation. A. Diehl