



BALTIC HERITAGE NETWORK

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***Merry Christmas
and Happy New Year!***

Baltic Heritage Network

What keywords could describe this past year? Economies are in a downfall and the world is restless. Wars and natural disasters are forcing people to leave their homes. The Israel-Palestine conflict arose in addition to Russian aggression in Ukraine. The constant war-related news stories forcibly call to mind the events of 80 years ago which led to the Great Escape of the Baltic peoples in 1944. History tends to repeat itself. How do we break free from this cursed cycle?

During the Christmas season, we talk about peace, Yuletide peace. But how can this peace be enjoyed if the world around you is so restless? There are small and large conflicts. How can we cope with it all? It might be appropriate to recall an old tale which is attributed to the North American indigenous peoples.

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, "My son, the battle is between two "wolves" inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego. The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith." The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins?" The old Cherokee replied, "The one you feed."

Wishing a peaceful Christmas season to you all! May 2024 bring positive solutions for the world's woes and good fortune to us all!

Piret Noorhani

Advance notice

In 2024, we will be commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape of 1944, during which hundreds of thousands of Baltic peoples had to flee the Soviet occupation via land and sea. New homes were created abroad; language, culture and historical heritage were kept alive. The year will be full of various events where the fates of those refugees and the historical events that led to them will be remembered, and the present day and future of the Baltic diaspora will be discussed.

The 7th BaltHerNet conference will also be dedicated to these themes. All of the network's long-time and new friends are invited to Vilnius from June 26th-29th, where the conference will take place in cooperation with the Martynas Mažvydas National Library of Lithuania. The conference's call for papers will be announced at the beginning of 2024. Keep your eyes open for upcoming ads!



The Baltic Heritage Newsletter is distributed quarterly, on-line.

The next deadline for submissions is **15 February, 2024.**

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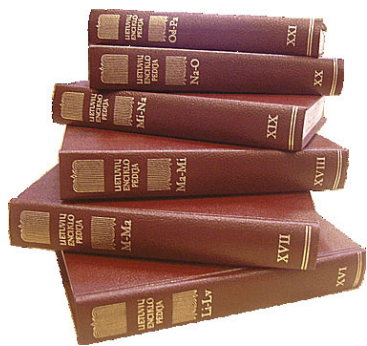
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Boston Encyclopedia Archive Receives UNESCO Recognition

The archive of the Lithuanian Encyclopedia, also known as the Boston Encyclopedia, has been recognized as an object of documentary heritage of national significance and entered into the Lithuanian National Register of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Memory of the World Program (Registration No. 83). The archive of the Encyclopedia is housed in the Lithuanian American Cultural Archives in Putnam, Connecticut, USA.



The Lithuanian Encyclopedia is the only known encyclopedia of its size and scope in the world, published in an ethnic language in the diaspora.

The thirty-seven-volume encyclopedia, published in Boston in 1953–1987, is an exceptional phenomenon in the history of encyclopedias. It is the only known encyclopedia of its size and scope in the world, published in an ethnic language in the diaspora. In addition to the information typical of a general encyclopedia, it contains information about Lithuania and Lithuanians, mainly about the



Six new objects were added to the UNESCO Memory of the World Program. Photo by M. Aleksa.

Lithuanian diaspora: its people, organizations, and their activities.

The initiator and publisher, Juozas Kapočius, managed to gather a large number of editors and contributors (about 80 people). He published all the volumes of the encyclopedia at his Lithuanian Encyclopedia Publishing House in Boston. The entire set was published with funds raised from the sale of the print run. Many members of the Lithuanian diaspora supported the publication by writing articles, providing information, illustrations and other materials. Almost every family in the diaspora had a set of the encyclopedia in their home.

In his introduction to the first volume, Prof. Vaclovas Biržiška, the chief editor of the first four volumes, compared the encyclopedia to a weapon that would help Lithuanians to defeat the Iron Curtain that separated Lithuania from the cultured world.

The fifteenth volume, devoted exclusively to Lithuania, was particularly important and popular among the Lithuanian diaspora. It secretly reached Lithuania. As a response to the Boston Encyclopedia, a three-volume Concise Lithuanian Soviet Encyclopedia was published in Soviet Lithuania in 1966–1971.

The Lithuanian Encyclopedia fulfilled its mission to the full. It has been used as a basis for the creation

and publication of other Lithuanian encyclopedias, such as the Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia.

The archive of the Lithuanian Encyclopedia in Putnam consists of 327 folders (21 boxes). The archive contains manuscripts of articles, edited manuscripts, questionnaires, illustrations, letters from editors and co-authors on the preparation of the publication, approval copies of several volumes, etc.

Ramūnas Kondratas, Draugas.org

VEMU Events – Fall 2023

As the warm, balmy summer days began to change into crisper, chillier autumn weather, VEMU kicked off its fall events and activities season. VEMU once again became the centre of bustling cultural energy and community activity after a short “summer vacation.” Many exciting and enriching events were planned, including everything from a taekwondo workshop to the opening of a fascinating e-Estonia themed exhibit and a whole slew of riveting lectures. Several events continued to have a focus on fitness and sports as the year of movement, as announced by the Republic of Estonia’s Ministry,



is in effect until the end of 2023.

September started off with a screening of the film “Our Tartu: 50 Years of Tartu College” at the annual Society of Estonian Artists in Toronto art show and exhibition. Chief archivist Piret Noorhane was also the guest speaker at the event this year, discussing the theme of belonging and how cultural identity both plays a role in that and also defines us as individuals. Both her speech and the film were received well by the audience and more film screenings are planned in the near future. Closely following that was another film screening on September 21st of “Anna Kaljas. The Untold Story,” directed by Dwight Storrington, which VEMU co-presented at the Princess Cinemas in Waterloo. The film tells the story of the remarkable life of a passionate social justice advocate who came to Canada as a refugee from Estonia after World War II and ended up as a member of the Order of Canada. September 23rd was an important day as we celebrated Tartu College’s



53rd birthday with an eventful and enriching afternoon! We opened Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom’s exhibition titled “Why Estonia? The 30-year Journey from the USSR to e-Estonia” which details the Estonia’s history of becoming a digital society and country. The guest speaker for the annual Dr. Vello Soots memorial lecture was Kristina Reinsalu, senior expert at the e-Governance Academy of Estonia. Her lecture was titled “Digitization as Driver for Innovation and Social Change” during which she spoke about e-Estonia and how other countries are also following Estonia’s example as a digital country. Needless to say, the event went well and participants enjoyed themselves to the fullest, celebrating our dear Tartu’s special



day together. Closing out the month was a lecture by Vabamu’s director Karen Jagodin about how Vabamu continues to be relevant as a museum and educational

centre in Estonia and how the role of museums in today’s society is evolving and changing.

Moving into the second month of fall, October, the leaves had begun to change colour and the weather had become chillier but VEMU’s busy calendar of events kept everyone warm and active. Kicking off the month was a long-awaited



idea that finally came to fruition, VEMU’s fresh keelekohvikud or Language Cafés! The keelekohvikud are focused towards complete beginners or people who have very little knowledge of the Estonian language, but welcome everyone that wants to come and practice their Estonian in a no-pressure environment! The first café had a good turn out, with ages ranging from 20 to 70+, and participants truly enjoyed themselves. A week later, Piret Noorhane spoke at an online meeting, “Leia oma Eesti” for Estonians who live abroad, about her journey to Canada, VEMU’s activities and what the Estonian community is like locally. On October 13th, the elderly folks at Ehatare Retirement and Nursing Home were treated to a screening of the film “Our Tartu.” Audience reception was, once again, good and interest was peaked. Mid-month, we had an interactive lecture by Tarmo Tuule from the Estonian publishing and game company Nutigrupp about how to create crosswords, writing children’s books and board games. He got everyone present to participate in fun sudoku and crossword creation exercises. The event was also the celebration of the Estonian Studies Library’s 20th anniversary and longtime



librarians Vaike Rannu and Alliki Arro were honoured. Rounding out the month was **Estonian foreign minister Margus Tsahkna's visit and reception at Tartu College**, in which VEMU also played a part. The minister visited VEMU archives, took time to speak with organizations in our local Estonian community and also briefly meet with members of the community that attended the event. **The second keelekohvik also took place** and we were happy to see both familiar and new faces join in, learn and expand their Estonian language skills and knowledge.

Nearing the end of November, we continued to provide the community with plenty of exciting lectures, events and activities to take part in. The month began with a bang, with a **taekwondo workshop by Estonian-Canadian Thomas Käis-Prial**, a registered black belt with World Taekwondo. Thomas taught us many punches, kicks, and blocks that are especially useful in self-defence. Participants left the workshop feeling refreshed and full of energy, inspired by the Korean form of martial arts. Throughout the month, **our keelekohvikud continued to take place** and we now have an established group of individuals, from all age groups and various cultural backgrounds, that comes together bi-weekly and enjoys practicing their constantly developing Estonian language skills.

Just recently, another idea that had been brewing for a while finally came to life, **VEMU's new writing club began!** We've had 3 workshops so far; more are planned for the near future, and so far it has been a success. Writing enthusiasts came together under the guidance of Estonian-Canadian Anne Rimmel, who has studied autobiographical and memoir writing, in order to learn how to gain momentum for writing and overcome obstacles. This includes where to begin with researching, tapping into our inner creative writer and more. Mid-month, **Estonian Anu Tähemaa presented a fascinating lecture about public speaking and the art of speech** in general, which reeled in the audience's interest right from the get-go. Anu was here to perform at North America's largest inspirational speakers' competition, Grand Slam. **Renowned Estonian folk musician Mari Kalkun came to Toronto** once again to perform at the



perform at the BLOK music festival; her performance was co-presented by VEMU and Estonian Music Week. The European Union Film Festival recently took place and Estonia's film "Kalev" was screened, with VEMU and

KESKUS co-presenting the event. The film tells the story of the famed Estonian basketball team, who came to be the last winners of the Soviet Union Basketball Championship before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The month finished off with a **celebratory lecture in honour of the 104th anniversary of the Estonian language Tartu University by Maarja Merivoo-Parro**, who has recently started work on a new series of documentary films. She spoke to us about the visual heritage which portrays the lives of Estonians living abroad from the 19th century onwards.

VEMU's slew of events for this year ended with a magnificent close with **Estonian-Canadian graphic artist Ashley Lennox's book launch on December 6th**. The colouring book is titled "The Occult & Folklore Coloring Book" and is a great introduction into Estonian and Eastern European folklore and tales. The event had a great turnout and was a success. **VEMU's team was also present at the community's Rahvajõulupuu or Christmas Market on December 9th**. We showcased some items for sale such as books and LP's and offered fun activities.

As you can see, we have much to see and do here at VEMU and we look forward to seeing many of you at the numerous events, workshops, lectures, and more that we have coming up in the new year.

Kati Kiilaspea

VEMU's COLLECTION CAMPAIGN

“My Many Lives. Being an Estonian in Multicultural Canada.”

In 2024, cultural diversity will be celebrated in Estonia upon initiative from the Estonian Ministry of Culture — the unique qualities of communities and cultures which contribute to the cultural diversity of Estonia. The organization of the year's events has been entrusted to the Integration Foundation. Everyone will work together in order to showcase and help bring cultural diversity to the forefront. There will be discovery and sharing, valuing and creation, preservation and enrichment of the cultural idiosyncrasies of communities and cultures through everything that unites people: starting from experiences and myths to creations and the future in day to day life and special occasions, in research projects and events. Cultural diversity is the face of our society, which we will all share next year, is what the leaders and organizers of the year declare.

As has been done before, VEMU Estonian Museum

Canada is going to take on the Ministry of Culture's invitation to participate in the thematic year. We wish to open an exhibition next year that will take a look at how Estonians function in multicultural Canada along with other cultural communities and many of us live with a multi-identity daily. Who are you? Are you Estonian, Canadian, Latvian or from another culture? What opportunities or dilemmas do multi-identity and cultural diversity present? In what way do you express your identity? How do you participate in various cultures at work or during celebrations, in professional or community life? What customs do you follow? What cultural events do you participate in? What languages do you speak and what hobbies do you have? Does your culinary palette, bookshelf or wardrobe reflect who you are? Or is it reflected in your friends or family? Maybe you can find signs in the urban space that you recognize yourself in? Does your cottage give a peek into who you are?

Share your (multi-)identity with us! Try to capture the essence of multicultural Canada through photos, videos, drawings or written musings! Through this, we have the chance to better understand ourselves and others, and create a sense of belonging and unity.

We welcome your submissions until January 31, 2024 at the following mailing address:

VEMU Estonian Museum Canada

310 Bloor St. W.

Toronto, Ont.

M5S 1W4

...or via email at info@vemu.ca.

EstoCast is Growing and Evolving!

With the leaves changing colour and the air getting that colder twinge, EstoCast has jumped into the fall season with tons of momentum, offering discussions on a wide variety of captivating topics for our listeners. If you're just tuning in for the first time or don't know about this endeavour, EstoCast is ideal for those who are simply curious about a multitude of topics and are in search of something fresh, exciting, inspiring, and educational to listen to. If you've ever wanted the latest of Estonian books, music, art, history,

science, and other key news and cultural topics, but in a convenient on-the-go format, EstoCast is perfect for you. Estonian Music Week, Eesti Elu/Estonian Life newspaper, and VEMU continue to collaborate and bring you the latest on everything Estonian and beyond in our biweekly episodes. Our episodes alternate between English and Estonian so that we can reach out to each and every one of you.

The title mentions evolving.. so how has EstoCast evolved? We continue to grow our listener base

steadily every month and have begun to branch out more into other communities as well, once in a while we hear or see a comment from someone with a completely different cultural background who has found our podcast, singing praises of how captivating our topics are and how much we have to offer. We've also evolved and grown in what we have to offer to our listeners and helping promote community events, often having lecturers, musicians, politicians, who have an upcoming event, in our

studio to introduce them to our local Estonian community and to our listeners. Our podcast is over a year and a half old and we're getting ready to close out our second season at the conclusion of this year; we're not showing any signs of slowing down! We continue to experiment with our new recording technology and strive to continually improve recording quality and auditory experience. The fall months have brought a slew of new topics to offer, from world travel to marathoning and fascinating, behind-the-scenes looks into what its like to be a professional athlete and coach. We continue to expand our range of topics!

We've had some great, personable guests in the studio these past few months, from Estonian-Canadian beach volleyball star Ruby Sõrra who touched upon how family values and support play a big role in becoming an athlete, to world traveler Markus Pukonen, who detailed his amazing trip around the world without the use of motors, and Estonian musician Anneliis Kits, who delved into the importance of equity and humanity in music. We also continue to focus on bringing the stories of people in our diaspora Estonian communities in Canada and all over the world. We have something for everyone!

A sizeable portion of our listener base continues to be in Canada, with the United States,

Estonia, Finland, and Australia now rounding out the top 5 list of countries. We've even gained new listeners in all corners of the earth, for example, Tanzania, Oman, and Colombia. We're taking over the world, one listener and interview at a time! Our most popular episode is still "Paul Lillakas Shares his Path to Becoming a TV Chef," followed by "Volleyball and Values-Talking Sports and Fitness with Ruby Sõrra," and "The Sonic Universe of Kara-Lis Coverdale." Most of our listeners tune in on Spotify, as well as Apple Podcasts, and organically through our podcast site. We're proud of how far we've come and we continually strive to improve, grow, and evolve!

With the end of this year, we're rounding out Season 2 (already!) and we have lots more in store for you in Season 3. Keep tuning in, there's a lot to check out!

Hosts Vincent Teetsov and Kati Kiilaspea, along with occasional guest hosts, will continue to take you through the exciting world of Estonian culture at large. You can find EstoCast here on major streaming platforms like Spotify and Apple Music, as well as at our website: <https://estocast.buzzsprout.com/> Happy listening!

Kati Kiilaspea

Dear friends & colleagues of ICARUS,

Please have a look at the following call from our partner Expatriate Archive Centre (EAC)!

The Expatriate Archive Centre (EAC) invites master's students worldwide to submit theses that contribute to the scholarship of expatriation studies.

The winner of the thesis award will receive €500, the executive summary of the thesis will be published online by the EAC and organisations involved in this initiative.

The submission deadline is 31 March 2024.

Candidates must ensure their thesis meets the following criteria:

- should relate to the EAC's *mission and objectives*;
- written in English;
- has been awarded a mark of 8/10 or more (or equivalent, e.g., 16/20 or more, or an 'A');



- is from the 2019–20, 2020–21, 2021–22, or 2022–23 academic year.

The following criteria are used to assess submitted theses, the weight of each in percentages: originality and innovation (20%); technical quality (30%); composition (10%); potential for contributing to the stimulation of scholarly (e.g. theoretical, methodological, etc.) perspectives regarding the Award theme (20%); potential for contributing to the stimulation of practical engagement by policy, industry and/or civil society actors with the Award theme (20%).

To apply, please submit the digital *application form*.

If you want to know more about the evaluation process, the jurors, how to apply or our partner organisations, visit the *EAC Thesis Award page*. Questions can be sent to welcome@xpatarchive.com.

Text © EAC.

It would be very much appreciated if you spread this within your various networks!

Best wishes,

Your ICARUS-Team & Tatjana

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Estonian Archives in Australia recognised in 2023 Citizen Day awards



Maie Barrow, archivist and Kristi Karelson, Director General, Estonian Foreign Ministry. The awards are made to “citizens and NGOs for their significant contribution to advancing Estonian language, culture and business in the world.”

EAA is honoured to have been recognised in this year’s Citizen Day awards. The archive has existed for 71 years and in that time many volunteers have devoted their time and experiences both in the Archive and on the Archives Council. It is gratifying to have their contribution recognised.

“Estonia’s greatest wealth is our people. Today, I would like to thank the dedicated and inspiring people who are preserving Estonian cultural identity and raising Estonia’s profile across the world. During these momentous times in foreign policy and security, it is good to know that Estonia’s voice remains strong and we are standing on solid ground,” said Foreign Minister Margus Tsahkna.

Kristi Karelson, Director General, Estonian Foreign Ministry, visited the Archive on 2nd of December and handed the letter, which we are now proudly displaying in the Archive, to Maie Barrow, the archivist.

In memoriam Rutt Hinrikus

05.07.1946 –
10.29.2023



After a serious illness, Rutt Hinrikus, a recognized literary scholar, emeritus researcher of the Estonian Literary Museum and the grand old lady of collecting biographies of the Estonian people, passed away.

Rutt Hinrikus was born on May 7, 1946 in the family of Agu Põllu, a church pastor in Vigala, Lääne County. Her grandparents were well-known Estonian state and cultural figures Helmi and Peeter Põld. She graduated from the University of Tartu in 1970 as an Estonian philologist and Estonian language teacher. In 1972, she started working in the Estonian Cultural History Archives of the Estonian Literary Museum, then called the Manuscripts Department. From 1977 to 1993, she was the head of the manuscripts department; from 1993 to 1995, the acting director of the Literary Museum. She was one of the founders of the Karl Ristikivi Society and from 1995-1997 worked as the director of the Karl Ristikivi Museum, a branch of the Tartu City Museum. In 2002, she obtained a MA degree at the University of Tartu with the thesis “Estonian literature in the diaspora” and worked as a researcher in the Estonian Cultural History Archives at the Literary Museum until her retirement in 2021.

Rutt’s life’s work became collecting and researching Estonian literary and cultural historical sources, including the heritage of Estonians who fled to the West during World War II. The second pillar in Rutt’s life’s work was the creation of a collection of Estonian biographies. Her tireless work in collecting Estonian biographies began in 1996 and since then, thousands of biographies, including from Estonian communities abroad, have reached the Estonian Cultural History Archives through dozens of collection competitions. The Association of Estonian Life Stories was also created with

her participation.

In 2000, Rutt’s work was recognized with the Order of the White Star III class medal of the President of the Republic of Estonia, and in 2016 she was declared an Honorary Citizen of the city of Tartu. In 2020, she received the Lifetime Achievement Award for Culture of the Republic of Estonia.

Rutt was a beloved and respected colleague whose erudition and dedication showed the way for many younger, like-minded people. The memory of Rutt will be carried forth in her books and writings, as well as the cast bronze footprint on Tartu’s Teerajajate Alley.

TV-series based on diaspora home videos

Estonian Public Broadcasting showcased the visual heritage of Estonians abroad in a new TV-series on ETV2. There were eight episodes, each 30 minutes long with a focus on a particular topic ranging from escape and politics to cultural activities and family life.

The footage was collected globally in collaboration with the Vabamu Museum of Occupations and Freedom. The TV-program featured not only diaspora videos but also diaspora music and was authored by Maarja Merivoo-Parro, directed by Marko Piirsoo and Andres Lepasar and produced by Kaidor Kahar. The project was funded by the Estonian Public Broadcasting and the National Archives Compatriot’s program.

All episodes can be streamed free of charge on the Estonian Public Broadcasting site: <https://jupiter.err.ee/1608822064/8-mm-elu> This was the third season of the program “8mm elu” (“8mm of life”). The previous two seasons focused on home videos from within Estonia.

Secret refugee music in Australia

Almost a decade ago, Maarja Merivoo-Parro and Vaiko Eplik curated a three-CD collection of Cold war Estonian refugee diaspora pop. This endeavor brought a rich musical heritage from relative obscurity into the mainstream, captivating music listeners and earning a spot on radio playlists. The global collection spanned four decades and was based on LPs, cassettes, and CDs released by the artists themselves or through various micro-labels in the global Estonian diaspora.

Yet, as all musicians know, official releases merely scratch the surface. Only a fraction of songs make it

to an official record. Some get recorded in a studio but never officially see the light of day outside the studio. Even more might be recorded at home as demos.

Since the officially released Australian Estonian music by Olev Muska and his collaborators was musically and aesthetically so distinct, it became apparent that these were just the tip of the iceberg. Valuable material was likely scattered around the continent on self-made mixtapes, home-burned CD-s or precarious USB-sticks, and decaying magnetophone tapes.

That's why Maarja Merivoo-Parro embarked on a mission to recover the unknown recordings and preserve them for future generations: "This incredibly rare audio is in grave danger because on the surface it doesn't look like much: old unlabeled CD-s or dusty tapes are probably the first to end up in a rubbish pile when relatives come to clear out the home of someone who has passed away."

The urgency arises as Cold War-

era cultural activists are aging and their fascinating contributions need to be acknowledged and heard. However, the task is not as straightforward as it might seem. The first obstacle is pinpointing the locations of these musical treasures. Maarja says doing this remotely is not possible: "I wrote and asked about artists and bands, and people kept telling me there had been none."

It was only after she had flown to Australia and inserted herself into the community did the shroud of secrecy start to lift. Anthropological fieldwork proved pivotal, Maarja noted: "Some of the most interesting finds came from the very same people who had assured me that there was nothing there. When they saw me in person and realized my interest was sincere they felt safe enough to confess that they themselves in fact had been in a band, and yes, there were recordings – unofficial ones!"

Initiated in 2019, Maarja's project has included fieldwork in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and

Perth. She views Australia as a gold mine for uncharted Estonian music and has brought back dozens of recordings. The CDs are repositied in the National Library of Estonia, while the cassettes and magnetophone tapes have found a new home in the National Archives.

"I haven't counted the actual tracks that are now or will soon be incorporated into the collections, but if I had to guess, I would think the number would surpass one hundred," Maarja ventures. She suspect there is still much to discover because there are three more centers to visit in person. "Hopefully that tour will be followed by yet another long trying trip back to Estonia holding the precious cargo in my hand all the way and arguing with every customs official to ensure the tapes wouldn't be X-rayed or damaged in any way. For me, it's a labor of love for sure," she concludes.

The project is co-funded by the National Archives Compaiot's Program.

Jūratė Statkutė de Rosales, A Scholar of Baltic Prehistory



Photo: Jūratė Statkutė de Rosales. Photo credit: E. Ovčarenko / BNS photo, Source: LRT.lt

On September 23, 2023, a Lithuanian-born Venezuelan journalist Jūratė Statkutė de Rosales passed away. The 93-year-old journalist was also a scholar of Baltic prehistory.

Born in Kaunas in 1929, Statkutė de Rosales and her mother fled West in 1944. Her father, Jonas Statkus, the Secretary General of the Lithuanian Nationalist Union, was arrested by the NKVD in July 1940 and imprisoned in Moscow's Lubyanka and Butyrki prisons. He disappeared without a trace.

Since 1951, Statkutė lived in Venezuela. She worked as editor-in-chief of the democratic weekly political, economic and cultural magazine *Zeta* and collaborated with the Lithuanian-American newspaper *Dirva*. Statkutė de Rosales also researched the Baltic prehistory and argued that the Baltic tribes once had a significant influence on the development of European history.

She is the author of many works: *Traces of the Baltic Languages in the Iberian Peninsula* (1985), *Los Godos—Un eslabón perdido de la historia europea*

(1998–1999), *Los Godos* (2004, two editions), *The Goths and the Balts* (2004), *The Great Deceit* (Vilnius 2007), *The Old Chronicle of the Aryan Tribe* (Kaunas, 2009) and *The Roots of Europe and We, Lithuanians* (2011 and 2015).

In 1996, Statkutė de Rosales was awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Gediminas.

A documentary film, "Jūratė Statkutė de Rosales, Dedicated to Her Ancestral History and to Lithuania," has been made about the researcher.

The Archive of Algis Kabaila

The Lithuanian Diaspora Institute at VMU has received the archive of Algis Kabaila (1925–2021), the first Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Australia and an active member of the Lithuanian Australian Community. Kabaila's son, Peter Rimas Kabaila, donated the archive to the Institute.

The archive relates to the activities of Lithuanian Australians at the dawn of Lithuania's independence and after 1990, when the Lithuanian Australian Community was involved in the attempts to secure the recognition of Lithuania's independence from the government of Australia. It also contains documents related to the establishment of diplomatic relations between Lithuania and Australia; the establishment of a consulate in Australia; and the activities of the first Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Australia, Algis Kabaila (1991–1994).

Photo: Algis Kabaila was the first Honorary Consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Australia.

Source: VDU.lt



Ženija Vītols (née Pētersons)

June 23, 1935 – October 27, 2023



KLAM – Canadian Latvian Archive and Museum has experienced a great loss with the passing of Ženija Vītols.

As a co-founder, together with her colleagues Aija Kārklīņa and Skaidrīte Tērauds, Ženija was our guiding light, said Andris Kēsteris, the initiator of the creation of KLAM.

Ženija was born in Daugavpils, Latvia, on the eve of Jāņi, the summer solstice, June 23, 1935. Having fled the country in 1944 and living in Displaced Persons camps in Germany for six years, Ženija immigrated to Canada with her parents and sister, arriving in Halifax on November 18, 1950 – Latvian Independence Day. The family took up permanent residency in Toronto.

After graduating from Jarvis Collegiate, Ženija married Alberts Vītols, and together they raised three children – Astra, Alberts, and Vilma – ensuring that the language spoken at home was Latvian.

Music played a major role in Ženija's life. She sang in numerous choirs and was a frequent soloist at many Latvian cultural events,

Ženija's early work in Canada was as a bookkeeper. Later in life, she enrolled in the University of Toronto as a mature student, graduating with a B.A. in Anthropology. For the last twenty years before retiring, Ženija worked in the tourism industry as a travel agent. In this capacity, she organized a tour of fifty people to attend the 2011 world premiere of Bruno Skulte's opera *Vilkaču mantinieci* (The Heiress of Vilkači) at the Latvian National Opera in Riga. Since 2010, Ženija served on the board of the Latvian National Opera Fund of Canada.

Ženija had a strong bond with Latvia and cared deeply about preserving the history of the Latvian diaspora. To this end she served for many years as the head of the Canadian Latvian Archive and Museum (KLAM). She also represented KLAM at the Baltic Canadian Imprint, a collaborative group of Balts in Canada who were behind the successful exhibit “Sharing Our Stories: The Baltic Diaspora at Home in Canada”. Ženija will be deeply missed by her family, friends and colleagues!

Baltic Canadian Imprint

The 75th Anniversary of the Arrival of Estonian “Viking Boats” in Canada

There are so many different arrival stories and journeys, I thought

The journeys of post-Second World War Estonian refugees and their experiences were completely

different from mine. Next year, we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Great Escape of 1944, during which tens of thousands of Estonians had to leave their homeland behind. The journey did not end there for most of those refugees who fled the Soviet occupation. Germany was in shambles from the war. The Soviet Union began to demand that Sweden reveal those Baltic peoples that had escaped there. There was no sense of safety and everything regarding the future was uncertain, and so the journey had to continue for most.



Estonian Honorary Consul John Soosaar and his family arrived in Canada on-board of the Cunard White Star liner Samaria in October 1949.

But this year serves as a reminder that 75 years have passed since the first Estonian refugees arrived in Canada on “viking boats”, i.e. sail and fishing boats as well as other small vessels which weren’t passenger liners. Due to the slow immigration process, other means of transportation to Canada were searched out. Ship co-ops were formed, money was gathered, boats and ships were purchased and so the journey started. The first vessel that arrived in Canada, named Astrid, began its route in Sweden on July 5th, 1948, landed in St. John’s on July 31st, and resumed its journey to Quebec City where it arrived on August 13th. Immigration officials were caught off guard and faced with the dilemma of what to do with these illegal refugees, but by August 31st, they all had visas in hand.

One of the most famous “viking boats” was Walnut. It began its life as a mine sweeping trawler and served in the British Royal Navy beginning in 1939. The Swedish company Stem Olsen purchased the vessel in 1948 but already by September, was bought by Compania Maritima Walnut S/A, which was formed by Baltic refugees (mostly a group of Estonians) who wanted to leave Sweden. The ship was registered in Panama to avoid Swedish capacity limits for the vessel and was rebuilt to transport 200 travellers.

Steamship Walnut began its journey from Gothenburg on November 13th, 1948, stopped in Lysekil to finish preparations for the trip across the ocean and departed on November 17th, 1948. A large part of the travellers were Estonians, but there were also Latvians, Lithuanians, Poles, Austrians, and Finns. After a stopover was made in Sligo, Ireland to stock up on coal, the vessel, originally made to carry 58 people, was on its perilous way across the Atlantic with 347 people on board. This was the biggest group of “vikings” that came to Canada through this method of transport.

The trip was long and arduous. There was very little room, the waters were turbulent, seasickness was rampant among travellers. The ship made it to Sydney, Canada on December 10th where food and coal were stocked up and arrived at the Halifax Immigration Terminal Pier 21 on December 13th.

In total, 11 “viking boats” arrived in Canada between 1948–1950 (in addition to travellers from three boats that had originally stopped over in another country), bringing about 1600 individuals, approximately 1300 of whom were Estonians. The ships forced Canadian immigration offices to change their policies, in part due to public interest and pressure since those who had risked their lives making the journey across the ocean moved the locals. Most of the refugees were allowed to stay in Canada.

The Walnut’s fame has undoubtedly been helped along by a dedicated section in the Pier 21 museum exhibition, but you can also find other Estonian tidbits there, for example Mrs. Oja’s suitcase and photos of Estonian refugees. The museum collection also has many interesting things that aren’t on display: documents, photos, oral history. I had the chance to familiarize myself with these materials during my visit in October; they gave a good, clear picture of the immigration of Estonians to Canada and a glimpse into their lives here. One of the most interesting and informative documents in the Pier 21 collection is undoubtedly the book of the Walnut’s protocols, which documents everything starting from the process of purchasing the ship to selling it Canada. Letters sent to the travellers from the Board of the Walnut co-op paint a picture of what the conditions of travel and rules aboard the ship were. The exchange of materials, info, and the exhibition was also discussed with colleagues at Pier 21.

The group of travellers on the Walnut has been great with documenting their own stories. The result of thorough collection and research work can be viewed at the website that Tiiu Roiser-Chorowiec started (<https://walnutship1948.ca/>), where you can find a half-hour long documentary film as well as written memoirs, articles, and more. Linda Männik defended her doctoral dissertation on the topic of the Walnut at York University, which was published as a book in 2013 (Photography, Memory and Refugee Identity. The Voyage of the SS Walnut, 1948).

Information about the Walnut can also be found in VEMU’s collections, for example in the Estonian Cultural Heritage Society’s oral history collection: biographical interviews with Elvira Potsepp, Silvi Treier, Juhan Zoobel, Jaanus and Hans Leppik, Monika Saarniit, and the recording of the commemorative event for the 50th anniversary of the Walnut’s journey in 1998. Whether there are also memoirs about the other “viking boats” remains to be seen until the students from Tartu University finish their supplementary descriptions of the aforementioned collection.

For those that are interested, there is much more to offer. This past January, Tõnu Tõsine presented a lecture at Tartu College titled “The Unique Voyage of Estonian Refugees: Coming to North America on “Viking Boats,” which can be viewed on VEMU’s YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bbt3zzdzF3c>.

Historian at the University College Cork, Gabriel Doherty, is in the process of making a documentary about how the ship Victory was caught in Ireland. His 2012 lecture (Escape by Victory: Ireland and Estonian refugees, 1949–51) can also be viewed on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n-W3UFgKSQY>.

The continued escape of Estonians from Europe to North- and South America has been documented in detail in Jüri Vendla's book (Unustatud merereisid. Eestlaste hulljulged põgenemisreisid üle Atlandi 1940. aastate teisel poolel), which can be borrowed from VEMU's archival collection and from the library.

VEMU invites everyone who came to Canada on “viking boats” and their family members to contact VEMU. We are interested in memoirs, documents, photos, and other archival materials as well as belongings that were brought along on the journey.

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