

**ALEXANDRO MALASPINA RESEARCH CENTRE
MALASPINA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

Annual Report 2007-8

OVERVIEW

This report covers the period from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008, during which the Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre at Malaspina University College has continued its activities on a number of fronts. The translation of Spanish-language newspaper articles and letters for publication on the AMRC website is complete. In order to extend the purview of its research mandate, furthermore, the Centre co-sponsored the first two of a series of symposia on environmental issues (Biosphere Conversations), and formed the Heritage Research Group, an affiliated set of scholars working on a range of historical issues related to British Columbia. Several new members joined the Centre in a variety of capacities. Most notably, the Centre gained a new Honorary Research Associate, Barry Gough, Professor Emeritus of History from Wilfrid Laurier University and among the most renowned historians of Canada.

PERSONNEL

Director:

Dr. John Black, Liberal Studies & Philosophy

Researchers:

Dr. Oscar Clemotte, Philosophy

Dr. Lisa MacLean Liberal Studies

Heritage Research Group:

Dr. Stephen Davie, History

Dr. Patrick Dunae, History

Dr. Laurie Meijer-Drees, First Nations Studies & History

Dr. Cheryl Krasnick Warsh, History

Associated Scholars:

Dr. Ana María Donat, Modern Languages

Dr. David Livingstone, Liberal Studies & Political Science

Dr. Melody Martin, First Nations Studies

Dr. Marni Stanley, Women's Studies & English

Dr. William Weller, Physics (retd.)

Honorary Associates:

Barry Gough, Professor Emeritus, Wilfrid Laurier

Ian Johnston, Liberal Studies and English (retd.)

Russell McNeil, Liberal Studies and Physics (retd.)

Student Assistants:

Lorill Ireland

María Soto de Podriske

INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Centre continues to operate independently of yet in collaboration with other research groupings at Malaspina University College. The Director of the Centre continues to sit on the Institute for Coastal Research Steering Committee, and this engagement has resulted in a number of useful collaborations. Of particular interest are the ongoing project to publish through ICR the proceedings of the 2006 Symposium on George Vancouver held in Victoria, and the Biosphere Conversation Series, co-sponsored by the ICR, the Institute for Practical Philosophy and the Clayoquot Field Station in Tofino.

In addition, 2007 saw the foundation of the Heritage Research Group, composed of historians working at Malaspina University College on a wide variety of projects connected by the themes of heritage, memory and identity. The Group will function administratively under the purview of the Centre, and while its work will not be restricted to the Centre's mandate there are promising opportunities for fruitful collaboration.

Of the founding members, Stephen Davies leads the Canadian Letters and Images Project; Patrick Dunae studies local British Columbian history, especially public history; Laurie Meijer-Drees works on First Nations history, with an emphasis on healthcare; and Cheryl Krasnick Warsh examines Canadian medical history with a special eye on the health of women.

CENTRE RESEARCH PROJECTS

General Theses on Physics

Bill Weller last year produced the Latin text of this, the only work published by Alexandro Malaspina during his lifetime, which consist of an axiomatization of the metaphysical basis of Newtonian physics. John Black has taken over the project of translating it from Latin into English, and intends to complete this in the academic year 2008-9 with the help of time-release awarded him by the Research and Scholarly Activity Committee.

Pictures of an Expedition

Lisa MacLean, a printmaker and art historian in the Liberal Studies Department, joined the Centre in January 2006 to pursue a project involving the critical analysis of images made by the artists of the Malaspina expedition. Of interest are the ways in which European documentary artists depicted First Peoples, their artefacts and their customs, and the possibility that these involved distortions in the service of various political, economic or ideological ends. This project is ongoing.

RELATED PROJECTS

The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius

Honorary Research Associate and past Director Russell McNeil published, with Skylight Paths Press, a selected and annotated version of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. The book, which has been very well received, suggests that the Roman emperor's Stoicism (discussed at length by Alexandro Malaspina in his *Meditation on Beauty in Nature*) is truly a philosophy for our time.

Translation and Web Publication of Source Documents

The ongoing project of translating the letters of Alexandro Malaspina, historical newspaper articles about him and his expedition, as well as other documents, for publication on the Centre's website, took a big step forward during the year, through the efforts of Research Assistants María Soto de Podriske and Lorill Ireland. Of the items written in Spanish, all the newspaper articles, and all but one letter, have been completed.

Biosphere Conversation Series

AMRC has co-sponsored, and contributed to the organising and financing of, the first two in a series of symposia on philosophy and the environment. In April and October 2007 invited guests, drawn from a range of disciplines, stakeholder groups and walks of life, met at the Clayoquot Field Station in Tofino for discussions on the rôle of philosophical discourse in helping people with diverse perspectives on environmental issues achieve a common ground for communication. The first meeting was moderated by John Black and Robert Pepper-Smith of the Institute for Practical Philosophy, the second by John Black alone. It is hoped that a third Conversation will take place in Fall 2008.

PUBLIC EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITY

Public Lectures

The Centre sponsored three public lectures in the Fall semester of 2008. The first was given by Honorary Research Associate Barry Gough on his new book *Fortune's a River*. The second, organised by Cheryl Krasnick Warsh of the Heritage Research Group, was given by Michael Bliss, on the subject *Failed and Changing Dreams of Canada*. The third was by Kevin Neary, a freelance historical researcher, on his work for First Nations groups developing support for aboriginal title from the European historical record.

International Collaboration

Preliminary meetings have been held, through the initiative of associated scholar Ana María Donat, to develop an application from Malaspina University College to become an associated centre of the Cervantes Institute. A successful application would result in support not only for the teaching of Spanish language and culture but also for the research and public education activities of the Centre itself.

John Black has begun preparations for a non-credit study tour of Lunigiana, the area in northern Tuscany where Alexandro Malaspina was born. *In Search of the Malaspinas* will take participants to Lunigiana in the summer of 2009, and contribute to the translation of the Centre's research activity into educational opportunities.

Newsletter

The Centre continues to produce a short electronic newsletter. Its archive is at: web.mala.bc.ca/black/amrc/Newsletter/newsarchive.htm.

Alexandro Malaspina Liberal Studies Award

As a way of honouring Alexandro Malaspina's broad range of intellectual achievement, the Centre last year supplied seed funding for a student award, to go to the Liberal Studies BA major student who shows the greatest commitment to and achievement in interdisciplinary study, with need and general academic performance as tie-breaking factors. Through donations from Liberal Studies faculty, alumni and audience members at the Department's regular *Music of the World* concerts, the endowment reached the minimum for matching funds from the University College. The first recipient of the award was Lorill Ireland, coincidentally a Research Assistant in the Centre.

FUNDING

During 2007-8 the Centre's allocation from a SSHRCC Aid to Small Universities grant – used to hire the Research Assistants and support the Biosphere Conversation Series – came to an end, and application has been made for a further three years' funding.