

Preface: The Inaugural Issue of *Preteritus*
(Qualicum Conference 2009)

For the past 35 years, scholars in the historical disciplines have gathered on Vancouver Island to share their research and to reflect on the developing practices in their profession. While the first gatherings offered a mix of presentations from established faculty and students, in recent years the conference has highlighted the work of graduate students and the most talented undergraduates. This shift reflects the increased size and calibre of the intellectual community among junior scholars in British Columbia, and indeed throughout Canada.

Now a generous donation to the conference, made through the History Department at the University of Victoria, has provided resources so that results can be shared beyond the sessions themselves. The print journal *Preteritus*, with an accompanying website, will reproduce selected papers that exemplify the diversity and vitality of historical investigation in the Pacific Northwest. Some contributors to this inaugural issue address classic themes in the history of the Canadian West, namely the encounters of Spanish explorers with aboriginal peoples in the later eighteenth century, and the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway a century later. But other authors range more widely, to Byzantium in the sixth century, Senegal before World War I, and the oceans controlled by the British navy in the eighteenth century. Above all, the essays present creative approaches to core problems in recent historical literature, in particular the interpretive challenges posed by imperialism and the impact of religious convictions and alliances in diverse contexts.

As of this writing, a demanding economic environment forces difficult choices among Canadian universities. This collection of essays illustrates the successes that come with active support of humanist inquiry, and the clear need of stewardship for a promising generation of professionals.

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