



August 15, 2024

This newsletter may interest particular those related to persons related directly or indirectly to Grace and Clifford Retson. My genealogy website is located at <http://www.retson.ca/retsongeneology.html>

“Opinion: If you’re going to be mad, at least be well informed.”

The above heading appeared at the top of the local editor’s article in the July 4, 2024, Kenora and Miner & News. The first line of the article: “The truth shall set you free.”

The same newspaper had details of the actions of Bruce Wallace Frogg on June 25 at the local Anicinabe Park

According to Susan Evenden, the store manager, Frogg “was clearly having some kind of mental health issues, was angry, talking a lot, shouting a lot, and may have poured a flammable substance around the outside of the store. While the lone staff working in the store was able to escape safely, Frogg lit the building on fire, prompting a response by the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP)

In a video that circulated on social media, Frogg can be seen standing next to the on-fire store wielding two knives, seemingly brandishing them at police forming a perimeter in and around the parking lot.

Frogg was killed by the OPP.

In the next week July 11 Kenora Miner & News reported on a vigil held for Bruce Frogg at Anicinabe Park:

Politicians, Chiefs and community members from across Treaty 3 and Nishnawbe Aski Nation territory gathered to honour the memory of the man recently slain there...

As the vigil continued, it was brought to light that Frogg was a victim of Ralph Rowe, a former priest in the Anglican Church that was convicted of sexually abusing Indigenous youth.

He was also an Indian Residential School survivor.

Frogg was obvious suffering pain and presumably his addiction to alcohol arose from drinking to kill the pain.

Local tensions are running moderately high due to events which occurred during the past two years including the burning of a local restaurant, a local store owner assaulted and the removal of encampments on both private and public land including lands of the area’s District Service Board being held for future housing development. Both a Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) specialist and an Indigenous relations specialist have been appointed by the city to deal with the tension.

Ignorance

Starting on July 3rd I started the last course required to get my PLCGS in Canadian Genealogy and Mythology. From the International Institute of Genealogical Studies. PLCGS is the professional post nominal awarded to students that earn a Professional Learning Certificate in Genealogical Studies. I started several years ago because I was finding that there was difficulties in genealogical research and while I never intended to become a “professional genealogist”, I figured the courses could help in solving issues in my personal research as well as increase my research efficiency.

The early courses were relatively easy and initially I wondered if I was wasting my time. Each level became more difficult, and some courses were downright frustrating. At times I thought that the lengths taken to ensure accuracy of research were downright “stupid”.

The term "stupidity" may seem derogatory or insulting. It is actually a scientific concept that refers to a specific type of cognitive failure. Stupidity is not simply a lack of intelligence or knowledge, but rather a failure to use one's cognitive abilities effectively. Stupidity is a consequence of a failure to be aware of one's own limitations, and this type of cognitive failure has a scientific name: the Dunning-Kruger effect.

You can be “smart” while having a low IQ, or no expertise in anything. By becoming aware of the limitations of our natural intelligence or our ignorance, we can adjust our reasoning, behavior, and decision-making to account for our intellectual shortcomings. The Dunning-Kruger effect is a psychological phenomenon that describes the tendency for individuals to overestimate their level of intelligence, knowledge, or competence in a particular area. The individuals are ignorant of their own ignorance. It is said “You can't fix stupid”. But how you react to such ignorance may determine your success in overcoming the effect.

An old adage suggests “A little bit of learning can be a dangerous thing”. One can think of examples in which failing to recognize one's own ignorance can become dangerous. This may be true of someone who rushes off to take a DNA test without thinking ahead of time of what the consequences of unexpected results might be or how one will respond to them. Or how do you handle news that some of your ancestors were less than pristine pure. I would suggest that if a little bit of learning may be dangerous, more learning may be less dangerous.

By accepting the fact that you lack competency in a particular task or have areas of ignorance, leaves you with certain options. You can be embarrassed, avoid the work necessary to gain the competency to perform certain tasks or gain new knowledge in certain areas of concern or you can determine that the effort is simply not worth the pain and work required. By facing our ignorance, we avoid sharing in collective stupidity. The truth will set you free. In engaging in genealogical research, I have gained a great deal of knowledge of my ancestors and the world in which they lived. I have also gained a better understanding of myself and the world in which I live. I have come to realize that many of our biases come from lack of self-awareness and that acquiring greater self-awareness may be a difficult task.

I have set out to learn about our ancestor's interaction the Indigenous People of America. The earliest time period of active involvement was the first 50 to 60 years after our arrival in North America and included what has become known as King Phillip's War. The second period followed the first several decades following our Arrival in what became Canada. The early the period the greater the work in finding and analyzing records.

Our relative Adam G, Archibald (my second cousins 4 generations removed) was the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories and played a key role in the negotiation and signing of treaties with various Indigenous nations and signed Treaty 1 and Treaty 2. Treaty 1 was signed on August 3, 1871, at Lower Fort Garry, and Treaty 2 was signed on August 21, 1871, at Manitoba House. These treaties were part of a series of agreements intended to address land rights and relationships between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples. He returned back to Truro, Nova Scotia primarily because his term as Lieutenant Governor ended before Treaty 3, also known as the North-West Angle Treaty, was negotiated and signed on October 3, 1873, by Alexander Morris, who succeeded Adam Archibald as Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories.

For those interested I would recommend 3 books:

Krasowski, Sheldon, No Surrender, The Land Remains Indigenous, Regina: University of Regina Press, 2019

Rutherford, Scott, *Canada's Other Red Scare, Indigenous Protest and Colonial Encounters during the Global Sixties, Montreal and Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press 2020* [documents my current hometown Kenora's involvement indigenous political protest and social struggles from 1965 to 1974]

Saul, John Ralston, *The Comeback: How Aboriginals Are Reclaiming Power And Influence* Penguin Canada. 2014

To one's comments that the 'Natives' are taking over every major building on Main Street: 150 years ago, they owned the entire territory.

King Phillip's War

King Philip's War, also known as the Great Narragansett War or Metacom's Rebellion, took place in southern New England from 1675 to 1676. It was one of the bloodiest conflicts (per capita) in U.S. history. The war is named after the Wampanoag chief Metacom, later known as Philip or King Philip, who led the fourteen-month bloody rebellion. Metacom was a son of Massasoit, who had greeted the first colonists of New England at Plymouth in 1621. The number of our ancestors who lived through involved in King Phillip's war is yet to be determined. The war affected all their lives, determined the subsequent history and how Americans dealt with the native population. The various stories that make up the war are too many to be told in one newsletter and will be covered in future newsletters as they are researched

However, the larger number of our ancestors involve in Indigenous affairs date from a much earlier time (1620 onward) in early Massachusetts history starting with the Plymouth colony and continuing to one of the darkest periods of American history. I am currently reading David J. Silverman's *This Land is Their Land: The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving*. Other books I have read portions include George Madison Bodge's *Soldiers in King Phillip's War*; Jill Lepore's *The Name of War, King Phillip's War and the Origins of American Identity*; Daniel R Mandell's *King Philip's War : Colonial expansion, native resistance, and the end of Indian sovereignty*; Nathaniel Philbrick's *Mayflower: A story of courage, community, and war*; Jenny Hale's *Pulsipher, Subjects unto the Same King: Indians, English, and the Contest for Authority in Colonial New England*; and Eric B. Schultz and Michael Tougias, *King Philip's War, The History and Legacy of America's Forgotten Conflict*. Every one of these books contain information on at least one of our ancestors. While I have covered some of their involvement in the past I hope in the future to dedicate a lengthier account.

Faith of Our fathers versus No faith at All

Religion is an important factor in identifying and distinguishing same named individuals. In the past it was also a fact in determining ancestors beliefs and practices in other areas. It is not always easy to determine to what degree individuals actually adhere to the official beliefs and practices of the official dogma of the Church to which they belonged. Paraphrasing Gandhi who indicated that he had no problem with Christ – its just that Christians were not Christ like.

However you may not be surprised to learn that religion is playing an ever decreasing role in modern society. Not only elsewhere but in Canada as well. In Canada, according to the 2021 census, around 35 percent of people fall into the category no religion, up from the 4 percent who identified as non-religious in 1971. A 2022 Pew Research Center report even ranked Canada sixth on a list of the world's 10 least religious countries, behind the United Arab Emirates, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

In the July/August issue of Broadview magazine, writer Julie McGonegal attempted to analyze the trend is happening, and how it's changing society. She points out a few interesting patterns. People who were raised non-religious stay that way, while those who were raised religious are more likely to reject the faith. Modern-day emphasis on independence, is antithetical to what religion offers, and the numerous new ways to find and foster community, are also factors. This transformation influences how we think about and practise everything. Social conventions ranging from how people get married and buried to how they imagine the human relationship to the environment are undergoing revolution. Genealogists will have to depend on less religious records in the future. There's no question that in a world competing for our attention in endless ways, getting youth to engage with religion will always be a challenge. But churches should still aim to create spaces where they feel seen, heard, and inspired.

Protestants

In what ways does Catholicism in the past differed from Protestantism? While a summary can only be superficial, a brief overview might be given to this question.

The initial starting point is the belief with respect to whether mankind was once better or worse than he is today and what has been termed "The Fall". Atheist in general believe that despite occasional temporary setbacks man is getting better. Christians in general believe that he was once better but lost their favoured position through disobedience to God in the fall. This disobedience led to the loss of supernatural gifts that were heirs in the Garden of Eden. Catholics believed that man's transgression weakened but renewed for Catholics because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Infant baptism restored this gift of grace. Protestant following Luther concluded that man's nature was totally corrupted by the fall and only through faith could man be justified to God (Justification by faith alone). Luther denied that good works performed by man, ethical or ceremonial could earn merit. Catholics did believe that good works did earn merit. Luther claimed that that supreme religious authority could not be found in a man or institution but in a book – the Bible, the sole rule of faith. Catholic believe that the Catholic Church and traditions of the Church held authority. Protestants refuse to recognize the Church as a divine institution with authority to teach and see the church only as a fellowship of believers,

The Generations Advance

	Birth Year	Death Year	Age	Between Generations
Richard Retson	1760	1818	58	19
John Retson	1779	1842	63	30
John Retson	1809	1891	82	39
George Retson	1848	1910	62	36
William Rankin Retson	1884	1975	91	28
George Clifford Retson	1912	1997	85	36
James Retson	1948.	Average	441/6= 73.5	188/6 = 31.33

In our line up to the author, on average a new generation arrives in our line just over every 30 years. In our line we live on average 73.5 years. By the end of this year , all but one of my siblings will have passed this average. On August 21, 2024, Wiliam Edward Retson, the first of our siblings joins the octogenarian club. Two more generations have arrived since my birth.

This newsletter was sent to individuals who have expressed an interest in this genealogy at some time. If you do not wish to receive future updates, please email me at jretson@shaw.ca and indicate so.