

JANUARY 2019

STIBC Voice

Society of Translators and Interpreters of BC

A Message from the President



Dear STIBC Members and Friends:

On behalf of the STIBC Board of Directors and staff, I want to wish you all a very happy and prosperous New Year! The Society accomplished many things in 2018, and I anticipate that 2019 will be even better.

We wrapped up the past year with a festive social event at the Steamworks Pub and, as the photos here show, it was wonderful to welcome and see so many of our members — new and old — celebrate with us.

The STIBC staff and our Board of Directors are enthusiastic about the New Year, and hope you are, too! It is an honor and a pleasure to serve as STIBC president, and I look forward to seeing you at one, or all, of our many workshops and special events throughout the year.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with me, or with the STIBC staff, about any issues of interest or concern to you.

With very best wishes,
Karin Reinhold, C.T., Cr. I.
President (Board of Directors)



The Early French Interpreters of B.C.

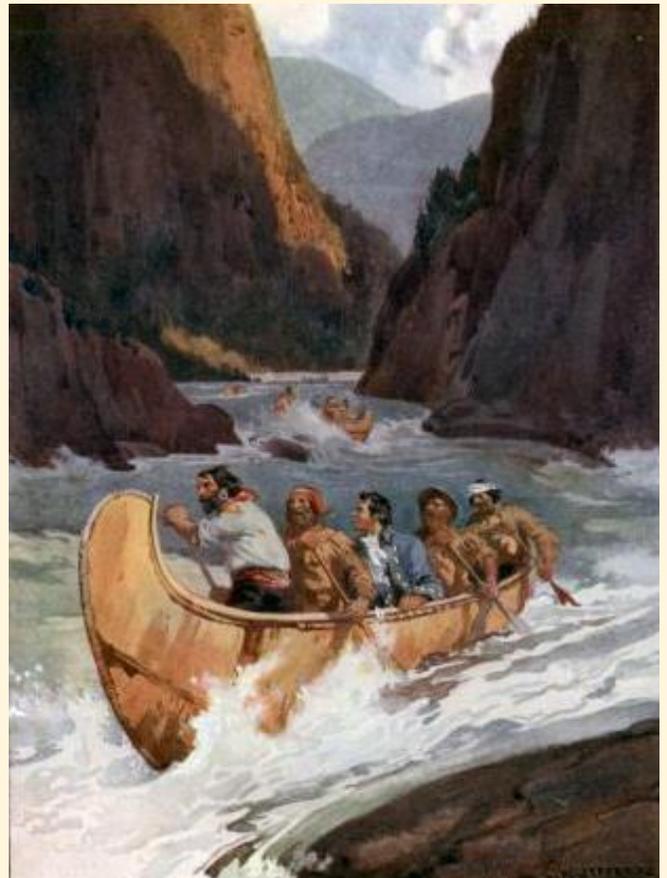
by Annie Bourret,

Certified Translator (English to French)

The success of the Mackenzie, Fraser, and Thompson expeditions is firmly based on the work of interpreters who were instrumental in communicating the explorers' peaceful intentions to the First Nations, as well as in procuring information, supplies, and guides.

There is little documented evidence of French interpreters in British Columbia before July 1811, when Thompson embarked on an expedition to find a natural way to cross the Rockies from south of the Fraser River. With him were five French Canadians, including Michel Bourdeau, who was an interpreter. Notably, interpreting was used for trade with the First Nations.

With the expansion of the fur trade, the North-West Company (NWC) and the Hudson's Bay Company had several interpreters with French names, such as Jean-Baptiste Lafleur (reputed to have worked in 1810-1811 as the interpreter for Jules Quesnel, who gave his name to a city between Prince George and Williams Lake) and Ovide Allard. It was apparently a dangerous job, since Michel Laframboise (1793-1861), who started working as an interpreter in 1813 in Fort George for the NWC, is documented as having had his life threatened several times.



Often the interpreters were Métis, like Jean-Baptiste Boucher, also known as Waccan, who was with Fraser during his 1806 and 1808 expeditions. This is not surprising, as most of them had French-speaking fathers and Aboriginal mothers. Not only were they raised in two languages from an early age, but they were also familiar with the ways of thinking of both cultures. They were actively sought after as interpreters and could even have other important tasks.

Several of these interpreters spoke and contributed to the Chinook jargon, a trade language commonly used in the mid-1800's. This mixture of proper

Chinook (an extremely difficult language) and Nootka, with English and French vocabulary and little grammar, seems to have appeared in 1810 at a fur-trading post established at the mouth of the Columbia River. Almost all agricultural terms, words associated with horses, and religious terminology have French origins.

Examples of French Influence on the Chinook Trade Language	
Chinook (French)	English
<i>lagome</i> (la gomme)	gum
<i>lahash</i> (la hache)	axe
<i>lapome</i> (la pomme)	apple
<i>Lejaub</i> (le yab)	the Devil
<i>lemah</i> (la main)	hand
<i>melass</i> (mélasse)	molasses
<i>shantie</i> (chanter)	to sing

A few interpreters became famous in their own lifetimes, like Michel Laframboise, who “picked up a smattering of several of the languages spoken on the Columbia” and directed several rather profitable commercial missions for the NWC. Others were simply indispensable. For instance, Jean-Baptiste Boucher/Waccan “was repeatedly entrusted with the charge of the main fort during the absence of its official head.” Almost forgotten nowadays, all played an instrumental role in the survival of various expeditions, often being the only means of communication between the explorers and the Aboriginal peoples.

Sources:

Demers, Ginette. “L’interprétation en Colombie-Britannique à l’époque des explorations par voie terrestre et de la traite des fourrures dans les comptoirs (1793-1846),” *TTR: traduction, terminologie, rédaction* 16.2 (2003), pp. 15-44.

Lillard, Charles, and Glavin, Terry. *A Voice Great Within Us: The Story of Chinook*. New Star Books, Transmontanus Series (Vancouver 1998).

Image: C.W. Jefferys, “The Descent of the Fraser River, 1808”

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Descent_of_Fraser_River_1808.jpg [*Pioneers of the Pacific Coast: A Chronicle of Sea Rovers and Fur Hunters*, by Agnes C. Laut (Toronto 1915)]

A postgraduate-trained linguist with 25 years of experience in translation, copy-editing and applied research in early childhood bilingualism, Annie Bourret was also a French contributor to the *Collins Gage Canadian Intermediate French Dictionary* (2005) and has published two children’s books and several essays. Her most recent book is *Pour l’humour du français*, from Les Éditions de L’Épaulard (Victoria 2018).

The ATA 59th Annual Conference, New Orleans LA, October 24-27, 2018

by Angela Fairbank, Certified Translator (Spanish to English)

In October 2018, I travelled to New Orleans to attend the 59th conference of the American Translators Association (ATA). As the ATA is much larger than STIBC, I was curious to see how they ran things, and wondered if I could bring back some ideas for our own, smaller, organization. For a bit of background, ATA and the CTIC – STIBC's umbrella organization – are both members of the International Federation of Translators (known by its French acronym FIT), which now represents 100,000 translators and interpreters in 130 countries on five continents, according to its President, Kevin Quirk of Norway, one of the speakers opening the ATA conference. Now 65 years old, FIT will hold its next conference in Varadero, Cuba in 2020.



According to its president Corinne McKay, the ATA currently has a stable membership of 10,000-plus members worldwide, of whom 83% renew annually. If you live and work in the USA, you become an “active” member once you are certified, whereas if you live and work outside of the USA, you will be a “corresponding” member upon certification. About 1,800 members are currently certified. The ATA holds certification exams several times a year in various parts of the country (and the world), including computer-written exams (bring your own laptop) since 2016. As of 2018, English to Arabic and Chinese to English are now among the 30 exam language combinations offered; 130 certified graders mark about 500

exams a year, of which, on average, only about 20% achieve passing marks. The September/October 2018 issue of the *ATA Chronicle*, the association's bi-monthly magazine, lists 44 newly-certified members in 13 language combinations. To pass the ATA certification exam, you need to achieve 83% *in each text* (no more than 17 points deducted). If the markers deduct 18 points or more, you fail. Nevertheless, *for each language combination you do pass*, you will receive a seal to certify your translations. In comparison, STIBC only issues one seal per person, with no language combination mentioned on it.

In 2018, the cost of each 3-hour exam was only \$300, but as of January 1, 2019, this fee was raised to \$525! The exam offers three passages of 225-275 words each, all presenting some challenges, of which you must translate only two. All texts are general-interest, needing no special dictionaries. The instructions preceding each passage indicate the text's source and purpose of the translation, such as publication or professional use.

The ATA's size means members have more benefits at no extra charge by joining divisions, some language-specific (French, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Nordic languages, etc.), others subject-related (education, science & technology, interpretation, literary, medicine, government, etc.) New divisions for law and audiovisual were added in 2018.

Besides the many networking opportunities, perhaps the main reason why people go to the ATA annual conference is the large range of continuing education and learning

opportunities available. This year, 375 session proposals were received, then whittled down to 175 for presentation over three days in 1-hour segments, with 15 presentations held simultaneously each hour. Subjects varied widely, as did language concentration and target audience. A colour-coded guide in the conference handbook helped us decide which ones to choose.

In addition to a job fair held by 31 recruitment agencies in two 2-hour evening sessions, a conference-long exhibition took place. Sixty-seven booths were staffed by translation and interpreting agencies, schools offering courses in translation and interpreting, US government agencies, CAT tool software vendors, and interpreting associations such as NAJIT, among others.

The first day, Wednesday, was an extra “Advanced Skills and Training Day” with morning and afternoon sessions. The more useful of the two courses I took was on how to pass the ATA Spanish into English exam, held by two former instructors from my Alma Mater in California. One of them was ATA-award-winning Holly Mikkelson of Court Interpreting fame, now nearing retirement, author of several celebrated books and articles on this profession. That evening, a “Buddies Welcome Newbies” session helped first-time ATA-conference-goers like me meet those who’d been to ATA meetings before and get tips on how to make the most of the four days. Following this meetup was a cocktail party that included a free drink and nibbles, with tables set up specifically for meeting people in the various divisions.



(c) Angela Fairbank

The Thursday and Friday mornings started early for attendees lucky enough to be staying at the conference hotel, with Zumba and Stretching classes, as well as a continental breakfast where you could meet the ATA board. Thursday's opening session began with a welcome speech from New Orleans' mayor, then board members were introduced, and we had a general introduction to the ATA. Another general session focused on presenting awards, for school outreach (where members visit schools to talk with the youngest generation of linguists about careers in T&I), for excellence in literary translations, and for outstanding service to the T&I profession. This year the recipient of the ATA's highest honour was a pioneer of simultaneous interpreting born in 1924 who interpreted during the Nuremberg Trials.

I attended five lectures during the Thursday and Friday sessions, ranging from the use of gender-neutral language in France and pitfalls to avoid while subtitling films in Spanish using on-line dictionaries from Spain's *Real Academia* (Royal Academy), to modern careers available to linguists and how to set freelance translation rates. I also learned a bit about how medical interpreting was arranged in the USA.

On Saturday, however, I could not attend any of the almost 70 presentations as I was busy writing my ATA certification exams. Better to try them now, I figured, than next year, when they will cost almost twice as much (I have just found out that I passed my exam, so am now ATA-certified for French to English!).

For STIBC members interested in attending an ATA conference, the following cities will host the event over the next five years: Palm Springs (2019), Boston (2020), Minneapolis (2021), Los Angeles (2022) and Miami (2023). Perhaps I'll see you at one of them!

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SimHebrew: Preserving Hebrew scriptures for electronic posterity

by Jonathan Orr-Stav, Associate Member (Hebrew to English)

At the start of the Second Temple period (late 6th, early 5th century BCE), Judeans wanted to commit their oral mythologies, historic accounts and Judaic law to writing—a compilation of written texts that today we know as the Hebrew Bible. But they faced a profound dilemma: should they use the ancestral Hebrew script that had served their ancestors since at least the 16th century BC, or the Assyrian one that they had learned during exile in Babylon and which they were accustomed to?

The two scripts were essentially of the same alphabet, because the Assyrian script was originally based on the Old Hebrew/Canaanite one, but had diverged from it considerably in the graphic forms of the characters. Nonetheless, it was a heart-wrenching decision: the heart said 'Hebrew,' because it was the script of the Ten Commandments and of the independent Israelite kingdoms prior to the Babylonian exile, but the mind said 'Assyrian,' because its script was more compact and disciplined, and therefore more suited to long texts. The Judeans wrestled with the decision for years, but ultimately the Assyrian won out, for the reason already stated (Fig. 1).

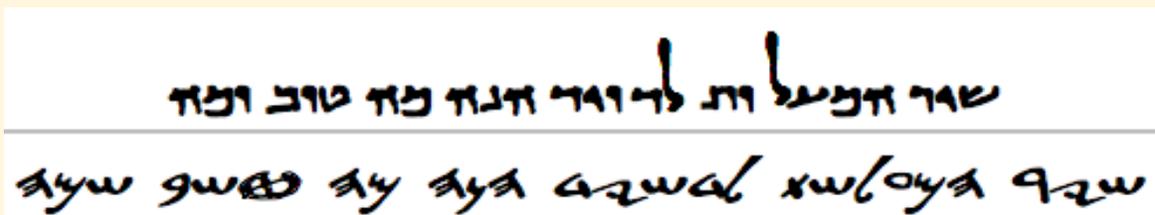


Fig. 1: Although highly controversial at the time, the Assyrian script (top) was ultimately chosen over the ancestral Hebrew one (bottom) for the Hebrew Bible because it was more compact and therefore more suited to long texts (top font courtesy of the Dead Sea Scrolls Research Institute at the University of Haifa; Design: Einat Tamir)

Today, we face a similar predicament in relation to the electronic preservation of the Hebrew scriptures. Despite the advent of Unicode, the information age is still fundamentally founded on the ASCII (American Standard Code for Information Interchange) character set—i.e., the English alphabet (upper and lowercase), common punctuation signs, and basic control characters. Like the Assyrian script in its Middle East of 2500 years ago, it is the *lingua franca* (or rather, *scriptum francum*) of all information-based technologies—including programming, Internet URLs, the International Standard Book Number (ISBN) database, and all electronic devices and domestic appliances. While there is no denying that the Hebrew Scriptures were enshrined in the Assyrian script (which subsequently received the more neutral name 'Square Script') and will forever be associated with it, providing a reliable method of encoding them in ASCII characters will ensure that they can be preserved and remain electronically accessible by electronic means without the use of special conversion software that may not exist in future.

The operative word here is reliable: whatever scheme is chosen must allow for conventional ('Square') Hebrew to be converted to ASCII (and back) with no loss of information—i.e., while preserving the distinctions between letters that in ordinary phonetic renditions appear to be the same (e.g. *matza bamatza*, or *et le'et ve'et le'et*). Common transliteration is hopeless for this purpose, as evident from the multiple spellings used for common Hebrew names (Hanukkah/Chanuka/Channukah, anyone?). Scholarly transliteration purports to address this ambiguity, but only at the cost of using various dots and diacritics above, below, or before characters that are impossible to replicate on ordinary keyboards (Fig. 2).

ISO 259-2: Hebrew romanization – Simplified

Hebrew	א	ב	ב	ג	ד	ה	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	כ	ל	מ	מ	נ	נ	ס	ע	פ	פ	צ	ץ	ק	ר	ש	ש	ש	ת	'		
Latin	'	b	ḃ	g	d	h	ḣ	w	z	ḥ	ṭ	y	k	k̇	l	m	n	s	'	p	ṗ	ṣ	q	r	š	ś	ṧ	t	'					
Hebrew	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	װ	'	
Latin	a	e	i	o	ẇ	u	ẇ	none	a	o	e																							

Fig. 2: ISO-259 for scholarly transliteration of Hebrew involves many diacritics that are not available on most devices (courtesy of Wikipedia.org)

SimHebrew™ was invented with this challenge in mind. As its name suggests, rather than attempt to replicate Hebrew phonetically, it simulates how Hebrew is written natively, by mapping each Square Hebrew character to a single Roman character, based on a reverse-engineering of the original Canaanite-to-Greek mapping (which accounts for most letters), or (in the case of 'orphaned' characters with no obvious Roman equivalent) to the one that is graphically most similar (k, c / ç, y, f, x, w).

t	w	r	q	x	f	p	y	s	n	m	l	ç	c	i	'	k	z	u	o	v	h	d	g	b	a
ת	ש	ר	ק	צ	ף	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל	ך	כ	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ו	ו	ה	ד	ג	ב	א


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Fig. 3: The SimHebrew mapping to traditional ('Square') Hebrew.

This one-to-one mapping allows the distinctive spelling of Hebrew words to be replicated in the Roman characters, such that the conversion is fully reversible by computer algorithm. Although the result deviates from traditional phonetic or linguistic conventions (e.g. with regard to the Hebrew letters vav, ḥet, kaph, tzadi, ayin, shin), the same may be said about any European language based on the Roman script (e.g., *Champs Élysées*, *Schadenfreude*, *pizza*, *Juan*, *Taoiseach*), and it is easily mastered and readable by any literate Hebrew speaker.

London (and Vancouver?) Calling!

by Jordan Lancaster Ortega, Associate Member (Italian to English)

You might wonder why a translator living in England would want to become a member of STIBC. A rather long time ago, I graduated in Romance Languages from UBC, great preparation for an international career in languages that has taken me to New York, Naples, Paris, London and Havana. I am a specialist in the Romance languages, a translator of French, Italian, and Spanish qualified through the Chartered Institute of Linguists (CIOL) in the UK, where I have been translating and interpreting full-time for over 20 years and published several books. As Brexit approaches, however—or maybe not?—and I was actually born in Trail, the call of home grows stronger.

In England, I am what's known as a Chartered Linguist, a “badge of quality and competence” considered the “gold standard” for linguists. According to the CIOL, which awards the title, “Chartership provides assurance to users of language services, inspiring confidence with employers, clients and fellow language practitioners. It confirms commitment to Continuing Professional Development and indicates that....a practitioner is committed to maintaining high professional standards, continually developing professional language skills and specialist knowledge. Chartership demonstrates commitment to improving standards and to professionalising the language industry.” So you can understand that I am eager to qualify with STIBC as well, since it shares similarly high standards and goals for the profession. During the process of commencing my membership with STIBC, I have been impressed by the commitment and professionalism of all the team in the office. I enjoy receiving the organization's publications, which help me begin to form an idea of the industry and its place within British Columbia commerce and society.



At the moment, I am considering a return to Vancouver one of these days. If this does come to fruition, I feel that having joined STIBC in advance will greatly assist me in the transition. I look forward to meeting staff and other members in person when I do.

After receiving her B.A. and M.A. from UBC, Jordan Lancaster

(www.jordanlancaster.co.uk)

earned a Ph.D. in Italian and French at the University of Toronto.

Her latest publication is *I Live in Havana: Yo Vivo en la Habana*, a bilingual book for young readers.

The *STIBC Voice* is Calling All Members!

The *STIBC Voice*, published four times a year (January, April, July, and October), is looking for contributions pertinent to the language and translation industry. Author-members eager to share new ideas, sources of inspiration, proposals for improvement, and experiences of interest to colleagues and friends are invited to submit news items, articles, announcements, or illustrated essays that fit into the following framework:

News Items and Announcements (50–200 words)

about events, issues, and projects relevant to STIBC

Feature Articles (500–800 words)

that entertain, enlighten, and compel,

- discussing one or more topics of interest in depth
- sharing knowledge, for example professional experiences, implementation efforts in markets, or tips and tricks
- offering new perspectives on current global issues affecting our profession, such as migration, citizenship, and technological change
- reflecting on technical and linguistic matters, educational issues, regulatory perspectives, etc.

Articles should include a *title*, the author's *name*, and *date* (section headings optional) The use of *images* (paintings, sketches, photos, tables, and/or sidebars) for illustration and emphasis is encouraged. All contributed material must comply with the *ethical principles and standards of professional conduct* set out in the STIBC Code of Ethics (Bylaws, Part 14).

Please send all texts (doc, .docx, or .rtf files, double-spaced 12-point standard font, basic formatting) and images (.jpg or .png files) to the *STIBC Voice* Editor at secretary@stibc.org

All articles selected for publication will be edited for content (including length, if they exceed the recommended word count), spelling, and grammar.

Contributions are welcome throughout the year, but...

THE SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE NEXT ISSUE IS

Monday 1 April 2019

To suggest ideas for articles or ask about any other details, please contact the *STIBC Voice* Editor, Stefanie Kennell, at secretary@stibc.org

Society of Translators and Interpreters of BC

400-1501 West Broadway

Vancouver, BC V6J 4Z6

CANADA

Tel: (604) 684-2940

Website: www.stibc.org

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