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Gloria McNabb (left) and Daryl Dumanski are volunteers with the Manitoba Genealogical Society. The two are shown holding the society's wooden sign from its founding year in 1976.

Manitoba Genealogical Society works to preserve, make available records, other historical materials

Serious about family histories

AARON EPP VOLUNTEERS



If you enjoy talking about the deceased, the Manitoba Genealogical Society might be the place for you. "I always say it's the only group where you can talk about dead people and no one will think you're weird," says Daryl Dumanski, the society's vice-president finance. "You're not strange because you like going to cemeteries."

Founded in 1976, the society promotes genealogical research and the writing of family histories.

It is run entirely by volunteers who assist researchers and work to preserve and make available Manitoba

genealogical and historical materials.

Dumanski got involved more than 35 years ago.

Around that time, her Aunt Mary in Victoria, B.C., was getting her will in order. Since Mary didn't have any children, she asked Dumanski if she would maintain the genealogical research she had started.

Dumanski figured that joining the society would be the best way to continue her aunt's research. Since then, she's traced her family's history back all the way to the 1600s.

She's also volunteered in almost every role in the organization. In addition to her vice-president position, Dumanski currently serves as volunteer recruitment co-ordinator and assists with publicity.

For Gloria McNabb, who serves as the society's treasurer, volunteering is a way to keep using the skills she acquired prior to retirement during her career as an accountant.

McNabb was first introduced to the society in 2016 when she took a five-

week course that taught participants how to research their family history.

During the final class, participants used one of the computer databases at the society.

McNabb recalls the records that came up when she searched for her paternal grandmother, who was born in Scotland. Even more records came up when she added her grandmother's brother's name into the search.

"I was amazed, and this started my interest in genealogy," McNabb says.

She joined the society in October 2018 as she was starting to research her husband's family, which has had roots in Manitoba ever since his great-great-grandfather arrived in September 1779 from Scotland to work for the Hudson's Bay Company.

As part of her research, McNabb travelled to Europe in August 2019 with her son and his girlfriend.

Over the course of two weeks, they visited Scotland, England and Finland, reuniting with some of McNabb's cousins along the way.

McNabb's son had plans for the trip beyond just meeting distant relatives, though. While visiting a castle in Scotland, McNabb turned around to find him proposing to his girlfriend.

"That was the highlight of the Aberdeen part of the trip," McNabb says. "It was quite a surprise and I was very happy about it."

The Manitoba Genealogical Society is always looking for more volunteers, according to Dumanski.

The society needs assistance in a variety of areas, including database management, publicity, social media, office maintenance and more.

Anyone interested can apply online at mbgenealogy.com or send an email to volunteer@mbgenealogy.com.

"Everyone comes with a different skill set and different backgrounds," Dumanski says. "I enjoy all the people and learning why they ended up here."

If you know a special volunteer, please contact aaron.epp@gmail.com.