

# Karl Anton Friedmann

NOVEMBER 18, 2023

KARL ANTON FRIEDMANN

1938-2023



It is with great sadness that we share the news of Karl's death in Delta, BC on Nov 18, 2023. Karl died peacefully with dignity and grace and on his own terms. His immediate family was by his side. Karl was born in Germany on May 25, 1938. After high school, he pursued a classics degree at the University of Heidelberg. His post-graduate work led him to study political science, which included taking classes at the London School of Economics. He became interested in the work and influence of the office of ombudsman. To this end he obtained a scholarship to St. Antony's College, Oxford where he worked on his thesis in that field. Back home in Heidelberg he obtained his doctorate in the study of the British Ombudsman office.

Doctorate in hand, he considered both Australia and Canada, but Canada was the winner after Karl received an offer for a teaching position from The University of Calgary Department of Social Sciences. Karl and family made the move to Calgary, Alberta in 1966 where he taught Political Science.

In 1979 he became British Columbia's first Ombudsman and a welcomed opportunity to put theory and academic research into practice, by setting up from scratch the first office; built on a foundation of principled best practices that became a model for ombuds offices launched in other jurisdictions. To say that his time in office was often turbulent, is to minimize his influence. Karl believed deeply

in justice for people who needed help in negotiating through the bureaucratic jungle of government, especially when those people felt they were not being heard or treated fairly. Karl and his staff brought the Office of the Ombudsman into the public domain, and many people benefitted from the help Karl's office was able to give them. Karl faced obfuscation and challenges to jurisdiction by the government of the day. To that end he took them to task in a landmark trial which reached the Supreme Court of Canada, ... and which ruled in Karl's favour. This case, ruling in favour of broadly defined powers of an Ombudsman to investigate matters over the more restrictive scope preferred by governments remains a leading precedent cited in litigation nationally, in other Commonwealth jurisdictions, and even internationally. To this day, we understand that several provincial ombudsmen still rely on that ruling when endeavouring to persuade their provincial governments to "do the right thing"! Karl was a man of great integrity and stood up for the individual complainants even at the cost of his own career. Governments are generally unenthusiastic when being investigated and course corrected.

Upon his retirement, he didn't settle down, but embarked on a new career showing off the beauty of Alberta and British Columbia to German speaking visitors. His enthusiasm for hosting and sharing his passion, experience and encyclopedic knowledge of British Columbia and Alberta's natural world, history and indigenous cultures made him 'the' in demand and most requested guide of new and returning tour groups. Karl loved this country deeply and was never happier than when he was out in the wilderness enjoying nature's wonders. A keen huntsman, he spent many hours pursuing game, and mostly missing. He also took up the hobby of rockhounding, rock polishing and silversmithing. He joined various rock and gem clubs and invigorated them with his enthusiasm. His son Bjorn who helped move him several times often bemoaned the great quantities of rocks that were collected on many of his adventures.

Karl is survived by his wife, Elizabeth O'Hea, his two sons, Oliver Friedmann and Bjorn Read-Friedmann, and his four grandsons, Kai, Grayson, Kaden and Toren Read-Friedmann. We will all miss him dearly.

In accordance with Karl's wishes, the family will hold informal celebration of life at 787 Tudor Court, Delta on the 4th of May, drop in between 1-5pm.

## Messages of Condolence

I very much admired Karl's intelligence, integrity, and sense of humour. I shared many a lovely evening with him and Elizabeth with a glass of wine and a "real" Xmas tree with live candles which scared the heck out of me. How he and Elizabeth managed not to burn the house down was a miracle. I will miss his laughter and good counsel. Thank you, Karl, for making this world a better place for your having been here.

Valerie Fuller

— **Valerie E. Fuller**

It is wonderful to read about Karl's life and a detailed account of his political work history!

I only remember meeting Karl a couple of times at the banquet and auction to benefit the Stephen Lewis Foundation, Grandmothers for Grandmothers. His smile and happiness was unforgettable!

— **Maria Box**



<https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/friedmann-karl-anton>

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