

MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH – 354th Edition – March 30 , 2012

Created by Sherron Jones sherronjones@shaw.ca

To use an e-mail address from the MocTel, replace the * with @.



Northern lights over Caribou Mountain. Photo taken from Bennett Lake...this morning! March 28, 2012 Photo courtesy Heather Jones hjones@northwestel.net (In Carcross)

ICE ISLAND

By Aksel Porsild yukoner1@shaw.ca (In Courtenay BC)

Suddenly snow swirled around us. My heart stood still. The helicopter was almost in a hover, dangerously close to a full stop above the snowy moonscape. I could see nothing in this swift deterioration from full visibility to almost blindness.

“What is our altitude?” “What is our airspeed?” “Are we over level terrain or rough ground?” All of these questions jammed in my head like sheep all trying to go through a gate at the same time but, to my rapidly increasing concern, the answer to each question was “I wish I knew!”

We were suddenly in an almost complete "white-out", a condition where sky merges with land and you feel as if you're flying through milk. A few nights ago we had experienced the same phenomenon on the ground, while on snowmobiles, and the sensation is almost nauseating, as vertigo sets in. I began to shake with fear, to the point where I could scarcely grip the control sticks, my knees like rubber.

"Over there--a spot!" Orest yelled, pointing. I glanced quickly to my left, past Orest's pointing finger. Through the billowing clouds of snow I saw what he was looking at - a dark area in the milky whiteness, probably a bare rock outcrop. Quickly, and with utmost concentration I focused on that patch of bare rock, an indeterminate distance away, and carefully aimed the helicopter at it.

I had thought we were done -- I could see us, in my mind's eye, piled up in a heap of scrap on the snow, because when all reference to land or sky is lost, spatial disorientation sets in and it becomes impossible to discern motion. This light helicopter wasn't equipped for blind flying nor was I trained in this type of operations. The next second we could be on our side on the ground since, with no sensation of movement, control is quickly lost. My stomach was churning and I felt weak and helpless, my arms and legs shaking uncontrollably.

Slowly, slowly, focusing all my facilities at the task in hand which had suddenly become a matter of survival, I tensed my muscles to stop the trembling, made the helicopter move forward. A quick glance at the airspeed indicator soon showed a forward speed and the machine seemed stable again, even if I felt less so.

It was April of 1988 and we were returning from Ice Island in Canada's High Arctic to Resolute Bay, a major staging base on Cornwallis Island. This was the first leg of our home-bound journey to Edmonton. Our two Bell 206L Long Rangers were on contract to the Polar Continental Shelf Project (PCSP) of Energy, Mines and Resources Canada. This organization had been formed in 1958, originally to do scientific research in Canada's high arctic resources, and to sustain our sovereignty in the arctic islands. Since then, PCSP has developed a logistics network which serves the vast areas from Alaska to Greenland, and provides such support to scientists of various disciplines and from various organizations: universities, other Federal departments, and foreign government agencies and universities. The aim is to reduce costs by having a logistics infrastructure in place providing communications, leasing equipment, and logistical support including co-ordinating transportation services to groups performing research in Canada's Arctic.

One of PCSP's bases was located on Ice Island, a massive chunk of ice which had broken off Ellesmere Island's Ward Hunt Ice Shelf seven years earlier. It measured about five miles long, two wide, and was one hundred and fifty feet thick, mostly flat. It drifts in the pack ice and it had by this time tracked some three hundred miles south-west of its point of origin. In the spring of 1988, it was located at latitude 80, about 700 miles south of the geographic North Pole, and about 60 miles off the west coast of Axel Heiberg Island, and frozen in the pack ice.

The base on Ice Island comprised several wooden prefabricated accommodation

huts, a large office/mess hall complex and half a dozen other structures, was occupied every spring, when the days started to lengthen. It was used by researchers and scientists from various locations, not excluding the United States on research of many disciplines: botanical zoological, glaciological and so on. As the short arctic summer approaches the airstrip becomes slushy and unusable and the base is abandoned until fall, when short projects sometimes are carried out.

Our machines were owned by CHC Helicopters of Edmonton, and we'd been supporting an ocean floor sampling project, conducted by the Bedford Basin Research Institute (now Satlantic Inc.) of Halifax, arriving at the Base in early April. This research consisted of recording ocean depths and the composition of sediment of the continental shelf, south and south-west from the Ice Island base. We would fly out along mapped grid lines, using the Omega low-frequency navigational aid installed in the helicopters. On site, as shown by the Omega device, we would set up the portable satellite positioning gear, Global Positioning System, or GPS, to determine a more accurate location. Satellite positioning was in its infancy and it uses a series of satellites in orbit to triangulate a position on the ground by taking a bearing to that position. Hence the more satellites that was in communication with the ground receivers at a given point in time, the more accurate the location. All the transmitting satellites were not in place yet, and one or more were malfunctioning, so we found this new technology was not always reliable, but we managed to establish most of our work sites accurately; it seemed that if the GPS position was inaccurate, it was grossly so, and we would use other, less accurate means to establish our locations.

At each site a portable winch and mast would be set up on the sea ice, and a hole drilled with a gas engine powered augur through the ice, which could be as thick as six feet. A special sampling device on the end of the cable was then lowered to the ocean floor. It was then brought up, with a small amount of mud and other debris from the bottom, as well as a sample of the water at a selected depth. The sites were located along the lines about three kilometres apart, and we could do several sites per trip, depending on bottom conditions (often the ocean floor was too hard for the sampler to pick up any material), and the electric winch, which gave some trouble.

We were at Ice Island for almost three weeks, working when the unpredictable weather allowed, sitting around when it didn't. The actual work was accomplished in five long days, and most of the rest was waiting for weather, which that particular year was bad; blowing snow and high overcasts cancelled flying two days out of five. By mid-April twenty-four hour daylight prevailed so we could, and did fly when the conditions allowed.

Both helicopters performed a few other minor lifting jobs while there, and in between the Bedford work, we were ready to ferry home by April 24. We had to wait a bit though, prevented from leaving the Island because of light snow and overcast skies, inducing almost zero visibility over the sea ice. This condition is known as whiteout, in which the snow covered ground or ice, the cloudy sky, and the horizon become a continuous, shadowless mass of dazzling white. It can cause dizziness and disorientation even when walking.

Finally, at nine in the morning the weather cleared and we set off on the four

hundred mile flight. My engineer, Orest Anhel, “rode shotgun” with me, while the other Long Ranger was crewed by Dave Mulan and his engineer, John Sutherland. Our fuel cache was at an abandoned Panarctic exploration camp on King Christian Island, and we landed there after a two hour flight, in fairly good weather but a high thin cloud sheet was forming.

One advantage of flying for Polar Shelf was that virtually every abandoned camp and almost every small, easy-to-find island had a fuel cache located on it. Some of these caches were established several years previously, and often the fuel in the older caches was contaminated to some degree. We used expensive filters on our refuelling equipment to ensure that good fuel was pumped into our tanks. However, one peculiarity about turbo (jet) fuel is that it is susceptible to fungal contamination when stored in drums. This fungus can sometimes pass through our refuelling pump strainers but clog the engine fuel filters, and can cause the engine to flame out (quit) from fuel exhaustion. The fuel we were supposed to use on King Christian was old and mostly contaminated so that between our two machines we could not find enough good JP-4 jet fuel to fill the tanks completely.

Therefore we would have to refuel again at the University of Alberta's research station at Polar Bear Pass, on Bathurst Island to ensure that we could make Resolute with the proper legal reserve. This station was some fifteen miles west of the direct route we were following so there would be little loss of time.

As we took off from King Christian Island, I noticed that the sun had become partially obscured by the high cloud and that the visibility had deteriorated. There were few shadows on the frozen sea but it was still quite bright and we could pick out the various shades of green and turquoise indicating upturned ice floes. A characteristic of the Arctic Ocean in this region was the presence of frozen-in ice bergs, of various sizes and shapes, broken off land glaciers, like Ice Island had been. In summer, when some areas of the sea ice break up, these bergs or floes act like sails and are blown to and fro by the wind. When winter returns, these masses of ice are sometimes turned upside down, showing their bare, hitherto unexposed clear ice surfaces above the level of the ice pack. They are often starkly coloured in shades of blue or green.

We continued south, watching for pressure ridges, where wind and ocean currents had made the edges of large areas of floes grind together and push up ridges of broken chunks of ice; some of these were miles long, and were usually perpendicular to the prevailing wind direction. Open areas between floes, called “leads”, most of them frozen over again, also showed up well on the surface.

As we neared the north coast of Bathurst Island, Dave called me on radio and we decided to go directly to Polar Bear Pass by flying over the Island, even though it was completely ice- and snow- covered, rather than follow the cliffs southward along the eastern shore.

We had not proceeded far inland when it became difficult to see; land and sky blended into one and it was like flying in milk. I became increasingly apprehensive regarding the visibility and checked with Dave again by radio.

He was several miles ahead of us, "We're doing okay, but I've slowed to about eighty knots," he answered, "it's getting pretty hard to see the ground."

I was also down to that speed, the better navigate from bare spot to grass clump to rock outcrop, the only things I could pick out of the drab whiteness, but it was becoming difficult to see these necessary reference points.

I strained my eyes and concentrated intently to see anything-- a shadow of a snow drift, a clump of sedge sticking out of the snow-- hoping to maintain visual reference until conditions should improve. While doing so I did not realize that we were gradually slowing down. When clouds of snow billowed up around us I was stunned. It indicated that I had allowed our forward speed to decrease to the point where the helicopter was virtually in a hover, without any visual reference at all. I was not trained on blind flying instruments, nor was there appropriate equipment or instruments installed in this machine to make much of a difference.

All the stories I had heard about white-outs, about pilots who had lost all reference and control, and with helicopters lying dismembered on the sea ice flashed through my consciousness. It was as if ice-cold water had entered my veins and I struggled to overcome my fright and to maintain control of my aircraft. Never had I known such apprehension in some twenty-five years of helicopter flying; my legs suddenly were rubber. It really was sheer fright!

Gritting my teeth, gently, gently, I eased the stick forward and increased power, never taking my eyes off that beautiful black speck of rock ahead. I pointed the faithful Long Ranger at it, we gained some forward speed and flew shakily out of the cloud of swirling snow. Another speck appeared, then another, and in a few minutes we were over the escarpment. The land pattern was again visible below us, falling away to the sea ice stretching starkly white to the undefined horizon; the seaward cliff faces provided welcome contrast.

I was still shaking and turned to look at Orest. He was pale, but grinned weakly back at me. We had almost "bought the farm" and we had nothing to say to each other. Relief flooded over me, and, while not entirely free of our problem completely, I knew that we could now at least reach Polar Bear Pass safely and after that, well, we'd see if the trip could be continued to Resolute.

We flew out from the cliffs and then turned south, paralleling them. I called Dave again and told him of our near disaster. John, his engineer, answered the radio, and I thought his voice sounded a bit quavery, "It's ok, we had to turn east too, and we're also following the cliff line south. See you at Polar Bear Pass."

I turned to Orest, "I wonder if he and Dave were as scared as we were."

He didn't say anything for a minute. "Hell, I wasn't scared, were you?"

"Well," I replied, lying, as he was, "maybe not really scared, but I'll be glad to get to Resolute and change into fresh underwear."

He just grinned back at me. I'll never know how many of the four of us really did some clandestine laundry that evening in Resolute.



Early morning encounter with a beautiful sow as she makes her final preparations to a Yukon winter. Photo taken after the early winter snow, October 13, 2011
Photo courtesy Heather Jones hjones@northwestel.net (In Carcross)

YUKON NUGGET

A CKRW Yukon Nugget by Les McLaughlin

Courtesy Rolf & Marg Hougen marg@hougens.com (In Whitehorse)

The Alsek River

The Alsek is a mighty river, and not one to be challenged by the faint of heart. It's fed by the massive glaciers of the St. Elias Mountains in Kluane National Park. Here lies an incredible landscape of towering mountains, active glaciers and broad valleys. The Alsek is one of the park's most precious jewels. Like a lot of places in the Yukon, it had many names. Its native name was first reported by Russian explorers in 1825. As early as 1786, a French explorer, LaPerouse, called it the Riviere du Behring. In 1886, Frederick Schwatka named it the Jones River after one of his expedition's sponsors. Schwatka had a habit of honoring those who paid his way and seldom cared

if a geographical feature had another name. At one time, the U.S. geographical survey called it the Harrison River after a U.S. president. The Canadian government finally got its act together and officially restored the original name, Alsek, in 1891.



Alsek River, as seen from summit of Mt. Kelvin 5000 ft. above it, July 3 1898.
Yukon Archives. Joseph B. Tyrrell fonds, #27.

From its origin as a meandering stream at the confluence of the Kaskawulsh, Dust and Dezadeash rivers, the Alsek flows for 250 km across the Yukon, the northern top of British Columbia and the Alaskan panhandle, emptying into the Pacific Ocean at Dry Bay in Alaska. This is a region of big-water rapids, canyons, glaciers and floating icebergs. On its way through the park, the river passes through a remote wilderness area, an undisturbed natural habitat for species of both Pacific Coast and Arctic plant life. The largest population of Grizzly bears in the world lives here.

The Alsek River contains many significant natural features which have resulted from the action of water, wind and glaciers on the landscape. Many areas of exceptional natural beauty and some of Canada's most important northern ecosystems are found here. The Lowell Glacier, one of the largest in the world, forms a large section of the Alsek Valley wall and calves, with tremendous force, into the Alsek below.

Small numbers of native people have inhabited the Kluane region for perhaps 10,000 years. Ancestors of the Southern Tutchone arrived in the vicinity about 4,500 years ago.

Some of the traditional hunting, fishing and trading camps, such as the village of Klukshu, just outside the park, have been used for more than 1,000 years. In the 1890's, during the Klondike

Gold Rush, the first white men came into the area from the south, travelling over the Dalton Trail to Dalton Post and other points north. Some stayed to prospect and mine the Kluane Ranges for a period at the beginning of the century.

In 1986, a 90-kilometer section of the Alsek River was designated a Canadian Heritage River. A plaque commemorating the dedication is located in Haines Junction.

A CKRW Yukon Nugget by Les McLaughlin

Myth and Medium Returns to Dawson City

By Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

February 26, 2012

The Dānojà Zho Cultural Centre was a hive of activity from February 21 to 23 as the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Department revived its long dormant Myth and Medium program and packed both the Gathering Room and the auditorium for a series of lectures, presentations and discussions around the idea of storytelling.

Events began on Tuesday evening with welcoming songs by the Hān Singers; presentations by Angie Joseph-Rear (a prayer and a story); a talk, "The Afterlife of Stories" by Julie Cruikshank; and some storytelling by Sharon Shorty, speaking as herself rather than her familiar Gramma Susie persona.

Wednesday was a full schedule, beginning with Parks Canada's overview of its new emphasis – people stories – presented by Interpretation Coordinator Carrie Docken.

Dawson City Museum Director gave a multi-media talk on the role of museums as social institutions and catalysts for local debate.

A heritage round table gave each of the two dozen attendees in the Gathering Room circle a chance to talk about their organization's role in preserving and passing on heritage. There were presentations from Mayo, Old Crow, the Yukon government, Parks Canada and TH's Heritage Department.

That afternoon the action moved to the TH Community Hall across the street for hours of hands on workstations showcasing Métis finger weaving, making dry meat, willow bark rope making, sewing, and brewing tea from bush herbs.

In the evening it was showtime, with a selection of Dawson home movies from the TH Archives, as well as the animated Dawson youth production "The Story of Crow" and a number of films brought by Vuntut Gwich'in filmmaker Mary Jane Moses.

On Thursday morning the sessions were called “We’ve got something to tell you about.” It was anthropologist Julie Cruikshank’s turn again, and she spoke about her relationship with a pair of Dawson elders: Mary McLeod and Pat Lindgren.



The Hān Singers welcomed a full house to the first night’s events.
Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

Parks Canada historian David Neufeld presented a multi-media talk about navigating the Yukon River and the cultural differences in thinking about maps and directions.

A mid-morning treat was a Rap throw-down between two members of TH staff and two groups from the Han Language class at the Robert Service School.

Old Crow’s Mary Jane Moses showcased the work of the Vuntut Gwich’in Heritage of Committee and showed off some of the curriculum publications that have been produced.

The final afternoon took the group outside on a sunny day for story telling around a campfire in the YTG Campground across the Yukon River as well as a fine wall across the frozen surface on the many trails.

The final event was a feast and fiddling evening called “The Men Know How to Cook It” at the TH Community Hall.

It had been eight years since the previous incarnation of Myth and Medium. It seems likely the next one will be sooner than that.



Kids Rap – Rapping in Hän is one way to learn the language.
Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish@northwestel.net (In Dawson)



Tea Break – Fran Morberg-Green (second from left) demonstrates Hän-a-licious Tea making.
Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish@northwestel.net (In Dawson)



Sharing stories and pictures in the Gathering Room during a break in presentations.
Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

Thinking About the Social Life of Stories

By Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

March 6, 2012

Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank was one of several speakers at the Recent Myth and Medium conference held at the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre. In two presentations during the conference she discussed her experiences working with the stories of First Nations women elders south of Whitehorse and in Dawson City between 1974 and 1991.

Cruikshank's first presentation was called "The Afterlife of Stories". She took on the task which ultimately became her life's career choice as the result of requests from native women of her own age when she first moved to the Yukon, not dreaming then that she would eventually return to university and pursue a degree in anthropology.

What Cruikshank's friends had noticed was that here was quite a bit of information being recorded about the history men's lives in the territory, but not much about women, so they asked her to begin a series of conversations with women elders to record their life stories.

That is not what the women she spoke with wanted to talk about. Instead of telling stories about their own lives, they wanted to tell the traditional stories they had grown up with, the teaching tales that were used to pass on culture, morality and common sense from generation to generation. As one of the women, Angela Sidney, was to tell her, in a phrase that became the title of the first collection of tales in 1977, "My stories are my wealth."

It was also Mrs. Sidney who gave a clear indication of the importance of stories in native tradition when she said, “I’ve tried to live my life right, just like a story.”

Cruikshank found that she entered her task with a set list of questions, things she had been asked to find out by the younger women who has engaged her assistance. What happened instead is that her interview subjects decided they needed to teach her what questions were important enough to be asked and answered, and they did this through the medium of storytelling.

“I expected I’d hear stories about the Gold Rush, about the Alaska Highway, about the missionary activity, and about the movement of the Canadian state into family lives. I expected to hear stories of struggle and about the lives of women who had lived through this extraordinary time, beginning in the 1890s and the rest of their lives into the 1900s.”

Instead, she got a course in how to use stories to think about life, an approach she went on to illustrate by talking about one particular story that was used by Angela Sidney on several key occasions during her life.

The story was that of Kaak’achgóok (which can be found on pages 28 to 35 of Cruikshank’s book *The Social Life of Stories*). The story involved a journey and a struggle in which the central characters overcame great hardship in order to get back home. Part of their journey involved following the path of the sun, which took on a great symbolic value.

In 1945 she told the story as a gift to her son who was returning from his own struggle in the Canadian Forces during World War II. There was some question from elders as to whether this was a legitimate telling, but she was able to establish that the story did, in fact, belong to her clan, and was therefore a suitable gift.

As a result of her research she discovered that the story had earlier been used to settle a fractious dispute between two rival Tlingit clans –another use of the tale. This information also gave her real legitimacy as a storyteller.

Subsequently she told the story over CBC radio.

In 1988 she told it again in a public forum, at the commemorative exercises for Yukon College, for she said the new college was like a sun for her people.

“Instead of going to Vancouver or Victoria, they’re going to be able to stay here and go to school here. We’re not going to lose our kids anymore. It’s going to be like the sun for them, just like that for Kaak’achgóok.”

One needs to understand, Cruikshank said, that these stories are not simply a heritage from the past but are also a guide to how to act in the future, as well as a commentary about the present. During her second talk, Cruikshank focused on work she had done in Dawson City, with Mary McLeod and Pat Lindgren, elders from different generations, who had differing perspectives on the history of their people.

Mrs. McLeod spoke of tribal ways and lore, almost as if providing a set of instructions, especially when it came to the seclusion of young women who were coming into puberty. There was very little of the personal in her talking, and Cruikshank was left with the impression that the life of the group mattered more than the life of the individual.



Julie Cruikshank began her career as an anthropologist while recording the stories told by First Nations elder women in the 1970s.

Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish@northwestel.net (In Dawson)

Mrs. Lindgren, the daughter of Chief Isaac, was born 23 years later and Cruikshank found her to be a sharp critic of the practices of the early missionaries, in terms of naming and marital practices.

For her, the word “civilization”, as it had been used by her father, meant alcohol and violence. It was not used in a positive way.

The other thing she said that Cruikshank found significant was “In my time, this was the first time we had a personal life.” This is an observation that reflected a great change in how the people lived and thought of themselves.

“Before that,” Cruikshank observed, “she was saying that it was a community life. (I had observed that) Mrs. McLeod did not talk about herself as having a personal life and it made me more aware of what Mrs. McLeod was doing when I heard Pat Lindgren speaking.”

Both women made it clear that Dawson was a sort of First Nations melting pot, a place to which people from up and down the rivers came for various reasons, causing a blending of customs and languages.

Reflecting on the significance of the Myth and Medium gathering, Cruikshank concluded, “If these women were alive today and could see what you’re doing, they would be thrilled.”

Seeing Stories as a Way of Finding Directions

By Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

March 8, 2012

Parks Canada Historian David Neufeld came to a better understanding of the meaning of his own family history during the course of his studies with the Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in over a period of years. He began his talk, “Moving Islands and Sticky Sandbars”, during the Myth and Medium conference by explaining something about how Mennonites of his grandmother’s generation looked at the world.

It helps to understand that the Mennonites themselves were a unique people, a branch of the Anabaptist line of Protestant Christianity. They had very little use for the hierarchies of either church or state and so were persecuted and forced to move from place to place during the 16th and 17th centuries. Settling in what is now the Ukraine, they prospered there until the Russian Revolution came along in 1917.

To the Communists they were both religious and economically successful – two strikes against them – and once again they were persecuted. Neufeld’s Grozma Sarah Albrecht, who was born in the late 1890s, ended up in Canada along with many others.

Neufeld said she had an interesting way of interpreting the experience and the hardship. You could talk all you wanted about Marx and Lenin and the Revolution, but that wasn’t how she saw it.

Mennonites often compared their wanderings to those of the Hebrews in the Old Testament, and drew meaning from that comparison. In the Bible the Jews are often told by prophets that they are facing hard times because of their shortcomings as a nation. She saw the exodus from the Ukraine in the same light.

“Her story,” he told his audience at the Dänojà Zho Cultural Centre, “was that the Mennonites had gone to Russia, they’d settled down, they built farms, they got rich, they forgot about how they were supposed to be living, and God sent the Russian Revolution to put them back in their place.” There was a difference between the official history of the era and the history of this particular group of people.

Neufeld said that there is the same sort of discontinuity between how settler culture looks at land and how First Nations people look at land. For people raised on European systems of thought, maps delineate property boundaries and give definite directions. Official maps are marked off in grids that depend on the imaginary lines indicating their distance from the place near London that was considered the center of the world when the sun never set on the British Empire.

For First Nations people the journey was a more important part of travel than merely the end points of a route, and directions, as in their songs and dances, were full of place names and stories about relationships.

Neufeld never felt closer to understanding this than when he sought out Victor Henry for directions to assist him in making a river trip down the Yukon River. Henry did sketch out a map in the gravel, but Neufeld found that it told him nothing when he later compared it with his own cartographer's maps.



David Neufeld spoke at the Myth and Medium Conference in Dawson in late February.
Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish@northwestel.net (In Dawson)

What was important in Henry's directions was a story about how to behave in relation to the land that he was going to encounter at a certain point in the trip. There were, he was told, a pair of

moving islands, and when he came to them he would need to steer his boat in certain specific directions in order to get past them.

This made no sense to Neufeld, and he avoided the issue completely on the way down river by taking a side channel. On the way back, however, he had no choice, and he found, to his amazement, that the islands – two sandbars really – actually did appear to be trying to move to cut him off. Henry's words came back to him, he followed the instructions and, sure enough, he and his companion did not run aground.

“The map wasn't very useful, but the story map was, and it worked.”

He still claims not to understand the optical experience, but subsequently learned that the American explorer, Lieut. Frederick Swatka, encountered the same islands during his travels on the Yukon River in 1883 and, lacking the wisdom of the story to guide him, got his expedition stuck on the sandbars where they had to offload their raft before they could get in loose, spending what his journal describes as a miserable night's sleep on the nearby shore.

Neufeld used these two tales as an illustration of the need for communication between different types of cultural narratives, which he saw as having been the focus of the International Polar Year project that he participated in here.

An online description of the project records that its focus was on “documenting traditional knowledge as it relates to climate change in the territory of the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation.

The resulting insights will provide perspective on what Aboriginal people in northern communities value and may help in developing strategies to adapt and cope with a changing environment. “In practice this meant an intense round of community interviews which involved the First Nation, classes at the Robert Service School, and a number of graduate students who were brought in to collect the data.

A lot of this material was in story form for, as Neufeld put it, it is in stories that we make sense of the world more than in other ways.

“Management isn't about data. It's about values and it's about cultural narratives; it's about stories. How do we make sure that the stories are in there so that people understand them?” Consensus is needed, he said, in order to negotiate our way through the various laws and documents that loom like sandbars in the way of making progress for all the people of the Yukon. “You can't make consensus on data. You can only build consensus on stories.” Neufeld concluded with the observation that, if we want to build a society where “civilization” isn't a dirty word equated to “alcohol and violence” it needs to become a word that signifies a place “where people talk to each other, respect each other and work together.”

Note: For a more complete version of the mapping portion of Neufeld's talk search online for “Learning to Drive the Yukon River: Western Cartography and Athapaskan Story Maps”, found on pages 16 – 43 of a 2011 document entitled Big Country, Big Issues: Canada's Environment, Culture and History, part of the Rachel Carson Center Perspectives series.

Laura Mann: Museums as Social Institutions

By Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

March 13, 2012

Dawson City Museum Director Laura Mann's view of the role of museums has changed since she first embarked on her career in 1980 with an internship in a small museum. Speaking at the recent Myth and Medium conference in Dawson, she described her transition and some of its implications.

“Like every other museum person at the time, I believed that a museum's purpose could be summed up with five little words: collect, exhibit, research, interpret, conserve. I think I was probably far too busy learning the language and the systems to consider anything beyond what sounded on the surface like really lofty goals.”

Experience and exposure to a variety of people and philosophies led her to an enhanced understanding of the museum's role in a community.

“I came to realize that museums have real potential to help our communities and our audiences find meaning.”

It was the writing of Stephen E. Weil, author of such books as *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations* and *Making Museums Matter*, which crystallized her new understanding.

“Weil said, ‘If our museums are not being operated with the ultimate goal of improving the quality of peoples' lives, on what other basis might we possibly ask for public support?’

“And, because he had a really keen sense of humour, he went on, ‘Not certainly on the grounds that we need museums in order that museum professionals might have a place to work.’”

She came to see mere collecting and collections as being the tools of the museum's trade rather than an end in themselves.

In the mid-1990s she had an opportunity to put some of her new thinking into practice when she was asked to head up a team to design an exhibit based on the experiences of survivors of breast cancer. It helped a lot that some of these women were quite wealthy and were willing to fund the project.

She was a bit horrified to find out that the sponsors had already contacted a number of women artists to produce work based on interviews they had done with survivors. The resulting exhibit was to be called “Survivors in Search of a Voice”.

She was concerned that the survivors seemed to have been struck dumb and weren't really speaking for themselves. Others were concerned that this had very little to do with what they felt was the main role of a museum and would end up producing a sort of victim exhibition.

Mann discovered the existence of another project on the same topic, called “Healing Legacies”, which seem to lend itself better to the museum setting, and was also more the work of actual survivors rather than mediated through other people. Blending the ideas seemed to offer a better solution.

The project team – four museum staff, plus about fourteen other people from the ranks of breast cancer patients, cancer agencies and medical professionals – eventually decided to put out a call

for submissions and ended up with about “130 pieces from 49 women with about a third of them local. There were works of art, crafts and writing.”

The problem at this point was that the original philanthropists were unhappy with the expanded vision of the show and withdrew their offer of support. This actually turned out to be a blessing. The museum board was still uneasy and Mann had to sell the project.

“This was not about the collection,” she told them. “It as about our ability to help people understand something that touches virtually every family. It was about the museum being a forum.”

The majority of the board approved and the exhibit opened in 1997 after a year of planning. People were still nervous about it, but the exhibit was a success. People looked at everything, read everything and came away moved. Press coverage was positive. Staff who had been opposed were converted by the outcome.

The slide presentation that ran while she was speaking showed an impressive looking exhibit that, while serious in its content, was nevertheless professional and positive in its outlook. The pieces were grouped according to where they fit under such headings as Change, Journey and Meaning. Mann said that museums in the Yukon, though underfunded, were at least stably funded, and our unique mix of tourists in the summer and locals in the winter made it possible to run two different types of programs for the two different audiences. For one group we are laying out our past and our accomplishments. For the other we can be helping locals understand themselves.



Laura Mann - Dawson City Museum Director

Laura Mann at the Myth and Medium conference.

Photo courtesy Dan Davidson uffish*northwestel.net (In Dawson)

“Imagine what might happen if one of our institutions did a project on the Peel Watershed, or what might have happened if there had been a project about the location of the new hospital, or the sewage treatment facility here in Dawson? Maybe nothing. Maybe everything.

“What if your institutions became the places where people automatically went to for information?” There are problems to be solved before these possibilities can open up. Mann cited the gaps in funding and trained staff between the larger institutions and the smaller ones.

“But I believe the potential is there and I believe that Dawson can be leading the way.”

Mann concluded with a few thoughts from the work of Robert James, who wrote *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance or Collapse?*

James writes that museums need to be resilient to be able to adjust to changing conditions, misfortunes and situations.

Mann provided a couple of quotations to end her talk.

““ As self-professed keepers of the continuum (of history) and all those acts which preceded us, as well as the champions of their present and future meaning, can museums not be the harbingers of an adaptive future?”

““If museums did not exist, would we reinvent them, and what would they look like?””

Clifford Elmer Fisher (Kip) 1927 - 2012

Was born January 12, 1927 in McKeesport Pennsylvania.

In 1929, due to the oncoming depression, Kip’s dad decided to head north to the Yukon. Kip was two years old. The family travelled up the coast to Skagway, his mother Ila, Father Bud and Sister Doris. From Skagway they took the train into Whitehorse.

They stayed in Whitehorse at the Regina Hotel and there Kippy met the love of his life Ester Mary Ewing (Jo) who was just a few months old and travelling with her family from Mayo to Quebec.

Kip related the story of their journey from Whitehorse to Mayo. It was early December and Bud put skis on the front of his truck and they drove the overland trail to Carmacks. From there they took an open horse and sleigh keeping warm with buffalo robes and hot rocks. The trip took about two weeks and they slept in the sleigh as well as at Montague and other road houses. Liz remembers dad telling her he had run alongside the sleigh when he needed to blow off steam during their long journey.

Many years were spent in Mayo and the house that Kippy’s dad Bud built still stands on the corner as you head into town.

Kippy’s father Bud Fisher pioneered the transportation industry in the Yukon and started the first cat train. Kippy was 12 years old when he started driving truck for his dad’s company, Fisher Services. The company hauled fuel and supplies to Keno and Elsa and ore back out. The cat train

ran 25 hours a day seven days a week. They hauled 30 tons at a time. Kip worked 12 hour shifts and his wage was 50 cents an hour. Kip recalled one very cold winter, losing a cat in Stink Lake. They had to go get Bud's second cat and it took them three weeks to get the cat and the ore out of the lake at 60 below temperatures.

In 1942 the Ewing's returned to Mayo where Jo and Kip met once again, and "ran around together" from that day on.

In 1944 at 17 years of age, Kippy lied about his age and flew to Shilo Manitoba to join the Army. He went through all the training and the war ended days before he was to be deployed.

Back in the North, Kippy followed the Ewing's back and forth across the countryside as Jo's dad moved around with the Signal Core. Finally in 1952 they were married in Mayo on a beautiful sunny day.

Dad had been into Whitehorse to the Chevy dealer to buy a car. At that time the dealer would drive anyone interested in purchasing a vehicle, to Dawson Creek to pick one up there. Dad had saved up \$2800.00 and bought his first car a shiny new top of the line Chevy.

Jo and Kip drove to Mexico for their honeymoon.

In 1955 Kippy bought a few trucks and a loader from his dad, and started a business of his own, hauling for the mines. He also ran a partnership business with the Cole brothers hauling mail and freight between Mayo and Whitehorse.

Daughters Liz and Cathy were born in Mayo and in 1958 he moved the family to Whitehorse. He hauled fuel for his dad who had moved to Whitehorse in 1955.

The fall of 1961 he found work with White Pass driving truck which he enjoyed.

Son Mark and daughters Kristine and Nicole were born in Whitehorse.

In 1965 with the financial help of his Stepmother Catherine, he took the leap and bought the Dairy Queen. Over many years he developed the DQ into a thriving business, the largest in Western Canada. He won DQ awards for best in Western Canada. He also owned and operated a Laundromat during the time of the Dairy Queen.

1976 he sold the DQ and bought into a partnership in the Taku Hotel. He told us the story of how (years earlier) he had hauled the first load of lumber from Watson Lake for the first phase construction of the Taku Hotel.

Kip was also in partnership in the Coco Cola Company in Whitehorse for several years. In the early 80's in partnership, he owned and operated the Whitehorse Esso for many years.

In 2003, Kip received a Lifetime Achievement Award from TIA Yukon for his "immeasurable contribution" of support and commitment to the growth and vitality of the Yukon's Tourism Association.

Kip worked hard to provide for his family and was a successful, accomplished entrepreneur. As you can see he wore many hats and people remember him for many different things.

During the winter you would see him with his red toque perched on his head. Liz recalls a school function for one of his grandchildren during the Christmas season, when a little girl there could not take her eyes off him. The mother finally brought her over to ask him if he was Santa Claus.

Kip loved driving on a clear sunny day. He loved taking his Harley out with his biker friends and took many long road trips. His trip to Sturgis was one of his favorites.

He loved to dance and socialize loved music, and he and Jo were fabulous dancers.

Kip was a very sensitive person and has a willingness to always help people in any kind of need. He would give you the shirt off his back if you needed it.

For 10 years Kip cared lovingly for Jo as she battled with Alzheimer Disease and passed away in August of 2010.

Kip is survived by his sisters Doris, Ila (Carol) and Marie (Al). His children Liz (Greg), Cathy (Gerry), Mark (Darcey), Kristine and Nicole (Tony). Grandchildren Kenton, Chase, Cory, Sammy, Coleman, Chanel and Angus, Patrick (Benita), Leesa (Brian). Great Grandchildren, Spencer and Fraser. We will all miss him dearly and we know he is happy dancing in heaven with his beloved Jo.

(Above is the information sent to her aunt Marie (Fisher), by Cathy Angel. This was put together by Kips three daughters – Liz, Cathy and Kristine.)

Marie (Fisher) Morgan mariem*facmail.com (In Kelowna)

ARLEEN KOVAC AND GEORGE VAN VUGT WED.

Wanted to tell you how excited we all are at this marriage. They make such a great couple. How many people get a second chance at 83 & 84. I love it. I got a cold just as I was in the midst of all this planning but with a lot of great help, everything went smoothly.

They were united in marriage on March 17, 2012 at the Catholic Church in Whitehorse, Yukon. Arleen's son Kim Kovac and George's daughter Erni Watson along with other family members were in attendance.

Friends served a delicious wedding dinner at the couple's condo following the ceremony.

A reception for the happy couple was held on Sunday March 18 at the Seniors Centre where 75 guests greeted the newlywed couple at a sit down dinner.

Shirley Keobke mistyonmarsh*northwestel.net (At Marsh Lake Yukon)



Congratulations to Arleen Kovac and George VanVugt.

Arleen's son Kim Kovac and George's daughter Erni Watson served as witnesses.
Photo courtesy Shirley Keobke mistyonmarsh@northwestel.net (At Marsh Lake Yukon)

A MESSAGE FROM AIR NORTH



Air North, Yukon's Airline would like to recognize our MocTel readers for their pioneering efforts in building our Yukon economy.

Your leadership exemplifies a sustainable approach to building a stronger Yukon with growing opportunities for present-day Yukoners. Air North, Yukon's Airline would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your past and continuing support in this changing competitive environment.



For additional reading we have posted ***The Changing Competitive Landscape*** - An analysis by Joseph Sparling President - Air North, Yukon's Airline <http://flyairnorth.com/DealsAndNews/News.aspx>

As we celebrate our 35th anniversary this year our team looks forward to serving you on board and looking after your cargo and charter needs during 2012.

Joseph Sparling
President

42 years ago.

We always enjoy the Moctel articles and pictures and appreciate your dedication to keeping it going. Thank you.

I was into one of our “memory boxes” today and noted this paper clipping from April 2, 1970. I hope you can read it ok and take a look at Commissioner James Smith’s report on the Yukon Budget and “deficit” that year....It might be interesting to compare that Budget of 42 years ago to this Years budget! Just for fun....and oh Yes! The Whitehorse Star cost 15 cents.

Let us know when you start for home,

Bill & Jeri Weigand jerrineweigand@shaw.ca (In Steveston)



Bill Weigand and Mrs. Paul Germain aka Helga Germain named to newly established Territorial Liquor board. 1970 Yukon Government Budget nears \$25 million dollar. Anticipated revenues of \$5.5 million with remaining funds coming from the Federal Government.

2012-13 Yukon Budget

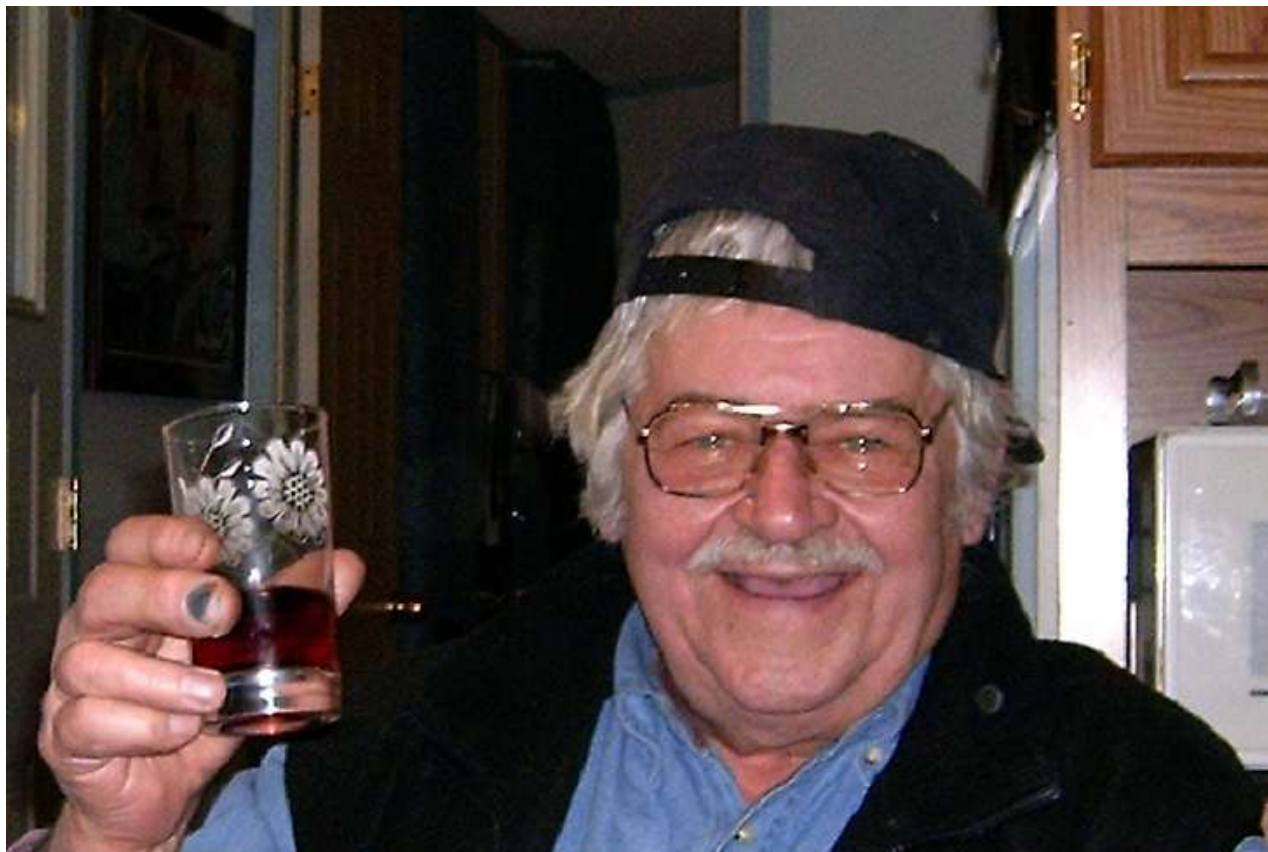
1 Billion 156.7 million. *(The 2003 – 4 Yukon Budget was 550 Million dollars.)*

http://www.finance.gov.yk.ca/pdf/budget/2012_2013_speech_e.pdf

At the bottom of an 8 page highlight list is a line item for 7 million to build a recreation center in Ross River.

The budget highlights - boast an \$80 million dollar surplus. (*If only the rest of Canada could be so lucky. How does one get 80 million more than they need.*)

OBIT



Harold (Hoobie) Hoobanoff

Our special friend, Hoobie passed away November 12, 2011 at the Red Deer Regional Hospital after a lengthy battle with cancer with his daughter at his side, he was in his 70s. Born and raised on a farm near Kamsack, Sask. Harold moved to Alberta to the hamlet of Lousana (east of Red Deer) and still resided in the community at the time of his passing. Hoobie lived his life to the fullest and travelled all over the world as a pilot and sailing on his boat in the Caribbean. He loved the Yukon and kept in touch with his many friends through email and visiting when he could. Hoobie lived life on his own terms and left this world the same way. He leaves to mourn his daughter Melody Korsakoff of Regina, Saskatchewan, Corinna Lotz of Whitehorse, Yukon, one sister Doris of Kamsack, Saskatchewan, several nephews in BC and his many, many friends who will miss his unique wit and vast knowledge. There will be a Celebration of Life in Whitehorse for Hoobie later in the summer of 2012.

Cathy Lyons lousana*xplornet.com (In Lousana AB)

NEW ADDITIONS

My name is Joe Prentice and I want to renew my subscription for the Moxasin Telegraph. Can you send me the particulars and where to send my fee. I miss it alot. E-mail is jwprentice@shaw.ca

I was in the Yukon mainly Whitehorse from, 1976 to about 8 years ago when my wife Pat died. I am in Victoria at present. I still get back to Yukon every summer or so as I really miss being there. My oldest daughter Shannon her husband Dan and two of my three granddaughters are still in Whitehorse. Shannon used to be the curator of the Transportation Museum

Joe
Joe Prentice

REMOVED FROM THE LIST

For the last six months or so I have been unable to open the Moxtel url so would you please delete me from your mailing list.....Thank you.

Joyce Nakarayko

NAKRAYKO, Joyce jonak5@shaw.ca (1957-65 Whitehorse, ----Les - Koidern `53 & `55, Destruction Bay `56) Salmon Arm.

ARTISTIC TALENT



St.Saviour's Anglican church in Carcross under the northern lights-February 14, 2012.
Photo courtesy Heather Jones hjones@northwestel.net (In Carcross)

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

A halo has to fall only a few inches to become a noose.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Vancouver Yukoners' Association 84th Annual Banquet

April 14, 2012

River Rock Casino/Resort – Whistler Ballroom
Address: 8811 River Rd, Richmond BC
Free Parking in Casino Parkade

Hotel reservations:

Telephone: 604-247-8900 or toll free 1-866-748-3718

Ask for *Vancouver Yukoners'* rate

Book before Feb. 1, 2012 to get the “early bird” rate
One bedroom suite April 13-15 \$147 until Jan. 31; \$167 from Feb.1
Comparable discount on two bedroom suites;
Special rates extend 3 days pre- and post-banquet,
based on availability

Banquet Tickets:

\$58.00 per person with cheque payable in advance to
Vancouver Yukoners' Association

Banquet Reception: Ballroom Foyer 4pm – 6pm

Dinner: 6:30 pm

Hospitality Room: Open Friday from 4pm and Saturday from noon

Note: Pick up tickets in Hospitality Room

Check www.vancouver-yukoners.com for updates

FOR TICKETS CONTACT VIVIAN STUART:

Email: lornellis@shaw.ca

Address: #217 – 3255 Cook St, Victoria BC V8X 1A4

Phone: 250-383-1349

(Maiden names too please – Helps to find friends of years ago)

IN WHITEHORSE CONTACT GOODY SPARLING: 867 668-3958

We encourage Yukon residents to fly Air North;

Convention Code available from Goody or Vivian

Vancouver Yukoners' Association Notice of Annual General Meeting

April 26, 2012

11:30am

Croatian Cultural Centre
Vancouver BC

Nominations and volunteers accepted from members for positions of President, Vice President, Secretary and two Directors.

Contact vanyukoners@gmail.com

Brannigans will host the 2nd (annual) Yukon Party in Victoria

June 2, 2012

6:30 – 9:00 pm

If you know of any ex-Yukoners now living on the southern tip of Vancouver Island-or anywhere else – who might enjoy linking up with others who have shared the Yukon adventure.

Sandie Wood sandie@brannigans.ca
Brannigans Restaurant (Cedar Hill Mall)
250-472-1083 (restaurant)

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE THE MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

If you have received this copy of the Moccasin Telegraph from a friend and wish to sign up to receive future editions yourself, the criteria is that you **are or were a Yukoner**.

The goal of this project is to provide an opportunity for folks to reconnect.

There is an annual subscription fee of (\$20 - \$25. your call) for the Moccasin Telegraph.

An easy way to send a money transfer is via your internet banking. Log into you bank's website, find "Money Transfers" or "Email Money Transfers" or however your bank may list it, enter the amount, my email address of sherronjones@shaw.ca and enter a password ie: moctel and press "Send". It's that easy. Then please send me an email to confirm your payment.

– Sherron Jones sherronjones@shaw.ca

MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

Sherron Jones 483 - 5707 E 32nd Street Yuma Arizona 85365 USA