

# The Klondike Sun

April 25, 2007 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon

Photo by Ed Vos



## Eldorado to Carry On

Photo by Dan Davidson



## Eldorado to carry on

by Dan Davidson

By April 17, Peter and Karen Jenkins had announced to the community that business would continue in the remaining portions of the Eldorado Hotel.

Neither the two dozen rooms in the separate annex building on Third Avenue, nor the Yukon Hotel on Front Street, were affected by the April 12 fire, so the Jenkinses announced on the DCTV rolling ad channel that 'We will continue to rent rooms in the Annex and the Yukon Hotel while we rebuild the Eldorado Hotel.'

Front desk operations were relocated to a two story yellow building at 929-3rd Avenue, across the street from the Eldorado, as demolition of the damaged portions of the main building continued.

By Tuesday the burnt portions of the second floor had been knocked down and carted away and the hotel, while a story shorter, was looking less like a disaster.

## Jenkins family appreciates support and kindness of Dawsonites

by Dan Davidson

By Sunday afternoon the actual cause of the fire at the Eldorado Hotel had been determined, an initial value placed on the damages, and work was proceeding on the cleanup. Trucks were filling up with debris from the second and first floors and heading off to the dump.

"We'll be reopening," said Karen Jenkins as she surveyed the stricken hotel from the elevated boardwalk outside the Red Feather Saloon.

Jenkins said that she and Peter felt enormously fortunate to be living in Dawson while going through such a tragedy. The outpouring of telephone calls, e-mails and personal condolences has, she said, been a tremendous lift to their spirits as they have looked at the damage and considered their options.

She said that Peter Jenkins, Dawson's former mayor and former MLA, has taken a great deal of comfort from the kindness of his neighbours, friends, and fellow Dawsonites.

Even Lauren, their primary school daughter, has appreciated the kind words.

On Sunday, Fire Chief Jim Regimbal said that he had spent most of Thursday evening and a good deal of Friday morning in the building with officials from the fire marshal's office. They had found that cause was accidental, turned the building back over to the owners and the insurance adjusters at 12:15 Friday.

"The cause was the improper use of electrical equipment," he said.

"There was an electrical plug in the wall under the bed which had been pushed against the wall. Over years the wires just wore off, and instead of having 300 wires running through the core, there were maybe half of them with the same amount of current going through."

A fire has started in the box spring under the mattress due to the heat from the damaged plug.

"Over time the movement of the bed had worn them (the wires) away. When the housekeeper stripped the bed and came in to put on a fresh sheet the introduction of oxygen into the room did it. The (snapping) sounds she heard would have definitely been the fire shooting up right away."

The position of the bed, on a low support near the floor, would have restricted air to the fire and given it time to smoulder for a bit.

"You probably wouldn't have smelled any smoke at all."

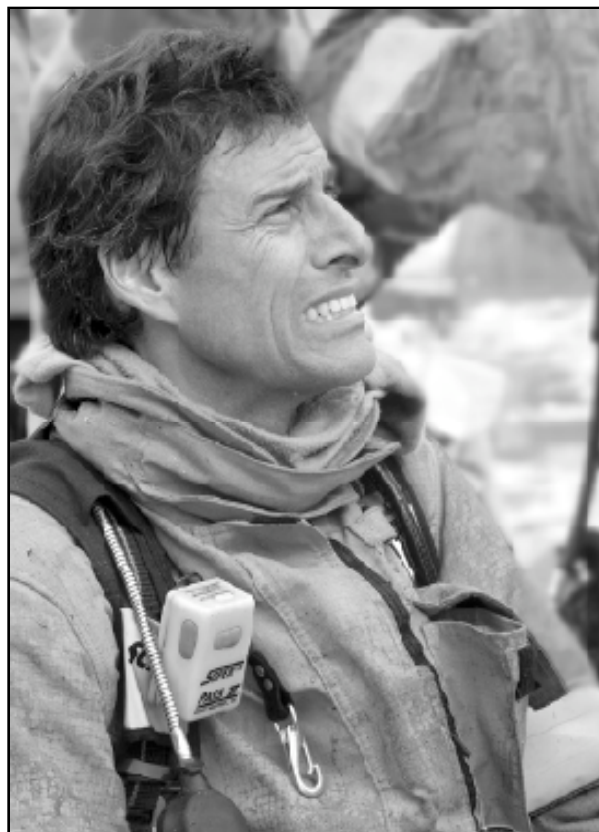
Regimbal said the insurance adjuster gave him a value of "500 plus", basically half a million dollars and up, in terms of damage. The fire chief noted that while the water damage to the first floor had looked very bad on the day of the fire, it looked better a day later, and much of the damaged ceiling was of the drop tile type that hides the wires and pipes, so it would be better than having to replace dry wall material.

He anticipated that it should be possible to reopen the ground floor, with the bar and those rooms, as well as the rooms in the untouched separate hotel annex, within six to eight weeks, possibly sooner.



Photo by Ed Vos

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Photos by Ed Vos

## Dawson Citizens Asked to Define a Sustainable Future

by Dan Davidson

Jim Taggart is a man in search of ideas. Not just any ideas, but ideas about what the future of Dawson City should look like in the future and how it should spend the money that it will be getting from the Federal Gas Tax Rebate Program.

In order to access any funds from this program communities and first nations have to develop an Integrated Community Sustainability Plan (ICSP).

The announcement of this program about a year ago effectively shelved the Official Community Plan (OCP) process that had been begun here under the trusteeship. While an OCP will still be needed, and while the two plans will overlap each other in many ways, the general consensus at that time was the ICSP horse had to come before the OCP cart because of its potential financial impact.

Since both councils were responsible to coming up with a ICSP, it was decided that a project manager would be hired jointly by the two administrations. Taggart works out of an office at Dawson's town hall, but is paid jointly by the City of Dawson and the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. He also keeps office hours twice weekly at the TH's Community Support Centre, next to the CIBC on 2nd Avenue.

Taggart reports to overview committees from both administrations and the report that he eventually writes will have to meet the approval of both chief and council and mayor and council before it can be passed on to the territorial ICSP committee for approval.

So Taggart is quizzing the community to find out what environmental, cultural, social, economic, and political dreams of its citizens might be and what municipal infrastructure is seen as necessary to achieve bring such dreams to fruition.

He has mailed a questionnaire to community members, asking three rather broad questions:

- What is important to you about the community today?
- What changes would you most like to see in the future?
- What can be done to make this happen?

In addition, two "Sustainable Times" newsletters have been circulated

April 11 marked the second phase of the data gathering, with a community dinner and lecture presentation attended by about two dozen people at the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Community Hall. Following the lecture, the audience was invited to participate in a sort of visioning plan exercise, complete with post-it notes and large sheets of poster paper labeled with the categories listed above, on which they

could leave any comments they wished to make at this time.

There will be another meeting in about a month, at which Taggart will reveal what data he has collected so far and what shape it seems to be taking. His report is due at the end of August.



## The Berton House Tax Bill Blues

By Dan Davidson

When Jorn Meier, the new chair of the Klondike Visitors Association, arrived in town council chambers on April 3, he wasn't spoiling for a fight, but he did want to know how an arrangement that had been in place since the early 1990s had somehow managed to go awry for the first time in the 2006 taxation year.

Former mayor and sometime KVA board member Peter Jenkins recalls the establishment of Berton House quite clearly. Pierre Berton bought the place in 1989, and turned it over to the Yukon Arts Council to develop a use for it. In turn the Arts Council looked to the KVA to upgrade the house, pay the taxes and utilities as well as handle the mortgage that was needed to finance the repairs and make the place useful, Jenkins said.

As of 1996, when it was ready to receive its first visitor, the KVA had spent \$97,000 on the place and covered all the annual bills via some arrangement that seems to have failed ten years into the active life of the program.

As far as folk at the KVA know, the town has been forwarding them duplicate copies of the bills which the KVA, in turn, has paid. Except for last year.

This February the KVA wrote to the town council asking to be forgiven a tax penalty of \$121.71 on the grounds that





this had never happened before and that the delivery system must have broken down.

Wrote the KVA's Juli Hnetka, "We only received a copy when the administration of the writer's retreat contacted us in November to let us know they had just received a letter from the City of Dawson indicating that the account was outstanding and being charged interest."

The writers retreat program, financed from a different pot of money, is now managed by the Berton House Writers' Retreat Society with the assistance of the Dawson Community Libraries Board.

Council considered the letter on March 6 and, while the councillors decided that the town was not responsible for sending bills to any one other than the actual owner of the building, they also decided that this was an unusual case and that they would forgive the debt, since the taxes had been paid.

That might have been the end of the matter, but a further review of provisions in the Municipal Act revealed that the council did not have the legal authority to cancel a penalty of this nature. So, on March 20/07, the motion to forgive had to be rescinded and the penalty had to stand.

If there were some sort of documented agreement about how the bills were to be handled, the story might be different, but the town's administration has been unable to find such a paper trail, in spite of the fact that there must have been some sort of system in place for the KVA to have been paying the bills for over 15 years without a slip.

Meier indicated that he was not satisfied with the situation as it stood and intended to find out more about the history of the arrangement.

The phrasing of the rescinding resolution, #C07-10-24, citing the absence of a "documented agreement", would make it seem that there is room to negotiate in the event that the KVA is able to find paperwork supporting the history of the practice which obviously had existed without interruption since the early 1990s.

## 8th Film Festival Ends with Northern Lights

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

By the last night of the Dawson Short Film Festival the organizers were pretty sure that they had set a record for attendance and festival founder David Curtis felt comfortable saying that to the delight of the audience. A few days later, with all the tickets and passes finally counted up, festival coordinator Dan Sokolowski confirmed it. 1711 people viewed films in the Oddfellows' Hall ballroom over the Easter weekend.

There were 12 screenings in total, featuring over 120 films, including everything from animation to documentary, fiction to fact, narrative to impressionistic, realistic to surrealist.

In addition there was a special showing of a previously unscreened episode of the Trailer Park Boys, with filmmaker Mike Clattenburg, its creator, who also offered a five hour masters class on the Friday.

There were Rachel Grantham offered a workshop on making short dramas on Saturday, and Sunday provided an afternoon panel discussion called "The Long and the Short of it: Finding your vision through short film".

Easter weekend also offered visitors an unusually fine display of Dawson weather, with temperatures reaching +13° C. The Sunday night display of Northern Lights was a herald to colder temperatures the next week.

According to the organizers, there were visiting filmmakers from "Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia" as well as the regular enthusiasts from Whitehorse.

Sunday night concluded with the presentation of the various awards associated with the festival. The MITY (Made In The Yukon) Professional Award was AYDAYGOOAY was won by Mary Code, who dramatized the Dené legend of Aydaygooay, who brought back the caribou, in a combination of animation and live action. The runner up was DESCENDRE LA RIVIERE POUR PRIER by Marten Berkman.



*Dan Sokolowski and Barb Dunlop present a MITY award to Mary Code.*

Mary Code also took second place in the Audience Choice Awards. First place went to New Zealand's Veialu Aila-Unsworth for BLUE WILLOW, her animation of a traditional Chinese Tale based on the artwork of a blue willow porcelain plate.

Whitehorse resident Arlin McFarlane won the MITY Emerging Talent award for her film TENDING TOWARD SILENCE, which explored the desire of a dying woman to fashion her own special resting place, rather than spend her last days in a hospital. Dawsonite Kerry Barber picked up 2nd place with her crowd pleasing MY INDIAN BUM.

The final award, which was not announced that night, was the Lodestar Award for best of the festival. A SHIFT IN PERCEPTION by Australian filmmaker Dan Monceaux, a film that celebrates the lives of three blind woman through the use of animation, time lapse photography and multiple mediums, won that award.



*Arlin McFarlane received her MITY award from Anne Louise Genest, representing the Yukon Arts Fund.*

## Let's resurrect a piece of Yukon history

By John Firth

Whitehorse Star, March 30, 2007

The show must go on. But it won't happen this year. Maybe it shouldn't even happen in Whitehorse.

We won't see a part of Yukon history at the Guild Hall this month. Foxy was probably a victim of the Canada Winter Games.

Eric Epstein was in charge of cultural events for the Games, so he's probably a little burned out, and Foxy is a full-fledged Broadway show.

The last time I was in a Broadway show (Hello Dolly in Vancouver in 1976), we rehearsed for three months before show time. With only a month between the Games and the opening date of Foxy, it's not surprising it's been cancelled.

Foxy was one of Broadway's more obscure flops. It was also one of the few Broadway plays whose soundtrack was never recorded (until an off-Broadway revival troupe made a CD in 2000), so most of us have never heard the music.

The original version of the play also had the unique distinction of having its Off-Broadway world premiere performance in the Palace Grand Theatre in Dawson City on July 1, 1962. It's that final point which made the planned revival so anticipated by long-time Yukoners.

The play was commissioned by the Klondike Visitors Association and the Government of Canada to be the first moose call to the great beyond for the Yukon's tourism industry.

The feds had just finished rebuilding the Palace Grand. They needed to showcase their multimillion-dollar investment in the middle of nowhere, so they contacted the founder of the Stratford Shakespeare Festival, Tom Patterson, and asked him if he could put the place on the map.

The result was Foxy – loosely based upon Ben Jonson's

satire Volpone – a musical comedy that exposes the darkest side of human greed with a sharp, twisted knife.

There are two versions. The one that played the Palace Grand in 1962 and hasn't seen the light of day since (as far as I'm aware, there is only one copy of the original script in existence) the 1964 Broadway show.

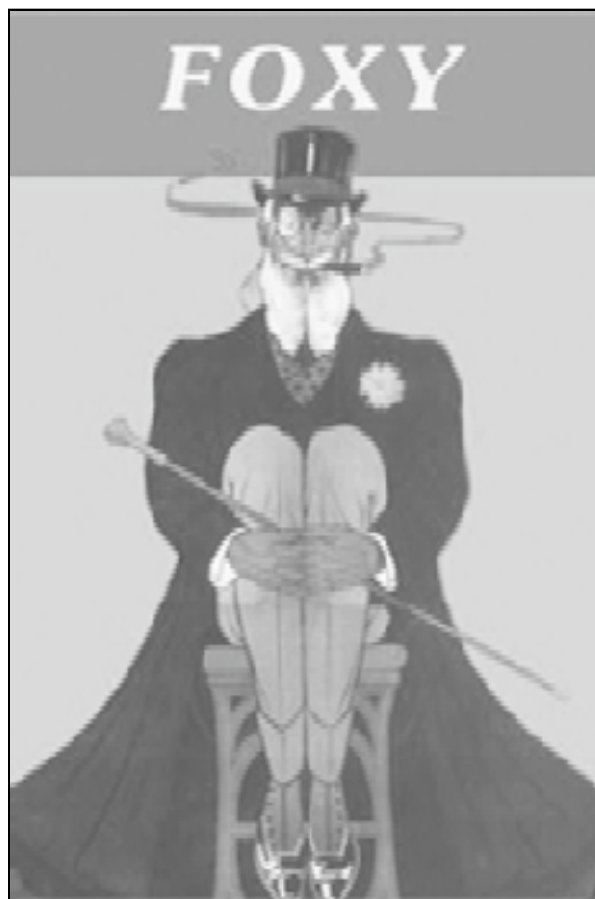
What made the original truly remarkable was the pedigree of the individuals that Patterson recruited.

Playwright Ring Lardner Jr., one of the Hollywood Ten blacklisted during the McCarthy anti-communist hearings and winner of two Academy Awards for original screenplays (M\*A\*S\*H, 1970, and Woman of the Year, 1942), had been forced to ply his skills anywhere but where he wanted to be and under any other name but his own.

Foxy was the first show he wrote following the end of the McCarthy era and much of it was penned in a small room in the back of the Palace Grand.

Lyrics were written by Johnny Mercer (Moon River, That Old Black Magic, for original song, Academy Awards).

He was at the peak of his career and revelled at being tucked away in a ghost town at the end of the road. Yukon artist Jim Robb and Dawson City historian John Gould, who worked as stage crew on the original Foxy, both remember sharing a brew or two with Mercer in the Occidental and Westminster Hotels.



The lead was crafted as a vehicle for the man known as The Cowardly Lion (The Wizard of Oz, 1939), comedian Bert

Lahr.

He spent the summer of 1962 playing to a largely-empty theatre and fishing in the Klondike River at our cabin in Rock Creek. Even though the cast outnumbered the audience on most nights, he grew proudly protective of the North and the show.

When the New York Times wrote a review describing the audience as “rustic” and composed of “stoic Indians”, he sent them an angry rebuttal.

It was Lahr’s desire to play the role on Broadway that convinced producer David Merrick to back the show in 1964 for its short run (Feb. 18-April 16; 72 performances).

It wasn’t a flop because people didn’t go to it – seats were sold out on its final night. It died because Merrick put most of his effort into his other Broadway show that year, Hello Dolly (see earlier mention).

In 1976, I was unaware of the connection between the two shows. It’s one of those six degrees of separation things.

Foxy was Lahr’s final Broadway gig and it won him the Tony Award as the best actor in a musical comedy for 1964. (It also netted a best actress nomination for Julianne Marie, who played the character Celia).

Foxy didn’t put Dawson City on the tourism map. It wasn’t because the concept was wrong. It was the timing.

Who wanted to head north on highways that consisted of mud or dust or take an airplane that took three days to reach Dawson City from Vancouver – only to arrive in a town that didn’t have any facilities to look after visitors?

Not even the lure of some of Broadway’s and Hollywood’s biggest names was enough to make people overlook the obvious shortcomings.

So the grand experiment failed and, sadly, is still failing today. For the next four decades, various producers staged a variety of performances in the Palace Grand (one play I wrote and directed was staged there in the 1977 Break-Up Drama Festival).

Roads improved, visitor facilities were built and flight schedules are better, but the product on stage was never able to recapture those heady days of 1962.

Eventually, the inevitable occurred. For the past two years, the Palace Grand has sat mostly vacant.

Visitors can tour the historical site or see an old silent film, but none can capture the atmosphere that such a venue adds to a live production.

While it would have been fun to have Foxy on a Whitehorse stage this year, maybe the delay is fortuitous.

Perhaps Epstein, along with the necessary government and corporate partners, can be persuaded to bring the play back home to the Palace Grand for a future theatre season.

It’s a nice piece of Yukon history and, as any archeologist will tell you, historical pieces should be kept in context.

*The writer, a long-time Whitehorse resident, writes monthly for the Star.*

## **Yukon Continues Support For KIAC’s Accredited Visual Arts Program**

Press Release

WHITEHORSE (April 18, 2007) - Education Minister Patrick Rouble and Klondike MLA Steve Nordick are pleased to announce an additional \$270,000 under the 2007-08 budget, pending legislative approval, to support the delivery of the School of Visual Arts program at the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture in Dawson City.

“The Government of Yukon is pleased to support this new education opportunity in the Klondike,” Rouble said. “We are committed to providing the education and training that Yukoners need to take advantage of local economic opportunities.”

In 2006-07, Yukon College received \$500,000 from the Yukon government in order to develop the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture (KIAC) School of Visual Arts collaboratively with Dawson City Arts Society and Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in.

“Funding this initiative is positive for my constituents here in the Klondike region. This additional funding will ensure that the School of Visual Arts opens its doors with the resources and support necessary to make this program a success for students and staff,” Nordick said. “Providing this important and unique education opportunity is a landmark for Yukoners.”

The program provides post-secondary students with a year of instruction in the fundamentals of visual arts. Students enrolled in the School of Visual Arts will earn Yukon College credits that will be transferable to educational institutes, outside of the territory, where students can complete a degree.

The KIAC School of Visual Arts has articulation agreements with Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design, Alberta College of Art and Design and the Ontario College of Art and Design.

“The government is pleased to support the work of Yukon College, Dawson City Arts Society and Tr’ondëk Hwëch’in,” Rouble added. “We anticipate providing additional support for the KIAC School of Visual Arts in future budgets.”

The visual arts foundation program begins this fall and will be housed in the recently renovated Old Liquor Store building in Dawson City.

## **Dawson City 2007 International Gold Show**

Submitted By Cheryl Thompson, Gold Show Coordinator

It is that time of year again and we are pleased to be holding the 21st Annual Gold Show, which will be taking place on Friday May 18th and Saturday May 19th, 2007 at the Art and Margaret Fry Recreation Center. The Gold Show has long been a meeting place for industry, suppliers and regulators to exchange information and ideas. This event is Northern Canada’s largest Industry and Consumer Trade Show for the Placer Mining Industry.

We look forward to continuing the format we introduced last year and we will once again be having an informal drop in Info/Talk Session located within the arena. Check our web site for schedule updates. [www.dawsongoldshow.ca](http://www.dawsongoldshow.ca) Our info/Talk Sessions allow more time to be spent one on one with our Placer Miners and Industry representatives.

We are also delighted to be offering children's events including the "Strike it Rick" kiddie sand box.

Remember to contact the KPMA for information on their AGM.

We have many exciting exhibitors this year, providing a wide-ranging consumer based show with something for everyone, from miners to gardeners and back again. As in previous years, we would not be able to provide this valuable forum for our miners, suppliers, industry, and government officials without the generous support of the Community, our Sponsors and Exhibitors.

Come and enjoy our Northern hospitality, take time to have fun and kick off our 2007 Klondike summer season.

For registration information or if you are interested in being a Volunteer contact us.

Sponsorship opportunities are also still available.

993-6720 or [goldshow@dawson.net](mailto:goldshow@dawson.net).

## **Pâques a Dawson ça veut dire le festival international du film!**

De Marielle Veilleux

C'est par une très belle journée de printemps que les gens de Dawson accueillent

«Le festival de film international a court métrage» qui en est déjà à sa huitième saison!

«Comme l'an dernier, nous pouvions visionner les 90 films a court métrage, a partir de jeudi soir» me dit le coordinateur du festival M. Dan Sokolowski. Dan qui nous parvient de Kemptville, Ontario (en banlieue d'Ottawa) est comme son prédécesseur, Mme Lulu Keeting un cinéaste et producteur de films. En effet, il avait assisté au tout premier festival de film de Dawson, il y a 8 ans. Et depuis a participé à de nombreux programmes donnés par KIAC (Klondike Institute of Arts and Culuture), en autres celui d'artiste en résidence de Dawson. Alors ce fut sans hésitation qu'il a accepté le poste de coordinateur du festival pour cette année.

Au fil des ans, les gens en charge du festival ont mis à point une formule pour que le déroulement soit fluide et «cette année nous avons décidé de continuer avec celle de l'an dernier», explique Dan.

La seule différence est que nous avons beaucoup plus de programmes.

Dan a voulu emmener un programme tout nouveau qui est basé sur le festival de film de New York, appelé «la tournée des routes rurales»: un concept qu'il trouve excellent et approprié pour le festival de Dawson ainsi que pour les pays circumpolaires.

On se rappellera que la vision des organisateurs du festival de Dawson, dont M. David Curtis est pour que le festival grandisse et puisse avoir une renommée internationale. Leur affiliation avec les pays circumpolaires

et leur participation au festival de Tromso en Norvège est d'ailleurs de plus en plus reconnue et enrichissante.

L'ouverture du festival de Dawson s'est fait jeudi soir avec un film de la série populaire des maritimes «The Trailer Park Boys» présenté par le producteur cinéaste; M. Mike Clattenburg. Le visionnement débuta à 19h et attira un grand nombre de personnes a la salle de KIAC.

C'est une première, les spectateurs de Dawson sont en effet les premiers a avoir eu la chance de visionner un épisode de la série pour la saison prochaine. Mike nous explique qu'ils ont changes le type de camera, ils ont passe du simple VHS a la camera HD. Dan semble un peu nerveux du résultat. Mais ses craintes ne sont pas fondées car les spectateurs éclatent de rire tout au long du visionnement. L'humour particulier des gens des maritimes est tellement spécial et apprécié par les gens de Dawson, ce qui se traduit pour un succès pour le jeune cinéaste.

On passe ensuite à la période de questions sur la série, Mike nous dit que lorsqu'il écrit, il s'inspire des caractères de son enfance. Il parle qu'il veut faire un deuxième film aussi et espère que la série reste un succès avec le public. Il y a ensuite un tirage de prix de présence tels des affiches et des T-shirts qui furent grandement appréciés par tous. Comme Mike veut profiter de l'accueil chaleureux que Dawson lui a donné, il décide de montrer le dernier vidéo du groupe «Tragically Hip» qu'il a produit tout dernièrement en Colombie Britannique qui mets en vedette un ours polaire. Ce vidéo est sur un thème pour l'environnement. La soirée se termine avec Dan qui invite les gens a venir participer à un atelier que Mike donnera gratuitement vendredi après-midi, a la nouvelle école des arts visuels de Dawson, le SOVA.

De plus, vendredi, c'est une soirée pour les films fait au Yukon. Incluant au programme, les films de Marten Berkman, Arlin McFarlane et de Paul Davis. Nous voyons aussi ceux de Kerry Barber, Mary Dode, Celia McBride, Richard Lawrence, Rachel Grantham, Duane Ghastant'Aucoin et Gerald Dixon.



Aussi, a tous les soirs, les passants avaient la chance de visionner à travers les fenêtres de la galerie d'arts ODDS, les films sur 16mm faits par les étudiants du programme des arts



visuels de Dawson.

Comme nous le savons, les participants au festival de Dawson viennent d'un peu partout au monde, de la Russie, États-Unis, Amérique du Sud et d'Europe. Il y en a pour tous les goûts, entre autres, nous avons eu la chance de visionner une dizaine de films québécois ainsi que celui du maire John Steins qu'il a fait lors de son pèlerinage à Hollywood lorsqu'il était à la recherche de la vedette Victor Jory.

Mais le choix de Dan, c'est le film polonais «on the road», histoire touchante d'un vieux couple, me confie-t-il et je suis d'origine polonaise, donc...

Les gagnants des prix seront annoncés dimanche soir. Mais on peut prédire que

le festival de Dawson connaîtra un autre succès cette année encore!

## No Strings Attached on this Stage

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

Many weeks of rehearsals came to a triumphant conclusion as the strings came off the players and this musical adaptation of the story of Pinocchio danced and sang like a real, live musical. Carlo Collodi's original children's novel has undergone many changes since it was translated into English in 1892.

Audiences are most familiar with the Disney classic, in which the "Fairy with the azure hair" became the Blue Fairy and the Cricket acquired the name Jiminy. The basic storyline was also a key element in the Spielberg film "AI (Artificial Intelligence)" in which another sad puppet longed to become a real live boy.

The basic story was penned as a moral tale. Pinocchio needed to learn lessons of obedience, truthfulness, thrift, as well as gain the ability to discern right from wrong in order to become a person. He fails miserably in the first half of the story and, in fact, Collodi had to be persuaded by his editor to find a way to redeem the poor puppet from the complete destruction he had originally planned as the ending of the story.

Redemption makes for a much better tale.

This version, adapted by Mary Donnelly and George I.O.

Strid, follows the main story and finds ways to build in song and dance numbers by Pinocchio's brother and sister marionettes (after all, Geppetto had to be making them for someone) as well as a school of dancing fish who show the lad and his father/creator the way out of the leviathan which has swallowed them both up.

The musical is set up as if a father is reading his little girl from one of her favorite stories, a framing device which sets us up for a nice little surprise at the end of the story.

This production was put on by the members of Mrs. Davidson's Robert Service School Choir, as well as other students from Grades 2 to 6, with backstage assistance from a number of students in Grades 8 through 10. Michael Davidson acted as co-director and Marni Bramadat assisted with choreography. Many parents supplied snacks and helped during the intense week of final rehearsals that led up to the two evenings on the stage.



## Life in the Snow Lane

Submitted by Cathie Findlay-Brook

Education Coordinator for Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in

Life seems to speed up rather onerously once New Year's has come and gone. One minute we're in the throes of never-ending winter when, before we know it, it's gone in a flash of rivers of water running amok in the streets of Dawson. That's how it felt for the Snow Shoe Program this year. Once we got up and running we were running out of snow!

In it's third year now TH Education has collaborated with teachers to host the Snow Shoe Program, an outdoor adventure series aimed at getting the Kindergarten to Grade 6's out and about learning about nature and the environment during our wintery season. Discussions with teachers beforehand ensure that curriculum links are made. It's a natural blend of P.E., Outdoor Ed., Science and Socials in a unique to Dawson Program.

When children learn something hands-on they remember in great detail - the great secret of Experiential Education. It is not so much about 'teaching' as about 'discovering' and 'experiencing' knowledge. It's an opportunity to share and learn first hand about the local natural history and cultural history of our own back yard. Children share their knowledge garnered from experience with family and friends. They become teachers demonstrating that learning from each other is immensely powerful and rewarding.

New this year TH Education enabled teachers to bring back another outdoor winter activity with new and revamped gear.....Cross Country Skiing.

Gear accessed through funding by Klondike Active Transport & Trails Society, Tr'ondek Hwëch'in and Dawson City Recreation made it possible to take a whole high school class out to experience another way to keep fit in the winter months. Not many high school kids think 'Wow' when you suggest cross country skiing but they do have fun in spite of them selves! It's about presenting options, another way to keep fit and be healthy.

Programs like the Snow Shoe Program foster awareness and appreciation of our natural environment and the



Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation who have lived here thousands of years, strengthening the broad goal of education to build a youth community prepared for the responsibility to be our future leaders.



## Rural Residents To Benefit From Expanded Mental Health Services

Press Release

WHITEHORSE ( April 19, 2007) - Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers today announced improved mental health services to rural Yukon residents, with the location of a mental health nurse in Dawson City.

"This service expansion recognizes the mental health needs of individuals living in rural Yukon communities and the fact that it's not always easy for people to get into Whitehorse to get help when they need it," Cathers said.

The minister added that the new rural mental health consultant will carry a small caseload but will spend most of the time consulting with other health professionals throughout rural Yukon, on individuals who may require assessment, treatment or other case management services. The new consultant will also be available to provide joint assessments in conjunction with community health nurses or physicians, and will be able to make recommendations about treatment plans. In addition, the mental health nurse will be able to assist with referrals to a psychiatrist or to resources in Whitehorse where required.

"We believe this new position will be very important in educating community professionals about how to recognize

the signs and symptoms of mental illness and in general, raising awareness in communities about mental illness and reducing stigma – mental illness is not something to be afraid of. The transfer of knowledge is another big plus for creating a rural position," Cathers said.

Funding for this new position has been provided under the Territorial Health Access Fund.

## **Uffish Thoughts: How Green was my Press Release?**

by Dan Davidson

With concerns about Global Warming and Carbon Emissions in the air, so to speak, and with even the Prime Minister reversing his previously stated opinion on the subject and going somewhat green himself, it's no wonder that our territorial government is bending over backwards to look as if it was infused with chlorophyll.

One can, however, get a little carried away with a theme. Whether it is the excessive enthusiasm of a recent convert to the cause, or some PR flak with a recent Spin Doctorate (Ph.SDBS) it is possible to take a idea and run it right into the ground.

The April 3 press release about the ten million dollar funding of the Carmacks to Stewart Transmission Project provides an illustration of the problem.

The plan to build the line has been advanced primarily because the companies interested in building mines along that route have been clear that no power line = no mining project.

As a secondary reason we have to take into consideration Yukon Energy's desire to be able to link the entire territory into one big grid so that we can all experience blackouts simultaneously every time something bad happens in Whitehorse, thus bringing unity to all communities.

I've been assured that this won't happen, but, I live in Dawson City, where the assurances of project engineers do not have a good track record, and I have my doubts.

Did the headline read "Yukon Energy to Extend Power Grid to Stewart" or even "Hydro to replace Diesel Along Klondike Highway"?

No. It read "Yukon Allocates Money For Carmacks-Stewart Line To Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions", as if we should think that only the environmentally pure of heart would even consider such a project.

There's more. How about a few words from Premier Fentie.

"The Yukon government is committed to the long-term efficiency and reliability of the territory's hydroelectric system, as part of our Climate Change Strategy,"

"The government, in partnership with industry and the Yukon Energy Corporation, is participating in a number of projects aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, cutting down on the territory's dependence on diesel-generated electricity and developing sustainable energy projects."

To read that statement, you'd never know that this project had anything to do with resource development, with

encouraging mining exploration and development, and with "growing the economy", in that lovely phrase that government types like to use.

Nor does this bit of creative writing make any mention of the speculation already spoken of publicly by the head of Yukon Energy, the speculation that the corporation probably won't be able to meet the peak demands of these mines once they are in operation.

The solution? Well, rather than burn more diesel in Whitehorse, Mr. Morrison discussed an option familiar to those of us who lived in Faro during the peak years of the Cyprus Anvil/Curragh Resources operation there. Each mine would generate some of its own power to top up its needs.

He didn't say precisely how this might be done, but generators can run on diesel, of course, or perhaps on some of that coal that Carmacks used to ship to Faro.

Either way, I can see more greenhouse gasses floating past the hydro lines and into the atmosphere sometime soon.

It's enough to make a real environmentalist turn green with nausea.

## **Spring Clean Up**

By Kimiko von Boetticher

My father turned 65 on May 2 and, as a family, we wanted to make it special. Our dad loves the outdoors and is always itching to go on an adventure; whether it's taking a new and different road to reach a familiar destination or going on a trip to discover new lands.

There were family plans to travel to the North but it never happened. Several years back, our dad traveled to Antarctica and we thought that a great adventure for him, as a 65th birthday surprise would be to finally see Northern Canada and visit the Arctic. We planned an RV trip from Vancouver to Inuvik where we could obtain an "Arctic Circle Explorer" certificate for Dad to place right beside his Antarctica certificate. Not many people can say they have been to both ends of the earth and we knew this would satisfy his adventurous spirit.

Since we only had two weeks to travel from Vancouver to Inuvik we drove all the way from Vancouver to Dawson City in 6 days. The morning we arrived we heard on CBC radio about the tripod with the bell on the Yukon River waiting to signal that the ice was breaking up. How exciting that we might witness this natural event! We toured around town; we had planned on driving up the Dempster Highway to Inuvik but heard warnings of poor driving conditions and road closures. I was determined to make it to Inuvik. We decided to fly to Inuvik and got a good deal with Air North. We would spend a leisurely weekend in Dawson before moving on and hoped to see the ice break-up.

We had always been a walking bunch and we took several trips along the highway, the Klondike River and in town. Every couple of hours we saw the ice beginning to build up more and more by the Klondike Bridge. Then flooding started on both sides of the highway. On Sunday afternoon he ice had piled up to about 4 feet of the bridge. When was

the break-up going to happen?

We've always had a family tradition of picking up litter on our walks. It's our way of giving back to the earth. We found a fair bit of litter along the Klondike Highway into Dawson. For three days we collected litter on our walks. I would estimate we collected over seven bags of debris. I will never understand how someone cannot feel guilty about throwing garbage out the window while driving.

If there is one thing in my life so far that I have learned it is that I am the only person I can control and I choose not to litter. However, I will not judge and write this up as a criticism of your city. I live in the village of Masset, in Haida Gwaii/Queen Charlotte Islands and littering is a big problem there too. We have had several letters to our paper from tourists who are mesmerized by the beauty of our islands and yet are puzzled and disgusted by the litter that plagues our villages. There too, my partner Andrew and I often take walks and collect litter. We also help organize and participate in local beach clean-ups to collect ocean debris and litter that visitors to our beaches leave behind.

To finish up this story, on my Dad's birthday, Sunday afternoon, we were having a great lunch at Klondike Kate's and having our old fashioned photo taken at Peabody's; we returned to Bonanza Gold to a gold panning lesson. As we crossed the bridge the ice was still piling up and the flooding continuing. At four o'clock we were invited to watch hockey, what a treat. As luck would have it, our walk following the game brought with it the shock of the ice having broken up! It happened in 20 minutes around 4:30. I couldn't believe we'd missed it! We've never witnessed a river ice break-up and the Yukon went while we were in Inuvik. So, I'll guess we'll have to come back some day.

## **Block Funding Review is a Scary Proposition**

by Dan Davidson

One of the best pieces of news at the last Dawson council meeting was the announcement that the town's administration had had to rework the 2007 budget. Suddenly the town had more money than it had expected it was going to have.

As Mayor John Steins was later to post on his Mayor's Blog:

"Block Funding - good news"

"Our unconditional grant from YTG was increased by \$70,000 this year which is excellent news for all Dawsonites. To the credit of Community Services, they are recognizing Dawson's ongoing recovery efforts and have applied the community grants funding formula accordingly."

What the mayor didn't say is that this is the first time in over 15 years that the grant for Dawson has not been either frozen or reduced.

I have listened to three past mayors complain about the formula which provides the base grant under which the town's operate. The smaller the tax base the greater percentage of a town's operating capital comes from this

grant, so it's a pretty key element in the fiscal reality of every community.

It was only a day or so later that the YTG website featured the following press release: "Municipal Funding Process To Be Reviewed".

Minister Glenn Hart was quoted as offering the following reasons why such a review was needed at this time.

"As the Yukon economy continues to recover and grow, it is a good time to look at the suitability of funding for municipal governments.

"With the addition of the Gas Tax revenue, as well as the opportunities provided through grants and the MRIF program for local infrastructure, there are a number of additional financial influences to consider in context."

To me, that line of reasoning suggests that the bean counters in Community Services are going to be looking for ways to trim the government's own contribution to the welfare of its citizens. Why? Because there are other sources of money available now.

The press release goes on to speak of considering "the real-world fiscal demands (the towns) presently have related to the programs and services they provide to their citizens, and to identify possible areas of improvement" and of working with the Association of Yukon Communities in carrying out the review.

The Department of Community Services would like to have this all wrapped up by the end of the summer. I would suggest that it's likely to take a lot longer than that, and that the municipal politicians who make up the membership of the AYC should make sure that it does.

Senior governments have a history of downloading chores to junior governments without passing on to them the funds needed to carry out the work.

YTG recently got out of the business of setting regulations for passenger vans and taxis, for instance, and passed this down to the towns to regulate. Why it would hang on to the rule book for all other sorts of wheeled transportation and let this one go is quite beyond me. I can't see that the rules needed to govern such businesses would be much different in Watson Lake, Dawson City or even Old Crow than they would need to be in the capital city.

Various municipal governments will now have to spend money coming up with their own bylaws - probably modeled pretty heavily on whatever Whitehorse has in place. Why not just have a territorial standard?

The regulation of public smoking is another area where YTG is shockingly lax. Don't get me wrong. I don't want them to outlaw the practice. It's just that it's very clear what direction this issue is taking across the country, and it's plain stupid - bad government, really - to have no territorial policy on the issue and force the creation of the smoking jigsaw puzzle which is now the Yukon.

I offer these things simply as examples where the government ought to be spending money rather than making the communities do it. When Mr. Hart is reported to have said that "We are moving this process forward now to ensure the fiscal capacity of the communities is appropriate." I find myself asking what he and the people

who are shaping his department's policies might think that means.

I don't fancy municipalities being reduced to the level of Non-governmental organizations which have to spend vast amounts of their limited human capital filling out grant applications in order to do their necessary work.

Thankfully, both the Municipal Rural Infrastructure Fund and the Gas Tax Rebate program came with wording that should prevent the territory from appropriating that money for itself, or using it as an excuse to cut the base funding which exists. My fear at the moment is that YTG will use the existence of these programs to argue against increasing the size of the block funding pie.

If I were a member of AYC, I would be very concerned about that.

## **Second High School Ski Friday - Apr. 5/07**

photos by Dan Davidson

