

# The Klondike Sun

May 9, 2007 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon

## And summer IS here!

Photo by Sarah Winton



### Break-up Burned the Bannock

by Dan Davidson

Freda Roberts was cooking bannock on the riverside porch of the Dānojà Zho Cultural Centre when she heard someone banging something loud to get her attention.

It turned out to be Caveman Bill, who lives in a pair of caves on the west bank of the Yukon River. Bill was banging on a pan, trying to get her to look at the river.

“Then I heard a sound from the wire attached to the building from the IODE tripod. I looked over and I saw it snap and jump.

“It went very fast and the ice was moving. It was very exciting and very fast this year.”

Roberts says the ice wasn’t thick, but it moved very quickly.

She had a portable phone outside with her and started making calls.

“I phoned the city to get them to sound the siren. I was so excited that I just kept phoning everybody.”

Oddly enough, there was hardly anyone on the dike at the time the ice began to move. Usually, this time of year, there’s a steady flow of people wondering what’s going to happen, but not this year, not at 1:32 on the afternoon of May 3.

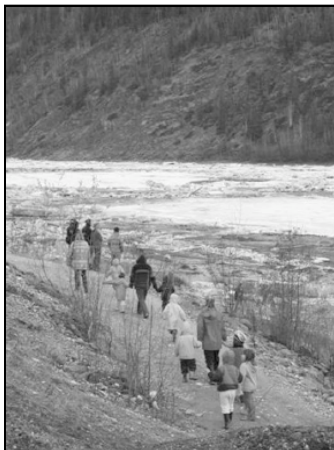
The cable was supposed to stop the clock on the cultural centre, but it didn't, and so Roberts and the IODE's Joyce Caley had to work out the time. Caley's watch was set to the 10 a.m. CBC time signal and Robert's watch was two minutes faster so it wasn't hard to calculate.

The river cleared in just a few minutes. Roberts was so captivated by the break-up that she burned her last batch of bannock.

The unofficial winner of the Ice Pool, according to Joyce Caley, is Ian Thomas, a New Zealander who mines locally. He had picked 1:33 as his time, so he was just a minute off.

The date and time confirm the trend predicted by retired engineer Stephen Johnson, who has plotted all the available times on an Excel spreadsheet and graphed them. If breakup had been right on the line of the graph, it would have occurred the next day, but even coming this close does suggest that statistics don't always lie.

### Break-up Photos by Glenda Bolt



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## World Heritage Status May be Some Years Away for Dawson

by Dan Davidson

It may be somewhat longer than anyone expected before Dawson City is considered for World Heritage Status, according to Rob Watt, Superintendent of Klondike National Historic Site.

Watt appeared before Dawson's council on April 3 to give an overview of the progress that has been made to date on the application that would see Dawson and the Klondike become part of a transnational World Heritage Site which would include Skagway, as well as the American and B.C. portions of the Chilkoot Pass.

There are currently eleven potential sites on the Park's official Tentative List of places that may be recommended to the recommended to UNESCO, the United Nations body based in Paris which administers the World Heritage Site designations.

The list includes Áísínai'pi (Writing-On-Stone), Atikaki/Woodland Caribou/Accord First Nations, Grand-Pré, Gwaii Haanas, Ivvavik/Vuntut/Herschel Island (Qikiqtaruk), Joggins, The Klondike, Mistaken Point, Quttinirpaaq, Red Bay, Rideau Canal.

The Rideau Canal was put forward in February 2006, as the second part of a four stage process which may lead to approval by the committee.

Watt visited Ottawa last December to consult on the application.

"I had no idea how complicated the process was," he told council. Since the 1970s, when Parks last submitted a proposal, it has become much more complex.

Getting on the tentative list is the first stage. After that, a nomination dossier must be submitted to the World Heritage Centre, which evaluates the paperwork. Stage three would see a contingent of experts from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) for cultural sites and from the World Conservation Union (IUCN) for natural sites visit the area to determine the worth of the application and confirm that the various local stakeholders actually desire the designation.

At stage four, the World Heritage Committee would render a decision, which might be to inscribe the site, the refer the nomination back to the national referring body (Parks Canada in this case), defer the decision until there is more research, or reject the application and not inscribe the site on the list.

Watt indicated that the time from stage two to the end of stage four could take at least 18 months. The decision on the Rideau Canal is expected this coming June.

"If we were to start next month, you'd be looking at a year to 18 months to pull the nomination together," he said. "It's more complicated because it's not just Dawson City; it's a whole series of sites from here to Skagway.

"You have to get all the stakeholders on side, plus you have to define, when you put the nomination in ... just exactly what you have in mind."

Without a carefully prepared dossier, with all the angles

covered, Watt suspects that an application would just "be blown out of the water."

The proposal is not a new idea. It first became public a decade ago when the late Pierre Berton and Pierre Dalibard (a former director of the non-profit citizen's group Heritage Canada, and professor in historical conservation at the University of Montreal) issued a challenge to the federal government, maintaining that the Klondike qualified on two counts of the UNESCO criteria as they were at the time.

"iv. be an outstanding example of a type of building or architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history..."

"vi. be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance..."

As part of its tentative listing, Parks has suggested using these criteria instead:

"(iv) The Klondike is an outstanding example of a landscape which illustrates exceptional adaptation and innovation by First Nations people for thousands of years, up to the present day, in responding to a challenging environment;

"(v) It is an outstanding example of a mining landscape which includes the resource, transportation, supply, and administrative and institutional components."

The Klondike dossier has not yet been submitted, partly because it is not yet certain what the Americans want to do.

"Obviously, we have no control over what the US does and for a while the US was not putting any nominations forward, but just within the last year they have decided that they would."

It is not entirely certain is Skagway will be part of a US proposal and that has been a hold up for Parks. Watt is expecting that the nomination documents might go to Paris as late as 2013, perhaps a bit earlier.

He expects that there will be a definite response from the Americans in about a month. In case the Americans don't like the joint approach, Parks has decided not to put all its eggs in one basket.

"So we're now looking at an alternative plan in case the US doesn't agree. We looking to re-craft our nomination proposal to either not include the US, or leave it open so the US could be added."

A working group will be assembled to prepare the nomination. Once a draft is prepared that looks good to Parks, the agency will seek input from Dawson citizens. the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, YTG and whatever other stakeholders are identified.

## Plastic Bags Are a Concern at the Dawson Landfill

by Dan Davidson

Mayor John Steins is upset about the number of plastic bags that are ending up in Dawson's Quigley Landfill. On a recent inspection tour of the site, Steins snapped some pictures of the mess created in the surrounding trees by wind

blown bags escaping the dump and posted the following comment on his Mayor's Blog.

"So what is this? An art installation by the great Christo and Jeanne-Claude? Unfortunately these are escapees on the



*This mess at the dump has since been cleaned up, but Mayor Steins was left to wonder how many bags had blown even farther from the dump. Photo supplied by John Steins.*

perimeter of our municipal dump. We took a little tour of the facility today provided by Norm our Public Works foreman who outlined some serious issues relating to waste management for Dawson."

Steins announced his intention to raise the matter of plastic bag waste as an agenda item at the May 1st council meeting and did so, proposing that the council look into ways of encouraging people to reduce their use of the polluting plastic in favour of other means of carrying their shopping.

Steins said that he was not proposing a ban or a bylaw at this time, but that an informal survey of the town's businesses had indicated that most would be willing to do without plastic as long as a workable alternative could be proposed. He noted that a number of places in Alaska, as well as the city of San Francisco had already taken measures to ban the bags.

Councillor Ashley Doiron felt that some sort of public process should be undertaken before any such move should be taken, and Steins agreed.

She felt that a public education program ought to be undertaken and the mayor felt that Conservation Klondike should be asked to make a presentation on the subject.

Council generally was in favour of looking into the idea and of promoting awareness of the mess that those bags have been making. Councillor Ed Kormendy felt that it would be possible to change the public perception of the issue and encourage responsible use of tote bags by the public.

Doiron and Steins disagreed on the issue of whether a bylaw was the ultimate answer to the problem. Doiron was of the opinion that bylaws are not always the answer to a problem, whereas Steins felt that the council existed to set a tone and direction in the town, and that bylaws were an appropriate way of doing this.

CAO Paul Moore reported that the mess photographed by Steins had been cleaned up, the task undertaken by the conservation society with a little financial incentive from the town.

"It was partly an operational issue," he told council. "The fence (around the landfill) needs to get turned on now because the bears are back, and it shorts out when the bags blow against the fence."

## **Uffish Thoughts: The territorial government dropped the ball on Dawson's recreation centre**

by Dan Davidson

The City of Dawson will never see a penny from the various contractors and experts who designed and built the structure that has become the Art and Margaret Frye Recreation Centre.

Council put an end to any aspirations it might have had in this direction during a quick meeting held at noon on March 19. It took just 20 minutes to pass the resolution that ended any hopes Dawson voters might have had of ever seeing any justice on this matter.

City of Dawson Resolution #C07-08-05 reads: "Moved by Councillor Doiron, Seconded by Councillor Andrew, that CAO instruct legal council to seek discontinuance of proceedings against TSL, FSC, and AXA Pacific Insurance with aim to mitigate any potential costs that may be sought by above named parties."

FSC designed a building that has a defective roof envelope that leaked and nearly caused part of the roof to collapse three years ago. TSL constructed the building that had to have all the preparations for a future artificial ice surface ripped out of it after the foundation shifted.

There were other players in the game, but it seems that these ought to bear some of the cost for fixing the problems that currently exist.

The heating and air circulation systems admit too much heat into the arena instead of cooling it, and the highly recommended thermo siphon system that was supposed to freeze back the permafrost after it was disturbed did not work. The contractors responsible for these deficiencies were not named in this resolution.

It frustrates me no end to see the town council having to walk away from this issue, but I don't blame them one bit.

It is not an issue that should have been left for them to deal with.

When the territorial government hijacked democracy in Dawson in April of 2004, it took on all responsibility for managing whatever problems there were in the town. Instead of actually tackling the major problems, it put them on the back burner, ignored the advice of its own Financial Supervisor, and launched into a protracted and horrendously expensive audit of the town's finances, an audit which raised more questions than it answered, and has still failed to produce either criminal or civil charges against the mayor, town manager and treasurer it blamed for everything.

Not that these men ever drew up a blueprint, raised a

hammer, welded a beam, or indeed, had much of anything to do with the construction overruns, all monitored by project management teams which had government advisors sitting on them, which drove the town into bankruptcy.

A trusteeship situation ought to mean that the person in charge would do everything possible to serve the needs of the people he is serving. Ray Hayes tried to do that, as far as I could see at the time, but the government failed to provide him with the backing to deal with the central issue of action against the people who had built the mess.

The town had no financial resources to go to court, and the government did not provide, so Hayes decided not to pursue the matter because he could not afford to. Subsequently, the Minister of Community Services ordered him not to; but he had already made the decision, based on his awareness of the potential costs.

Two years and some months passed during which nothing was done on this file, at the end of which the government finally cobbled together a restoration of municipal government deal that closely followed the outline its supervisor had proposed two years earlier.

Just about a year ago, the Premier announced the shape of the deal and also announced that YTG (which now prefers to be called YG) would look after all fiscal matters related to the recreation centre.

The government has not done that. It has helped the town access MRIF dollars to do some work on the building, but made the council leverage that with money from a grant which was supposed to have been used for other infrastructure needs.

It has refused to touch the matter of the contractors' responsibility, or to advance any funds to make that financially feasible for the town to take on.

If the insurance companies involved on the other side of this case had to stare down YTG lawyers, funded by YTG coffers, it is fair to assume they would be looking for a deal. As it stands, however, they have been facing a town, which, while it looks to be in good shape right now, does not have the deep pockets it would take to pursue this matter.

Like Ray Hayes, nearly three years ago, Dawson's council really has no option but to walk away from this battle. Big Brother, who should have handled the matter for them, has failed badly on this one.

Our government may be willing to spend tens of thousands of dollars pursuing questionable timber cases elsewhere in the territory, and it may even dig in its heels when outfitters build wilderness lodges on land they don't own, but when a town is defrauded of the recreational facility it thought it had bought and paid for, the government does nothing but punish the people who got tricked.

Dawson's council has every reason to be frustrated with this outcome, but it really doesn't have a choice.

## Chief Isaac Incorporated hire new COO

DAWSON CITY – The Chief Isaac Incorporated (CII) Board of Directors have appointed Mark Smerchanski as the new chief operating officer for CII and the operations manager for MacKenzie Petroleum Ltd.

CII Board Chair Otto Cutts said the CII directors have found a strong leader to guide the First Nation-owned company.



“We’re confident Smerchanski will create new business opportunities for CII,” said Cutts. “We also look forward to him building on the relationships we already have with local businesses and the community at large.”

Smerchanski, 51, has 35-years experience in sales, marketing, and industrial facilities management. He’s provided leadership at several of Canada’s leading businesses, including Eldorado Gold Mines Ltd.; Thunder Bay Chemicals; Aerofoam Chemicals; Eco Exploration; and International Fibreboard Inc. Smerchanski’s contribution to the business world was recognized in 1995 when he was nominated Manitoba’s entrepreneur of the year.

Smerchanski has an equally impressive volunteer resume, including United Way fundraiser, minor hockey and soccer coach, and activity volunteer with the Manitoba School for the Deaf.

Smerchanski is in Dawson and will begin immediately.

## Yukon Government Announces Community Wellness Court

Whitehorse (April 30, 2007) - Justice Minister Marian C. Horne announced today that a Community Wellness Court will be officially opened this afternoon by Territorial Court Judge Karen Ruddy. The Yukon and federal governments committed \$609,000 toward the establishment of this innovative initiative under the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan.

“Establishing the Community Wellness Court is part of the Yukon government’s commitment to integrate a therapeutic problem-solving court into the Yukon justice system. Offenders with challenges such as addictions, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), or mental health problems will now be able to work with the court to address their treatment needs,” Horne said.

Offenders who are willing to participate may be eligible for a comprehensive treatment plan that includes court-supervised substance abuse treatment, random drug testing, incentives and sanctions, clinical case management and social services support.

“We are committed to helping those who wish to participate in improving their lives,” Horne added.

The Community Wellness Court will evolve and adapt over time, through regular community input from local non-government organizations, First Nations and service providers.

## **Yukon Government Announces Funding For Yukon Placer Regime**

WHITEHORSE (April 27, 2007) - Energy, Mines and Resources Minister Archie Lang announced that the Government of Yukon has committed a total of \$650,000, in two parts, for the Yukon Placer Regime.

The Department of Energy, Mines and Resources, through its Client Services and Inspections branch, will receive \$170,000 to hire qualified personnel to analyze and monitor information collected from water samples within areas where placer mining activity exists. This funding will also be used to develop a comprehensive database.

“The information provided from this work will help ensure that the regime achieves its overall management objectives,” Lang said. This work will position the Yukon as a global leader in monitoring and enforcing placer mining activities.”

The Yukon Placer Secretariat will receive \$480,000 to complete its three-phase consultation process and to implement the new Yukon placer mining regulatory regime this year. This consultation has been a cooperative partnership between the governments of Canada and Yukon.

This funding will allow the Secretariat to purchase automated water monitors to analyze samples collected from watershed areas, to complete the final regime documents and to complete the collection of traditional knowledge from First Nation governments.

“Implementing the new placer regime recognizes the importance of a sustainable placer mining industry to Yukon, as well as the importance of conservation and protection of fish and fish habitat,” Lang said.

A new, integrated regime framework to manage Yukon placer mining was cooperatively developed by the Yukon government, the Council of Yukon First Nations, Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the

Klondike Placer Miners’ Association.

## **Dawson Firefighters Lauded for work on Eldorado Fire**

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

The Yukon’s Fire Marshal is very impressed by the work the Dawson City Fire Dept. did in saving the Eldorado Hotel during the April 12 fire.

In a letter to Fire Chief Jim Regimbal, which was tabled at the April 17 town council meeting, Fire Marshal Marty Dobbins was full of praise for the fire department.

“I’m sure that the the Eldorado Hotel Fire that occurred yesterday (April 12) in Dawson would have had a less successful outcome if it were not for the high level of proficiency your firefighters demonstrated on the fire ground.

“Older buildings are very challenging for many reasons and require a precise intervention strategy initiated rapidly before the loss is uncontrollable, and your team achieved just that.”

The fire started under a bed in one of the second floor rooms. The bed was ignited by a frayed electrical plug in which half of the usual strands of wire in the cord were carrying the full load of current. It smoldered for some time before bursting into flame while one of the house keepers was making the bed, the ignition being caused by the extra air introduced into the room at that time.

The Eldorado Hotel is nearly 40 years old, having been built in 1969/70 on the site of a store that was also destroyed by fire.

Peter and Karen Jenkins, the hotel’s owners, are operating out of the two dozen rooms in the undamaged annex building while repairs are being effected to the main building. The damaged rooms on the second floor have now been demolished and the framework for the reconstruction is in place.



*Reconstruction at the Eldorado Hotel has been a speedy process.*

# Robert Service School Elementary Science Fair



Photos by  
Betty Davidson