

# The Klondike Sun

August 15, 2007 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon



## First annual Gay Pride event fun for all

Story & Photo

By Brendan Reese, Summer Student Intern

If you noticed something a little queer going on in Dawson on Tuesday August 7th, you were not alone. The first annual Dawson Gay Pride event took place this day and with a turnout of over 40 people it was hard to miss. The event started at the gazebo, which had been renamed the gayzebo for the occasion, and quickly grew to a good sized crowd and a parade. The atmosphere at the event was welcoming, inclusive, and very exciting for all involved. Many in attendance were dressed in colourful clothing and some held signs proclaiming their support for the gay and lesbian movement.

Before leaving the gazebo the crowd grabbed noise makers and painted their faces in preparation for the parade. The parade passed many homes and businesses, many

curious onlookers could not help but join in the fun. Spectators smiled and waved and oncoming traffic politely pulled over and marveled in the enthusiasm of the crowd. The parade came to an end at the Downtown Hotel where gay drinks were on special and the bar was decorated with rainbow paper chains. The party continued well into the evening.

"This is something we thought about all winter" said Justine, one of the event coordinators. "To show support to the gay community in a small town is important. This is our first event and it is something we hope to continue in the future."

Not everyone had the will to stay for the whole event.

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When one member of the group remarked that he could not stay because he was hungry Catherine Lavallee remarked "you should be hungry for gayness!" Most were as the crowd gained more steam then it lost as it moved throughout town.

One event attendee said "I love that there are so many people here, it's great to see that there is such an open and supportive community in such a small town. There is a large gay and lesbian population in town and it's fun to be recognized and celebrated for the wonderful people we are. It's wonderful to have events like this because everyone is welcome to join in, show their support, and have fun. No matter what your sexual orientation is you can still come to an event like this and have a great time with great people."

After a very successful event all agreed that this event was a tradition that should continue for years to come. Over drinks and stories of good times in Dawson City the crowd could not help but dream of an even bigger and better event in the future.

## **Board Suggests Placer Mining Support Signs have Outlived their Purpose**

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

Dawson's Planning Board doesn't have anything against the placer mining industry, but it does believe that the protest signs in support of the industry that were placed on many businesses and homes in town have served their purpose and it's time they came down.

The signs, which read "This Business Supports Placer Mining / Placer Mining Supports this Business", were part of a community support campaign which led up to and culminated in the Black Wednesday protest march in March of 2003.

They were also part of a fundraising campaign by the Klondike Placer Miners Association to raise money to help cover its costs in participating in a lobbying effort against the government's apparent decision to shut down the industry, which was implied by an announcement made late in 2002.

The announcement had come at the end of a protracted series of negotiations to revise and update the Yukon Placer Authorization and appeared to be a complete about-face on the direction that the talks had taken over a period of several years.

The signs (which were used Yukon-wide) and the protest were part of a movement to get the federal government to reconsider the implementation of some very strict guidelines which industry supporters claimed would have killed the industry.

Over the next several years a new working committee was struck and new set of placer guidelines was developed after a great deal of consultation. By June of 2005 much of the work had been done and the industry was no longer under

threat of being closed down by regulations.

The Planning Board's submission to Dawson's town council notes the importance of the industry to the Klondike, but also notes that "these signs were allowed as part of a temporary political campaign", that they do not meet the historic guidelines for signage in the town and that they do not have authorization permits.

Further, the board is concerned that "the continuing presence of non-historic signs weakens public confidence in the Zoning and Historical Control Bylaw ... and prevents enforcement of the bylaw" and that the signs detract from the "heritage character of the community."

In short, the board contends that this campaign ended several years ago and that these campaign signs, like others that get posted to serve a limited purpose, should now be removed.

The board's resolution requested that town council pass its own resolution with respect to this matter and "direct (the) administration to have these signs removed."

Council had an extensive discussion on this matter, the gist of which was that, while the planning board was essentially correct, the action it was requesting was more heavy handed than the council was prepared to take at this time. Councillors hoped that businesses might be persuaded to remove the signs, as has already happened on many of

the homes where they used to be posted, without the need of any official action by the town's bylaw officer.

A further reason for delaying any action could be found in the fact that the town is

presently without a bylaw officer and is currently attempting to recruit a replacement.

## **Johnson Family Recognized as Fossil Collectors**

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

The link between palaeontology and placer mining is a well established one, dating back many decades now. Indeed one of the exhibits at the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Palaeontology celebrates the contributions of Yukon placer miners in general, and the McDougall family in particular, in helping the museum build up its collection of Ice Age fossils.

The same can be said of the Beringia Museum in Whitehorse, most of whose artifacts come from the Mayo and Dawson region, and have been unearthed by placer miners looking for gold.

July 27 the annual barbecue held in Dawson each year by the Klondike Placer Miners Association became the occasion for celebrating another family which has contributed greatly to the territory's store of fossils.

The Beringia Research Award was presented to Bernard and Ron Johnson by Tourism and Culture Minister Elaine





Taylor.

"Tonight," Taylor told the crowd in the Fry Recreation Centre arena, "I'd like to recognize a couple of individuals for their contributions and their significant work over the years in terms of raising awareness about Beringia and raising awareness about placer mining and the mesh between the two.

"This is really significant because we're here tonight to recognize Bernie and Ron Johnson. This award is integral in terms of raising awareness about placer mining, because if it wasn't for placer mining we wouldn't have the opportunity to have all these ice age historic fossils."

"This award recognizes (the Johnson brothers) for the significant and outstanding gift of fossils that they recently presented to the Department of Tourism and Culture. It was only recently that Dr. Grant Zazula was able to go to the Johnsons', where they presented us with numerous hundreds of various fossils."

This gift increased the department's ice age fossil collection by twenty percent.

Bernie Johnson accepted the award on behalf of his brother and himself, saying that it was a great honour.

"It's always been a great inspiration to me throughout my mining years to find these bones and learn more about them. As a zoologist I'd like to encourage all the rest of the miners out there to bring these fossils to the attention of the paleontologists whenever they find them. It's quite important that they be preserved for posterity."

## Klondike Sun on the Web & Elsewhere

by Dan Davidson

For those who have not noticed, an abridged version of the Sun is once again available on the internet, each issue being placed online a few days after the next one replaces it on the news stands. The files are in PDF format, which downloads to your computer and opens with Acrobat Reader, a program which is a standard item loaded on to all Macintosh and PC platform computers. The file is 8 to 10 letter sized pages long and in smaller print, but the Reader program allows a person to enlarge the display size of the

page, so print size is not really an issue.

I create and format the files and John Steins places them on the CityofDawson.com forum at <http://cityofdawson.com/sun.html>. John is able to track the activity on the site and provided the following download stats for July.

390 /download/Klondike\_Sun/Sun\_June\_20-07.pdf

236 /download/Klondike\_Sun/Sun\_May\_23-07.pdf

92 /download/Klondike\_Sun/Sun\_March\_28-07.pdf

80 /download/Klondike\_Sun/Sun\_May\_09-07.pdf

79 /download/Klondike\_Sun/Sun\_March\_15-05.pdf

This would seem to mean that we are reaching well beyond the scope of our print run.

In addition, we have been leaving back issues of the paper at the Visitor Information Centre all summer for tourists to take, and the box keeps emptying, so that must be working as well.

## Uffish Thoughts: I want my, I want my, I want my C...B...C

by Dan Davidson

It's hard to be anything other than annoyed with the folks at CBC Radio these days. First, they cancelled the relatively inexpensive and nicely soothing Northern Lights program that used to run from 11 p.m. to 1 a.m. in favour of more talk show reruns. Now in order to have some quiet music to relax by before going to sleep we have to play CDs in the bedroom and then remember to flip a switch before going to sleep so we can hear the news in the morning.

Having no choice, we adjusted.

Summer came. I travelled for five weeks and came back to read in the Star that Dawson was going to have CBC Radio 2 added to its radio options. Sweet! We listened to a lot of that while driving around Ontario in June and July. It would be a welcome addition to the mix.

Further down in the article it noted that the CRTC had actually forced the CBC's hand in this matter and was

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forbidding them to transmit the same signal on both AM and FM. Radio One would only be available on AM since Radio Two began transmission.

The article also said that the strength of that AM signal would be boosted to compensate for the reduction in broadcast quality.

Two weeks later I have to hope that this adjustment is yet to come, because the Radio One signal in Dawson is absolutely awful, excremental, in fact.

I've just spent the evening trying to rearrange the stereo system in my home office so that I can pick up a signal with only a little bit of static in it. No joy. I've shifted everything in sight and the only positive effect was that it caused me to throw out several stacks of piled up clippings and other papers that, between being a reporter and a teacher, had gotten out of hand. I can see the top of part of that table again.

The signal improved only slightly.

I had hoped for a dramatic improvement. In our bedroom I found that turning the clock/radio so that the AM antenna faced the broadcast tower on the Dome seemed to do a lot of good. There was only mild static in the signal.

Of course, now I can't see the radio when I wake up in the night and actually have to sit up to find out whether it's worth while getting out of bed to go to the toilet or not. I'll probably buy a little travel alarm with a glowing face to solve that problem.

Radio Two is lovely, by the way - I'm listening to it right now, in fact - but I happen to like the morning shows, Ideas, a little bit of Q and weekend stuff like Vinyl Tap and Sat. Night Blues, and I often have then on while I'm working, planning lessons or marking student assignments.

I do have the option of listening to Radio One via a streamed broadcast through my computer, and the speakers on my new MacBook Pro are a lot better than on my old iBook G4, but I'm thinking that I may bring in an old broken CD player which has a working radio and mount it near the east window to see if that works.

I'm not the only one complaining by the way. I posted a query on the Dawson City Forum and learned that the reception is poor in parts of Sunnydale, and with one resident over there asking Mayor Steins to complain about it. Rock Creek also reports bad reception.

Another resident, who lives in the shadow of the Dome hill in the town's north end, posted that he had spent several hours fiddling with and repositioning radio receivers on both floors of his home, all to no avail. He reported some success in at least getting the signal, but that it was very fuzzy.

I can only hope that this situation can be rectified - soon. When it comes to news and public affairs programming, I can only say, with a nod to Dire Straits, I want my C.B.C

## Pipe Corrosion Prompts Emergency Maintenance in S&W System

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

Corroded Pipes and the potential for serious to catastrophic failure at either the York Street Lift Station or the Fifth Avenue Screening Plant has caused Dawson's council to request an authorization from the territorial government to spend \$340,000 of the \$792,000 remaining in the infrastructure grant that was given to the City of Dawson to assist with a maintenance deficit when the local government was restored 14 months ago.

The urgency of the situation is outlined in a study recently completed for the town by EarthTec, in which the 28 year old sewer and water system is described as being "in various stages of degradation due to both external and internal corrosion".

This conclusion was reached after a preliminary report was filed in April 2007 and a more complete study was carried out between June 12 to 17 of this summer.

An ultrasonic thickness measurement gauge was used to conduct the investigation.

"In all cases examined," says the executive summary of



the report, "the piping exhibited significant external corrosion in the form of pitting. ... (B)oth internal and external pitting were present, and ... in some areas wall thickness had deteriorated to half of the original value."

Earthtec recommended replacement of the more critical areas during the current maintenance year.

Public Works Superintendent Norm Carlson attended the August 7 meeting of council to recommend that finding be obtained and the project be given the go ahead.

In his report, Carlson was blunt, having already had to deal with a partial failure of the York Street Lift Station just last winter during less than congenial working conditions.

It had been hoped that work on the screening plant could wait and be part of the financing arranged for the secondary sewage treatment facility, but the EarthTec report makes delay inadvisable.

"Failure to act immediately," Carlson reported, "could result in a catastrophic failure whereby sewer service is

disrupted to the entire town and raw sewage is discharged unscreened into the Yukon River.”

There are only certain times of the year when work like this can be done. Early fall when the water table is lower is the preferred time for pipe work in Dawson. Carlson sees the project being completed by October.

## **Residential School Impacts are the Focus of the Dānojà Zho Centre's Summer Program**

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

The major exhibit at the Dānojà Zho Center this summer is “Where Are the Children” a text and photography display created by the Legacy of Hope Foundation, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and Library and Archives Canada.

The focus of the exhibition is the residential schools system that operated across Canada between 1892 and 1969 in a joint operation supported by the Government of Canada and run by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, United and Presbyterian churches.

As documented in several of the ‘Sessional papers’ reproduced in the exhibit, one of the primary objectives of the system was to assimilate native children into the larger Canadian culture. In practice this meant that they were cut off from their birth cultures and languages.

The exhibit posters note that “thousands of Aboriginal children across Canada - First Nation, Métis and Inuit - passed through these schools.

“Some children attended these schools for a short time, others, for their entire schooling. Some graduated with useful skills, while many became self-destructive as a result of the physical sexual, and mental abuse that took place,”

The photos show first nation children in a variety of classroom and work settings; travelling to and from the schools; in “before and after” poses that show, at least in terms of clothing and hair styles, some of what happened to them while they were at the schools. They also show classrooms, shops and dormitory settings.

The display also provides internet resources to a great number of sites and documents that explore this topic further, as well as a free CD on the topic.

The centre has tied in local content with an overlapping



display based on the memories of Dawsonites who attended the schools as children.

## **Slow Rush Tours Seeks a New Driver**

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

“It’s hard to think of this as work,” says Holger “Holly” Haustein, as Rocky heads the cart down the street from Eighth Avenue on the way back to the Visitor information Centre on Front Street.

It’s not the warmest of days in Dawson, but it’s not cold and Holly says he prefers it as it is.

If it’s a little chilly you can light a fire or put on a sweater, but when it’s hot you can’t do anything, he says.

We’re trundling over the route that he and Rocky usually take with the tourists, detouring to look at the “ugly new Customs Building” that has been placed by the docking area for the Yukon Queen II at the behest of nervous Homeland Security folks, who insisted that Canada had to have an official building down there.

Along Front Street the carriage catches the eyes and lenses of many a tourist, and Holly says he thinks he’s become one of the most photographed sights in Dawson during the six summers he’s been out on the street.

Up past the Territorial Administration Building in the former Court House, we push on past the Black Residence and up to 8th Avenue, where tourists outside the Jack London Centre obviously mistake the carriage for public transit and can’t quite make up their minds where they want to go.

On past Pierre Berton’s house and Robert Service’s Cabin, where Johnny “Caribou” Nunan temporarily loses his audience as Rocky and Holly saunter past.

“There’s a sight for sore eyes,” he quips, leaving us to wonder if he’s talking about the horse, the carriage, the driver or the passenger.

The kids in the yard at the Dawson Daycare are clamoring for attention, and there’s no traffic, so Holly guides Rocky across the street to the fence where the kids lean out with handfuls of grass.

Holly grew up in East Germany, and was 22 when the Wall came down, but he didn’t rush right off. He had a decent roofing business (“I’ve always worked with wood.”) and it was several years more before he started travelling, finally ending up in Dawson City.

Slow Rush Tours was kind of a whim, a summer job that paid for itself, allowed him to have a horse year round, and giving him the chance to meet a lot of people.

His work day doesn’t begin until 11 in the morning (“You have to feed the horse.”) and he spends a fair amount of time just sitting in the shade of the covered wagon, waiting for people to make up their minds that a leisurely one hour tour of the town is worth \$15.

He figures the business could probably be busier than he has developed it to be, but it’s not his philosophy to rush around. He has other interests. He’s built benches out of recycled material on either side of the ferry landing and in other places around Dawson. This summer he’s helped put





two rafts in the Yukon River. One has a little wooden hut on it and the other a wall tent. Both are occupied.

He's worried about Slow Rush though. He and his family are planning to go travelling for a couple of years. They're closing up their 100 year old home in Sunnydale and planning to travel across Canada. They hope to spend a year in Newfoundland, then perhaps sail around the world and come home to Dawson.

"When I come back, I think I'll do something different," he says but he'd like to see Slow Rush continue. He believes the town would miss it if it weren't there, in the same way it misses the mounted RCMP officer that used to patrol the streets in the summer.

So Holly is looking for someone to take over the business.

If Slow Rush Tours is still running in 2008 it will be because someone has taken up the reins.

Meanwhile there's another customer waiting at the VIC and this time Holly will get to talk about his beloved Dawson City to someone who doesn't already know the stories.

## Lonely Planet Comes to Dawson

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

Ryan Ver Berkmoes travels to out of the way places because he likes to get off the beaten track. Working on the Lonely Planet guides for Canada and British Columbia has given him an excuse to visit Dawson City regularly for the last decade.

There's a fairly substantial section of the BC guide that deals with Dawson City and a briefer mention in the Canada guide. The BC Guide actually has an entire seven pages on our little town and Ver Berkmoes was in town in mid-July to bring them up to date.

Ver Berkmoes took up travel writing after a stint in the regular newspaper business, succumbing to a wanderlust he says was triggered during a trip to Europe. His bio notes that he has "covered everything from wars to bars", noting that he prefers the latter.

For the Lonely Planet series of guidebooks he has

authored Chicago and Moscow, co-authored Texas, Canada and Western Europe, and coordinated Russia, Ukraine & Belarus, Great Lakes, Out to Eat - London, Netherlands, and Britain, in addition to Lonely Planet British Columbia.

He noted a large selection of the more exotic Lonely Planet destination books on the shelves and Maximilian's and wondered what that said about the travel habits of Dawsonites.

In keeping with his love of bars, Ver Berkmoes spent several days walking the streets of Dawson, which has many bars in the summer and running down the list of things he needed to add, alter or delete for the next edition.

"Where ever I go I read the local papers," he said as we chatted at the Klondike Sun office, "just to see what the issues are and what's going on."

"There's an occupational hazard in this business, because by the time you do your reporting and the spring when the book comes out there's always changes."

Some deletions are real surprises.

"I may have talked to the owner of a place last September, seen the place and said to myself, 'oh, they're here', only to come back less than a year later and it's GONE."

This year he was surprised to find the laundromat closed and disappointed that Mama Cita's restaurant was no longer open.

His guide does make a small attempt to mention local issues and get a local voice. For the present edition he has a short interview with second generation placer miner David Millar.

Ver Berkmoes grew up in Santa Cruz, California, which was, at that time, pretty much a tourist town as he recalls it. He currently lives in San Francisco and works as author liaison manager at Lonely Planet's Oakland office, but he's on the road so much that the address on his card is mainly for contact.

He's driven the trip to Dawson the last three times he's made it and says he will continue to visit the town as often as he can find an excuse to.



## Cereal Thriller Indeed

By Megan Ruiter

A culmination of 1950's nostalgia and the down-to-earth reality of legalities and real estate, *Cereal Thriller* (Nathanson & Terrill, 2006) outlines the ongoing phenomenon of the Klondike Big Inch Land Company.

In 1955, the Quaker cereal company, in conjunction with the popular radio show, *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*, bought a 200-dollar piece of land along the majestic Yukon River. This land was divided into the world's largest subdivision, comprised of one inch square lots, and the deeds were each given away with puffed wheat cereal, thereby entering into one of the most infamous marketing ploys of all time.

*Cereal Thriller* examines the lasting effects of this campaign a half century after it started, examining both the legal and emotional remnants of the once larger-than-life phenomenon. The actual land that was purchased is now an untended portion of Dawson's very own Top of The World golf course, a prized chunk of Dawson real estate. Will the apparent rightful land owners unite and demand compensation? Watch *Cereal Thriller* to find out.

With celebrity guests like Casy Casum and quality sound bytes, footage and craftsmanship, *Cereal Thriller* is well made, worthwhile and entertaining. David McDonald, who wrote, directed and produced the film, did an excellent job at capturing the sublime essence of the Yukon both then and now, as well as expressing the voices of a lost

generation of Yukon land owners. Watch History television for a chance to learn about this wonderful tidbit of Dawson history and how a simple marketing campaign has left our little portion of the Yukon in the hearts of a generation across the globe.

## Rachel Wieggers brings burlesque back to Dawson at DCMF

By Brendan Reese, Summer Student Intern

After spending the winter in Vancouver, and attending a course on burlesque, Rachel Wieggers could think of no better place to show her new skills than this year's Dawson City Music Festival. On Saturday of the festival weekend she performed in front of one of the largest audiences at Music

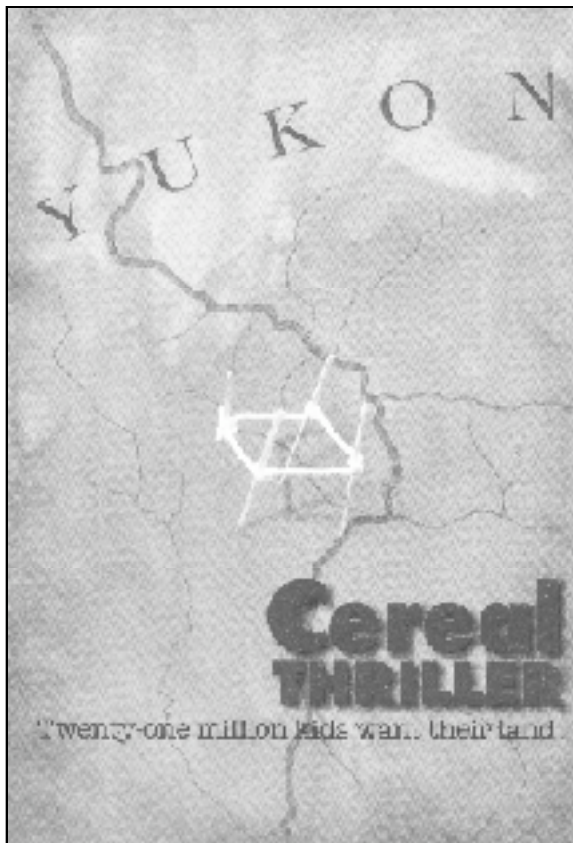


Fest. The response was fantastic as the group of music fans watched and enjoyed a Dawson winter story told in a very different way. Rachel performed her show as a fill between sets and no one in the audience knew quite what to expect.

Her story began with a very typical Dawson winter scene. Snow could be heard blowing, and Rachel, who's performing name is "The Wild, the Untamed, Shevonne of the Yukon, Toast of Dawson City," was bundled up in a parka and mukluks heading home through the cold. Once she returns home music starts to play, it is a song with the lyrics "I've got my love to keep me warm." Things no longer seem so cold to Shevonne, and she begins to undress. It seems to the audience that the show will become a typical strip tease. This however is not the case, for out of no where a bear has arrived.

Shevonne is scared and is not sure what to do. The show stops and the situation becomes quite tense, Shevonne will have to think of something to get out of this one. As she is thinking she hears the familiar voice from *Hinterland Who's Who* come on talking of the Black Bear. The Black Bear does not seem so bad according to the narrator, and Shevonne once again begins to relax. That is of course until the line "and will eat almost anything."

Now there is a problem, her safety is at stake, and something will have to be done. She has not come entirely unprepared for this encounter and quickly remembers her bear bell garter. Unfortunately as most people know, bear



bells don't really work and the bear continues to intimidate her. Next she tries her bear spray, but unfortunately this also fails and only makes the bear even more angry. She then tries to use her feminine charms to calm the bear, which seems to work briefly until the bear gets fed up and rips of a piece of her clothing.

This is the last straw and Shevonne decides to finish this troublesome bear once and for all. She pulls out an axe, goes after the bear, and the bear dies. Shevonne then returns triumphantly with a new bear skin rug, which is assumed to have come from the bear she has just killed. She is then free to continue removing her clothing and finishes the show with the strip tease that had been expected earlier.

Rachel's dream of bringing her art back to the lusty and bawdy town of Dawson had been fulfilled. "Burlesque in Dawson goes all the way back to the Gold Rush. I've always wanted to do this in Dawson and it finally all came together" Rachel said of her performance.

"The course I took in Vancouver was all I had hoped it would be and more. It touched on so many different aspects of burlesque, it was very thorough. People in town had heard that I took this course and wanted to see a show. Usually a show consists of at least 3 performers so it was a bit challenging as the only one."

When asked how burlesque differs from a modern day strip show Rachel had this to say: "A strippers audience is generally made up of males who have come to expect a certain stereotype of what contemporary beauty, or sexiness, or sensuality is. Burlesque differs because it is not about this stereotype, it is about bringing back older sensibilities of what is sexy and what is beauty. With burlesque you don't have to conform to these strange modern ideologies. Burlesque also involves humor, it's not serious. There is almost always a story, and it's something for everyone to enjoy. Men and women, old and young can leave a burlesque show feeling good."

In the future Rachel hopes to continue the tradition of burlesque in Dawson City. She is leading a course in Whitehorse this winter and is considering something in Dawson as well. Rachel would also like to tour and perform at festivals across the country at some point. Showing a broad audience what "The Wild, The Untamed, Shevonne of the Yukon, Toast of Dawson City" has to offer. And With the interest and excitement generated by this years performance, she should have no problem finding an audience.

## City of Dawson Info Session; Takin' it to the Streets

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

Was it an exercise in "open government" or an attempt to treat community development as a tourism activity? What was the purpose of the big white tent full of displays and goodies next to the Front Street Gazebo on August 9?

Simply put the event, billed as "Six Hours of Power", was an attempt to engage the interest of a community which stubbornly refuses to attend public meetings or voice its

opinions until something goes wrong.

Within in the tent a visitor could learn about the plans for the secondary sewage treatment lagoon, talk to the recreation director about programs and plans for the building itself, discuss the Integrated Community Sustainability Plan, chat with mayor and a rotating selection of councillors and city staff, and vote for your choice of the Seven Wonders of Dawson.

Exhausted by all of that, you could then have some fruit or sweets, grab a cup of coffee or bottle of water and, refreshed, go at it again or at least hang about until the door prizes were drawn.

"The purpose," said city manager Paul Moore, "is just to find out what people think about our various projects. We've been holding lots of public meetings, but there's a group that just can't make it in the evenings and we've been told to do something during the day, so we thought why not



try the day and why not get out of the office to the dike here, where people can wander by and we can hopefully hear as many opinions as possible.

"So far it's been pretty successful," he said at the half-way point in the afternoon. "We've heard a lot of opinions, talked to about 50 people, and discussions have happened that haven't happened before, so we're pretty pleased with that."

The tent also seemed to have captured the attention of quite a few tourists as well, puzzled by the hubbub.

Mayor John Steins was also happy.

"I think it's a success, I'm glad that the staff came up with the idea I think it makes the city business more accessible. It's much friendlier than going into a room at night and following all the rules.

"Everything is laid out here. Nothing is taboo. You can talk about anything. We've got everything covered here. You can learn about the wastewater treatment plan from Kriss Sarson. You have Jim Taggart and Mark Wickham talking about the sustainability plan. We have recreation here, the fire chief, public works superintendent. It's great and we're in full view of everybody. I think it's the best way to go to engage the public."



## Alaska Author Says River Dwellers Should have been Left Alone

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

In August of 2001 Dan O'Neill set out to take a trip down the Yukon River from Dawson City to Circle City, a good part of that trip taking him through the Yukon-Charlie Rivers National Preserve. He had studied the area years before, in 1975, as part of an attempt to chronicle the lifestyle of the people who lived along the river.

He had travelled it several times before, and actually made several other trips that summer, though his book *A Land Gone Lonesome*, has a narrative structure that hangs on the backbone of that particular trip.

In the 1970s there had been an influx of "back to the land" folks who built upon the slender infrastructure left them by a similar group from an earlier generation.

O'Neill was guest lecturer at the Dawson City Museum on August 9, explaining something of those people and their way of life, and advancing his thesis that the US National Park Service has essentially micromanaged these people out of existence and has nearly destroyed a way of life which was one of the reasons that the Yukon-Charlie preserve was established in the first place.

O'Neill's talk, accompanied by a slide show, demonstrated the minimal impact that these people, who were youngsters when they arrived in the early 70s, had on the land. While some have called these people pioneer wannabes, O'Neill contends that they actually lived a rougher existence than the greater numbers of people who lived along the Yukon from the time of the Gold Rush to the end of the riverboat era, when there were larger settlements, regular transportation routes by river, and easier annual access to both the river settlements and the outside world.

O'Neill's slides showed the low-tech life that these people lived, hauling supplies by lining their canoes up the rivers, relearning aboriginal skills in order to survive, gardening, trapping and fishing by season.

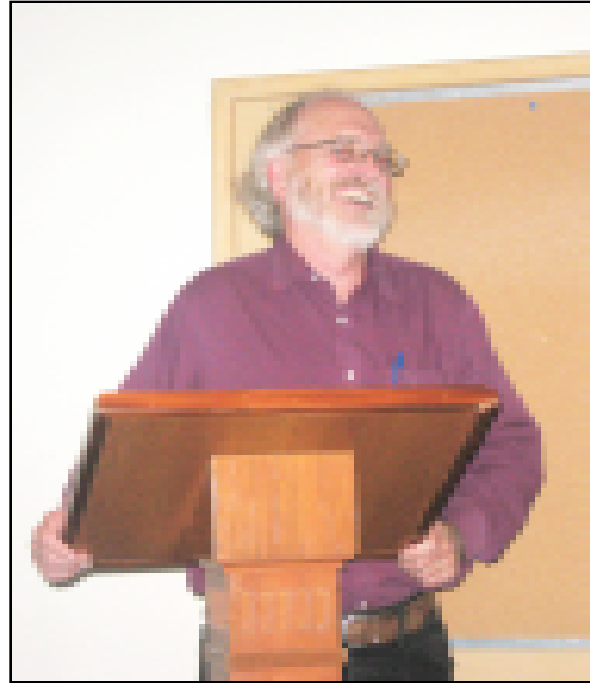
The cabins and homesteads they left behind are largely moldering ruins now, their passing hastened by Park Service policies that forced to live from one permit renewal to the next, would only allow the permits to pass on to one generation, and would not allow a settler who had had enough to sell his permit to another would-be pioneer.

Over a 30 year period, this meant that most of the residents have moved on, and the record of their passing will soon be nothing by crumbling logs on the forest floor.

O'Neill believes passionately that these people weren't doing anything to hurt the park, and that the area would be better served by having a few residents in it.

O'Neill told his audience he was inspired to write his book by the host of really bad "true north" books that are so popular in the south and the sappy movies that are being made from them. In particular, he mentioned the work of Tim Treadwell, who was eaten by the bears he had rhapsodized over in his book.

Among O'Neill's audience at the museum were a number of Dawsonites who used to live along the river and who are



mentioned in the book.

Following his presentation there was as lively discussion on a number of subjects, what caused people to move to the wild in the first place being the longest of them.

O'Neill said this group of about 14 people was the best audience he'd ever had.

## Dawson Lagoon Still Four Years and several Regulatory Hurdles Away

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

Dawson City is probably another four years away from getting its secondary sewage treatment lagoon, but most of that time can be accounted for in the regulatory processes the YTG spearheaded project will have to undergo before construction can start.

A small group of eleven people learned this at the latest in a continuing series of project updates held at council chambers on August 8 and presented by YTG's program manager for this project, Kriss Sarson.

The three cell aerated lagoon that is no seen as the answer to Dawson's contravention of its water license is slated to be constructed on lots 1059 and 1058, in a tailings area between the Dome Road and the Klondike Highway, just across from the town's ball park an soccer field.

Negotiations to purchase lot 1058 from the absentee owner in Alberta seem to have fallen through in spite of the government offering that person twice the market value of the land, and so Sarson said that the government would probably expropriate it, still paying the last price that it offered.

That having been done, the project will still need to go through a screening under the Yukon Environmental and



This is the proposed lagoon location as it looks now.

Socio-economic Assessment Board (YESAB), which could take as little as a year and as much as three years, depending on the complexity of the interventions and the outcome of public hearings. After that there would still be hearings under the Yukon Territorial Water Board, which could cost up some more time.

So 2011 might be an optimistic date, but it seems to be one that Judge Heino Lilles does not think unreasonable, given the amount of work that has been done on the project over the last 2 1/2 years and his complementary comments on the work at the latest court hearing, held here on June 28.

Sarson addressed a number of issues in his presentation.

The new lagoon will have a new screening plant, with the old one of 5th Avenue (which is failing ) being converted into a lift station.

The new system will have a new force main to the sewer outfall running underground along the inside of the dike, replacing the existing main, which recent studies have shown to be suffering from corrosion.

Various studies have been undertaken to determine if any kind of spill from the lagoon would have any impact on the town's water supply, which comes from a series of wells that are downstream of the proposed facility. Sarson says that the most negative computer simulations that could be devised by a consultant still showed no impact.

In the case of flooding, the entire town would already be flooded long before the lagoon.

In the case of an earthquake, all the water and sewer lines in town would already have broken before the lagoon's contents became an issue.

The lagoon option is the cheapest in terms of sustainable operations and maintenance costs for the town, Sarson said and produced a chart proving what various town councils have always said, that Dawson now has the highest rates in the territory - \$1200/yr as compared to \$544/yr in Whitehorse or the low of \$344/yr in Watson Lake - and that this gap will be even worse after 2001.

Dawson rates under the lagoon system will jump to \$560 to \$1720 per year.

The sequencing batch reactor system investigated by previous councils and preferred by Environment Canada (largely because it is already designed and ready to be built



This is an artist's rendering of the finished project.

and could be in place in about 2 1/2 years) would have more than doubled existing rates, adding \$1,400 to the yearly charges. This facility was designed in response to the original court order, but YTG put the design on the shelf when it emerged that it would cost nearly three quarters of a million dollars annually to operate.

Dawsonites who did not attend this meeting got a second chance to look at the plans or ask questions during a afternoon session held in a tent along Front Street on Thursday afternoon.

## More than Dinos Down in the Valley

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

In spite of there being dinosaur statues and signs pointing to the Royal Tyrrell Museum everywhere you look, Drumheller is not the one trick pony of a town that one might expect. There's more here than the giant T-Rex at the visitor center might suggest.

The area itself is one of those illusions that the world likes to surprise us with. After hours of driving over what W.O. Mitchell liked to call "the bald headed prairie" east of Banff and north of Calgary, the traveller descends still lower into the landscape and is apparently surrounded by low hills on either side. These are the walls of the Drumheller Valley, cut deep into the prairie soil by several rivers that seem to converge on this location, but because there are the remains of what used to be islands within the valley, the illusion of hilly terrain is convincing.

The peculiar nature of this valley led to a number of discoveries. In the days before oil was king, coal mines flourished here. The remains of these can be visited and one of the tourist attractions in a nearby town is the suspension bridge the miners used to walk over the river on to get to the diggings.

The geological conditions that created the "badlands" look of the valley, favoured the formation of hoodoos, massive sedimentary rock pillars which look like stone giants wearing deformed bowler hats, or perhaps like giant



mushrooms. The pillars can quickly erode away if their harder rock capstones are dislodged.

And of course there are the fossils, the accidental discovery of which went on to become the foundation of the Royal Tyrrell Museum of Paleontology and established the valley as a paleontological gold mine, one of the world's premier sources of information about the era of dinosaurs.

One display in the museum makes special reference to the important role played by Yukon placer miners in exposing and donating a large portion of the museum's collection of ice age fossils. Chuck and Lynn McDougall are mentioned by name as major benefactors of the collection.



The town appears to love its saurians. Aside from the world's biggest T-Rex, there are smaller dinos all over the place: on street corners, in front of shops. Some are sculpted models. Some, like the worn examples at our RV park, are wire frames plastered over with papier mache. In one case, a wire frame outlining a longneck dinosaur has been set up in a garden and vines are being encouraged to grow through the wires to fill in the gaps.

There's a certain amount of kitsch. The Flintstones would be at home here. Shops have names like "Fred and Barney's", "Dino's Diner", the "Bedrock Inn".

The locals have taken advantage of a natural



amphitheater out by the "ski hill" to assemble a three hour production of the life of Jesus Christ, from his baptism by John the Baptist to his post-resurrection Assumption. Offered in six performances during the second and third weekends in July, this play is listed as one of Alberta's top cultural attractions and in the top 100 events in North America.

We took in the July 14 presentation and were favorably impressed. The cast numbered in the hundreds, and all but the major players were volunteers who had been in rehearsal for months. There was no amplification beyond the natural bowl, and yet you could hear nearly every word. In spite of the blistering 35 degree heat that afternoon, it was a tremendous experience.

We had visited Drumheller twice before in the last 25 years, but were impressed this time that the place has gone beyond its initial claim to fame and has developed enough attractions to keep the visitor busy for several days.

