

# The Klondike Sun

October 10, 2007 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon



## Writers' Trust Takes Over at Berton House

by Dan Davidson

The Berton House Writers' Retreat program is to be saved. An invitation to the event, passed on to this paper by recent writer-in-residence Robert J. Sawyer, tells the tale on a single card.

The invitation reads "Berton House Writers Retreat Society and the Writers' Trust of Canada invite you to the official transfer of the Berton House Writer's Retreat Deed"

The Writers' Trust will assume the ownership of Pierre Berton's childhood home and the chore of raising the \$50,000 it takes to maintain the program annually. The ceremony is slated to be a two hour event at the Stonegrill in Toronto

The house has been home to some 36 writers in the eleven years of its operation, beginning with novelist and journalist Russell Smith and continuing on, most recently to Sawyer and his wife, poet Carolyn Clink. Over the years it has hosted historians, authors of children's books, playwrights, a mystery writer, and Berton's biographer, A.B. McKillop.

The future of the program has been in doubt since the middle of the summer, when BHWR chair Elsa Franklin suddenly announced that the Canada Council for the Arts was ending the special arrangement under which the program had been funded since 2001.

The news prompted an angry blast from Sawyer, and a full column in the Globe and Mail by historian Ken McGoogan, in which he decried the short sightedness of the Canada Council's decision, noting that the resident writers so far had included "Andrew Pyper, Rachel Manley, George Fetherling, Steven Heighton, Sally Clark, Greg Cook, Phil Hall, Andrea and David Spalding, Carmine Starnino, Charlie Wilkins, Luanne Armstrong and Eric Wilson, to name a

few".

From Paris, Lisa Passold, the poet who occupied the retreat in the winter of 2007, wrote:

"This is happening right when Prime Minister Harper is emphasizing the importance of the North for Canada (upping the military presence against international incursions, etc)—doesn't this include the North's phenomenal cultural & historical heritage? Will this unique Northern creation, the childhood home of Canadian extraordinaire, Pierre Berton, simply disappear?"

As for the productivity of the program, McGoogan wrote: "Nobody has done a count, but the retreat has contributed to the writing of several dozen books. Speaking for myself, in Dawson City I rough-drafted one and conceived another"

Franklin had mentioned the possibility of putting the program under the umbrella of the Writers' Trust, which Berton had helped to found in 1976. McGoogan championed this notion in his museum. He wanted it to be a place where writers from Outside could get some northern exposure.

The house and its program have been recently been run under a joint plan which included the BHWC, the Dawson Community Library Board (which acted as a liaison to the community) and the Klondike Visitors Association which annually put about \$4,000.00 into the building's upkeep and organized one event there during Discovery Week each August.

Poet and novelist George K. Ilsley (Manbug) will be the next writer to reside at Berton House. The writers for 2008 have been selected and were announced at the deed transfer

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ceremony. They will be: Monica Graham, author of *Pictou County*, Nova Scotia (January – March); Charlotte Gray, author of *The Museum Called Canada: 25 Rooms of Wonder* (April – June); Elin Kelsey, author of *Canadian Dinosaurs* (July – September); Frances Backhouse, author of *Women of the Klondike* (October – December).



## What is the Writers' Trust?

by Dan Davidson

The Writers' Trust was founded in 1976 by Margaret Atwood, Pierre Berton, Graeme Gibson, David Young, Margaret Laurence. It is incorporated under a federal charter and registered as a national non-profit organization in 1976.

It exists to offer financial support to writers unmatched, as its website states, "by any other non-governmental organization.

The Trust raised funds through corporate donations and gifts from individuals, and carries on a number of fund raising events each year. They manage to cover the costs of the organization without direct government funding.

"The Writers' Trust believes that Canadian writers must be supported and rewarded.

Award programs administered by the Trust include: the RBC Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers, the Writers' Trust of Canada/McClelland & Stewart Journey Prize, the Marian Engel Award; the Writers' Trust of Canada's Matt Cohen Prize - In Celebration of a Writing Life, The Rogers Writers' Trust Fiction Prize, the Nereus Writers' Trust Non-Fiction Prize, the Writers' Trust of Canada's Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing, the Writers' Trust of Canada's Timothy Findley Award, the Vicky Metcalf Award for Children's Literature, the W.O. Mitchell Literary Prize.

Programs include the Margaret Laurence Memorial Lecture, the Thomas Head Raddall Atlantic Fiction Prize, the Writers' Trust/Humber School For Writers Scholarships and now, the Berton House Writers' Retreat.

## The Dynamite Addiction

By Sylvia Sands Johnson

We all know what addictions are about – drinking, gambling, smoking, over-eating, crosswords, and rotting as a couch potato. What has been left to say? Even boredom can become an addiction if you wallow in it too long. I thought I had every addiction in life beat, until a subtle, new one, began to creep into my life. Of course, I blamed it on the horrible winter we had had – then the draggy Spring, and so on.

It started when I was reading at bedtime. I can't reveal the brand name of course. I had seen some cup-shaped chocolates on sale – that should give you a clue. They were so cheap, I threw them in with the rest of the groceries. I promised myself I would only eat ONE PER NIGHT. Of course, one grew into two, and then after walking Quincey, our Springer Spaniel, I'd work up an appetite – then number three went down the hatch. (Any excuse will do when it comes to an addiction).

When I told my daughter about this chocolate gig, she said: "Mom, don't you realize that chocolate is a sex substitute?" (I have one of those daughters who makes you RE-THINK about everything that has ever happened in your life). Well... I thought... that's all very well for HER to say when she just got married for the THIRD time. It seems that when she was born in Dawson City, those long winter nights passed directly into her genes, while I was busy washing diapers by hand in a galvanized tub. However, I do appreciate these New Age perspectives. When she passes through our garden, she nibbles on on clover-heads and chickweed because they are so "nutritious." I tried that but decided I'd rather eat the honey after the bees are finished. Still, I'm always willing to learn from one who has better eating habits than I do, and who has a figure unlike that of a Globefish. But it is interesting to note that weeds can act like an aphrodisiac. Oh heck, I'll try anything once.

Of course, the first solution to the new 'choc' addiction

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would be to eat something else before bedtime. I consulted a friend about this, who is a one-in-a-ten-billion diet addict, and she said, "Tuna fish is very low on calories, or a boiled egg." Hmmmm. Then I recalled the words of a dear friend who had passed to the 'other side,' who insisted that when dieting, you should ONLY eat sardines. I had taken a liking to snacking on vegetable crackers with cheese on top. Now I would dump the cheese, and add tuna with a light-calorie dressing. I convinced myself it was delicious. I STILL had two pieces of chocolate left, however, and promised myself I would only nibble on one of them – to test my new resolve and polish the whole bad habit off. The last piece was for an emergency. I would never buy chocolate again, or ever eat those delicious mystery chocolates that someone had given me as a Xmas gift. (Next Xmas I am posting a sign on the door, which reads: "Please do NOT give me as a gift any chocolates YOU don't want. Thank you. I'm not a dumping ground.")

During the next shopping expedition, I asked my diet-dedicated friend, "did you happen to notice any items missing in the groceries? She answered with a question, "You don't mean chocolates, do you?" I was in denial and hadn't realized how obvious my habit was becoming. I decided the only solution was to dodge the aisle those particular chocolates were in – always On Sale. Sort of like dodging the liquor store at Xmas time.

Still gorging on chocolate tidbits at night, I decided to join choclaholics, which I saw advertised in an underground newsletter.

My first public confession began, "I am a choclaholic. In my lifetime I have been a sexaholic, an alcoholic, a cigarette addict, and a thrift store addict – but chocolate is the worst addiction I've ever had. (I shed a few tears on the podium). Luckily, I have found a choclaholic sponsor who understands my obsession, and tells me the only way to beat it, is to own up to it. So I admit there isn't a chocolate born that I haven't stared at, craved, or hidden away – to be eaten in secret. It has added to the national weight problem, putting my life in danger, and I am now in a serious financial decline, cut off by the credit card people. I beseech my higher power to move me to the next step, and sincerely apologize to anyone for any suffering I have caused them, watching me gobbling up chocolates endlessly."

## **Uffish Thoughts: It's beginning to look a lot like ... nah, it COULDN'T be!**

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

The truck with the Alaska plates was zipping down Front Street when the first of the shepherds crossed the road. The truck was way down the street, so there was no danger of anyone getting hit, but the driver slowed down anyway. Slowed down again to a crawl, and then to a dead stop as the adults carrying the sheep appeared.

Not real sheep, you understand, just cardboard models fastened to wooden stands so they would stay upright.

In the slight drizzle of Saturday afternoon, the parishes of St. Paul's Anglican Church, St. Mary's Catholic Church

and the Dawson Community Chapel were preparing for December's annual Christmas Pageant.

This might seem a little odd during the third weekend in September.

That was what had the Alaskan travellers befuddled when I walked over to their truck.

"Been drivin' though here for 12 years and I haven't seen anything like that before," he said, gesturing at the diminutive shepherds, who were now lining up behind their docile sheep for a group photo. She simply nodded.

The thing is, we've been doing this for just about that long, but twist. This year we're going with the more traditional nation wide census and shepherds in the abiding, but there have been other versions.

How about Mary and Joseph as members of a bus tour group? Or tourists without a hotel reservation?

How about those shepherds becoming miners out in the goldfields, thawing permafrost in the night? One memorable fire season we ended up with firefighters in the hills, beating down sparks.

The human cast can vary quite a bit depending on the events of the year. The angels, however, stay pretty much the same. As for the sheep, well, they're never a problem.

You've got to do the picture shoot in September though, and even then it's had to count on the weather. It could snow. It could certainly rain. Last year we left it took late and ended up putting together a "best of" event composed of a mix of images from all the previous years. It was fun, but we could wait another decade to do that again.

As for settings, we been in historic buildings, on the Keno, in the Palace Grand and on the streets. The plan this year had been to take the project across the Yukon River and shoot in the campground. But the drizzle put an end to that.

We're all very flexible though. We shot our photos on the dyke and around the Mary Hanulik Garden instead. There may need to be some alternations to the narrator's script, but it will all be fine in the end.

The couple from Alaska took it all in, nodded, and moved on. I don't know what stories they will tell others as they go their way, but I bet people will smile at this part of the tale.



## Avoiding White Coat Hypertension

Hello Dawson City:

(September 22, 07) I am back in medical school. Unlike the initial few weeks of first year, where we were told over and over how remarkable and exclusive we were for jumping through all the hoops they had laid out for us in the application process, this year we had a half hour welcome consisting of “hi, how are you, congrats on passing year one exams, second year is tougher” and then it was smack back into lectures just like we had never had a summer. Oh well, I am happy not to be a first year medical student any longer. It seems that there is no one lower on the totem pole. Not that “second year medical student” on my id tag really confers any more respect.

My courses are interesting but not only for the academic content. We just finished a block on the digestive system and my primary tutor was a retired gastroenterologist (a specialist in gut stuff) by the first name of Joe. Locally he carries the nickname “G.I. Joe”. Well before he entered medicine he fought as a guerrilla soldier in Croatia during WWII. Over the last four weeks of the block he captivated us with stories of what he witnessed and how close he came to death on several occasions. Certainly we were off-topic but none of us cared and the stories pointed out how fortunate we are to live in such a stable country.

We are once again placed in a Family Practice office once a week. This is a rich opportunity to see a wide spectrum of health issues. Last week I wound up staying until past 6:00 pm helping the doctor do a cyst removal from a guy’s backside. It was great to be handling syringes of lidocaine and scalpels again and it is funny how you get so caught up in the procedure that you set aside the fact that you have your nose only inches from the patient’s bum. There is a final exam for this class and it is notorious for asking obscure questions about some set of boxes to be ticked off on a BC prenatal physical exam form (in other words – memorize the form) or multiple choice questions on medical ethics (Huh? I thought there were no right answers in ethics). The exam is a crap shoot in my opinion but it doesn’t negate the fact that I have to write it. Maybe I will luck out and there will be a question about removing sebaceous cysts from posterior aspects.

The Family Practice experience has allowed me to make a few observations about patients and doctors while in an appointment and I thought I would pass on some pointers. If you are going in to see your doctor, try to book the appointment a bit in advance. This way if you have to cancel, you can give the office a chance to rebook you or slot some other people in. Some doctors charge a fee if you don’t give enough notice too. Tell the receptionist the reason for your visit. It helps the docs if they can be more prepared and so that you have enough time booked for your appointment. When the doctor asks what medications you are on, have the names and doses straight or you could bring the drugs with you. Don’t just think of the prescription drugs but also tell them about the non-prescription drugs too. These are things like vitamins, herbal remedies,

traditional meds, even alcohol, tobacco, and recreational drugs. Let the doctor know how much you take and how often (be honest). This is because some of these other drugs can interact with medications you might be on or the ones the doctor would like to put you on. Wear appropriate clothing. You will probably have a blood pressure taken at very least so try to have a short-sleeved shirt on. If you suffer from “white coat hypertension”, reducing the clothing fumbling factor might help lessen the anxiety. If you have a whole shopping list of issues, maybe sort out the top two or three. Let your doctor know what your list is but plan to work on the ones that are most important first. Be sure you have all the details straight: where does it hurt, what are all the symptoms you are experiencing, how long this has been happening, and how it affects you. After the appointment, follow through on your part of what you and your doctor have decided to do. Go get your prescriptions, go have the lab tests done, and make a follow-up appointment if this is what your doctor has recommended. It is your health and your doctor is there to help you but ultimately it is your responsibility to make sure you get what you need to be healthy.

Time to get back to work. Our next block is haematology (all about blood). Even though I am a recovering needle phobic, haematology is one of my favourite topics and I am looking forward to the next few weeks. Take care, Dawson, stay healthy!

- Aedes Scheer

## Jazzing things up at the Oddfellows’ Hall

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

It was a fine night for coffee, deserts and drinks in the ballroom of the Oddfellows’ Hall on September 22 as the Klondike Institute of Art and Culture and Jazz Yukon paired up to bring Dawson jazz aficionados the duo of mandolinist John Reischman and guitarist John Miller.

Both musicians are masters of their instruments, but their pairing takes both of them into slightly different territory than they pursue alone or with other partners.

Reischman is known for his bluegrass mandolin work, especially with a group called the Jaybirds.





Miller started out as a country-blues finger picker, but has added jazz (finger picking George Gershwin, for instance) and Latin styles to his repertoire over the years.

Both men compose their own tunes as well as sampling the broad range of material available for their instruments.

In concert, Miller tends to hold down the bass and rhythm lines on his guitar while Reischman noodles about on the higher pitched mandolin, but they do trade off solo time and each proves himself a fine improviser.

The evening featured quite a bit of material from the two CDs the two have produced together, *The Singing Moon* (1998) and *Bumpy Road* (2002), including a sing-a-long number ("Bye, Bye Blackbird") led by Miller.

While about half of the music was slightly Latin-tinged, the rest ran through a wide range of musical styles, from reinterpretations of jazz and pop standards to original material by each of the performers.

It was a fine evening, and the need for an encore was never in doubt.

## Arctic Melodies Visit the Klondike Capital

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

The Ancillary Room at the Robert Service School was packed on Saturday night (September 22) for the only Canadian date on the fall tour of the Arctic Chamber Orchestra. It isn't often that Dawson City is graced with the presence of a 38 piece chamber orchestra, a subset of the much larger Fairbanks Symphony.

This tour, sponsored by ConocoPhillips, with transportation by Gray Line of Alaska, was a return engagement, part of a tour that took the group from Eielson Air Force Base, to Delta Junction, Northway, Tok and finally Dawson.

There were three works on the program, which ran just under 90 minutes, including the intermission.

Music Director Eduard Zilberkant led off with Beethoven's Overture to "The Creatures of Prometheus" (Op. 43, 1801).

He was joined in front of the orchestra by oboe soloist Joseph Robinson for the three movements of Richard Strauss's Concerto for Oboe in D Major (1946), and more modern and moodier work.

It was back to the 18th century for the final piece, after the intermission. The four movements of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No. 104 in D Major (1795) are scored for two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, two horns,

two trumpets, timpani and strings. The performance brought the audience to its feet.

## Ravens can find things in the Odd Gallery

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

Feathers and little piles of red cloth are the first things you notice when you walk in to see Peter Morin's exhibit, "Things that are left behind for ravens, at the Odd Gallery."

Morin isn't talking about just any garden variety raven in his title. It turns out that the bits of red cloth are wrapped around things left for "our Raven" to consider.

The artist's statement for this exhibit makes the intent clear in a very poetic form.

"1.

I leave books with Tahltan information written by white men wrapped in red cloth

(For our Raven to read.)

I leave books with Tahltan information written by Tahltans wrapped in red cloth.

(For our Raven to check the facts.)

Peter Morin is of the Tahltan Nation of Telegraph Creek, BC, and he is using his art to explore his heritage. Elsewhere he has written about this.

"In my art practice, I am making a return to that original self, my Tahltan self. Returning to look at this model and understand how it is intrinsic to my existence. I now recognize the favorite places of my childhood, places in the traditional Tahltan territory as foundational to my identity. I work towards becoming reconnected to these places, about honouring this history, and about relearning our stories, songs, and language. The work has always been about these stories, and about my grandmother's teaching.

"5.

I leave these beads wrapped in the red cloth.

I leave the beads my grandmother used wrapped in the red cloth.

I leave the beads her grandmother used wrapped in the red cloth.

I leave our Tahltan words wrapped in the red cloth.

I leave our Tahltan words I remember my grandmother using wrapped in the red cloth.

I leave our Tahltan words my mother spoke to me wrapped in the red cloth, in honour of our Raven.

The display includes a number of images that ravens flow into and out of, and lots of images of feathers, including a button blanket and a fringe of feathers which borders the room.



Peter Morin is of the Crow clan. He spent 4 years working with Redwire Magazine, as a community educator and advocate for First Nations youth, through media, writing and art.

"My art is a record of the process that I make each

day within the understanding of my culture and language, he has written.

"My voice is Tahltan. It comes from the land, from the traditional Tahltan territory.

The exhibit remains open until October 19.



## Dawson Girl Wins Poetry Recognition

submitted by Jacki Johnson

Ron and Jacki Johnson are proud to announce that their daughter Tassha who is in Grade Ten at Porter Creek High School in Whitehorse has had a poem she submitted judged as one of high merit for publication in a hardbound anthology entitled - "A Celebration of Young Poets".

The Creative Writing area in the United States was contacted by her mother with Tassha's approved submitted poem and judged by educational consultants across Canada and the United States. Thousands of entries were submitted. Tassha's poem was further judged and she received the designation Number Two of Top Ten among thousands in which she received a monetary award in the Fall of 2006 from the United States. This judged by competition high merit poem accomplishment has given her the right to be called a Published Poet.

Recently, another poem submitted to the Poetry Institute of Canada was chosen by an editorial committee to be included in the top group of entries received for this Fall 2007 for Canada. The second poem will be published in January of 2008 in another hard bound anthology of verse entitled - "From Wayside and Woodland" which is registered with the National Library of Canada in Ottawa. ISBN 978-1-

896965-85-7. Her poem is now in final competition for a further higher monetary reward in Canada.

We would like to share with you, with permission from Tassha, her two poems for publication.

### THE SNOW BLIZZARD

Drifting down  
in playful silhouettes  
Dancing on air  
Twisting like a whirlpool  
Scattering in the wind  
Hungry for excitement  
An above ground ocean  
Dancing, its neverending dance  
Nature's white wonder

### THE HUMMING BIRD

A rainbow colored speck  
flitting to and fro  
back and forth  
at a brisk and nippy speed  
Feathers glisten like tinted water  
polished pink, ravenous red, overwhelming orange,  
young yellow, glossy green, blazing blue and velvety  
violet

Land atop a leaf blade  
ever so gracefully  
like a miniature ballerina then zooming off in a flash  
to find the most perfect, unblemished blossom

Tassha has been a high achiever all through Kindergarten, primary and intermediate school and a First Class Honors academic student throughout high school. She is now the first and only Published Poet in her family. Her Mom and Dad are supportive mentors to encourage further success in the writing field, even though she is keen to focus her direction in the near future at university in the Faculty of Science.

## Poetry Round Table Draws Readers and Listeners

Story & Photo by Dan Davidson

It was poetry night at the Dawson Community Library on September 24 as Berton House co-resident Carolyn Clink hosted an evening of reading and sharing.

Clink and her husband, science fiction writer Robert Sawyer, had spent most of the summer, from July to September, as participants in the writers retreat program now in its eleventh year of operation.

Clink is a published poet of mainstream, horror and science fiction poetry, whose work has appeared in all five of the *Northern Frights* anthologies, the *Tesseract* series and a number of SF magazines, as well in the more usual range of literary magazines.

Her choice for the evening was to have a reading round



table, sharing the spotlight with local writers, including Jack Fraser, Helen Winton, Dawn Mitchell, Barb Hanulik, Pat Thomas, Stephen Johnson and Dan Davidson, all of whom had something to contribute to the evening. The table went round three times, with interludes for the discussion of ravens, local themes and ideas about writing.

Clink read her first published poem, "Veterans' Day at the CNE", a dark SF prophecy called "Cenotaphs", and some tankas that she had written while in residence at Berton House. These celebrated the Midnight Sun, the local Post Office and Robert Service's Cabin.

## **Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Not Surprised By Supreme Court Ruling**

DAWSON CITY (September 24, 2007) – Chief Darren Taylor announced today he's disappointed the Supreme Court decided not to hear the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in appeal over the Yukon Government's Orders-in-Council establishing the Tombstone Park. But he's not surprised.

"We believe the YTG Orders-in-Council for the Tombstone Park are inconsistent with Chapter 10, schedule A, of our Final Agreement," said Taylor. "We hoped the Supreme Court would be willing to hear our arguments, but we knew from the outset it was an uphill battle to get their attention."

Taylor also expressed concern the issue is being misrepresented to Yukoners.

"This court challenge had nothing to do with mining claims," said Taylor. "For the YTG to portray it as such doesn't clarify the issue for the public."

The Tombstone area has been used by the Tr'ondëk

Hwëch'in for thousands of years and is described by elders as the First Nations' "supermarket."

The area was a TH lands-claim selection for the over 1,000-strong First Nation, but was dropped after promises from Canada and the Yukon Government that the area would be "protected for all time" as a collaboratively managed park by YTG and TH.

YTG unilaterally drafted the Orders-in-Council that established the Tombstone Park, however, without consulting TH or taking into account the intent of the park.

"As collaborative managers of the park and as a people with a millennia-old connection to the area, TH should have been involved in writing up the Orders-in-Council," said Taylor. "We weren't. That's where the problems began."

"As the O.I.C.s are written now, they drown the original purpose of the park with legalese that serves the interests of everyone but the First Nation," continued Taylor. "YTG promises to collaboratively manage and protect the area have proven empty. If we had known that our relationship with YTG regarding the park would be defined with court battles and acrimony, we never would have agreed to the park in the first place."

## **Changes To Enforcement Of Dempster Highway Wildlife Regulations This Fall**

WHITEHORSE (September 26, 2007) – Environment Yukon is advising there are changes affecting Dempster Highway caribou hunters this fall.

This year the department will not be enforcing the 500-metre no hunting corridor or the one week closure allowing the caribou leaders to pass. These changes follow a recent decision to stay charges against a Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in First Nation citizen, and take into consideration concerns expressed by First Nations user communities and the pending effort by the Porcupine Caribou Management Board to develop a harvest management strategy for the herd.

The department will undertake a review and consultation with the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, affected First Nations and others to determine whether the regulations continue to meet the intended public safety and conservation objectives.

The decision to not enforce the 500-metre corridor regulation only applies to caribou hunters.

The department will enforce the laws that prohibit other licensed big game hunters from taking big game within 500 metres of the highway.

The department will enforce the public safety laws of general application that prohibit the shooting of firearms across a highway or from a vehicle.

The one-week hunting closure will not be enforced if or when the herd starts its migration across the highway.

## Four Generations Travel the Yukon River to Tell Tales

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

Four generations of the Van Bibber family cruised into the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in dock in Dawson City on August 25, bringing to a close a river trip intended to bring the generations together and preserve some family lore that it was feared might soon be lost.

Commissioner Geraldine Van Bibber was at the dock to greet her husband and her relatives. She had been tied up with a number of official events between Champagne and Dawson City over that week and had been unable to make the trip herself.

"We've got right from 9 to 91 here," she said. "They're going to be telling stories for a long time to come. I'm sorry I had to miss it."

The Van Bibbers have a moderate sized metal houseboat large enough to camp on and even hold a party on occasion. Eight passengers was not a challenge.

The elder generation included Alex, J.J., Pat Sr. and sister Lucy Sanderson, who lives in Cranbrook, B.C. Pat Jr. was the second generation, with Andrew as the third and the twins, Dustin and Joshua, as the fourth.

The eldest of the Van Bibbers is a sister, May, who lives in Copper Ridge in Whitehorse and was unable to make this trip.

"The purpose of this trip was to get the three Van Bibber boys together for the first time in years and years," said JJ.

"Alex lives down in Champagne, and I'm up here. We wanted to all get together for one rendezvous and tell old stories of the early days.

"We wanted to get all of Alex's stories out of him that we could, all the way down," JJ added, patting a portable tape recorder in his pocket.

"I was the one that kept all the tapes and stuff and Alex

did most of the talking about the early days, you know, and how we were raised in the bush, along the river and on the land.

"It was a good rendezvous all the way down for three days."



The Van Bibber river cruiser, framed by a pair of fish wheels.



Four generations of Van Bibbers: Alex, J.J., Dustin, Joshua, Lucy, Andrew, Pat Junior. and Pat Senior.



## Binet House Offered History and Coffee Last Summer

Story & Photos by Dan Davidson

There's a good restaurant in Mayo, but no coffee shop, so when coffee hour was on several times a week at Binet House last summer both locals and tourists turned up early. Coffee was actually served at the Visitors' Information Centre located behind the house itself. The two structures are linked by an open deck, which has a picnic table and some chairs.

Visitors were just doctoring their mugs of coffee when Tara McCauley, this summer's Binet House supervisor, arrived with a tray of fresh muffins and cookies and soon everyone was standing around licking butter from sticky fingers and washing it all down with one last sip of java.

Tara, who has spent the last two years teaching in Mayo at J.V. Clark School, is a former student of mine and former member of my wife's school choir, so we shot the breeze and caught up with each other's lives while enjoying the early August sunshine.

Then it was off to Binet House itself. The 1922 structure was built for Gene Binet, a gold rush era miner who finally settled in Mayo and operated a hotel there until 1938. In 1990 the house was renovated for use as a territorial Visitor Information Centre and museum and opened for those purposes in 1992.

There are two rooms on the ground floor, and the organizers chose to start the place off with a bang. Down in one corner is a stuffed grizzly bear, surrounded by the newspaper clippings which tell you how it got to be that way and show the damage it did to the house it broke into.

In a kind of Goldilocks' revenge story, it broke in, ate food, demolished furniture and slept in the bed, doing some \$10,000 in damage to the house involved.

There are some other stuffed animals in the room, but nothing quite so dramatic.

The second room has a series of displays devoted to glaciation, placer mining, the Yukon Order of Pioneers, and a 3-D relief map of the area. There are photo displays about the Nacho Nyak Dun First Nation, gold and silver mining (predating the Klondike Rush) and local geography.

Upstairs the landing is given over to three photo and text displays dealing with transportation, business, and law & order.

Two rooms are set aside as medical display rooms. One is an old time dentist's office and the other contains an iron lung.

The grounds around Binet House are well kept and

contain several displays of old mining equipment as well as a Veteran's Monument and a pleasant Pioneer Garden.

The center and the museum are part of a walking tour of historic buildings in Mayo, a brochure for which is provided at the VIC.



• Above: Historic Binet House in Mayo is the local museum as well as the location of the Visitor Information Centre



• Above: The ground floor at Binet House begins with the tale of a rampaging grizzly.

## RSS Students and Staff Go for a Walk to Beat a Record

Story & Photo  
by Dan Davidson

Robert Service School students and staff joined the World Record Walk 2007 on October 3. Using the elementary school/high school buddy system worked out for the Terry Fox Run in September, the students and teachers left the building at 9:30 Wednesday morning and walked a kilometre together.

Similar walks were taken at the same time (12:30 in Ontario, 11:30 in Manitoba, etc.) all across the country in an effort to break the current Guinness World Record held by Western Australia, which had 100,915 participants in September, 2006.

According to the Manitoba World Record Walk site, more than 1,800 events were registered across the country, and if they all came off, there will have been 575,000 participants. Final numbers should be known next issue.

