



Newsletter Christmas 2019

Merry Christmas from the Yellowknife Historical Society! Here are some updates on what has been happening with our project in the past few months.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Martin Theberge Consultants and Playground Creative Agency's feasibility study has been released. Its overall findings show that our museum project is very positive and financially feasible, and that the Centre would be profitable very early in its operation stage. The analysis shows that if the Society can secure operating grants from the federal and territorial governments, the museum would turn a profit from the first month of operations. Successful navigation of the Giant Mine remediation project, as well as the long-term lease or ownership of the land, is essential in securing stable funding for the operation, and the Society must pay very close attention to these two factors. You can read the study [here](#).

GIANT MINE REMEDIATION PROJECT UPDATE

The Society is still engaged in the Giant Mine Remediation Project as an intervener in the Water Licensing process. A claim for compensation was submitted to the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board. Responses to our claims were provided by the Remediation Project and we now await a ruling from the Board as to the validity of our compensation claim. At issue is compensation for the cost of moving the outdoor display, the contents of our storage building, and residual financial loss from the future operation of the museum if remediation is taking place nearby.

Technical Sessions were held in July and September of 2019 and attended by members of the Society to voice our concerns. A session on remediation of the open pits (which are right next to our museum) was held on December 5, 2019. The Society, as an intervener in the water license process, will also be attending the Public Hearings to be held in February 2020.

CHRISTMAS SALES

Society merchandise was for sale at a number of Christmas markets in November, including the Baker's Centre and the Weledeh School. Ryan Silke manned the tables with the help of Jake Olson of Yellowknife Gold & Silver, who was selling 24-karat gold infused into maple syrup. A real hit! Jake donated a portion of the proceeds to us, and our own art cards, art prints, books, and Erik Watt holiday cards sold pretty well, bringing in \$535 in sales.

PHOTO CAPTION CONTEST

We sought out clever photo captions on the Facebook group 'YK Memories' recently. Here is the most voted caption suggestion, provided by Rob Parry:



"Ice came, ice saw, ice conquered!"

This was a variation on Peter Cullen's suggestion, "He came, he saw, he conquered". Honourable mentions include: "Snowking...the early years" – "What? Cut the cake? I thought you said cut the lake!" – "Man finds woolly mammoth comb in lake" – "How much ice did you want for your drink?" Thanks everybody for your fun suggestions!

GREN THOMAS' BOOK SOLD AT GEOSCIENCE FORUM

The Society exhibited and sold merchandise at the Geoscience Forum November 19-21, bringing in \$2,200 in sales. Our best seller this year was Gren Thomas' autobiography, "Serendipity: From coal dust to diamonds", which is a new release just in time for Geoscience. What better time of year to buy a book about one of the NWT's greatest prospector and mine developers! Gren Thomas was very active in the hunt for diamonds in the Territory during the early 1990s, and it was his work that led to the discovery and development of the Diavik diamond mine. Gren's new book is an exciting recounting of what was happening during the Great Diamond Hunt, all the important people involved, and a bit of reflecting on his career as a whole. Congratulations Gren on your achievement, and thank you for supporting the Yellowknife Historical Society!

RECENT DONATIONS

Some incredible donations to make note of! Barb O'Neil (nee Chipchase), life-long YKer and a long-time member of the Society, has donated \$500 towards our museum project. As mentioned above, Gren Thomas also donated a portion of his book sales to the Society. Dave Connelly donated \$100, and an anonymous donor dropped nearly \$7500 into our bank account! Thank you everybody for your generosity and support!

FAREWELL DAVID FINCH

One of our board members is leaving Yellowknife to return to his schooling. David Finch has been a member of our board since 2016 and for the past term has also served as secretary-treasurer. David was a member of the City of Yellowknife Heritage Committee and became a knowledgeable liaison between our organizations. We have no doubt that we shall see David Finch donning his moose-hide jacket and fedora at Beer Barge in the near future! Thank you for all your contributions to preserving our city's history.

CHRISTMAS IN THE NORTH 1955

Imagine the stress of moving into a new house during the Christmas season; now imagine the added stress of physically moving *an entire house* during the season! Here is a story written by Betty Stevens recounting the time in 1955 when her husband Jack bought the old mine manager's house at Negus Mine and dragged it across the lake to School Draw Avenue. The house still stands today. Glen Abernethy bought the house from the Stevens estate in 2001 but has recently sold it. Glen donated some Stevens family artifacts to the Society. Here is Mrs Stevens' story:

After having lived in a log shack for 11 years, my husband had finally purchased a house, but with a problem. It was the house built for the mine manager at Negus Mine on top of a steep hill, on rock overlooking the lake toward the Indian Village, now Dettah.

Many people wanted this house but did not know how to move it. My husband solved this problem by hauling muck from the mine to level the hill so the tractors could pull the house down to the lake. Half way across the lake, a big blizzard blew up which delayed the move until the following day. This delay brought neighbours and spectators to watch the school draw event. The house was parked until the basement was poured then the house was moved to its permanent position. After that it was almost rebuilt, inside and out.



Left: the Negus Mine house being moved on the ice in 1955. Right: the same house in 2019

What rushing and commotion there was when we were told get organized and move on Christmas Eve to celebrate Christmas in the new house. Everyone carried boxes as it was only next door and of course the turkey all prepared to roast for the big day was also in a cardboard box. The workers were still doing the finishing touches to the place and may have moved the turkey. It was like playing 'hide and go seek' but when found in one of the

many attics on Christmas Day, there was great relief. The aroma of that missing turkey well outweighed the late dinner that was served.

A lovely time was spent with our guest Gordon Greenaway from Bear Lake playing my father's 1911 violin, me at the piano with the family singing carols. The men enjoyed their hot rums; we enjoyed a happy and roomy Christmas.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM PROJECT

The Yellowknife Historical Society envisions the museum site at Giant Mine as a place that celebrates all aspects of Yellowknife's interesting history, from its Indigenous stories, geological setting, prospecting, the industrial activities of the gold mines, and the pioneer entrepreneurs that began the town in the 1930s. Inside we will be displaying mining and Yellowknife history and that should broaden its appeal and increase the number of visitors.

Yellowknife Historical Society

Box 1856 Yellowknife NT X1A 2P4

www.yellowknifehistory.com

info@yellowknifehistory.com

