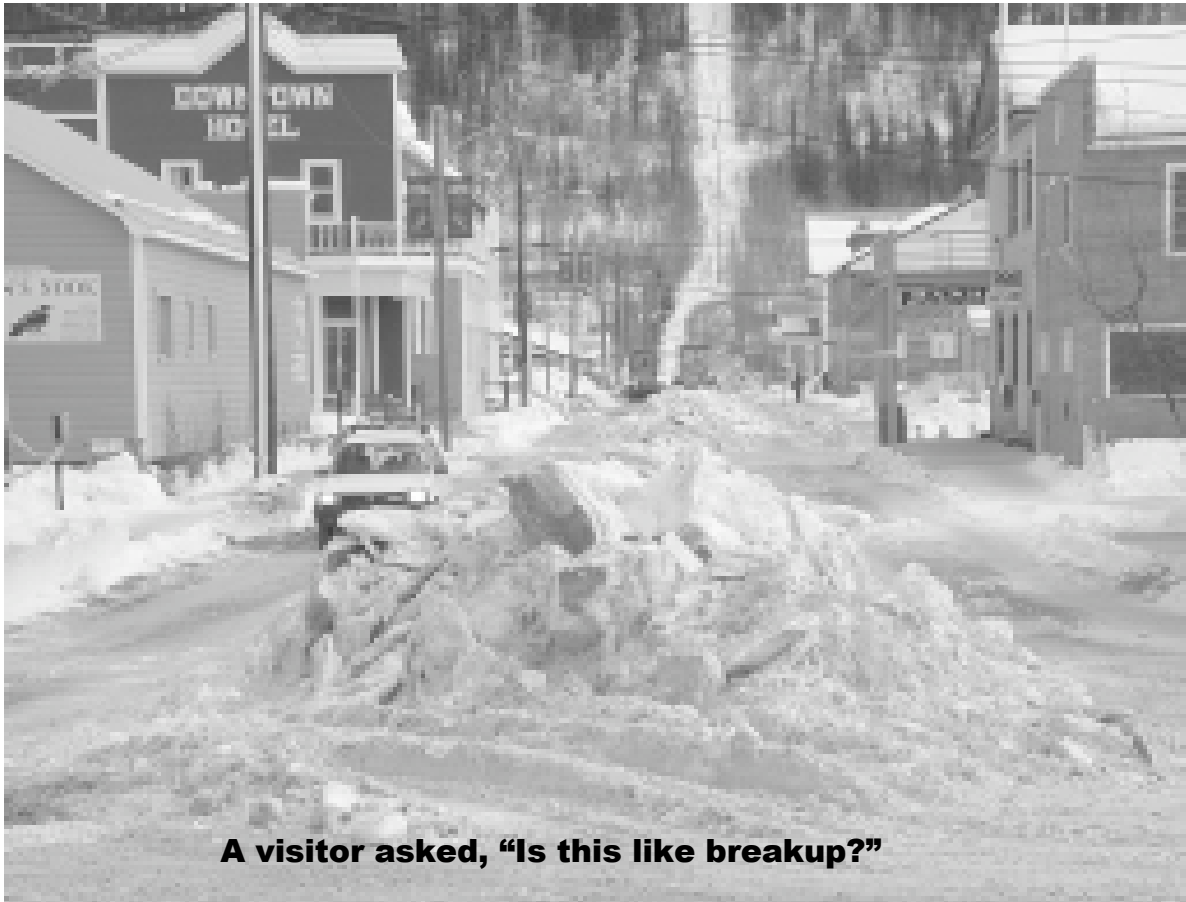


The Klondike Sun

April 12, 2005 Online Edition

Dawson City, Yukon



A visitor asked, "Is this like breakup?"

RCMP Now Looking into Dawson's Finances

By Dan Davidson

By March 31 of The Report of the Forensic Audit and Financial Review of the City of Dawson, which had been leaked to the CBC and had led the news every day for the previous week and a half (CBC stories reprinted in March 29 Sun), had been officially tabled in the Yukon legislature.

As the CBC noted in its April 1 story ("Government seeks protection for audit's contents") the government was apparently leery about its legal position with regard to the audit and sought to have the entire legislature grant the document the same sort of "legislative privilege" which protects MLAs when they speak in the house.

"This status prevents anyone who believes they may have been libeled by the document's contents from taking legal action," the story reads.

The Yukon Party used its majority to push the legislation through, as the two opposition parties refused to cooperate.

"I have no reason to trust this government when they pull stunts like this," said Liberal Leader Pat Duncan.

"I don't believe that they needed to do that," said NDP MLA Steve Cardiff."

In the same story, CBC acknowledged that its earlier reports were based on a leaked document. Premier Fentie has several times over this period refused to admit that there was such a leak, and reporters have indicated that government staffers have tried to suggest that Glen Everitt was the source of CBC's information. Everitt has denied this.

None of the key ministers in the Fentie government would speak to the situation with the media, saying the audit speaks for itself.

While this is true to a certain extent, it must be noted that the audit has several voices.

In the Whitehorse Star, reporter Jason Small summarized the situation regarding the building projects as “management by bad example.”

The audit has substantially shifted the discussion from recreation projects to financial mismanagement, claiming that each of the three top officials at the City of Dawson somehow acquired funds the auditor felt they should not have received. Auditor Ian Doddington also linked all of Dawson’s financial problems into a deliberate conspiracy headed by these three individuals.

Small wrote: “The \$460,000 report, written by B.C.-based auditor Ian Doddington, states that three former Dawson City employees owe the town a combined total of more than \$200,000 for various charges and cheques.

“According to the report, Everitt is the biggest debtor of the trio, owing \$107,608.69 to the town.

“Doddington reports that the town’s books show that Everitt owed the community \$49,452.82.

“Everitt has spoken about these debts in the past and said that some were for trips that were supposed to be paid for by other organizations. He said he was having a hard time getting the reimbursements for these trips.

“However, beyond the \$49,000, Doddington argued that Everitt owes the town another \$58,155.07 for payments which the auditor argued should not have been paid out to him.

“The audit argues that the mayor was given more than \$11,000 in vacation pay that he should not have received.

“As well, it argues he received \$3,960.80 that he should not have been granted.

“It is also listed that Everitt received \$12,500 in a retroactive salary increase which the auditor called invalid.”

The report states that Coulson owes the town \$60,542.97 and that Dale Courtice is responsible for \$33,520.77.

In the appendices to the main report however, the auditor seems to be more cautious.

Footnotes 57, 58 and 59 of The Report of the Forensic Audit and Financial Review of the City of Dawson contain the following identical wording in reference to the financial claims made against Dawson City’s three top administrative officials in the report.

“Appendix D uses the term ‘due from’ because that is the terminology used in Dawson’s books. In using this terminology we are not making the decision that legal or other collection processes should be used to recover these amounts. That is not our role and is a decision for others.”

After many pages of allegations devoted to each individual, Doddington concludes with more conciliatory language.

Of Everitt, who has said that he attempted to meet with the auditor several times only to have his appointments cancelled, Doddington writes, “it is possible that the Mayor can provide Dawson with valid records and documents, other than letters and ‘agreements’ which we referred to above, which might lead to a different understanding of the transactions.”

Similarly, for Scott Coulson and Dale Courtice, he

notes, “The CAO2 and treasurer may be able to provide Dawson with valid and appropriate documentation, other than what we have considered, which would give a different understanding of these and similar transactions.”

Indeed, as Small notes in his article, “it appears that while Doddington goes after these three for inappropriate expenses, he does not talk to them for explanation.”

Coulson has already indicated in interviews with the Whitehorse media that he has explanations for Doddington’s accusations, and that he is pursuing court action to clear his name.

The normally voluble Everitt has been muzzled by his own lawyers since the Audit was tabled in the legislature.

The lawyers for both Coulson and Everitt appear to think that the selective leaking of the audit’s contents to the CBC may be enough to render its parliamentary immunity null and void.

Should that happen, watch for legal action from BDO Dunwoody, Dawson’s auditors for several decades, which take quite a shellacking in the report. This firm also has a reputation to protect. Dawson’s Trustee, Ray Hayes, told his last advisory committee meeting that the town had ended its relationship with Dunwoody in the fall of 2004.

In the meantime, both opposition parties continue to press for a full public inquiry into Dawson’s affairs, and the RCMP, as reported by the CBC on April 8, have begun looking into the matter.

“Sgt. Guy Rook says an experienced team is looking into the allegations.

“‘M Division’s commercial-crime division received a copy of the forensic auditor’s report into the management of Dawson City’s finances,’ he says.

“‘We’re currently investigating the matter to determine if criminal acts were committed. And that investigation will determine what if any charges should be laid. We have the experience and the knowledge to look into these matters.’

“Rook says he won’t release any more information until charges are laid.”

(This article is based on material published by the CBC, the Yukon News, and the Whitehorse Star, as well as material contained in The Forensic Audit and Hansard.)

Dawson bridge will ruin view, says Parks Canada

WebPosted Apr 8 2005 01:01 PM MDT
CBC News

WHITEHORSE - One of the major players in Dawson City says it doesn’t want to see a bridge across the Yukon River. Dawson City is a Canadian heritage site

Dawson City is a Canadian heritage site Officials with Parks Canada say the proposed bridge will destroy the view.

Anne Morin, Parks Canada’s superintendent in the Yukon, says the federal agency supports the bridge concept, but only if it’s not visible from Dawson heritage sites.

“Parks Canada does have concerns for the proposed location at George Street,” she says.

“What we’re most concerned about are the impacts on the viewsapes and the grid street layout in Dawson City. We are encouraging the government to seek alternative options so the bridge is located outside the viewscape.”

Morin says Parks Canada is raising the concerns after consulting with other Dawson City agencies and groups.

But Premier Dennis Fentie says Parks Canada should mind its own business.

Fentie says the Dawson bridge will be outside the agency’s jurisdiction. And as for spoiling the view, he says they have it all wrong.

“There is no evidence to that. In fact, we have committed to building a bridge that is in keeping with the historical theme of Dawson City,” Fentie says.

“Hopefully Parks Canada will stay focused in their area of responsibility, contributing to the Yukon’s future, and stay out of areas they have no jurisdiction in.”

The latest Yukon government plans call for the bridge to cross the Yukon River at or very near the current ferry crossing in the north end of town.

Cost estimates peg the project at about \$35 million. Fentie says his government is still in discussions with contractors over who may be eligible to bid on it.

Bagnell Happy Not to Be Involved with Dawson Bridge

by Dan Davidson

“The bridge? Oh well, that’s not a federal issue,” said Larry Bagnell, wiping his hand across his forehead in mock relief. A good politician knows when to avoid a contentious topic.

Bagnell was in Dawson in mid-March to show the flag during the International Federation of Sleddog Sports World Championships, and meet with some 15-20 of his constituents in an informal, open house setting held in the Downtown Hotel conference room.



The bridge came up mid-way through the discussion. Yukon’s Member of Parliament did indicate that he, personally, would have made some effort to poll residents and see how they felt about the project, but he is generally in favour of increasing transportation routes within the

territory, as evidenced by his long term support for the railway project.

He has been frustrated by a lack of movement by the federal government on this issue, but is happy that it is now being studied. He sees advantages in transportation, trade, mineral development, Canada-US cooperation and tourism from such a project.

Bagnell himself favours the Tintina Trench route, which is the area where most of the minerals which might be carried on the railway would be found, but he is content to wait for the outcome of a study being undertaken to look at feasibility.

“All my interest is in the feasibility study. After that, it’s up to industry to build it. I don’t see using taxpayer’s money to build a railroad.”

Other topics at the open house included genetically modified foods, labeling and regulation of organic health supplements, improvements to rural telecommunications, the Alaska-Yukon Salmon Treaty and the Porcupine Caribou Herd.

Uffish Thoughts: About Letting the Document Speak for Itself

by Dan Davidson

When government officials respond to questions about the audit by saying that it speaks for itself, that leaves a number of things open to question.

For instance, the audit claims that it was commissioned by Trustee Ray Hayes, who has said quite clearly that he only recommended it. He had no money even to pay the original estimated cost, let alone the final price tag of \$460,000 and he therefore had no authority to commission anything.

According to the debates recorded in Hansard, the signatures on the contracts are those of the minister and deputy minister of Community Services, and I think the people who pay the bills can be said to have commissioned the report.

Of those accused of financial wrong doing, the parties who have spoken at all, prior to being told to keep quiet by their lawyers, have gone so far as to say that they have explanations for many of those accusations. They seem to feel that the deliberate leak of the document obviates Yukon Party attempts to protect the government from law suits by having the report fall under “legislative privilege”, and that court cases will be forthcoming.

I’m not sure what that means in terms of who owes what to whom in the situation described in the report. If the sums listed were obtained in the manner described in the report, then certain parties have some ‘splainin’ to do, as Ricky used to say to Lucy.

Let’s be very clear about this: no one should have obtained any money that they were not entitled to, and if there are no explanations for Ian Doddington’s conclusions, then these are very serious matters.

However, no explanations were sought by auditor

Doddington, as he did not feel it appropriate for him to do so. (p. 1)

There are some details that he really ought to have checked, however. On page 5 of his report he states that “Both the Supervisor appointed in 2001 and the successor appointed in 2003 had significant difficulties in carrying out their role.

“They experienced what appeared to be unjustified challenges to their authority and lack of cooperation. Dawson officials responded to requests for information with delay, resistance and, at times, equivocation.”

I certainly observed the testy relationship between the council (not just the mayor and CAO 2) and Supervisor 2, (to use Doddington’s nomenclature). André Carrel, whatever his actual status, was widely perceived here by all sides in the debate as a hit man directed to carry out the will of the Yukon Party and of his one time boss, Klondike MLA, and government Deputy Premier, Peter Jenkins. Carrel says otherwise, but that was the perception. So, yes, feet were dragged and formalities were prolonged.

On the other hand Supervisor 1 (AKA Ken Hodgins) has repeatedly said that he had every confidence in the elected councils he dealt with for nearly three years, and that he had a good working relationship with the City of Dawson.

Where Doddington complains that Mayor Glen Everitt misled citizens about the Supervisor’s role in May 2003, Hodgins himself completely confirmed Everitt’s interpretation of the situation, indicating that he was not on the file to take over the management of the town, but merely to help it manage itself. (Star, December 19, 2003)

Doddington also manages to mangle the history of the swimming pool construction project here.

On page 33 he writes: “ The pool originally planned for in 1997 was to be a year round facility. The pool Dawson now has is not used as a year round facility.”

It is true that a pool plan from 1997 (and several from the decade earlier, for that matter) did promote a year round facility, but reports in the Star and Klondike Sun from April, 1999, make it clear that this was not the operational plan by the time the construction was due to begin.

“It’s the mayor and council’s position that Dawson cannot afford to have a year-round pool and an artificial ice plant.

“‘We’re saying the population is too small (to afford it),’ Everitt said.” (Sun, April 16, 1999)

The other item which jumps out at me on a first reading of this long, depressing document is the old computer failure story. When Doddington writes that the “computerized accounting system malfunctioned because a ‘hard drive overheated’” (p. 81) the inference in the extra quotation marks seems fairly clear, as are such phrases as “we were told that” in reference to attempts made to recover the data.

This event was the subject of discussion at many council meetings in the winter of 2002 and yet the auditor can’t find many references to it. I don’t know what kind of a report Scott Coulson (CAO 2) filed with council about this event, but the insurance company which paid for the replacement equipment and the time it took for the treasurer to

reconstruct the computer record from the paper documents seemed to be satisfied.

I’m not dismissing Doddington’s report over these issues, some of which people may see as quibbles, but I repeat here, once again, that a public inquiry, where officials would have been empowered to take statements and compel evidence from everyone involved, would have been by far the better approach to take with events here.

There’s so much blame to go around that what I’ve heard and read in the last two weeks doesn’t begin to cover it. Maybe the blame game is the wrong way to go, but if that’s the route, then let’s take the whole trip: several councils, three territorial governments, two financial supervisors, several ministers and deputy ministers, three city managers, two treasurers and, if the report is correct, the town’s long time auditing firm.

I’d even say that the Dawson electorate, who put two of the councils in place, even though there was a lot of debate about projects and finances in both 2003 and 2000, has to take some responsibility.

Saying that the buck stops with just three people on a mess this big is incomprehensibly silly.

Sixth Film Festival Called “Best Ever”

by Dan Davidson

With over 70 films of various lengths, spaced over three days and seven different programs, the 6th Dawson City International Short Film Festival was once again a busy way to spend an Easter weekend.

Producer Lulu Keating was pleased but tired early the next week.



“It went really well. There was strong attendance and an exceptional excitement in the air, which I think came from there being a lot of energy around the films we were seeing.

“There was a lot of enthusiasm for film making. There were a lot of people who left saying ‘when I come back next year, I wanna have a film in the festival’. There was a lot of that, so that was really thrilling.”

Those outcomes fit in well with Keating’s vision of what a film festival should be: one part entertainment and one part inspiration.

“I think myself that here are two functions to a film festival. One function is to deliver good films to the audience – a diverse assortment. The other function is to stimulate the film making activity in the Yukon. It’s certainly achieved the second objective and most of the

feedback that we got was very positive about having achieved the first objective.”

Watching films was not the only activity. Sunday featured two lectures, one by Yukon film maker Carol Geddes and another by Andrea Dorman, the current artist-in-residence at McCauley House.

“It was great that Carol Geddes was here,” Keating said, “and that we had a chance to really appreciate her. She did an excellent presentation on Sunday afternoon. It was just inspirational. Also Andrea Dorman’s talk was great.”

One of the film showings, *Hitting the Mark*, featured a chance for the audience to talk to the film’s directors about their aims, and to give them feedback.

There were hand-on events as well.

“We had some little workshops this year,” Keating said. “I had thought there might be 6 or 8 people in each. There were 18 in the first one and a lot in the second one, like triple the numbers I had expected.

The children’s screening was well attended.

“The best festival yet,” was a phrase she kept hearing and seeing in the audience feedback.

David Moen, an exchange visitor from Norway’s Tromso Film Festival, called the Dawson event “a gem of a festival”.

Asking for suggestions, Keating inquired what the festival organizers could do differently, and Moen advised her not to mess with a successful formula. Trying to grow too much, too fast, can, he advised, create growing pains.

As producer, Keating previewed films, invited films, organized the screenings for the selection committee and make the final programming decisions. It’s been a busy, and she says, rewarding experience.

“Though it’s been a hell of a lot of work, I’ve been able to enter into all those worlds of trying to find innovative ways to get money and to make the money that we do have stretch.”

This year one of the awards the MITY professional, was improved in value a great deal. Previously \$1,000 worth of grip gear (from the Northern Film and Video Industry Assoc.) has been made available for a film maker to use, but it’s been a little hard to access. This year that part of the prize comes bundled with the use of a one ton cube van,

Keating herself is a Halifax based film maker with 20 years experience in the field who has transplanted herself to Dawson for a few months after having been. She’s had films in several past festivals and has developed an apparent affection for Dawson City in the time she’s spent here.

Film Fest Floods Dawson

Press release

By Lulu Keating, Festival Producer

The 6th Dawson City International Short Film Festival (March 25, 26, 27) wrapped up on Sunday night with a spirited awards presentation. Seven MITY (Made in the Yukon) awards were presented. In the Professional category, Richard Lawrence won with his new drama, “Mother’s Day”. Carol Geddes’ animated film “Two

Winters: Tales from above the Earth” also took a professional award. In the MITY Emerging Talent category, the big winner was “Where There’s Smoke: A Summer of Fire in the Klondike.” Prizes included cash, services, and real gold!

The town of Dawson City (population 1,200) was flooded with outsiders, attracted by the festival’s reputation for fine films and warm hospitality. Special guests included Yukon documentary filmmaker Carol Geddes and Andrea Dorman, the Artist in Residence at KIAC (Klondike Institute of Art & Culture). Adding an international flavor, David Moen, Program Coordinator of the Tromso International Film Festival, was also present. For five years, the world’s two most northerly festivals have been exchanging winning films and filmmakers. After an intense three days of watching films and attending events, Moen described the Dawson event as “a gem of a festival”.

Lulu Keating



This year the Film Festival truly came into its own, boasting 17 Yukon productions, and another 13 productions by students studying filmmaking! Two programs consisted entirely of made in the Yukon films, and each other program included at least one Yukon film. The audience had the opportunity to speak directly to filmmakers. The highly successful forum *Hitting the Mark* screened two Yukon films, with Moderator Franka Cordua von Specht focusing the discussion. The second part of this forum, *Hoops and Loops*, allowed agencies and broadcasters a platform to describe their programs for supporting homegrown films.

International entries include films from Japan, Estonia, Italy, Sweden, the United States and several other countries. Winner of the ZED People’s Choice award was Poland’s Maciej Adamek’s short documentary. “A Life to Live” is about blind children who are taught how to “see” the world through their other senses.

This year a new award was launched. The winner of the Lodestar Award (an ounce of real gold) was the Russian film “The Door,” by Kott Vladimir. A strange story about a middle-aged man and a door, it won the hearts of the Festival Director and Producer. Despite differences in language, climate, landscape, and culture, it’s the commonality of humanity that makes us laugh and cry.

Guest Editorial – Before condemning them, let's hear them out

By Jim Butler

Editor, Whitehorse Star

April 6, 2005

It's hard to imagine the audit on Dawson City's finances reaching a more devastating set of conclusions than it has.

Today, the Klondike town stands mired in debt with a cloudy financial future. Its ex-mayor and two former senior officials have been disgraced by the document, and a municipal byelection now won't occur until the fall. That will have left the residents of Dawson under the control of a government-appointed trustee for 18 months, instead of the elected mayor and council they're entitled to.

Through all this, the painful saga in Dawson has delivered a stinging black eye to the general concept of independent municipal government in the Yukon.

When it became known in 2004 that Dawson was a mortifying \$4.3 million in the hole, former mayor Glen Everitt suggested some of the debt problems were caused by the town taking on major projects successively.

In a short time span, Dawson tackled the installation of a new cable television and Internet system; relocated its town hall, fire hall and public works shop; constructed a new recreation centre complex and built a new swimming pool.

According to the audit, inadequate planning and management surrounded some of these projects. That led to the dreadful fiscal consequences the town and its residents find themselves in in 2005.

The TV-Internet venture, for instance, rocketed from an estimated \$690,000-cost to \$1.5 million, a stunning 100-per-cent overrun. Ditto for the building relocations.

By the time council discovered it couldn't realistically afford the bids for the new swimming pool and recreation centre, the audit relates, the old facilities had already been demolished.

These projects sucked up the town's accumulated reserves and crippled its ability to borrow more money – the worst thing Dawson needed as it contemplated the unexpected spiralling costs of the recreation centre.

The problems, the audit concludes, didn't end with naive, over-ambitious management of the major projects.

Using phrases like "irresponsible conduct", the report accuses Everitt, former treasurer Dale Courtice and ex-town manager Scott Coulson of misusing taxpayers' money on the job.

It concludes Everitt should repay Dawson \$107,608 in money he was never entitled to receive. It calls on Coulson to reimburse the town \$60,542. Courtice should cough up \$33,520, the audit insists.

(In the extremely limited explanations he has provide to selected media outlets, the ex-mayor has said some of those bills were due to groups not paying for trips they had committed to cover.)

Also worthy of asking is how all this, if it did, could have embarrassingly gone on under the former council's very noses without a stop being put to it.

The audit notes that some Dawson citizens were expressing concerns about the use of credit cards, travel patterns, and other financial concerns while Everitt and council were in office.

How did council respond? Where were the constructive scrutiny and pointed questions Dawson electors would rightfully expect to form a basic part of councillors' duties? Why in God's name should any municipality be lending any mayor money from public coffers in the first place?

The audit says of the fired council: "It is unclear to us why council at times tacitly supported the mayor's extensive and often unauthorized travel and absence from the municipality. The records of council frequently disclose no purpose or objectives for the travel, leaving council with no basis to be satisfied that the travel and absence from the municipality was required in the best interest of Dawson."

It's unfortunate that, for a headshaking \$460,000, the audit doesn't include explanations from the former mayor and ex-officials.

That would have added context to each disturbing financial situation for the public to digest, and presumably afforded somewhat fairer treatment to the three people involved.

It may also have modified some of the stunning conclusions the auditor reaches. Coulson, for one, has told CBC North from British Columbia that he can explain every conclusion the audit makes about his actions.

The auditor must have seen the necessity and propriety of quizzing the three men about their handling of the finances and their remuneration, because Everitt says several appointments were made between himself and the auditor. However, each time, they were cancelled by the auditor, he says.

By the same token, suggesting, as Everitt has, that the whole exercise was "political" casts negative aspersions on the individuals who researched and created the report.

They are professional auditors brought in from Outside who likely couldn't have cared less about the well-documented problems between Everitt and Klondike MLA Peter Jenkins. To propose they were influenced by this chronic breakdown in human relationships would be a serious and ill-advised attack on their integrity.

It's all too tempting to take the audit's conclusions, run with them, and cement certain outraged impressions in one's mind.

But a person's name is a sacred entity. The owners of the reputations sullied in the audit deserve the chance to provide their sides of matters.

With their agreement, the formal replies the government has invited them to provide over the next two weeks should similarly be tabled in the legislature for the same degree of study that's been afforded the condemnations of their professional performances.

Gentlemen, within the parameters your lawyers will permit, the territory expects, deserves and awaits your considered responses.

Charles Wilkins - A Walk Around Dawson City

by Dan Davidson

Charlie Wilkins was working on draft of his latest book, Walk to New York, when he learned about the Berton House Writer's retreat.

"It was a Labour Day Monday and I was despairing, as I often am about 2 o'clock in the morning, and I opened up the Writer's Union newsletter. There was a little postage stamp sized ad, saying 'Come to the Yukon.'



The deadline for application had passed about two hours earlier, but Charlie, counting on the time zone difference, fired off an e-mail to Steve Robertson.

It was a few months before all the applications were reviewed by the local committee, and he was offered a three month stay in the fall of 2004.

He couldn't make the trip then because of the promotional tour for Walk to New York, so he asked to spend a couple of months in the winter. Little did he know he would get to share in one of the coldest mid-winters that Dawson's had in a few years.

"It seemed kind of daunting at first, 'cause the first thing you think about the Yukon is 50 below." A student who had spent time here talked him into it, telling him that winter was the time when the Yukon was the Yukon. So he decided to take a chance.

As opposed to getting smaller and more rickety, the planes he took from Thunder Bay to Winnipeg to Edmonton to Whitehorse got better at each stage, and the Air North flight was the best of all.

"On the smaller airplane (flying to Dawson) everyone seemed to be in a trance on the day after New Year's, but I was fascinated by the terrain below and amazed at how little population there was."

There are 120 thousand people in the Thunder Bay area,

which is considered almost isolated by Ontario standards, but the Yukon, where the caribou outnumber the people, remains a wonder to him.

"I arrived, I had a week of grace, and then we got this cold snap."

Charlie, who hustled about town daily at 40 and 50 below, visiting the mail and dealing with his e-mail at the public library, says he enjoyed the whole thing.

Walking remains a pleasure, even in cold weather, though he found he did more of it here than he did at home - around the town, over the ice bridge, up into the Sunnydale area of West Dawson.

"Since I walked to New York and back I had ceased walking, really, except for fits and starts, and was regretting it.

"The difference of being in the north - one could say it was temperature, or the shortage of light - but one thing that made a major difference to me was not having a vehicle. It felt so healthy, even on those bitterly cold days, to be out there hoofing it. I have loved that element of it.

"It's been a wonderful thing - to hike up the Dome, and up onto the Top of the World Highway, and up the river. That has been a lovely element of it.

"On those short days, when I first came up, I could not wait for it to get light enough to get out there booting around. I felt so connected somehow, in a way that I don't feel in the city.

"I don't feel that I really made a home of Berton House. I feel somewhat sheepish about being here for a couple of months, and then leaving, and not really consolidating a connection that I feel here."

KIAC was important to him. He taught a writing class in eight sessions over several weeks and got to know a range of people he might not have met otherwise.

"It was also a nice opportunity to be, you know, officially connected to what's going on."

The Dawson Community Library was also a haven for him, a pleasant place to connect with the southern world and meet some deadlines, but also a place to sit and experience Dawson.

Like many a writer-in-residence, Wilkins got caught up in some of the community's events, addressed the Haggis at the Double Bob dinner, spent all night at the checkpoint watching mushers and dogs arrive during the Yukon Quest.

He's not new to the writer-in-residence gig. A call to the public library in Thunder Bay is actually what caused him to move there from Toronto. That was in 1991, and he stayed.

Dawson, he says, will see him again.

"I've been telling people, quite sincerely, that I'm going to be back, because I enjoy the country so much. I've met people here with whom I am able to talk easily - talk and walk and hang out - the likes of which I never meet in Thunder Bay."

He plans to make the trip with his girls, ages 9 and 11, and will probably be driving cross country.

In the house he enjoyed surrounding himself with Pierre Berton's work. He had read the histories mostly, the books which were idea books but not so personal to the author.

Finding Drifting Home, and I Married the Klondike, and the memoir volumes, immersed him in Berton's world of Dawson and underlined its importance to Berton's career.

"Reading Starting Out, I found the passages were powerful. The talk about his parents, about how that 'fatal' trip out changed their lives ... he spilled a lot of himself into that book and Drifting Home. I enjoyed the books a lot and felt a new respect for Pierre and a new awareness of where his strength lay.

"(As many have said), a writer's capital is his childhood, and that's so true when you read books by Pierre - it's his best stuff."

Wilkins was in Dawson for most of January and February, leaving during the last week of the second month.

Dawson Community Steward update

by Sebastian Jones

Greetings from the Dawson Steward! This is the second in what will be a series of quarterly updates on what I have been doing and what is planned for the future and how you can be involved in community stewardship projects.

· Plant Watch.

Spring is approaching and many of us mark its arrival by the date of the first Prairie Crocus found blooming near town. Do you think that spring is coming earlier now? Is this a sign of global warming? Plant Watch is an initiative that is trying to collect the dates at which several different plants first bloom and leaf out in as many Yukon communities as possible. If any of you would like to be part of this, please contact me.

· YESEA

The new, made in the Yukon, environmental assessment act will be in effect soon. Not many of us have a clear understanding of what difference this will make to us or to projects that are planned. In February, I coordinated a two-day workshop for 17 local people from groups such as Tr'ondek Hwech'in government, the Dawson District Renewable Resources Council and a selection of other interested folks. In April, Steve Caram will be opening a YESEA office in Dawson where we will be able to go for information on any matters related to environmental assessments.

· Chandindu Weir

For several years, the Commercial Fishing Association and Tr'ondek Hwech'in ran a weir on the Chandindu or 12 Mile river. This weir successfully counted king salmon on their way to spawn. The Steward applied for and received funding to remove the equipment and clean up the site. Three people have been hired to do this and will be starting right after Easter.

· Dawson District Renewable Resources Council

The Steward and the Council will be working closely on many things and I will be giving regular reports to the

Council. The public is always welcome at regular Council meetings and this is another place to find me.

· Restoration and Enhancement Fund.

The R&E Fund is the compensation fund set up when the Yukon River Salmon Agreement was signed (a few) years ago. It is a contribution of US\$ 1.2million a year to part pay for the Alaskans catching more than their fair share of fish.

This year in the Dawson area, 7 projects received money, these include:

1. 1st Fish Camp
2. Test Fishery
3. Chandindu Weir demobilization
4. Yukon Stewardship Program (My wages)
5. Yukon Queen II mitigation plan
6. A study of how decaying, spawned out salmon affect the boreal forest
7. Continuation of "Bio engineering" at Germaine Creek

For more information on these projects, or any other issues, please come and see me, the coffee is always on !

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"Klondike Kate" Hits the Goldrush Trail Again

Story & Photos
by Dan Davidson

The call for Gillian Campbell to come to Dawson in March was a nice coincidence for her.

"About two months ago I was thinking I'd really like to do to Dawson City or the Yukon one more time, 'cause I haven't been up for a while."

The phone rang, and it was Mark Mather, owner of the Dawson City General Store, inviting her to do a few shows during the busiest part of the International Federation of Sleddog Sports World Championships and the Percy DeWolfe Memorial Mail Race, both of which the store was sponsoring in a big way to help celebrate its own quarter century in business.

Gillian Campbell almost didn't get to be a household name in cabaret entertainment. It's hard to imagine a mere male telling her to do or not do anything, but the energetic lady who put her own stamp on the stage persona of "Klondike Kate" was once too cowed by her first husband, Brian, to go before an audience.

"He just didn't think that was kosher," she says, settling back in a comfortable chair in the parlor at Bombay Peggy's.

She had done a lot of amateur work prior to her marriage, she says, had entered a lot of contests and usually placed first, second or third. In fact, she was a Black and Decker demonstrator for power tools when she met him. That came

to an end.

“He just sort of clipped my wings.”

So when she came to Canada from England in 1966 she was surprised when he talked her into singing a few songs for the passengers during the boat trip. Her husband apparently decided it was okay as long as it was his choice.

“He’d never seen me perform because he didn’t wanna know. When I came off the stage he said to me ‘You’ve got something; you’ve really got something.’”

Must have been that British understatement at work.

Once in Vancouver, she was allowed to stretch her wings a little, and it was thus that she came to the attention of Fran Dowie, the Vancouver impresario and vaudevillian, who was looking for talent to strut the boards of the recently rebuilt Palace Grand Theatre in Dawson.

Dowie browbeat Gillian’s overbearing hubby into letting her go north with her sons to become Klondike Kate in the Follies in 1967. Coincidentally, she lived that summer in the building which is now Klondike Kate’s Restaurant.

The stage name has been with her ever since.

In 1968 she got sent to Barkerville to do a similar show there. Her husband and two children came along. The act was great, but the family life didn’t go well.

“He was knocking me about and I wasn’t staying for seconds. When I came back I knew I was gonna leave him.”

She’d already met the man she would marry later. Edward Thompson, who now owns and trains race horses, is a former Dawson bank manager and Klondike Visitors Association treasurer. She met him there when stepping off the plane with her two boys, Richard and Jason, in 1967.

These days she introduces him as “my second husband, who’s much better than my first.”

“He’s the wind beneath my wings,” she coos, looking at him across the parlor.

In 1970 she was back in Dawson City where she cooked and cleaned and washed for 16 people by day and turned into Klondike Kate each night. She took the role to Whitehorse

and headlined at the Frantic Follies before eventually returning to Dawson to play Diamond Tooth Gertie at the casino.

In 1976 she stopped coming to the Yukon for long gigs. She says the annual dislocations were hurting her boys’ school progress. But she has been back regularly ever since.

“I never really left the Yukon ‘cause they kept bringin’ me back.”

She was a regular feature at Rendezvous for years. She spent two seasons in Skagway and played the cruise ships for Holland America.

“The phone never stops ringing and the gigs keep on coming. We do a lot of conventions at Whistler and at the Empress in Victoria, and the Hotel Vancouver.”

Along the way she’s played for royalty: Princess Margaret, Prince Charles and Lady Diana, and Princess Margarine of the Netherlands. Over her almost thirty years on the boards she’s played Holland Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia, and all over the USA.

At Christmas Gillian and Ed do a Mr. and Mrs. Santa



Edward Thompson, Gillian Campbell, Mark Mather and Jason Campbell.

Claus routine for Vancouver Tourism.

“If I ever have several days of gigs at a time I hire my son, Jason (he has his own band in Santa Barbara) to play bass with us, and I call the group Motherlode.”

Her older son, Richard, is her regular drummer in a band that sometimes swells up to eight members. For Dawson she brought the boys and added sometime PG ivory tickler Bill Costin.

When he can, Ed accompanies her as a lighting man and dresser.

Gillian Campbell doesn’t travel lightly. For her Dawson engagement she brought six outfits plus clothes for offstage. That’s eleven pieces of luggage, plus one for Ed.

It’s said she has \$100,000 in costumes and accessories. She says they’ve all been made by the same outfitter, who’s been making her clothes - she pauses as if almost about to give something away - for years.

Well, okay then. How many years?

“I’m as old as my tongue and a little bit older than my teeth.”

While in Dawson she did 14 shows in a bit under four days. That’s not a record, She once did 135 shows in ten days during an engagement in Edmonton, where she played Klondike Days for many years.

Her eyes were so sore from the accumulated makeup that she did our interview in dark glasses.

An interview with Gillian is a bit like her show : nonstop and off in all directions a once. It’s perhaps most like her perennial closing song, “I’m forever blowing bubbles”, which ends with audience members batting balloons every which way.

“I do go off on a tangent, don’t I?” she says shamelessly several

times in the half hour, but she plays the interviewer like she plays an audience.

“Thank you. Oh, he’s so good in’t he?” she says, turning to Ed for confirmation as I drag her back to the time line I’m trying to assemble. If I were that good, she wouldn’t have been able to ramble down that detour in the first place.

When she enters a stage area, all feathers, boas and enormous hats, the audience acceptance is immediate. We’re in another, kinder time, where double entendres were merely verbal fun, and every flirtation didn’t have to lead to a climax.

The songs are all of another century now, as are the jokes and the body language. I don’t know how much longer her tongue and her teeth can keep this up, but it’ll be fun while it lasts.



Gillian Campbell teases John Gould at the Percy DeWolfe banquet.

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