

Newsletter September 2018

SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

We invite members and the general public to the Annual General Meeting of the Yellowknife Historical Society, to be held on October 4, 2018 from 6:30 to 8:30 at the Baker's Centre. An update on the museum construction will be provided plus a slideshow of the work in progress this summer to complete renovations to the historic Giant Mine recreation hall. This is your chance to get involved in our group, a very active heritage organization preserving the rich history of Yellowknife. We welcome new members and people who want to be involved on the Board of Directors!

10th ANNUAL BEER BARGE WAS A SUCCESS

The barge arrived this year at 5:06 on June 16, 2018 (time guessed correctly by Wayne Guy and Simon Hache) and a grand party was had by all. Thanks to all the people that bought tickets and supported the event through sponsorship and volunteer hours. Baby Brian's Country Club, and The Andrea Bettger Band provided the live entertainment, and Tony Whitford orated a history of the barges in the north. Our profit this year was \$18,400, very similar to last year's income of \$17,900. This was the tenth annual event and we hope there will be many more in the future as this is our main fundraising and publicity event.

SUMMER WORK PARTIES

Two work parties were held this summer. The first was targeted at building new storage shelves in our warehouse building so that our archival materials could be better managed. The second work party was focused on the outdoor display area, where significant vegetation was cut and cleared, and five bags of trash were collected from around the boat launch parking lot. The area is looking much cleaner now! Thanks to the following members for helping out: Walt Humphries, Helmut Epp, Diane Baldwin, David Kellet, Dave Finch, Ryan Silke, Marie Adams, Ken Hall, Steve Matthews, and Pamela Taylor.

MUSEUM CONSTRUCTION UPDATE

Construction is wrapping up for the season at the Giant Mine recreation hall building, the proposed museum exhibit facility. During July to September 2018, Paul Brothers Nextreme Inc. completed a \$185,000 contract to remove asbestos, repair exterior walls, and install new windows, doors and siding. The results look fantastic! Eddie Paul and his crew are to be commended for a job well done. The project was supervised by Society executive Walt Humphries, Helmut Epp, Ryan Silke and coordinator Tracey Bryant. This is a major step forward as repair of the exterior has been a significant holdup in moving forward with the

museum construction. Funding for the project was provided in part by the Government of the Northwest Territories, Industry Tourism and Investment.

The next phase of renovations will require a significant investment. We have applied to the Federal Government's 'Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency' (CANNOR) for \$1.1 million dollars to complete all necessary construction, including: insulation, electrical, mechanical, parking lot, landscaping, fire suppression, security, and displays. As we may not receive this entire amount, we are canvassing local businesses to help raise any additional funds. A 'Business Plan' is available for download at our website that outlines the project in more detail.

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.

MISSION:

The Yellowknife Historical Society preserves and promotes awareness of local community history for residents and visitors.

VISION STATEMENT:

There is a community-driven and thriving museum with a focus on Yellowknife's community history that engages residents and visitors by providing learning opportunities for all. The Yellowknife Historical Society is dynamic, influential and sustainable.

Yellowknife Historical Society

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Museum construction August 2018



Volunteer work party August 2018

Tom Hoefer is seeking community help to save the old RCMP building in Yellowknife. Email him at executivedirector@miningnorth.com to lend ideas and support!

1940s-era building coming down

'I just think it would be a shame to lose it,' says long-time Yellowknifer

by **Brendan Burke**
Northern News Services

A Yellowknife man is calling for less demolition and more preservation of the capital's past as the territorial government moves closer to tearing down a long-standing building with deep roots in the community.

The former Yellowknife RCMP building, which now sits vacant and boarded-up at 5109 51 Street in the city's downtown, is on the chopping block.

In six to eight months, the The Department of Infrastructure (INF) plans to demolish the building, which is owned by the GNWT.

"I just think it would be a shame to lose it," said Tom Hoefer, a longtime city resident.

Hoefer would like to see the building spared, preserved and re-purposed given its historical significance in Yellowknife.

Erected in 1947, the building was one of the first to spring up in the city's New Town. Its establishment on Yellowknife's expanding front marked a relocation from the Mounties' home base in Old Town, where the original headquarters was located.

By the 1950s, when Hoefer was a young boy living two blocks from the headquarters, the building had become a central part of the city's core.

"I grew up as a kid walking past that building every day. It was a bright and shiny building at that time," said Hoefer with a chuckle, adding he would routinely stop by the station to return lost items he'd found around town.

"It was very impressive to me as a kid growing up here because here's all these nicely uniformed guys that would look on you kindly," he reminisced.

It was a place where artillery was stored in the basement, while driver's licences were handed out upstairs.

It was a different time, and, for Hoefer, a time worth remembering.

But the INF has no intention of keeping the long-standing building standing. Without a historical designation, the building is up for grabs in the department's bid to free up valuable city space.

"The building is not listed as a designated building for heritage purposes and is not under the consideration for designation as a heritage building," wrote INF communications coordinator Greg Hanna in an email.

Two different labels can be ascribed to buildings with historical importance in Yellowknife. Heritage designation applies to any "heritage resource designated by a bylaw passed by council and becomes part of the heritage bylaw and current zoning bylaw.

Heritage recognition is reserved for heritage resources that are not designated by a bylaw, but are acknowledged through a motion of the Heritage Committee, according to a city spokesperson.

For either or those labels to be attached to the building, its owner would have to initiate a process to have it recognized.

Among the criteria for a building to reach recognition or designation as a historical site, one question asks if the structure "has the potential for illustrating Yellowknife's heritage to a degree such that it will be possible for the visitor to gain from the heritage resource an understanding of the architecture or history with which it is associated?"

Hoefer said the former RCMP building passes the test, especially since its seen



Brendan Burke/NNLS photo

ABOVE: Tom Hoefer wants to see the building saved and re-purposed on the basis of its historical significance.

photo courtesy of Yellowknife Historical Society
RIGHT: Built in 1947, the former RCMP headquarters was one of the first buildings to take root in Yellowknife's growing New Town.



other occupants, including the YWCA and a pair of day cares, in its seven-decade life.

Hoefer hasn't launched a formal bid to protect the former headquarters. Instead, he's hoping other like-minded nostalgists will join his call to save the storied structure.

"Personally, I like to save as many old buildings as you can

because that's the early days of Yellowknife and it's the architecture of the time which, they just don't build buildings like this anymore," said Walt Humphries, president of the Yellowknife Historical Society.

"It'd be really nice to save it, but to save a historic building you need a use for it," Humphries added.

Hoefer has thought of a new use – to transform the aging building into an in-demand spot for a new visitors centre.

If all goes as planned, and the building is torn down next year, Hanna said the land "will be utilized in the future for a new GNWT facility. Hanna didn't say what facility would potentially fill its place.

For Hoefer, the government's plan to move ahead with demolition is emblematic of a "in with the new, out with the old" mentality in the city.

"We have this tendency to knock stuff over and forget about the past. "It helps us remember where we can from and where the town came from," said Hoefer.

Yk Historical Society's \$1.5M museum in works

Windows, doors to be added by end of summer as part of ambitious plan at Giant Mine

by **Brendan Burke**
Northern News Services

A non-profit heritage group's long-running dream of turning a piece of the city's past into a multi-use museum is one step closer to becoming a reality.

The Yellowknife Historical Society – a newly re-branded collective committed to the preservation of Yellowknife's cultural, economic and natural history – has kicked off construction at the former Giant Mine recreation hall.

It's a once-bustling community hub the society hopes to transform into a museum and interpretive centre.

Since late July, local contractors – overseen by Yellowknife Historical Society president Walt Humphries and secretary-treasurer Ryan Silke – have worked to remove weather-worn wooden siding and hazardous material from the red-roofed rec hall, which sits near the Giant Mine site and the Great Slave Cruising Club's boat launch.

Built in 1953, the recreation hall was the go-to leisure spot for Giant Mine workers and staff living at the townsite.

The latest phase in the hall's face-lift, Humphries told Yellowknifer, is a crucial step in the society's bid to breathe new life into storied space.

"Once we get the walls done then we've got the building enclosed and it's weather-proof, then we can work on it in the winter and in the summer. Before we didn't have power and we didn't have heat. That's why it's important," said Humphries, who is also a *Yellowknifer* columnist.

The current construction is part of the society's ambitious \$1.5-million plan to transform the aging recreational hall into a museum that showcases Yellowknife's local history – mining and more – complete with a planned exhibit hall, tea room, library and gift shop.

The Yellowknife Historical Society hopes to complete the project by 2020.

With two to three years of work ahead, the initiative is still in its infancy, but the society plans to install new windows, doors and siding to the rec hall by the end of the summer.

Once the exterior is complete, it's

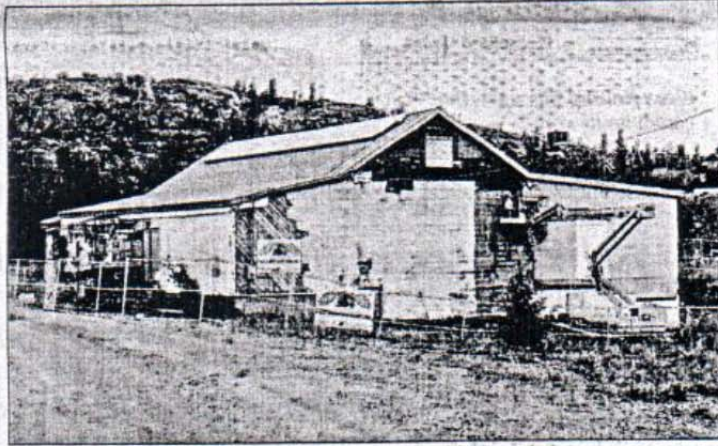


Photo courtesy of the Yellowknife Historical Society

By the end of the summer, the society hopes to have new windows, doors and siding installed to the rec hall. Then, it's on to the interior, where electrical wiring will be done before work on the proposed exhibit hall, tea room, gift shop and library begins. The donor-dependent project is slated to wrap up in 2020.

on to the inside.

"After the walls are done, then we can start on the electrical and the interior of the building," said Humphries.

While construction is well underway, the project's completion hinges on the support of private and government sponsors.

"We're dependent on funding and we're hoping to get it done in two or three years. If the money comes in it'll be done fast; if it doesn't it'll be done slower," he said.

Recent progress on the project follows years of hiccups and false starts. The Yellowknife Historical Society – formerly dubbed the NWT Mining Heritage Society and YK Spirit – made repairs to recreation hall's roof and foundation in 2007 and 2010, but remediation work at the Giant Mine site stalled development for 10 years.

Now, with the completion of new windows, doors and siding a month or so away, Humphries hopes to fill the revamped rec hall's walls with markers and memorabilia of Yellowknife's rich past – and in doing

so, he aims to fill a demand.

Aside from the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre, which focuses of the history of NWT as a whole, Humphries said there, "is no Yellowknife museum."

"When people come up here they want to see some of the local history and some of the local colour – that's what we plan to concentrate on," he said.

"There is no group that's preserving Yellowknife history and local history and that's what we're doing."

While the Giant Mine remediation process will continue near the site of in-the-works museum, Humphries said he doesn't expect it will interfere with the museum's development. He also stressed the proposed museum will stand well away from any potentially contaminated land.

As for what Yellowknifers think of the society's plan to re-purpose the rec hall, Humphries said he's received positive feedback.

"People are supportive and enthusiastic."