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FEB/MAR 2013

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COVER PAINTING OF THE IZUMI FAMILY, PICTURED OUTSIDE THEIR FIRST HOME, A WILLOW WOOD COURT CONDO, BY YELLOWKNIFE ARTIST, NICK MACINTOSH.

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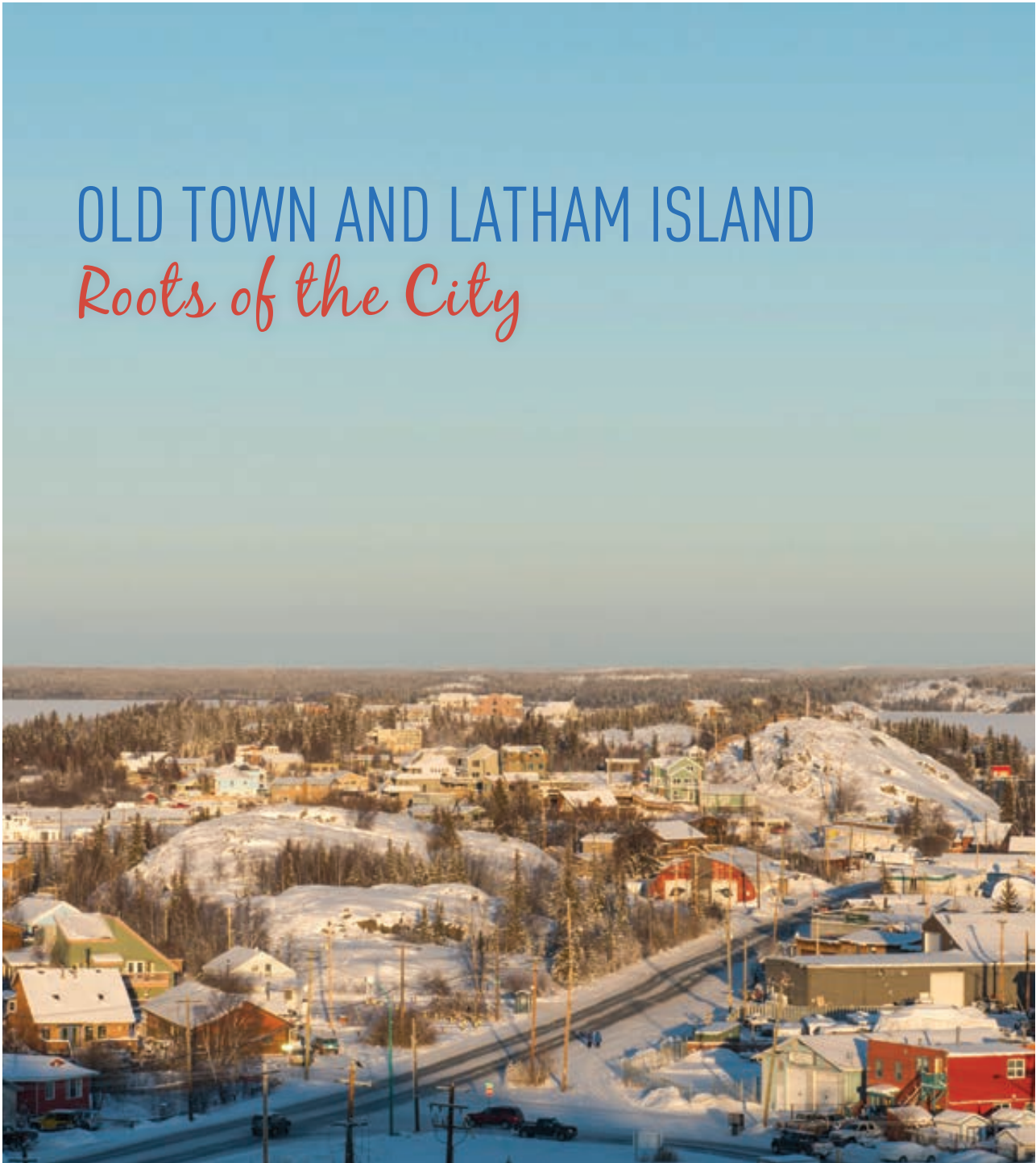
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EDGE YK's in your mailbox and we want your ideas!

If you're reading this magazine for the first time because it arrived in the mail, I'd like you to meet **EDGE YK**, Yellowknife's hyper-local magazine. We're a free publication, available six times per year in print and online, and we cover all things YK, from arts to business. And as of this issue, **EDGE YK** is being delivered to households across the city.

If you're a regular reader, perhaps one who's been with us from the start, welcome back. As usual, this issue has a great variety of stories, from Founding Editor Jack Danylchuk's feature explaining how a once-prominent aurora tourism business failed to Denis Légère's account of his kite skiing trip to YK from the East Arm community of Lutsel K'e, and everything in between.

In **EDGE YK** news, I'm excited to introduce Jeremy Bird as the magazine's new Advertising Sales and Marketing Manager. Having spent the past few years in a similar position with the Native Communications Society and CKLB Radio, Jeremy has great ideas and understands the local market. Speaking from experience, I can also say he's great to work with.

On the editorial side of things, I often mention we're always looking for contributors. But I don't often get into how to contribute. If you're interested and haven't read our Contributors Guidelines, you can find them at www.edgeyk.ca. Basically, they say the magazine's dedicated to showcasing Yellowknife's vast pool of creative talent, and that we're interested in well-told first-person narrative stories, as well as traditional reporting on the issues, ideas and people affecting the city's past, present and future.

That means if a story has a YK connection and you're excited about it, we want to hear about it. Many people don't know the magazine is written almost entirely by freelancers. That means the answer to why we haven't done a particular story might be 'because you haven't done it!' Every issue, we need contributions from writers, photographers, visual artists and illustrators. While we can't accept every idea, we'll try to let you know whether yours will work as soon as we can.

If you're nervous about getting in touch, I'll tell you we aren't worried about whether you've been published before. I've found a good idea paired with enthusiasm can be just as valuable as previous experience and formal training. And while we love our regular contributors, we always need new ones to keep things fresh. In terms of getting in touch, the process usually starts with sending a few lines outlining your idea and why you think it's a good fit for **EDGE YK** to editor@edgeyk.ca.

Brent Reaney
Editor / Publisher



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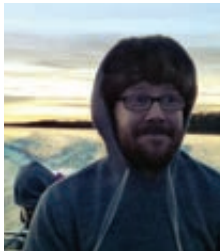
CASEY KOYCZAN

In his graduating year of Fine Arts at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC, Casey is an artist that focuses on sculpture, installation, photography, and audio art. As a musician Casey interacts with the music scene in Yellowknife in many ways, whether it's performance or promotion, but in this issue, he contributes his knowledge of local music into his Band Spotlight column.



DENIS LEGERE

Born and raised in the small village Acadien de Caraquet in New Brunswick. Denis worked in the forestry sector for five years before being swept into education/instruction. Currently in Yellowknife, various trips around the Canadian North – including the Barren Lands – have given him a new appreciation for the land. His love for the unexpected brings him to 'untouched' places and sports, ranging from the Back River to Kayak Polo, Dene Games and Ultimate Frisbee. In this issue, he writes about his kiteskiing trip from Lutselk'e to Yellowknife.



DAVID MAGUIRE

David is a long-time northerner, aspiring bush man, and a bit of a geek. When you can't find him at his desk rummaging through lines of code, he is likely fumbling through some backwoods adventures with a group of close friends who share a sense of pride and appreciation for the great northern wilderness. He has a proclivity for breaking snow machines and lays claim to one of the longest "beginner's luck" runs in recent Yellowknife fishing history. In this issue of the magazine, he shares some cold-weather gear tips and tricks.



photo James MacKenzie

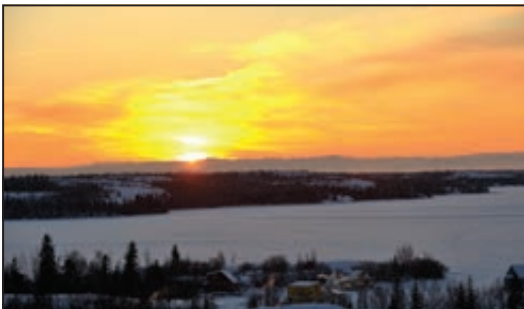
PABLO SARAVANJA

Pablo is a born-and-raised Yellowknifer, photographer and documentary filmmaker. As one half of the talented aRTLeSS Collective, some of his current projects include the popular recent City of Yellowknife video and the incredible commercial for this magazine at edgeyk.ca.artless.org



CAMILLA MACEACHERN

Look around an event in YK, and you'll probably find Camilla is your host for the evening. The self-described "redneck hippy," lives across all worlds in her Northern haven on Rat Lake. She is a film commissioner by day and one of the women who brought Brrrrlesque to Yellowknife. Fun Fact One: her story in this issue about her childhood in YK is the first thing she's ever published. Fun Fact Two: she starts her old Toyota van with a spoon.



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SNOWKING

WINTER FESTIVAL XVIII

Festival Schedule

Saturday, March 2

Artist Run Community Center (ARCC) presents *subARCCic Art Show* (12-5 pm)
Indio CD Release Show (8 pm)

Sunday, March 3

Frosty Children's Theater
1 pm..... BUG OFF Winter
3 pm..... BUG OFF Winter
NJ Macpherson Drama Program Presents
2 pm..... Grades 4-6: Robert Munsch Play and Grades 1-3: Puppet Play
2:30..... Fireweed Children's Choir

March 2-9

Castle Exhibit *FREEZE Frame* by Rae & Bill Braden

Wednesday, March, 6 | 8 pm

WAMP presents Frozen Dog Film Festival

Friday, March 8 | 8 pm

The Great Meltdown with the Labour Party and Grey Gritt

Saturday, March 9

Snowy Craft Sale (12-5 pm)
The Shivering Shake with Old Town Mondays (9 pm) followed by Andrew Scott and Band (10 pm)

Sunday, March 10

Yellowknife Choral Society and Guests (12:30-1:30 pm)
Bem Galada (2-3 pm)

Yellowknives Dene First Nation presents *Snowy Fun with Dene Games* (3-5 pm)

Wednesday March, 13 | 8 pm

Dead North Short Horror Film Competition presented by Artless Collective

March 11-16

Aurora Arts Society Juried Exhibition

Friday, March 15

Fit for a King - An afternoon lunch with northwest influence with Chef Robin and Chef Ned Bell (Servings at 1 & 2:30 pm)
NWT Pride Presents DJ Battle (8 pm)

Saturday, March 16

Frosty Children's Theater
1 pm..... BUG OFF Winter
1:30 pm..... Special Musical Guests
2 pm..... BUG OFF Winter
Aurora Arts Society Juried Exhibition Winner Presentation and Social (3 pm)
Annual Snowking Cup Pond Hockey
The Lost Expedition with Erebus and Terror and Friends (8 pm)

Sunday, March 17

Bella Beats Broadway Bound (1-2 pm)
Mr. Freezes Puppetorium with music by Peek-a-boo Kazoo
2 pm..... The Laughing Kings
3 pm..... Rock'n' Roll Snowking

Sunday, March 17-22

Mr. Freeze's *Picture in the Picture* Exhibit

Tuesday and Wednesday, March 19 & 20 | 8 pm

Within the Light Without - Created and Directed by German Saravanja. Featuring Reneltha Arluk and Phoebe Vlassis

Friday, March 22 | 8-12 pm

The Royal Rave with the Bushleague DJ's

Saturday, March 23

Iceolation Art Show (12-5 pm)
Snow Ultimate Frisbee (4 pm)
The Royal Ball with Angus Beaulieu followed by Adrian Dolan (8-12 pm)

Sunday, March 24

Snow Volleyball (11 am)
Future Smuggler in the Bright Eyed Archipelago by Jenny Lee Craig (12 pm)

Mr. Freeze's Royal Puppetorium
1:30 pm..... Rock'n' Roll Snowking
2:30 pm..... The Laughing Kings

Frosty Children's Theater with music by Peek-a-boo Kazoo
3 pm..... Big Dreams, Little Pond
3:30 pm..... Peek-a-boo Kazoo
4 pm..... Big Dreams, Little Pond

Wednesday, March 27 | 8 pm

Chilled Minstrel Hastilude II Poetry Slam

Friday, March 29 | 9 pm

BRRRLESQUE



To see the most up-to-date schedule visit www.snowking.ca



BACK BAY CEMETERY

Story and photo by James MacKenzie

In 2005, an elderly couple visiting Yellowknife asked me if I knew where the old Indian cemetery was. I had no clue what they were talking about. Later that summer I was walking my dog on the ski trails with a few friends when we came across a dead raven. Being superstitious folk, we detoured into the woods to go around it and found a rickety old bridge that spanned a dried-up creek.

The warm and sunny afternoon suddenly took on a serious tone as we found ourselves among the not so recently departed. Beneath a sheer cliff face, nuzzled on a small hill with a creek running at its base, gravestones and crosses littered the ground around us. Fences that surrounded burial plots had been partially taken over by nature.

Weeds grew rampant on the graves and various animals had burrowed out homes or dug up bones. A lot of the graves belonged to children, the rest to young men. I had found the Back Bay Cemetery.

Despite its derelict condition, there was a calmness about the area. The late afternoon sun looked and felt a little warmer. Before the Lake View Cemetery opened, this is where Yellowknifers buried their dead in the 1930s and 40s. And it is possibly the resting place for some of Yellowknife's aboriginal ancestors. One headstone, low to the ground and partially damaged, had a picture of the man buried there; Peter Hendrick, Feb, 9, 1917 – June 24, 1942, with the inscription: "his spirit will dwell

forever in this place which he so loved. I will lift up mine eyes up to the hills."

Those steep hills block out the noise from the city, reflect the warmth of the sun, and shield against the wind. It is not out of the ordinary to sit on top of them and watch as foxes and coyotes chase mice around the graves, or to have a bald eagle glide silently over your head, so close you can almost touch it.

There is a feeling of tranquility and a stillness of spirit as I stand among the dead of Yellowknife's founders; thinking of the hard life the prospectors and miners led, and that their loved ones were able to find a perfect piece of northern wilderness as their final resting spot.

Looking for the cemetery? In Old Town, get out on Back Bay and head for the Ski Club. You'll find the cemetery down by the water.



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photo Pablo Saravanja

HOT tips FOR COLD weather

WHY A **TURKEY BASTER** CAN BE
YOUR BEST FRIEND AT -30

by David Maguire

I've found myself describing to southern friends the northern sense of humour that develops when you live in a place where the weather is like a bad joke. Part of our northern resilience can be attributed to our ability to make fun of ourselves and the extreme situations we get into living in such a hostile environment.

It's funny when your beard is frozen like a brick of ice, or when you can almost break a strand of your significant others' hair off because they went outside too early after a shower. It isn't funny when you're 20 kilometres from town with a broken Ski-Doo, slim chance at cell reception and your gear starts to fail you.



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Since I love living in the North and believe getting outside in winter is important to maintaining sanity through the darkness and cold, I've discovered a few affordable small items that can make time in our frozen-wasteland-of-a-home easier and more comfortable. Here are some hot tips for the cold:

Stealth Cold War Gloves

These hidden gems can be found at Weaver's or True Value Hardware. The neon green and black rubberized fishing gloves fit neatly in your pocket for when you need an extra pair. They don't have the insulation you would want to depend on for a three-hour ski trip, but they are perfect for changing a spark plug or doing any type of activity that requires some dexterity; and they are waterproof, which is handy for when you pull that delicious trout out of the ice hole.

The real bonus of these modern marvels is that they work with your touch phone. Need to grab a quick call or send a text to your buddy? Don't freeze your hands; just get a pair of Stealth Cold War gloves. Make sure to buy a pair that fits small, otherwise the touch-phone support will be spotty. Best to try them in store before you buy.

The All Mighty Turkey Baster

This classic holiday kitchen utensil is also an essential item I make sure I have in my snow machine's emergency kit. It may be useful for keeping your holiday bird moist and delicious, but it's also a godsend when something goes wrong on your sled trip, and anyone who has spent time in the bush around our little town on a snow machine knows that a sled trip without a breakdown isn't a sled trip at all.

Run out of two-stroke oil and forget your spare? Use the turkey baster to borrow some from a fellow rider in your group or a passer-by. You can use the baster to transfer any number of vital fluids that are the lifeblood of your northern steed. It's a handy tool to start a quick fire, also if the worst has happened and you got wet because you crossed a body of water that wasn't quite frozen, or if you just really need a quick fire to cook that hot dog.

A Six Pack...of Socks

If you're lucky enough to get invited out to a cabin or winter camping trip with all your best buds then you'll want to bring a few libations. This brings us to the great northern dilemma. How do you get those tasty brew pops from town to the cabin in one piece? Throw them in a backpack and you'll be squeezing your drinks out of your t-shirt at day's end.

Instead of risking getting your gear wet, and wrecking a number of perfectly good beers, take a six-pack of socks, place two beverages in each sock and twist in the middle to create a buffer between them. Now tape those beers together and wrap them in a cardboard box. It may be a lot of work but when you arrive after a long sled ride and have all your beverages accounted for, it will be worth it. Needless to say, this is a trick for cans – who brings bottles to the cabin, anyway?

Friends with a Few Strong Backs

Sometimes the most powerful tool you can have at your disposal is a good friend willing to go out of their way to do you a solid favour. I'm not an advocate of keeping score on who-helped-who last, but as a simple rule I make sure that if there's a friend in need, no matter how brutal the work, I'll do my best to be there with them lifting, pulling, freezing and laughing at our collective misfortune. Over the 2012 holidays I spent a solid eight-hour day running around between Reid and Prosperous lakes with generators, cables and a few good buddies working to unfreeze some vehicles left out in the cold weather too long. When you're truly stuck in the bush, sometimes all it takes is putting a few heads together, calling in some favours and a bit of heavy lifting. Better to suffer together than alone.

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FIRST PLACE
Angela Gzowski

FACE OFF

FOR YK'S PHOTO COMMUNITY



The rules were simple. Using only one camera, one lens and one light source, 23 photographers were given 20 minutes to shoot a pair of models they hadn't met at the former Hudson's Bay warehouse in Old Town – a location they were made aware of only minutes before the shoot. It was a challenge

in being creative and thinking quickly with limited resources. At an exhibition in late November, more than 200 people turned out to Twist Resto-Lounge to see all the photographers work in print and vote for their favourite pair, as well as the top two individual photos. The event was organized by Pat Kane

Photo and the aRTLeSS Collective and sponsored by Roy's Audio Video and *EDGE YK* magazine. The models for the competition were Brian Collins and Jaimee Imrie, who spent 14 hours in below freezing temperatures posing for each photographer. Although everyone produced great

work, here are the winners, as chosen by the people who came out and cast their ballot for YK's first-ever FACE OFF competition. To see the rest of the competitors' photos and watch a behind-the-scenes video of the contest, visit edgeyk.ca in the month of March.



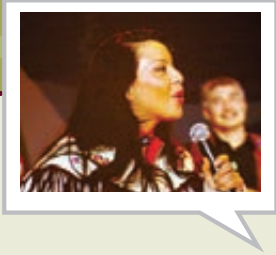
SECOND PLACE
Steven Efono



THIRD PLACE
David Prichard



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La date limite pour présenter sa demande est le **28 février 2013.**

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BAND SPOTLIGHT

Mary Caroline and the Sundogs



photo Pat Kane

by Casey Koyczan

From left: Kevin Dunbar, Anne Marie Gredon, Mary Caroline, Greg Nasagaluak.

I have known Mary Caroline for about six years now as an aspiring musician with a lot of motivation to play and record, which has led to her releasing two CDs — *Snow Blindness* in 2009, and last year's *Who's In Control* — since becoming a Northerner.

Mary made the journey to Yellowknife in 2005 from Lucknow, ON at age 23 to build on her love of frontier experiences, which started

while working in northern Ontario during her high school and college summer breaks. She had never played a paid gig before moving here, but had plenty of practice while in college. She studied Ecosystem Management at Sir Sandford Fleming and spent her spare time composing on her guitar and playing songs at open mics to develop her unique folk-rock sound.

Once in Yellowknife, Mary played at open mics and took part in Music in the Park, held at Somba K'e Park. Her first band, in 2005, was The Unfortunately Employed. The following summer she formed The Travelling Yeah Yeah's, which played some local gigs and travelled to Fort Smith for the South Slave Friendship Festival.

"Back in the early days it was great to be able to travel with friends and play music, but I also knew it wasn't the end of the road; I wanted to do more with my music," Mary says.

She returned to her hometown for a few months to visit with friends and family and compiled a list of her favourite songs for her debut CD. She recorded *Snow Blindness* with the help of producer, engineer and recording artist Travis Mercredi. "We recorded the CD in Victoria but it features cameos from northern musicians such as Travis Mercredi, Tj Buggins and Dale Pettier on drums," says Mary. "I met Dale in Yellowknife and lots of Old Towners still remember him."

The CD encapsulates Mary's time spent in the North with upbeat songs you could jig to, but it also includes waves of dark, folk undertones on her acoustic guitar and ethereal lyrics with that haunting honesty so prevalent in the North.

After *Snow Blindness*, Mary took a break from performing for over a year and focused on establishing her own band and recording her second CD, *Who's In Control*. The CD explores more pop-driven lyrics and guitar riffs than the debut album, but still has tracks that hold true to her original soulful folk style. While in-studio completing the CD last March, she played a show at the Snow Castle in Old Town with cellist Anne Marie Guedon and drummer Julia MacIntyre as Mary Caroline and the Snowflakes. Playing with a cellist had long been a dream for Mary. The two have continued collaborating for about a year and played a few shows as a duet.

"I really enjoy having another female in the band, I would always see my guy friends joking around with their band mates like "bros" and it's surprisingly awesome to have another girl to hang out with. Especially when we are traveling and staying in hotels. I really like it!"

Mary sought out other dedicated musicians to begin playing shows and recording again. She looked to seasoned drummer Kevin Dunbar, who is featured on the album. Greg Nasogaluak was originally invited as a guitar player, but as the band dynamics found its groove, it was decided that Greg would play bass and that Anne Marie would present the leads with her cello. Both Nasogaluak and Dunbar also perform with the dance band *Wake Up Hazel* and were part of the trio *Funk 69*. Nasogaluak's rocking riffs can also be heard with the long-standing Yellowknife band *Priscilla's Revenge*. The Sundogs first gig as a band was at the Springtime Hootenanny last July at The Top Knight.

They played *Break Out West* in Regina last September, a showcase of 50 artists from across Western Canada that takes place at the same time as the Western Canada Music Awards. To make this trip happen the band did local fundraising and received a showcasing grant from FACTOR. The Sundogs were well received and there was some Twitter commotion as the group started receiving tweets from people after the show.

"JJRamone tweeted a picture of us, and said, 'Mary Caroline from Yellowknife is pretty fricking awesome!'" Mary recalls.

Mary and The Sundogs are busy applying for grants and preparing to host a few shows down South to tour the new album next summer. Mary has always been a vital cog in the local music machine and helps to keep it running smoothly as a member of the Music NWT board, volunteering her time to help organize events such as The Great Northern Music Showcase and Conference in January.

You can catch Mary and The Sundogs from time to time at jam nights held at Twist and The Gold Range, or sample her songs off her website at marycaroline.ca.

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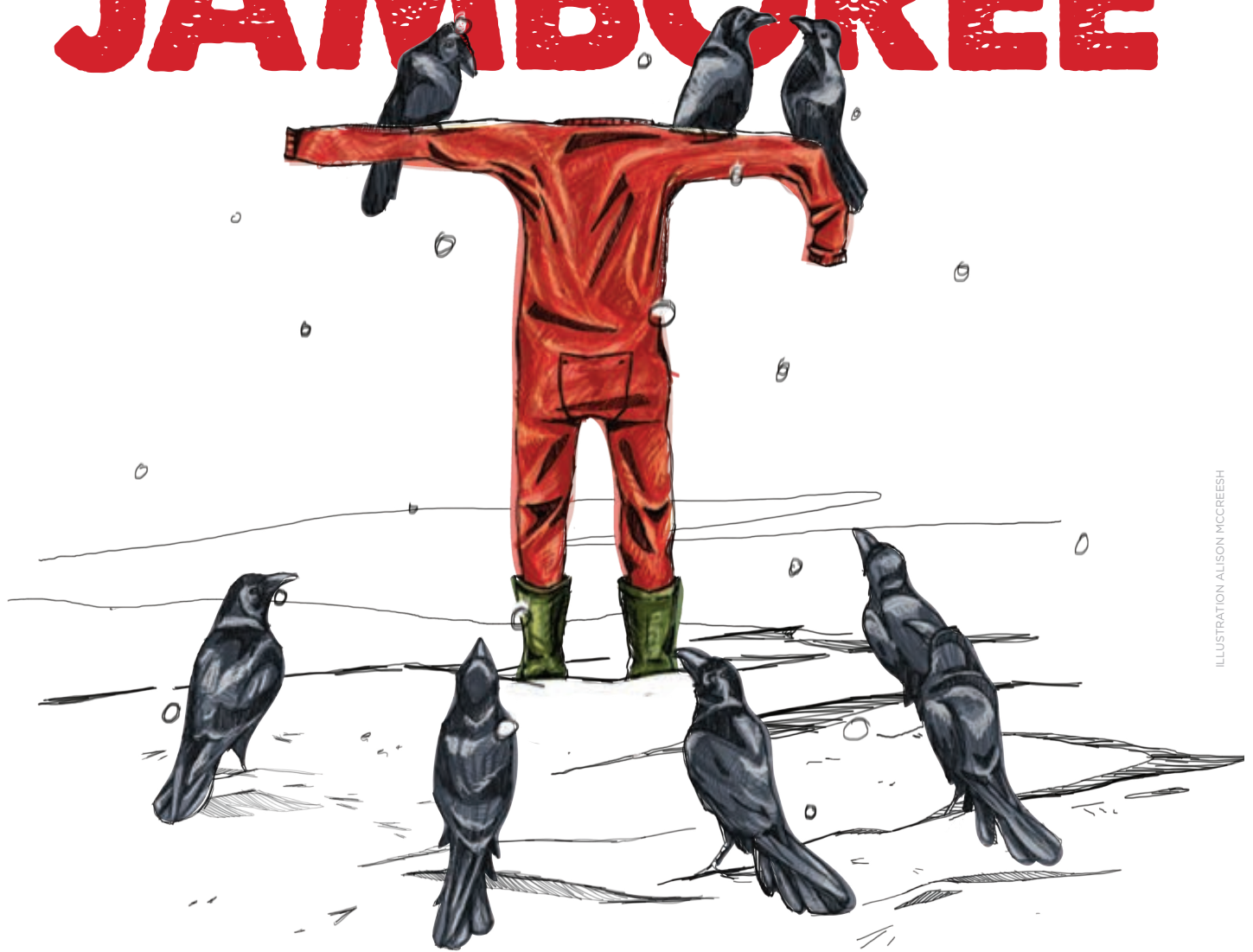


ILLUSTRATION ALISON MCCREESH

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BLOWN AWAY

FROM THE EAST ARM TO YK

by Denis Légère

photo Denis Légère

On the move: photo compilation of a kite moving from left to right along the East Arm's Redcliff Island on the second day of the author's excursion.

Ever since I can recall, I've always been fascinated by maps, dreaming of new territories to discover and explore. You could say that's one, if not the main reason, I moved from New Brunswick to Yellowknife five years ago. The North has amazing landscapes, people and a variety of new activities. I knew I'd be doing interesting and challenging adventures in my spare time, but I could not have imagined that being dragged by a kite while skiing across the frozen depths of Great Slave Lake would be one of them.

I saw my first kite skiers while cross-country skiing to a friend's houseboat with my dog Cadjouk. I couldn't believe my eyes. These colourful, rectangular kites pulling people at such speed! I looked down at my skis and decided right then, no more. I was never a big fan of cross-country skiing. I was going to learn to kite-ski, using the wind as my fuel.

Since I didn't know anyone who was kite skiing at the time, I

researched it on the Internet, ordered my own equipment — downhill skis and boots, helmet and a snow kite — and taught myself. I don't recommend this for safety reasons, but that's how I learned. My first season was full of trials and errors; I was lucky to walk away from it with only a few bruises and many hilarious, yet scary stories to share.

Within three years, I'd taken my instructor certification in Quebec and was looking for a challenge. I'd been through Lutselk'e — a small Chipewyan community on the south shore of the East Arm on Great Slave Lake — twice on kayaking expeditions and knew the lay of the land there. It also had daily scheduled flights, so I decided to try to ski from Lutselk'e to Yellowknife, a distance of 385 kilometres. If all went well, it would take me around four days, but I planned my supplies for 12, just in case the winds didn't cooperate.

On Tuesday, April 24th the conditions were perfect – 30-km/h winds from the northeast and temperatures around 0. I boarded the plane to Lutselk'e with 90 kilograms of gear. Within two hours after landing, I was packed and on my way.

I was ecstatic. The wind was blowing at my back, it was warm, the sky was blue with no trace of clouds. For a kite skier, it couldn't get any better. I was making good time — travelling around 30-40 km/h — except for one big problem: my sleds.

My gear and supplies were in two 4 x 2 x 1-foot sleds stacked one on top of the other like a sandwich. This contraption had worked for me in the past, but the volume of my load meant the sleds were too high and kept falling over sideways when I caught speed, causing way too much pull on my body. Imagine a car pulling you forward from the waist while a huge rock drags behind you from your lower back. I managed a distance of only 30 kilometres before I stopped for the night.

I didn't take the time to properly set up a wind barrier, which meant my cook fire created a lot of swirling smoke. I slept that night in my tent and awoke the next day with puffy eyes, a stuffed nose and smelling strongly of smoke. I vowed that I would take the time to engineer a proper castle at my next camp — one that would make the SnowKing envious.

As I digested my premade omelet on the second day, I remembered a friend's sled system from a trip we'd done to the North Arm. I redesigned my sleds side-by-side, reorganized my gear and away I went.

Every worry, ache and stress vanished as I glided silently across this frozen expanse. When I got closer to Redcliff Island, my speed gradually slowed and my kite settled down as the wind dissipated. I was not worried. Each day as the sun came to its zenith, two pressure systems would meet, cancelling the winds. I just had to sit down, enjoy the scenery, and wait for my ticket. Over the next three days, it would become a daily routine to relax, stretch, meditate or do some yoga.

I found myself in the best yoga shoulder stand of my life, with the bottom of my ski boots pointing to the sky to stabilize me, when I felt the wind pick up. The majestic Redcliff Island was just around the corner, its tall cliffs looking as if half the island has been sliced in two by a razor-sharp scimitar. My crazy side told me to inch closer to this natural masterpiece, but my rational side was well aware of the dangers of the compression effect. This is when the wind meets a cliff going upward. It initially slows down, compressing at the base of the wall, then forces its way upward and over, creating a strong updraft that could potentially slam me right into the cliff.

I was mesmerized as I glided past Redcliff, my orange kite in the sky spicing up the scenery. I ended my second day on the southwest point of Blanchet Island after a solid 130 kilometres, according to my GPS. By now my sheltering abilities were up to speed. The skies were already announcing a fantastic show of northern lights. As my gear dried I made windbreakers and

A fire helped Denis stay comfortable on the cold nights.

heat reflectors out of snow. I laid down spruce bows close to the fire and settled into my bivy sac to gaze at the dancing night sky.

Since day one, my entire body had been aching, but my spirit remained high as the clouds. Nothing could bring me down. By the third day my body figured out that this daily punishment was what it is, and will, be for a while. All the aches didn't seem so bad. The body is an amazing machine.

Most people believe this sport is an upper body workout. It is, but the legs get their share. The kite is attached close to your belly, so a strong core certainly helps. The arms and torso control your kite movement, but your legs create the edge

continued on page 24



photo Denis Légère



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necessary for speed, direction and stability. There's never a break for the leg muscles. I developed an hourly routine to help stretch them and remove some of the lactic acid. I would stand on one leg and lift the other, bending in the process and holding for 20 seconds.

I also perfected my "butterfly" or "slingshot" technique. This is best used when the wind hits close to the direction in which you're going. It saves an amazing amount of travel time. Your kite draws an "eight" sideways or an infinity sign in the sky. At the same time, your body goes in the opposite direction. This dance propels you forward at staggering speeds. The tricky part with a sled is to avoid sharp turns so that your sleds don't yank the bejesus out of your back.

Late in the third day, my first pressure ridge appeared on the horizon. These can be both magnificent and deadly. They form when two or more underwater currents collide. You can visualize the tectonic plates of clear blue ice clashing and forming mountains and ridges. They can go for kilometres on end and reach several metres in height. Finding a safe traverse can sometimes mean huge detours. There are also puddles of water that form on one or both sides that can affect ice stability. Luckily for me, I didn't have to drift too far off course before I found a suitable crossing.

On the fourth day, the heat on the lake rose well over the freezing point so the snow slowly changed to a sticky slush and accentuated the drag of my skis and sleds. Thankfully the wind kept its course to give enough forward momentum. I had become more aggressive, using natural and gradual winds to create more power, hence more speed. Natural wind speed pushes your kite, gradual wind is the additional wind created by moving the kite. If there's a 30-km/hour wind and you

displace your kite up and down at 20-km/hour, the total wind hitting your kite is 50 km/hour. The more aggressive you are with your kite, the more power you generate and the faster you'll go.

As I passed Devils Channel, about 80 kilometres south of Yellowknife, the snowflakes turned to bone-chilling rain. I quickly stopped to cover my gear with a tarp and realized that most of the snow cover on the lake was already gone. Ice I can deal with, but add freezing water to the mix and travel becomes a slog. I had two options: set up camp at the first favorable spot and risk deteriorating conditions or make for Yellowknife before darkness.

Speed was with me as the wind roared from the southeast. I added another layer under my Gore-Tex and started the homestretch. Signs of civilization appeared as two snowmobilers passed me, looking puzzled to see a kite way out there.

I travelled along the ice road past the old fish plant around Wool Bay. The water covered highway made the final stretch that much more exhilarating as I glided from one puddle to the next. My clothes drenched, sleds half-full of water and my beard soaked, I was really starting to question whether I should have stopped a while back. But as I saw that beautiful red Con shaft sticking out of the wilderness, a burst of joy exploded from my lungs as I screamed my warrior cry. After all those kilometres, trials and errors, rain and sunshine, my heart was at a loss.

I came to a halt at Dettah to meet up with my friend, Aaron Jaque, who was on the lookout for me. I left him my sled and glided back to Yellowknife. Only a few days after would I start to realize my accomplishment and yearn for my next trip. ©



Denis waking up on the fourth day out of his bivy bag. He experimented with a cozy combination of a bivy, a thermal blanket and sleeping bag, as well as sleeping with a polyester coat on.

photo Denis Légère



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WHAT YOU NEED TO KITE SKI

photo Steve Schwarz

If you're interested in learning, here are a few starter tips.

Because wind is unpredictable, kite skiing has inherent dangers. It's best to meet first with someone who knows the sport, ideally an instructor who can give you lessons. Stéphane Sevigny of Aquilon Power Kites in Yellowknife oversees bookings with three certified instructors including himself, Sebring Bernasconi, and Denis Légère, the writer of this story. Beginner lessons cost \$95/hour, which includes a kite, harness and helmet. Aquilon has a limited selection of skis, boots and boards to use, depending on your size, and recommends 3-6 hours of lessons before

kiting independently. Aquilon Power Kites: cell (867) 445-9758, home 766-4804, or info@aquilonpowerkite.com.

If you love the sport and want to buy your own equipment, Aquilon sells kites, helmets and harnesses, as does Overlander Sports. Expect to pay around \$1,250 - \$1,650 (or much more) for a kite and harness suitable for an average-sized person.

There are two basic types of kite – foil and inflatables. Foil kites are best for our harsh environment and beginners. The wind inflates the chambers and gives

shape to the kite; they have minimal setup to launch and store away, and will not puncture if they are dragged across sharp ice or snow. You'll also need downhill skis and boots or a snowboard, a helmet, ski goggles, warm clothes and lots of determination.

The ideal time to kite ski is in the spring – February, March and April – when it's warmer and there's more light and wind. If you're really keen to start learning, anytime during the winter is good, starting in November once the ice is thick enough. ☺

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- To drive with care and at speed appropriate for road conditions.
- Don't overdrive your headlights because you can't avoid bison you can't see, particularly in the dark.
- Make sure everyone in the vehicle is wearing their seatbelt.

Report any collisions or injured or dead bison to the nearest Environment and Natural Resources office.

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story by Jack Danylchuk
illustration by Alison McCreesh

Into the wild blue yonder with aurora tourism

HOW A PLAN THAT SEEMED SO RIGHT
TURNED OUT SO WRONG



Yellowknife's history was carved out of the gold-bearing rock below, but its future lay in mining the treasures of its night sky – the fabled aurora borealis. At least that's what the territorial government and a who's-who list of Yellowknife investors believed when they bolstered up the aurora-viewing tourism industry — specifically Aurora World Corp. — about 10 years ago.

Back then, the swirl and shimmer of northern lights beckoned like a money-green banner, promising to bestow riches on all who staked a claim in the winter tourism market.

But that's not what happened. The territorial government's adventure in the aurora tourism business cost taxpayers more than \$1.5 million and embroiled four of those investors – Grant Beck, Darryl Dolynny, the NWT Metis Development Corp. and Alex Arychuk – in a messy legal tussle to try to get them to pay the \$100,000 they promised to pony up if Aurora World failed on their watch.

How did it all go so wrong?

The debt was owed to the NWT Business Development and Investment Corp., the latest in a succession of government-backed lending agencies that loaned \$1.8 million to the ailing Aurora World and its predecessor Raven Tours to finance their play in the northern lights viewing market.

At last count, BDIC lost all but the \$300,000 it recovered from the sale of Aurora World's Prelude Lake viewing centre to Don Morin's Aurora Village, after the investors recruited to save the company walked away from it.

The \$1.5 million loss is the largest single hit to the fortunes of BDIC, the lender of last resort for the Northwest Territories, and not one that Pawan Chugh, the current president, or Dave Ramsay, the GNWT minister responsible for the corporation, is willing to discuss, citing the confidentiality agreement appended to the settlement reached this past spring with Aurora World investors.

All questions on the Aurora World file were referred to Doug McNiven, the lawyer who represented BDIC in its efforts to recover its investment in the bankrupt company. McNiven says that all answers can be found in the voluminous court records on the case.

The aurora business started in Yellowknife when Japanese tour brokers began shopping for destinations to satisfy demand for the spectacle and found Bill Tait, owner and operator of Raven Tours.

Tait rode the wave through the nineties, cashing in on the 11-year aurora cycle and the enthusiasm of Japanese tourists who talked up the new experience, glamorizing the journey

into the bitter cold of a northern winter to see the dazzling lights.

As the millennium approached and the cycle promised another brilliant display, the aurora business was bright with promise.

"The aurora market is not a fad," the authors of a government-commissioned report by Ellis Consulting wrote in 2002, but "sustainable with significant growth potential." Aurora tourists were lighting up cash registers to the tune of an estimated \$25.4 million for the 2001-02 winter tourist season, which would add \$8 million to government tax coffers.

The only thing keeping more Japanese viewers from sharing the experience was investment in what looked like a gold mine in the sky. "If the NWT is marketed, the only limitation to aurora tourism growth is capacity, in infrastructure and attractions," the report said, noting the market's phenomenal growth to a predicted 15,600 visitors that year, from just 400 visitors a decade earlier.

The report's authors watered their enthusiasm somewhat in a footnote that proved prophetic for Aurora World Corp: "The 2001-02 season does not reflect the estimated impact of the events of September 11th on the market," they wrote, "but it is possible that this impact will be greater than anticipated.


Nonetheless the market is expected to rebound and continue to grow."

Much of that proved true. Bill Tait, now a travel consultant working out of Vancouver, remembers the 2001-02 season as a disaster for the Territory's developing aurora market. "It wasn't just 9/11, it was a perfect storm of events – the mad cow scare, bird flu, terror attacks in Spain."

Aurora travel from Japan imploded, from almost 14,000 visitors in 2000-01 to 6,500 in the first post-9/11 season. Aurora World's share was just 3,000 customers, nowhere near enough to service its debt with the territorial government. "We had to lay off our guides, cancel leases on buses. It was a disaster," said Tait.

In a bid to salvage the company, Tait brought in Alan Vaughn, former president of the NWT Development Corp., and accountant Grant Hinchey. They developed a plan to revive Aurora World and with Tait, recruited investors from Yellowknife's business community.

Tait couldn't recall all the names of all those who he said put up from \$20,000 to \$100,000 each, but they included



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Don Yamkowy, a travel company owner; Grant Beck, kennel owner and dog sled racer; pharmacist-entrepreneur Darryl Dolynny; Edward Eggenberger, YK Liquor Store owner and son of Raven Tours founder Albert Eggenberger; Shahram Yazanmehr; Fred Hunt, then head of Nunasi Corp.; Air Tindi founder Alex Arychuk and the NWT Metis Development Corp.

Going strictly by the numbers, Aurora World's new management team was well positioned to save the company. After 9/11, the aurora market seemed to be on a sustained uptick: 9,000 visitors in 2002-2003, 9,990 the year after, and 10,245 in 2004-05 – but there were other factors in play.

Sage Suzuki viewed the aurora business from the vantage point of a small operator whose company, Canadian Ex, catered to groups of 30, bussing them to a rented property just far enough from Yellowknife to escape light pollution from the city and give the visitors a sense of the vastness of the surrounding wilderness.

The market is driven by the Japanese tour brokers, he said, and they have definite ideas about the product they want. Staffing was the deal-breaker for him. Guides were brought from Japan. Suzuki was their sponsor and only legal employer. In summer, when he pilots helicopters, he had no work for them. "I was always recruiting new people. It just got too difficult."

When Suzuki closed the books on Canadian Ex and sold off the last of his bright-red parkas, Aurora World was barely keeping the lights on. It was in a price war with former premier Morin's Aurora Village, and losing.

Bill Tait's new partners threw him overboard, but the business kept sinking, despite the improving tourism numbers. The company had not made payments on its \$1.8 million debt since December 2003, and owed another \$1.2 million to suppliers, restaurants and the Canada Revenue Agency.

"Aurora World Corporation is insolvent," Garth Hinchey, by then the company's chairman and CEO, wrote Peter Vician, then deputy minister of the GNWT's Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development Department, in April 2004. "Unless reorganized, it runs the risk of seeking bankruptcy protection."

Bankruptcy would be the easy way out for investors, Hinchey wrote, but "the effect on the local economy would be devastating as 12 businesses and individuals would also become bankrupt and the ripple effects would be felt for years. The Aurora industry would be lost forever with no person or business able to replace Aurora World, meaning the loss of \$25 million in annual revenue to the NWT."

RWED minister Brendan Bell was sympathetic, but made no promise beyond financial help to pay for professional advice in the search for a solution to Aurora World's troubles.

But in October 2004 the BDIC (then known as the Business Credit Corp.) agreed to forgive \$815,000 in loans, leaving

Aurora world with a \$1-million debt at seven per cent interest.

As if to applaud the bail-out plan, aurora visits held at 10,200 in 2005-06, but by the following year, the recovery took on the appearance of a dead-cat bounce. Visits fell to 7,000 in 2006-07, and then dipped even further with the onset of the world recession, to 5,460 in 2008-09. By then, Aurora World was out of business.

Darryl Bohnet, then chairman of Aurora World, delivered the bad news in an email to directors and investors. Aurora World could not meet its financial obligations and would close its doors Nov. 1, 2008. "With the numbers for the upcoming winter season looking bleak, we were just not able to continue," he wrote.

All that remained was for the Business Development Investment Corp. to recover the \$1.1 million in principal and interest, and the \$100,000 four directors agreed to pay if they failed to turn around the fortunes of Aurora World Corp.

The Prelude Lake viewing centre was sold in 2009, bringing in almost \$300,000. The guarantee proved more difficult, perhaps impossible. According to an affidavit from BDIC officer Chris Taylor, the directors tried more than once to wriggle free of their commitment.

Grant Beck, Darryl Dolynny, the NWT Metis Development Corp. and Alex Arychuk in September 2004, sought to have the guarantee terminated if they ceased to be directors. BDIC refused. In August of 2008, they admitted their liability, but a year later, in May 2009, they said the guarantee had a five-year limit. Again BDIC disagreed, Taylor said in his affidavit.

Finally, when pressed for payment, the four former directors claimed that during loan negotiations, BDIC officials and former minister Bell assured them that "in no event would BDIC enforce the personal guarantee," and that "the entire cabinet were in support" of the deal.

Last March, BDIC filed a notice of motion with the NWT Supreme Court that said it could find no written evidence to support the directors' claim that they had been induced to sign the guarantee. "The respondents have not produced any evidence, and may not rest on mere allegations or denials," said the motion, which asked the court to order the directors to make good on their guarantees during a chambers hearing on April 13, a Friday.

Whatever agreement was reached that day, the details are private. Without explanation, the BDIC discontinued its action to recover the \$100,000.

As the aurora cycle approaches another peak, the NWT is back on tourists' bucket lists, but now it shares the business with Yukon, Nunavut and Alaska. In 2010-11, aurora visitors numbered 6,700, according to the Department of Industry Tourism and Investment — less than half the mark set a decade ago, when the sky seemed to be the only limit for aurora tourism operators. (E)

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Growing up in YK

by Camilla MacEachern

I was born and raised in Yellowknife. When people learn this, nine times out of ten they get very excited. Something lights up inside them, and then I wait for it, the inevitable question: "What was it like growing up in Yellowknife?"

I don't mind this question at all. In fact, I encourage it. Unfortunately, it is usually asked at very inconvenient times, like at a party with all of its distractions, or during a 15-minute coffee break. It's a tough question to answer on the fly, and anyone who knows me and my storytelling knows that I don't like to give half-assed, rushed interpretations. So for those of you who have ever asked, or will ask, here is my 1,000-word answer.

I was born in the old Stanton Yellowknife Hospital in 1978, which from my recollection was a single storey "super-trailer" located where the Avens Senior Centre now resides. At that time there were no official labour and delivery rooms, so my mother tells me I made my appearance in the operating room (classy).

For any kid in Yellowknife, playing outside was a huge pastime and in the summer there was no shortage of

daylight hours or places to wander. I loved being in nature. If I wasn't camping with my family, I was playing in the bush with friends. Being surrounded by never-ending wilderness provided endless exploring and fort location options. It also presented new discoveries. It seemed you couldn't go anywhere

without finding someone's stash of "adult magazines." I guess you could say I had my first official anatomy lesson on the rocks behind the Racquet Club.

In winter, we closed down our forts in exchange for warmer activities such

continued on page 37




1979, the Yellowknife Daycare on 51st Street, still standing today.



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as swimming and skating. Recreational facilities were somewhat rustic but we made due. Our swimming pool was located in the bottom of an apartment complex (Fraser Towers). There was no shallow end for children, so the powers that be created one for us simply by placing tables at the bottom of one end of the pool.

Our ice rink (the old Gerry Murphy arena) also had a lot of character. It was like a big old woody barn, and it wasn't uncommon for brown clumps to fall from the ceiling and settle on the ice. We would just skate over them. It wasn't a surprise when they opted to build a new arena rather than tackle repairs.

School was never cancelled and "snow day" was a foreign term only used in movies. Just like other school children across the country, we were still expected to go outside for recess but the difference between those children and us was about negative 30 degrees. Like little herds of muskox on the tundra, my school pals and I would stand around in pockets, slowly shuffling through the schoolyard with only our eyeballs exposed. My ambitious friends would attempt to play games to keep warm. I would often play mental games with myself to take my mind off my frozen toes and eyeballs.

There were no franchise stores, with the exception of The Hudson's Bay (the Bay). We shopped at places that usually started with someone's name, like Joan's Fashions or Norm's Stationary; or stated the obvious, like Shoes n' Things. My family relied heavily on Sears mail orders. That catalogue was my bible, especially the 'Christmas Wish Book'. That glorious publication would be tattered and worn by the end of the year after so much page-turning and sibling tug-o-wars.

Toy Land, located in the basement of The Bay, was a kid's utopia. In retrospect, I recognize it was likely a few shelves of mix-matched toys. I grew up in the era of My Little Pony, Strawberry Shortcake and Cabbage Patch Kids. Although stores did a great job of carrying these hot items, there was always a limited supply. My mom recently reminded me of "The Great North of 60 Cabbage Patch Incident," where she was tipped off that a shipment of Cabbage Patch dolls was arriving in town. I longed for one. On the big day, my mom, and many other moms, lined up outside of Toy Land. I can just imagine the "Good, the Bad and the Ugly" theme song playing in the background as they stood there, sweating in their parkas and Sorels, waiting anxiously for the door to open. When it did, like roller derby girls, each raced to the doll section. Some used

excessive force, some used strong words. My mom was one of the lucky ones and walked away with her prize. The moral of the story, if you wanted something in this town, you needed to stay on top of things.

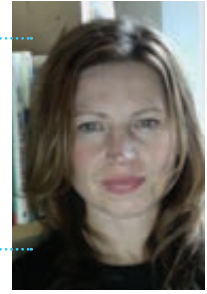
Buying fresh foods was another challenge. Frozen vegetable medley was never a stranger at the dinner table, although I desperately wished that it was. When the ferry was out, it was really out. Shelves remained bare for weeks at a time, and when the going got tough my parents relied on powdered milk, our caribou or moose supply and frozen or canned veggies, to get us through.

There was no need to fret though because there were plenty of restaurants — Papa's Pizza, Mr. Mikes and Netties Perogies to name a few. But my favourite was The Lunch Box (LB). It was the social hub of the town, had the best fries and gravy and blue swizzle chairs that would help me entertain myself while my parents talked to everybody. It was located in the lower level of the YK Centre across from Northern Flair hair salon. There was something comforting about the aroma of hamburgers, cigarette smoke and perm solution that would drift from that basement. I recently learned from an old LB employee that the fries were so tasty because they allegedly only changed their grease trap every three months.

When the ferry or the ice road were operating, driving was my family's mode of vacation transportation (flights to Edmonton cost a minimum \$1,000). Packed in the Bronco with my parents, brother and sister — Steve Miller cranked in the tape deck — all that would get me through that gruelling gravel-road journey was my pink Walkman and the anticipation of being in the big city, going to shopping malls and eating fresh McDonalds. Yeah, you heard me, I say fresh because it wasn't uncommon to place a Big Mac order with a friend who was going to be "down south." We even placed bulk orders through our middle school, William McDonald.

As a child I was in awe of skyscrapers, dark summer nights and the people who lived "down south". How they would dress, things they would eat and the cool things that they would get to do, like ride escalators! I'm still a little bit in awe of those things (truthfully, it wasn't until my mid-twenties that I seamlessly mastered how to get on and off of escalators), but now I can appreciate why so many people are in awe of my childhood here. Because it was truly that — awesome.





Why Devolution could harsh some people's mellow

Before I tell you why the devolution deal being penned between the territorial government and Canada is bad for Yellowknife — and everywhere else in the NWT — let me first explain where I'm coming from when I write. I have lived in Yellowknife off and on for the past 20 years, but I grew up in Inuvik. "Stephanie, she's a Delta girl," is how people like Willard Hagen, the legendary Northern aviator and former Gwich'in Tribal Council president, introduce me. That's Mackenzie Delta, ah? Most of the work I do as a governance and political advisor is with organizations and people located in communities outside of Yellowknife, so when I critique political developments — like devolution — naturally I take into account what is good for all of us. My Yellowknifer edge has been sharpened and oriented by my life in the regions.

Devolution in and of itself is not a bad idea. Who could be against wanting administrative control of lands and resources to shift from Canada to northern governments? Depending on what changes are eventually made to our regulatory regime, devolution could lead to control over staking or decisions on mining permits being made by a government that lives here. But if we take into account the bigger picture, we might start to see why some of our fellow Northerners — the ones who live in shacks and just off gravel roads with minimal services; or off the grid, without any sort of self-conscious, self-congratulatory intent — are feeling like devolution is sort of harshing their mellow. Their concerns would be ones like: will devolution concentrate power in Yellowknife and not the regions? Will it result in an impetus to increase resource extraction that could threaten the very important food sources and cultural practices that are the economic mainstays of many small indigenous communities, communities enveloped in poverty that would be unimaginable in places like Yellowknife? How will devolution change the way things are done?

A problematic aspect of the devolution deal is the Resource

Revenue "Sharing" Agreement, in which Canada will do way more keeping than sharing. According to a GNWT website, Canada will only provide the territories with maximum revenues equal to 5 per cent of the territorial government's annual budget — about \$65 million — from the resource royalties generated by resource extraction projects in the NWT. To reach that cap, many resource extraction projects will have to be approved (because the NWT is burdened with a 19th century, archaic resource royalty regime that sells resources far too cheaply). The revenue-sharing formula is a crazy kind of accounting where the cap is literally dreamed up — it bears no relation at all to the federal-provincial equalization formula or any other rational basis. Should the GNWT start authorizing resource-extraction projects with a view to maximizing royalties, it will quickly become evident that \$65 million per year will not be nearly enough to cover real expenses that are not the responsibility of industry: things like roads and public infrastructure, and social and environmental costs.

It is likely that Yellowknife will not bear many of the environmental or cultural impacts — those will be the scourge of the smaller, faraway places (a reality requiring a more in-depth future article). But Yellowknife will bear social and economic impacts that all resource-boom-economy centres encounter, such as rising housing costs, food prices and demands on social and educational programs. Government will have to respond to these realities — through political and institutional change, taxation, rethinking the resource royalty regime and considering moving forward with measures like a permanent fund (where you live off its interest) or an economic stabilization fund (that you use to smooth out the booms and busts). Fundamentally, devolution impacts on Yellowknife will be felt around the territory. Mitigating negative impacts will require solutions that are not only right for Yellowknife, but right for all of us.

A political advisor and analyst, Stephanie Irlbacher-Fox is a graduate of Samuel Hearne Secondary School in Inuvik and holds a PhD from Cambridge University. She is an advisory board member and political correspondent for *Northern Public Affairs* magazine, and lives in Yellowknife with her husband Andrew and their two boys.

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