

MINUTES

ATTENDING: Sue Popesku, Northern Lights College, Ft. St. John  
Dr. Curtis Nordman, Northern Lights College, Ft. St. John  
Keith Hancock, Freelance Journalist, Ladysmith (NL College)  
Marl Brown, Chamber of Commerce, Ft. Nelson  
Harold Duby, Chamber of Commerce, Dawson Creek  
Alfie Seidl, Chamber of Commerce, Dawson Creek  
Doreen Passmore, Chamber of Commerce, Ft. St. John  
Dick Sequens, Managing Director, P.R.A.H.T.A.  
Dave Kullo, Western Guides & Outfitters, Hudson's Hope  
Norma Cox, Chamber of Commerce, Ft. St. John

At 9:10 A.M. Dr. Curtis Nordman gave some background on and showed a video film about the building of the highway entitled "The Alaska Highway" by Richard Finnie. The film was quite informative, giving good information about the timetable involved in the building of the Highway and the reasons why it was built. It was started in March, 1942 and finished as far as Fairbanks with a passable seasonal road in November, 1942. The Peace Bridge opened in 1943 and marked the beginning of a year-round road from Dawson Creek to Whitehorse. The film is part of the material to be used at the Alaska Highway Symposium to be held at Northern Lights College June 19 & 20, 1982.

At 9:50 A.M., after the film, Dick Sequens introduced himself as the Managing Director of P.R.A.H.T.A. and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and also temporary acting chairperson of this steering committee. The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the possibilities of an anniversary celebration in 1982 of the Alaska Highway and what directions the northern communities are going to take towards this end:

- a) whether or co-ordinate our efforts or work separately
- b) if co-ordinated, to work out a time frame for events
- c) to set up a working committee to promote the idea at home in each community

The prime advantage of this kind of celebration is the large tourist potential for the future and all the benefits that this industry can provide for the area.

Dick then introduced Dr. Curtis Nordman of the History Department at Northern Lights College. Curtis explained to those present about the Alaska Highway Symposium that will be taking place at the Fort St. John campus of the college next June, using the aid of a highlight sheet which was passed out to all present. He explained the background not only of how he got involved but how the Symposium got started and how plans stand at this point in time. He gave a brief chronological background of the building of the Highway from the planning stages to the present and stressed the impact that the Highway has had and the prospects for the future that the Highway makes possible for the area. Curtis told the meeting that the Symposium will have some technical data as well as historical information and discussions of the socio-economic changes related to the Highway. He explained that the College

hopes to write and produce a play based on the Highway which will premiere at the Symposium and be available after that time for production in other places. He also told those present about publication and video possibilities that are being considered for the Symposium. Curtis suggested that the Symposium could be used as a kickoff event for a summer celebration of the Highway Anniversary. He confirmed that there will be a major banquet at the Symposium to honour contributors to the Highway and that he will be able to confirm who will be the Guest Speaker at the banquet on or about November 5, 1981. He stressed that while the Symposium is to be an academic event it has also been designed to stir local interest. Curtis also explained that celebrating the 40th Anniversary was decided upon because of the ages of most of the people involved in the building of the Highway: they should be in their 60's or 70's and be free to travel and also have the funds to do so at this stage of their lives.

Curtis was questioned on whether or not the Symposium could be enlarged to include a tourist package after the Symposium and told the meeting that those possibilities could be discussed at a later date.

He was asked how a quality control would be done on the publication coming out of the Symposium and told those present that the provincial Ministries of Tourism and Education are co-ordinating that part of things. Curtis is to be the editor for duplication and quality control. He then told the meeting how the Symposium format was arrived at, with most of the work being done by himself ie. outline, correspondence with speakers to get experts in each field being dealt with.

At this point, Sue Popesku stressed that the College is a regional college and not a Fort St. John college and asked that the attitude of the Chambers be regional as well, especially on this project. Curtis explained that the reason the Symposium is being held in Fort St. John is purely for reasons of convenience for air travellers and accommodation facilities available here.

Dick then introduced Sue Popesku to explain the costs involved in the Symposium and the possible grants available not only to the College but to the Chambers, should they decide to pursue this project. She explained that she works on Community as well as College project funding and that she has been assigned to collect \$30,000 for the Symposium. She is using this as a contact for later discussion with her sources for possible funds for a Northern Education Centre which may be founded in the future. She stressed the advantages and publicity involved in the 40th Anniversary Reunion concept and told the meeting that Keith Hancock had been hired by the College to promote the Symposium at all levels. She explained briefly the possibilities of each Chamber getting a Special Projects Grant from Tourism BC to help pay Keith to promote the whole 40th Anniversary celebration.

At this point, the promotion aspect of the Anniversary was stressed, the regional promotion via the Symposium, P.R.A.H.T.A. promotion

available nationwide and across North America on tours. Again, regional co-operation from all organizations was strongly recommended as being the most effective form of promotion for the best use of the money available to the area.

Dick told the meeting that the Ministry of Tourism has hired the firm of John Glover and Associates to promote economic tourism and that they want to initiate this program in Region H.

Dick then introduced Keith Hancock, who gave a brief background on himself, including 10 years as a journalist, head of the British Tourist Association in Shakespear year, a public relations consultant in a British firm, Business Editor of the Nanaimo Times and a freelance journalist. Keith explained that if he is going to promote this Anniversary celebration he needs to know the target areas we want covered. He stressed the potential of the senior citizen market, regional publicity and the need for all areas to contribute ideas and material for promotion and publication. Another possible area of tremendous revenue is that of package tours of the region. Keith also stressed the possibilities of promotion on an international level, the "single voice" for the region aspect of promotion and the possibilities for socio-economic promotion. He showed and discussed how to turn negative publicity into positive, touring the region to show the smaller centres how to promote themselves and suggested that a Regional Calendar of Events was of prime importance to the project.

Next, Dick asked for input from each of the communities represented:

Fort St. John - co-ordinate Totem Days and the annual Rodeo with the Symposium. Brainstorming sessions have been held and have come up with the following ideas: a major airshow and military fly-in at centres along the Highway; Bush Pilot's Reunion. It was felt by the committee that they wanted the reactions from other communities before proceeding too far into planning.

Dawson Creek - Alfie asked for an introduction of those present. He then explained that several groups and individuals have ideas but that, at present, there is no co-ordination of schedules, as they were waiting for results of this meeting.

Fort Nelson - Marl told the group that they had only recently been made aware of the project but that there was good interest in his area.

Hudson's Hope - Dave said that he will do some background work but that there was good enthusiasm. He suggested using the Pot 'O Gold magazine as an advertising vehicle.

Chetwynd/Pouce Coupe - Dick reported that Pouce Coupe will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary this coming year and that might tie in with the Highway celebrations. Chetwynd had given him very positive feedback on the idea.

At 11:55 the Committee broke for lunch and informal discussions over the meal.

At 12:50 P.M., after a Chinese lunch sponsored by the Fort St..John & District Chamber of Commerce, the committee reconvened.

The first item to be discussed was the future direction of this committee. Should separate committees be formed at this time to start work on the project? It was felt by all that the representatives present should go back to their Chambers and sponsor groups so that we may have more enthusiasm and a slightly larger representation at the future meetings. Dick suggested that at the next meeting a special committee be formed separate from the Chambers and that they elect a Chairperson at that time.

It was tentatively decided that the next steering committee meeting would be held on Saturday, November 14, 1981 in Dawson Creek, these arrangements to be confirmed through Dick Sequens as soon as possible. The main objectives of this meeting are to be:

- a) form committee and elect chairperson
- b) outline major promotion for each community then fill in with more minor projects for each area
- c) discuss special presentation by Curtis Nordman of film shown at start of this meeting and by Keith Hancock around the region
- d) invite native representation to the committee

At this point a brainstorming session was held with all members of the committee submitting ideas. See the attached list of ideas mentioned at this time. At the next meeting some of these ideas should be more developed so that committees may be formed and the portfolios may be initiated.

Dick took a picture or two of the entire group and will put together a news release to be mailed to the Chambers as soon as possible to start publicizing the committee, the Anniversary celebrations, and the community involvement requested for the project.

The meeting finished at 14:30 hours.

Respectfully submitted

Joan Scoble  
Secretary,  
Fort St. John & District  
Chamber of Commerce