

Pioneering women sug

BRONWYN SCOTT
STAFF WRITER

Fort St. John's new elementary school needs a name, and school board trustees decided Monday to solicit input from the community.

The \$24.8-million school, which the province announced in November, will be built near Sunset Ridge, and will accommodate 365 students from Kindergarten to Grade 6.

It's been given the temporary name of North West Elementary, but it needs a formal name.

"We need to give the site a proper name so that we can start dealing with it on a provincial basis," said Dave Sloan, superintendent of School District 60.

The district currently does not have a naming protocol, but staff were able to source information on past naming practices from archived meeting minutes.

"In 1964 when we had a new school, the motion was that names be submitted to and tabulated by the office of the district superintendent, and that the tabulation be submitted to the board for due consideration," Sloan said.

Some schools are named after pioneering members of the community, their geographic location, or the communities they serve—hence Upper Pine, Clearview, Central, and North Peace.

After researching naming criteria from other jurisdictions, staff were able to share some of the most common criteria for the board.

"Specific criteria for naming schools after people include (those) who have made valuable contributions to the education community or country; people who represent diversity within the community; people who are renowned for their historical humanitarian or cultural contributions," Sloan said.

The person should be deceased by five or more years "to avoid emotional responses," he added.

For places, the common criteria are recognition of the area the

facility serves, recognition of the geographic location or features, or recognition of historical events that took place at or near the location.

"All the names must be distinct from other names in use, so we couldn't call it North Peace Elementary because we already have a North Peace Secondary. They must be in good taste and be able to stand the test of time," Sloan said.

District staff are in the process of establishing a process seeking community input, but suggestions have already started rolling in.

"A number of names have been suggested, and what commonly comes to light is that all the schools that are named after people in our district are named after men," Sloan said.

"There has been a push both from the historical society, from the students from Upper Pine, from other community members that, if we're going to continue the practice of naming buildings after people, that we might want to add a little gender diversity."

Emma Eggimann, a 10-year-old from Upper Pine Elementary, wrote in suggesting Monica Storrs, a woman pioneer who lived in the Fort St. John area from 1929 to 1950.

"Ms. Storrs was never married and was considered a pioneer woman in those days because it was not easy living in the north at that time," Eggimann wrote.

"There were not many roads to get places and Ms. Storrs used to ride her horse or walk everywhere she went.

"One of her jobs was to check on the people who were living out of town a long distance. She would ride in all kinds of weather conditions through forest and brush to check on these people and encourage them by lifting their spirits."

Eggimann added that Storrs would let older children who lived far out of town live with her at her house near town so they could attend a proper school.

Other suggestions the board has

uggested as names for new school

received include naming the school after Bella Yahey, a First Nations signatory to Treaty 8 and wife of Charlie Yahey, for whom Charlie Lake is named, and Anne Young, the region's first registered nurse.

Heather Sjoblom, curator with the Fort St. John North Peace

Museum, said students need female role models.

"We enjoy giving guided tours to students in this area, and seeing about the role the men played, but it's time for the students to have some female role models as well," she said.

"They connect more with the historical character if their school is named after them."

Construction on the school is expected to begin this summer, and be completed by the end of 2017.

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LOCAL NEWS



Fort St. John North Peace Museum Curator Heather Sjoblom speaks to a full house of locals who turned out for the museum's documentary night on the building of the Alaska Highway. The film included original film footage as well as historical photographs to take viewers through the eight-month rush of constructing the highway through challenging territory.

HALEY LABOUCANE PHOTO

Museum in need of volunteers

MATT PREPROST

editor@ahnfsj.ca

The North Peace Historical Society is looking to bolster its roster of volunteers and bring in a new generation of history keepers ahead of its upcoming annual general meeting in March.

The Fort St. John North Peace Museum, which is operated by the society, broke a number of records in 2016, including 48 school tours, 142 archival requests, and 2,762 paid visits. More than 90 volunteers put in more than 4,200 hours last year to bring it all together.

"The museum is getting busier and we need more help," said Evelyn Sim, president of the North Peace Historical Society, noting its volunteer and director base is aging.

"I'm not just thinking now, I'm thinking ahead for the future."

Opportunities at the museum range from helping to run the gift shop, providing museum tours, and helping out with archiving and research.

The historical society is also hoping those interested in serving as board directors to help guide the museum's future will step up to the plate.

"It's important to get people in to become volunteers and really interested in preserving this history, and to carry out the functions of our mandate," said Sim.

"We need those volunteers who want to do that."

The historical society will hold its annual general meeting March 1.

For more, contact museum curator Heather Sjoblom at (250) 787-0430.

LOCAL NEWS

HISTORY CLASS

JULY 26, 2018



Historic Dunvegan was on hand for the North Peace Museum on July 21 to teach visitors about the fur trade. The museum grounds were filled with a cast of characters to guide visitors through historic buildings, including Anglican missionary Monica Storrs, businessman and adventurer Paddy Carroll, and police constable Thomas Jamieson. Garry Oker from Doig River First Nation was also on hand to talk about Treaty 8 history and culture.

Royal BC Museum biologists in the Peace

AUG 9, 2018

AUSTIN COZICAR

reporter@dcdn.ca

Over the past few weeks, a group of Royal BC Museum biologists have been working in the Peace Region making collections of plants, insects, spiders and fungi in six alpine areas.

"Each year, we go to some area in the northern half of British Columbia, alpine areas. This year, we've divided our work between Tumbler Ridge and Fort St. John, accessing parts of the Northern Rockies we haven't been able to get into yet," says Robb Bennett, who focuses on spiders.

Last month, the biologists made a presentation in Tumbler Ridge, just a couple of hours removed from nine days of field work on three different peaks. Among the groups they are helping is the Tumbler Ridge Geopark, whom they are supplying with data.

"We're documenting areas that haven't been visited before, especially in the alpine," explains Dr. Ken Marr, a botanist. "Nobody's made collections of the Limestone Lake area, we went to Mount Whitford. Our goal is to cover as much ground as we can."

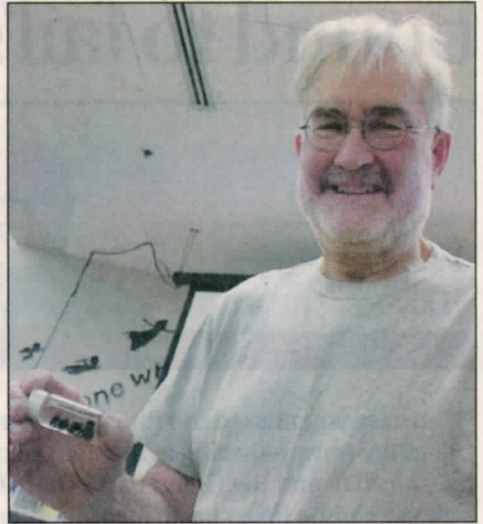
Obviously, the scheduling is not perfect — with nine days in the field between three peaks, they are beholden to the weather. On Mount Whitford, they lost two days in the big rain storm that saw them "blown off Mt. Whitford literally."

The odd pairing of groups — plants and spiders, for one — is one that has proven fruitful. "It wasn't until I saw some spiders they had collected, [I got the idea]," Bennett says of the botanists.

The collaboration has been going since 2014, and allows the museum to cover more ground.

"It's taken biodiversity science to where it was quite a long time ago, when museums were much better funded, better organized, and museum exhibitions were much more common, where they go en masse and investigate," says Bennett.

"We largely go to the sites the botanists want to go to, and we know anytime we go to any of the sites, we're always going to get new data. So anything's exciting for us."



AUSTIN COZICAR PHOTO

Robb Bennett holds about 150 specimens of spiders in his hands.

After they visit their "six to eight sites in a year," he says they expect to have "at least 20 new records for the provincial species list." He notes they often find specimens that turn out to be actually quite common, but undescribed by science, because no one had looked there before. "For other groups — birds or plants, reptiles or dragonflies — the species lists are pretty complete for those. We're nowhere near that with spiders," Bennett says.

Marr says they pick spots by going through their collections and UBC collections "and determining where the gaps are." They also make use of a limited budget by calling up helicopter companies to find out where they have already have work, and inquiring if they can go to those spots.

Why is this so important?

"It's the museum's responsibility, as the provincial natural history museum, to document the diversity in the province," Marr explains. "Another reason is there is a concern that alpine environments are going to be lost as the tree line gets higher up, because tree lines are determined by temperature. As the climate warms, tree lines are going to go higher and higher. Part of it's documenting what's here now."

After their presentation, the biologists were headed for the road for another nine days of field study in the Northern Rockies.

LOCAL NEWS

Museum News — February 2019

In these quieter winter months, we're able to get caught up on our work behind the scenes here at the museum. Cataloguing of new artefacts continues, and shelves and boxes are reorganized as the new items are added. Our volunteers are also in the process of ordering some new items (and restocking some old ones) in our gift shop.

Archives & Collections

Did you know that the museum collects obituaries? If you have a recently deceased relative who lived in this area and have not posted his/her obituary through Hamre's or in the Alaska Highway News, please feel free to email it to the museum archives at fsjarchives@fsjmail.com or drop it off at the museum (we can scan and return it to you or keep it if you no longer want it) so that we can improve our records.

School Programs

School programs are back

in full swing at the museum. We have two new offerings this year. Our Building the Alaska Highway Program is now available for grades 4-6 as well as grade one (original program) and high school. Call the museum at 250-787-0430 for more information on programs and tours.

Upcoming Events

• Heritage Day

Saturday, February 23 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the museum

The theme for this year's Heritage Week is Heritage Stands the Test of Time. Find out what's going on behind the scenes at the museum by taking a guided tour of our collections storage area and seeing several artefacts that are not currently on display. See a photo exhibit on local heritage buildings with past and present photographs juxtaposed. Guess the artefacts from the museum collection at the "What is it?" table. Admission is free. Donations are welcome.

• North Peace Historical Society Annual General Meeting & Dinner

Wednesday, February 27, at 6 p.m. (Dinner at 6:30) at the museum

The North Peace Historical Society's Annual General Meeting will take place at the museum this year. We'll be eating a turkey dinner from Aniela's Kitchen followed by dessert. After dinner, we'll have a short meeting to look back at what we accomplished this last year. Our guest speaker this year is Jim Little who will be telling stories of his time as a surveyor and employee of the Ministry of the Environment. Everyone is welcome! You don't need to be a member to attend; you only need a membership to vote. The ticket cut-off date was February 13. A few tickets may still be available to purchase; please contact the museum at 250-787-0430 for more information.

Exhibits

• Shears, Sutures, and Syringes: Unusual Medical Instru-

ments Used Through the Years, Now until May 2019 at the Fort St. John Hospital

Shears, Sutures, and Syringes showcases some of the weird, odd, or downright scary medical tools used throughout the years. All the artefacts in the display case are from the museum's collection and most were used in the local hospitals!

• Capturing the Past: Cameras of the North Peace, January 28 – June 2019 at the North Peace Regional Airport

This exhibit showcases a few of the museum collection's cameras that were used by prominent local people, including Dr. Kearney and Duncan Cran.

• Say Yes to the Dress: A Journey through the History of Infant's Clothing in Western Culture, Now until May 31, 2019 at the museum

Our special exhibit this fall, winter and spring looks at the various tasks women undertook in the North Peace from typical women's jobs like nurse

or teacher to less typical jobs such as trapper, interpreter, and politician. It also looks at a variety of handicrafts from mukluks to embroidered tablecloths made by local women. This is one of our largest exhibits with twenty-two interpretive signs spread out around the museum. These purple signs are integrated into many of our permanent exhibits, showing that women in this area were involved in all different kinds of work inside and outside this home. Marjo Wheat and Heather Sjoblom curated this exhibit.

• Tools of the Frontier

Tools of the Frontier looks at a variety of tools and their uses for trappers and homesteaders as well as the changes in technology over time. Summer student Walker Brady assembled this exhibit. Some changes to this exhibit will be made over the next few months. Check back often!

Caty Virostek is manager and curator of the Fort St. John North Peace Museum.

THE LAND RECORDS

MARCH 7, 2019



MATT PREPOST PHOTO

Jim Little shared his experiences working as a land surveyor in the formative days of the North Peace during the North Peace Historical Society's sold-out annual general meeting on Feb. 27, 2019. Little ended his presentation by donating an old land use study he helped develop for the region, once ordered to be thrown out by the former Bennett government.

"I managed to keep some of them. In time, the rest I have will reside at this museum," Little said, adding other land registers for Fort St. John, Dawson Creek, Chetwynd, and Fort Nelson were given to those communities instead of being sent to Victoria. "I don't always do what I'm told ... Now, those communities actually have the opportunity to see the land register of history in their own areas without having to make a fancy trip to Victoria, which would cost you a fortune to do, and unlikely most people would ever get the opportunity to see."

We've recently received shipments of new items for the gift shop, which include cookie cutters, wooden animal magnets, dinosaur egg and fossil kits, and more! Come and check them out! The Arts Council is hosting a Storytelling Series at the museum during various Saturdays in March and April. For more information, please contact the museum at 250-787-0430 or Sue Popesku at the Arts Council.

Please note that access to museum parking lot is now only via 100 Street due to construction on Centennial Park between the museum and the Pomeroy Sport Centre.

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Upcoming Events

• **Documentary Night: 225th Anniversary of the Rocky Mountain Fort, Friday, April 5 at 7 p.m. at the Museum**

This year marks the 225th anniversary of Rocky Mountain Fort. Established in 1794, Rocky Mountain Fort was the first to be built in the North Peace region, at the confluence of the Moberly and Peace Rivers. It closed sometime during 1805 for unknown reasons and wasn't rediscovered until 1975. Detailed excavations began in the mid-1980s. Join us for a presentation on the history of the fort (featuring excerpts from the only existing journal written at the fort) and the archaeological digs, as well as

a short film shot during the digs.

Exhibits

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Caty Virostek is manager and curator of the Fort St. John North Peace Museum.

Museum seeks old yearbooks

MAY 23, 2019

MATT PREPROST

editor@ahnfsj.ca

The Fort St. John North Peace Museum is looking for old school yearbooks to bolster its archival collection.

The museum is looking for copies of yearbooks for Bert Bowes, Dr. Kearney, and North Peace Secondary Schools.

In particular, it's looking for yearbooks from 1967 and 1986 for Bert Bowes, and yearbooks from the 1970s for North Peace Secondary.

"It's wise to have two collections, one for the schools and one for the museum," said Tamara Secrist, who helps co-ordinate the museum's archives. "It's safe practice."

The museum often receives calls from former students looking for information about an old teacher, or from others tracking down pieces of their family.

"It makes it easy for us when people have questions," Secrist said.

Contact the museum at 250-787-0430 if you can help.

Museum News — July 2019

Things are busy behind the scenes at the museum this summer.

With the help of our summer students, we are making great strides in getting more of our collection of 15,000 + photos in our database. They are also digitizing yearbooks into the museum collection for researchers to use.

Would you like to know more about some of our collection that's not on display? Follow the Fort St. John North Peace Museum on Facebook to learn more about some of our artefacts. We post a new artefact or photograph every Tuesday. It's also a great way to keep up with our events, test your memory with local historical trivia, and learn more about what's going on behind the scenes.

Archives & Collections

Did you know that the museum collects yearbooks? If you are interested in donating your yearbooks to the museum, please call or email us to see which yearbooks we need. If you don't want to part with yours but still wish to help us improve our museum records, you can drop the yearbook off and we will digitize it and return the original to you.

School Programs

Our fur trade program has by far been our most popular program this year. We've had classes from as far away as Pouce Coupe come to learn more about the exchange processes of the fur trade, see archaeological items from the Peace River forts, and try a bartering activity.

We have two new offerings this year. Our Building the Alaska Highway Program is now available for grades 4-6 as well as grade one (original program) and high school.

Edition, Friday, July 26 at 7 p.m. at the Fort St. John Cemetery

Join us for a guided cemetery tour of the Fort St. John Cemetery on 100 Ave. Learn about the connection of many of the people buried there to the Alaska Highway. From construction workers to entrepreneurs to ambulance drivers, the cemetery is full of people who worked and lived along the highway. Tour is \$10 and can be paid at the gate of the cemetery prior to the tour. Call 250-787-0430 for more information.

• Cemetery Tour: Taylor Edition, Friday, August 9 at 7 p.m. at the Peace Valley Cemetery

Join us for our first-ever Taylor cemetery tour! From surveyors to Hudson Bay factors to loggers to ranchers, this cemetery is full of people who lived on and worked the land around Taylor and the Peace River. Tour is \$10 and can be paid at the gate of the cemetery prior to the tour. Call 250-787-0430 for more information.

Exhibits

The Peace River: Highway of the North

Before roads, rivers were the highways of First Nations and early settlers. Birch bark canoes allowed First Nations to travel swiftly. Steamboats could travel over 500 miles along the Peace River from the chutes near Fort Vermilion to gates at Hudson's Hope. This exhibit looks at over twelve boats, steam and gas powered, that used to navigate up and down the Peace River. Watch a slideshow of archival photographs, and listen to the sounds of steamboats. See what a dining table on the D. A. Thomas may have looked like. Try on a life jacket and see how it compares to one from over 100 years ago.

Museum news

Oct 10, 2019

Summer is over, and we're preparing for the fall here at the museum. We've ordered in new sweaters, Fort St. John magnets, stickers, and key chains! We also have some new Christmas ornaments for sale. We've introduced annual family memberships to the museum. Call the museum for more information!

Exhibits

• Charlie Lake Cave

Now until December at the Fort St. John Regional Airport

Designed and installed by our summer students, this exhibit looks at the history surrounding Tse'K'wa (Charlie Lake Cave), the archaeological digs conducted there, what has been found, and future plans for the site.

• Providence Hospital & The Construction of the Alaska Highway

Now until November 2019 at the Fort St. John Hospital

This exhibit looks at the role that Providence Hospital had in the building of the Alaska Highway. Dr. Kearney and nurses treated sick sol-

diers who had arrived in Fort St. John to begin building the Alaska Highway. The sudden influx of soldiers strained the hospital's resources, and hallways were turned into patient rooms. Even the X-ray table was used as a bed!

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Caty Virostek is manager and curator of the Fort St. John North Peace Museum.

OCT 24, 2019

FRESH LOOK

Fort St John
North Peace
Museum
Manager Caty
Virostek
mounts a panel
about the po-
litical history of
the Peace River
Block on new ex-
hibit walls that
were installed at
the museum on
Oct. 15, 2019.



Spinners and weavers guild mark ancient tradition

ALEISHA HENDRY

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We don't often think about how our clothing is made and how much effort has gone into it, but a group of local ladies are keeping the craft of spinning and weaving fiber alive.

The North Peace Spinner and Weavers Guild marked the centuries old tradition of St. Distaff's Day at the Fort St. John North Peace Museum on Jan. 7.

Despite the name, St. Distaff's Day isn't named for an actual Saint. Rather, a distaff is something that holds the fiber that is spun into thread, and can be made from pretty much anything.

St. Distaff's Day would come at the end of the traditional 12 Days of Christmas, which in medieval times was taken as a holiday from work. Once the holiday was over, women of all classes had to get back to spinning their thread.

"Spinning was super important at that time because that's where all the clothing and stuff came from," said Rene Giesbrecht, vice-president of the North Peace Spinners and Weavers. "The spinner has to spin for something like a week to have enough for two hours of weaving, so it was a lot of work.

"They would spin in the evening, during the day, any spare time they had, they would be carrying their drop spindle in their pockets, there were no idle hands."

The spinners and weavers celebrate St. Distaff's Day now for fun, but knowing how important the craft was hundreds of years ago.



ALEISHA HENDRY PHOTO

North Peace Spinners and Weavers Guild member Marjo Wheat spins flax fibers on a distaff into thread during the St. Distaff's Day event at the Fort St. John North Peace Museum on Jan. 7.

"Now we have commercial spinners, it's all so fast and easy, but when you think about it, every piece of thread that was used at that time, had to be hand spun," said Giesbrecht. "It was work. We do it for fun and as a hobby and make beautiful things, but back then it was a necessity. If you wanted a sheet on your bed, you had to do the work."

The guild had members doing demonstrations on spinning wheels, small looms, and drop spindles, as well as a display of different types of spindles and a distaff holding flax fibers.

The guild will also mark its 40th anniversary in Fort St. John this May, and will be marking the occasion with a celebration of their craft.