



**ALASKA HIGHWAY**

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*Rendezvous '92*



ALASKA HIGHWAY 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SOCIETY

FINAL REPORT



ALASKA HIGHWAY

Rendezvous '92

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FOREWORD

This report is the combined effort of the Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 staff at Fort St. John, BC. It is intended as a description of the activities of all of those associated with the planning and implementation of the Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 events beginning in 1988 and continuing through to dissolution on December 31, 1992.

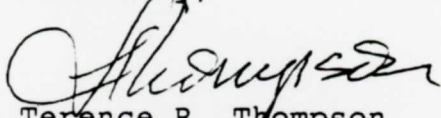
Despite the many problems associated with funding of the event, Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 has achieved a level of success surpassing all expectations. Because of this achievement, the general theme of this report reflects the positive attitudes that were encountered at the community level and by all of those who were in charge of, or assisted in, the production of the many Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 events throughout the course of 1992.

While there were many frustrations at various periods in the planning phase and occasional roadblocks that had to be surmounted during implementation, the impact of these had very little effect on the outcome achieved and therefore their relative importance has been minimized.

The Executive Director and staff express their sincere appreciation for the outstanding cooperation and direct participation of, first and foremost all of the many volunteers, the Peace River Regional District, the Fort Nelson-Liard Regional District and finally, the Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 Board of Directors. Without their unanimous support the task would have been much more difficult.

All of us in northeastern British Columbia can now look forward with pride to 1993 and beyond.

Sincerely,



Terence R. Thompson  
Executive Director

TRT:jdg



## Section I

### Executive Summary

#### OVERVIEW

This report has been compiled based on data collected since the inception of Project '92 in 1988. As the international profile of the organization emerged the project was designated Rendezvous '92, a name that has become synonymous with the celebrations of the 50th Anniversary of the Alaska Highway.

Put simply, the mandate of the project was to:

"Influence an increase in tourism in the region and to expand the national and international awareness of north eastern BC for the purposes of economic development."

A realistic assessment of the performance of Rendezvous '92 cannot be examined in isolation from the International Joint Committee (IJC). This body comprising Alaska, the Yukon Territory and British Columbia, came together recognizing that a coordinated, multi-jurisdictional, international organization could better promote planned activities that were cross-jurisdictional in nature. Through shared costs of operations the IJC was able to mount a production, marketing, promotional and merchandising program with an international profile that was more attractive to the corporate sector.

Early on in the program, the Northwest Territories and Alberta were participating members of the embryo consortium but withdrew as financial support from their respective governments did not materialize. (It is of interest to note here that the Province of Alberta were significant beneficiaries of Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 although their financial investment was marginal)

Stevenson Kellogg Ernst and Whinney were commissioned in early 1989 to develop a Strategic Marketing Plan for the Alaska 50th Anniversary Celebrations. This plan completed in September 1989, provided a marketing strategy encompassing the years 1989 to 1992 inclusive. Total cost of adopting this strategy was spread over the four years for a total of \$957,000.00. Obviously, the magnitude of this cost was well beyond the reach of an already strained Rendezvous '92 budget.

As will be seen later in this report, all of the objectives of the Strategic Marketing Plan were accomplished at minimal cost through a resourceful and creative Media Operations and Services Strategy.



By mid-1990 the BC Society had entered into a marketing program that was essentially a duplication of the effort of those who were responsible for the promotion and marketing of tourism in the region (PRAHTA). Furthermore, the office had been staffed by four personnel who had been given no job description or terms of reference and only general guidelines as to what was expected of them. Deloitte & Touche were commissioned in early 1990 to analyze the structures that were in place and to make recommendations that would set the Society on the right track. Most of the Deloitte & Touche recommendations were implemented including the appointment of a new Executive Director.

During this same period, the IJC was experiencing similar difficulties in establishing a base plan from which to proceed on an international scale. Ad hoc funding of the IJC which had been the norm was finally addressed by the committee and an IJC core fund was established to provide for the promotion, marketing, advertising and production costs that were to be incurred on behalf of the three jurisdictions.

In early 1991, an annual IJC core fund of \$300,000 was approved by the Board of Directors contingent upon the approval of the three jurisdictional governments. In addition, it was resolved by the IJC that each jurisdiction would be responsible for the establishment of a "seed money" fund that would form the basis of the funding for a major event to be staged in each jurisdiction. (The Province of British Columbia provided a grant of \$300,000 for this purpose)

During November/December 1990 the Rendezvous '92 office was subjected to a crash organizational analysis based generally on the Deloitte & Touche study. A new management structure was put in place and detailed terms of reference were prepared for each of the existing positions and those that were projected to be filled early in 1991. The core budget as it existed at the time was revised to fit the staffing plan and a business plan and a set of milestones were put in place. These documents were forwarded to the office of the Provincial Secretary and thereby formed the basis of continuing "Go BC" contributions to the core fund.

In early 1991 the leading financial experts had announced that the economy had bottomed out and that a recovery was in progress. This gave encouragement to Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 organizers to establish corporate sponsorship expectations (cash and contra) at the \$2.5 million level. This reflected a downward projection established earlier in the program where expectations were set at a minimum of \$3.5 million. As it became apparent that the economy had failed to improve as had been forecast, projections were eventually downgraded to a \$1.5 million threshold.

Recognizing the need for "seed money" that would provide incentive for corporate sector participation the Provincial Government approved a onetime grant of \$300,000. This grant was to be released contingent upon achieving a \$1 million threshold in both cash and in-kind sponsorship.

Revenue driven budgets were established for each event and expectations had to be continually downgraded to reflect the cash poor realities of the corporate sector. Officials in the Department of Tourism were reluctant to recognize the economic realities causing further frustration in the implementation of the many events associated with the Anniversary Celebrations.

All of these factors had a very significant impact on the ability of the project planners to accurately predict sponsorship revenues and concordant activity levels throughout the course of the whole project. In the end the total value of the sponsorship program for Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 settled at about \$1.5 million in both cash and contra despite the prevailing economic conditions.

Since the fall of 1991, the Province and the Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 organization have experienced three Premiers, four Ministers of Tourism and a change of government. This provided a source of frustration through the critical planning phase of the project and was only made easier by the will of the personnel associated with the project. The provincial government eventually provided a welcome degree of support through the Department of Highways, Department of Parks and Department of Tourism.

The Federal Government under the stewardship of the Honourable Frank Oberle were highly supportive throughout the whole program. Mr. Oberle was totally familiar with the unique problems of the area and fully realized the importance of Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 to the economic future of the region. Without the rapid reaction of The Honourable Frank Oberle and the expert follow-up of the Western Diversification officials, the level of success of the Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 programs could not have been achieved.

As 1992 draws to a close, the financial situation for Alaska Highway Rendezvous '92 (BC) is most positive. The projected surplus subject to a formal audit in early 1993 is on the order of \$100K. This surplus occurred as a result of the late payment of the final portion of the Provincial grant. Uncertainties as to weather this final payment would be made have led to this surplus which will provide a legacy that will benefit future generations in northeastern British Columbia.





**ALASKA HIGHWAY**  
***50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SOCIETY***

**AN EVALUATION**  
**of**  
**EFFECTIVENESS and EFFICIENCY**

**15 May 1993**

# EVALUATION OF THE 1992 ALASKA HIGHWAY ANNIVERSARY 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SOCIETY

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The year 1992 witnessed the staging of the Alaska Highway 50th anniversary commemoration in the northeastern region of British Columbia in conjunction with similar celebrations in Yukon and Alaska. As part of the 'close-out' management process, the Celebration Society commissioned an objective evaluation of the project in order to learn from the experience, to provide for accountability and response as to efficiency and effectiveness and to focus on the legacy of the Celebration in terms of future regional development. In conducting this evaluation, we have attempted to answer five key questions:

- Did the project make sense?
- Was the approach efficient and effective?
- What happened as a result?
- Did the project achieve what was expected?
- What happens now?

The analysis was based on over 60 interviews, including Society directors and staff, community committees, federal and provincial departments and ministries, associations and program consultants, as well as review of Society records and files and analysis of relevant tourism performance for 1992.

In summary, we can report that the Celebration was a success in terms of creating public and tourism awareness, in generating tourism visits and financial benefits exceeding direct investment and in leaving an ongoing legacy related to long-term tourism development and to an enhanced community sense of pride of achievement. A total of 216 events provided 833 days of community activity, of which the Celebration accounted for 70 specialized, dedicated and cross-jurisdictional events and 425 days. It is estimated that the northeastern region experienced a 17% to 18% increase in visitor activity in 1992 as compared to 1991, which compares very favourably to overall Canadian

performance. In total, over 413,000 visitors travelled through the region. Moreover, the Celebration generated an approximate range of \$6 to 7 million in incremental tourism expenditures in addition to the indirect and induced benefits resulting from the total project public direct investment of \$3.2 million. From this aspect and from future 'downstream' benefits, it was a good return on the taxpayer dollar.

Our summary 'report card' in terms of project efficiency and effectiveness in each key result area where performance was essential is shown as follows:

<b>CELEBRATION '92 REPORT CARD</b>		
<b>Key Result Area</b>	<b>Qualitative Comment</b>	<b>Report Rating (0—10)</b>
'Creating Awareness'	This result was an overwhelming success as evidenced by the tourist response (PRAHTA Survey '92) and the North American tourism awards to the Society. The coordinated efforts of the Society, Tourism North, PRAHTA and the Ministry of Tourism produced high recognition levels in Canada, the U.S. and overseas. The efforts of the federal government (consulates) were also strong support factors. Marketing and promotional dollars were well worth the effort and will act to sustain tourism in the region provided this continues to be supported by ongoing investment. In summary, 'awareness' was a 'big plus'.	<b>8</b>
'Generating Tourism Visits and Expenditures'	Although precise data are not currently available, various data sources indicate that the Celebration acted to prevent tourism erosion (as elsewhere in Canada). Probably tourism visits and investment were increased over 1989-1991 levels in the order of 10% to 15%. Incremental tourism expenditures (past and future) justify the project costs — a 'good use of taxpayer dollars'.	<b>7</b>



<p><b>'In Getting Support'</b></p>	<p>This area was problematic and pointed to the need to 'line up' allies early in project planning. The formation of the IJC was necessary to gain 'critical mass' as to scale and event attraction, particularly for U.S. markets. The Alaska result was disappointing and impacted in large measure on the failure of political support and corporate sponsorship (particularly in the U.S.). On this latter note, private-sector funding was not forthcoming. This was due to a late start, to the recessionary effect of the economy and the lack of a proper integration of product/marketing/promotion/'business approach' overall plan. Early and consistent support was not evident at the political, leadership and business level. The public sector, in the form of the region, provincial and federal government financial support, was extremely supportive and necessary for eventual project success.</p>	<p><b>8</b> for public-sector funding <b>3</b> for private-sector support <b>5</b> overall</p>
<p><b>'In Getting Community Involvement'</b></p>	<p>Although there were heightened expectations at the outset and more could have been done to financially support local efforts and to involve communities in overall planning, the community effort was outstanding in the number, extent and diversity of the events held and the positive enthusiasm shown. As a result, there is a demonstrated maturity and pride in accomplishment at the community level. The 'joining together' of the individual communities in a regional undertaking was also positive. Only Fort St. John expressed a degree of negative comment largely related to business disappointment. However, Fort St. John hosted a large number of events including a successful international air show. Their geographical proximity to Dawson Creek did not add to prospects for tourism spending. However, future efforts to 'attract off the highway to the city centre to induce a stop' should create a positive result.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>7</b></p>

<p><b>'In Leaving a Legacy'</b></p>	<p>The prime legacy will be the immediate tourism 'spill-over' effect in 1993 and 1994 as evidenced by the actual, increased activity as reported by PRAHTA. The 200th anniversary of Alexander Mackenzie's explorations and the Yukon Anniversary events will add to tourism in 1993 and 1994. The awareness impact has made the northeastern region 'a better known and increasingly known' area to U.S. and European target tourist markets. The legacy of community pride and maturity is another and ongoing benefit, together with an increased community understanding of their history and cultural uniqueness. Physical legacy investment extends to the Pioneer Village, highway improvements, historic signage and the acceleration of projects such as those at Monkman Park.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>8</b></p>
<p><b>'In Managing the Effort'</b></p>	<p>The Society got off to a difficult start. The first two years were non-productive although basic foundations were established in getting inter-jurisdictional support and in securing basic 'core' funding. Mistakes were made in not getting effective support at the outset and in not defining a more realistic strategic direction and product. Hindsight criticism of a unique and difficult project is easy, however. In total, the Board and management recovered and, through a 1991 centralized 'hands-on', strong and focused effort, placed the project 'back on track'. The continuing frustration of lack of sponsorship revenue and impact on 'scaled-down' event development added to the management burden. The media awareness program was particularly effective, as were efforts to obtain funding. Staff reaction to management direction and approach was positive and supportive. The effective working relationship between the Society Chairman and the Executive Director contributed to overall success.</p>	<p><b>4</b> for the first 2 years <b>8</b> for the next 2 years <b>7</b> overall</p>

While a greater impact could have been generated by a more committed political and financial support from Alaska and by earlier, more focused and more integrated approaches to the program development/sponsorship/event marketing aspects of overall Celebration planning, the Society and the region can claim pride of achievement in what was achieved. The public financial support forthcoming from the region and the provincial and federal governments was also essential to the positive outcome.



Was the 1992 Alaska Highway Anniversary Celebration a good idea and a sound investment? These are the essential questions to be addressed in an evaluation of this nature. The answer has to be a definite 'yes!' to both questions. This report has dealt with the economic and tourism impacts and benefits resulting from the investment of funds, time and organizational effort. Broad indications are that over \$6 million was generated in additional tourist expenditure, together with direct public-sector funding and private-sector sponsorship (in the order of \$1.5 million in cash or in kind).

The above benefits and investment measure only a part of the total impact to the northeast region of the Province. We have commented, at length, on the positive social and cultural outcomes related to community cohesion, volunteer involvement and achievement, a heightened educational awareness of history and regional distinctiveness, legacy investments not only in archival material but also in facility and cultural enhancement and the growing regional sense of maturity based on what was accomplished. It was, overall, a valuable learning experience for the many people and organizations involved in planning for and delivering the Celebration.

The regional success of the Celebration was based on several key strengths to the planning effort.

- the commitment and dedication of the Anniversary Society Board and staff who invested over four years of effort and time in a challenging venture without precedent;
- the degree and extent of public-sector funding, particularly the investment made by the regional community in its own effort;
- the partnership with other jurisdictions to produce a common theme and product incorporating logos and overall presentation;
- the awareness generated by an excellent media and tourism marketing effort;
- the support and participation of the communities and the extent of volunteerism.

In submitting this report, we must state our sincere appreciation to the many people who gave of their time to participate in this evaluation work. Their thoughtful comment was invaluable to our analysis and formulation of findings.