

FLY NORTH

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NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

Preserving and celebrating the diverse history of aviation in the northwest, through the collection and preservation of artifacts and stories of the persons and events that made this region unique in aviation history

NOAHC News -----

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Jan. 27, 2021 (ZOOM Meeting) (For the year 2019-2020; delayed due to Pandemic 2019-2020)

President's Report -Liz Wieben

This will be our first AGM held by ZOOM and I want to thank you all for making the effort to join us. We had delayed this meeting which, would have been held May 2020, due to the Covid 19 pandemic. I had anticipated holding it in the fall but then the 2nd wave hit and it was decided to hold it in January by Zoom. So here we are.

I will direct my remarks to an overview of operations since our last AGM in May 2019 up to May 2020, which is when we expected to hold the subsequent AGM, and then follow up with a few comments on the closure period. Later in the Agenda you will hear reports from committee leaders with more of the details. We had a very good year in 2019 - 2020, probably the best ever. We had more presentations and events in the community than ever before. Probably the highlight of the events was having Buffalo Joe McBryan and his son Mikey from Ice Pilots here with the DC-3 that they rebuilt for 70th anniversary of D-day.

We had Jonathan Sheppard as an Intern until Sept. 2019 which was very helpful in moving some projects forward. In particular Jonathan got us going on a device called the Square which enabled us to do debit and credit card purchases. With his help we were able to produce two more Oral Histories. One of these was with the two men who engineered and then supervised the building of the airstrips established at the many northern reserves in the '70s. It is a good tale.

We have done more this year collaborating with other museums. We presented two programs at the Thunder Bay Museum, coordinated the DC-3 viewing with Thunder Bay Aviation, had meetings with the Sault Ste Marie Bush Plane Museum staff and President and in fact had a

local Pratt and Whitney 1340 engine, that we couldn't accept, delivered to Sault Ste. Marie for their collection. This engine was salvaged off an aircraft sunk in the 50's in a lake west of Armstrong.

We coordinated an event with the Ninety Nines Gold Cup Air Rally whose western terminus was in Thunder Bay. This included a tour of our centre and a barbecue cohosted by NOASARA, the local air search and rescue arm of CASARA, Canada.

As well as successes we also had a couple of setbacks. The Thunder Bay Film Festival, from which we benefitted last year, was cancelled in 2020 and we were unsuccessful in obtaining a couple of grants for which we applied.

I want to thank you for renewing your memberships and also for the donations that have come in this past couple of months. This was very encouraging. We need a membership base to validate our purpose and from which to draw our volunteers. We are in pretty good shape financially for now. However, we have a Board and volunteers that have put a lot of time and effort in for the last 10 years who need to reduce the time they contribute to NOAHC. We need to have people following who want to serve in this organization. Prior to the Covid 19 closure, we were having trouble getting enough volunteers to open the centre on the scheduled Wednesdays and Sundays. We will follow up on this once we can be more active.

Although we were not open, a book was published, all regular newsletters were sent out, two new exhibits were developed, meetings were held with the Thunder Bay Museum, our reading library was inventoried, and all of our required government and bingo reports were filed. We negotiated with our landlord R.F. Holdings for and received the Commercial Rent Relief package. This finished in September but we have had some income from Superior Shores Gaming since then.

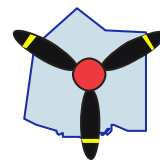
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As noted in a previous *FlyNorth*, (Vol 12: No 4 Oct-Dec, 2020) NOAHC received, from the Marathon Museum, a copy of the memoirs of Colin Macmillan, a pilot who flew locally for the Ontario Provincial Air Service and the Marathon Paper Company. Among other papers received at the same time was an account of a company named Pays Plat Outfitters, the brainchild of Colin Macmillan. This was one of the first fly-in fishing and hunting organizations in the north west and the story of its creation and operation provides a view of the trials and tribulations of setting up and running such an operation

Pays Plat Outfitters

In the mid-1940s, Colin Macmillan, a pilot with the Ontario Provincial Air Service and Maurice Nicol, manager of the Nipigon Bay Fish Company, conceived the idea of erecting a small tourist lodge at Pays Plat Bay on the shores of Lake Superior in northwestern Ontario. Both men knew the area well, Macmillan having flown out of the Air Service base at Pays Plat for four years and Nicol's fish company being located along the coast at Rossport. For most of the summer and fall the plan was to operate a small aircraft to fly hunting and fishing parties into the interior locations that were inaccessible by other means of transport at that time. In addition, the expectation was that the aircraft could be chartered to lumber companies, commercial fishermen and mining interests. Wartime restrictions meant that the company could not begin to operate until the war ended, but, by the second half of 1945, Pays Plat Outfitters Ltd. was ready to start working.

The property at Pays Plat had been acquired in 1944 and other equipment required for the operation, such as canoes, boats, generators and outboard motors, was also purchased. For a fly-in operation, of course, a plane was necessary and a light-wing Cessna T50, a twin engined aircraft used as an intermediate trainer in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan, was bought in late 1945. It cost \$2,500 (about \$35,000 in 2020 dollars) from War Assets with an additional \$500 to cover the cost of tests for an airworthiness certificate and the installation of skis. All this was completed by January 1946 and between then and April it flew men, supplies and equipment into Kagiano Lake, where the Marathon Paper Company was building a control dam. The contract was a lucrative one and as a result the loan obtained for the purchase of the Cessna was paid off by the spring of 1946. By that time it was clear that the company needed a floatplane. The light-wing Cessna could not be fitted with floats so the company purchased a DH Fox Moth, which could be flown as a floatplane and later in 1946 it also bought a heavy wing Cessna T50 from Superior Airways' Orville Wieben, which was suitable for float installation. All three could also be flown on skis and wheels. To fly the new aircraft the company hired Tom Carr and Ted Fallen, both former RCAF pilots. The work for the aircraft was divided between contracts with Marathon Paper and flying hunters and fishermen into and out of the Pays Plat base. The latter seems to have been sufficiently innovative at the time that the *Toronto Globe and Mail* ran an article in August 1946, entitled "Pays Plat Campers Fly to Fish and Hunt", which described the facilities and people involved in the operation. It was depicted as a tent camp consisting of 14 tents on wooden bases with 5 foot high walls, some with complete housekeeping units, including pressure cookers, stove, sink, cupboards and twin beds, plus a generator to provide electricity. Most of the guests

came from the United States, but as well as hunters and fishermen some came to allow the fresh northern air to alleviate the hay fever symptoms that plagued them in the Midwest. At that time accommodation consisted of tents, but plans were afoot to erect more permanent structures. The components for three buildings, measuring 24x60 feet, part of a dismantled military camp, were purchased from western Canada. One was set up as a staff house with kitchen and bedrooms shared with a warehouse or storage area for equipment. The two others were combined to create what was planned as a large lodge containing up to 14 bedrooms and a glassed-in veranda overlooking the lake. Although it was erected the interior was never completed.

By the end of 1946, Pays Plat Outfitters had three aircraft operating, servicing on-going contracts with the Marathon Paper Company and guests arriving at the camp on Lake Superior. The future looked bright. However, the promising outlook changed drastically. In February 1947, the light-wing Cessna was destroyed in a fire and in July of the same year the Fox Moth crashed during take-off from Cirrus Lake and was completely lost. A Republic Seabee was obtained as a replacement, but there was insufficient work for it and it was sold. The reduction in business continued into the winter of 1947-48 when the amount of flying was hardly enough to meet expenses. At about the same time Colin Macmillan gave up flying to become the chief guide and entertainer for the Marathon Paper Company. His departure from Pays Plat Outfitters must have had a significant impact on the company and although details of its last few years are obscure, it seems to have gone into receivership in the late 1940s or early '50s. In 1953 it was purchased by Orville Wieben, who established Wieben's Resort and a Superior Airways base on the site and the two operations remained in the family until 1988.

The Pays Plat Outfitters operation was short-lived, but it should be remembered as a pioneer of the fly-in fishing and hunting enterprises that became such an important element in the economy of northwestern Ontario in the 1950s and '60s and beyond.



Pays Plat Outfitters' Cessna T50

NOAHC Visitors and Volunteers for the Calendar year 2019

Visitor and event attendance 1,815: Total to date - 5,015 (Includes 850 at the Thunder Bay Historical Film Festival)

Volunteer hours 1,188: Total to date - 11,788 (Does not include numerous volunteer hours put in away from Centre)

Prepared by *Archie Gribben*

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Once the pandemic is over NOAHC will again host a monthly bingo at the Superior Shores Gaming Association on Memorial Avenue. The returns from these events make an important contribution to the Centre's revenue.

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NOAHC News continued.....

Board Membership

Prior to the AGM the NOAHC Board passed a motion to have all Directors and Officers remain in their elected positions until the next AGM. That decision was presented to and passed by the general membership at this AGM

NOAHC Board 2019-20

President – Elizabeth Wieben

Vice-President – George Holborn

Executive Secretary – Denise Lyzun

Treasurer – Dave Sutton

Recording Secretary – Victoria Bowen

Board Members

David Bryan, Gerry Bell, Archie Gribben
Mary-Alice Isaac, David Kemp,
Don McRae, Jim Milne

NOAHC Public Facebook Group

Tom Skoropad, a longtime NOAHC supporter, has created a Facebook group that allows NOAHC members, and those interested in preserving the history of aviation in Northwestern Ontario, to post pictures and exchange news of interest to local aviation enthusiasts. There are currently more than 100 members in the group. We would be happy to have you join in.

Superior Shores Gaming Association – current situation

Following the easing of the last lockdown in mid-February, the gaming-machine side of Superior Shores was opened with a maximum of ten people, but bingo sessions remained closed. In a recent e-mail, Melody Lavallee, the organization's Charity Co-ordinator, pointed out the impact of that situation on revenue distribution, "We will only have 13 days open this month, with 10 players at a time, so as you can imagine, that makes our revenues hard to estimate. Due to that, there will be a possibility of funds not being dispersed for the month of February until April, when we can roll them in with March. We won't make this determination until we see what revenue February brings us." With the return to lockdown, it will be some time before that situation is resolved.

Larry Bryan has taken over from Robin Webster as NOAHC's Bingo Co-ordinator. NOAHC thanks Robin for setting up and managing the bingo program for the past several years. His work has made a significant contribution to the organization's finances.

Before and After – The Restoration of the Burnelli CBY-3 Loadmaster

After 8 years of restoration by 40 volunteers led by Crew Chief Harry Newman, the New England Air Museum (NEAM) has put its CBY-3 Loadmaster on public display. Designed by Vincent Burnelli, a proponent of the lifting fuselage, and built by Canadian Car and Foundry (CCF) in Montreal, the Loadmaster first flew in 1945. CCF was unable to find a market for the design and the prototype was the only one built. However, it served successfully as a freighter in northern Canada, the United States and in Central and South America until it was retired in 1959. NEAM acquired it in 1964 and it sat exposed to the elements until 2012 when the Museum was able to begin the restoration. A comparison of the before and after pictures below show what the restorers had to face and the extraordinary results they achieved.



The Loadmaster sat outside for more than forty years, suffering the depredations of the weather, as well as nesting birds and other creatures



After restoration, on display in the NEAM Civilian Aviation Hangar. The aircraft is lacking its left wing which will be fitted when additional space becomes available



Moving the fuselage into the restoration hangar



The fuselage after four years of restoration work



The derelict cockpit prior to restoration



The cockpit fully refurbished with seats still to be installed

All pictures by NEAM, forwarded to NOAHC by Larry Pope, a Burnelli enthusiast, who advised NEAM on the aircraft colour scheme