



# Heritage News

## Discover Crowsnest Heritage

ISSUE #10

FEBRUARY 15, 2011

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by  
Monica Field

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*A Crowsnest Heritage Initiative Project.*

*If interested in submitting an article, news piece, or update, please send it to [cnheritage@shaw.ca](mailto:cnheritage@shaw.ca).*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday in February was named Heritage Day by Heritage Canada in 1973 to “encourage the preservation and promotion of Canada’s nationally significant historic, architectural, natural and scenic heritage. Unfortunately, although lobbying to have this date declared a national statutory holiday, each province and region organized their own holiday schedules. In 1990, Alberta created Family Day on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of February and moved its Heritage Day to the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday in August downgrading it from a statutory holiday to an “optional” civil holiday. Fortunately, the “August long-weekend” is a popular with Albertans, whether paid or not, and arguably, the move to a warmer month made access to heritage resources easier. At the same time the Alberta Government has made combining Family day and heritage awareness easy on Monday, February 21st, by offering free access to all provincially run museums and historic sites. Our own **Frank Slide Interpretive Centre** will offer free admission and a variety of activities for families. In the spirit of family our locally run **Crowsnest Museum** is offering a special admission rate for the entire Family Week. Children get to bring their parents in for free.

The results of the “Name this Newsletter” competition are tallied and it will remain the “Crowsnest Heritage Newsletter.” Although a lot of very innovative creative alternative names were suggested, the Heritage Initiative membership preferred keeping the old name. Thank you to everyone who sent in names.

Finally, good financial news this month for a couple of heritage institutions. Read about it in “Updates.”

### WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH

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#### CROWSNEST HISTORICAL SOCIETY Annual General Meeting.

**DATE:** Sunday, March 6th  
**LOCATION:** Orpheum Theatre, Blairmore  
**TIME:** Business Meeting 2:00 pm  
Public Presentation 4:00 pm

**Free Public Presentation 4:00 pm**  
by Tom Langford, University of Calgary.  
Editor of *A World Apart: The Crowsnest Communities of Alberta and British Columbia* (Plateau Press, 2002) along with Wayne Norton. He will be signing books.

This year’s AGM is being held at the Orpheum Theatre in Blairmore in commemoration of Blairmore’s 100th municipal anniversary.

During the Business Meeting the Board president and treasurer will present the highlights of our past year and the Society’s new Strategic Plan. This will be followed with by-law changes, and the nomination and election of new Board members. After a half-hour break for refreshments, the general public are invited to join the society at 4:00 p.m. to listen to guest presenter, Tom Langford, and his research on the Crowsnest Pass.

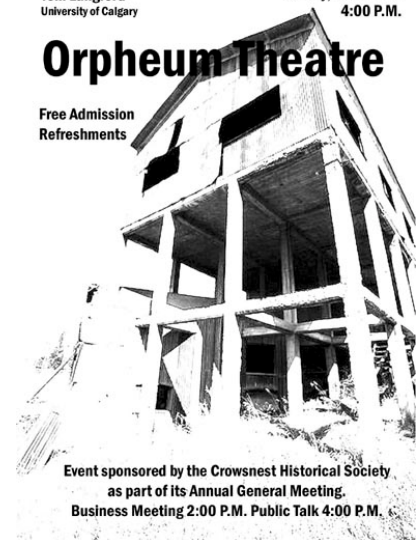
#### When the Mines Closed, 1952-1961: Stories of Hard Times and Struggle

presentation by  
Tom Langford  
University of Calgary

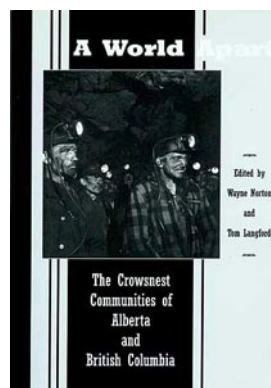
Sunday, March 6th  
4:00 P.M.

### Orpheum Theatre

Free Admission  
Refreshments



Event sponsored by the Crowsnest Historical Society as part of its Annual General Meeting.  
Business Meeting 2:00 P.M. Public Talk 4:00 P.M.



**FAMILY DAY (Monday, Feb. 21st): Free admission to all Alberta Government-run Museums and Historic sites!**

**Frank Slide Interpretive Centre -- Head-Smashed-In-Buffalo-Jump -- Remington Carriage Museum**

**FRANK SLIDE**



The Frank Slide Interpretive Centre is open year round 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This Family Day, staff from the Bellevue Underground Mine will be on hand to give presentations on the everyday life of a miner. The different types of miners' lamps will be featured in a presentation called, "And Then There Was Light." Admission: **Free for Family Day. Contact: info@frankslide.com. Regular Admission: Adults \$9, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (7-17) \$5, Under 7 free, Families \$22.**

Hwy 3 Crowsnest Pass 403-562-7388

**HEAD-SMASHED-IN BUFFALO JUMP (UNESCO World Heritage Site)**

Hwy 785 403-553-2731

**Open year round 10:00 am - 5:00 p.m.** This Family Day the site's archaeologist will be on hand to help visitors explore the jump. There will be a simulated archaeological dig at 10:30, 1:30 and 3:30. Performances of Napi's Puppet Theatre will be held at 11:00, 1:00 and 3:00. There will be crafts for children. Along with its displays the centre has audio-visual presentations, a cafeteria featuring bison burgers, a gift shop filled with First Nations handicrafts, and hosts tour groups and runs educational programs.

**REMINGTON CARRIAGE MUSEUM**

Cardston, Alberta 403-653-5139

**Carriage County Fair:**

On Family Day a small town carnival will be held on the grounds. There will be games, midway food and interactive demonstrations from 11:00 - 4:00.

**Open year round 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** The Museum has the largest collection of horse-drawn vehicles in North America with over 240 carriages, wagons and sleighs. The 63,000 square foot facility features video displays, a fire hall, a carriage factory, a restoration shop, a working stable, carriage rides, carriage rentals, a restaurant and a gift shop. There are free guided tours. Group tours and educational tours are offered.

**CROWSNEST MUSEUM, ARCHIVES AND GIFT SHOP**



The Museum is open Family Day and **Children bring their parents in for free for Family Week.** Open year round. Along with its displays and archives, it hosts a Gift Shop and runs tours and educational programs. **Open hours are Monday - Friday 9:00 a.m. - Noon, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.** \*\*\*The Museum is now on Facebook-check it out\*\*\* **Contact: cnmuseum@shaw.ca. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$8, Youth (6-16) \$6, Under 6 free, Families \$24.**

7701-18th Ave. Coleman 403-563-5434



**KOOTENAI BROWN PIONEER VILLAGE**

1037 Bev McLachlin Dr., Pincher Creek. 403-627-3684

**Family Day Skate.**

The Family Day Skate is weather dependent. It is scheduled for 10:00-2:00. Hot chocolate will be served and mascot Cooper will be attending. The Museum is open **Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Adults \$10, Seniors (65+) \$7, Youth (7-17) \$7, Under 7 free.**

**OPEN ALL YEAR IN THE CROWSNEST!**

**LEITCH COLLIERIES**

Hwy 3, East end of Crowsnest Pass

**Open year round. Self-guided tour.**

The site has interpretive panels, lights for nighttime viewing and washroom facilities. The walking tour takes you past the ruins of the old powerhouse, the mine manager's residence, the coke ovens, the washery and the tippel.

**HILLCREST MINE DISASTER AND MEMORIAL CEMETERY**

West end of Hillcrest, follow Heritage Driving Route Signs into Hillcrest

**Open year round. Self-guided tour.**

The site has interpretive panels. A walking tour takes you past the graves of the miners killed in the Hillcrest Mine Disaster of 1914, Canada's worst coal mining disaster. There is a memorial to all miners killed in coal mining accidents in Canada.

**OPEN ALL YEAR NEARBY**

**WRITING-ON-STONE PARK AND CAMPGROUND**

32 km east and 10 km south of Milk River on Hwy 501 403-647-2364

With its mild winters, Writing-on-Stone is a great destination to visit year-round! Hiking trails are clear for most of the year and can be most enjoyable in cooler weather. For inquiries regarding trail conditions or tour schedules please call the information desk at the **Visitor Centre (403) 647-2364 ext. 0. Rock-Art Tours: Adults (18 and over) \$8.00; Youth (7-17) \$6.00; Children (under 6) Free; Family (2 parents and their children under 17) \$25.00. Camping all year \$21 - \$27 a night.**

**GLENBOW MUSEUM**

130 9th Ave. SE, Calgary 403-268-4100

**Open Monday to Saturday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sundays 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Adults \$14, Seniors (65+) \$10, Students (with ID) and Youth (7-17) \$9, Under 7 free, Families \$32.**

**GALT MUSEUM AND ARCHIVES**

502 1st. S., Lethbridge 1-866-320-3898

The Museum is open all year round. **Monday to Saturday 10:00 am to 4:30 pm, Sundays and Holidays 1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Adults \$5, Seniors (65+) \$4, Youth (7-17) \$3, Under 7 free, Families \$12.**

**CROWNEST MUSEUM AND KOOTENAI BROWN PIONEER VILLAGE**

**Prairies'n Peaks Quilt Festival: Friday, June 10th to Sunday, June 19th.**

A juried and invitational show sponsored by the Crownsnest Museum and the Kootenai Brown Museum, including a showing of historic textiles. For more information go Visit : [www.prairienpeaks.com](http://www.prairienpeaks.com)

FEATURE ARTICLE

**Marion Leitch and the Frank Slide**

by Monica Field.

The Leitch family lived in a miner's cottage on Manitoba Avenue (maybe it felt like home) in southeast Frank. Alexander had expanded the house to meet the needs of his wife Rosemary and their seven children, all born in Manitoba: Mary Jessie 1888; John Alexander 1891; Rosemary (May) Louise 1892; Allen Roy 1895; Athol Osborne 1897; Wilfred Jamieson 1899; and Marion Moore 1901. Originally from La Prairie, Quebec, the four Leitch brothers followed the railroad across Canada, providing timber along the way. They settled in Oak Lake, Manitoba to start a flour mill, and established a grain elevator in Killarney, Manitoba and lumber mills in British Columbia. Alexander Leitch lived in Oak Lake and then Killarney, where he operated the family's grain elevator. The elevator burned down, causing Alexander to move to Frank where he opened the town's first general store. He'd been impressed with the town's grand opening in 1901, and decided this was the spot to settle down.



Frank pre 1903. Provincial Archives of Alberta A15276.

W.M. Leitch in a letter to Jim Kerr in 1979 wrote, "I remember my mother saying or telling that she had visited Alex and Rose the week before the slide on her way home from visiting the Archie Leitches in Cranbrook. She had said that the house was so small and the family so big she suggested to Rose that she take three or four of the boys home with her to Oak Lake, Manitoba. She'd pay their way and look after them for a week or two – it didn't matter – it would give Rose a bit of a holiday from the kids and they would enjoy the change, too. Rose wouldn't hear of it. The following week they were dead – killed in the slide."

Alexander, Rosemary, Athol, Wilfred, John and Allen died in the 1903 Frank Slide, but the three girls were in a different part of the house and they all survived. Little Marion, 27 months old, was thrown out of the window and found, unhurt, by rescuers.

William Worden in "The Deadly Mountain that Walks" (According to Sheilah Yorke, Marion's daughter, Marion considered this article to be the most accurate summary of the events of the Frank Slide) details his interview with Marion Leitch: "Today, Marion is a charming red-haired matron, living with her husband and teen-aged daughter in a quiet British Columbia city. But, the quiet is shattered when a stranger at her door mentions the Frank Slide. She says, very definitely. "That thing again! Won't it ever stop? All my life people have been looking

at me as if I belonged in a zoo, just because of what happened to our family. Have you ever heard the song? It's a mountain ballad of the worst sort – and about whom? About 'Frankie Slide,' the poor little baby who never knew her own name. Leitch is a good Scottish name, and I've known it was mine all my life. But every year, on the anniversary at least, they put that horrid thing on the radio again – and people start ringing my telephone... That isn't all. There was a radio play written, all about Frankie Slide again – and they've repeated it two or three times. People keep talking about me being the only survivor – but nobody seems to know how that story started. Of course, I don't know anything about the slide or remember anything. I was a baby then – and I'm not a hundred years old now, although most people seem to expect me to be. Come inside now. I want to put on my shoes. I can't get mad properly with my shoes off."



Frank, April 29 1903. Second from the left is Alexander Leitch's house. Glenbow Archives AN-411-6.

Marion was also interviewed by Barry Mathers for the "In Our Times" column, 1949. His knowledge of the slide was typical, and like everyone else he thought that the town was buried except for a

baby girl. Mathers wondered what ever became of the slide baby, who seemed to be surrounded in mystery. He was surprised to discover that she lived, as he did, in Nelson, BC: "Meanwhile, in Nelson, the Frank Baby turned out to be Mrs. L.A. McPhail, a brown-haired music teacher who, with her husband, a land-registry official, and a 10-year-old daughter, live in a nice, white house on a hill. In 1903 she was Marion Leitch...She (a seventh child), and her six brothers and sisters lived with their father and mother at Frank. Mr. Leitch was a store keeper. Of this family only Marion and two sisters survived the slide. 'I was found outside near where our house had stood. No, I don't know how I got there. The stuff they write every now and then about the Frank Baby makes me so angry. And there was no mystery about what happened to me after the slide. My uncle, Archie Leitch, looked after me. I was brought up in Cranbrook. And later in Vancouver. And my two sisters who lived were looked after by an uncle in Manitoba."

Marion Leitch lived a good life despite her traumatic experience in the Frank Slide, and died an old lady, with a loving family around her.

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*Monica Field is the Manager of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre, long-time resident of the Pass and local naturalist, historian and writer.*

## UPDATES

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### CROWSNEST HERITAGE INITIATIVE

Evan Berger, MLA for Livingstone-Macleod recently presented a cheque on behalf of Alberta Lottery's Community Initiative's Program and Alberta Culture and Community Spirit for **\$22,050** to the **Crowsnest Heritage Initiative's Signage Committee** to add an additional **15 heritage signs** to celebrate our community's heritage. The new signs which will be installed by the end of June will enhance the award-winning Crowsnest Heritage Route project.

### CONNIE KALDER AT THE FRANK SLIDE by our secret reporter MF

The January 30th concert was extraordinary. The centre sold out its available 70 seats long before the concert. Connie sang with Paul and Bill accompanying her with voice, guitar and bass guitar. She used her guitar, electric piano and a ukulele. The sound was beautiful – perfect! This was an unusually intimate concert, and people were able to speak with the performers and purchase CD's at intermission.

Songs sung included: *Hymn, You're All Right, Oh my Love, Liar, Prairie Moon, Mother's Prayer, Sheep Creek, What Might Have Been, Bird on a Wing in the first set, and Miner's Wife, Long, Long Way, Okanagan Peach, Ride Gone Wrong, Wood River, Wander, and Time* in the second.

Connie's blend of dynamite voice and musicianship plus her stories, both amusing and emotional, had people laughing and moved to tears depending on the song. Many of the songs touched a deep chord in audience members. The song *Miner's Wife* really spoke to the Crowsnest Pass. *Ride Gone Wrong* made the ranchers smile. Songs like *Liar* got a laugh out of everyone, and the *Mother's Prayer* certainly reached the mothers in the audience. Cathy Pisony is to be congratulated for organizing such a successful event, with weather and time of year working against it. And, of course, thanks goes to Connie who generously offered us this opportunity for old time's sake. This was her third performance at the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre.

### FERNIE MUSEUM

Nic Milligan of Teck presented a donation of \$100,000 to the Fernie Museum Project at the 2011 Robbie Burns Party held at the museum Saturday January 22nd. This generous contribution will do much to get the ball rolling on phase two and three of the project. This involves the development of a core exhibit on the main floor that will maximize the use of the space and really showcase Fernie's early history.

Repair of deteriorating bricks and sandstone on the building's exterior is a priority of phase three and should be achievable this year with Teck's hefty donation. Many thanks to Teck for supporting the vision of the Fernie Historical Society and honouring Fernie's rich heritage.



- February 16th: A meeting of the mine managers of The Pass which was held in the Imperial Hotel, Frank, last week resulted in the organization of the Alberta Mine Managers Association.
- February 16th: Coleman Opera House--3 Nights Only 3--**Miss Verna Felton** and the Allen Players. Prices 25c, 50c and 75c.
- February 18th: The first official air mail flight takes place from Allahabad, India to Naini, India, when Henri Pequet carries 6,500 letters a distance of 13 km.
- March 9th, Blairmore Enterprize: Sanatorium is now Opened--And Is Ready for Business--It is Strictly First-Class--One of the Best in Canada--Is A CREDIT TO THIS TOWN--Erected at Famous Sulphur Springs and is Owned by the Canadian Coal Consolidated, Limited.
- March 8th: International Women's Day is celebrated for the first time.



Verna Feldon 1890-1966. Worked on stage, in radio, film and television. Best known as the voice of many Disney animated characters. Wikipedia fair use copyright.

*VOLUNTEERS NEEDED*

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**SUPPORT LOCAL HISTORY BY VOLUNTEERING SOME TIME AT THE CROWSNEST MUSEUM!**

Some volunteer opportunities available include:

- Taking admissions and running the Gift Shop
- Acting as a guide for walking tours and educational programs
- Working with the collection
- Housekeeping and maintenance

Contact Stephanie at the Crowsnest Museum to discuss volunteering some time: 403-563-5434.

*SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE*

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# When the Mines Closed, 1952-1961: Stories of Hard Times and Struggle

presentation by

Tom Langford  
University of Calgary

Sunday, March 6th  
4:00 P.M.

## Orpheum Theatre

Free Admission  
Refreshments



Event sponsored by the Crowsnest Historical Society  
as part of its Annual General Meeting.  
Business Meeting 2:00 P.M. Public Talk 4:00 P.M.

HEY KIDS!

BRING AN ADULT DOWN TO  
THE MUSEUM FOR FREE!  
ANY ADULT ACCOMPANIED BY A YOUTH (17 & UNDER)  
IS ADMITTED FREE WITH PAID YOUTH ADMISSION!

# FAMILY WEEK

AT THE

CROWSNEST MUSEUM  
Established in 1961 as a National Historic Site

FEBRUARY 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>  
YOUTH ADMISSION JUST \$6.00!

SPECIAL EXHIBIT:  
"BEHIND CLOSED DOORS AT THE CROWSNEST MUSEUM"  
HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED HOW ARTIFACTS AND DOCUMENTS BECOME  
PART OF A MUSEUM'S COLLECTION? COME LOOK "BEHIND CLOSED  
DOORS" AT THE CROWSNEST MUSEUM TO FIND OUT!

TOURS AND TALKS: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011  
11:00 AM, 1:00 PM, 3:00 PM  
7701 18TH AVE COLEMAN AB, 403-563-5434

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