



# Heritage News

## Discover Crowsnest Heritage

ISSUE #3

JULY 15, 2010

### WELCOME

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This month is the Crowsnest Pass 5th Annual Doors Open & Heritage Festival, a partner in the Doors Open global celebration of built heritage, architecture and design.

The first annual Doors Open event was hosted by France in 1984. Since then, the festival has spread to over 49 European countries, Australia, and the United States. The first Doors Open event in Canada was in Toronto in 2000 and through the years the city has attracted over 1.5 million visitors to hundreds of its heritage buildings. The annual event was brought to Alberta by the Heritage Community Foundation in 2002. In 2006 we inaugurated our own Doors Open days in combination with other heritage activities celebrating the Crowsnest's rich cultural history.



France 2010 Doors Open (Journée du Patrimoine) Festival Poster. Each year France selects a different theme and celebrates Doors Open during European Heritage Days.

This July 30th to August 2nd take the opportunity to tour buildings not usually open to the public, such as the Blairmore Courthouse, Blairmore Union Bank, Coleman's Grand Union Hotel, or Frank's Masonic Hall. Attend a guided heritage walk or pick up a self-guided walking or driving heritage tour brochure. Join other events, such as the Miners' Memorial at the Bellevue Mine, the Teddy Bear Picnic at the Crowsnest Museum, the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre's 25th anniversary celebration and the Crowsnest Country Market. An online brochure of what's on during Doors Open can be viewed at:

<http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/Events/DO%20&%20HF.pdf> or see page 4 for "Schedule at a Glance."

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### WHAT'S ON

#### CROWSNEST PASS DOORS OPEN & HERITAGE FESTIVAL

**FESTIVAL :** *Friday, July 30th to Monday, August 2nd.*

Pick up a Festival Brochure at many local businesses or visit <http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/Events/DO & HF.pdf> for a detailed schedule of events. There are activities at the Bellvue Underground Mine, Crowsnest Museum and the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre plus many other venues in Crowsnest Pass. See page 4 for "Schedule at a Glance."

#### GALT MUSEUM, LETHBRIDGE

502-1st St. South 1-866-320-3898

**KAAHSINNOONIKSI AO'TOKSISAWOYAWA: Our Ancestors Have Come To Visit: Blackfoot Shirts: Saturday, June 5th to Sunday, August 29th.**

The Galt Museum & Archives is hosting five extraordinary Blackfoot shirts which have resided in the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford, England since 1893. Written records tell us this much about the shirts, but many unanswered questions surround them. The exhibition will allow Galt visitors to appreciate their beauty, the skill of their makers, and the power of the 170-year old objects.

#### KOOTENAI BROWN PIONEER VILLAGE, PINCHER CREEK

1037 Bev McLachlin Drive 403-627-3684

**COMMUNITY AND GARDEN BUS TOUR: Saturday, July 24th.**

Advance tickets only. 403-627-3684.

**ANTIQUES ON THE CREEK: Saturday, July 31st to Monday, August 2nd.**

A variety of different vendors will be on site from across Alberta, bringing their wares. There will be scheduled tours of the Museum cabins. 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. Free admission.

#### TRANSPORTATION EXHIBIT

The new exhibit includes "Balanced on Two Wheels" a collection of rare and antique bicycles, including many owned by local rider, Dave Glass. Two Sicilian donkeys, Leon and Violet, are a favourite with children.

#### FRIDAY PIONEER MARKET

A pioneer market is held each Friday at the Museum from 11:00 am until early afternoon.



Blackfoot Shirt c. 1880's. Royal Ontario Museum. Photo by Claire Allum.

## FRANK SLIDE INTERPRETIVE CENTRE

Frank 403-562-7388

Alberta Arts Days: *Friday, September 17th to Sunday, September 19th.*

## CROWSNEST MUSEUM

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

Harvest of Memories Fall Festival: *Saturday, September 25th.*

## BELLEVUE UNDERGROUND MINE

Bellevue 403-564-4700

Halloween Howler: *Sunday, October 31st.*

## PRAIRIES'N PEAKS QUILT FESTIVAL

PO Box 1226, Pincher Creek T0K 1W0, 403-627-3684

A juried and invitational show sponsored by the Crowsnest Museum and the Kootenai Brown Museum, including a showing of historic textiles. For more information go to <http://prairiesnpeaks.blogspot.com> : *Friday, June 30th to Sunday, June 19th 2011.*

# FEATURED ARTICLE

## ONE FLAG, ONE SCHOOL, ONE LANGUAGE: THE KU KLUX KLAN AND THE CROWSNEST PASS, 1932 by Kyle Franz

That crosses were burned at Blairmore throughout 1932 is a matter of historical fact. "A fiery cross," the *Lethbridge Herald* reported, "burned for about half an hour last night on the mountains that overlook [Blairmore]. It was watched by hundreds."<sup>1</sup> The larger question of whom was responsible for burning such crosses - and why they chose to burn them - has been the subject of much rumour, gossip and speculation ever since.

It has been suggested by some that cross burnings were simply a prank perpetrated by the more adventurous members of that year's high school class. Others believe that the giant crosses were soaked in coal oil and then set alight in order to intimidate members of the Red-affiliated Mine Workers' Union of Canada, who were then in the throes of a nasty strike. Still others have added to the intrigue surrounding the issue by warning that cross burnings in the Pass are a stone best left unturned.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the dire warnings, the question remains: was the Ku Klux Klan active in the Crowsnest Pass during the early 1930s?

In a word, yes. Recently obtained RCMP reports clearly indicate that the Ku Klux Klan had a presence throughout the Pass in 1932, coinciding with the apex of Klan influence throughout the province of Alberta. In reports that were forwarded to RCMP brass, Staff Constable R.J. Connor observed from Blairmore that the Klan "had over one hundred [members] on the roster in the Pass, all of whom are good citizens from between the towns of Pincher Creek and Natal."<sup>3</sup> He went on to inform his superiors that well known Klansmen J.C. Galbraith and A.P. Van Buren - both of Calgary - were regular visitors to Blairmore "from which they operated in the other towns of the Pass, organizing membership for the Ku Klux Klan."<sup>4</sup> As it turns out, Blairmore was not only the centre of the Communist movement in the Crowsnest, but of the Klan as well.

Now, before stereotypical images of Klansmen - or for that matter, Klanswomen - cloud our perspective, it is important to consider what the Klan represented at Blairmore during the time in question. The K.K.K. of the early 30s was not the same as the Klan of the 50s, nor is it the same as the Klan in contemporary movies or TV shows.

Once again, Staff Constable R.J. Connor can be of assistance. Attached to his report are not only statistics pertaining to Klan membership, but also the cards they were discretely distributing to drum up support. These cards describe the organization as: "Pro-British, Pro-Protestant, [in favour of] Law and Order [and] Commercial Cooperation." Their slogan "One Flag - One School - One Language" is remarkably similar to the then-mainstream Orange Lodge.<sup>5</sup> The Klan at this time also promoted

itself to be a protector of women's rights and was very much in favour of prohibition. What isn't immediately evident is the racist agenda for which the K.K.K. is so well known.

Though a fringe group now, it might surprise you to know that the Ku Klux Klan was publicly recognized as a service club by the Government of Alberta; the K.K.K. was incorporated as a society under the *Societies Act of Alberta* on September 17, 1932. In fact, Alberta was the only jurisdiction in the British Empire to grant the Klan this kind of official recognition. Premier Brownlee claimed it was a matter of "free speech," but with the mass arrests and charges of sedition that were laid at Blairmore and Bellevue against striking workers earlier in the year, many - including one provincial court justice - were left to question if Premier Brownlee was under the influence of the Klan himself.<sup>6</sup>

Yet we still haven't answered the most important question of all: what was it about the Klan in 1932 that held such a potent appeal to some residents of the Crowsnest Pass? I believe that the real draw of the Ku Klux Klan lay not just in its platform of nationalism, law and order and sobriety, but also in what these values meant vis-à-vis the massive strike held that year by the Mine Workers' Union of Canada (MWUC).

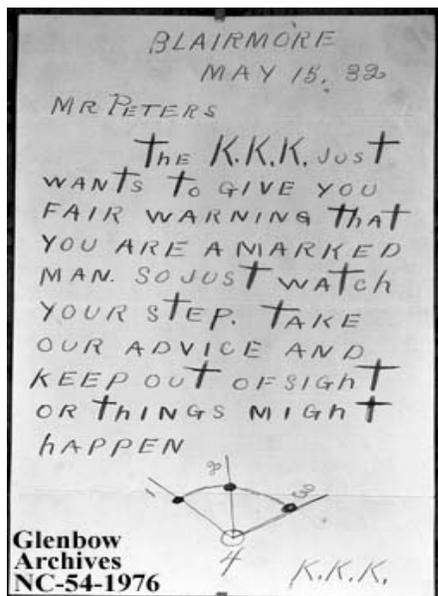
The strike of 1932 - itself worthy of a full article, or even a book! - was long and bitter, with the union and the West Canadian Collieries digging in for what can only be described as a nasty eight-month fight. Basic strike demands aside, there was a political aspect to this strike that had not been a factor in earlier disputes in the Pass: Communism.



Ku Klux Klan Klansmen and women at a cross lighting, 12th Nov. 2005. Wikimedia Commons. Creative Commons-ShareAlike 3.0 License.



Ku Klux Klan Imperial Council, Nov. 1925. Photo by Stuart Thomson. City of Vancouver Archives CVA 99-1496. Public Domain.



The MWUC was considered by many to be a “Red Union,” and it was in fact affiliated with Communist organizations at that time. Though it is clear that not all union members were Communists, the union leaders certainly let their Red sympathies be known. Strike parades carried banners such as: “Workers of the World Unite!” “Our Future is Our Youth. Join the Young Communist Party!” “Send Food, Not Mounties!”<sup>7</sup> So-called “boogie parades” were undertaken against those who refused to support the strike, and violence caused by drink was frequent on both sides. For the first time in the Crowsnest Pass, women and children took an active part in the picket lines, the boogie parades and by directly confronting strike-breakers and mine bosses.<sup>8</sup>

It was also the view of many that the authorities were far too tolerant of the Reds, and given their political doctrine the ringleaders should have been arrested and tried for treason.<sup>9</sup>

It was against this backdrop of violence, poverty and instability that the Klan so successfully made inroads into the Crowsnest Pass. Though some individuals did not agree with the aims of the strike, most were not in a position to express their opinion. In a town dominated by one industry, it was simply not good politics or good business to alienate a key constituency. Who would shop at a store when the owner came out against the union? Who would vote for a man who did not support what many believed to be their fundamental and inalienable right to strike for a better standard of life? Perhaps equally important, who wanted to subject themselves to the social consequences of opposing the strike? After all, no matter what your opinion on the matter, nobody wanted their house surrounded by striking men, women and even children who would then proceed to shout profanities not only at you, but your family as well.

For many the Ku Klux Klan must have been an ideal solution. Its law and order agenda was clearly attractive to the more conservative elements of the valley who had seen their towns and villages turned upside down during the course of the strike. The support for traditional sex roles addressed what many believed to be scandalous behaviour by women and children and the demand for prohibition sought to curb the worst of the booze-fuelled violence. And, of course, the

Klan was a secret organization. Nobody had to know you were a Klansman, or Klanswomen, and so there were little consequences for members’ collective actions.

For many in the community, the Ku Klux Klan allowed those frustrated with the contemporary political and social situation to turn their frustration into tangible action. The burning of a cross sent a powerful message to the community, and was clearly intended by the Klan as a challenge to strike leaders and known Communists. The organization also sent unsigned letters threatening key strike leaders, or simply painted “K.K.K.” in bright red on the side of buildings in order to get their message across.

But despite the residents of Blairmore electing a Communist Town Council on Valentines Day, 1933, the Ku Klux Klan vanished from the Crowsnest Pass as quickly as it had appeared. Why would the organization simply melt away given the electoral triumph of the much-maligned Reds?

Part of the explanation can be found in the Klan’s provincial organization. The Imperial Grand Wizard had been arrested by police, charged, and found guilty of sedition in early 1933. He was consequently sent to prison. After his arrest it was discovered that significant amounts of cash were missing from the organization, and when an auditor was called in grassroots support for the organization quickly disintegrated.<sup>10</sup>

At a local level, tensions still existed between the left and right, but the resolution of the strike had brought with it an end to the most obvious transgressions of social and political norms. The mines were once again working, children were back in school, and in an ironic twist the increase in relief cash provided by the new Red Town Council actually increased the amount of money being spent in local stores. With no provincial organization left and the Reds now publicly accountable vis-à-vis holding elected office, those who disagreed with their politics could say so openly without having to worry about challenging the union or the miners’ right to strike.

We are now definitively able to say that the Ku Klux Klan operated in the Crowsnest Pass in 1932. We also have a clearer picture of whom the Klan were, and how their appearance relates to the lived experiences at this time. What still remains a mystery is how anyone managed to construct such large crosses, let them soak for two days in coal oil, transport them up the side of the mountain, light them on fire and yet still remain anonymous!

#### REFERENCES CITED

<sup>1</sup> *The Lethbridge Herald*, 18 May, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> For a personal view of these perspectives, see Isabel Gill, “Story and Stereotype: Aboriginal Literature as Anti-Racist Education” ( M.A. Thesis, University of Lethbridge, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> R.J. Connor, RCMP Memo “Activities of the Ku Klux Klan in the Crowsnest Pass: Secret,” 6 November, 1932. In author’s possession.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> For a complete discussion of the Ku Klux Klan in Alberta, see William Peter Baergen, *The Ku Klux Klan in Central Alberta* (Red Deer: Central Alberta Historical Society, 2000). Note: Though his book claims only to cover central Alberta, Baergen gives a clear and concise account of the overall provincial goings on in relation to the Klan.

<sup>7</sup> Slogans found in J.T. Jones, RCMP Memo “Mine Workers Union of Canada – Crow’s Nest Pass. Mayday Demonstration – Blairmore. Secret,” 3 May, 1932. In author’s possession.

<sup>8</sup> For a more complete discussion of the strike of 1932, see Allen Seager, “A History of the Mine Workers’ Union of Canada, 1925-1936” (M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> Repeated demands for prosecution of Reds were received by the Premier’s office and are preserved in his papers at the Archives of Alberta.

<sup>10</sup> Again, see Baergen for a more detailed analysis of the provincial situation.

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## 100 YEARS AGO: 1910

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- In Burmis the Post Office opened a local bureau in W.A. Brown’s General Store.
- C.P. Hill sells the Hillcrest Cole and Coke Co. and it becomes Hillcrest Collieries.
- On July 10th the village of Acme, Alberta was incorporated.
- On July 14th the village of Brooks, Alberta was incorporated.
- On the afternoon of August 7th a large meteor crash landed in Coucil Bluffs, Iowa, scaring the inhabitants.
- Florence Nightingale, the English founder of professional nursing, died, age 90.

# INFORMANTS NEEDED: BELLEVUE HILLCREST PASSBURG CENTENNIAL PROJECT

In an effort to understand the roots and early lives of victims of the Bellevue Mine explosion of 1910 and the Hillcrest Mine disaster of 1914, as well as any information about the descendants of the victims following the explosions, the Bellevue Hillcrest Passburg Centennial Project is asking anyone with connections to these men to contact Belle Kovach at [bellekov@jrtwave.com](mailto:bellekov@jrtwave.com)

In researching the early years of Bellevue, Hillcrest and Passburg, it is apparent that little is known of the victims and their families. The results of the findings will be an integral part of the planning for the upcoming 100th year Commemoration of the Hillcrest Mine Disaster in 2014 as well as a proposed publication about the history of early Bellevue, Hillcrest and Passburg.

## CANADA DAY PARADE

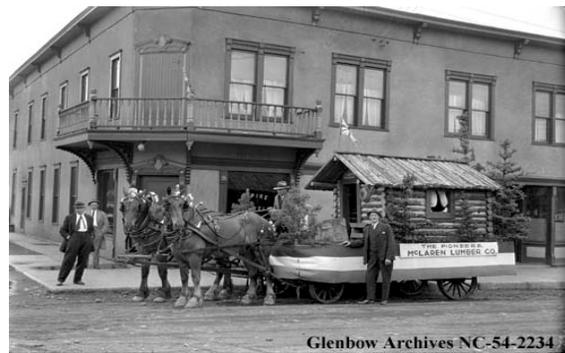
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Float commemorating the 100th anniversary of Flumerfelt Park. Photo by Joanne Wilson. 2010.



Crowsnest Museum Float. Photo by John Salas. 2010.



Glenbow Archives NC-54-2234

McLaren Lumber Parade Float c. 1922

## UPDATES

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### CROWSNEST HERITAGE INITIATIVE

#### CROWSNEST HERITAGE SIGNAGE PROJECT

The Crowsnest Heritage Route was recently featured in "Building Tourism: A Resource for Development" a Government of Alberta Newsletter on tourism development. As a winner of the Chinook Country Tourist Association's "New Idea Program Award" 2008, the newsletter highlighted how the project was developed, its participants and sponsors and how it plans to expand in the future. The issue can be viewed at: <http://tpr.alberta.ca/tourism/tourismdevelopment/pdf/Issue5-ARTS%20.pdf>

## DOORS OPEN: "SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE"

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### Friday, July 30

- 10:00 am - 5:00 pm 25th Anniversary of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Historic Blairmore Courthouse Guided Tours
- 1:00 - 4:00 pm Historic Union Bank Tours- Crowsnest Pass Chamber of Commerce
- 1:00 - 4:00 pm Lethbridge Brewing and Malting Company tour - Royal LePage Office
- 7:00 - 9:00 pm Launch event - Polish Hall, guest speaker Dr. Laurel Halladay, entertainment and refreshments

### Saturday, July 31

- 9:00 am - 3:00 pm Crowsnest Pass Pottery Club show and sale - Sports Complex
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Crowsnest Country Market - Flumerfelt Park 100th anniversary
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Open air market
- 11:00 am Auction
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Teddy Bear's Picnic - Crowsnest Museum - \$5.00 admission
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Guided Walking tours of Historic Coleman - meet at Crowsnest Museum
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Grand Union Hotel guided historic tours (on the hour)
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Royal Canadian Legion tours
- 10:00 am - 5:00 pm 25th Anniversary of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
- 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm Open House and Guided tour of Rocky Summit Lodge #30 - Frank
- 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm Chinook Lake Information Session - meet at Day use area
- 1:00 - 4:30 pm Capture the Beauty of the Crowsnest Pass Photo Excursion
- 1:00 - 4:00 pm Historic Union Bank Tours- Crowsnest Pass Chamber of Commerce
- 1:00 - 4:00 pm Lethbridge Brewing & Malting Company tour - Royal LePage Real Estate
- 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm Guided Mountain Bike Tours - Cross-Country Ski Club

### Sunday, August 1

- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm Bellecrest Quilters Fair - Bellevue Underground Mine
- 10:00 am & 4:00 pm Guided Walking tours of Historic Coleman - Crowsnest Museum
- 10:00 am - 5:00 pm 25th Anniversary of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
- 12 Noon Memorable Mine Ponies
- 1:00 am - 3:00 pm Guided Flower Walk (1 hour)
- 2:00 pm Turtle Mountain Monitoring Presentation
- 10:00 am - 5:00 pm Interpretive and audio-visual presentations, Science Alberta Exhibits

- 10:00 am - 5:30 pm 100th Anniversary Bellevue Mine Explosion - Bellevue Underground Mine
- 1:00 pm Miners' Memorial
- 10:00 am - 1:00 pm and 2:00pm - 4:00 pm Antique Appraisals with Sheldon Smithers
- 2:00 pm Mine Rescue Demonstration from Teck Coal Ltd.

- Throughout the day Safety Lamp Demonstration and Simulated Mine Explosion
- Historic Mine Photo Display
- Pulling the Pillars, an interactive program for children
- 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm Birding Walk on Miners' Path - meet at Crowsnest Conservation Society Office
- 8:00 pm Movie by Starlight - Bellevue Arena Memorial Park

### Monday, August 2

- 12:00 noon - 2:00 pm Gushul Studio and Cottage Guided tour - Blairmore
- 10:00 am - 5:00 pm 25th Anniversary of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
- 11:00 am & 2:00 pm Ride Through the Slide Driving Tours - from Frank Slide Centre (1-1.5 hours)
- 12:30 pm & 3:30pm Historic Crowsnest Pass Driving Tour

### Throughout the Weekend

- 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Crowsnest Museum - Coleman, closed on Monday
- 9:00 am - 5:00 pm Hike the Historic Miners' Path
- 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Fri. & Sat. Crowsnest Pass Art Gallery Exhibit, Photography Exhibit and Frank Historic Walking Tour - Allied Arts Building
- & 1:00 - 4:00 pm, Sun. & Mon. Bellevue Underground Mine Tours - 1st tour: 10:00 am, last: 5:30 pm
- 10:00 am - 5:30 pm Holy Ghost Church historic tour - Blackbird Coffee House in Coleman
- 10:00 am - 5:30 pm 25th Anniversary of the Frank Slide Interpretive Centre
- 11:00 am - 10:00 pm Historic Blairmore Walking tours
- 11:00 am - 2:00 pm Guided tours of Leitch Collieries Provincial Historic Site
- 12:00 Noon - 10:00 pm Historic Bellevue Walking Tours/Photo Exhibit
- 12:00 Noon - 9:00 pm, Fri., Sun. & Mon. Crowline Art Studio and Birdhouse Walkway
- & 7:00 pm - 9 pm, Sat.

British Columbia lost two significant buildings to fire this spring. The Silver Ledge Inn, in Ainsworth, built in 1896, was set alight by the estranged husband of its owner on June 3rd. It served as the local museum, filled with pieces of antique furniture and housing an archive of hundreds of historic Ainsworth photographs.

The loss followed an equally devastating blaze at the Mesa Hotel in Oliver, a small community in the South Okanagan. Built in 1912, the large building had been moved by rail from New Westminster in the 1920's. It burned on May 23rd leaving a wide gap in the streetscape of this small community's Main Street. Ironically it was closed for renovations to bring it up to fire code at the time.

Closer to home, when Waterton's Kilmorey Lodge burned in January 2009, a landmark in Alberta's history and parks disappeared.

Losses like this remind us how precious old building are. A non-renewable resource, they are often built of flammable materials and are expensive to upgrade with modern fire safe-guards that don't mar their original historic character.



Silver Ledge Inn June 2010. Photo by Claire Allum.



Kilmorey Lodge c. 1930.



Possible design of the new Kilmorey Lodge to be constructed.



Silver Ledge Inn c. 1940s when it ceased to operate. BC Archives E-05343. Research, non-profit license.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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The Crowsnest Museum needs volunteers for a number of special events and to keep the museum open during its extended summer hours.

**EVENTS:** Teddy Bears' Picnic, Saturday, July 31st  
Harvest of Memories, Saturday, September 25th

Whether you can volunteer for one event or have the time to work a few hours each week, all help is gratefully received. Jobs at the museum include accessioning artifacts, scanning photographs, manning the gift shop, leading tours and working with school groups. Please contact Don Harvey (403-582-0141), Stephanie Laine-Hamilton (403-562-8435 especially if interested in working with tour groups or educational programs), or Wendy Zack at the Museum (403-563-5434).

### GARDENING/LANDSCAPING ENTHUSIASTS

Want to show off your gardening skills but don't have a garden? Have extra seedlings you need a home for? Like to get together with friends in the sun? The Crowsnest Museum grounds need landscaping and garden maintenance. Please contact Wendy Zack at the Museum (403-563-5434) if you and your friends are interested in working on a garden project.

## WEB LINKS

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Crowsnest Heritage Initiative: <http://crowsnestheritage.ca/CHI.html>

Crowsnest Heritage Driving Tours: <http://www.crowsnestheritage.ca/Driving%20tours.htm>

Crowsnest Museum: <http://www.crowsnestmuseum.ca>

Bellevue Underground Mine: <http://www.bellevueundergroundmine.org/aboutus.htm>

Frank Slide Interpretive Centre: <http://www.frankslide.com>

Rum Runner Days: <http://www.rumrunnerdays.com/>

Heritage Canada Foundation's Top Ten Most Endangered Places List (includes Crowsnest Pass Mining Complexes): [http://www.heritagecanada.org/eng/Top\\_Ten\\_Backgrounder\\_2009\\_E.pdf](http://www.heritagecanada.org/eng/Top_Ten_Backgrounder_2009_E.pdf)

The Virtual Crowsnest Highway (great fun, some errors): <http://www.crowsnest-highway.ca/index.htm>

## SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE

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