

Lost men rescued

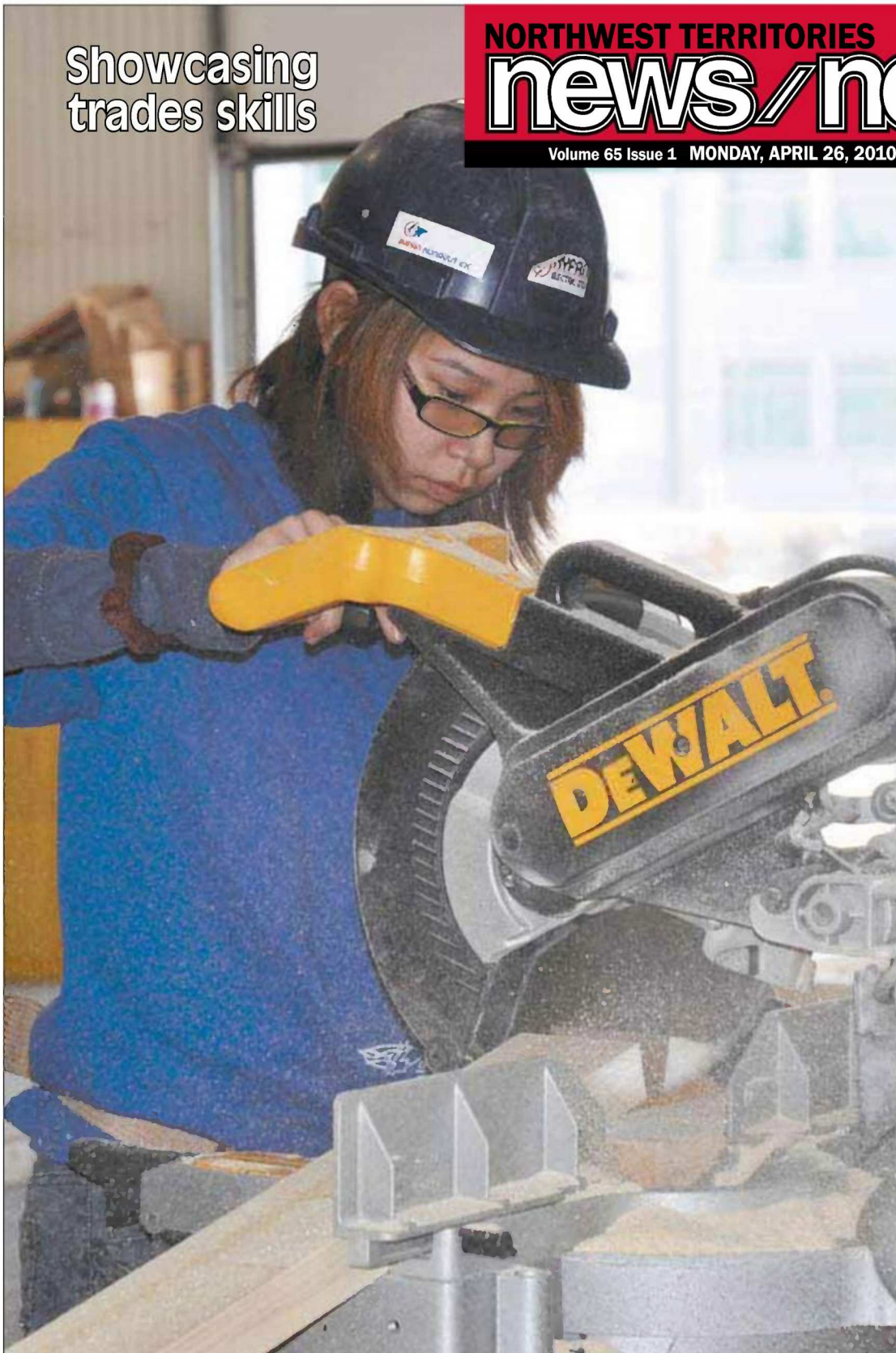
Whati and Behchoko travellers become stranded; RCMP warn about dangers of melting ice

Showcasing
trades skills

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

news/north

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Elder issues warning on proposed B.C. hydro project



Aklavik and Ottawa students share culture



Hay River plans new arts festival

Tim Ekenstedt/NSI photo

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"Nine times out of 10 you're upsetting more people than you're making happy."

- Steve Nitah about his election loss to Antonie Michel. Michel garnered 82 votes to Nitah's 65 in the Lutsel K'e First Nation election, page 12.

Simple life

In mid-March, a French expedition of two individuals left Yellowknife to ski towards their final destination, Kugluktuk. One French woman, Dominique Simonneau, provided logistical support, monitored and kept contact by satellite communication. She sought local information in Yellowknife and Behchoko that could add to their planned route. She met up with the expedition in Gameti to help replenish supplies and to seek further local knowledge from those who have made trips to Great Bear Lake in the early years.



GONAEWO
Our way of life

John B. Zoe is the former executive officer with the Tlicho government and a former land claims negotiator. He holds an honorary doctorate of law.

Madame Simonneau became interested in the historical and continuing friendship of the Tlicho and the Inuit of Kugluktuk to compliment the trek. She came to Behchoko during the Caribou hearing and met some people who have taken the trek by snowmobile from Behchoko to Kugluktuk in March of 2008. As of April 1, she was in Kugluktuk gathering more information and awaiting the party to arrive.

A retired former RCMP member, stationed in Fort Rae in the mid-1940s wrote a book, Overalls, Red Serge and Robe. He wanted to attempt a winter patrol to the Inuit camps near the Coppermine River in 1946 with a Special Constable. He wanted to monitor a new relationship between the Tlicho and the Inuit. The Tlicho had contacted the Inuit on their trapping excursions a few years earlier.

In the summary of the book, it says that the Indians were very apprehensive of the Inuit especially in the summer and fall, but in the winter it was a little different, although they harbored the fear of harm. The author's observation of two peoples coming together is an interesting read.

I remember back in 1994, travelling by canoe with the late Harry Simpson on an archeological survey. We encountered teachers, ordinary Canadians and Europeans paddling just to be in and see the pristine wilderness. One evening, while we were sitting in the pup tent, reviewing the day, Harry said, "we have been paddling for a few summers and have encountered many people except our own. We only see the remnants of our ancestor's campsites, but no one to rekindle the fires. We need to get our young people out here to experience the trails of our ancestors, so that the land does not become empty of our people."

Crossing paths with Madame Simonneau reminded me of the words that Harry expressed that one evening. In the following summer of 1995, Harry proudly led the first canoe trip back into the wilderness with 30 youth to follow their ancestor's trails.

Sometimes it takes people with roots from Europe to strap on some wood to the bottom of their feet and ski cross-country to remind us, that going onto the land can be kept simple.

SEND US YOUR COMMENTS

You can e-mail us: editorial@nns.com with the subject line "My opinion"; or send mail to News/North at Box 2820, Yellowknife X1A 2R1; or drop your letter off at our office at 5108-50 Street. All letters submitted must be signed with a return address and daytime telephone number.

We will do our best to ensure that letters submitted by 3 p.m. on Thursday are printed in Monday's News/North.

editorial



photo courtesy of George Mandeville

Former Chief of Lutsel K'e Steve Nitah, second from left, was a member of the Metis Reelers Dance Group. This photo was submitted to News/North following Nitah's dismissive comments about the Metis printed in the paper on April 12. Part of the note accompanying the photo read that, "He (Nitah) didn't mind being a Metis when he was with the group." When asked about his former association, Nitah said he enjoyed dancing, adding the park issue is about protecting the rights of people who have inhabited the land for thousands of years.

Imaginary battle

Metis/Lutsel K'e First Nation loggerhead senseless

We had hoped that the election of Antoine Michel as chief of Lutsel K'e First Nation, would mean sharing with the Metis Nation.

Former Chief Steve Nitah was adamant in his protest against recognizing the Northwest Territory Metis Nation's claims to the proposed park land encompassing the East Arm of Great Slave Lake which the LKFN is negotiating with the federal government. Unfortunately it seems Michel shares Nitah's stance on the issue.

However, Nitah wasn't always so dismissive of the Metis and he should have been reminded of the spirit of camaraderie he once shared with Metis.

Following last week's article, a photo was delivered to the offices of Northern News Services demonstrating Nitah once had a close relationship with the Metis.

In the photo, Nitah, clad in traditional Metis garb, proudly stands

as a member of the NWT Metis Reelers Dance Group. George Mandeville, a prominent Metis musician from Fort Smith and a representative of the North Slave Metis, submitted the photo along with a note stating that Nitah didn't mind being Metis when the photo was taken.

Earlier this month, when referring to the NWT Metis Nation's claim on future park land in what the LKFN considers Akaitcho territory, Nitah said: "There should not be two distinct aboriginal groups in our area."

The Metis - who are recognized in the Canadian constitution - are not the Akaitcho's enemy. In fact, for the two groups to be at odds over the development of the park is senseless.

There is strength in numbers and it makes more sense for the Metis and the

Akaitcho to work together.

Betty Villebrun, president of the Northwest Territory Metis Nation, has extended the hand of co-operation to the LKFN. Both groups seek the same thing, recognition of their traditional rights and protection of their traditional lands.

The Metis have a long history in the Lutsel K'e area. Mandeville can trace his lineage back to a man the Akaitcho once called Katehwi. Mandeville described his ancestor as a Metis who was a recognized leader of the Chipewyan. Katehwi, Mandeville says, was also an accomplished peacemaker.

Divisiveness between the Metis and Akaitcho will only serve to weaken both groups' negotiating position with the federal government. It's time to put aside small differences and act in a spirit that will best serve both the Metis and the Akaitcho. Let peace and co-operation rule the day.

We hope that Chief Michel will eventually see the value of working with the Metis.

THE ISSUE:

Metis and Akaitcho

WE SAY:

Should work together



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