



Jasper-Yellowhead Museum & Archives

Archives Across Canada

Archives across Canada are facing many of the same issues: they are usually small organizations barely able to maintain themselves with meager budgets, minimal hours of operation, and dwindling supplies of volunteers. One of the few

opportunities for archives to attain more funding in order to properly maintain and preserve its records are grants that are offered on a national and a provincial level. This funding opportunity is an annual event and each year the majority of archives across the nation submit applications in the hopes that their project will catch the attention of the adjudication committee and be approved. Last year Jasper's archives was a fortunate recipient of a grant from the Archives Society of Alberta and the National Archives Development Fund. The project submitted was to appraise, arrange, and describe archival records that have been stuck in a limbo of sorts, otherwise known as backlog.

When historic records are donated to an archival institution, they are rarely processed immediately. First, they must be accessioned, which means they are formally accepted as a donation and a certificate of gift (legal document) is issued as a record of the donation and the transfer or ownership. Second, the records must be appraised; in other words, their historic value must be established, in order to determine how the archivist will arrange and describe them. The most important principle of this process is known as *respect des fond*, which requires the archivist to maintain the provenance of the records and the original order of the records. The provenance refers to the individual, family, or corporate or administrative body whose activities resulted in the production of the records and original order refers to, as you may have already guessed, the ability of the archivist to arrange the records in the order they were accumulated and used by their creator. Next the archivist must describe the records, so that they will be accessible to researchers. Archival descriptions are governed by the Rules for Archival Description (RAD). These rules were developed by the Canadian Council of Archives and help to ensure that no matter where you are in Canada, historic records are described consistently, making it easier for researcher to locate what they are looking for.

Perhaps this all sounds a bit tedious, but in between the tedium of sorting paper and ever so carefully removing rusty staples emerges someone's story, a piece of history that was almost forgotten. With each

fonds (collection) that is processed the Jasper archives becomes more complete, offering researchers and visitors an unmediated glimpse of history and people who had something to contribute. Upon the completion of the Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives Backlog project, here are some of the records that are now available to the public: The Robert William Sandford fonds, which contain records about two of Jasper's great alpinists: Willy Pfisterer and Hans Schwarz; The Gillett family fonds, which contains beautiful and unique images of Jasper circa 1927 and photographs of the trains and wrecks along the CN line; The Harold Allen fonds, which contains military records from a young British man who signed on to serve in World War I in Jasper; The Jasper Senior High School Dramatic Society fonds, this photograph album contains over 100 photographs of on-stage and back-stage poses by Jasperites such as Gail Richards, George Andrew, and Luigi Tassone, just to name but a few; The Robert (Bob) Dowling fonds, which contains records generously donated by Jasper's favorite MLA covering the production of the Jasper Story, and early Jasper Chamber of Commerce records; and finally The Norman C. Lindhjem fonds, which contains photographs of a training and secret vehicle test program (the Weasel) that happened at the Columbia Icefields during World War II. Lindhjem was an American soldier and took part in the training. His photographs are a unique look at life at a military camp amidst a most beautiful yet treacherous environment.

The Jasper Yellowhead Museum and Archives is currently the second largest contributor to the Alberta Society of Archives' InSight database, there are currently over 5000 photographs available to the public. For a closer look at some of these remarkable photographs and thousands of others go to www.archivesalberta.org or through links provided at www.jaspermuseum.org. Once again, thanks to the Alberta Society of Archives, The National Archives Development Fund and the Canadian government for making sure that our histories are not forgotten and available to all.