

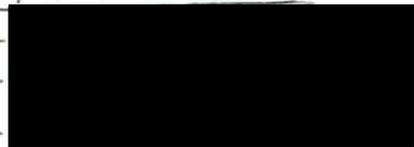
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SUNDAY OCT-1 - 6-10 PM  
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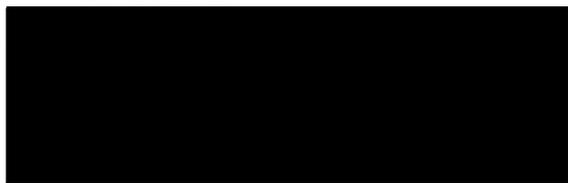
GOOD EVENING BCUC PANEL - MY NAME IS MARK MEIERS - CO-FOUNDER OF THE  
ROCKY MTN FT CAMP OF 2015 AT THE CONFLUENCE OF  
THE MOBERLY RIVER AND THE PEACE RIVER WHERE WE  
HELD B.C HYDRO AT BAY FOR 62 DAYS UNTIL A COURT  
ORDER FORCED US TO LEAVE.

I COME TO THIS MEETING IN DEFENCE OF OUR WILDLIFE AND ITS HABITAT  
THAT THROUGH A CROOKED-CORRUPT GOVT HAS WILLINGLY DESTROYED FOR POLITICAL  
AND MONEYTARY GAIN. THE PEACE RIVER VALLEY IS HOME TO EVERY ANIMAL FROM  
MICE TO MOOSE AND EVERY CRITTER IN BETWEEN. THE MOST VALUBLE SPRING CALVING  
GROUND FOR ALL UNGULATES - THE BEST WINTERING GROUND ALSO. THE FIRST MIGRATORY  
BIRDS - TO MANY TO MENTION WITH MY SHORT TIME FRAME STOP ALONG THE PEACE  
RIVER AS SPRING IS EARLY IN THE PEACE RIVER VALLEY - MANY NEST AND RAISE  
THEIR YOUNG HERE. GOLDEN AND BALD EAGLES - THEIR 40 YR OLD NESTING TREES  
HAVE BEEN DESTROYED. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOOSE THIS LAST PART OF THE YUKON  
TO YELLOWSTONE WILDLIFE CORRIDOR FOR POLITICAL GREED AND MONEYTARY GAIN.  
TOURISTS COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO VIEW THIS VALLEY AND ITS WILDLIFE  
THESE DOLLARS AMOUNT TO MILLIONS OVER THE YEARS WILL BE LOST FOREVER.  
PEOPLE COME FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD TO HUNT AND FISH THIS AREA - AS THE  
WILDLIFE WILL BE DECIMATED DUE TO LOSS OF HABITAT THIS TOURIST REVENUE  
AMOUNTING TO MILLIONS OF DOLLARS WILL BE LOST FOREVER. WHEN A GOVT MAKES  
LAWS WE ALL HAVE TO FOLLOW - THEN IN TOTAL SECRECY CHANGES THOSE LAWS  
FOR THEIR OWN CROOKED-CORRUPT GAINS CAUSING B.C. RESIDENTS UNAFFORDABLEY  
EXTREME HYDRO RATE INCREASES FOR GENERATIONS TO COME SOMETHING IS  
TERRIBLY WRONG

IN CLOSING I URGE THIS PANEL TO TAKE TIME TO DO A DAYS TRIP ON THE  
PEACE RIVER AND VIEW THIS AWSOME VALLEY FIRST HAND.

BCUC INQUIRY RESPECTING SITE C F 273-1

MARK MEIERS



OCT-10-2017

SITE C SUBMISSION @ BCUC.COM -



Some of the homes at Finlay Forks, 1967—a ghost town awaiting the flood.

Photo: Joan Curtin

the rail line to be run up the trench of the Rockies. Both men had in mind to develop hydro power and build lumber and pulp mills. They envisioned a monorail being built, a relatively new rail concept at that time, to carry passengers and supplies up the trench. Their plans were not to be.

In 1963 the provincial government of British Columbia called for bids to build one of the largest earthen dams in the world. It would be constructed at the Peace Canyon and would be 600 feet high. Negotiations were begun to compensate some of the trappers and settlers who would be affected by the huge reservoir that would be formed. The larger traplines were bought out for a few thousand dollars, a paltry sum considering the many cabins that had been built on each line (they were usually spaced every six to ten miles apart). Miles of trail had been cut out laboriously by hand, and boats had been built and stationed on the lakes of each line by the trappers. The buy-out was essentially a take it or leave it deal. The province had hired Alf Janks and later Gord McMullen to burn every cabin down, and they would receive money for every cabin burned. A photo of the burning cabin was proof of the job completed. Janks attempted to burn some cabins two or three years in advance of the flood waters. Needless to say he was not well received by those who were still using them. On one occasion he was run off at gun point.

The spring of 1968 was a time of infamy for the rivermen. The gates to the three diversion tunnels were closed and the mighty Peace River was stopped by the WAC Bennett Dam. With the spring runoff at its peak, the reservoir began to rise rapidly, catching many off guard.

One trapper tied his boat up to a tree on the riverbank and settled into his cabin for the night. Imagine his surprise when he rolled out of bed the next morning to step into two inches of water. He hurriedly dressed and went outside to see his riverboat floating out of reach with the bow almost under water. It was lucky he had tied the bow rope with a fair amount of slack. He managed to use a pole to swing the stern around within reach and once on board he had to cut the bow line to free the boat. He then motored downstream on the Finlay to see if any ice jam had formed causing the river to back up. Soon others, including some Sekani Natives from Finlay Forks, were on the river to see what was the matter. No ice jam was found. The waters of the now-dammed Peace River were rising much faster than was originally forecast. Along the narrow reach of the Peace River, the water rose ten feet a night.

The human population was not the only thing affected; wildlife was caught off-guard too. As the wide valley around Finlay Forks began to flood, hundreds of moose, bears and other wildlife became stranded on islands that were formed by the rising water. Trees, logs and other floating debris prevented the animals from swimming to shore and hundreds of moose drowned.

Pen Powel, a bush pilot from Hudson Hope, flew his small plane over Finlay Forks in the fall of 1968. Near the mouth of the Omineca there was a hill that rose above the surrounding country. The slashing crews had cut the big spruce and pine trees on this promontory and the logs lay like pick-up sticks. This hill now became an island as the waters rose and it was to this high point the moose gathered to try and find refuge. The moose now became trapped as they could not leave due to floating debris. Powell returned a week later and counted more than 100 dead moose on the flooded island. Of course, more than just moose died; Powell said, "Even animals you don't often see in the water

TAKEN FROM THE BOOK  
HOOKED RIVER RATS 172  
THE ADVENTURES OF PIONEER RIVERMEN  
BY BERNARD MCKAY

were swimming for their lives—weasels, mice, even squirrels. The squirrels would swim with their tail straight up out of the water." By late summer of 1969 the smell of rotting moose carcasses was everywhere. The floating animals had bloated and were caught in the debris piles. For the next two years the moose would try to cross the river as they always had and would exhaust themselves trying to swim around and through the logs that were piling up in the shallows of the forming lake. By 1972 the entire north end of Williston Lake was choked with logs and even the tug boats could not get through.

The flood waters eventually stretched from the Peace Canyon on the east, north to Deserters Canyon on the Finlay and south to almost where the Hart Highway crosses the Parsnip. The historic rapids of Deserters Canyon were now tamed, flooded under fifteen feet of water; also, gone forever were the Ne Perle Pas and Finlay Rapids on the Peace. The Omineca River was flooded ten miles up past the Black Canyon. The lower reaches of the Ospika and Ingenika Rivers were also lost. Old Fort Graham became only a memory and Finlay Forks rests under 300 feet of water.

Some of the old rivermen tried to carry on in the early years as Williston Lake rose, but the old flat-bottomed riverboats were no match for the big waves encountered on the wind-blown lake. On one occasion Art Van Somer was attempting to leave for Fort Ware with a big load of freight on board his forty-four-footer. As he pulled out of a cove protected from the wind near Finlay Forks, he encountered five-foot waves on the main lake and swamped his boat. His brother Jim rescued him and his overturned boat using a small tug boat, but more than \$2,000 worth of supplies were lost. The hunting guide Ken Christopher left Fort Graham for Finlay Forks for a trip that would normally take hours; instead it took two days of hard work pushing and pulling his boat around the floating debris. He had on board two injured tree fallers who needed emergency treatment in Prince George. Eventually a tug boat had to be called and it plowed out a channel for the log-jammed riverboat to follow.

The Indians near Finlay Forks kept moving their camp to higher ground every few days. They did not understand the situ-

ation and figured the flood would eventually stop: it did, but not until a huge inland sea that was twenty miles across had formed. Their communities at Fort Graham and Ingenika were completely drowned out. The Native graveyard at Fort Graham was located on a high bank, and as the waters rose the bank sloughed in. The wooden caskets could be seen sliding down into the forming lake. Ed Stranberg was the last resident of Finlay Forks to pull out, surrendering his cabin to the flood waters.

When I was on the lake in its early years (1973), boating was very dangerous because of half-submerged deadheads. When the afternoon wind came up, the waves formed would force me into shore, if a passage could be found through the flotsam of logs. Submerged trees would let go from the lake bottom and rocket to the surface like torpedoes. A lot of sloughing in has occurred on the surrounding hill sides as unstable ground was flooded.

By 1990, however, the lake's condition had improved considerably. B.C. Hydro and various logging companies worked for years cleaning up the logs and the majority of the remainder had become water logged and sank to the bottom. It is now possible to reach the beach in most places. The moose and other wildlife eventually adapted to the big lake and, in fact, the fishing is excellent for dolly varden especially where the creeks enter.

I went on a tour of the powerhouse and dam in 1978 with my family. It is without a doubt an impressive marvel of engineering. But as I stood on the viewing site overlooking the dam and the flooded valley behind it, a feeling of sadness came over me. The era of the rivermen was over.

THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT WE CAN EXPECT TO  
HAPPEN AGAIN

MARK MEIERS

THIS WILL COST BC RATEPAYERS MILLIONS  
AND MILLIONS IN LOST TOURIST REVENUE AND  
CLEAN UP COSTS.