



The NStar Chronicle

The Project North Star Association of Canada

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Editor's Notes

Roger Button

Our Association was incorporated in 2003. We are fortunate that a number of the original members of the organization, such as Tim Timmins, are still involved as they can provide an historical perspective. As Tim says, in the article "Our Members," there have been many bumps in the road, and the fact that the aircraft is still a long way from completion after 16 years speaks for itself. In January 2017, Réjean (Rej) Demers took up his position as CASM's Conservation Project Manager. Rej's first contribution to the Chronicle can be found in the "Conservator's Corner." The restoration of the North Star is a priority for Rej. He has spent the first year of his mandate gathering information and developing systems and procedures which will, in the long run, move the restoration of the aircraft forward in a coherent manner. I have previously stated the obvious and that is the health and vigour of the Association is dependent on the restoration status of the aircraft. In the last few years there have been as many bumps in the road as there are potholes in Ottawa in the spring. The President is very optimistic we have reached a real turning point (see the "President's Notes") and wouldn't that be great.

PNSAC

Contents of this issue:

Editor's Notes	1	Conservator's Corner	3
Notes from the President	2	Our Members	4
		Calendar of Events	5
		Board and Officer's Contact Information	5

Notes from the President

Richard Lodge

Since the last issue of the NStar Chronicle in March of this year we have continued to reorganize our volunteer operations under the leadership of the Museum's Special Projects Manager, Réjean (Rej) Demers. We have started a recruitment process for new restoration volunteers and to date two new people have started work. During the summer two more permanent Museum staff joined Rej to replace people who have retired. It is obviously taking time for the new Museum staff to get to know the complex operations of the Aviation Museum, to get to know the Project North Star volunteers and assess their various talents and areas of expertise. Consequently, our summer has been quiet but steadily productive.

For several reasons it became necessary to reorganize the location of several major Museum artifacts. This affected the North Star aircraft which spent the summer outside the Reserve Hanger resulting in some problems with water ingress and further bird activity. I am pleased to say that the aircraft is now back inside the hangar.

The Museum is actively supporting Project North Star and trying to facilitate our restoration work wherever possible and is promoting our work and future activities. Our Treasurer, Paul Labranche, and I recently met with the Museum Foundation. The Foundation is the umbrella organization with responsibility for fundraising and business development at the three museums, comprising the Museum

Corporation, (Aviation, Science & Tech and Agriculture). We had a very productive meeting, which among other things has resulted in the Foundation deciding to highlight Project North Star in its Fall fundraising mail out. This type of collaboration is very good for our Association and we hope as good for the Foundation.

Our biggest challenge at present is to get our website properly operational again. A couple of our volunteers with website knowledge have indicated a willingness to do the necessary work and we are hoping to have the site working and up to date in the near future.

On December 2nd we held a Members' meeting at the Museum when we were fortunate to have Jim Mason join us to talk about the restoration of an early Lockheed aircraft flown by TCA. The meeting was well attended in a new venue of the Avro Arrow room instead of the Bush Theatre. Following Jim's interesting presentation, the group moved to the Museum's Restoration Hangar where Rej talked about the progress of the North Star restoration and the plans for work in 2018.

One of the initiatives currently underway is to create a visual timeline of the work already completed on the North Star restoration and the planned future work to bring the project to completion. It is anticipated that this visual timeline will be mounted on a display board for our members and the public to view.

In closing, I am optimistic that 2018 will see increased activity both in the aircraft restoration work and also within our Association.

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Conservator's Corner

Réjean Demers

Réjean Demers (Rej, to those who work with him) is a Transport Canada licensed Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (AME). Réjean was a small business owner in Gatineau QC for over 10 years, working for a wide variety of private and commercial aircraft owners and operators. Following a stint in Northern Ontario working on turpoprop freighters and bulk fuel haulers, he took up his present position as a Conservator, Special Projects Manager with Ingenium, Canada's Museums of Science and Innovation in January 2017. His main project is the restoration of the Canadair North Star DC-4GM at the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum. He recounts below his introduction to his new job.

Leaving Pickle Lake was like getting shot out of a cannon in a snow storm. At that time, Christmas of 2016, I was the last person on my crew to leave the YPL base, having seen my colleagues off for the end of our tour and the holidays. After a full day of flying, the fleet had to be tucked away in the barn ready for service. On Boxing Day, a fresh crew would fly in and start another two week tour of line maintenance with the company we worked for. However, on that Christmas, I was quitting my job.

Nobody knew I was leaving until I got back to the bunkhouse and shared Christmas dinner with the remaining pilots and ops personnel. I refer to them in these terms now, but then and there, I could say they were my friends. In the weeks leading to my departure, no one knew I was leaving. No one speaks of breaking out of prison when they are behind bars. The difference being the only bars I saw were the Pickle Lake Hotel and a watering hole in Thunder Bay called the Apollo.

Driving down the 599 in that snow storm with a truck I had bought for \$100 was a white knuckle ride. Knowing this would probably be the last time I drove the 2000km distance between Northern Ontario and home in Gatineau. The stakes were high: A flight to catch in Ottawa (T-minus 48hrs), New Year's eve in New York city with my family waiting there for me and a new job starting at CASM on the day of my wedding anniversary. Could 2017 start with anything less? Arriving to work that January 3rd morning was a good feeling, until I got startled by "Manny" the mannequin sitting in my predecessor's office chair. If a sense of humour was a job requirement, I hoped to get the joke. I would later find Manny in other compromising positions, some of which I refuse to admit my participation in writing.

The momentum I have gained in the twelve months since my escape from Pickle Lake is only part of what keeps me moving forward. I also count on the support of others, namely co-workers and volunteers. My position as Project Manager of the North Star restoration relies on the good work and cooperation of all hands involved. As the work itself proves to be technical and highly detailed, with wide ranges of abilities involved, people are always the driving force.

It was suggested my article for the North Star Chronicle be focused on the restoration of a certain four engined artifact #1967.0645. For details on the work that has been carried out by our dedicated group of volunteers, I recommend you read my conservation report on the subject. It is available online: <https://documents.techno-science.ca/documents/NorthStarConservationReportOctober2017.pdf> or by email: rdemers@techno-science.ca

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Our Members

Interview with Austin J Timmins

1. What is your background in aviation?

My aviation experience includes 36 years service in the RCAF and nine years with the Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute. In the RCAF I completed radio navigator training, which included communications, navigation and air gunner. I later qualified as an airborne interception navigator. My operational experience includes air transport, search and rescue and training. My assignments included Navigation Leader, Aircrew Leader, Squadron Commander, Air Command Navigator and Deputy Commander (COO) of the Air Transport Group. I logged 9500 hours, mostly on the following aircraft: Beechcraft, Dakota, North Star, Mitchell, Yukon, Hercules, and Boeing 707. My staff assignments in Europe included movement control (traffic management) for 1 Air Division and a tour at The NATO Defense College in Rome.

On retirement from the RCAF I participated in a Transport Canada A Base review of several airports. I then secured full employment with Canadian Aeronautics and Space Institute as Executive Director, retiring in 1995.

2. How long have you been involved with Project North Star and how and why did you get involved?

My involvement with efforts to conserve North Star 17515 predates Project North Star. Ottawa area members of the 426 Thunderbird Squadron Association, mostly retired North Star aircrew, met with the National Aviation Museum staff to express their concern about the state of the North Star and proposed volunteer involvement in a preservation ef-

fort. These expressions of concern and interest led to a meeting between the Association representatives, where General Adamson presented a proposal for the restoration of the aircraft. It was rejected but assurance was given that the North Star would be first priority when the new hangar was completed. Also a North Star Trust Fund would be established. Robert Holmgren, an observer at the meeting, then proceeded to develop a proposal for volunteers to restore the North Star.

3. What has been the history of your involvement to date?

I have been involved from the beginning of efforts to establish PNS, first as a member of a Steering Committee, led by Robert Holmgren, later, Vice President and then President of PNSAC. My contacts in aviation provided much needed advice and support, including access to initial funding for PNSAC.

4. What has been the highlight of your involvement?

The highlight of my involvement has to be the establishment of PNS and PNSAC.

5. What has been the most challenging part of your involvement?

PNS is now in its 16th year. It has been a work in progress with many bumps along the way. I spent a lot of time and effort, along with other members of the Executive, evening out these bumps. Establishing and maintaining effective channels of communication with CASM and CSTM required constant attention. Much effort was directed to fund raising, publicity, and, finding volunteers. In the beginning, every date brought a new challenge.

PNSAC

Calendar of Events

Thursday, April 12, 2018

Board of Directors Meeting

Saturday, April 14, 2018

Annual General Meeting

Sunday, July 01, 2018

Canada Day

Board and Officer's Contact Information

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