



REQUEST FOR DECISION

File # 7710-01

Report To: Mayor and Council
From: Chief Administrative Officer
Presenter: Milo Macdonald
Subject: Administration Report No. 0026/24
Frozen John Mascot - Historical Research
Meeting: Regular Council
Meeting Date: 12 Feb 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

"THAT, Council receive the historical research information within Administration Report No. 26/24, AND THAT, Council authorize staff to continue using the City's Frozen John mascot."

CAO'S COMMENTS:

Towards the end of 2023, City of Fort St. John staff heard local concerns that continued use of the "Frozen John" mascot might be insensitive because it trivialized the death of a local First Nations Person from exposure. The Fort St. John North Peace Museum conducted research as did Doig River First Nation. Through that process, it was learned that the namesake of "Frozen John" was a Swedish man by the name of Hjalmer Melquist who had died of exposure near Fort St. John in 1918 in an area now known locally as "Frozen John" In those days, Hjalmer was known as "Honest John".

ALTERNATIVE RECOMMENDATION:

"THAT, Council direct staff to provide a report to Council to detail the implications of changing the name of the "Frozen John" mascot to "Honest John"."

KEY ISSUES(S)/ CONCEPTS DEFINED:

During the early part of 2023, there were a number of conversations that took place between

members of our staff and members of the public around the Frozen John Mascot. This mascot has been associated to the City of Fort St. John for several years. The story behind the Frozen John mascot was of a local man who had perished of exposure many years ago. Some concern was expressed that this person may have been a community member of Doig River First Nation. It was felt that if this was the case there may be some sensitivity in continuing to use this mascot to support our local events.

Having learned of this potential controversy and concern, staff made inquiries to determine if continued use of the mascot was problematic. Staff were seeking to determine both the story of "Frozen John" and the identity of the the real person who was the namesake of the "Frozen John" story.

Internal records were consulted first to learn what information was available about the adoption of the mascot and also the underlying history around "Frozen John".

It was learned that the Frozen John mascot was first brought forward in November of 2005 at a Council meeting by the City Manager of the day and Sue Popesku, who introduced "Frozen John" to Council.

Staff contacted the Doig River First Nation (DRFN) band manager, Shona Nelson, and asked whether the Frozen John mascot was a matter of sensitivity to the DRFN. The concern was that if the namesake of Frozen John was Indigenous, and had died of exposure, whether it was appropriate to continue using the mascot. Ms. Nelson made a number of inquiries and advised that in a discussion with their Elders, she had learned that the namesake of "Frozen John" was not Indigenous, not a DRFN band member, and that DRFN took no position on whether the mascot should be used or not.

After searching all available records, staff were unable to locate much information conclusive to the story of "Frozen John". It was decided to involve the North Peace Museum, and in conversation with their curator, it was decided to hire the museum to research this matter to determine if historical records could provide any more detail on the story of "Frozen John".

During these inquiries, the Museum managed to locate several pertinent records and spent many hours learning the story of "Frozen John" in detail. The details of the story are below in point form as extracted from the historical records compiled for us by the North Peace Museum.

- | On March 3, 1918 there was a report that a man had perished of exposure. The matter was reported to police.**
- | On March 5, 1918, the man was located frozen and deceased, and was then buried out near where he was found.**
- | It was learned that the deceased man was a 40 year old man, of Swedish origin, by the name of August Hjalmer Melquist. He was known as "Honest John" and was found by Aku and Japesia near Fish Creek.**
- | Melquist was born in Sweden and had immigrated to Canada on November 20, 1905 on the ship Parisian. His occupation at the time was listed as "Glass Blower" and**

“Labourer”.

- | **Interestingly, it appears that one of the BC police officers involved in the investigation was Robert J. Ogilvie, after whom a local school has been named.**
- | **The area north of town and near Fish Creek where Melquist perished has been referred to as “Frozen John” for many years.**
- | **The first public appearance of the “Frozen John” mascot was on November 18, 2005 for the Santa Claus Parade.**

The only consideration that may be worth making on this particular mascot is that the deceased person was known as “Honest John”, although his actual name was August Melquist. It seems like a shame that this mascot is named after the way he died rather than the way he lived, as an honest man.

Nevertheless, there are no objections or concerns from DRFN that the continued use of this mascot is in any way inappropriate or disrespectful.

In the preparation of this report it has been very useful to have had the support of DRFN, in speaking with their Elders and passing along to us the oral history of this event.

It has also been very useful to have the skilled historical researchers at the Fort St. John North Peace Museum who managed to unearth an enormous amount of information to put this story in context.

With the benefit of the information learned, there are no concerns about the continued use of this mascot.

RELEVANT POLICY:

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION

COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PILLARS:

Vibrant Community – Invest in community safety, social, cultural, and recreational programs.

Relationships & Advocacy – Initiate and foster relationships and advocate to decision makers on the issues that impact our community and our neighbours.

Economic Development – Enhance community economic development to provide opportunities and sustainability for Fort St. John.

Organizational Excellence – Provide a healthy workplace that is inclusive and builds on our diversity, engagement, and sense of community.

Managing Assets – Build and manage assets that support the current and future needs of the community.

COMPLIANCE WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

GENERAL: The effort involved in the preparation of this report is justified by the strategic focus on the value of relationships and advocacy, as well as within the goal of a vibrant community, fostering community pride and a sense of belonging.

ORGANIZATIONAL:

FINANCIAL: There are no financial considerations relating to this decision.

FOLLOW UP ACTION: No follow up action will be required if Council authorizes the continued use of the "Frozen John" mascot as recommended in the report.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION:

**Doig River First Nation
Fort St. John North Peace Museum**

COMMUNICATION:

DEPARTMENTS CONSULTED ON THIS REPORT:

Attachments:

Fort St. John North Peace Museum research materials

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

**Milo Macdonald, Chief Administrative Officer
02 Feb 2024**

FROZEN JOHN

Frank Beatton Journal Entries:

March 3, 1918

Continues cold and stormy with snow. Wind from North. Davis and Japesia arrived from Montignes camp. They report a white man having been coming in with 2 horses to sell but found where horse had died and they saw the man's rifle and cap and they think the man is laying there somewhere dead. I reported the matter to the police.

March 5, 1918

Self and Mr. Taylor and Olgvie and Porter went out about 8 miles and found man that was frozen and buried him out there. A fine clear day. The Indians left this morning.

.....

British Columbia Archives:

Vital Statistics, Death Registration

Event Type:	Death
Registration Number:	1918-09-225852
BC Archives Mfilm Number:	B13113
GSU Mfilm Number:	1927141
Event Date (YYYY-MM-DD):	1918-??-??
Event Place:	fort st john
Age at Death:	40
Person:	AUGUST HJALMER MELQUIST

Information recalled by Elder Gerry Attachie:

“Frozen John” was a trapper/trader called “Honest John” who was found frozen by Aku and Japesia near Fish Creek when they were heading to a store. This is most probably the Hudson’s Bay Company (F.W. Beaton, chief buyer) where they reported the matter. The HBC was located on the north bank of the Peace River at that time.

Gerry told Tamara (FSJNP Museum) that one horse was dead and they managed to save the second horse.

Tamara questioned the names of the First Nations men, as she had located a 1918 entry in F.W. Beaton’s journal of Davis and Japesia finding evidence of white man’s death. They discussed the possibility of mistaken identity. Gerry later came into the Museum and reported that it was Davis and Japesia. He said Japesia died in Fort Nelson in 1960s and Acko died in Fort St. John in 1960-70s.

Individuals Involved:

August Hjalmar Melquist

Born: May 7, 1877 in Goteborgs, Sweden

Immigrated to Canada: Arrived 20 November 1905 on the ship Parisian

Crossed to USA: Nov. 1905 to Kane, Pennsylvania to see friend Edward Hansen

Canadian Land Application: July 1914 applied on SE32-80-14-W6M

Canadian Land Application: Cancelled above application by sometime before Oct. 1916

Canadian Land Application: July 1917 applied on SW34-83-18-W6M

Occupation: Ship record and Canada to USA crossing show occupation as glass blower
Land record app. in 1917 show occupation as laborer in Pouce Coupe

Davis - 1873 (est.) - 1943 Born: B.C. Died: Moose Creek, B.C.’

Ray Acko - 1879 - 1973 Born: B.C. Died: Fort St. John, BC

George Chipesia - 1884 - 1964 Born: B.C. Died: Fort Nelson

B.C. Police: Harry Neil Taylor – stationed in Old Police Barracks

Robert J. Ogilvie (living on homestead by Police Barracks on south side of Peace

Arthur W. Porter – Early prospector/homesteader (NW25-83-18-W6M)

Frozen John Research

Alaska Highway News Search (1 hour)

General References to Area

- Lots of references to Frozen John hill in the 1990s and early 2000s particularly in regards to tobogganing and nearby railway tracks, Frozen John Roubaix (Blizzard bike club race), and parties
- Motocross races at Frozen John (1970s)
- Real estate references to "Frozen John area" in early 2000s

Historic References to Area in AHN

- AHN 1992 – Amy Smith’s story of her arrival in Fort St. John and journey out to North Pine where she was to teach in **1930** – stopped on top of Frozen John Hill with driver Tommy Hargreaves and fell in love with the Peace
- AHN 1955 (earliest reference in AHN) – Slim Byrnes’ article mentions Frozen John hill as being part of the Fort Nelson Trail in the **1920s** – this reference to Frozen John hill and the Fort Nelson Trail is mentioned again in a 2001 AHN article (Glancing Back by Bill Dyer)

Mascot References in AHN

- Nov. 2005 – Frozen John – our “winter” mascot “danced into city hall” as unofficial first public appearance – first notable public appearance was two days later (Nov. 18 2005) at the Santa Claus Parade
- Dec. 2005 – Frozen John makes appearance with Salvation Army photo
- January 2006 – Frozen John appears at his first High on Ice festival

Peacemakers of North Peace (1978) by Cora Ventress and Marguerite Davies – only reference to Frozen John below – Tamara chased the Klondike guy who sold meat and found he squatted near Fish Creek in 1898, built a cabin, and returned to try and claim land in 1912 but as this isn't the right candidate we have omitted that information (unless you'd like us to include it)

History of North Pine District

By Jessie Wood and Amy Smith



1931 — NORTH PINE — A few of the early birds in a crowd of over two hundred gathered from the North Country for supper, lecture and dance at the North Pine School under the auspices of the North Pine Farmers' Institute. August 13. — Photo by W. D. Albright
 Front Row 3rd from left; Ione Sandry, 4th Ivy Mooney; 7th Iva Sandry; 8th Shirley Keith behind Mrs. Bill Smirl; 9th Jean Keith; 10th Georgia Keith. Second Row — Dark jacket over light dress, Annie Keith behind in white apron Mrs. O. E. Keith to her left Margaret Campbell.

The North Pine District covers the valley of Indian Creek and the long rolling slope leading down to the Beaton, or as it is better known locally, the North Pine River.

Although once heavily wooded with stands of spruce, diamond willow and poplar, recurring fires had cleared off many patches and here grasses and wild peavine, set with flowers of every hue, waved in colorful abundance. Across the western edge of the district runs the trail followed by the gold seekers of 1898. On top of "Frozen John", the huge hill overlooking Fort St. John, was the grave of one of those who failed to reach his goal. Up this trail an enterprising pioneer drove a herd of cattle bound for the Klondike. Winter caught him in the mountains and he was forced to slaughter his herd and take the meat on by dog sled. Although he sold the meat for a dollar a pound he still lost on the venture.

In 1919 Vern MacLean, the first of the

ranchers, drove a herd of cattle in and built his home on the banks of the North Pine. His cattle had unlimited range at first, then Clay Martin, Gilbert Howe, John Middleton and the Clarke boys also brought in herds. Cold, long winters and disease hampered them and by 1927 Clarkes were the only ones left — with the Petersen boys in Rose Prairie and Clay Martin in Montney.

John Keith, Bill Tiegs, Frank Hall, Bill Smirl and Frank Druyts all came to the country and filed before the middle of March, 1928.

Bill Smirl was the first to build a house and bring his family to the district. He filed on the 17th of March and began building a log house the next day. Mrs Smirl and Billie arrived in Hythe the last of April, where Bill met them with a team and wagon. The weather was warm and the streams were running high and had to be forded. At the crossing of the Montney Creek above Clay Martin's Mrs. Smirl walked across on a foot

August H Mellquist

in the Canada, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1865-1935

Detail

Source

Name	August H Mellquist
Gender	Male
Arrival Age	28
Birth Year	abt 1877
Departure Port	Liverpool, England
Arrival Date	20 Nov 1905
Arrival Port	St John, New Brunswick, Canada
Vessel	Parisian
Search Ship Database	Search for the Parisian in the 'Passenger Ships and Images' database

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August Hjalmar Mellquist

in the Sweden, Emigrants Registered in Church Books, 1783-1991

Detail

Source

Name	August Hjalmar Mellquist
Gender	Man (Male)
Birth Date	7 maj 1877 (7 May 1877)
Birth Place	Göteborgs och Bohus, Nödinge
Departure Date	28 okt. 1905 (28 Oct 1905)
Departure Place	Göteborgs och Bohus, Kungälv
Arrival Place	Nordamerika
Occupation or Relation	Glasbl.
Notes	Travels alone
Page	63
Original Page	152
Source	Kungälv's Hfl (1900-1907)

Household Members (Name)

August Hjalmar Mellquist

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39392-0

FORM NO. 1.
100,000-28-5-13.

Form A.

No. 393665

Application for Entry for a Homestead, a Pre-emption or a Purchased Homestead.

I, August Hjelm Melquist
of Port St John BC do hereby apply for an Entry
for a homestead, under the provisions of Section 11 in that
behalf of the Dominion Lands Act, for the SW Quarter Section of Section number 34
in Township 83, Range 18W of the 6th Meridian.

(2.) I am a British subject.

(3.) I am a citizen (or subject, as the case may be) of Sweden, but I declare that it is my intention to become a British subject under the laws of Canada.

Stg. August Hjelm Melquist

Peace River District.

NOTE.—Strike out paragraph 2 if applicant is not a British subject.
Strike out paragraph 3 if applicant is a British subject.

NOTE.—The statistical information called for below will be obtained and filled in by Agent when granting entry.

Number in family, including entrant, giving their ages.				COUNTRY OF BIRTH.	SUB-DIVISION OF COUNTRY OF BIRTH.	LAST PLACE OF RESIDENCE.	PREVIOUS OCCUPATION.
Male Adult.	Female Adult.	Children under 16.	TOTAL.				
40			1	Sweden	Bukovina	Peace Camp BC	Laborer

570049

INTERIOR DEPT. OTTAWA
AUG 9 1917
REGISTRATION BRANCH

DOMINION LANDS OFFICE
JUL 16 1917
Peace River Crossing, A.B.



Form B.

Affidavit in support of an Application for Entry for a Homestead, a Pre-emption or a Purchased Homestead.

I, August Halmer Melquist of Post St John BC do solemnly swear (or affirm, as the case may be), that I am over eighteen years of age; that there is no person residing on the land herein applied for; that there are no improvements thereon; that there is not more than twenty-five (25) acres of merchantable timber on the land.

(2.) That I have not heretofore obtained an Entry for a Homestead on Dominion Lands.

(3.) That I obtained Entry for a Homestead on the 30th day of July 1914, for SE Quarter-section of Section 32, Township 80, Range 14 W of the 6th Meridian, but forfeited (or abandoned, as the case may be), the same.

(4.) That this application is made for my exclusive use and benefit, with the intention of my residing upon and cultivating the said land, and neither directly nor indirectly for the use or benefit of any other person or persons whomsoever.

(5.) That to the best of my knowledge and belief the land in respect of which my application is made is agricultural land and open to Entry.

(6.) That my Homestead Entry is in good standing at this date.

Sig. August Halmer Melquist

Subscribed and sworn to this 13th day of June 1917 before me at Post St John BC

WJH Local Agent, (or Sub-agent, as the case may be.)

NOTE - Strike out paragraph 2 if applicant has already received homestead entry.

NOTE - Strike out paragraph 3 if applicant has not heretofore obtained an entry for a homestead on Dominion Lands.

NOTE - Paragraph 6 is applicable only in the case of an application for a pre-emption entry.

VITAL STATISTICS ACT.

SCHEDULE B.—Deaths.

68852

August Hjarv Melquist is alleged to have been born in Sweden of Swedish parents about 1898 years ago. Little is known of him here and nothing whatever known of living relatives.

FILED REGISTRATION

Registered No. _____ City or town of _____

1. Full name *August Hjarv Melquist* District of *Port St. John* R.C.

2. (a.) Sex *M* (b.) Colour *W* (c.) Single Married Widowed Divorced 10. How long resident in city _____

3. (a.) Birthplace _____ (b.) Date of birth _____ 11. How long in district *2 years*

4. Age *38* *years* *about* *Months* _____ *Days* _____ 12. How long in Canada, if foreign born _____

5. Died on the _____ day of _____ 191____ at about _____ M. 13. (a.) Name of father _____ (b.) Birthplace of father _____ (Province or country) _____

6. Last occupation *Trapper & Game warden* *St. John* (Kind of Industry) _____ 14. (a.) Maiden name of mother _____ (b.) Birthplace of mother _____ (Province or country) _____

7. Former occupation _____ 15. The foregoing stated personal particulars are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

8. (a.) Place of death *10 Miles East of Port St. John* (Street and No.) _____ Informant *Harris Indian*

(b.) How long at place of death _____ 16. Address *Port St. John*

9. Former or usual residence _____ 17. Undertaker *P. G. Pollock*

18. Place of burial *10 Miles East of St. John* 19. Date of burial *March 2nd 1918* Address *Port St. John B.C.*

20. Date of burial _____ Hour *9* A. M. _____

PHYSICIAN'S CERTIFICATE OF CAUSE OF DEATH.

I hereby certify that I attended _____ from _____ 191____ to _____ 191____

That I last saw _____ alive on the _____ day of _____ 191____. That _____ died, as I am informed, on the _____ day of _____ 191____

at about _____ o'clock _____ M., and that to the best of my knowledge and belief, the cause of _____ death was as hereunder written.

(IF UNDER ONE YEAR OLD, STATE HOW FED.)

(a.) Remote or Earlier Pathological or Morbid Condition _____	Duration in Years, Months, Days or Hours _____
Was operation performed within one month before death? _____	
(b.) Immediate or Final Determining Cause <i>Liver to death on yellow trail</i>	

Witness my hand, this *2nd* day of *March* 191*8*

(Signature) *James Taylor Port St. John B.C.*

Address *Port St. John B.C.*