

Research Collections relating to the DEW Line in the western Arctic with Recommendations for Future Work

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The Parks Canada history and cultural research program in the western Arctic has been running for over fifteen years. The work includes archaeological field surveys, cultural resource management site assessments, community-based oral history, interviews with non-resident experts and archival and museum research. The purpose of this research is to support the better understanding and appropriate management of the National Parks in the area. It is recognized that this can only be done in co-operation with the regional Inuvialuit people and all cultural research is done in co-operation with them.

Research on the DEW Line in the western Arctic was initially inspired by the need to address the cultural resource management issues of the BAR-1 Auxiliary DEW Line radar station in Ivvavik National Park. Since 1986 this research has collected and organized significant collections of drawings, artefacts, photos, oral history interviews and documentary materials from personal collections, archives and museums. A limited number of publications have been produced, though work on more is in progress. Work is currently focussed on the evolution of Inuvialuit social and economic structures and the community's inter-relationship with the federal government and the development of northern development policies and aboriginal programs in the period between WWII and the early 1960s.

Research collections include the following:

North Slope Oral History Collections - Transcripts and recordings of some 80 interviews from a number of oral history projects on the Yukon North Slope and the DEW Line.

DEW Line Archival Reference Collection - Approximately 6 cubic feet of photocopies from files of the Departments of External Affairs, the RCMP and Northern Affairs and Resource Development in the National Archives of Canada. These were selected from approximately 40 cubic feet of files reviewed. A small library of books and publications related to the DEW Line, continental air defence and arctic sovereignty and development has also been collected.

DEW Line Photo Collection - Some 1300 contemporary and historic images of the DEW Line from the period 1950 through 1995, obtained from private donors, the Department of National Defence, the National Archives of Canada and Parks Canada field work

North Slope Photo Collection - Approximately 800 historic images of life on the Yukon North Slope and the Mackenzie Delta from the period 1900 through 1960 obtained from community members, National Archives of Canada, Anglican Church Archives and the Prince of Wales Heritage Centre

DEW Line Drawing Collection - A complete set of 311 architectural and engineering drawings, dated 1950 through 1990, from the BAR-1 Auxiliary radar station. This maybe the only complete set of drawings of a DEW Line station in Canada.

DEW Line File Collection - The nearly complete set of files, equipment manuals and operating notices from the BAR-1 Auxiliary radar station, totalling some 15 cubic feet of records.

DEW Line Artefact Collection - A collection of about 130 artefacts representing the different aspects of life and work at the BAR-1 Auxiliary radar station are available for study.

Future research on the history of the DEW Line and its effects upon the Arctic as a whole should include the following work:

A broader survey of community memories and impressions of the DEW Line and the period of the 1940s and 50s from across the arctic. This might be best gained through a combination approach seeking both direct information on the past from elders and other knowledgeable individuals, but also broader community meetings that identify issues and address concerns about the future.

The many retired staff of the DEW Line retain a sustained interest in their time of work in the arctic. Many of these individuals not only remember a host of stories and memories that would contribute to the historical record but also have extensive and valuable photo and memorabilia collections that would enhance our understanding of this period.

Additional archival research would expand the presently regional nature of the Parks Canada research.

Archival sources also contain significant amounts of wildlife observations and weather/climate data that may have direct contributions to make to current scientific research.