Project on:

**History of the Geological Survey of Canada**

**In the**

**Sedimentary Basins of Western and Northern Canada**

**Background**

In 2004 a group of retired employees of the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) established the GSC History Committee. This group under the leadership of Charlie Smith included Robin Riddihough, Marie-France Dufour, Murray Duke, Chris Findlay, Melissa Kane, George Plant, Bill Poole, Dan Richardson, John Scott and Christy Vodden. The Committee is “dedicated to compiling and assembling the material necessary for the continuation of a written history of the Geological Survey of Canada from the end of Maurice Zaslow’s Reading the Rocks (1972) to the present.” A proposed “Table of Contents” was developed in 2010 for something they called “Reading the Rocks Again” to cover the period 1970 to 2010. It was hoped that the outline would assist a future historian and “ to identify key documents that need to be safeguarded for future reference.” The Committee sought former colleagues who could prepare notes on specific topics, events, etc.” By 2012 the Committee had received a number of contributions from past and present employees and it planned to post these on the web following the pending review of the Earth Sciences Sector’s web presence.

**Contribution from the Calgary Division of GSC**

On 14 April 2011 Grant Smith submitted a proposal to the Division’s Acting Director (Godfrey Nowlan) to compile the history of the GSC in Calgary, subject to the provision of office space, desktop computer and printing services, required office supplies, etc. Volunteer status was given for a period of two years to pursue the proposal’s objectives.

**Proposal**

Context: Friends of GSC History Series – “to identify, assemble, examine and report on available information relevant to the future preparation of the history of the GSC post-1972 by an historian”.

* To produce information on the history of GSC to be used by a future historian preparing a sequel to Zaslow’s history, and
* To produce a ‘benchmark’ record of important events and trends since early in the 1970s.

Objectives:

* To identify, assemble, examine and report on available information relevant to the history of the Calgary division of the GSC
* To produce a ‘benchmark’ record of important events and accomplishments of the division
* To organize an archive of significant documents related to the history of the division
* To solicit from individuals anecdotal accounts that may be significant to the historical record

Methodology:

The proponent proposed to pursue this project over a two year period as a “Volunteer” with GSC (Calgary), whereby furnished office space would be provided by the division, along with free access to the library facilities, photocopiers and computer printers. Documents would be assembled and organized in file cabinets and bookcases that would ultimately constitute a historical archives/repository.

As a “Volunteer” the proponent would dedicate to the project an average of about 10 hours per week between 15 October 2011 and 15 April 2012, and a similar period beginning October 2012. Boxes and files of historical documents had already been located and these could be marshalled immediately, as soon as appropriate space was assigned. The proponent would do as much work as possible at home to avoid unnecessary commuting.

October 2011 to April 2012:

* identify, assemble, examine and report on available information
* produce a ‘benchmark’ record of important events and accomplishments
* organize an archive of significant documents

October 2012 to April 2013:

* compile anecdotal accounts
* compile a list of staff based at the GSC in Calgary since 1967
* prepare a final document on “The History of the Geological Survey of Canada in Calgary”

**Progress**

By 1 May 2011 office space and resources had been secured to start the project. Several boxes of archival materials were marshalled immediately and the space was organized to start the project in October 2011.

After further organizing numerous boxes/collections of archival materials in October-November 2011, work began on producing a timeline of significant/milestone events on the history of GSC in the region. This timeline provides a major part of the framework on which the history can be further articulated. Research to produce the timeline took most of the projects **first work session (October 2011 to April 2012).** Also, by the end of the first work session, a list of all staff ever employed by the GSC in Calgary was completed, including their years of employment. A status report on the project was sent to the Committee in Ottawa on 11 April 2012. Response was very positive:  
  
 “…it is clear that the story you are compiling will be a very significant addition to the GSC History project”

“Congratulations on a fine piece of work. You are setting a standard that will probably exceed anything else that people are doing with regard to the history of GSC.”

“I want to add my congratulations and to load you with more praise. No doubt you have set a very high standard and will produce a useful, interesting and comprehensive history. Allow me to suggest that you consider writing GSC Calgary’s history in the form of a book or at least a thick pamphlet for a standalone publication.”

The **second work session on the project (October 2012 to April 2013)** was dedicated to

* finishing the identification, assembling and examining of available information on the history of GSC’s work in the region
* finishing the organization of an archive of significant documents related to work in the region
* studying and describing the work environment within which the geoscience research was conducted
* drafting a summary report on “The History of the Geological Survey of Canada in the Sedimentary Basins of Western and Northern Canada”

A status report on the project along with three hardcopy versions (ring binders) of the 200-page report was sent to the History Committee in Ottawa in May 2013. Again response was very positive.

“Volunteer” status to continue work on the project was renewed for a two year period in October 2013. The **third work session on the project (October 2013 to April 2014)** was focussed on completing the report to a stage where it could be critically reviewed by others for errors, significant omissions and suggestions for improvements.

The **fourth and final work session (October 2014 to April 2015)** was directed toward

* responding to comments from critical reviewers and completing the report
* planning and preparing a PowerPoint - supported oral presentation on the

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**The Proud Heritage  
of the  
Geological Survey of Canada (Calgary)**

The report was reviewed between August and November 2014 by Roger Macqueen, Walter Nassichuk and Don Stott. Revisions based on their recommendations were made and the report was finalized by the end of December.

A PowerPoint – supported oral presentation was prepared between January and May 2015.

The project was completed and the report submitted to the GSC History Committee and the Director, GSC (Calgary) in May 2015.

*This report of May 2015 is not intended to reflect an exhaustive treatment of the subject. It can, however, lead the reader to the archival materials that have been assembled for more detailed information.*

*Grant Smith  
1 May 2015*