

**HAROLD
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*Heritage Conservation and
Architectural History*



A Plan for the Conservation and Re-use of the Blue Cabin

Submitted to the Blue Cabin Committee

Harold Kalman with Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd.

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1. Background

The 'Blue Cabin' is the name given to a small wood house that is best known as the former home of artists Al Neil and Carole Itter. Built in the 1930s and moored on a barge in Vancouver's Coal Harbour, it was subsequently towed to North Vancouver and relocated on piles on the Dollarton foreshore, adjacent to today's Cates Park. When the site was cleared for remediation and redevelopment in June 2015, Neil and Itter were evicted and the cabin was moved again. It has been placed on skids and secured on an industrial site in North Vancouver.



The Blue Cabin, Dollarton, North Vancouver, 1996. (Carole Itter)

Many people have recognized that the cabin has heritage significance. It was the former long-time residence of prominent artists and a noteworthy example of a rapidly disappearing building-type, the foreshore squat. The leading voices for its conservation and re-use have been those of Glenn Alteen, director of the grunt gallery in Vancouver; and artists Esther Rausenberg, Creative Cultural Collaborations; and Barbara Cole, Other Sights. This 'Blue Cabin Committee', led by Alteen, has worked tirelessly to attract interest and support. The committee has retained heritage planner Harold Kalman to prepare the present plan for the long-term conservation and re-use of the Blue Cabin. Kalman is referred to in the report as the author and the consultant. Conservator Andrew Todd is responsible for material on the conservation of materials and structure (Section 4.3 and the original reports in the appendix). Kalman and Todd both offered their services *pro bono*, following the lead of many other artists, professionals, and suppliers who have agreed to donate goods and services in order to retain the Blue Cabin.

Kalman and Todd began their work in June 2015. A preliminary report was submitted in September. Several meetings and discussions with the client group followed, leading to improvements and revisions. This final report has been prepared after further comments.

The authors and the Blue Cabin Committee have worked together closely throughout the preparation of the conservation and re-use plan. The content and the recommendations reflect this collaboration. Nevertheless the views expressed in the report are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the client, other than the recommended solution, which was selected by the Blue Cabin Committee and is supported by the authors.



The Blue Cabin, interior view. (©Stan Douglas, reproduced with the permission of the artist)

2. History and significance of the Blue Cabin

2.1 History and context

The Dollarton and Cates Park Foreshore

Dollarton, Cates Park, and a large part of the Burrard Inlet shore have been inhabited for millennia by the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, 'The People of the Inlet'. Some ten thousand people are believed to have lived in the area, setting up camps and erecting their summer houses along the foreshore in the late spring as part of their seasonal round. The village of Whey-ah-Wichen ('facing the wind') was located in the present Cates Park. The Tsleil-Waututh Nation and the District of North Vancouver signed a cultural agreement and protocol for Whey-ah-Wichen and Cates Park in 2000.

Europeans arrived in Burrard Inlet in the middle of the nineteenth century to exploit the timber and quickly began to displace the First Nations communities. Before century's end the cities of North Vancouver and Vancouver were well established. The forests around Cates Park began to be cut down towards the end of the First World War. Shipping magnate Robert Dollar (1844-1932) built a sawmill and wharf at Roche Point in 1916. The workers' community that subsequently developed around the mill became known as Dollarton. Ruins of the mill, which closed in 1942, survive near the foot of Sea Shell Lane.



The McKenzie Barge and Dollarton Shipyard properties, facing west from the Cates Park wharf. The cabin is located on the foreshore, below the vertical line drawn in the sky. (Carole Itter, ca. 1990s)

The area was linked to North Vancouver by the Dollarton Highway in 1930. It came to be used for shipbuilding and other marine industries, principally by McKenzie Barge and Derrick Co. Ltd. (later McKenzie Barge and Marine Ways Ltd.) and the Dollarton Shipyard (Noble Towing). Both were located just west of Cates Park, which had been developed in 1959. Numerous squatters and tenants lived in cabins along the foreshore. One was artist Al Neil. The industrial sites were recently acquired by Polygon Homes, which is currently developing Cates Landing, with 95 residential units, on a 4.74-acre site.

History

Al Neil resided in the cabin on and off from 1966. Carole Itter became a co-resident thirteen years later, and both lived here (and in a second home in Vancouver) until their eviction in June 2015. The history of the cabin that follows has largely been excerpted from a report by Nancy Kirkpatrick. The full, illustrated report, which includes a history of squatting on Burrard Inlet, is reproduced as an appendix.¹

The cabin was built in the 1920s or early 1930s as one of hundreds of squatters' dwellings along the Burrard Inlet foreshore. They provided homes for marginalized people who were forced to 'squat' by poverty or because they deliberately chose an alternative lifestyle off the grid. The Blue Cabin was reportedly first moored on a barge in Coal Harbour, in Vancouver (near Stanley Park); then moved across the inlet to Dollarton, in the District of North Vancouver. Marty McKenzie of McKenzie Barge and Derrick, its Dollarton landlord, said that the cabin was built in the 1920s and moved to Dollarton in 1932. Neil was told a slightly different story by Vince Mason, one of the oldest workers at McKenzie Barge, who said that it was built in the 1930s by a Scandinavian (perhaps Norwegian) carpenter / craftsman as his home. According to Mason, when the carpenter found a job at McKenzie Barge, he had the cabin towed to the Dollarton foreshore and lifted onto pilings.²

The cabin became one of several inhabited by beach dwellers and/or workers at McKenzie Barge. Whether the cabin's builder was technically a squatter, an owner, or a tenant of McKenzie Barge (with or without paying rent) is unclear and moot. Squatter communities such as this grew up all around Burrard Inlet. Some shacks, cabins, and larger houses sat on rafts or barges (they were known as 'float-houses'), while others were fixed on pilings. Many squatters here at Dollarton and elsewhere in Burrard Inlet were artists. The most celebrated was writer Malcolm Lowry, who lived in a succession of shacks near the Blue Cabin. The relatively luxurious float-house community at Coal Harbour remained into the 1970s,³ and the others that survived around the inlet – including a squatter community at Maplewood mud flats, a short distance west of Dollarton – were also removed in that decade. The Blue Cabin is believed to be the last extant squatter cabin on Burrard Inlet, a unique survivor of what was once a common and important way of life in this maritime environment.

In September 1966, while Al Neil was acting as a temporary lightkeeper at Point Atkinson, in West Vancouver, he spoke with Ralph McKenzie of McKenzie Barge about the possibility of moving into the

¹ Nancy Kirkpatrick, 'Report on Foreshore Cabin Adjacent to Future Polygon Development and Cates Park,' North Vancouver Museum and Archives, 2014.

² McKenzie's version was provided by Glen Alteen. Mason's story was told to Al Neil and reported to Nancy Kirkpatrick. The present consultant initiated additional research on the cabin's history and its builder, but no new sources emerged. Since the history of the cabin is oral and not documentary, the story will surely remain fuzzy and somewhat contradictory. This is the nature of oral history.

³ Harold Kalman, *Exploring Vancouver*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1974, p. 235. The float-house was a common sight along Canada's shores, particularly in BC and Newfoundland. In both places houses were often moved by barge.

cabin, which sat vacant. McKenzie agreed. He provided the cabin with electricity and charged Neil rent, presumably nominal. According to Neil, Robert and Brian McKenzie considered him a beach watchman.

A decade later, Cates Park had been developed. All that remained along the beach adjacent to the McKenzie Barge site were two squatter shacks (reportedly dwellings of McKenzie workers that had escaped the general razing of shacks in the later 1950s) and an illegally-beached freighter, the *Island Prince*. According to Neil, after the freighter was demolished in 1978, the Ports Police ‘zeroed in on the two squatters’ shacks on the beach.’ By this time, the shacks had been occupied by a series of residents, including ‘workers from North Van, temporarily unemployed and latterly, itinerant hippies.’ After the Ports Police evicted the squatters and demolished the shacks, ‘they spotted my cabin which always looked nice.’ They handed him an eviction notice and ‘told [him] with grins on their faces to get out within a week and they just walked away.’ Bob McKenzie looked at the eviction notice, called the Port and arranged for the cabin to be spared. Neil said, ‘he liked having me on the beach as an extra watchman.’

In later years, Neil and Itter enlisted the help of musician-carpenter Vern Clare to help with the upkeep of the cabin and its surroundings.⁴ The cabin is the subject of new documentary film by Krista Lomax, commissioned by the North Vancouver Museum and Archives and supported by Port Metro Vancouver (*Al Neil and Carole Itter’s Blue Cabin*, 2015).

Ownership

McKenzie Barge would have owned the land to the high-water mark, as dictated by British Columbia property law. Whether or not it considered itself to be the owner of the cabin is unclear. Al Neil served as a beach watchman and paid rent to the McKenzies, so he would have been a resident tenant and not a squatter. When, in the 1970s, the port authority evicted other squatters but spared Neil’s cabin, it evidently believed it had control over the cabin. Whether or not Port Metro Vancouver was actually the owner would have been a legally murky issue.

In 2015 Al Neil and Carole Itter vacated the cabin and asked Glen Alteen of grunt gallery to act as steward. They signed the cabin over to Port Metro Vancouver in the expectation that it would help grunt obtain insurance. Port Metro Vancouver didn’t see itself as actually owning the cabin, even though it was on the Port’s foreshore. The cabin was considered to be abandoned property and grunt gallery was seen as having scavenged it. If, however, McKenzie Barge did own the cabin, then possession would have passed to Polygon Homes, which purchased the McKenzie property. Polygon cooperated fully with grunt gallery and provided funds to move it from the foreshore, so in effect Polygon gave the cabin to grunt. In either event, all interested parties have accepted the donation to grunt gallery. Grunt is considered by all interested parties to be the cabin’s present owner. Grunt is pursuing legal documentation from Port Metro Vancouver.

⁴ Information in this and the following section includes material from Glenn Alteen.

The cabin and its design

The Blue Cabin is about 12 feet by 24 feet in size and consists of a single room, its long dimension formerly oriented north-south. The entrance, in the centre of the north end, opened onto a large deck. A lean-to storage shed stood along the west side. The south side faced the water, which was accessed by a gravel beach.



The entrance to the cabin and the deck, with storage to the right, looking south, 1996. (Carole Itter)

The construction is conventional timber framing. The details, however, are quite eccentric, made remarkable by the many curved features. The roof is bowed, in the form of a low ellipse, supported by rafters having curved top edges. The window and door surrounds are segmental in form, with the four segments around the windows forming a circle. The exterior corner boards were also segmental. These features are surely original (they were in place when Neil took over the cabin in 1966). They were evidently playful, signature features of the craftsman, reportedly Scandinavian, who built the cabin as his home.

The timber structure comprises the following components. All dimensions are approximate.

Floor structure and floor

- Heavy support beams, around 8" x 12" and rough-cut, at approximately 2-foot spacing, running in the long dimension of the cabin. The beams rested on piles and, as the water line receded, also on stacks of concrete blocks. The beams show considerable deterioration; see Section 4.3.
- Joists of sawn dimensioned lumber, approx. 3" x 8" @ approx. 2-foot spacing, running perpendicularly and resting on the beams. These are in generally good condition.

- Floorboards, about 4 inches wide. These are exposed in the back half of the cabin; in the front area they have been covered with ¼-inch plywood, painted in places.

Walls

- The wall structure is not exposed. Presumably it is a stud wall with horizontal strapping, because the finishing boards are applied vertically.
- Tar paper inside the walls provides waterproofing and insulation.
- Exterior sheathing consists of horizontal boards, about 5 inches exposed.
- Interior sheathing is mostly vertical tongue-and-groove boards, about 2 inches wide. The side walls towards the rear are finished with plain vertical boards, about 6 inches wide .
- Decorative curved, segmental boards (Carole Itter calls them 'scallops') on the walls both inside (beneath the ceiling) and outside (as door and window surrounds).

Roof

- The roof is supported by rafters, about 2 inches wide and varying in depth, to establish the elliptical curve of the roof.
- The tops and bottoms of the rafters are finished with decorative mouldings.
- The purlins are about 1" x 1" and shaped, spaced at about 2 feet.
- The ceiling boards are about 8 inches wide.
- The roof surface is rolled, heavy roofing paper, sealed with tar at the joins. Small leaks have occurred in the past and been patched.



Interior detail and view, 2015. (Harold Kalman)



The interior is essentially a single space, with the only subdivided feature being a kitchen alcove in one corner. The space was dominated by the tools of the occupants' art: Neil's upright piano and Itter's drawing board, with shelves behind it to hold her paints and supplies. The cabin also contained a wood stove and furniture for living and sleeping. The beams are painted red, blue, and green. The walls are partly green, partly natural wood, and partly panelled with other finishes.



Interior views: Left, the kitchen alcove; right, Al Neil's piano, which was given to artist Luke Blackstone, both 2015. (Michael Jackson)

Exterior colours

The building is commonly referred to as the 'Blue Cabin', although it has been blue for far less than half its life. It was simply whitewashed when it was towed to Dollarton. Carole Itter reports that Al Neil and his first wife, Marguerite Neil, painted the cabin brown, using paint that they found at the nearby shipyard. This would have been at some time between 1966, when Neil first occupied the cabin, and 1979, when it is clearly brown in an image from the film by Dave Rimmer.⁵



East elevation, facing the water, painted brown, c.1979 (from Dave Rimmer film) and blue, 2015 (Michael Jackson).

⁵ David Rimmer, 'Al Neil – A Portrait,' film, 1979.



West elevation, which retains early whitewash, after tree removal and grading, 2015. (Michael Jackson)

Al Neil and Carole Itter subsequently repainted the exterior, likely in the 1980s. They discussed colour options and settled on a combination of green and blue, starting with green at the top and changing to blue at the bottom. Their choice reflects their attraction to primary colours. Itter says that she was inspired by something she saw in Haida Gwaii.⁶ Photos show that the door and window sash were painted blue, the segmental window surrounds (which Itter calls ‘scallop’) were painted green and red, and the curved door surrounds and door frame were painted green and red respectively. The soffits were painted orange. The paint was applied mostly with rags, rather than brushes. The west side was left whitewashed, since it was difficult to access and virtually invisible.

Carole Itter repainted the cabin, probably twice since then, most recently in 2005. She removed the red (overpainting it with blue) about five years ago.



Entrance elevation, c. 1980s-1990s (left, from Al Neil web site) and 2015 (right, Michael Jackson photo)

Itter has described the colour scheme and the reasons that she and Neil selected it:

The siding of the cabin exterior was painted with Ted Harris Paint Co. colours. Green was 20-14, exterior latex. Blue was their 25-12, in exterior latex.

⁶ Carole Itter, telephone conversation with Hal Kalman, August 27, 2015; also e-mail letter from Itter to Kalman, November 28, 2015.

The green was started at the top of the siding, and the blue at the base, going up with a gradual mix between the two colours. So the mid-way area of the siding was a sort of turquoise. The decision to paint it this way was made between myself and Al Neil. The intent was to enhance the lighting when the tides were high and the east wall was in full sun. Orange paint, Ted Harris Co.'s 5-13, exterior latex, was painted on the soffits. It was chosen because McKenzie Barge & Marine Way's colours were pale blue and orange. The west side of the cabin has only its original whitewash on the siding. It would have taken too much scaffolding to get at that side with the blue/green combination.

The scallops around each window were lightly sanded each spring, then handstained, usually with paint on a rag, in places that were raw. Then a coat of latex Varathane was added each year. A fair patina was built up this way.

In general, we regarded the paint as a protection from the elements. We also studied the cabin from a distance, usually from the wharf at Cates Park, to decide if the colour choices allowed the cabin to fit in to that place.⁷

We retain the name 'Blue Cabin' in the present report because it is familiar and it describes the image of the cabin imprinted in most people's memories.

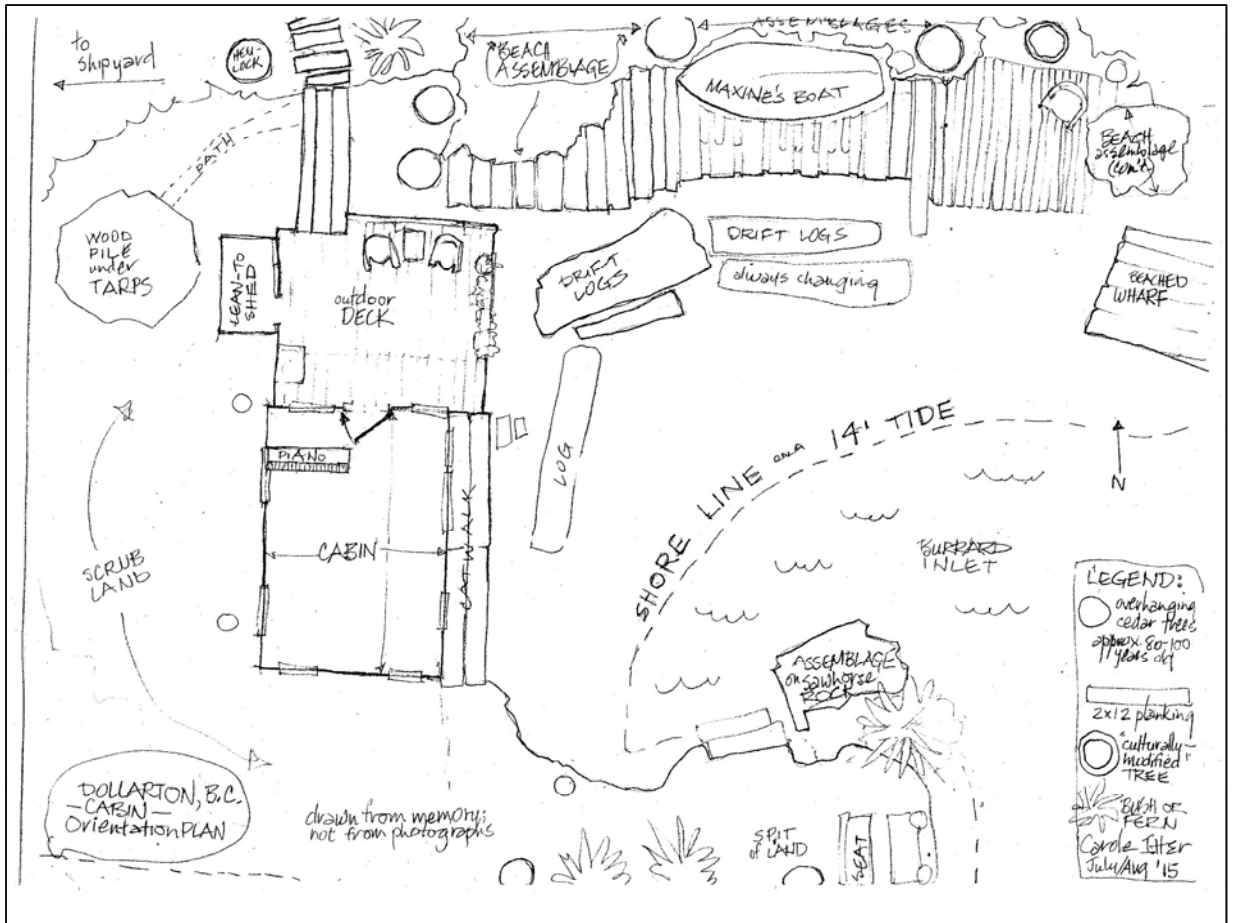
Site and assemblages

Al Neil and Carole Itter's home and workplace extended well beyond the cabin and the deck. Their living space included the beach, which was littered with driftwood logs that came and went with the tides, a privy, and a number of 'assemblages' placed around the cabin. The principal assemblages were to the north and east of the cabin, partly on boards painted to resemble a piano keyboard, which formed a deck. The assemblages were sculptural montages composed of found artifacts and other objects. The largest artifact was 'Maxine's Boat', an overturned dinghy; the smallest included bottles and floats. The surrounding forest, the foreshore, the water, and the drift logs were also important components of the environmental ensemble.

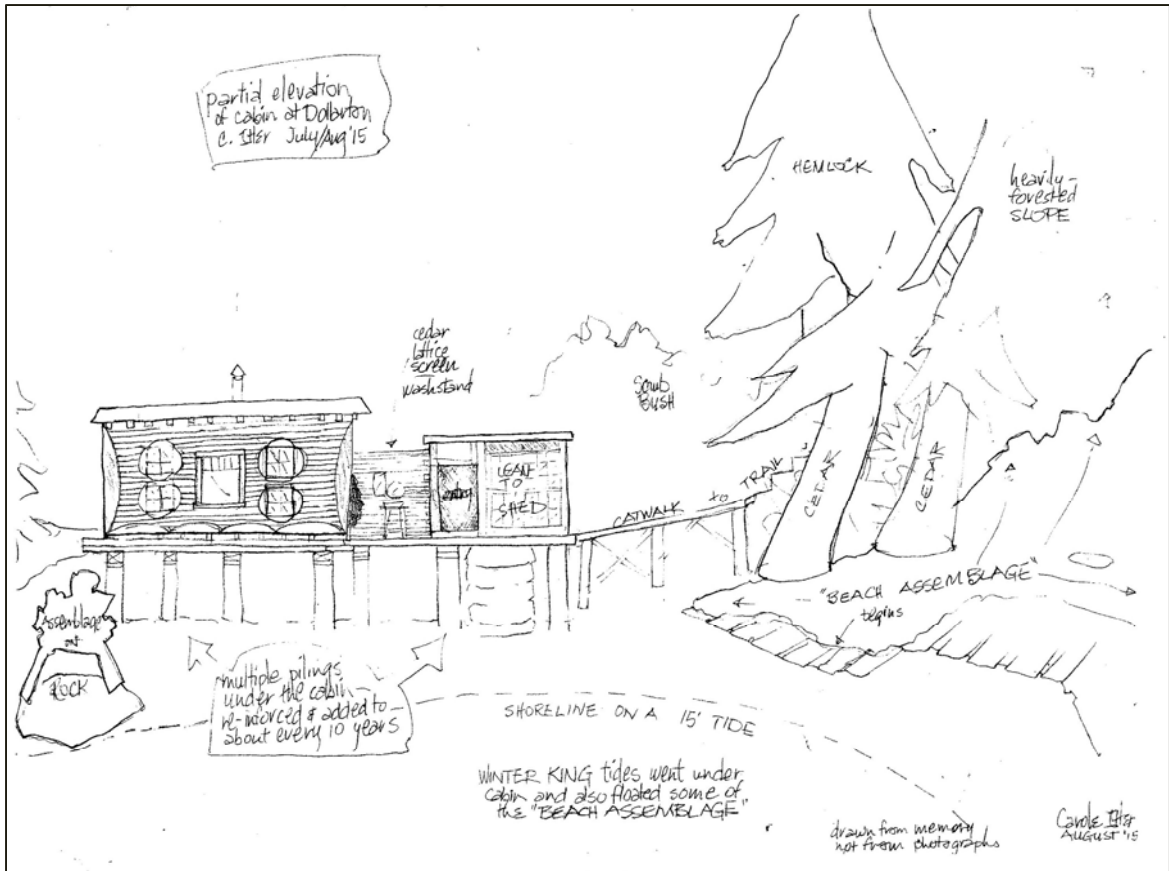
The cabin was accessed from the Cates Park parking lot by a trail through the park, steps, and a catwalk. The slope down from the parking lot was heavily forested with cedar and hemlock, while north and west of the cabin were small, deciduous trees and brush.

Carole Itter kindly drew a site plan and an elevation for this report.

⁷ Carole Itter, e-mail to Harold Kalman, September 6, 2015. Ted Harris Paints, at 757 East Hastings Street, a long-time familiar Vancouver business, opened in 1947. It was closed by Bob Harris, the son of Ted Harris, on September 30, 2009. John Mackie, 'Ted Harris Paints: An icon closes on Hastings street,' *Vancouver Sun*, October 2, 2009; Available at <http://www.vancouversun.com/life/Harris+Paints+icon+closes+Hastings+street/2055742/story.html> (accessed November 24, 2015).



Blue Cabin, site plan. (Carole Itter, July-August 2015)



Blue Cabin, view from south. (Carole Itter, July-August 2015)

Some of the artifacts from the assemblages were removed when the cabin was vacated in 2015, but others were abandoned on the site.⁸



Portion of 'Beach Assemblage' with Maxine's Boat and keyboard deck, 2011 (Carole Itter)



Remains of 'Beach Assemblage', July 2015. (Harold Kalman)

⁸ Grunt gallery has documented the artifacts in photographs and has records of those that were moved.

Music critic Alexander Varty described the cabin in 2005:

After taking a hidden woodland trail to his rough cabin – which, perched on top of a small, permanently beached barge, seemed as much houseboat as house – we drank tea and discussed art and music to the accompaniment of his cat, making its delicate way across the keys of a battered upright piano. Slanting through dusty windows, the sun lit up Neil’s flotsam assemblages just as surely as the pianist’s wayward yet erudite conversation illuminated the idea that it’s possible to build a life around constant exploration. For that lesson, I’ll always be thankful, as will the thousands of others who learned it under this madman, mystic, and living legend’s persistent tutelage.⁹

Relocation

The Blue Cabin remained on the Dollarton foreshore until June 2015, when it was once again relocated. The adjacent property had been purchased by Polygon Homes, with the intention of redeveloping it as the Cates Landing residential complex. It was necessary to remediate the foreshore, which had suffered severe environmental damage from heavy metals and other chemicals as a result of the long-time industrial use by McKenzie Barge and its successors. Environmental regulations required the removal of the cabin, regardless of the intentions or desires of the stakeholders.

And many stakeholders there were! The cabin was situated within the jurisdiction of the District of North Vancouver. It sat next to Cates Park, which is managed jointly by the District of North Vancouver and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation. The foreshore belongs to Port Metro Vancouver. And the adjacent site is owned by Polygon Homes. Nobody had legal title to the actual cabin and none of the above groups was willing to take responsibility for it. Al Neil and Carole Itter were widely viewed squatters although, as mentioned above, they were actually resident tenants who considered McKenzie Barge to have been their landlords. They provided a measure of security for the company and paid it nominal rent.



The cabin being moved and a view of it in storage at Canexus Chemicals. (Michael Jackson, Harold Kalman)

Neil and Itter were served several eviction notices, beginning in November 2014, and left in May. Their plight became a *cause célèbre*, splashed on the pages of local newspapers and publicized on social and other media. Nancy Kirkpatrick, director of the North Vancouver Museum and Archives, prepared a

⁹ *Georgia Straight*, quoted in Kirkpatrick, ‘Report.’

report that helped to establish the artistic and cultural value of the cabin. Her report is reproduced in the appendix.

Glenn Alteen, director of grunt gallery, became involved in rescuing the cabin before the media began to give it attention. Neil and Itter granted Alteen the role of the cabin's steward, and Neil gave his piano to Vancouver artist Luke Blackstone. Alteen then enlisted the support of Barbara Cole, Esther Rausenberg, and others in the art community. Collectively they successfully appealed for support and money.

Polygon Homes agreed to give the grunt gallery time to move the cabin. It was removed from the waterfront site on June 23, 2015. The movers, Supreme Structural Transport Ltd., transported it to the secured grounds of Canexus Chemicals Canada LP, North Vancouver, and placed it on skids. Canexus generously offered a one-year lease, with an option to renew, to store the cabin.¹⁰ It was learned in November 2015 that Canexus is likely to sell the property, effective in June 2016.

Profiles of Al Neil and Carole Itter



Al Neil on the deck of the cabin, 1973. (photo by Nina Raginsky)

Al Neil (b. 1924) is a musician, composer, collage artist, sculptor, and writer. He is renowned on the West Coast for his experimental and avant-garde works. A World War II veteran and jazz pianist, he began playing in Vancouver clubs in the late 1940s and was a central figure in the 1950s and 60s at the Cellar, where he performed with other artists and with his own group, the Al Neil Quartet. He later

¹⁰ The client group paid \$12,000 for the move, which was reportedly below cost. The storage agreement (lease) is between Visible Art Society (the society that operates the grunt gallery) and Canexus Corporation. Jillian Cooke managed the project for Canexus.

introduced a wholly unique and unusual, free jazz style and released several recordings, which were re-issued in compilation formats in the 1980s and 90s.

In addition to his music, Neil is known for his writing, visual art, and extensive artistic collaborations with artist Carole Itter. He produced memorable multimedia performances in the 1970s and mixed-media collages from 1980s. His works have been exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Western Front in Vancouver, and the Musee d'art Moderne in Paris. He is the subject of a 1979 film (*Al Neil: A Portrait*) by the celebrated filmmaker David Rimmer. In 2008, Al Neil received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Emily Carr University of Art and Design. In 2014, he received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award at the Mayor's Arts Awards in Vancouver, which recognizes "an individual who has made significant contributions over his or her lifetime to the cultural vibrancy of the city." From 1966 to 2015 he divided his time between Vancouver and the foreshore cabin at Dollarton.



Carole Itter in the cabin, 2015. (John Lehmann/The Globe and Mail)

Carole Itter (b. 1939) is a sculptor, art instructor, experimental artist, film maker, oral historian, and writer. She has received awards from the Canada Council for the Arts and the British Columbia Arts Council. In 1989 she received the prestigious VIVA (Vancouver Institute of Visual Arts) award. The oral history of Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood (*Opening Doors: In Vancouver's East End*, 1979) that she co-wrote with Daphne Marlatt was re-published in 2011 as one of the *Vancouver 125* legacy books to celebrate the City's 125th anniversary.

Many of Itter's artistic works involve 'found objects' and natural materials. Her opposition to consumer culture is a thread that weaves throughout her work. She has become known for large-scale installations which use recycled materials and objects from her surroundings to create art with emotional resonance. Works by Itter are in the collections of the Canada Council Art Bank, the Vancouver Public Library, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and private collections.

2.2 Heritage significance

The heritage significance of a historic place can be determined by identifying its heritage values – those characteristics that are valued – and arriving at a synthesis of the values. The list of heritage values of the Blue Cabin that follows has been compiled from the author’s observations and research. It includes values identified by people who were consulted during the course of the project.

Heritage values

Heritage values are usually defined in a Statement of Significance (‘SOS’), a tool developed by Parks Canada. The SOS also provides a concise description of the historic place and lists its ‘character-defining elements’. Conservation projects are expected to retain the character-defining elements in order to preserve the heritage value of the place.

The principal heritage values of the Blue Cabin are:

- The cabin was likely built by an anonymous Scandinavian (reportedly Norwegian) builder-craftsman, who is representative of the new Vancouverites who helped to develop local trades.
- The cabin has rare or unique architectural features, particularly seen in the recurrent use of curved components, including the roof profile, window surrounds, and segmental boards beneath the eaves and at the top of the interior walls.
- The cabin was further transformed into a work of art by artist-residents Al Neil and Carole Itter, who created the idiosyncratic colour scheme and filled the place and its surroundings with music and art.
- The cabin is a work of art in its own right: a joint creation over the period of about 80 years by its Scandinavian-Canadian builder, Al Neil, and Carole Itter. It has always been more than a utilitarian shelter.
- For nearly fifty years, the Blue Cabin was the home of musician, visual artist, and writer Al Neil, who is widely recognized as one of the foremost experimental artists in the region. (Initially his primary home, and subsequently a secondary home.)
- For 35 years, the cabin was the part-time home of Carole Itter, a notable visual artist, filmmaker, and writer.
- Neil’s and Itter’s life and art spilled out of the cabin into the surrounding space, evidenced by the deck, the small structures, and the many works of sculpture and assemblages.
- The cabin was one of several artists’ residences that comprised a vital artists’ community along the Dollarton foreshore. The most celebrated resident was writer Malcolm Lowry.
- The cabin is believed to be the last remaining squatter’s dwelling along the Burrard Inlet foreshore.

- The cabin symbolizes a once popular, but now vanished, way of life when people of little means could live 'off the grid' in 'squats' along the waterfront, yet within an urbanized, metropolitan area.
- The forced removal of the cabin and the development of Cates Landing represent the ongoing gentrification of the Burrard Inlet shore.
- The issue of the ownership of the Blue Cabin emphasizes the jurisdictional grey zone that is the Burrard Inlet foreshore.

The heritage significance of the Blue Cabin is a synthesis of these values. They provide the Blue Cabin with considerable architectural, historical, cultural, and social significance.

3. Options for future location and use

This chapter discusses alternative long-term locations and uses. They were intended in the preliminary report to help find a solution for the Blue Cabin. The final choice for the Blue Cabin combines aspects of more than one of the approaches described here.

Section 3.3 recommends a particular solution which has been inspired by these options. We retain the full array of options in this final report for reference, and also as evidence that many projects of a similar nature have been successfully completed.

3.1 No interim use

The Blue Cabin Committee has discussed the possibility of placing the Blue Cabin in a short-term, interim location while arrangements are made for its long-term accommodation and a detailed plan is drawn up for its conservation and use. The author respectfully recommends that the Blue Cabin *not* be moved to an interim site. The cabin is secure in its present storage location, at least until June 2016 and possibly longer. Any short-term move might require structural modifications (e.g., to the substructure), and these could constrain or prejudice changes that will have to be made for the long-term use. Furthermore, our own experience with similar situations has shown that adding a move or an interim use, however carefully executed, often causes wear and tear on the building. This in turn could damage the cabin and affect its long-term viability. Also, preparation for an interim use would cost money, and all resources – even if offered by an outside party – are best saved for the final preparation, relocation, and conservation.

3.2 Potential long-term locations and uses

The permanent installation of the Blue Cabin should balance conservation and use. The first respects the architectural, historical, and artistic significance of the cabin, whereas the latter takes advantages of its being a usable, if small, space in good condition and having a stellar legacy.

The future use of the Blue Cabin might emphasize either use or conservation, although both must be considered. The stakeholders have clearly indicated a desire to repurpose the cabin for a beneficial new cultural use. Nevertheless, the future disposition should also include a program of both short- and long-term conservation. Conservation is discussed further in Sections 4.1 to 4.3.

The most desirable outcome is a cultural use that will allow public access, whether frequent or occasional, while not exceeding the carrying capacity of the structure. In any situation, the risk of damage from overuse or vandalism, as well as addressing the natural degradation of the materials, must be taken into consideration.

Repurposing the Blue Cabin as a cultural facility for music and/or the visual arts would make a good fit with its history and potential interpretation. So too would the more specific proposal that it become a facility for an artist residency. Another possibility would be presenting the cabin as a cultural artifact in its own right, without a significant use, but this option has experienced less traction.

The precedents that follow look at the alternatives. They are followed by a list of various locations that have been suggested by stakeholders or added by the consultant.

The five examples that follow illustrate a range of options for cultural use. In any of these situations, the cabin could be used to for an artist-in-residency program or other cultural use, and simultaneously to interpret themes such as Al Neil and Carole Itter's stories and art, the former squatter community, aboriginal histories, maritime history, the importance of waterways for our resource-based economies, cultural production in non-traditional settings, and more. Interpretation is discussed in Section 4.4.

The first two options (the Al Purdy A-Frame and the Vancouver park fieldhouses) emphasize use over conservation. The last option (Sam McGee's Cabin) emphasizes conservation over use. The third and fourth options (Leighton Artists' Colony and LightShed) are new constructions and their conservation at present is limited to a program of maintenance.

Precedents



The Al Purdy A-Frame (Vancouver Sun)

The **Al Purdy A-Frame**, the former home of poet Al Purdy (1918-2000) and his wife, Eurithe Purdy, **has been adapted for use in an artist-residency program**. Located on Roblin Lake, near Ameliasburg in Prince Edward County, Ontario, was begun by the Purdys in 1957. They lived there until they moved to B.C. in 1987. The Al Purdy A-Frame Association has upgraded the place in situ. It now serves as a funded, short-term residency for writers. See <http://www.alpurdy.ca/>¹¹

- With respect to the Blue Cabin, if it is repurposed for an artist residency, changes may be made to accommodate the new use, consistent with respect for its heritage integrity. This is discussed with Rehabilitation in Section 4.2 below.

¹¹ The A-Frame has been featured in a recent film, *Al Purdy Was Here*, by Brian D. Johnson (2015). See Geoff Pevere, 'The man who outlived himself,' *Globe and Mail*, September 15, 2015, p. L2. Al Purdy was a visitor to Al Neil's Dollarton cabin.



Vancouver Society of Storytelling performs in the Slocan Park Fieldhouse (Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation)

The **Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation's studio residencies program** uses **re-purposed park fieldhouses** and other buildings as work-only studios for artists. Successful applicants have the use of the place in exchange for providing community arts-based engagement. More than 50 artists are active in 13 different parks. One such residency is the Vancouver Society of Storytelling (VSOS), which uses the Slocan Park Fieldhouse to bring diverse groups of people together to exchange stories, from folktales and fables to personal narratives. See <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/field-house-studio-residencies-in-parks.aspx>



The Cardinal Studio at the Banff Centre, designed by Douglas Cardinal, which is particularly well suited for musicians. (Banff Centre)

Purpose-built studios, rather than re-used old structures, have been constructed at the Banff Centre to **provide working space for musicians, writers, and visual artists**. As with the Vancouver Park Board program this provides artists with the facility for a limited period as part of a funded artist-in-residence program. Engagement with the community and provision of limited opportunities for public access are desirable, but less essential. Residency is supported with dedicated funding. Nine studios for independent residents in the Leighton Artists' Colony at the Banff Centre have been designed by celebrated architects and are themselves works of art. The photo illustrates the Cardinal Studio, designed by Douglas Cardinal, which is particularly well suited for musicians.¹²

¹² For the Leighton Artists' Colony, whose cabins were commissioned from leading Canadian architects, see <http://www.banffcentre.ca/leightoncolony/studios.asp>



LightShed, by Liz Magor (Public Art Private Views, <http://publicartprivateviews.com/documentaries/>)

LightShed, a sculpture by Liz Magor (2004), **is an outdoor sculpture without any utilitarian purpose.** It takes the form of a reduced-scale boat shed on stilts that are reminiscent of piles. It is located on the seawall of Harbour Green Park in Coal Harbour. The work was commissioned by Grosvenor Canada Ltd., the developer of the adjacent residences. Its creation and installation were subjected to the processes and guidelines established for the City of Vancouver's public art program. It is interesting to note that the Blue Cabin was originally located in Coal Harbour.



Interior of replica of Sam McGee's Cabin (MacBride Museum)

A replica of **Sam McGee's cabin is located within a museum as an indoor artifact.** It can be found in the MacBride Museum, Whitehorse. This is the cabin of the subject of Robert Service's popular poem, *The Cremation of Sam McGee*. See

<http://www.macbridemuseum.com/permanentcollection.html>

- With respect to the Blue Cabin, Nancy Kirkpatrick, Director, North Vancouver Museum and Archives, formerly suggested cutting off the front elevation and a part of a porch and placing it within the North Vancouver facility. However, she made this proposal when there were pressures to resolve the cabin's future quickly, and she no longer supports the idea of truncating the cabin (nor does the present author). If the Museum could accommodate the entire cabin, this would be supportable by the author.
- Alternatively, some small historic buildings are **located outdoors, on the grounds of a museum or other major cultural facility.**
- In any museum setting, the emphasis would be on the conservation of the Blue Cabin as a cultural artifact. The primary use would be as an object that interprets the life and art of Al Neil and Carole Itter, squatting on Burrard Inlet, the cabin's pre-Neil history, and other associated themes. The cabin would not be upgraded to meet current building standards.

Potential locations



Aerial view of Larwill Park (City of Vancouver)

Other Sights for Artists' Projects, a Vancouver-based artists' collective, has suggested a **temporary location in Larwill Park, Vancouver**, the proposed site of the new Vancouver Art Gallery. The VAG supports this option. The client's and VAG's current suggestion for the Blue Cabin is only as an interim use, since the site would be redeveloped. However, as stated above, the consultant does not support an interim use. If the cabin could be permanently located on the site as part of the VAG complex, then we would consider this to be a more attractive option.



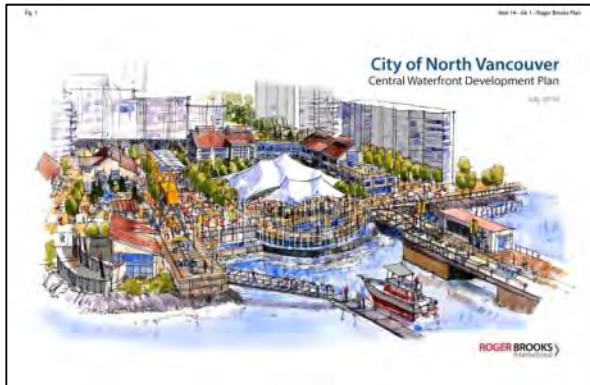
The Cates Park Foreshore. (blog.wfgates.com)

A location on the waterfront in or near Cates Park (Dollarton), District of North Vancouver. The cabin could be relocated in or near Cates Park, close to its historic location. It could be placed on the foreshore on piles or a foundation, or else floated on a barge moored to a dock. This would require approval from Port Metro Vancouver and/or the District of North Vancouver (DNV). If placed above the foreshore it would require approval from the DNV and, if in Cates Park, by the DNV and the Tsleil-Waututh Nation, who manage the park jointly. This has the distinct advantage of being close to the cabin's original location and, if on the foreshore, in a setting similar to its historical context.



Rendering of Cates Landing (Polygon Homes)

A location on the Cates Landing property being developed by Polygon Homes, District of North Vancouver (This option is identified here but it is no longer practicable.) Cates Landing is the residential development between the cabin site and the Dollarton Highway, occupying 4.74 acres. The remediation required for its permit forced the Cabin to be moved. Several people suggested locating the cabin on the Polygon site, whether on dedicated public land, strata amenity space, or even placed on a rooftop. Polygon Homes points out that this is not possible, because the development has progressed too far to make any changes. A lengthy and public rezoning process was required to achieve a CD-1 classification and an approved plan, and many residences have already been sold. The site is fully built out and the publicly-dedicated land is located on the riparian zone of a creek, on which development is prohibited.



The Shipyards and Shipbuilders' Square, City of North Vancouver; Central Waterfront Development Plan, cover (City of North Vancouver)

A location in The Shipyards or Shipbuilders' Square at the foot of Lonsdale Street, City of North Vancouver. Several stakeholders have suggested relocating the cabin here. It has been suggested that the cabin be associated with the proposed new North Vancouver Museum and Archives, the new Presentation House Gallery, and/or within the historic Shipyard precinct. This is a highly accessible and well used waterfront location in North Vancouver, features that compensate for its location at a considerable distance from Dollarton. Approval – and perhaps participation – would be required from the City of North Vancouver and likely also Pinnacle

International or another of the private developers involved in the area. (These entities have not been contacted by the consultant.)

- The Pacific Great Eastern station, another historic building, which was originally located at the foot of Lonsdale Street, is also being considered for inclusion in Shipbuilders' Square.



A view of Coal Harbour (<http://www.downtownsuites.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/189792-1.jpg>)

A location on the waterfront at Coal Harbour, Vancouver. If the cabin were to be located on the south shore of Burrard Inlet, whether on the foreshore or afloat, Coal Harbour would most appropriate, because that was the cabin's original location. Jil Weaving, Vancouver Park Board, suggests placing the cabin near the Coal Harbour Community Centre.

A location in another public park or public place. The cabin could be moved to any of a number of public parks or public lands. Jil Weaving, Vancouver Parks Board, proposes McLean Park, Kitsilano Beach, and Strathcona Park as possible destinations. Possible other locations that have been suggested by interested parties include Granville Island (by Alma Lee of the Board of Trustees) and the Burnaby campus of Simon Fraser University (by Melanie O'Brian, Director, Audain Gallery, SFU).

Place in a children's camp, to be used for arts and crafts

David Duckworth of Camp Jubilee on Indian Arm, an arts-and-crafts camp for children, suggests relocating the cabin to the camp. The camp operator would be responsible for management. A similar proposal, from District of North Vancouver Councillor Lisa Muri, would locate the cabin at Maplewood Farm, where it would be an attraction for children.

Move to private property and retain for private use

A number of offers have been received from private property owners, including Eric Pawlett (a cousin of artist E.J. Hughes) of the Sunshine Coast; and an artists' retreat in Langley. This or relocation to another private property would require appropriate safeguards to protect the cabin and its appearance. The best tool might be a Heritage Revitalization Agreement (HRA) negotiated by the property owner and the municipality. See Section 4.1 for a discussion of HRAs.

- We do not recommend this option, since the Cabin would not be accessible to the public. An exception might be made if the new owner undertook to open it to the public a certain number of times per year; this could be ensured by a clause in the HRA.



Dengbejs, by Halil Altindere (<http://www.newmedia-art.org/>)

Place on the roof of a tall building. A precedent is *Dengbejs*, by Halil Altindere (2007), a log cabin and another wooden house that were placed on a rooftop in a Turkish city by Kurdish artist Halil Altindere in a 2007 installation (*Dengbejs*). See <http://www.newmedia-art.org/>¹³

- The Blue Cabin could be placed on the top of a high-rise building and used as an amenity space (preferably cultural) for the occupants of the building.
- Many other locations that challenge the status quo in a similar spirit could be conceived.

3.3 Recommended solution

The Blue Cabin Committee has considered the various options and their variations, and has chosen what it would like to do with the Blue Cabin. The consultant supports this decision, which is presented here as the recommended solution.

The Blue Cabin would be placed on a barge and used as a studio / work place for an artist-in-residence program. A separate, small home for the artist would also be located on the barge. The committee hopes to be able to moor the barge in the region's waterways, including Coal Harbour, Burrard Inlet, False Creek, and/or North Vancouver. No specific site has yet been made available, although discussions are underway.¹⁴

¹³ Yekhan Pinarligil, 'Halil Altindere, Dengbêjs 2007,' Available at <http://www.newmedia-art.org/cgi-bin/show-oeu.asp?lg=FRA&ID=150000000058176>. 'Dengbêj' is Kurdish for 'singer' or 'minstrel'. Colin Browne and Marian Penner Bancroft kindly provided the reference to the project.

¹⁴ City of Vancouver staff have suggested mooring the barge in New Brighton Park, at the east end of Vancouver, near the Second Narrows Bridge, across Burrard Inlet from Dollarton. The consultant does not support this location, since it bears little relationship to the cabin's history and also because visitation at that site is low, other than swimmers in the summer.

This solution would meet the primary objectives of providing for both a good cultural use and good conservation, with opportunities as well for interpretation. It would also present the Blue Cabin as a significant work of art / architecture in its own right.

The committee would also like the Blue Cabin to address a number of societal issues separate from culture and the arts. These include seeing the cabin and the house as demonstrating good practices in environmental sustainability, by making it self-sufficient with solar collector panels, composting toilets, and a rain retrieval system. This would leave the cabin without plumbing and would require only electrical wiring and heat. They also see the artist's residence as representing the small-house movement, which is a popular solution to the current shortage of affordable housing.

The consultant tentatively supports these secondary objectives, but only if they do not interfere with the cabin's use as an artist residency or with its conservation. There is always a potential risk associated with a project's trying to achieve too much, in that it can weaken the primary objectives and messages. On the other hand, the secondary objectives could attract a broader base of support and funding. The two must be balanced.

There is a potential conflict as well in placing the artist's residence on the barge, adjacent to the studio. A residence is by definition a private place, whereas the studio should be made available to the public to ensure community engagement and benefit.¹⁵ The need for both privacy and access could lead to conflicts. Careful thought should therefore be given as to whether to build the residence on the barge.

It is likely that municipal authorities will require that the cabin conform to applicable life-and-safety code requirements. In addition, the cabin should be inspected by a structural engineer to determine whether the structure requires upgrading to accommodate the new use and conform to seismic and other code requirements.

Any alterations that may be made for code compliance, structural upgrading, and/or to accommodate the new use should be done under the oversight of a conservation architect or other conservation professional.¹⁶ Every reasonable effort should be made to minimize the visual impacts of changes, and to take care not to obscure or destroy heritage character-defining elements.

¹⁵ The studio should be accessible at certain posted times and not continuously, in order to allow the resident artist some quiet work time.

¹⁶ We recommend that the architect or other professional be a member of the Canadian Association of Heritage Professionals (CAHP).

4. Conservation and interpretation

As has been stated throughout this report, it is essential that the stewards of the Blue Cabin be committed to a program of conserving the building and its materials, as well as to the public interpretation of the cabin's history and significance.

This chapter addresses those issues. The first section looks at heritage conservation, which is the big-picture question of how to safeguard the integrity of the cabin. Section 4.2 addresses the conservation work that should be done to prolong the life of the materials and the structure. And the final section discusses interpretation.

4.1 Heritage protection

The Blue Cabin should be provided with long-term heritage protection. This will prevent demolition or unsympathetic changes, while enabling modifications and upgrades that respect and retain the heritage character of the historic place. It will also ensure that the cabin is safeguarded in the long term, after the current stewards have moved on to other interests.

The regulation of heritage conservation in Canada falls under provincial jurisdiction. The Province of British Columbia, in turn, delegates the responsibility for conservation to local government. Regardless of the Blue Cabin's location and use, its heritage values would best be protected by a municipal heritage protection bylaw (passed by the local government in whose jurisdiction it is located), to complement the good intentions of its stewards.

Protection tools are described in Part 27 of the *Local Government Act*. Two appropriate protection options are available for the Blue Cabin:

Heritage Designation, pursuant to Sections 967-969. This provides the historic place with protection against inappropriate change or demolition. It allows change that respects its heritage values, provided that the proposed changes are approved by the municipality, which is usually done upon the recommendation of its heritage commission or committee. Approved changes are described in a Heritage Alteration Permit. Designation is registered against the property title.

A **Heritage Revitalization Agreement ('HRA')**, pursuant to Section 966. The legal owners or stewards of a historic place enter into a voluntary, but binding, agreement with the local government. An HRA balances conservation with change. It offers an opportunity for the local government to relax zoning, use, density, and other land-use regulations. This might be very helpful in the case of the Blue Cabin and its barge, because they well might be non-conforming with respect to existing regulations. The process also permits approved changes that respect heritage character, as with heritage designation. An HRA is also registered against the property title.

It should be noted that the consultant has no experience with the application of either heritage designation or HRAs to floating structures, nor has he received a reliable opinion on this matter. Formal protection may be complicated, since they are land-use regulations that are intended to be tied to

specific properties. It is possible that the Blue Cabin on a barge may not occupy delimited property, unless it is on a registered water lot. Once the final destination(s) for the Blue Cabin has been determined, it will be necessary to enter into constructive discussions with the local government (and its legal counsel) about the applicability of heritage controls.

4.2 Conservation treatments

Heritage conservation professionals recognize a number of different approaches that may be taken in the conservation of historic places. These are called ‘conservation treatments’. The different treatments have been developed and defined by international and national heritage agencies.

Parks Canada, which promotes best conservation practices in Canada, recognizes three conservation treatments:

Preservation is a program of maintenance and intervention designed to prevent further deterioration and to keep a building or structure ‘as is’ – that is, to respect the present form, material, and integrity.

Restoration is the process of returning a building or structure to the appearance of an earlier time by removing later material and by replacing missing elements and details. Restoration must be guided by reliable documentation on the previous appearance; conjecture is not permitted.

Rehabilitation is the process of returning a property to a useable state through repair or alteration. Rehabilitation makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features that are significant to the property’s historic, architectural, and cultural values.¹⁷

Two conservation treatments are potentially applicable to the Blue Cabin: Preservation (i.e., keeping it as is, other than repairs and maintenance) and Rehabilitation (i.e., making upgrades to accommodate a new use, while still retaining the cultural heritage significance). Restoration (i.e., returning the cabin to a past form) would *not* be appropriate, since there is little evidence of the cabin’s early appearance on which to base the restoration.

Preservation is a relatively simple and inexpensive process. It is recommended if the present configuration will work well for the artist residency. However, if it is necessary to introduce changes to accommodate the residency properly, then rehabilitation is indicated. Change *is* consistent with good conservation practice. The only constraint is that the changes should not alter, hide, or destroy any ‘character-defining elements’ – the features of the cabin which are identified in a Statement of Significance as giving it its heritage character.¹⁸

¹⁷ Parks Canada, *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, 2nd edition, Ottawa, 2010, 15-17. Available at <http://www.historicplaces.ca/media/18072/81468-parks-s+g-eng-web2.pdf>

¹⁸ The Blue Cabin Committee or the District of North Vancouver may consider commissioning a Statement of Significance (SOS) for the cabin.

It is important that the barge that is procured should be able to accommodate the Blue Cabin in its current form, without adversely affecting any character-defining elements. The barge should be adapted as necessary to meet the needs of the cabin, and not vice versa. In other words, the cabin should not have to be modified, other than its substructure, to fit on the barge.

4.3 Conservation of materials and structure

This section summarizes two reports prepared by conservator Andrew Todd: one on short-term stabilization and the other on long-term conservation. The original reports are reproduced in the Appendix.

Short-term stabilization

An examination of the Blue Cabin at its storage location was undertaken by Andrew Todd on Tuesday, 21 July 2015. Michael Jackson, Hal Kalman, Glenn Alteen, Barbara Cole, Marko Simcic and Esther Rausenberg were present at the time. A visit to the original Dollarton location was also made.



The Blue Cabin on site in the outdoor storage yard, North Vancouver, July 2015 (Andrew Todd).

The visual examinations of the cabin were made with the assistance of optical magnification recorded with digital images of the painted exterior, the unpainted under-structure, and the various surfaces of the interior. Inspections were made in the vicinity and at the actual location of the original site. Several discussions were held with other conservators to seek input for the site. In addition, on-line research was carried out and several articles were saved which relate to the project. This research is available from Todd's files as required.

These short-term recommendations began to be implemented by the Blue Cabin Committee in September 2015.



Location of the cabin in temporary outdoor storage. (Andrew Todd)

Observations

In general, the Blue Cabin is structurally in good condition, although with deteriorated wood and flaking paint observed on the surfaces. The under-structure has seriously deteriorated beams and joists. Treatment to stabilize this area will be required. Protection of the Blue Cabin needs to be provided to prevent the effects of environmental free water/rain and moisture accumulation levels in the interior of the structure.

As there is a great deal of material related to the habitation which would be useful to preserve, a careful recording survey is recommended. In preparation for the recording, some cleaning may be required.

Conservation recommendations

As noted, the Blue Cabin is in need of environmental protection. It is recommended that a scaffolding surround system be erected at the four corners and where required mid-span and that overhead framework scaffolding be provided and covered with a shrink wrap type of plastic fabric. (This would be similar in method to the covering currently provided for Christ Church Cathedral on Burrard Street.) It would also be a good idea to cover the sides for at least one-half the height of the building, leaving the bottom open for circulation of air.

The interior of the Cabin should be supplied with a small electric heater which can maintain just enough heat to keep the interior free of moisture and condensation.

For security it is suggested that consideration be given to supplementing the present secure storage site with an 8-foot-high portable fencing system around the Cabin. If installed, the fence should be kept locked to prevent entry.

Long-term conservation

This section describes the findings and resulting recommendations based on an examination of evidence of wood and structural conditions. Reference to the structural and decorative materials and current conservation issues were made during inspection of the Blue Cabin. A further inspection is recommended to define details of these recommendations.

A review of the history of the cabin has been made with attention to information that provides evidence about the state of the wood and decorative elements in relation to weathering and deterioration.

Further inspections will be required to confirm conservation treatment.

Conservation examination and assessment



Detail of scalloped decoration and decorative finishing of the underside of the eaves. (Andrew Todd)

At the conservator's visit to the site in mid-July 2015, he became familiar with the present storage site and with the previous location along the Dollarton foreshore. An examination began with visual observation of the two locations, as well as photographs. An overall microscopic inspection was conducted. Summer weather was noted. Visual examination was well illuminated. In addition to visual examination, sound testing was conducted by rapping gently on all the wood surfaces. Sharpened blade probes were also used to determine the strength of the wood surfaces and determine how deeply penetration could be made in areas where infestation could have caused weakening and tunneling of the wood. Notes were made of all findings for future reference.

Evidence of the deterioration of structural wood from fungal rot was noted. In addition, other forms of wood decay were observed, including some evidence of sawdust ('frass') piles. Environmental conditions are relevant, since the materials in question are structural and the cabin is built on them.

The examination included the following:

- Physical measurements of penetration depths in the deteriorated wood were taken by traditional blade-penetration instruments. The measurements are recorded on the conservation documentation sketches in the possession of the conservator. In summary they varied considerably from surface to interior areas of the building. Some areas are much more seriously deteriorated, with fungal decay and rot causing physical breakdown of the wood. In several areas of the structural base support timbers the wood has split open, revealing extensive brown cuboidal fungal deterioration. The specific locations will be identified after further investigation.
- The overall fungal growth was assessed internally and rot was very apparent in each of the sections. Deterioration conditions were evaluated and found to be extensive throughout.
- Penetration depths and measurements of cracks and splits in the wood were made.
- The structural condition was examined overall by visual means and by the use of 'hollow tap' sounding tests.
- Biological growths on the surface and end grain areas of the sections were noted and recorded. Specific fungal growths were noted on several end-grain areas of the sections.
- Insect and pest activity was searched for and conditions were observed to be ideal for their presence.
- Locations and specifications of findings were made.
- Conservation handling techniques were followed during examination of the cabin.

Further visual examination, assisted by magnification loupes and a strong flashlight, needs to be carried out. A battery-powered moisture meter should be used to record moisture content of the wood. Various probes and wood penetrating instruments are recommended to further assess conditions and determine penetration depths. Additional digital photographs of conditions in various areas of the cabin need to be made with details for the records.

The roof should be examined for its weatherproof capacity, and repairs made as needed with standard roofing sealer material.



Areas of structural deterioration in the support beams under the cabin. (Andrew Todd)

A structural engineer should examine the cabin in light of its present condition and proposed future use, to estimate its structural capacity and determine whether any structural reinforcement is required. Reinforcement may require the addition or replacement of components, to provide new structural support systems and stabilize sections of the cabin. In this event, new wood may be required as part of the treatment for both structural and decorative components. If any changes or additions are required, the design for reinforcement should specify the least amount of disturbance that is feasible – i.e., what is called ‘minimal intervention’.

Infestation by pests

During the examination to discover the condition of the wood, the possibility of insect infestation, particularly by carpenter ants and possibly by termites, was noted. Excrement markings of other pests were not noticed. The possibility that rats had entered the cabin was considered and observations were made to discover any signs of this. None were noted.

Sample collection of deterioration factors, particularly of frass, should be made and identified. The infestation by termites is considered a slow-moving, slow-breeding, long-term threat of damage to structural beams in wood-frame buildings such as this.



Detail of brown cuboidal fungal deterioration, frass, and small flight holes of insects, possibly furniture beetle or carpenter ant. (Andrew Todd)

Subterranean termites, which live in colonies in damp or moist soil in the vicinity of wooden structures, travel to wooden members, where they grow and multiply slowly. Because they remain within the wooden members, they are difficult to observe. As a result, an infestation can only be detected by signs of frass and movement trails. Changes in weather conditions can create noticeable activity. Because these insect infestations are difficult to observe, their exact location can be hard to determine. This problem leads to difficulty in exterminating their presence.

Treatment plan

The following are initial recommendations for treatment. Based on a further examination and an assessment of the future plans for the cabin, it is recommended that a more detailed conservation treatment plan be developed to consolidate and treat the materials and structure. In addition to remediating present issues, it will help to prevent future damage.

Pest prevention

Pest prevention strategies are suggested. It is recommended that a treatment of Tim-bor be carried out for protection from insects. Tim-bor is a diffusible pesticide with very low toxic effects, especially for humans and animals. Chemically, Tim-bor is 'trisodium octaborate tetrahydrate'. This treatment will provide initial stabilization of sections of the cabin and will slow the process of deterioration.

Structural members: large support timbers

While removal of the cabin from storage to its initial destination is underway, a complete dry cleaning treatment of the underside of the structure should be undertaken. After dry cleaning, a low-pressure power washing spray to the whole underside of the cabin should be carried out. Washing with brushes and soap should be done at the same time, followed by a spray rinse.

While still damp from the wash and rinse, an application of Tim-bor (10-15% solution) should be sprayed on all of the underside wooden structure, using hand-powered garden sprayers. This borate-based

treatment will provide eradication of any insect infestation and provide prevention and spread of fungal rot. Further eradication steps may need to be taken with follow-up borate treatments for prevention and eradication of any wood-boring insects. The penetration of borate treatments can be assisted by mixing the solution with propylene glycol.¹⁹

The insertion of boron copper fused rods is also proposed. A number of products are available on the market, including Impel Rods and Cobra Rods. Both these products require an operation to drill into the wood with a ½-inch bit, and then insertion of a 2-inch or 4-inch rod and covering the opening with a wooden plug or a manufactured plastic cover, which can be removed for re-application. The fused rods slowly disperse their toxic contents upon the rise of moisture content in the wood. Since moisture is present in our environment; this method is considered a very effective preventive treatment and is recommended for the Blue Cabin.

Exterior finishes

The protection treatment proposed involves first overall dry cleaning of the exterior structural members and the exposed interior ceiling beams, followed by the application of a 10-15% solution of Tim-bor by hand-spray application. The exposed wood should be cleaned and stabilized, followed by a treatment to consolidate the flaking layers of paint.

The rough, whitewashed finish on one exterior wall should be consolidated with a spray adhesive application and then covered with a clear coating of a custom water repellent. Other painted areas of the exterior should be cleaned and consolidated with follow-up in-painting to seal exposed wood surfaces.

Interior finishes

Cleaning the surfaces, followed by stabilization of flaking paint, should be undertaken. It is necessary to be able to consider past events in the preservation of the building with new treatments in order to be sure that future problems are not being created. The results of investigations reveal that there are areas of the cabin that exhibit signs of normal wear from use. Care should be taken to preserve signs of this use and wear (it is called 'patina'), and not to make the treated finishes look new.

Some additional research needs to be carried out to confirm the extent of treatment, the best time to conduct the treatment, and the extent and length of time for treatment. This would include detailed planning of the work to provide maximum benefit and least intervention. Based on further examination, a more detailed treatment plan can be provided.

Maintenance

A plan should be developed for on-going annual inspection of and long-term maintenance to the exterior finishes and structural systems. Conservation housekeeping to the interior should be maintained. Both should follow best practices as outlined in the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*.²⁰

¹⁹ The use of fumigation is not permitted under Canadian law, given the danger of residual poisoning of visitors to the cabin.

²⁰ See reference on Page 31.

4.4 Interpretation

Ongoing public interpretation of the history of the Blue Cabin should be an important component of the project and the ongoing operation of the cabin. 'Interpretation' is museum-talk for 'telling stories' – for communicating the history and associations of the place to visitors and users in an interesting, engaging manner.

The interpretation should address some (or all) of the following themes:

- The building
 - o The architecture of the cabin
 - o The cabin as representative of foreshore squats in its scale and (early) siting
 - o Rare and unique features of the design, and their possible Scandinavian connections
 - o The story of the purported builder
 - o Cabin-building and woodcraft
- The history
 - o A representative squatter's dwelling along the Burrard Inlet foreshore
 - o The cabin's distinction for being the last survivor of this type
 - o The early history of the Coal Harbour and Dollarton sites
 - o Associations with the Tsleil-Waututh Nation
 - o Events of the recent past
 - o Moving the cabin: from Coal Harbour to Dollarton, to its present site, to its destinations
- The inhabitants
 - o The reported original role of the cabin as the home (presumably a squat) of a Vancouver immigrant craftsman
 - o Its more recent role as the long-time residence of distinguished experimental artists Al Neil and Carole Itter
- The arts
 - o The role of the cabin as a long-time place for the arts, inhabited and visited by artists
 - o A non-traditional setting for cultural production
 - o Experimental music, visual arts, and literature in BC since the 1960s
- Environmental sustainability
 - o Demonstration of good environmental practices, such as zero waste, rainwater retrieval, solar collector panels
 - o 'Living off the grid'
- Interactions with mainstream society
 - o Squats and the need for affordable housing
 - o Using and inhabiting found spaces
 - o The small-house movement
 - o The importance of waterways for our resource-based economies
 - o The appeal to save the cabin and the community's response

The interpretation can rely on a combination of media, predominantly digital, and perhaps including some of the following:

- Text
 - o Panels or other devices
- Photographs
 - o Historical photos, photos of Neil and Itter, etc.
- Sound
 - o e.g., Al Neil playing the piano; sounds of the water and the wind
- Neil's and Itter's writings and visual art
- Video
- Film
 - o E.g., Films by David Ritter and Krista Lomax
- Assemblages from the Dollarton site, either relocated or recreated
- Guided tours

We recommend that a detailed Interpretation Plan be prepared to address these and related issues. The interpretation should be selective. It cannot tell all the stories, but rather should relate most strongly to the final use and appearance of the cabin. The interpretation should be planned so that it complements, and does not compete with, the use the cabin.

5. Implementation

5.1 Management and finances

General considerations

We recommend that the Blue Cabin Committee identify an existing not-for-profit entity to take on responsibility for the ongoing conservation and operation of the Blue Cabin, the artist residency program, and fundraising. Ideally the entity should already have obtained charitable-donation status. It is inadvisable that a group of unincorporated volunteer stewards should commit to much beyond the immediate tasks of determining the location and planning the details of the cabin's future.

Alternatively, a new not-for-profit society can be formed. This would be a second choice only, because incorporation and the acquisition of charitable status take time, thereby delaying the society's ability to procure grants and fundraise.

Ongoing management will be by the society's Board of Directors. It is likely that the core members of the Blue Cabin Committee will become directors of the society. Since the directors remain volunteers, there will be a need to appoint a manager and possibly also support staff. While these may begin as volunteers, in time they will be paid staff.

Budget

The Board will prepare a detailed budget. The following is the framework for a budget. It names the principal categories, but does not provide amounts.

Revenues

Core funding (if secured)
Ongoing fundraising
Earned revenues (art sales, publication rights, and other public-directed activities)

Expenses

Capital Costs

Acquisition of a barge
Conservation of the Blue Cabin
Upgrades to the Blue Cabin
Construction of the new residential cabin

Operating Costs

Moorage and/or water-lot rental
Utilities
Maintenance and ongoing conservation
Staff salaries and benefits
Award to the artist in residence (if any)
Expenses of the artist in residence
Promotion and marketing

5.2 Implementation checklist

The following is a summary of the steps required the plan for the conservation and re-use of the Blue Cabin:

1. The Blue Cabin Committee formally approves this report, or else revises it and approves a revised version.
2. The short-term conservation work is continued and completed.
3. Fundraising continues on an ongoing basis.
4. The Blue Cabin Committee identifies or forms a not-for-profit society to take responsibility for the project, and that society succeeds the Committee.
5. If an existing society, members of the Committee are appointed to the Board of Directors.
6. If a new society, the Committee appoints the initial Board of Directors, which approves bylaws and incorporates with the objective of achieving charitable status from CRA.
7. A structural engineer examines the cabin to determine the possible need for structural upgrades.
8. A conservator undertakes a detailed inspection of the materials and structure.
9. The Board prepares a comprehensive Conservation Plan that addresses in detail heritage conservation, materials conservation, structural upgrading, and architectural interventions, and prepares cost estimates for the work.
10. The Board plans and sets up the artist residency program.
11. The Board prepares a Business Plan. This will include plans for staffing, operation, and fundraising.
12. A barge is secured for the long term.
13. Moorage is secured.
14. The Board prepares an Interpretation Plan.
15. The cabin is moved to the barge.
16. The programs of facility upgrades, long-term conservation, and interpretation begin. These should be done with the assistance of a conservation architect, conservator, interpretive planner, and/or other heritage professional.
17. The new residential cabin is designed and built (unless it is deferred pending establishment of the residency and secure funding).

18. The Board selects the first artist in residence.

19. The residency program begins.

20. Plans are made for future moorage sites.



The Vancouver area has numerous artist residency programs. (Vancouver Biennale)

6. Sources

6.1 People

Blue Cabin Committee

Glenn Alteen, Project lead; Programming Director, grunt gallery
Esther Rausenberg, Co-artistic Director, Creative Cultural Collaborations Society
Barbara Cole, Executive Director, Other Sights for Artists' Projects

Consultant team

Authors of the present report

Harold Kalman, primary consultant
Andrew Todd, Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd., sub-consultant

Consulted or retained separately by the Blue Cabin Committee

Marko Simcic, Architect
Michael Jackson, Project manager
Dan Pon, grunt gallery

People consulted

By Harold Kalman

Anne Bancroft-Jones, Vice President, First Nations Relations and Special Programs, Polygon Homes
Colin Browne, Poet and filmmaker
Carole Itter, Artist
Nancy Kirkpatrick, Director, North Shore Museum and Archives
Melanie O'Brian, Director, Audain Gallery, SFU
Gary Penway, Director of Community Services, City of North Vancouver
Poul Erik Rasmussen, Scandinavian Cultural Society, Burnaby, BC
Reid Shier, Director and Curator, Presentation House Gallery
Craig Sims, Heritage Building Consultant, Kingston, Ontario
Andy Sylvester, Director, Equinox Gallery
Carolyn Thauberger, Scandinavian Cultural Society, Burnaby, BC
Jørgen Walle Jensen, Vancouver

By the Blue Cabin Committee

Port Metro Vancouver and other foreshore interests

Christine Banham, North Shore Waterfront Liaison Committee
Jillian Cooke, North Shore Waterfront Liaison Committee; Canexus Corporation, Quality Engineer
Christine Eriksen, Port Metro Vancouver
Naomi Horsford, Port Metro Vancouver
Ian MacMurdo, Chair, North Shore Waterfront Liaison Committee
Allan Neilson, Port Metro Vancouver
Frances Tang-Graham, Port Metro Vancouver

Development

Michael Audain, Chairman, Polygon Homes
Neil Chrystal, President and Chief Executive Officer, Polygon Homes
Darren Cranston, Vice President Construction, Polygon Construction Management Ltd.
Cynthia Melosky, Vice President Development, Polygon Cates Landing Ltd
Rene Rose, Senior Vice President Development, Polygon Cates Landing Ltd.
Peter Roskell, Senior Vice President Construction, Polygon Construction Management Ltd

Municipal Government

North Vancouver Mayor and Council
Mayor Richard Walton, District of North Vancouver
Lisa Muri, North Vancouver District Council
Jim Hanson, North Vancouver District Council
Heather Deal, Councillor, City of Vancouver (COV)
Geoff Meggs, Councillor, COV
Doug Allan, Lands Office
John Rice, North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Commission
Lori Phillips, North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Commission
Rich Newirth, COV Cultural Services
Diana Leung, COV Cultural Services
Bryan Newson, COV Public Art Program
Jil Weaving, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Alison Sales, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation
Catherine Evans, Park Commissioner, COV
Members of the Vancouver Public Art Committee

Cultural Organizations

Daina Augaitis, Chief Curator/Associate Director, Vancouver Art Gallery (VAG)
Kathleen Bartels, Director, VAG
Shaun Dacey, Curator of Learning and Public Programs, Contemporary Art Gallery (CAG)
Paul Larocque, Associate Director, VAG
Nancy Kirkpatrick, Director, North Vancouver Museum & Archives
Nigel Prince, Director, CAG
Reid Shier, Director, Presentation House Gallery
Scott Watson, Director, Helen and Morris Belkin Gallery
Alma Lee, Trustee, Granville Island Trust

Project Management

Michael Jackson, volunteer project manager
Pietro Widmer, VP, Project Services, PM Volunteers

Heritage

Deborah Myers, Department of Canadian Heritage
Peter Miller, North Shore Preservation Society
John Atkin, historian
Bruce Macdonald, historian

Individuals

Luke Blackstone, artist

Thomas Benjamin Carruthers, artist/architect

David Duckworth, Camp Jubilee, Indian Arm

Christine Elsey, educator

Penny Gurstein, Professor and Director, School of Community & Regional Planning and Centre for Human Settlements, UBC

Bill Jeffries, curator

Robert Kleyn, artist/architect

Jo Ledingham, supporter

Eric Pawlett, Sunshine Coast

Tom Sandborn, writer, Vancouver Sun

Movers

Bob Vickers, Zebiak Houseraising

Peter Christensen, Supreme Structural Transport Ltd. (the cabin's movers)

Adam Knipfel, Nickel Brothers

Ben Gourlay and Gordon Macdonald, Macdonald & Lawrence Timber Framing Ltd.

Dick Boulter, Bear Creek Movers

Fundraising and support

Gail Huzel

The Freybes

Garry Neill Kennedy

Cathy Busby

Lindsay Ross

Jeanette Langmann

Robert Kardosh

Craig Sibley

6.2 Published and unpublished sources

'Al Neil Bio & CV,' Vancouver in the Sixties, <http://alnel.vancouverartinthesixties.com/bio-cv>

Chuck Davis, ed., *The Greater Vancouver Book; An Urban Encyclopaedia*, Vancouver: Linkman Press, 1997.

Nancy Kirkpatrick, 'Report on Foreshore Cabin adjacent to Future Polygon Development and Cates Park,' North Vancouver Museum & Archives, November 16, 2014.

Krista Lomax, 'Al Neil and Carole Itter's Blue Cabin,' film, 2015.

- Commissioned by the North Shore Museum and Archives, funded with a grant from Port Metro Vancouver

David Rimmer, 'Al Neil – A Portrait,' film, 1979.

Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd., 'The Blue Cabin: Conservation Inspection Report; Blue Cabin Preservation Committee,' Bowen Island, 16 August 2015

'Tsleil-Waututh Nation: a quick rewind of Colonial history,' 2004, available at http://volcano.resist.ca/2004/tsleil_waututh_nation.html

'Tsleil-Waututh: People of the Inlet,' updated 2015, available at <http://www.twnation.ca/>

Photographs and documentation in the collection of Al Neil and Carole Itter, and in the collection of the grunt gallery

6.3 Promotion by the Blue Cabin Committee

Facebook page, over 730 likes (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Al-Caroles-Cabin/641796659281951?fref=ts>)

The Globe and Mail, Marsha Lederman, June 22, 2015. "Saved from demolition, historic Vancouver cabin needs a new home".

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/saved-from-demolition-historic-vancouver-cabin-needs-a-new-home/article25069337/>

CBC News, Jan 20, 2015

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/cates-park-artists-cabin-must-go-ahead-of-condo-development-nearby-says-port-metro-vancouver-1.2920852>

The Globe and Mail, Marsha Lederman, Jan 20, 2015

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/protecting-a-colourful-piece-of-vancouvers-art-history/article22531931/>

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<https://www.straight.com/arts/809251/artists-al-neil-and-carole-itters-cabin-under-demolition-threat-north-vancouver>

CBC Stephen Quinn, On the Coast, Jan 21, 2015

Global News, News Hour BC, Jan 21, 2015

<http://globalnews.ca/video/1786406/end-of-an-era-for-historic-cates-park-cabin>

(Blog) Theresa Kishkan, Jan 21, 2015

<http://theresakishkan.com/2015/01/21/a-blue-cabin-on-the-tides-edge/>

North Shore News, Jane Seyd, Jan 23, 2015

<http://www.nsnews.com/news/north-vancouver-waterfront-cabin-ordered-removed-1.1741242>

The Vancouver Sun, Tom Sandborn, Jan 24, 2015

<http://www.vancouversun.com/mobile/entertainment/top-stories/history+Vancouver+squats/10755812/story.html>

<http://www.vancouversun.com/entertainment/Artists+fight+preserve+historic+year+North+Vancouver+cabin/10755706/story.html>

(Blog) Daniel Francis, Reading the National Narrative, Jan 24, 2015

<http://www.danielfrancis.ca/blog/history-squatting>

(Blog) Scamcouver, Jan 31, 2015

<https://scamcouver.wordpress.com/2015/01/>

North Shore News, Letter to the Editor, Feb 4, 2015

<http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/letters/letter-move-squatter-s-shack-to-cates-park-1.1752259>

7. Appendixes

Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd., 'The Blue Cabin: Conservation Inspection Report,' August 16, 2015.

Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd., 'Conservation Recommendations to Stabilize and Secure The Blue Cabin,' November 30, 2015.

Nancy Kirkpatrick, 'Report on Foreshore Cabin adjacent to Future Polygon Development and Cates Park,' November 16, 2014. Reproduced with the permission of the author.



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The Blue Cabin

Conservation Inspection Report; Blue Cabin Preservation Committee

16 August 2015

Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd.

Conservation Inspection Report

Date of Report: 16 August 2015

Date of Examination: 21 July 2015

Inspection by: Andrew Todd

Conservation Inspection Report; Blue Cabin Preservation Committee.

An examination of the Blue Cabin formerly the recreational/creative retreat of Al Neil and Carole Itter was undertaken by Andrew Todd on Tuesday, 21 July 2015 with Michael Jackson, Hal Kalman, Glenn Alteen, Barbara Cole, Marko Simcic and Esther Rausenberg. The visual examinations were made with the assistance of optical magnification recorded with digital images of the painted exterior, the unpainted under-structure and the various surfaces of the interior. Inspections were made in the vicinity and at the actual location of the original site and further inspections will be required to confirm conservation treatment.

Observations

In general, the Blue Cabin is structurally in good condition with deteriorated wood and flaking paint observed on surfaces. The under-structure has seriously deteriorated beams and joists from the original shoreline site. Treatment to stabilize this area will be required. Protection of the Blue Cabin needs to be provided to prevent the effects of environmental free water/rain and moisture accumulation levels in the interior of the structure.

Site Recommendations

In preparation for recording the site some cleaning may be required. As there is a great deal of material related to the habitation which would be useful to preserve, a careful recording survey is recommended.

Conservation Recommendations

As noted, the Blue Cabin is in need of environmental protection. It is recommended that a scaffolding surround system be erected at the four corners and where required mid-span and that an overhead framework scaffolding be provided and covered with a shrink wrap type of plastic fabric. (Similar to the covering presently provided for Christ Church Cathedral on Burrard St.) It would also be a good idea to cover the sides for at least ½ the height of the building, leaving the bottom open for circulation of air. The interior of the Cabin should be supplied with a small electric heater which can maintain just enough minimum heat to keep the interior free of moisture and condensation.

For security it is recommended an 8' high portable fencing system be provided around the Cabin. The fence should be kept locked to prevent entry.

Conservation Research

Several discussions were held with other conservators to seek input for the site. In addition, on-line research was carried out and several articles were saved which relate to the project. This research is available from the file as required.

Signed:  Andrew Todd

16 August 2015



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30 November 2015

Conservation Recommendations to Stabilize and Secure

The Blue Cabin

Introduction

This conservation report describes the findings and resulting recommendations based on examination of evidence of wood and structural conditions. Reference to the structural and decorative materials of the building and the current conservation issues were made during inspection of the Blue Cabin. A further inspection is recommended to define details of these recommendations.



The Blue Cabin on site in outdoor storage yard, North Vancouver, July 2015

Background

The Blue Cabin was constructed in the 1930's as a cabin retreat.

The history of the cabin circles around the personalities of Al Neil and Carole Itter and their cultural influences. Al Neil was initially involved in the design and development of the cabin as a retreat and later it was further decorated and maintained with input and direction from Carole Itter. Their vision for a weekend retreat included a cooperative seaside atmosphere with other cabins in the area of the Dollarton Flats at Burrard Inlet.

There are many literary references to the area by various authors, including Malcom Lowery in his famous book "Under the Volcano", which was possibly at least partially written at one of the cabins at the site.

Other historic references to the cabin and the area have been researched and are becoming available in support of the preservation of the cabin.



Location of the cabin in temporary outdoor storage.

Conservation Examination and Assessment

In the early days of July 2015, conservator Andrew Todd was contacted by the Michael Jackson, engineer responsible for management of the cabin. A meeting was held with Michael Jackson, Hal Kalman, Glenn Alteen, Barbara Cole, Marko Simcic and Esther Rausenberg.

A site visit to the cabin's original location was made and then a survey of the cabin in storage was undertaken. In addition to obvious signs of deterioration from fungal rot, other forms of wood decay were observed including some evidence of sawdust (frass) piles. Summer weather conditions were noted and a series of days were recorded as quite warm for the usual weather in our region. This first link with the environmental conditions still remains relevant since the materials in question are structural and the cabin is built on them.



Detail of scalloped decoration and decorative finishing of the underside of the eaves.

The conservator was first able to visit the site in mid-July 2015 and at that time became familiar with the site and locations where evidence of deterioration of structural wood was noted. An examination began with visual observation of the actual original location, as well as photographs, overall microscopic inspection of the location was conducted. Visual examination was well illuminated in the area. In addition to visual examination, sound testing was conducted by rapping gently on all the wood surfaces. Sharpened blade probes were also used to determine the strength of the wood surfaces and determine how deeply penetration could be made in areas where infestation could have caused weakening and tunneling of the wood. Notes were made of all findings for future reference.

- Physical measurements of penetration depths in the deteriorated wood, taken by traditional blade penetration instruments. These measurements are recorded on the conservation documentation sketches but in summary they varied considerably from surface to interior areas of the building. Some areas are much more seriously deteriorated with fungal decay and rot causing physical breakdown of the wood. In several areas of the structural base support timbers the wood has split open revealing extensive brown cuboidal fungal deterioration.

- The overall fungal growth was assessed internally and rot was very apparent in each of the sections and deterioration conditions were evaluated and found to be extensive throughout.
- Penetration depths and measurements of cracks and splits in the wood were made.



Areas of structural deterioration in support beams under the cabin.

- The structural condition was examined overall, by visual means and by use of “hollow tap” sounding tests.
- Biological growths on the surface and end grain areas of the sections were noted and recorded. Specific fungal growths were noted on several end grain areas of the sections.
- Insect and pest activity was searched for and conditions were observed to be ideal for their presence.
- Pest prevention strategies are suggested here and it is recommended that a Tim-bor treatment process be carried out for protection. Tim-bor is a diffusible pesticide with very low toxic effects especially for humans and animals. Chemically, Tim-bor is “trisodium octaborate tetrahydrate”.
- Locations and specifications of findings were made for the cabin.
- Conservation handling techniques were followed during examination of the cabin.

Research Cultural

A review of the history of the cabin has been made with attention to information that describes the state of the wood and decorative elements in relation to weathering and deterioration.

Further Examination Instruments and Equipment

Further visual examination, assisted by magnification loupes and a strong flashlight needs to be carried out. A battery powered moisture meter should be used to record moisture content of the wood. Various probes and wood penetrating instruments are recommended to further assess conditions and determine penetration depths. Additional digital photographs of conditions in various areas of the cabin need to be made with details for the records.

Treatment Project Plan

Based on a further examination, and an assessment of the plans for the cabin, it is recommended that a conservation treatment plan be developed to consolidate and treat the cabin. Degrees of restoration include initial stabilizing of the sections of the cabin to slow the process of deterioration, as mentioned with an application of Tim-bor. The cleaning and stabilizing the exposed wood would be the next step followed by a treatment to consolidate the flaking layers of paint. Providing conservation and restoration treatment of the wood would involve consolidation and the addition of replacement parts to give new structural support systems as may be required to stabilize sections of the cabin. New wood may be required as part of the treatment for both structural and decorative pieces of the cabin.



Detail of brown cuboidal fungal deterioration, frass& small flight holes of insects, possibly furniture beetle or carpenter ant.

During the examination to discover the condition of the wood, the possibility of insect infestation by particularly carpenter ants and possibly termites was noted. The excrement markings of other pests were not noticed during the exam. The possibility that rats had entered the cabin was considered and observations were made to discover any signs and none were noted.

Collection and Analysis of Samples

Sample collection of deterioration factors, particularly of frass should be made and identified. The infestation by termites is considered a slow-moving, slow-breeding, long term threat of damage to structural beams in wooden frame buildings.

Characteristics of Infestation by Insects

The Subterranean Termites which live in damp or moist soil in the vicinity of wooden structures live in colonies and travel to wooden member where they grow and multiply slowly. Because they remain in the wooden members they are difficult to observe. As a result, an infestation can only be detected by signs of frass and movement trails. Changes in weather conditions can create noticeable activity. Because these insect infestations are difficult to observe, the exact location can be hard to determine. This problem leads to the difficulty of exterminating their presence.

Consideration of Treatments

Overall Structural Treatment; (The large support timbers):

Prior to the replacement of the support timbers, while removal is underway, a complete dry cleaning treatment of the underside of the structure should be undertaken. After dry cleaning a low-pressure power washing spray to the whole underside of the cabin should be carried out. Then washing with brushes and soap should be carried out at the same time followed by a spray rinse. While still damp from the wash and rinse an application of Tim-Bor (15% solution) should be sprayed on all of the underside wooden structure using hand powered garden sprayers. This borate based treatment will provide eradication of any insect infestation and provide prevention and spread of fungal rot. Further eradication steps may need to be taken with follow-up borate treatments for prevention and eradication of any wood-boring insects. Borate treatments can be assisted in penetration by mixing the solution with propylene glycol.

The insertion of boron copper fused rods is also proposed. There are a number of products on the market, including Impel Rods and Cobra Rods. Both of these products require an operation to drill into the wood with a ½ inch bit and then insert a 2” or 4” rod and cover the opening with a wooden plug or a manufactured plastic cover which can be removed for re-application. The fused rods then slowly disperse their toxic contents upon the rise of moisture content in the wood. Since moisture is present in our environment; this method is considered a very effective preventive treatment. It is recommended for the Blue Cabin.

The rooftop of the building should be examined for weatherproof qualities and repairs made with standard roofing sealer material.

Outside Finishes

The old, rough unpainted exterior wall should be consolidated with a spray adhesive application and then covered with a clear coating of a custom water repellent. Other painted areas of the exterior should be cleaned and consolidated with follow-up inpainting to seal exposed wood surfaces.

Summary of Conservation Interior Finishes

Cleaning of surfaces followed by stabilization of flaking paint should be undertaken. It is necessary to be able to consider past events in the preservation of the building with new treatments in order to be sure that future problems are not being created here. The results of investigations reveal that there are areas of the cabin that exhibit signs of normal wear from use. Care should be taken to preserve signs of this original use.

Recommendations and Long-term Maintenance

A protection treatment is proposed and involves first overall dry cleaning of the exterior structural members and the exposed interior ceiling and beams followed by the application of 10% solution of Tim-bor by hand- spray application. Certainly the use of fumigation is not permitted under Canadian law given the danger of residual poisoning of visiting guests to the cabin. The other options require some structural additions to the cabin and the least amount of disturbance and the safest treatment is recommended. Some additional research to the requirements of the cabin needs to be carried out to confirm the extent of treatment, best time to conduct the treatment, the extent and length of time for treatment. This proposal would include detailed planning of the work to provide maximum benefit and least intervention. Based on the examination, a further, detailed treatment plan can be provided upon request.

On-going annual maintenance to the exterior finishes and structural systems should be identified and planned. The interior conservation housekeeping can be maintained with reference to the steps outlined throughout the “Standards and Guidelines for Conservation of Historic Places in Canada”.

As principal of Andrew Todd Conservators Ltd., I am prepared to act as consultant for this project and lead the conservation treatment program and work in cooperation with project team.

Respectfully submitted:

Signed: _____



Andrew Todd

30 November 2015



**REPORT ON FORESHORE CABIN ADJACENT TO FUTURE
POLYGON DEVELOPMENT AND CATES PARK**

Nancy Kirkpatrick, Director, NVMA

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to a recommendation in a staff memo ("Foreshore Cabin Adjacent to Future Polygon Development and Cates Park, October 27, 2014, by Mathew Schofield), on October 30, 2014 I was asked to visit the site of the cabin and provide recommendations with respect to preservation, documentation and/or retention of the cabin and surrounding artwork. I subsequently spoke with Mathew Schofield of DNV (Oct 31); spoke with the cabin's co-resident, artist Carole Itter, visited the site and took photographs (November 1); wrote a brief e-mail with preliminary findings (November 4); spoke with Jennifer Paton of DNV and Reid Shier, Director of Presentation House Gallery (November 5); corresponded by e-mail with Reid Shier and Glenn Alteen, Director of Vancouver's Grunt Gallery (November 6 and 7) who is authorized by the cabin's co-residents, artists Carole Itter and Al Neil, to speak about the cabin on their behalf. On November 8, Glenn Alteen met with the artists and posed questions I had asked about the cabin, its contents and the assemblage sculptures beside it. On November 11, I spoke about the cabin with John Rice of the Recreation and Arts Commission.

Follow-up e-mails with District staff (November 12 and 13) informed me that Port Metro Vancouver had told the District they would hold off on demolition of the cabin until the District had an opportunity to assess the building and determine, by the end of November, if they had an interest in it. I was also informed that Polygon is anxious because they are getting pushed by Port Metro to demolish or otherwise dispose of the building as part of a larger demolition project on the foreshore lands.

On November 14, I met with Carole Itter and Glenn Alteen to review the matter and to discuss a possible future option for the cabin, i.e. removing its entrance façade and adjacent assemblage elements for use as a future exhibit in the New Museum. Mr. Neil could not meet with us because he is recuperating from back surgery.

ATTACHMENTS

- Recent Photographs of the Cabin
- Selected Bibliography

HISTORY OF THE CABIN

Al Neil has resided in the cabin, on and off, since 1966. Carole Itter joined him as a co-resident thirteen years later. What I know about the structure comes from conversations with Ms. Itter and from a 2-page history written by Al Neil in August 1996.



McKenzie Barge site with blue foreshore cabin on the right.

Vince Mason, one of the oldest workers at McKenzie Barge & Derrick, told Al Neil that the cabin was built by a Scandinavian craftsman in the 1930s and was originally moored on a barge in Coal Harbour. When its builder got a job at McKenzie Barge he had the cabin towed to its present location and lifted by a derrick onto pilings. The cabin became part of a small community of beach dwellers who worked at McKenzie Barge.



In September 1966, while Al Neil was acting as a fill-in light keeper at Point Atkinson, he spoke with Ralph McKenzie about the possibility of moving into then-vacant cabin. Mr. Mackenzie agreed, and provided an electrical supply to the cabin which, I think, involved running extensions from the main McKenzie site. To my knowledge, there is no running water in the cabin.

According to Neil, Bob and Brian McKenzie always considered him a beach watchman because the cabin was the only thing standing between the beach and their Marine Ways.

By the late 1970s, Cates Park was in existence and all that remained at the end of the beach adjacent to the McKenzie Barge site were two squatter shacks (dwellings of two McKenzie workers that had escaped the general razing of shacks in the later 1950s) and an illegally-beached freighter, the *Island Prince*, which was demolished in 1978.

According to Neil, after the freighter was demolished the Ports Police “zeroed in on the two squatters’ shacks on the beach.” By this time, he says, the shacks had been occupied by a series of residents including “workers from North Van, temporarily

unemployed and latterly, itinerant hippies.” After the Ports Police evicted the squatters and demolished the shacks, “they spotted my cabin which always looked nice”. Then they handed him an eviction notice and “told [him] with grins on their faces to get out within a week and they just walked away.” Later, Bob McKenzie looked at the eviction notice, called the Port and arranged for the cabin to be spared. Said Neil, “he liked having me on the beach as an extra watchman.” Today, several decades later, the cabin remains on the beach where it was first deposited some eighty years ago¹.

In 2005, music critic Alexander Varty writing in the *Georgia Straight* described a visit to Neil’s cabin:

After taking a hidden woodland trail to his rough cabin—which, perched on top of a small, permanently beached barge, seemed as much houseboat as house—we drank tea and discussed art and music to the accompaniment of his cat, making its delicate way across the keys of a battered upright piano. Slanting through dusty windows, the sun lit up Neil’s flotsam assemblages just as surely as the pianist’s wayward yet erudite conversation illuminated the idea that it’s possible to build a life around constant exploration. For that lesson, I’ll always be thankful, as will the thousands of others who learned it under this madman, mystic, and living legend’s persistent tutelage.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT AL NEIL AND CAROLE ITTER

Al Neil (b. 1924) is a musician, composer, collage artist, sculptor, and writer, who is renowned on West Coast for his experimental and avant-garde works. A World War II veteran and jazz pianist, he began playing in Vancouver clubs in the late 1940s and was a central figure in the 1950s and 60s at the Cellar club where he performed both with other artists and with his own group, The Al Neil Quartet. He later introduced a wholly unique and unusual, free jazz style and released several recordings, which were re-issued in compilation formats in the 1980s and 90s.

In addition to music, Neil is known for his writing, visual art and his extensive artistic collaborations with artist Carole Itter. He is known for his multimedia performances in the 1970s and mixed-media collages from 1980s. His works have been exhibited at the Vancouver Art Gallery, the Art Gallery of Ontario, the Western Front in Vancouver, and the Musee d’art Moderne in Paris. He is the subject of a 1979 film (*Al Neil: A Portrait*) by the celebrated filmmaker David Rimmer. In 2008, Al Neil received an Honorary Doctor of Letters from Emily Carr University of Art and Design. In 2014, he received the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award at the Mayor’s Arts Awards in Vancouver, which recognizes “an individual who has made significant contributions over his or her lifetime to the cultural vibrancy of the city.” For the past forty-eight years he has divided his time between Vancouver and the foreshore cabin at Dollarton.

¹ Apart from its deteriorating foundation, the cabin is still in good shape with a well-constructed tongue and groove interior and a roof supported by sturdy curving rafters.



Above: Al Neil on deck of the cabin, undated (1990's?). Photo by Jim Jardine.
From the website "Vancouver Art in the Sixties".
(<http://alnel.vancouverartinthesixties.com/bio-cv>)

Left: "Al Neil on front deck, Dollarton, BC", 1973.
From the website "Vancouver Art In the Sixties"
(<http://vancouverartinthesixties.com/archive/169>)

"New York has William Burroughs, Los Angeles has Charles Bukowski and Vancouver has Al Neil." – John Armstrong, Vancouver writer and musician

Carole Itter (b. 1939) is a sculptor, art instructor, film maker, oral historian, and writer. She has received awards from the Canada Council for the Arts and the British Columbia Arts Council. In 1989 she received the prestigious VIVA (Vancouver Institute of Visual Arts) award. The oral history of Vancouver's Strathcona neighbourhood (*Opening Doors: In Vancouver's East End*, 1979) that she co-wrote with Daphne Marlatt was re-published in 2011 as one of the Vancouver 125 legacy books to celebrate the City's 125th anniversary.

An experimental artist, many of Itter's artistic works involve 'found objects' and natural materials. Her opposition to consumer culture is a thread that weaves throughout her work. She has become known for large-scale installations which use re-cycled materials and objects from her surroundings to create art with emotional resonance. Works by Itter are in the collections of The Canada Council Art Bank, the Vancouver Public Library, the Vancouver Art Gallery and private collections.



Above: Photo of Carole Itter from the website "ABC Bookworld".

http://www.abcbookworld.com/view_author.php?id=716

Left: A 'playable' sculpture by Carole Itter titled "Grand Piano Rattle: a Bosendorfer for Al Neil", 1984. Collection: Vancouver Art Gallery.

HISTORY OF 'SQUATTING' ON BURRARD INLET

For much of the twentieth century, Burrard Inlet was home to squatters living in houseboats, floating shacks, cabins, and foreshore cottages on pilings. The Inlet's most famous squatter was Malcolm Lowry, who lived between 1940 and 1954 in successive shacks at Dollarton, in what is now Cates Park, very near to the location of the foreshore cabin. Those were some of Lowry's most productive years and he wrote much of his classic novel *Under the Volcano* while living in a shack at Dollarton.

Waterfront squatters' communities evolved in the Vancouver area for various reasons, including poverty and unemployment, adjacency to work places, rebellion against social conventions and the yearning for an unfettered way of life in harmony with nature. According to Scott Watson, "Squatting in the intertidal zone is as old as Vancouver and is an important part of the history of the city. ... Intertidal squats have been established and last largely due to the ambiguity of jurisdiction over the intertidal area."

The earliest squatter settlements in the region date back to 1860 when sailors jumped ship in Vancouver harbour and settled in what later became Stanley Park. Historian Daniel Francis says, according to one source, there were 364 shacks along the Vancouver foreshore in 1894. At their height in the 1930s and 40s, over a thousand people lived in squatter communities on the Inlet. According to Francis, in 1949 there were 866 shacks along the foreshore, reflecting the housing shortage in the city. By the late 1950s, most of those communities had been destroyed.



Left: Floating shacks and houses in Coal Harbour, across from Stanley Park, 1925. Photo from City of Vancouver Archives (AM54-S4-: Str N11). Al Neil's cabin was said to have been built here.

Vestiges of the squatter colony in Stanley Park remained until 1958 when the last resident died. Squatters also lived on Deadman's Island (where 150 squatters lived in 1909), and at Coal Harbour (where a squatter community was dubbed "Shaughnessy Heights" for its relatively luxurious accommodations). Conditions were much different on the north and south shores of False Creek (where squatters were issued their final eviction notices in 1955) and beneath the Burrard Bridge on the foreshore of the Kitsilano Reserve (where some 300 people were living in 1936).

A sizeable squatter community (sometimes called "Lazy Bay") evolved on the foreshore near Roche Point in North Vancouver. It was first inhabited by fishermen and employees of the Dollar Mill and McKenzie Barge. Later, some of the cabins served as summer cabins for Vancouver families. Malcolm Lowry and his wife Margerie lived there for fourteen years. Other writers, including Earle Birney, Dorothy Livesay, and Al Purdy, were drawn to live or visit for a while in the ramshackle beach homes at Dollarton. At its peak, writes Dan Francis, there were about 90 or more shacks there. In the late 1950s, the residents were evicted, the shacks were bulldozed, and the area became Cates Park.



Right: Dorothy Burt a Malcom Lowry's shack, c. 1954
Photo courtesy Deep Cove Heritage Society

In an on-line posting from 2012, District Mayor Richard Walton talked about being a young UBC English Literature student and listening to Professor and poet Earle Birney talk about the Dollarton shacks being flattened by District bulldozers. According to Walton, Birney prefaced these words in an edition of Malcolm Lowry's collected poems:

The bright crazy little shack is gone; all the sloppy ramshackle honest pile houses where fishermen lived and kingfishers visited are bulldozed into limbo, along with the wild cherries and 'the forest path to the spring'. Now there is an empty beach and beside it a park with picnic tables and tarmac access; the sea air stinks with car exhaust. And the city that ignored him plans to cement a bronze plaque in his memory to the brick wall of the new civic craphouse.



Maplewood mud flats with squatter shacks, photo taken in 1973 by Bruce Stewart.
From Presentation House Gallery website.

On the foreshore a kilometre west of Cates Park another squatter community grew up on the Maplewood mud flats 1969. Previous squatters on the muddy estuary had been forced out in 1961 when L&K Lumber purchased the property. When hippies discovered this area of the foreshore in the early 1970s, they set up tents, shacks and lean-tos and formed a community where the counter-culture flourished and artists and poets were welcomed. Sculptor Tom Burrows lived there for two years. Some of the dwellings were burned down by the District in 1972, while others lasted a few years longer. The films *Mudflats Living* (NFB, 1972) and *Living in the Mud* (Sean Malone, 1972) document that community.



The last squatter in the area, who had lived on the flats for 36 years, was allowed to stay in a home he had built from scrap lumber until 1986. This photo was taken in the year of the shack's demolition, when its 88-year old resident went into a nursing home.

Left: From a Flickr photo set:
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/canadagood/3068744135/>

Across the inlet, there were also squatter communities near Brighton Beach in Vancouver and at "Crabtown" in Burnaby, just east of the Second Narrows Bridge. Rolf Knight's book, *Along the No. 20 Line*, contains detailed descriptions of the squatter community near where he grew up at the eastern end of Commissioner Drive. People living there were cleared out in 1951, after being evicted by the National Harbours Board. Crabtown met a similar fate a few years later. It had sprung up during a housing shortage in 1912 when a group of mill employees built a few shacks on piers along the Inlet. In 1957, eviction notices were given to the 150 families living there and two years later the last members of that community had been re-located and their shacks were destroyed.

At their height, according to Sheryl Salloum, squatter communities in Vancouver were home to about 1,800 people. Like the foreshore cabin at the McKenzie site, most squatter's dwellings had no electricity, running water, sewage or garbage disposal. And none of their residents paid property taxes, a fact that irked other citizens especially during the Depression when everyone was having trouble getting by.

According to Daniel Francis, "squatters have been part of the urban scene in Vancouver for a long time. The term is often used in a pejorative sense, but as often as not squatters, despite their marginal lifestyle, have been productive members of the community, holding jobs, raising families and, in Lowry's case, writing great literature." This was also the case for Al Neil. He moved to the foreshore cabin in 1966 after his former home in Vancouver's west end burned down. As he recounted in 1996, "I'm a writer and musician and artist and this has provided my meagre livelihood." Although he lived a lifestyle similar to that of a squatter--in a cabin without running water and utilities--he never considered himself a "squatter" because he lived there with the permission of McKenzie Barge and was considered the "beach watchman".

Al Neil's cabin, as far as I know, is the last remaining example of the many hundreds of squatter dwellings that once dotted the foreshore of Burrard Inlet.

CONCLUSION

The foreshore cabin at the McKenzie site has strong local and regional cultural, historic, and artistic value because:

- It is the last remaining foreshore dwelling from among the many hundreds of such 'squatter' dwellings in the Vancouver region that once dotted the shores of Burrard Inlet and provided homes for marginalized people, including labourers, seniors, artists, and 'free-spirits'.
- It is a highly symbolic building because it tangibly connects us to a now-vanished way of life when people could live 'off-the-grid' and on the waterfront within the bounds of a rapidly urbanizing metropolitan area where private access to the waterfront is now restricted to the wealthy and the well-connected.
- For almost fifty years, the cabin was lived in by one of the region's foremost experimental artists, Al Neil. The cabin and its foreshore site have also acted as a home and a muse for thirty-five years to Neil's partner, noted artist Carole Itter.
- On the site, in and on the cabin, and adjacent to it (on the beach, on the deck, and in the trees) there are significant sculptural works of art co-created over many years by Al Neil and Carole Itter.

Nancy Kirkpatrick
Director, North Vancouver Museum & Archives

ATTACHMENTS



View of cabin and deck (to the right) from the water



Approaching the cabin from Cates Park



Entrance facade



View from deck toward Burrard Inlet



View of the deck



Façade facing the beach



Façade opposite the entrance



Sculptural assemblage on beach by cabin



Assemblage on entrance facade



Large assemblage in the trees



Detail of central part of large assemblage



Photograph of interior taken by internationally renowned Vancouver photographer Stan Douglas. This photo was provided to the author by Glenn Alteen.

NOTE: The original version of this photo is a copyrighted work of art which we do not have permission to reproduce.

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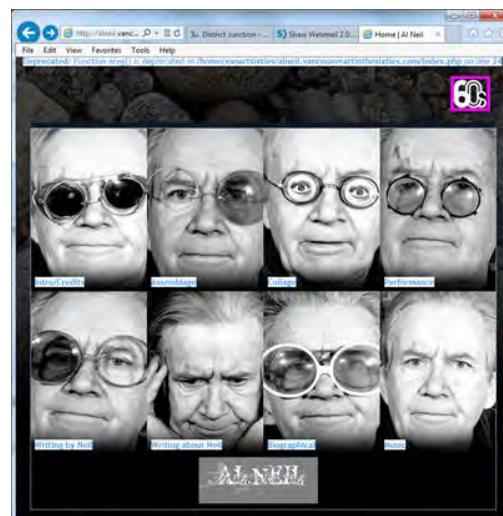
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Right: There is a full chapter on Al Neil in the excellent website *Vancouver Art in the Sixties*.
<http://alnel.vancouverartinthesixties.com/>