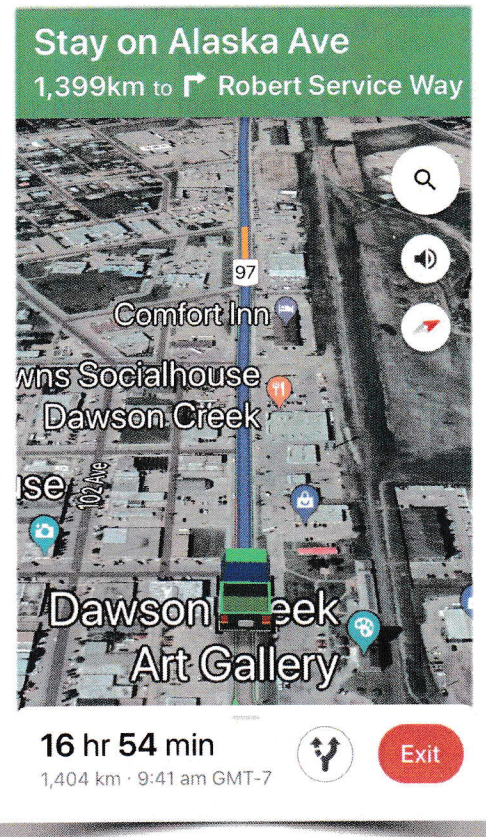


Fr. David & Ranga's Trip to the CWL Provincial Convention

Dear Parishioners, I thought I would share with you what Ranga and I have been doing over the last three weeks.

Our trip up to Whitehorse was not without incident. We were two days late in leaving so we did a dash up through Alberta and got to the Alaskan Highway early on our second day of driving. It hadn't rained in this area for three weeks so the ground was firm and it was easy to turn off the Alaskan Highway and into the bush to find a nice place to camp. Sadly, one night the heavens opened and it rained and rained and rained. We went to sleep on firm dry ground; in the morning we found ourselves in the middle of a bog! It was at this point that the drive-shaft decided to give up the ghost, or at least, one of the drive-shafts. Eventually good-old BCAA came and dragged us out and we limped on up to Whitehorse just in time for the CWL Provincial Convention.



Top: Dawson Creek, B.C., is the start of the Alaskan Highway, and my GPS announced, "Stay on the Alaskan Highway for 1399km".

Above: The remains of my front drive-shaft.

Left: Overnight the rock hard mud turned into a particularly sticky swamp.

The Catholic Women's League 2018 Provincial Convention

The Convention was impressive. If you think the CWL are just a group of ladies who bake cakes and cater for funerals, then you are missing a big chunk of what they do. At the convention there were people who were passionate about the society they live in and desperately want to shape that society in the same way that Pope Francis wants to create a better world. So they bake cakes, cater for funerals, do numerous other good works of charity, and also raise their heads and look at some of the bigger issues that surround us – this year euthanasia was a particular focus at the convention. The presentations and debates were serious, thoughtful and informed, and the guest speakers were often quite challenging.

On the lighter side, call me a coward but I was relieved that the night the ladies 'let their hair down' the local bishop called all the priests to his home so he could talk with us; a hundred CWL ladies partying can strike fear into even the most hardy priest, and it was quite a party!

The CWL executive – *which included myself* – would meet at 8:30am each morning, we were then on the go all day, and only once did I get to my room before midnight, so by the end of the convention I was ready for some wilderness!



Above: *The Alaskan Highway – most of my photos of the Highway show an empty road, except for wildlife – and for vast distances there was no cell service, so no way to call for help!*

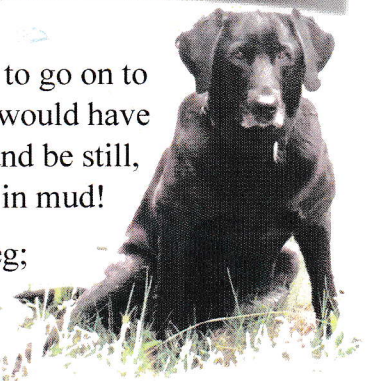
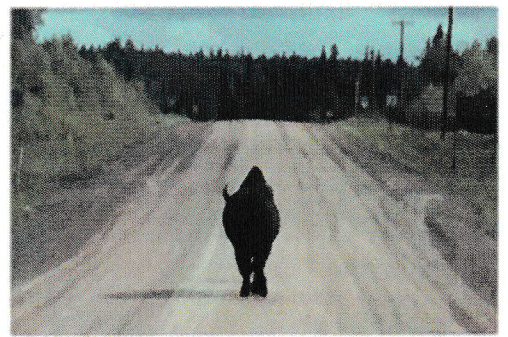
Right: *A buffalo walks slowly down the road before us, but it was so big I wasn't going to hassle it; Ranga, however, bravely barked at it... from the safety of the truck!*

These were good days: I loved having light for twenty-four hours a day, I was amazed at how few bugs there were, and on our walks Ranga and I did meet a number of bears and a buffalo or two, but generally our return trip was, thankfully, uneventful.

6,400km later and we are home. I wish I had had more time and could have got further north, but in the North West Territories to go on to the next town would often mean a nine or ten hour drive, and then one would have the same drive to come back! I also wish I had had more time to stop and be still, that is, other than the two days I stopped and was still... up to my axels in mud!

I can't wait until August and the CWL National Convention in Winnipeg; I will be fascinated to see how the CWL operates at the national level.

When it was all over we had to wait another three days for a replacement drive-shaft to arrive in Whitehorse. This left us about three more days before we needed to head out on the long trail home. Accordingly we only had time for a quick look around the Yukon, but we did briefly get up into the North West Territories. In fact, if I had pushed myself we could have spent an extra day or two exploring, but all the roads were mud and the weather forecast was calling for more severe rainstorms, and having got stuck once I wasn't going to risk it again. We were lashed with rain for most of the way back down the Alaskan Highway but by then we were on a nice, hard, paved road.



*Fr. David & Ranga (right),
6th July 2018*