

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NORTHLAND BARBERSHOP CHORUS PRESENTS 50th ANNUAL SHOW:

“NORTH TO ALASKA”

*An Evening of Music in the Barbershop Style &
Gold Rush-era poetry of Robert W. Service: “Bard of the Yukon”*

The **NORTHLAND BARBERSHOP CHORUS** of the Sault, Ontario Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society is proud to announce its **50th Annual Show** will be presented **Sat. April 05th, 2014** starting at 7:30 p.m. at the Kiwanis Community Theatre Centre.

BACKGROUND: THE KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH

The Klondike (or Yukon) Gold Rush was a migration by an estimated 100,000 prospectors to the Klondike region of the Yukon from 1896-1899. Gold was discovered there on Aug. 16, 1896 and, when news reached Seattle and San Francisco the following year, it triggered a "stampede" of prospectors. Newspaper reports fuelled a nation-wide hysteria, causing many to leave their jobs and set off for the Klondike as prospectors. Only 30,000 made it through the harsh conditions. After a miserable, cramped sea voyage, after a weary trek across mosquito-infested bogs and over glaciers, after interminable months spent courting frostbite in a flimsy tent, they finally reached the fabled gold fields, only to find that all the land along every gold-bearing creek had long since been staked out. For many, this was the final blow; most sold their outfits and headed home without ever attempting to find the gold for which they came. An estimated 4,000 found gold but very few managed to hang onto their wealth - most gambled or drank it away. The Yukon Gold Rush ended in 1899 after gold was discovered in Nome, prompting an exodus from the Klondike to Alaska, in pursuit of the prospector's dream.

In July 1896, Dawson City didn't yet exist; one year later it had a population of 5,000, the year after that, it swelled to 40,000, becoming one of the largest cities in Canada. By 1901 it was down to 9,000. Today the population is 1,300. One of Dawson's more famous residents was English poet Robert W. Service, known as "The Bard of the Yukon" for his famous poems such as "The Cremation of Sam McGee", depicting the Gold Rush and the special atmosphere of the Klondike. His vivid descriptions of the Yukon and its people made it seem that he was a veteran of the Klondike Gold Rush, instead of the late-arriving bank clerk he actually was. Service was transferred to the Dawson branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce in 1908 – 10 years after the peak of the Gold Rush. Ironically, the North made Service a wealthy man who found gold in the stories he heard while living in Whitehorse from 1904-1908, then in Dawson from 1908-1912. His first book of poetry alone, "Songs of a Sourdough", made him a very wealthy man, selling more than 1.5 million copies.

SHOW DETAILS

The 40+ man chorus will present songs in traditional four-part barbershop harmony within the context of an original play written by chorus member Bob Shami. The setting is the office of aspiring writer Sam McCord (**VERNON BAILEY**). Sam's grandfather, "Big Sam" McCord, was a Sourdough – that is, a veteran prospector during the Yukon Gold Rush. Sam wants to write a book about his grandfather's Yukon adventures, but knows little of the details of Big Sam's life. He wishes he could hear first hand from someone who was there and gets his wish with the appearance of Big Sam's partner George Pratt (**HARRY HOUSTON**). Through George's stories and Sam's recitation of famous works by Service, we get a unique perspective into a legendary period in Canadian history.

FEATURED MUSICAL PERFORMERS

- **NORTHLAND BARBERSHOP CHORUS:** Now in their 53rd year. Bob Shami – Music Director
- **FOREIGN ACCORD:** Our newest Chapter Quartet, all talented members of the Northland Chorus.
- **HEADLINE QUARTET – STORM FRONT:** World Class Barbershop Quartet from Denver, CO. This famously funny foursome also sings a cappella at the highest possible level, having won the International Barbershop Quartet Competition Gold Medal in 2010.

All Tickets: General Admission – **\$25.00* CDN or US Funds**, available at:

- Theatre Centre Box Office* (Station Mall) Hess Jewellers (Churchill Plaza)
- Any member of the Northland Chorus Soo Theatre/STARS (534 Ashmun St. Soo, Mich.)
- Tickets may also be available at the door. Doors open at 6:45 p.m. Curtain is 7:30 p.m.

* A \$3.00 per ticket service charge is added by the Station Mall Box Office to all tickets they sell. Box Office price is \$25.00 + \$3.00 = \$28.00 total.

As always, a major portion of the proceeds will go to support local speech therapy programs at the Speech-Language Pathology Unit of the Sault Area Hospital. More than \$70,000 has been donated by the Northland Chorus to this cause since 1995 in keeping with their motto:

“We Sing ... That They Shall Speak.”

Northland Chorus - General Information

Barbershop singing had its beginnings in American barbershops of the 1890's through 1920's. Barbershops served as “tonsorial parlours”: places where men gathered to share news, camaraderie and a song or two.



At left, the logo of the Barbershop Harmony Society, an umbrella international organization which serves 30,000+ members in 800+ chapters across North America. It granted the Sault Chapter its charter in 1961.

At right, the logo of the Sault Ste Marie Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. It represents an iconic barbershop singer whose International Bridge/handlebar moustache is symbolic of our membership coming from both sides of the border. The red, white and blue colours represent the colours of the flags of both nations. The four bars in the hat represent the 4-part harmony that is the hallmark of the barbershop style, and recall the stripes of a traditional barber pole. The “oh” vowel being sung is the first sound in each country’s national anthem.

Northland Chorus - 2010 Medal of Merit Winner



The City of Sault Ste Marie awarded the Northland Barbershop Chorus the 2010 Medal of Merit, the city's most prestigious honour, in recognition of community service given over 5 decades.

The award is given to nominees for "outstanding achievement in a chosen area which has resulted in making a valuable contribution to the community". The award was officially presented to all then-currently active chorus members by Mayor Debbie Amoroso at a civic ceremony and dinner held May 7, 2011.



For Ticket Information

In Canada, Doug Iles at (705)-942-3075

In US, Bernie Arbic at (906)-635-1057

Northland Barbershop Chorus 50th Annual Show, April 5th, 2014

"NORTH TO ALASKA"

Bob Shami: Music Director and Publicity Chairman

Home Phone: (705)-253-9574

Cell Phone: (705)-254-9368 **E-mail:** bshami@shaw.ca