

STONECLIFF

*A new musical drama about the man
who built the White Pass and Yukon Railway*

Book by Conrad Boyce

Music by Matthew Lien



Canada's 150th birthday is an opportunity to celebrate some of our nation's untold stories. One of them concerns a second-generation Irishman, born on a farm in the upper Ottawa Valley, who became one of the greatest railway builders in North America.

Michael J. Heney, born in 1864, was working on the CPR hundreds of miles from home when he was still a teenager. He supervised the construction of his first railway in Washington State when he was only 24. When gold was discovered in the Klondike, Heney was ready. He convinced some English financiers that he was the man to build a railway over the mountains from Skagway into the Yukon, to service one of the richest goldfields in the world. The last spike on the White Pass and Yukon Route was driven on July 29, 1900, and today the WPYR is recognized as one of the great engineering marvels of the world, on par with the Panama Canal. "Big Mike" Heney became known as Alaska's "Irish Prince", and was working on another "impossible" railway along the Copper River when he died as a result of a shipwreck off the B.C. coast. He was only 45.

Heney's story is intrinsically theatrical: a larger-than-life hero, achievements against the odds, beating the bad guys, tragic death. And now it will be told in a grand piece of musical theatre to be co-produced in the Yukon/Alaska and Ottawa Valley in the fall of 2017. The score will be played on traditional Irish folk instruments, but incorporating the ragtime and "tin pan alley" styles so intrinsic to the time and place of the WPYR's construction.

Taking the helm of "STONECLIFF" are two artists well known in the Yukon for their creative energy and innovative approach to story-telling. CONRAD BOYCE is an actor, director, producer and playwright, currently residing in the Ottawa Valley, with an established reputation for vibrant history-based theatre in both the Yukon and Ontario. MATTHEW LIEN is an internationally recognized musician and composer, passionate about the environment and cultural history, and a master of the variety of styles, epic and intimate, required to tell this story.

STONECLIFF will tour a number of Ontario towns in the fall of 2017, as well as Whitehorse and the two Alaska communities that know "Big Mike" well: Skagway and Cordova. Our team, which includes one of Heney's own great-nephews, looks forward to your participation in this great theatrical adventure.

