Episode 3 Transcript from Greetings from 1975: The Calgary Time Capsule

Peter Brown (host): Hi, I'm Peter Brown and this is *Greetings From 1975: The Calgary Time Capsule.* We're continuing to rummage through the time capsule that was found in the pedestal under a sculpture, technically found in the plinth under the bust, in Calgary's Plus 15 system in the Telus Convention Centre. And we're still looking for clues about the Citizen of the Century contest that ran in Calgary 50 years ago.

I have three goals for this episode. One, to say the word *plinth* as many times as I can. That's going great. Goal number two is to figure out how this contest actually worked. The winner of that contest, Colonel James Walker, is the man portrayed in the bust that sits on top of the plinth. There's only one nomination for him in the time capsule, and no indication how or why he won.

And there's almost nothing about the committee that declared him the winner. I say *almost* nothing. There is one document in the time capsule that might offer some clues. I showed it to Devin McLaughlin, the man who helped find the time capsule in the first place.

This is the agenda of the official Citizen of the Century unveiling ceremony, Calgary Convention Centre, Monday, November 24th, 1975.

There are a lot of honorary guests and speakers, Lieutenant Governor, and at 10:15, introduction of judges. The judges listed here are nine: Mrs. Martha Cohen, Mrs. Mary Dover, Mr. Wally Madill, Leigh Spicer, Les Ferguson, Tom Moore, William Gold, Stan Cramton and Dr. Eber Upton. So, Devin, how much does this help us?

Devin McLaughlin: It's fantastic you're able to get those judges. I haven't been able to find a list, through archives, anywhere. Now, of those nine people, none of them really stand out except that first one, Mrs. Martha Cohen. She actually was a big philanthropist with her husband, Harry, here in the city for many years. So it makes sense that she's part of this process. There is a foundation here in the city called the Harry and Martha Cohen Foundation. Hopefully someone in the foundation can direct you or have some insight into what her involvement was 50 years ago.

Brown: They couldn't. Cheryl Cohen, Martha's daughter and executive director of the foundation, and a very helpful person, wasn't able to locate any records of the contest or her mother's role as judge. So at this point, we don't have any record of the committee's deliberations or public comments about their decision.

We know the who. We don't know the how or the why. So that part of the quest continues. But there's still a lot to sink our teeth into. The nominations are full of fascinating characters with

entertaining stories. And telling some of those stories is goal number three. So let's start with a nominating letter written in lovely flowing cursive by C. Warren Hunt.

Calgary's image is not of statesmen, humourist newspaper publishers, or even clergymen politicians. Nor is it of the NWMP or CPR, or even pioneer oilman. Calgary's image is the Stampede. The parade, western hospitality, ranches, etc. And Guy Weadick is the key figure. There is only one possible choice when you think about it.

Brown: Philippa Holgate writes that Weadick "started Stampede, which is the main money-making attraction for Calgary."

Brown: This is Episode 3: There's only one choice and it's Guy Weadick.

If you go to Stampede, you have heard the name Guy Weadick. There's the Weadickville stage. The Guy Weadick award for sportsmanship and exemplifying the spirit of the Stampede. But almost everyone who wrote in to nominate Guy Weadick said this:

Different speakers:
He's not recognized as the founder of the Stampede.
…Never receives any credit for it.
…Never seems to get the credit he so richly deserves because the Big Four seem to overshadow him.
…Started the Calgary Stampede before the Big Four took over.
…Never was credited for his idea. So it's time he should be.

Dr. Christine Leppard: My initial gut reaction is that Guy Weadick would have loved hearing that. He was a consummate showman who was out in the community promoting both himself and the Stampede, so I think it would have been perfect for him.

I'm Christine Leppard and I'm the manager of exhibits and experience for Sam Centre, a new year-round museum experience for the Calgary Stampede.

Brown: So let's talk about Guy Weadick, his role in the Stampede and how much credit he deserved.

Dr. Leppard: He came to Calgary in 1908 with the Wild West Show.

Brown: At that point, he was just a young cowboy, but he saw possibilities.

Dr. Leppard: He sort of said, this city is at a transition moment between the days of the open range and a really modern city, and so there's opportunity to create a festival and bring what is essentially a young city together with an annual tradition.

Brown: It took him a few years, but in 1912, Guy Weadick came back with a plan.

Dr. Leppard: With some friends and with some fancy footwork, and as an absolute consummate salesman, he ends up getting the support he needs to test out the Calgary Stampede.

Brown: One of those friends was George Lane.

Dr. Leppard: George Lane was the ranch manager at O H ranch. He was the absolute stereotypical cowboy. There wasn't a thing he could not do on a ranch, and he worked his way up to being an owner, ultimately of the Bar U.

Brown: Weadick pitched his idea to Lane.

Dr. Leppard: He really spun a vision of a frontier day celebration — that's what he called it — where everybody from the community was included and where for one of the first times, rodeo would be a competitive sport.

Brown: You know how people always say, this isn't my first rodeo? This kind of was the first rodeo. Weadick sold Lane on something bigger.

Dr. Leppard: They would have cowboys from all over the world, cowgirls from all over North America, and First Nations participation, and make this real "frontier day celebration," he called it. Once Lane was on board, Lane helped to recruit the other founders of the Calgary Stampede.

Brown: This is where we get to the Big Four. AJ McLean.

Dr. Leppard: McLean was a politician…

Brown: And also a rancher. There was Pat Burns.

Dr. Leppard: Burns was a massive meat-packing giant and also a Senator.

Brown: Burns, by the way, also a nominee for Citizen of the Century. And the final member of the Big Four…

Dr. Leppard: A.E. Cross was a rancher and also a brewer. And they came together, and they promised that they would back the Stampede. So they would insure it up to $25,000 each, which was a lot of money at the time.

Brown: But Christine Leppard thinks the Big Four were much more than just money men.

Dr. Leppard: They were creating industry associations like the Stockman's Club. They were in politics actively, and they were giving the money, in this case, to organizations that they thought could build community. So I do think each of them have a story beyond the Stampede, and the Stampede is one part of their commitment to building sort of an early Calgary and the vision that they had set for it.

Brown: Once Weadick had secured the money he needed, the sales job began.

Dr. Leppard: They convinced people internationally to come. Flores LaDue, who was Guy Weadick's wife and partner in founding the Calgary Stampede, was a world champion trick roper.

Brown: Side note here: if anyone in this story deserves more credit, it's Flores LaDue.

Dr. Leppard: With their combined prestige and, and their own competitive ability in the sport, were able to really recruit cowboys and cowgirls from all over. We were also offering one of the largest purses in rodeo at the time, which also helped entice people to come.

Brown: Weadick certainly deserves credit for a couple of innovations.

Dr. Leppard: He set out victory categories for Canadian cowboys, so you could be the Canadian champion. So in this sport that was very heavily dominated by primarily American cowboys and cowgirls, he made space for Canadian cowboys, which in turn helped grow a competitive circuit here in the country.

The other thing he did, which is really critical, was he ensured that we had, in 1912, First Nations competitors here and who were winners. At the same time, we had First Nations from the Treaty 7 Nations come and participate and become iconic partners in the Calgary Stampede. That all started right in 1912 with Guy Weadick.

Brown: He didn't just have a vision for the event, he was also brilliant at marketing and tourism. He sold local businesses on the economic benefits of the event. He made deals to ensure that trains to the city and hotel rooms were both inexpensive — and a lot of people rode those trains and stayed in those hotel rooms. He bought a whole section in the *Calgary Herald*, which guaranteed that the Stampede was covered in the paper every day.

He encouraged the city to give employees a half day off to go to the rodeo. And after all that, the test run in 1912 went well. I'm sorry, I misread that. The test run in 1912 went… well…

Dr. Leppard: They broke even in 1912. And I mean, when they broke even, they broke even to the penny. The ledger is money in, money out. So, do we have a real and true accounting? Tough to say, but they broke even.

And the reviews were mixed but positive. We had almost double the number of people who live in Calgary come to parade day. They also had some questions as to what this was and why we were doing it.

Brown: There wasn't another Stampede until 1919, then — and we know this mostly because of the work of historian Max Foran….

Dr. Leppard: There isn't another Stampede after that until 1923, and that happens at the initiative of this annual exhibition, the Calgary Exhibition. And they bring Guy Weadick back to

help make the Stampede a part of the Exhibition. And so that's the first year we have both agricultural exhibition and rodeo, Elbow River camp and our Western showcase, that arts and crafts component to it.

Brown: This is where the Stampede starts to become a major cultural event.

Dr. Leppard: Calgarians weren't necessarily dressing Western all day, every day. We were wearing European styles, smoking European cigarettes, listening to European music. And so he looked at this community that had people from all over the place and created a tradition that people could wrap around and opt into by dressing Western, by donning a cowboy hat, by deciding if you want to wear cowboy boots.

And it is a powerful tool to have something that iconic that is so tied to your identity, and that really started with some push from Weadick. He did things like hold best dressed competitions through the 1920s and ’30s to encourage people to participate in this tradition, and then the Stampede and the City and the white hatters at the airport have kept that rolling over time.

Brown: So we have Guy Weadick to thank for all the office workers in Calgary dressing Western for Stampede, for the white hats at the airport, for politicians putting on western gear, trying to look all folksy, for that photo of Stephen Harper in the ill-fitting vest that somehow too tight and too loose at the same time. And speaking of ill-fitting clothes, there's one more thing.

Dr. Leppard: Weadick was part of, I think, the really iconic moment in 1923, when pancake breakfast came to be. He laid the groundwork for it, he initiated chuckwagon racing. It was chuckwagon drivers who went downtown, started advertising the races and handing out pancakes.

Brown: It was around this time that a young guy from Nova Scotia — [new voice] “hello there!” — moved to Alberta and started working as a cowboy.

Wilf Carter: This is Wilf Carter talking to you. I just thought I'd drop by and say a great big hello. I'm going to the rodeo.

Brown: Wilf Carter is often cited as the godfather of country music in Canada. He won lots of awards, and he was nominated for Citizen of the Century. Jay Allen wrote: *He is always donating his talent toward charity drives. He is known as the King of the Cowboys. He lives in Priddis.*

Carter [singing]:
We're headin' for the round-up, goin' to the big Stampede
Old Dick Cosgrove ridin' in the lead
The old chuckwagon rattlin', the snortin' buckin' broncs
We're a-headin' for the Calgary Stampede

Oh, we're a jolly bunch of cowboys, we hope you are the same
We have no cares, the laws we never heed
Oh, gather in the circle and sing this round-up song
We're headin' for the Calgary Stampede

[yodeling]

Brown: And he gets bonus points for yodeling.

Dr. Leppard: Through the 1920s and into the 1930s, we see the community accept the Stampede as an iconic part of its own. Guy Weadick, though, still believed it to be a bit of the Guy Weadick show, and so Max Foran shows through his research that it was an uncomfortable change management into an organization that had a really powerful board of directors, that had the community driving what it wanted it to be.

And eventually that led to a bit of a falling out. Unfortunately, it happened in a very dramatic way with Weadick, let's say, celebrating too much —

Brown: Sure, let's say celebrating too much.

Dr. Leppard: — and then walking onstage at a rodeo and making a bit of a fool of the brand and himself at the same time. And so he was he was fired after that.

Weadick then took the Stampede to court over the name “the Stampede,” which was also the name of his ranch, and there was eventually a settlement over that. But it meant some bad blood between Guy Weadick and the Stampede for many years.

Brown: During that time, Guy and Flores ran their Stampede Ranch near Longview.

Dr. Leppard: They ran it as a dude ranch. The sort of scuttlebutt is that LaDue was the one who actually ran the business. He was the one who sold it. So they had this real deep partnership in their work there.

Brown: Weadick had nothing to do with the Stampede for decades.

Dr. Leppard: Until finally in the 1950s, with a new board of directors, a new organizing group, Weadick was welcomed back, and he led the parade as the founder of the Stampede — really being that moment where he got the credit as founder.

Brown: He certainly received credit over the years.

Dr. Leppard: Over the last 100 years, Guy Weadick has been undisputedly the recognized founder of the Calgary Stampede. He was recently inducted into the Alberta Sports Hall of Fame along with his wife Flores LaDue as a sport builder here, and I certainly think he is the

recognized name along with the Stampede. Is it enough credit? No, but I do think historically he has received credit for his role in community building here.

Brown: Do you think there's a case to be made that Guy Weadick was the Citizen of the Century from 1875 to 1975?

Dr. Leppard: Yes, there is a case to be made because of the lasting impact that he has within the city. When you have that type of cultural gravitas and when you have 3,000 volunteers shaping the organization, and when you have the type of economic input from a community, let alone output, I mean, there is something to be said about Guy Weadick being that Citizen of the Century.

Brown: So there's only one choice for Citizen of the Century: Guy Weadick. Of course we can't make that happen, but we can at least give him more of the credit he deserves. We can sing his praises. We can make up a song about him.

Voices [singing]:
Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick,
The hero of Calgary.
Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick,
He brought us the Stampede.

Our knowledge of the man is not encyclopedic
So listen to a story of a cowboy named Guy Weadick.
He came to Calgary in ought-eight when the city was still young,
A rope and riding cowboy, shiny dreams and silver tongue,
Sized up the young community, said, you know what'd be neat?
A giant western festival where cowboys can compete.

Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick.
With cheap train fares and hotel rooms, the folks, they all flocked here.
Soon we were scarfing pancakes and wearing western gear.
But then there was an incident, it pains me to relate.
Why, oh why, Guy Weadick did you over celebrate?

Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick,
Got fired, his time was through.
Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick,
He went back to Longview.

It took 30 years, but Guy Weadick got his day.
I was so sad a verse ago, now happy I can say,

The new directors reached out after three decades,
They said come back to the Stampede and lead the big parade.

Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick,
Everyone agreed.
Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick,
was king of the Stampede.
He's the reason we wear boots that aren't orthopedic,
And eat pancakes until we become hyperglycemic.
Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick, Guy Weadick.

Brown: This has been Episode 3 of *Greetings From 1975. The Calgary Time Capsule*. The Guy Weadick song was set to music and performed by Kieran Martin Murphy. Thanks to Laura Macdonald of the Calgary Stampede, Dr. Christine Leppard at the Sam Centre and Cheryl Cohen at the Harry and Martha Cohen Foundation. Special thanks to the secret stewards of the time capsule, the Calgary Telus Convention Centre.

You can see all the time capsule letters we talk about all the children's art and documents and souvenirs. Just go to the link in our episode description. *Greetings From 1975. The Calgary Time Capsule* is produced by me, Peter Brown, for Calgary Arts Development and the City of Calgary.