

# Book on the life of Gordon Gill makes waves in NWT

## A Métis Man's Dream: From Traplines to Tugboats in Canada's North proves popular in Hay River and Yellowknife

By Amanda Rumbolt  
Northern News Services

A book about the life of Gordon Gill has become a Canadian best-seller in the self-published genre and the author couldn't be happier with the success.

A Métis Man's Dream: From Traplines to Tugboats in Canada's North tells the story of Gill making his way to Hay River to work as a cook's helper on a tugboat at age 15 and eventually going on to found two successful companies: Northern Arc Shipbuilders and Northern Crane Services, which is now known as NCSG Crane and Heavy Haul Services.

The book illustrates how Gill was the engineer on the first tug to take drill rigs and pipe into the Alaska oil fields and being the final engineer on the last wooden tug boat to operate as part of the major marine transport links in the North. He was also the engineer on the final journey of The Radium King, the former NTCL flagship.

Gill would also have a short-throw tugboat named after him, the MT Gordon Gill, in 1982.

Neil Gower, who wrote the story and who has known Gill for close to a half-century, told NNSL Media that while he had no idea how sales would go, it's obvious Gill's story seemed to resonate with a lot of people.

"For example, the number of people who are now talking about their Metis status and who love to learn about Gordon's Indigenous/Métis upbringing and his success has been amazing," he said. "In the old days, it was difficult for many Métis people to acknowledge that side of their life. As well, Northerners are everywhere — they are interested, and they seem to have the sense of 'once a Northerner, always a Northerner.'

"And the people who are neither Métis nor Northerners all seem to have friends or relatives who are or were Northerners. I am so pleased to have received numerous letters and reviews from people who had no idea about the things Northerners take for granted, like tugboats

on the Mackenzie (River)."

Gower said around 850 copies of the book have been sold or distributed. Sales in Hay River have exceeded his expectations and there was an order for another shipment at The Book Cellar last month, he added.

"I haven't heard much about the rest of the territory, but I know there are fans," he said.

Gower also indicated that Buffalo Airways has been a big help in delivering the book to locations in Hay River while also getting help from residents who may know people driving north to bring a carton or two of books with them.

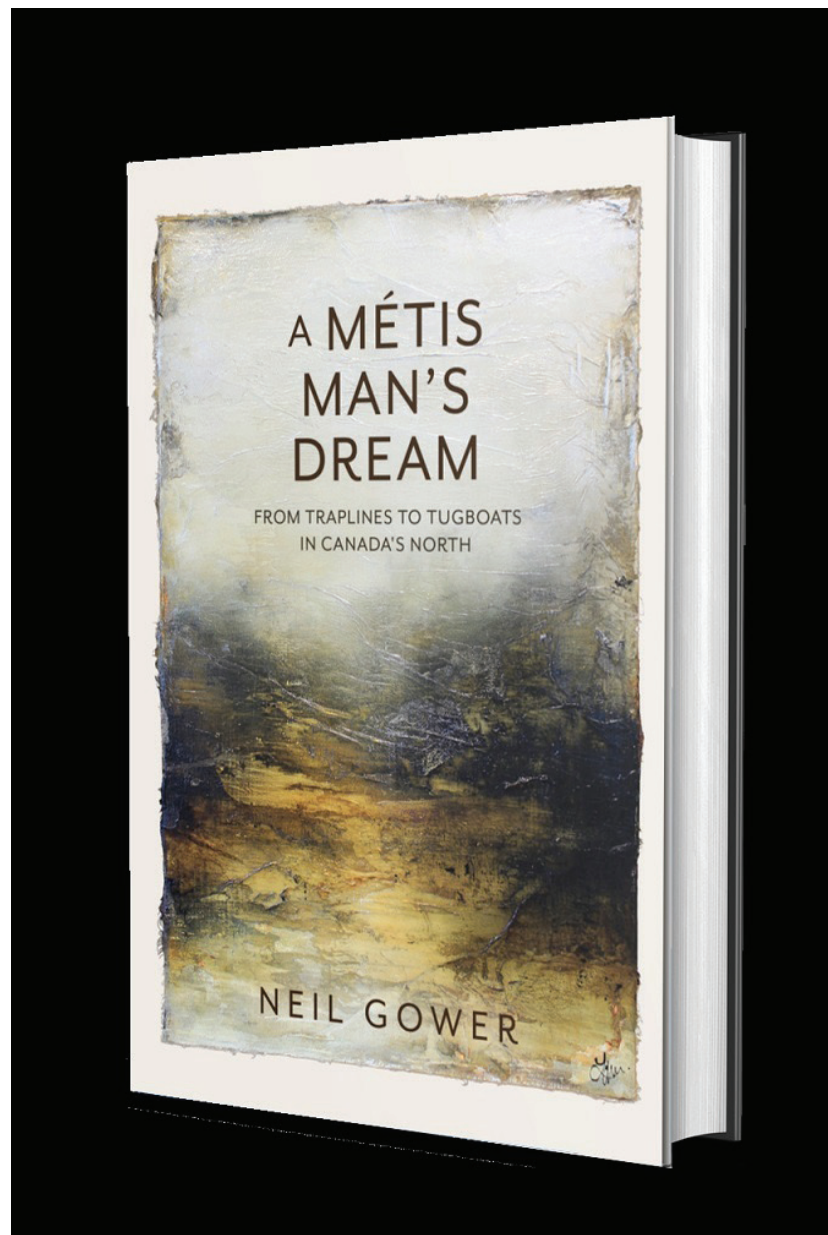
When Gower announced the publishing of the book last year, he indicated that proceeds from sales would be given to various organizations involved in literacy improvement and Métis betterment.

Close to \$9,000 has been donated to three groups, according to Gower, all receiving an equal one-third share: the Hay River Métis Governance Council, United for Literacy (formerly Frontier College) and a third to the Edmonton Community Foundation for Metis Education. "We will do another donation next Christmas," said Gower.

Gill himself has been surprised with how the book has been received, Gower added.

"His family is proud that his story is getting told and remembered," he said. "His accomplishments — especially where he was a real pioneer in shipbuilding, dredging for gold, staking claims and oil and gas exploration work — are remarkable. Personally, I think this type of story needs to be told more in our country. I think it is inspiring for his family and others."

The audio book is in the final preparation stage, said Gower, with the last edits currently being done. Gower's website — neilgower.ca — will have details on how to purchase. You can also get the deluxe colour version of the book from the website and it's also available online from various retailers.



A Métis Man's Dream: From Traplines to Tugboats in Canada's North is the story about the life of Gordon Gill. The book has been well-received since being published in 2023, says Neil Gower, the book's author. Image courtesy of Neil Gower



A Métis Man's Dream: From Traplines to Tugboats in Canada's North is now on sale in locations throughout Alberta and the NWT. It's the story of Gordon Gill, a man who went from engineer to entrepreneur. Photo courtesy of Neil Gower

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