



Heritage Seekers



NATURAL PHENOMENA and their Effects on the Lives of our Ancestors



The Grande Prairie & District Branch of the AGS was delighted to welcome **Wayne Shephard** to our September 20 meeting as our featured Speaker. Wayne has a Master’s degree in Geology and a 40 year career in oil and gas exploration. He believes that humankind has always had to adapt to environmental change, and that earth scientists are well positioned to inform us about these changes. Genealogical research is informed by taking into account natural phenomena that have impacted the lives of our ancestors. The following synopsis was kindly provided by Wayne:

In almost any scenario one can imagine involving people and communities in the past, the physical environment has played a major role in living conditions as well as in how the basic necessities of food, shelter and employment were obtained.

Some commonly-occurring events, such as storms or floods, have caused damage and death in just hours; others, such as climate change, have played out over centuries. Many incidents concerning natural phenomena have disrupted normal activities, significantly altered lives and livelihoods and, in many instances, forced people to change their way of life and/or move.

Stories about the places of habitation and circumstances in which people lived, their response to natural phenomena, and how they adapted to environmental changes are part and parcel of the construction of family histories.

Examples of natural phenomena include:

- fast-moving events - storms, floods, earthquakes and disease epidemics;
- slow-moving events - river system changes, coastal margin modifications; drought, famine and volcanic eruptions; and
- long-term changes primarily brought about by climate change.

Social and political events can often be correlated with natural changes or events which may have caused upheaval and unrest among people. Migration of families, on a local scale or involving whole communities, happened when people could no longer support or feed themselves in areas devastated by natural changes to the environment.

Specific cases selected to illustrate the ideas were primarily from the British Isles because this region is where most of the speaker’s family originated and about whom most of his genealogical research has been done. They also represent some of the more extreme historical events that affected large numbers of people and which have been widely documented. Such events, however, might be found in almost any region of the world and certainly have been common occurrences throughout human history.



Inside this issue:	
Guest Speaker Presentation	1
Branch Notes	2
Old Newspapers, Next Branch Meeting	3,4
Research Serendipity	5,6
Check it Out	7
Branch Information, Call for Submissions	8