

R. Hook, Director of Communications Branch
Prince Albert,

December 16. 1968

Enclosed please find a copy of the new Departmental Cipher which will become effective February 1, 1969. As this cipher is secret and confidential, please take every precaution to see that no person other than regular Department employees have access to same.

Would you kindly pass this information on to members of your staff who may have occasion to use the Departmental Cipher.

RH/nd

Mark

A.G. Stark
G.E. Couldwell
A.W.B. Benson
E. Bodds
L.M. Armstrong
T.A. Harper
H. Read
J.S. Sinclair
H.S. Barton
C.T.A. Fenner

G.W. Sherman
J.I. McGunigal
N. Masurak
C. Gusator
J. Good
C.M. McCullough
L.S. Barton
J.R. Hall
N. Hanson
G. Norman

R. McBride
C. Haugen
W.R. Parke
E.C. Nicholson
F.H. Hewett
W.A. McGaff
A.R.
F.M. McAdoo

The Departmental Cipher

This is a very interesting memo. Every year until the mid '70's, Ron Hook the Director of Communications Branch, would send out a memo like this with the new "cipher". The Cipher Code was a code that Field Supervisors/Administrators and Radio Operators used to send "sensitive messages". These were messages that would be coded using the cipher code so people listening on the radio would not know what the message was. This might be messages relating to a death of a person, RCMP messages, Hudson Bay fur prices, or any message that should not be heard by the general public.

It was a straight letter to letter substitution cipher. Every year the cipher was changed supposedly to make it harder to "break". Actually anyone who was good at crossword puzzles could usually "break the code" in minutes.

The cipher code was on a separate piece of paper that only had the letters and numbers on it. The piece of paper was to be locked away somewhere in the files until needed. This is a made up sample and is exactly the way it looked with the lower line of letters typed in red.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
H P V R W C Y S N E O B I Q L D Z T F X J U A G K M

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
9 4 7 8 6 1 0 2 5 3

An example of a “cipher message”

J O E S M I T H W A N T E D F O R A R M E D R O B B E R Y
E L W F I N X S A H Q X W R C L T H T I W R T L P P W T K

Usually the radio Operator would take the written out message and change the letters to the cipher letters. Then when the message was sent on, the radio operator used the phonetic alphabet to send each letter. Sometimes they would only pause between spelling of a word or they would say “next word” or “next”. The conversation might go like this...

XLF 63 Buffalo, XLB50, I have one coded message for you, over.....

XLB 50, 63 Buffalo, go ahead....

Message number 1257, today's date, check of 6 (words) paid, from RCMP P.A....

going to RCMP Buffalo Narrows..... and I spell...

Echo, Lima, Whiskey, next, Foxtrot, India, November, Xray, Sierra, next, Alpha, Hotel, Quebec, Xray, Whiskey, Romeo, next Charlie, Lima, Tango, next, Hotel, Tango, India, Whiskey, Romeo, next, Tango, Lima, Pappa, Pappa, Whiskey, Tango, Kilo, stop (period)

signed RCMP Prince Albert, over.....

The Radio Operator in Buffalo Narrows would then “de-cipher” the message and write it out in plain language to be delivered to the RCMP in Buffalo Narrows, either by hand or over the telephone.

* Remember this was in the days when there were no telephones to Buffalo Narrows, only hand crank or local phones in the community. The “DNR Radio” was the telephone to the outside until the early ‘70’s.

Also interesting in this memo is the list of Administrators and Radio Operators

I will try to fill in some info which may not be correct

A.G Stark - (Al) - later became Regional Director for Prince Albert

G.E. Couldwell - (George) -

A.W.B. Benson (Benny Benson) - Director of Fire Control

E. Dodds - (Earl) -

L.M. Armstrong - (Roy) - Morse Key Operator and Radio Operator for La Ronge

T.A. Harper -

N. Read -

J.S. Sinclair -

H.S. Barton - (Hank Barton) - Prince Albert Radio Operator and Hudson Bay, Father of Joe Barton also PA Radio Operator.

C.T.A. Fenner - early Relief Radio Operator for many years

G.W. Sherman - (Glen Sherman) - Radio Operator Gold Fields then Uranium City

J.I. McGunigal - (Jack McGunigal) - Radio Operator La Ronge retired December 1978

N. Mazurak - (Nick Mazurak) - Radio Operator Divide (Meadow Lake)

C. Cusatator - (Charlie Cusator) - Radio Operator originally Foster Lake then Buffalo Narrows

J. Good - (Jim Good) - Radio Operator Stony Rapids

C.M. McCullough - (Charlie McCullough - "Chainsaw Charlie") Radio Operator at Cree Lake

L.S. Barton - (Joe Barton) - (son of Hank Barton) Radio Operator Prince Albert

J.R. Hall - (Johnny Hall) - Radio Operator Hudson Bay

N Hanson - (Nap Hanson) - Radio Operator Brabant Lake

G. Noorman - (Gay Norman) Radio Operator Beaver Lake (Denare Beach)

R. McBride - (Ray McBride) - Accounting , Prince Albert

C. Haugen - (Carl Haugan) -

W. R. Parks -

E. C. Nichol森 - Construction Branch ?

F.H. Hewett -

next 3 names unknown