

# Plain & Valley

Covering Southeast Saskatchewan and Southwest Manitoba  
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Photos courtesy of Taylor Stangeland

Taylor Stangeland during her trip to India to volunteer. Left: Stangeland carries a jug of water on her head during a water walk to collect water from the local well. Right: Stangeland and another volunteer push the crank to bring water out of the local well.

## Rocanville teen goes to India with Me to We

BY JULIA DIMA  
Rocanville's Taylor Stangeland has just arrived home from a two-week long volunteering trip in India.

Stangeland, along with 24 other students from Canada and the United States, went to the Rajasthan Province of India to volunteer with Me to We, an organization affiliated with Free the Children. Me to We brings groups of students to developing nations to help the communities with education, water access, food security, health, and sustainable livelihoods.

Each time a group goes, priority is given for five students whose parents work with PotashCorp since they sponsor the agriculture and food security 'pillar' of Free the Children's development model for improving life in developing countries.

Stangeland's father works at PotashCorp Rocanville, so she was able to apply for one of the spots. It was her dad, and sister Kelli, who told Stangeland about the opportunity to volunteer abroad. In 2013, Kelli went on a volunteering trip to Kenya through the same program.

"I wanted to go mainly to see another culture and see what kind of issues they are going through," Stangeland says, "and be able to learn from it and taking that information home to be able to help the communities around us."

Stangeland applied to go with a full essay about why she wanted to volunteer, and then when she was approved, got her vaccines and travel documents done, and packed her backpack for the two-week trip.

Her initial arrival in India to the city

of Udaipur, which was about two hours away from the rural community where the volunteers were working, was a culture shock.

"It was very shocking and eye opening stepping into India. We stepped off the plane onto the tarmac at the airport, and noticed it was humid and very smelly. We drove from Udaipur to our actual accommodations after—that drive was shocking and jaw dropping, driving through the communities that were poverty stricken—there was garbage everywhere, there was someone bathing in a hole beside the street, there were animals everywhere. The cows and dogs were skinny, you could see their ribs, tailbones and spines," Stangeland says.

During their time in India, the group of volunteers had two main goals. Their first was to dig a trench for the installation of a brick wall near the local school. That way, the newly built wall would help keep animals off of school grounds and increase the safety of the kids, create a larger greenspace for kids to run and play, and make walls for a garden that will be used to grow fresh food for the children in the kindergarten to grade five school. The second goal was to plant trees and bamboo plants with local farmers to help improve air quality.

Doing the tasks, the volunteers had to learn to work with the local kids and farmers through a language barrier, since nobody in their group spoke Hindi, and none of the locals spoke English.

"Even though we can't speak the same language, we can communicate—just

through smiles and facial expressions, and just being able to share laughter even though we don't know what the other is saying—everyone was open and accepting," Stangeland says.

Working with the children highlighted that for Stangeland.

"They have so much joy, and just to see how we can communicate with smiles and laughs, is great. These kids are so happy, and we would run around with them and play tag, and they would always have huge smiles on their faces," she says.

The children and villagers where Stangeland was volunteering were all living in poverty—most had just enough to survive, and nothing else. In India, where the caste system is still prevalent in social structures, those villagers were considered part of the lowest caste, the dalits, or as they used to be called in India, the untouchables. Dalits are treated poorly by those of higher castes, who do not associate with the lower castes. As such, they are more likely to live in poverty and have less opportunity for success. For Stangeland, that discrimination was upsetting.

"It was very hard to see—all these kids were so happy and had huge smiles on their faces, so it was crazy to think that these kids had absolutely nothing, and people won't be around them even though they are so joyful and cheerful to be around," she says.

In the community where Stangeland was volunteering, Me to We had recently built a new school to replace the old classroom. The volunteers had a chance to see the old classroom, and the condi-

tions that kids were learning in. Stangeland recalls that there were low ceilings and dirt floors, and the small classroom was humid and dirty. On most days, students would go outside the school to do their lessons because of the conditions in the school—providing it was not the rainy season. The latrines that the children had access to were nothing but holes in the floor, with a low wall around them, and they were very dirty. The quality of the bathrooms was so bad that it prevented girls from attending school.

"Many girls wouldn't go to school because the bathrooms were such poor quality," Stangeland says. "It was sad that the bathroom stall impacted their ability to attend school."

Stangeland says it was upsetting to see all the barriers and challenges facing girls and women in India.

"It definitely opened my eyes to how life is a lot harder for girls there. In Canada, life is pretty equal between girls and boys. There, the quality of living was so much worse for women, so it stuck close to my heart, just seeing how well we have it, and how hard the women there do," she says.

Along with seeing that girls were hindered from education, the volunteers also spent a day with an Indian mother to see what her life was like day-to-day. They helped her make roti—a flatbread—for the day, and also did a water walk, carrying water from the local well, the way Indian women and girls do every day—in buckets and jugs on top of their heads.

Continued on page 21

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Vendors and customers at the Red Barn market near Kenosee Lake.

## Red Barn market is a busy summer attraction

BY ED JAMES

About three years ago Harold and Brenda Johnston bought the Red Barn Flea Market site at Kenosee Lake. It was to be a semi-retirement project as they were originally from the area and wanted to move back to the area where they still had many friends.

The weekly day-long event on every Sunday from May long weekend until Labour Day has become more successful than they ever imagined. On average the Sunday attendance is around 1,500 people with over 75 vendors from as far east as Virden, Manitoba to Regina in the west. These vendors offer a variety of products, garden produce, baked goods, arts and crafts, and collectibles.

Over the last three years they have made a number of improvements, such as more parking, a children's play area, picnic tables with umbrellas and weekly musical entertainment with a stage and an area for dancers. Many of the musical groups provide old time music so it has brought out several weekly old time dancers.

"The Red Barn is a work in progress and we have more ideas for the future to improve it," said Brenda Johnston. "We have found that we get a lot of offshoot business from the local casino, the water slides and tourists at Kenosee Lake. We are enjoying this new adventure since we get to see not only old friends but make a lot of new ones."





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# Musical ride in Wawota wows crowd

BY JULIA DIMA  
 Awesome, fabulous, and beautiful—those were a few of the words being used by guests at the RCMP Musical Ride in Wawota that was held last Tuesday. The Musical Ride showcases RCMP members on horseback performing a number of complex riding drills set to music. Traveling across Canada each summer, the ride goes to different provinces, and raises funds for a non-profit or community organization. This year, the Wawota Business Enhancement Group organized the event, hoping to raise funds for an outdoor recreational area at the splash

park in Wawota. The expansion will involve a beautification, addition of a walking path, lamps and seating areas, and an outdoor kitchen for public use. The ride was just the finale to an evening of family friendly activities—before the show, there were bounce tents and face painting for kids, as well as a number of food vendors raising funds for other community organizations, and live music performed by KO and Friends. Afterwards, the RCMP riders came down into the valley north of the school in Wawota, and performed a show that had audiences clapping and emitting ‘oohs’ and ‘ahhs’ with each intricate formation.

“It’s such a pleasure to be here and see it—and the nice part of it all is that we’re up so close. If you’re at Calgary Stampede or something like that, you’re so far away. In this, you’re right up next to them, and right up close to the activity,” says Bonnie Denomme. Denomme, along with her sister-in-law, Susan Frazer, and her mom, Downa Frazer, came to Saskatchewan from their home in Airdrie, Alberta, to visit Downa Frazer’s sister in Welwyn, Willa Overholt. Despite growing up in the heart of cowboy and horse country—Calgary—Denomme says she’s never seen the Musical Ride before.

“It was a thrill—just how they are all so precise out there, all in tune, and they don’t miss a beat,” she says. Some traveled from farther away, like Sean Beau-

lieu, who came from Estevan with his family to see the show. For him, it was a family affair, as his sister, Erin Beaulieu was performing in the ride. “It was nice, I haven’t seen her before in it, so it was nice to see her, and we didn’t really have to travel a long way for it,” he says. “It was a lot of fun.” Some guests came from farther away for the experience of seeing the ride. Malena Peacock came to Wawota with her husband and kids all the way from Australia, to visit family in Wawota. It gave the family the chance for a Canadiana experience.

“We thought it would be a fun thing to do. I am from Canada, and I married an Australian, and our kids are all born in Australia, so this is their really fun Canadian experience,” she says. “I found the show really fun and the girls loved it.” Then, others came from nearby to see the show. Terry Latham from Wawota was volunteering at the show. He has seen the Musical Ride five times, and says that the best part of the Wawota performance was the venue—a hillside that created a natural amphitheater for the riders to perform in. “From the hill, you can appreciate all the cuts, looking down on it,” Latham says.

Doug Schneider traveled from Kipling to see the show. He says that the only downside was only getting to watch the performance once. “It was fabulous—they did their part, and it was

perfect,” he says. “One highlight was at the end, when they came up to the fence and they asked the young people to come and meet the horses and they communicated with the crowd—I met a horse who was named Jacob and 22 years old.” Schneider says that he likes to support local community events, and knowing the funds raised will help community development in Wawota made him feel happy to be a part of it. “It brings people closer together. It seems like with all the electronics, people tend to stay at home more, so this is a great thing to bring people together, and say hi to your neighbors,” he says. “And this is a community event, and it’s a good thing to support your community.”

Continued on page 16

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# Southeast College program offered in Moosomin: Electrical program seeking more applicants for fall

BY JULIA DIMA

The pre-apprentice electrical program at the Southeast Regional College in Moosomin is seeking more students interested in enrolling for the fall program, or it may not be offered this year. The electrical program takes in 12 students each year, and since it started being offered in Moosomin, the class has been full. However, this year, things have slowed down. As of last week, only five students had enrolled to take the 20-week course.

"We want to see the classroom full so we can continue to operate at maximum capacity—12 would be the ideal number for us, but there's some flexibility there, and it all depends on the budget," says Jeff Richards, VP of strategic development for Southeast College. "With only five students, it would really be in question, and we would have to have a serious debate about that. . . . The program starts September 28, so we have a six-week review date where we'll really have a look at current enrolment, have a look at the budget, and sort of make an assessment in the programming and student services department—they will make an assessment on whether that program is going to be able to run. We would want students enrolled before that six-week date."

Earlier this year, the future of the program was in jeopardy. When the college looks at choosing programs for the year, they use a matrix that takes into account labour market demand and student demand. There is a certain amount of funding available to offer those programs, and the programs are ranked based on the matrix.

This year, the electrical program in Moosomin fell just below the funding matrix, and the college was concerned that if there was not more money in the provincial budget released in March, the program wouldn't be offered. However, there was more money provided for skills training allocation in the budget than the college had estimated, and they were able to reallocate funds within their budget to offer the program. In late March, it was announced the program was going to be offered.

The program is the pre-apprentice program, which teaches basic electrical skills in a classroom and hands-on lab setting from September to February. It offers small class sizes with a maximum of 12 students. Students complete the program, and then can enter the workforce under an electrician to build up their hours as an apprentice. After they've achieved a certain number of hours and their employer decides they are ready, students return to school and continue their education. Typically, it takes four years to complete a journeyman's and the electrical program in Moosomin is the start of the certification.

Tuition for the course is \$2,830 with books around \$855.

"Everybody that enrolls in this program



Photo courtesy of Kyle Jeannot

Kyle Jeannot and Dylan Mills push a spool of electrical wire together at a work site last week. Jeannot, who took the electrical program in Moosomin in 2006, hired Mills just three days after he graduated from the same program.

will get a \$1,000 entrance scholarship straight away, and they can also apply for a \$500 provincial scholarship," Richards says. "We think that makes it very appealing to take the classes."

Richards says that there could be a number of factors impacting enrolment numbers, but he doesn't believe the later announcement of the course being offered is one of them.

"It's somewhat early yet, maybe the labour market demand has slowed down for electricians in the area, and maybe the learner demand has slowed down—not always will there be big demand for a particular thing year after year," he says. "We know that the trades are a good route to go—there's plenty of data provincially, even of just the earning potential in the

trades, getting higher and higher as a career choice, so the trades are always good."

Richards says that the college is looking into ways to keep updated with graduates and see if they are making careers in the electrical field after taking the program, and where they are working, to help make the labour market data more accurate.

"It is hard for us to track, because once a student leaves the school, they're under no obligation to keep in touch, but we are currently trying to put better systems in place to follow our graduates and see where they end up—do they end up in the field, do they end up in the region?"

"The opportunities are here, as an electrical student, so hopefully the labour market supports it," he adds.

One student who took advantage of

those opportunities was Dylan Mills, who finished the program in February. Mills, who lives in Wawota, is now employed with Jeannot Electric in Moosomin.

Initially, Mills was not sure what direction he wanted to go in after high school. He tried a year of university, and realized the lecture style learning was not for him, and he was better suited to working with his hands. He was interested in the trades, and tried carpentry, but found he did not enjoy that either. A friend, who had taken the electrical course in Moosomin the previous year, told Mills he should enrol in the course and see if electrical work was something he would like.

"It was a trial-and-error thing, I tested out what I enjoy, and I ended up enjoying electrical when I was in school," Mills says.

He says the instructor, Dean Kazakoff, who will be returning to teach the program this year, was helpful in preparing the students for what the electrical trade is like, and for Mills, the most valuable part of the class was the lab portion, where students were responsible for wiring and fixing actual electrical components.

Nearing the end of the course in late January, Mills and the other students in the program were beginning the job-finding process, and an open house was held at the campus in Moosomin where instructors, students, members of the public, and local employers met. Kyle Jeannot, owner of Jeannot Electric, was at the open house, and was looking to get to know the newly trained students, as he had plans to expand his business.

At that meeting, Mills decided to walk up to Jeannot and introduce himself.

"The whole idea of the meet and greet was to find work—I didn't see anyone else approaching (Jeannot), so I went up to him, just shook his hand, and I guess that sparked it—I got hired three days after finishing school," Mills says.

Jeannot says that Mills' attitude is what made him stand out among the other students.

"He stood out to us, he was the most confident of the group, he came up and introduced himself to us right away and talked to us, and that really stood out to us," he says. "We want somebody who is going to be outgoing and not be a shy person when dealing with customers."

Jeannot was in Mills' shoes back in 2006, when he took the same program in Moosomin. He always had the hope of opening his own business, and spent his apprenticeships gaining as much experience as possible in different aspects of electrical work, working in Moosomin and Carlyle, and working in the mining, oil, residential and commercial sectors. He officially opened Jeannot Electric on June 9, 2014.

As an employer, having the electrical program close to home makes sense to Jeannot.

Continued on page 29

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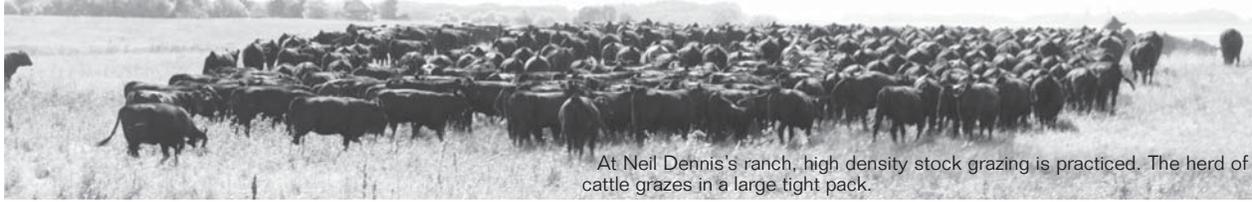
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# Open gate tour held to show off holistic agriculture



At Neil Dennis's ranch, high density stock grazing is practiced. The herd of cattle grazes in a large tight pack.

**BY JULIA DIMA**  
Last week, at a ranch southeast of Wavota, around 30 like-minded farmers, ranchers, environmental advocates and scientists were gathered together to share ideas about holistic agriculture, examine mob grazing, and get their hands dirty. As part of Holistic Management International, open gate farm tours are being held across Canada this summer to educate people about holistic management in agriculture.

Neil Dennis, who is a rancher and holistic manager, volunteered to host an open-gate tour, with Blain Hjertaas, who is a holistic manager and holistic management educator from Redvers, facilitating the event.

"What we want to do is share—it's an open gate day, so it's just walking out and looking, we aren't going to tell anyone how wonderful it is, we want them to come out and look, and decide for themselves," Hjertaas says. "Many people here own or manage land. There's people from Ducks Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy of Canada who are interested in land health. There's people here that are kind of kicking the tires, they are not sure yet, they've heard about it, they've seen it, and they just want to learn more."

Holistic management, though it has practical applications in agricultural practices, is a way of thinking that spans across any career or decision-making process—at its core, it's about making choices that are financially, sociologically, and environmentally sound.

"Holistic management uses money in decision making—it's important and we need to be profitable. But it also takes into account the people and the land. I can make an awful lot of money in 20 years, and destroy my land. I am borrowing the land from my grandchildren. So, I can be rich, but if there's nothing else for them, what do I prove? It's about financially, sociologically, and environmentally sound decisions—it's not as easy as just saying 'Does this make money?' It's a lot of work to be a holistic manager, a lot of work thinking and planning," Hjertaas explains.

Within agriculture, there are different holistic practices, and Dennis uses high density stock grazing to increase cattle health and create healthier soil.

Mirroring the actions of plains bison herds, Dennis groups a herd of 800 to 1,000 cattle in a smaller paddock created with electrical fencing, lets them graze for a controlled amount of time, and moves

them, leaving the grazing area to recover for an extended period of time. Rather than grazing the paddock to the ground, the cattle graze quickly, and leave behind enough grass to maintain ground cover. The litter layer left behind delivers nutrients into the soil, resulting in more minerals and nutrients in the soil, stronger root systems, and better water retention.

The high density or mob grazing that Dennis practices has results in the animals, the plants, and the soil itself. His animals are healthier and happier, he grows a polyculture of different plant species in the pasture that have strong root systems, and his soil is storing carbon deeper in the soil than others. In August, a soil carbon expert from Australia, Christine Jones, will be visiting Dennis's farm for that reason.

"We measure the carbon every three years. We've done two tests now, and things are getting better and I am storing carbon deeper," Dennis says.

Carbon sequestration is becoming a topic of importance as discussions of global warming are increasing. Holistic farming practices eliminate practices that oxidize the soil and put carbon dioxide in the air like tillage and burning, and use practices—like creating a litter layer and increasing plant diversity—that boost the mineral health and organic matter in the soil, meaning the carbon dioxide that plants take in through photosynthesis is stored deeper in the earth.

Hjertaas, along with Dennis, and other farmers in the area, have been involved in studies that look at the impact of carbon sequestration.

"For every single hectare I ranch, I am sequestering 22.88 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. People are each emitting 18.9 tonnes per person per year," Hjertaas says. "We have to reverse the process and take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere into the earth—that's what's wrong with

our agriculture soil—we've mined the soil. It was 12 per cent organic matter in 1880, and over the 130 or 140 years of farming, we've taken the carbon dioxide and put it in the atmosphere and it's gone from 12 per cent organic matter to two or four per cent."

The health of holistically managed soil was evident to those who went to Dennis's farm for the tour—in one example, soil from Dennis's fields was compared to soil that was farmed with traditional agricultural practices. In the first, grass grew over an inch-deep litter layer. The soil was aggregated, with crumbly pieces clinging to a deeper root system—that happens because of the glomalin, which acts as a glue, that is exuded by fungi in the soil. The other sample of soil had a grass growing on bare ground, and below the surface, the soil was hard and layered in chunks that fell away from the soil easily, and had a shorter root system that did not aggregate with the soil. On the surface in the fields, abundant grasses, species diversity and litter layers impressed the guests on



Above: A guest on the tour, Liam, smells the organic matter in the soil in Dennis's pasture. Farmers at the tour say the smell of soil high in organic matter is different from chemically treated soil.

the tour.

"I was here probably eight years ago when Neil did one of his first tours, and I'm here eight years later and I'm really interested to see how the grasses have taken off, and what a difference it has been—you can see impacts of holistic management and mob

grazing," says Robin Hamilton. Hamilton is a biologist with Ducks Unlimited in Manitoba. "There's still lots of cover for wildlife, waterfowl, deer, moose, and elk, there's a balance, and that's really important for us."

*Continued on page 11* ESR

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# Holistic management tour held at Sunnybrae Farms

Continued from page 10

Hamilton says that holistic grazing creates a healthier ecosystem in which all life thrives and can live together, as opposed to traditional practices which eliminate wildlife habitat.

"We want to provide the best wildlife habitat yet still manage our grasses and utilize producers to do that—we want to have a balance there, and holistic management seems to be the best way to do that. It leaves enough residual cover there for waterfowl and wildlife in the spring, and yet it still provides enough food for cattle. It's a really interesting concept," he says. Hamilton says he was most intrigued by the high number of cattle that Dennis has—in some cases—1,000 head of cattle on an acre of land being moved every two hours.

"Typically, I'm up at 5 a.m. when it's cool, spend a couple of hours setting (electric) fences up with automatic gate openers, program them, and in the heat of the day, I go in the house where it's cool," Dennis explains. "The cattle are moving themselves, the gates fly open, and they get used to that. A few years ago, I was moving every two hours, and I had one Red Angus, and at an hour and a half, she'd be standing by the gate waiting for it to fly open to go into new grass."

With such a large herd, Dennis says the cattle manage themselves, and a herd mentality kicks in when they are close together, meaning less work for him, and less stress for the cattle at moving time.

"It's not very hard work—it's not a rodeo like most people figure to move the cattle... I set up paddocks for the cattle's quality of life—if you want to go away for a weekend or a wedding, you set it up so there's bigger paddocks so they have enough feed," he says.

Dennis says that he wouldn't have guessed that he would still be on the farm ranching today. Before he became a holistic manager, the farm was struggling financially, and Dennis says the stress was impacting his health. Though he didn't believe that the holistic grazing methods would do anything, his stubborn attitude made him push to keep farming, and to his surprise, things got better on the farm.



Above: Though unimpressive to look at, this small brown lump of dirt is an earthworm casing—evidence that the soil is active and healthy.

"I didn't know I would be ranching by now because of the financial problems—changing the way we made decisions has made things so easy," he says. "I used to always get sick, it was nerves. And now, I'm never worried. It's a more relaxed style of living—I spend most of my time in the house."

Hamilton says that when Dennis does holistic management presentations in Manitoba, the quality of life is something he brings up, that ranchers and farmers attending the presentations are interested in.

"They are basing their farming practices on their weekends, and when they have to be at the lake—it's not the other way around, they aren't putting all their time into farming and having to sneak away to have a family life," Hamilton says. "It's provided them a better standard of living, and Neil emphasizes that

all the time when he comes out."

For others, seeing how efficient the land management has become with high density stock grazing is the selling point for the style of grazing Dennis practices.

"Right now, we are doing conventional grazing on native pasture, and recognizing that there's a lot of wasted potential out there," says Leigh Rosengren. Rosengren came out to the tour from Midale. She says she's known about Dennis's work for a decade, and has read extensively about holistic grazing and Dennis's ranch. "For the pastures we have, it could increase productivity and decrease risk—this approach has a lot more tools to manage things like drought, improve plant biodiversity, and improve use."

The open gate tour was the first Rosengren was attending. She says the biggest benefit of the tour is the ability to go into the field and see the impact of mob graz-

ing firsthand, as well as connect with other ranchers who have an interest in holistic management.

"I've learned more in the last hour than I have in the last year—you get out and you see things and it makes you ask questions and there's 10 people in your group with a different answer, so it causes you to look deeper into things," she says. "We've got some baby steps we can take right away and over time as we grow our farm, I think holistic management will be a very good fit."

Despite the benefits that the guests on the tour saw, and their interest in holistic management, the practice still has not caught on in mainstream agriculture, and in some cases, receives fierce opposition from others.

"People don't like change—one farmer told me he'd sooner go belly up than do what I was doing—he's not on the farm anymore," Dennis says. "Farmers do not like change, they like to stay the way things were. I fit right in there until I was going to go belly up and I was too stubborn to give up."

Hjertaas chalks up the reluctance to change as well. He believes that one day, agricultural paradigms will shift, and holistic management will be second nature.

"We've been taught for at least two generations now, and I was taught this when I went to agricultural college, that we have to buy our inputs—that the concept of all of a sudden totally making the system healthy is so foreign to our thinking. That is the way we've been taught and trained. To all of a sudden go to a system where you don't need to do anything, they think it's impossible—it can't work," he says. "Knowledge is a slow process—you see something new, and you don't agree right away, but you see it again later, or read about it, and eventually you say 'Hey that is right.' It's a long, slow process. In the 1880s, doctor Ignaz Semmelweis suggested washing hands between operations—he was booted out of the medical profession. Knowledge changes, but it's very slow. What these events do is help the process of change. People see it and go home and think about it, and say 'Maybe that guy isn't as dumb as I thought.'"



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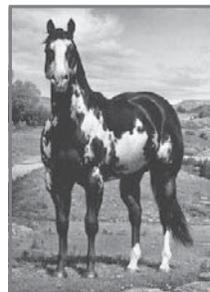
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Andrea Jaenen and Julia Dima photos

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# Moosomin traffic officer fights fires around La Ronge

BY JULIA DIMA

Moosomin's Rob Hockley spends most of his work days enforcing traffic laws on the local highways around Moosomin, but for one week, he stepped into a new role as a firefighter to help battle blazes outside of La Ronge.

Emergency Management and Fire Safety (EMFS) sent out a call for more government worker volunteers through the civil service response team, and Hockley saw the opportunity to help.

The civil service response team provides special training to government employees to help in a time of crisis. Because the fire efforts were short volunteers, EMFS was looking for any workers with some experience. Hockley used to work in forestry in Ontario, and had his basic forest fire training because of that work, though he's never fought any fires.

The need for volunteers was so great, that Hockley was brought on board, and two weeks ago on Monday night, he made the seven-hour drive to La Ronge.

For the weeks previous to his departure, the impact of the fire was known all over the province, and on some days, as far south as Oxbow, smoke filled the sky and health advisories were issued across the province. Seeing the smoke in the sky each day at work is what Hockley says pushed him to want to go up north.

"When I was working down here, there were those days where you'd see the smoke and haze, and how it was even affecting us way down here from up there, and then you read about it and see that they are going to lose a lot of communities up north—it's devastating," he says. "You start to think, if something like that were to happen here, you'd get support—and if I have the means to help and they need help, and I can experience it, that would be phenomenal."

Driving up, Hockley says it was a humbling moment to see the extent of devastation around the town, but, enclosed in a circle of safety, the community was safe.

Hockley's role was property protection. "What it was was civil protection. We did protection of values and properties in the La Ronge area—fighting spot fires, setting up sprinklers, protecting hydro lines, SaskTel buildings, all that kind of stuff," he explains.

The first days that Hockley was in La Ronge were crucial, as fires burned closer and closer to town limits. His role in those first days was to assemble sprinkler packs, which were used to essentially spray water onto and around infrastructure to keep it wet and prevent it from lighting. The main fire fighting efforts were right around the community, and Hockley says that as front line fire fighters were setting up the sprinklers and pumps, they were also carefully watching above head for burning trees that were getting too close as they worked, and be prepared to quickly get out of the way if the fire overtook them.

Near the helicopter pad where water bombers were landing and taking off regularly, and crews were working, the atmosphere was busy. For Hockley, who has never fought fires, seeing the equipment used, and having a chance to learn how to use the equipment was exciting.

"You take everything serious and it's a serious situation, but at the same time it's exciting to—you're like a big kid again," he says.

After those first days, Hockley says the crews had the bigger blazes under control, and his role because putting out spot fires around La Ronge.



Photos courtesy of Rob Hockley

Above: Hockley in his full fire fighting gear looking for spot fires to extinguish around La Ronge.

"By day three, we were controlling it, and when we got some rain, we really hit it hard. We had a couple more days of doing spot fires and a little more rain after that," he says.

Around La Ronge, crews were posted in every section to put out any fires that started. Every day, Hockley and other volunteers worked 10 to 11 hour days.

"It was hot—they supplied us with gatorade and water every day—you're breathing in a lot of smoke and ash, and the fire coveralls are heavy," Hockley says.

Small gestures of kindness kept Hockley motivated each day, however. A thank you board was set up showing all the names of the volunteer fire fighters, and the communities they came from, and each day, inspirational messages or thank-yous from evacuees were taped to water bottles and granola bars, giving the firefighters an extra boost.

"The positivity up there was infectious—it was like one big family," Hockley says. "I would do it again in a heartbeat."

Last Saturday, evacuees began returning to their communities, and Hockley got to be in La Ronge to welcome people back to the community.

Volunteers met the evacuees as they came in on buses,

took their luggage off, and helped them get ready to go back home.

"A lot of people were saying thank you, and I think they were relieved because it was a long time to be away from home, so spirits were high," Hockley says.

There was minimal loss to infrastructure in La Ronge, but in other nearby communities, the fires were too quick, and homes and cabins were lost.

"For those who do have loss, to be out of your home for a month and come back to that, it would be a sick feeling—to sit there and wonder if you have a home to go home to," Hockley says. "We don't realize how good we have it. We had some flooding last year and that caused damage, but at the end of the day, you still had something to go home to."

For him, the experience was invaluable, as he had a chance to learn skills and try something completely different. It encouraged him to renew his fire fighting certification to ensure he can go up and help the next time there are wildfires.



Above: A few members of Hockley's crew putting out a spot fire close to the SaskTel building in La Ronge.

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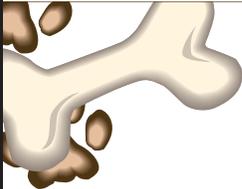
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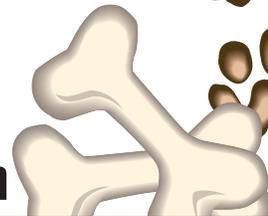
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# Redvers and Carlyle firefighters lend a hand in northern fires

Wildfires continue to burn across Northern Saskatchewan, threatening wildlife, cabins, and homes, and forcing thousands to evacuate to southern communities. Firefighters are overwhelmed, and asking for help from firefighters, volunteers, and now the Canadian Army reservists.

The Saskatchewan Volunteer Firefighters Association has been reaching out to fire departments across the province to lend equipment and services to help battle the fires.

The call has prompted Southeast Saskatchewan firefighters to pack their trucks and head up north. Carlyle fire chief Trent Lee, Redvers fire chief Brad Hutton, and firefighters Eric Brown, Andrew Hamilton, and Dwayne Henderson of those departments answered the call, and spent six days helping battle back fires around the village of Weyakwin, located 95 kilometres south of La Ronge.

"They were looking for assistance, and they gave us a call to go up and do some value protection around the big wildfires," says Lee. "Part of value protection is making sure any of the hot spots around the villages and communities where we are working are taken care of to prevent any spread to structures."

Going up north to help out was a no-brainer for the crew.

"It doesn't matter where we're doing it, the mentality is people need help, let's go out and help them. It doesn't matter if it's our community or someone else's if the call is out there that there is an emergency and help is required, it's the right thing to do," Lee says. "We always say that if we need help here, we're going to want people coming to help us."

Because they were stationed to prevent structure damage and to extinguish spot fires, Lee says the work was similar to what the fire department does back home in the Carlyle area, putting out grass and shrub fires, as well as structural fires.

However, the extent of the fires was something Lee, Hutton, and the rest of the crew, had never had to contend with before.

"A lot of the fires we saw were really thick black smoke, that turned to white and would take over the whole sky. The flames could be quite high over the treeline and spreading extremely fast," Lee says.

Upon arrival, Lee says the scene near Weyakwin was overwhelming.

"There were all kinds

of people and equipment, helicopters dropping water and very thick heavy smoke. We saw water bombers flying over, it was pretty intense there for a little while, way different from what we're accustomed to down here," he says.

Hutton says that driving past burned rubble and empty communities was disheartening.

"It was a pretty dull and depressing looking area—driving in was all burned out and black, and then when you get in, there's a completely evacuated reserve and resort community, and all you could smell was burned wood and smoke the whole time," he says.

On their first day, the firefighters spent the time patrolling around the edge of the village and putting out any hot spots that could endanger property, and running a sprinkler system around the edge of the village to keep everything wet and prevent it from catching fire. Afterwards, they began traveling along the roads and highway and extinguishing every hot spot they came across in the bush. The hot and dry conditions paired with the age of the old forest around Weyakwin creates challenges in keeping the fires out.

"It was an old forest that had never been burned, so the buildup of old wood on the forest floor kept smouldering," Hutton says.

"We put out countless fires—I can't imagine how many," adds Lee. "You'd go to one spot fire, come back, and on your way back, you'd come across one that wasn't there when you drove by 20 minutes before. They would flare up out of nowhere."

Neither Hutton nor Lee ever felt like they were in danger during their time up north. They had to be cautious to look out for falling burning trees overhead, as a tree had fallen on a firefighter in the region before they arrived. The spot fires they were extinguishing were controllable, and Lee says if there was a point where they felt unsafe, the wildfire team would send in a helicopter to put out larger fires.

"We knew from our morning debriefing that there were experienced and well-trained people there. It was a good situation to be part of—one of those situations where everything ticked," Lee says. "There was absolutely fantastic teamwork among ourselves too, we never had to tell each other what to do, we just had that spe-



Photos courtesy of Brad Hutton

Left: Fires burning along the roads near Weyakwin were what the Southeast Sask fire crews were dealing with sometimes. Eric Brown extinguishing a hot spot in the bush. Five firefighters from Redvers and Carlyle went up north to help put out wildfires.

cial click and pulled onto a spot fire, and someone was automatically on the nozzle and someone firing the pump."

Despite the good experience of fighting the fires together as a crew, watching the north burn was disheartening for the crew.

"It's devastating to see because it's such a loss, such a waste—there's all these trees and habitats lost, and you think about the animals as well, you wonder where all the animals go and if they are burned and killed in the fire, or if they got out. You can never know," Hutton says.

Lee says he feels good knowing that he was able to protect the homes of the people of Weyakwin, who were all forced to evacuate. "It's been devastating to the locals up there and the people who have to deal with that on a daily basis. The devastation is unreal—it's widespread and affecting a lot of people, even just to be evacuated for that amount of time is quite stressful for the people who live there," he says.

The crew was sent home when it was clear that Weyakwin was safe from fires. But if the call came again, Lee, Hutton, and their crew of volunteers say they would be ready to pack the truck again and hit the road.

"We would go back no questions asked, absolutely," Lee says. "It was definitely something I'd like to go back to and experience again, get some more experience under our belts and help the guys out."

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# Musical ride in Wawota wows crowd

Continued from page 8

To organizers, seeing that community spirit at the event made the whole evening worthwhile.

"We don't know yet how much was raised in total. We may not have raised enough to finish the entire project, but if anything, we raised awareness, and we raised community pride, and that is priceless to me," says Shannon Houff who helped organize the Musical Ride. "We raised awareness that we are serious about keeping our community at the top of the line, and we raised awareness that community pride is the life of what we do."

Houff says that in the final days of planning for the event, the weather forecasts—that were calling for high winds and heavy rain—made her worry that the event wouldn't go as well as hoped.

"When you put all this work in for months and months, it's pretty stressful the last few days, especially looking outside at the weather, and thinking, what if nobody comes? We still have all these expenses, and we're still trying to make money," she says. "Crowd-wise, it turned out better than I could have expected for the day we had. I am pretty impressed and proud to say I am a Saskatchewanian. We come rain or shine—we're there because we know it's important."

For guests, the rain may have made the ground a little damp, but it did not dampen their spirits.

"Despite weather, it was still pretty fun—it doesn't matter that much, we're not made of sugar," says Peacock.

Schneider and his friends came to the performance in full-length rain jackets.

"We live in Saskatchewan—the weather changes on us," he says.

Despite the rainy weather, most of the day saw only a light mist—minutes after the riders finished their show and meet and greet with the public, it began raining heavily.

"Us prairie people, we are strong, and water doesn't melt you, it just grows things—and in that particular event, it looked like a growth of people far and wide that were just ready to be there for the right reasons," Houff says. "They were willing to stick it through no matter what, and just like the riders, rain or shine, they'll be there. We proved that (at the ride)."

In addition to the funds raised through admissions, community groups and businesses from Wawota were selling food as well, and Houff says every vendor nearly sold out of food.

Houff says that she wishes there was more time at the end of the performance to thank the individuals and businesses that sponsored the ride before the rain hit.

"People need to realize that those businesses are supporting that local event so you will support them locally—

so when people are going out to shop, please think of them and go to them instead of the big box stores in the cities, because they are not the ones giving you the \$250 for minor hockey. Those supporters made it so that everything we got off the gate was our profit, which was a huge help," she says.

Her hope is that the park project that will be one step closer to completion because of the ride will give the people of Wawota a sense of pride.

"It affects everybody—your local community does well, and that is why we are doing the beautification. When your community does well, everybody wins, from the businesses to the landowners and home owners," Houff says.

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# Brett Clark teaching his skills to the next generation

BY JULIA DIMA

From the small town rink in Wapella to an 18-year-long professional hockey career in the NHL and AHL, most of Brett Clark's life has revolved around the game.

Now, Clark has retired from playing pro hockey, and is using his skills to help the next generation of young players improve their hockey skills through a hockey camp he started up called Clarks Power and Performance Hockey School.

"I just like to teach the kids and give them the same opportunities I had when I was young. I went to hockey school in Whitewood where you had Brad McEwen and Garry Carson and Dennis Scott running big hockey schools down there every summer, and I remember going to those," explains Clark.

"It's just about people taking the time to help us kids get better in our games, and I think that's something we don't see enough of anymore."

Growing up in the rink his parents ran in Wapella, and having NHL roots in his family, Clark inevitably fell in love with the game at a young age in Wapella.

"That was basically our hang-out—in those small towns during wintertime, it was so cold, the only place you could hang out was the rink, so I think that is why a lot of good players come out from that area of Canada, because they spend so much time at the rink, so it's good exercise and good fun when you're young, and hopefully you can make a career of it," Clark says. "Growing up in a small town, you always dream of playing NHL someday, and fortunately it worked out for me. It starts when you're young, you have that passion and drive and you have to



Photo courtesy of Candace Clark

Brett Clark working with a group of kids in his Clarks Power and Performance hockey school. Clark has hosted three camps so far, one in Florida, and two in Colorado.

be willing to put in the hours in order to make that next step."

Clark played his Junior A hockey in Melville and received a scholarship to play at the University of Maine. From there, he was drafted to the Montreal Canadiens, and then played with Team Canada for a season. After that, he started a long career playing in the NHL and AHL system, playing over 500 NHL games, and playing with the Canadiens, Tampa Bay Lightning, Atlanta Thrashers, Minnesota Wild, and Colorado Avalanche.

"You look back on those days now, and think, wow, I actually did make it, and all the work and hours I put in paid off and the sacrifices that kids make nowadays to make it to the next step, when you put that jersey on for the first time and step out there for the first regular season game—it's quite a feeling of accomplishment," Clark says.

Now, Clark continues to do

player development for the Colorado Avalanche, and helps coach his son's hockey team, but he was looking to find ways to help kids with their hockey skills in the off-season. His wife, Candace, recommended he start up a camp for kids.

"I love teaching kids, and I've had a lot of people tell me near at the end of my career, 'oh, you're going to be a good coach some day.' Because I like to educate the kids on what it's all about," Clark adds. "It's been a good first year so far. We got it up and running a month and a half ago, the actual hockey camps got going."

"It's been good from where I came from and the experiences I have and education I got from skating and conditioning coaches, weight trainers, and hockey coaches throughout my career. Now I can put a lot of it together and educate young . . . families about what it is really all about," Clark adds. "If I can help the kids

have fun and get them a little bit better, a bit stronger, that's what I am all about."

Clark keeps the camps smaller, to ensure there is enough one-on-one interaction with the kids. The camps are targeted at kids as young as novice age to bantam, and so far he's held three week-long camps, one in Florida and two in Denver, Colorado.

The camps have both on-ice development and some off-ice development, and Clark has former NHL goalie Peter Budaj helping as a goalie coach and Chris May, who has coached athletes in the NHL, NFL, CFL, and more, helping as a strength coach at camps.

Along with the practical training, Clark says he likes to teach the kids about the hockey world and the life lessons he's learned through his career. He says he's received excellent attitudes from the kids in the camps so far.

"They pay attention and are

excited to have someone who has been there over the years. The kids are sometimes just out there having fun, as long as you make it fun and you're teaching the kids the proper skills, it doesn't matter who you are. They all have a blast, there is always smiles on their faces, and that is all I care about at the end of the day," Clark says.

Though he now calls Colorado home, Clark and his family travel back to Canada each year to visit family, and looking towards the future, now that he has established the hockey camp and plans to continue it, Clark says he hopes to hold a hockey school in the Wapella area one day, to offer local kids in his hometown the opportunity to learn as well.

"I think I am going to look and see if we can maybe set up a hockey school or camp up there, perhaps next year. Now that we have something set up here, it would be something I would really enjoy doing, going back home and providing some of my wisdom to the kids around there. We'll see if we can track some ice and time down, and see if I can set something up," Clark says.

For Clark, seeing talented hockey players continuing to come out of the area and go on to play AAA, WHL, NHL, and overseas hockey makes him feel proud to have come from a hockey-strong community.

His advice for young hockey players who are building their careers or dreaming of an NHL future is to keep pushing on all levels of the game.

"All the advice I have is never give up—no matter who you play, someone is watching, so no matter what you are doing, you have to go out and give your best every time you step out on the ice," he says.

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Members of the Mitchell family and PPCLI veteran Douglas Jones who took part in the Battle of Kapyong in 1951.



The Mitchell family sharing an emotional moment as they look at the building named after their father.

## Virден veteran honored at CFB Shilo

BY ED JAMES

The Korean war broke out in 1950 and lasted until 1952 in a truce that is still in effect today. When North Korea, with its Chinese allies, invaded the south, the United Nations sent an international military force to help the overwhelmed South Korean army.

This international force included Canadian troops, with one of the regiments being the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry (PPCLI). This regiment, that was founded before the start of the First World War, has a Moosomin connection in that Sgt. George Mullin, MM of Moosomin won the Victoria Cross at the Battle of Passchendaele in France in October 1917. At the time Sgt. Mullin was a member of the PPCLI regiment. In fact, for the past several years a platoon of PPCLI members come out to Moosomin to take part in the community's Remembrance Day events and to honor Sgt. Mullin.

It was during the Korean War, sometimes called the Korean Conflict, that another Western Canadian soldier brought honor to the regiment. It was on April 24 and 25, 1951 that Private W.R. Mitchell of Virден showed great bravery during the Battle of Kapyong, when his position on Hill #677 was overrun by 100 enemy soldiers. The official citation for his bravery that night reads:

"During the enemy attack on B Company's position on 24-25 April 1951, Private Mitchell's light machine gun foxhole was overrun. Despite his position being attacked by 100 Chinese soldiers, his valorous conduct became the stuff of legend. The official citation—the longest citation for bravery that night at Kapyong—describes what followed:

"Not withstanding the overwhelming odds, with marked determination he held his ground, skillfully using his Bren light machine gun to inflict maximum casualties on the enemy. He was largely responsible for repulsing this attack and was wounded in the chest during the course of the battle. Although wounded he refused to leave his Bren gun and was a source of inspiration to the remainder of the platoon. He was ordered to report to Platoon Headquarters to have his wounds dressed. During this time, he voluntarily carried a wounded comrade back to safety.

"By midnight the Chinese had overrun two section of 6 Platoon and were attacking Platoon Headquarters. Private Mitchell again skillfully brought his Bren gun into action to repulse the attack. At one stage, seeing his Platoon sergeant with six wounded men pinned down by enemy fire, he voluntarily, without regard for his safety, rushed toward the enemy firing his Bren gun from the hip, thus allowing the wounded to be moved to safety. In this action Private Mitchell was wounded for a second time by an enemy grenade.

"During the withdrawal, Private Mitchell exposed himself again and again, moving from fire position to fire position where he could best engage the enemy to cover the withdrawal. At 0300 hours, after the fourth attack had been repulsed, Private Mitchell had his wounds dressed by the Company medical assistant, but refused to be evacuated, staying at his Bren gun post for the remainder of the night. At daylight, Private Mitchell could hardly stand for loss of blood. For his actions, Private Mitchell was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, second only to the Victoria Cross. He was 19 years old at the time."

Several years ago the 2nd Battalion of the PPCLI moved from Winnipeg to CFB Shilo into a new headquarters and operations buildings.

The regiment has recently named three of the new buildings after men who distinguished themselves at the Battle of Kapyong. The event was carried out by Lt. General R Crabbe, retired Colonel of the regiment and the Right Honorable Adrienne Clarkson who is the honorary Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment. Also present were family members of the soldiers the buildings were being named after. When it came to unveiling the commemorative plaque and framed photo of the late Private Mitchell, it was an emotional moment for his son and daughter who were present.

"When the plaque was unveiled, it was very emotional for our family," said Rob Mitchell about the tribute to his late father. "All the talk, plans, memories and travelling the last few months became real, to see his name on the plaque. His picture and plaque will hopefully remind future soldiers of the regiment that leadership and bravery can come from any rank." This was a reference to the fact that the other two buildings were named after officers of the regiment.

"This is the building where the regiment keeps its light armored vehicles (LAVs) that are important to the infantry soldiers and as the soldiers go in and out of this building, they will remember my father and his actions."

Later on that afternoon, Clarkson and the invited family members took part in the change of command ceremony as leadership of CFB Shilo was turned over to a new commanding officer.

Continued on page 31

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# Rocanville teen volunteers overseas in India

*Continued from front*

"Sitting in her house, it's the size of a small bedroom in Canada—that was their whole house . . . The house had no electricity or running water, it was dark and hot, and in front of the stove is where they would sleep every night on a pile of blankets on the cement floor," Stangeland says.

"As we were doing the water walk, it was very humbling, because we were struggling and trying to hold the jugs with both our hands, and the women there were able to do this freehanded.

"It opened up my eyes, it really makes you appreciate how much you have—even just opening the faucet every morning and having water there. Or having parents who can cook easily—we can go to the grocery store and buy food, when all they eat in their day sometimes is roti," says Stangeland.

There were also fun experiences during the trip, like learning about Bollywood dancing, having henna done, and learning how to tie-dye and do block painting, traditional art forms in India.

Stangeland says that she hopes the group of volunteers made a difference for the community during their stay, and now, she is home with a determination to raise awareness about poverty and education access so other Canadians will want to help.

"I was hoping once school started again this year, to be able to go to the classrooms and raise awareness about education in India, the difference between our education and theirs, and issues they face every day to be educated. I think after I can raise awareness, my next step would be to hopefully raise funds to go build another school in India," she says. "We have it really well in Canada, and I think we take our education for granted. There are so

many kids in India that can't go to school every day—sometimes, they have to walk, so some kids are too far away from school. Some don't have the funds to pay for their uniform that they are required to wear in school. . . I hope that people here start to look at school not as something they have to do, but as something they enjoy doing. So people don't wake up saying 'I have to go to school' but 'I get to go to school!'"

Stangeland says it's her hope to volunteer internationally again, the next time an opportunity arises. She is going into grade 12 at Rocanville School, and after high school, she plans to take a year off to travel internationally and volunteer.

"I would love to go back and volunteer again at some point—I don't know how soon that would be, but I would like to volunteer again, in India or somewhere else, just to help out," she says.

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Julia Dima photos



## Rocanville votes Yes to new hall

BY JULIA DIMA

Rocanville residents have said yes to a new hall.

In a referendum held Wednesday on the town financially supporting a new community hall, 391 people voted, with 277, or 71 per cent, voting yes, and 114, 29 per cent, voting no.

The voter turnout was higher than it's been for most municipal elections, according to town administrator Monica Merkosky. "It's a very good turnout. We believe there are around 700 eligible voters, and the remainder are under 18," she says. "So that is more than we've ever had in an election."

Mayor Daryl Fingas says he's impressed with the turnout, and thinks things went smoothly considering the town has never held a referendum before.

"We were pretty impressed with voter turnout. It was an important decision to be made, so I am glad townspeople came out and voted," he says.

For the hall committee, a yes vote is what they were hoping for, but more importantly, a large turnout.

"We really wanted a big turnout so we got an honest opinion of how the town felt as much as anything—of course we wanted it to go ahead, but we really wanted a lot of people to express their opinion and we got that," says Steve Fortney on the hall committee.

"We felt that a strong turnout was to our advantage. We felt that a lot of people wanted the hall, but we thought the no side was more motivated to come out and vote than the yes side, so we were worried people might take it for granted that it was going to be a yes vote."

The next step, Fortney says, is to get things moving with the contractor.

"We will approach the town and initiate the contracts for construction—we'll get the town council's permission to authorize the contractor to get his engineering in line and engineering drawings approved," he says.

The goal is to have construction starting in three weeks.

Fortney says the contractor is hoping to have the building closed in before winter so the workers do not have to be working outside during the winter months.

As for fundraising, Fortney says it will be a long process, but things are already getting started. Before the referendum was held, he says a number of individuals and businesses approached the committee looking to make a contribution, but the committee decided not to accept any donations until they knew the hall would be built.

Now, Fortney says they will be approaching those individuals and starting the flow of

donations.

The committee has also been applying for grants throughout the process, and will start their fundraising push by approaching local businesses for large donations. There has already been a \$35,000 donation pledged, and the Economic Development Board committed a \$10,000 donation as well.

In terms of canvassing and approaching the public, Fortney says the committee hopes to start doing that in October, when the hall structure is up.

"We think our big campaign in the community will probably be in October. We'd like to do it when the walls are going up. We think that seeing a building going up will generate a lot of excitement, and people will feel more like donating when they see things happening," he says.

The hall committee has discussed a number of community fundraising efforts, but one thing they are hoping to bring back to Rocanville to raise funds is the Lucky Lottery.

When the rink committee was fundraising, they raised \$900,000 for the rink, and held Lucky Lotteries. Fingas says that for the years these lotteries were done, they generated a lot of income.

"It didn't sell out in the first year or two, but we were always very close. They made upwards of \$100,000 some years, but around the last year, it was going down, and we raised around \$20,000. But, it averaged \$50,000 to 60,000 after expenses," Fingas says. "We'll go out and try it once and see what happens. We'll be able to tell if people are interested in that with the first lottery."

Fortney says he knows the fundraising will be a long-term effort and will require a lot of work, but he's hopeful the committee and community will be able to raise the funds and hold good community fundraisers.

Despite the hall going forward, 114 of the voters were opposed to the hall. Fortney and Fingas hope that once the hall is built and becomes a part of the community, those who are opposed now may change their tune and be glad to have the hall.

"We did go for a public referendum, so we hopefully let the community express their opinion. There may be people continually opposed to the hall, but hopefully they recognize that this was a democratic process, and the people expressed their will," Fortney says. "We will try to have a good project and involve everybody who wants to be involved."

Councillor Ken Nixon, who was not in favor of the town financially supporting the new hall, says he plans to be involved to ensure the committee is held accountable.

"If this thing ever starts overrunning, I will say to council that the taxpayers don't pay anymore. If you run over budget, leave the doors shut until you have enough money. I congratulated them on the vote after the referendum. Then I told them, 'you got what you wanted. Now, do what you said you'd do.' I also told them I would be their biggest critic,

as they knew. You have to have somebody keeping them accountable for what they are doing," Nixon says.

Local business owners who were in favor of the hall say they are ready to put the x on the cheque.

Councillor Stan Langley owns Universe Satellite Sales, and has pushed for the community hall since it was announced. He says that the committee will see a donation from

his business, and himself as a private citizen. Outlets of the referendum were what he expected, and he's happy there was high voter turnout.

"It makes you feel good that people care—there's a lot of people with good foresight for the town, to see the town keep moving forward," he says. "There's lots of people who have confidence in our town when they go ahead with something like that."

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**2013 Ram 2500 SLT Crew Cab 4x4**  
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6.7L, Leather, Loaded, Power Options, 4x4, 128,000 kms, Silver  
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**2012 Ram 1500 SLT Plus Quad 4x4**  
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# Sylvio Fontaine places third in Elvis festival



Fontaine performed as Elvis as this year's Parade Marshall at the Moosomin Parade.

BY JULIA DIMA

Though a unique hobby to have, Elvis Presley tribute artists have a large community across North America, hosting numerous Elvis festivals each year, from the biggest Elvis competition in North America—The Ultimate Elvis Competition held in Memphis, Tennessee—to the Manitoba Elvis Festival held in the RM of Gimli, Manitoba, which attracts Elvis enthusiasts from across the country.

One such enthusiast is Whitewood's Sylvio Fontaine,

who has been doing Elvis tributes since 1987. On June 26, he participated in his first ever Elvis festival, the Annual Pentiction Elvis Festival in Pentiction, B.C.

"I thought I might as well try it before I retire the Elvis thing, and go from there and see how it all was," Fontaine says.

He initially started doing Elvis tributes because he enjoyed the music, and figured he could pull off the look. But Fontaine never imagined he would compete at festivals. Fontaine came in third place for the amateur division at the festival, and won a cash prize.

"It was awesome. I never even imagined I would place, let alone get top three. I just wanted the experience of the whole thing, which was awesome," he says.

Competitors sang Elvis songs, and were judged on their singing abilities, appearance, and Elvis-like stage presence. First place in the amateur division went to Fred Steen from Chetwynd, B.C. and second place went to Christopher Blaine, who is from Pentiction.

In the professional division, the winner was Johnny Lee Memphis, who sings around the world, and has won the Elvis World Cup title.

Watching the pros, Fontaine says, was like watching the real Elvis.

"If you closed your eyes, you'd swear it was him on stage—their mannerisms were really good," Fontaine says. "I've never seen that extent of enthusiasm by the fans and by the other Elvises. They made me feel like family. I was nervous and I was scared, but performing in front of such great Elvises was such a pleasure. And they talked to me, they gave me some pointers, and it was really good overall."

Though initially Fontaine had planned to just try out the competitions, doing well in Pentiction has encouraged him to keep the Elvis tribute going for as long as he can.

"I will do Elvis now until they kick me off the stage," he says.

He's preparing to go back to Pentiction again, and do even better.

"Every day you basically have to rehearse or watch some of his movies just to get some new moves. I have to start studying that more, because next year, I'm going to be number one," Fontaine adds.

In addition to the Pentiction festival, Fontaine will also be at the Blue Suede Elvis Festival in Busby, Alberta, the Manitoba Elvis Festival in Gimli, and the Canadian Blue-moon Elvis Festival in Barriere, B.C. this summer.



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## Tourist centre operating with minimum resources

BY ED JAMES

The tourist information centre at Kirkella is one of my regular stops every summer for two reasons. The first is to visit the summer staff, many of them being former students of mine from the Fort La Bosse School Division or from my work with Brandon University.

The visit gives me an opportunity to find out what they are doing with their lives, and because of the nature of the job, they have an opportunity to learn valuable people skills as they meet and help travellers.

During the past spring the Manitoba provincial government made a decision to not open the Kirkella information centre. Their plan instead was to have people leave the Trans-Canada Highway at Brandon, and drive into the city to the Riverbank Discovery Centre for travel information.

This did not sit well with the communities and businesses in the area west



The tourist centre at Kirkella, shown at left, is still a welcoming sight however, inside the centre (above), there is little left to offer visitors.

of Brandon. There was a public outcry and petitions from the area, and the provincial government reversed its decision.

On my most recent visit to the Kirkella centre, I discovered a few changes that took away from the centre.

The building itself has always been an imposing site with its large parking area, grassy picnic table area and year-round pub-

lic washroom, whether you are traveling east or west along the Trans-Canada Highway.

However, when I went in, I noticed several changes.

Most of the furniture had been removed that offered travellers a place to sit and go over the tourist brochures.

Gone was the free coffee, gone were the wonderful large free posters of

Manitoba sights and gone were the free Manitoba lap pins. I noticed also that there were not as many information pamphlets.

Overall, in my opinion, the site was but a shadow of its former self. The two of the three staff members that I met were very helpful and are doing the best with what they have, but its not the tourist information site it used to be.

## Elkhorn Chamber upset with tourist centre changes

BY KRISTEN WEEDMARK

The Kirkella Tourist Centre in Manitoba is open for the summer after first being planned on closing.

However business owners in Southwest Manitoba are concerned with how Travel Manitoba has been running the centre.

"They're getting roughly 100 people a day through that centre," said Mark Humphries, chair of the Elkhorn Chamber of Commerce.

"So for us, that's 100 prospective customers. Usually people stop at the tourist booth for that specific reason, to learn information on sites that they can go visit while they're driving through Manitoba. So for us its purpose is solely that, it's to direct prospective customers to our door. So with it being open, that gives us the chance for more customers."

Humphries says that in the first two weeks the centre was open this summer, they had travellers from Alberta, Vancouver, Banff, and various other places who have made the effort to visit their business.

"When the centre is closed, people go straight past it and the next place that they can get information from is Brandon. When people are travelling from one side of the

country to the other, they're not going to travel back and make that effort to visit, so for us it's vital that it's open."

When the Government of Manitoba first planned on closing the tourist centre for the summer, businesses in Southwest Manitoba worked to lobby Travel Manitoba and Tourism Westman.

"We also approached the MLA and various other organizations," said Humphries. "There were a lot of people, not just including Elkhorn, but Virden, Souris, it was right way across. We began to challenge the people that run it to keep it open."

Business owners in Southwest Manitoba are now concerned with the centre itself, as it offers nothing for sale to customers.

"The staff are excellent," said Humphries. "But Travel Manitoba has left them with nothing but an empty room."

"They're as frustrated as we are at the minute, there is nothing in there other than display leaflets, which is fine for us, but as a representation of Manitoba, there is nothing in there for a tourist to either purchase or see.

If you go to the Saskatchewan tourist booth across the road, there's anything from a magnet to maple syrup to buy, there's every tourism purchase that you can think of,

and it's a vibrant shop. Then you go to the Manitoba one and it's just an empty room with a leaflet stand. As much as the staff are doing a fantastic job in directing people where to go, as a representation of Manitoba there's nothing there."

Humphries says that he has phoned several times as both a business owner and as chairman of the Elkhorn Chamber of Commerce, but he has not heard back from a single person.

"It is quite embarrassing that as a tourist industry we've got nothing to display for visitors coming from the West. It makes no sense at all that we're not saying 'Here's a tourbook you can buy,' or 'Here's a Manitoba flag,' or 'Here's a magnet for the fridge.' There's nothing at all, which makes the staff's life in that booth very difficult."

So far Humphries doesn't know what the future is for the tourist booth.

"It's up to Tourism Manitoba and Travel Manitoba to be contacting us and to offer solutions to the problem to the local community to work with them. At the minute that's not being done. We would like to extend, from the chamber's point of view at any rate, an invitation to them to pick up the phone and discuss this centre with us, so that if they do plan to reduce it even further next year, that perhaps a local player can pick it up or we can think of ideas that are collective around the area to keep it running."

Despite repeated attempts to contact officials with Travel Manitoba for comment, no one was made available for comment.

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# One year later: 2014 Flood still impacting local communities

BY JULIA DIMA

It has been one year since massive rainfalls hit southeast Saskatchewan and southwest Manitoba, leading to widespread flooding, lost infrastructure, and states of emergency issued in dozens of communities. While some communities were hit harder than others, most places are still feeling the repercussions of the disaster a year later.

Moosomin was hit with three heavy rainfalls, two of which caused flooding—the first storm which started on June 29 and brought with it over 200 mm of rain, and the July 10 storm which filled the streets with water and hail in a matter of minutes. Getting back to normal has been a year-long and continuing process for the town.

"I wouldn't say we're perfectly back to normal yet," says Mayor Larry Tomlinson. "We've still got another dig to do on Carleton Street that will take a week or two. Most of the sewer lines that we needed to get relined have been relined and some parts have been replaced. Part of the lagoon that was washed out has been ripped up so the bank will stay intact—and there's still stuff to do yet before winter."

Since the sewer system in Moosomin was overwhelmed with the water, the town has used a hydrovac on all the storm sewers, and now, has an inventory of pumps, hoses, and other equipment available directly in town to be readily available if another disaster were to occur.

"They are available right in town and will be left there for some time. The big thing last year is that we couldn't get enough equipment fast enough," Tomlinson explains.

Moving forward, Tomlinson says it is hard not to



Above: Greg Coleman took this photo of Evan Coleman standing waist-deep in flood water in Moosomin after the second flood event on July 10. During the flood, torrential rain filled Main Street in a matter of minutes. Stephanie Lange took this photo of the heavy rain coming down in front of MNP in Moosomin.

think about the flood, especially every time a large storm is forecasted for the region.

"It was unreal—I hope we never see that again."

However, moving forward, Tomlinson says Moosomin has learned from the disaster.

"I think we are better prepared going forward, we've spent a lot of money and done a lot of work, and we still have some to do but I am confident we'll get that done before winter. Hopefully, now we are better prepared for what is going to happen—if it happens. Hopefully it never

does," he says.

Maryfield's Mayor David Hill says that this year's Canada Day was much more relaxing and enjoyable than last year's.

In Maryfield, there was only one flood event, but culverts and roads were washed away, and basements flooded. Hill says that Maryfield has had to do some repair and mitigation work to infrastructure, and continues to do so.

"I think we're a little more prepared for something like that to happen again, because after what we went through last year, we addressed some of the

issues, like the pumps and that sort of thing," he explains. "We have an emergency set-up, and now we have an idea where the danger zones are and what we need to address right away. It was kind of a learning experience for us last year. There is still the odd person who is still putting their basement back together, so that part of it is ongoing, and we had one culvert on the east side of town that was partially plugged, so we have addressed that situation, and we have a few more places that we need to look at."

Despite the year-long

impact, Hill says the parts of the flood that stuck with him were the acts of community.

"It was just great to see the way everybody stepped forward. You didn't have to call on people, they were coming in and asking what they can do and where they're needed, and what they could provide. I think it brought the community maybe a little bit closer as well," he says.

In Elkhorn, the flood also brought out the best of people, says Elkhorn CAO Garth Mitchell.

"We're thankful we have the resources in our com-

munity and the volunteers that stepped up to make a bad event into almost a good, positive, community bonding event. But the fact that there are still people suffering with water in their basements and destroyed basements is pretty unfortunate," Mitchell says.

Elkhorn has been in a year-long process to fix the damages from the flood and work on mitigation efforts. There is still temporary diking along Boss-hill Creek, and Mitchell says that Elkhorn is in the process of working with the provincial government through the Community Flood Program, which helps with permanent mitigation efforts in communities deemed at risk for flooding.

"The Community Flood Program is a preventative diking program where they come in and build permanent dikes for communities that were affected by the floods, and we had originally talked with the program back in 2011, and we'd been on their radar since that time," Mitchell explains. "Just prior to the flood of 2014, we were selected as a community to proceed with a feasibility study, so that is where we are now, that process is just about completed. That study will determine where they think some permanent diking is required and necessary, and they did all the elevation studies and soil studies—it's where we have the current temporary diking."

Mitchell says that there is still clean-up happening around Elkhorn, and he knows of residents who haven't been able to put the sump pumps away, because of the high water table.

Continued on page 33

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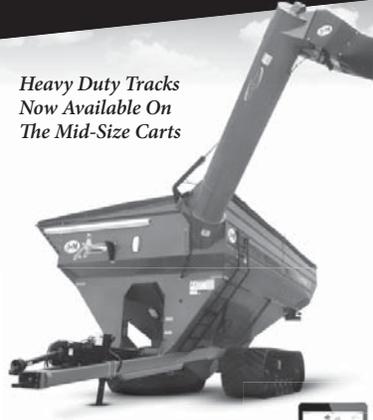
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# Electrical program seeks more applicants for fall

Continued from page 9

"Having the program is nice because we can keep local kids in our community, we're not losing everybody to the city to go find a job, and we're not dragging people from the cities to come have a job and then sending our local guys up there to get jobs. If they want to stay close to home, there's a job there for them," he says. "With the program being here, you can meet with the instructor, you can usually meet with the kids and see who are the stronger kids in the class, and rather than pulling someone out of the city that you don't know from a hole in the ground, here, you have a background, you know who they are."

Getting hired with Jeannot Electric was a relief for Mills, who says he now feels like he is going in the right direction in his life. Entering the workforce, he says he had the skills and confidence with electrical work to perform well, simply from what he learned in the program.

"I had skills already—the pre-employment is awesome for that. . . I had an idea on pretty much everything that has been tossed my way, and that's a lot less stressful for Kyle too, knowing that I know a good chunk of first year to begin with. Who wants to hire someone that doesn't have that much knowledge of it? It's less efficient," Mills says. "I felt confident that I had knowledge in everything he's asking me to do, which makes me more comfortable. I was nervous going into this, but I quickly realized that

the course really helped me out and I was happy that I took it."

Those skills that Mills received in the program are boding well for Jeannot, who says that the past five months of having Mills on staff have been going well.

"It's been nice that he has that hands-on training—when you get him to do something basic, you don't have to be standing over his shoulder all the time, you can go and look at what he's done after and it's done right. It's nice to see that the instructors are giving them good training in the classes," Jeannot says. "He's indentured as an apprentice already with us, and hopefully within the next year and a half, he'll be heading back to school."

Jeannot says he hopes to have Mills back on staff after his next chunk of schooling, which Mills will take in Moose Jaw.

In his first few months of electrical work, Mills says he feels certain he's found the right career for himself.

"I usually don't commit this long if I am not interested—and I haven't been bored which is something that used to be common for me. In electrical, there's so many different branches and aspects that will always keep me on my toes and interested, so I am happy about that," he says.

Both Mills and Jeannot say they are surprised that the program has fewer applicants this year, since it was full when both of them took the course. As someone who has

just started out in the field, Mills says that it's a good career path for those who want a hands-on and constantly evolving challenge for the rest of their careers.

"I think if someone is interested in working with their hands and learning visually, the pre-employment in Moosomin would be super beneficial," he says. "If you like doing something physical, it's an awesome trade, and the money is good too—there's not much downfall to this trade, and everybody I tell that I'm doing this says I can't go wrong."

Nearly 10 years into the career, Jeannot says that he is still learning new things and sees the opportunity out there for young people who want to get into the field.

"It is a good trade to get into—you're not doing the same thing every day, everything is always changing, and there's tons of different fields you can get into—whether it's commercial or residential or you want to get into mining or oil—you won't be doing the same thing every day," Jeannot says. "Everything is always changing, there's always new stuff coming out, even I am learning new stuff everyday and I know guys that have been in business for 30 or 40 years who are learning new things too. It's a long career and definitely a lot of opportunity."

For individuals who think they may want to give the electrical program a try, they can call the Southeast College Moosomin campus to learn about the admission requirements and register for the program.

# Kidsport helping locals get into the game



BY JULIA DIMA

For many children, physical activity and team sports factor in for a big part of growing up. However, not every family can afford the high costs associated with getting involved in organized sports. That is where Kidsport comes in. Kidsport is a non-profit Canada-wide charity that helps kids get involved in athletics by providing the finances for registration, and other requirements for kids to play. Locally, the Pipestone-Qu'Appelle Kidsport chapter helps families in Whitewood, Rocanville, Wapella, and Moosomin.

"We support kids in all sports, through rodeos to cheer leading, so we help sponsor kids that have problems getting into sports, or families with low income, or assistance, and those with disabilities, be-

cause of the extra expenses there," explains Sue Shepherd, who has been involved with the local chapter of Kidsport since day one 20 years ago. "Basically, we do the finances. Kidsport does not pay the family directly, we pay the organization that they are going into. We just turned over \$2,005 for the swimming pool in Moosomin, so we sponsored 20 kids at the pool this year to have swimming lessons."

Since kids travel all over the region for sports, Shepherd says it made most sense to have one chapter covering the region. Sometimes, if needed, the local Kidsport group will also support kids in nearby communities if they need it. They have provided funds to help a family in Watota enroll their kids into hockey and figure skating, and have provided funds for

a child from Carlyle who wanted to play hockey in Whitewood, as well as sponsoring children from the region who want to play football with the Moosomin Generals.

Last year, 98 local kids received funding from Kidsport. Kidsport raises money locally by fundraising and receiving donations. Shepherd says that she is always looking for ways in which Kidsport can get involved and raise money. Each week, she holds a barbecue luncheon in conjunction with the Whitewood weekly summer farmer's markets on Fridays. In addition, Shepherd says she will cater events, and look for opportunities for Kidsport volunteers to do bar and food services at weddings. This summer, Kidsport will be catering lunch for the Prairieville Car Rally and Mud Bog near Whitewood in August to raise funds. Last year, Shepherd says Kidsport earned \$1,000 from that event.

In addition to locally raised money, Kidsport receives a provincial grant that is based on a percentage of what is locally raised. Shepherd says that when money is raised in a community, the money is used for kids in that community, and if a community has come short for what is needed, the provincial grant is used for those kids.

To get involved in Kidsport and receive help, families can visit the Kidsport website for Pipestone-Qu'Appelle to print off a registration form, and forms can also be picked up from the town office in Moosomin from recreation director Mike Schween. During the school year, forms are also available at MacLeod Elementary School.

"Kids just need to fill those applications, and parents have to verify they are a low-income family or in need of that help," Shepherd says. "We review it as a group, and as far as I know, we have never refused anybody."

Shepherd says the importance of helping kids play sports extends beyond the game.

"To me, it's a life thing. When you're a kid and you're learning how to do sports and how to work with people, when you grow up, you'll know better how to work with other people because you have been a part of a team," she says. "Look at swimming—we don't just promote swimming, we promote the lessons. You learn first aid and lifesaving skills at the pool. Our oldest daughter took her lifesaving course, and when she moved to Regina, a guy in the back alley near her home was injured, and she kept him alive with mouth-to-mouth that she learned at the swimming pool. These skills go through life, it doesn't stop."

Shepherd says that the costs for organized sports can add up, and if there's any financial strain on a family it can be difficult to support every child. She says this is particularly true of hockey which is usually the most costly sport they sponsor.

"If you have four kids and they are all in hockey, the cost of that and to be able to keep them in there and active is huge. The big thing is to be able to afford to do it," Shepherd says.

While Kidsport anonymously supports families, Shepherd says she's felt proud when she sees kids who received support from Kidsport now going on to have successful careers in sports.

"We have had a number of kids who have gone a long way in sports. That makes me feel proud—it makes me feel good when people know we are there if they need us."

People can support Kidsport by donating online to the Pipestone-Qu'Appelle chapter, or supporting the barbecues that Shepherd holds across the four communities Kidsport supports.

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# Virden veteran honored at CFB Shilo

Continued from page 19



Far left: Rob Mitchell and family are joined by the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson as they view a memorial photo of Rob's father Private W. R. Mitchell. A building at CFB Shilo was named after Mitchell in a ceremony on June 11.

At left: Private Wayne Robert Mitchell of Virden receiving a medal for bravery for his actions at the Korean battle of Hill 677 in Kapyong, Korea. The medal is being presented by Governor General Vincent Massey.

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Scenes from last year's flooding. Above: A photograph taken by Ed James shows a washed out road near Elkhorn in the first flood event. At right, pilot Dale Woods took this aerial photo of the flood waters that washed out Cook Road in Moosomin.

## 2014 flood still impacting local communities

Continued from page 28

"It can take a number of years to get some things back to normal. Due to soil conditions being so wet, we weren't able to do some of the restorative work," he says. "I think there are still a number of residents feeling the effects, and with the high water table still in our area, there are still a number of houses pumping groundwater out of their basements, so the water problem is still there. When the 2011 flood happened, we thought that was the high point of flood, and 2014 was a reminder that no, it can get worse."

In the RM of Ellice-Archie, flood damage continues to impact the infrastructure, especially in the Assiniboine Valley where the flood washed out roads and bridges, and destroyed homes.

"In the valley, you can still see impact. I've heard talk there that they've spent hours and hours with bulldozers trying to get things leveled—it's a real mess down there," says Reeve Barry Lowes. "Up top, it's not nearly as bad, but there's still issues—we had three big creek roads wash out where we had to replace culverts, and they washed out again this spring because we

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Lowes says that he does feel the RM is better prepared going forward, but there is still more to do.

"We're trying to build a couple more dikes around some properties in the valley, and helping landowners do that. There's a couple of projects we are working on down there but it's a long drawn out affair," Lowes says. "The government isn't doing a lot in that section—they seem to be there when there's a disaster, but to get them to do something proactive is a little tougher, and that is what we're trying to do as a council."

Across the southwestern corner of Manitoba, the flood is continuing to have an impact,

and Arthur-Virden MLA Doyle Pivniuk says there should have been more action after the 2011 flood to address infrastructure issues in the area.

"We should have learned a lot of lessons from 2011 which we never did, and now we should be learning lessons from 2014. In my constituency, we were sort of left to fend for ourselves, and when the flooding got closer to larger centres, all of a sudden a state of emergency was called. This government should have looked after all of Manitoba and not just portions of it," he says. "I found that what was great about the flood . . . was people working together and helping each other out, and that was one thing I remember seeing and was so proud of this region. I think we can learn a lot from working together, but also having more emergency measures out there to help—we need to make sure extra equipment is available in different regions of the province, so if a flood like this happens again, we have those resources."

Looking back a year later, Pivniuk feels there is still much work to be done to make Manitoba flood-ready, but he was happy to spend the anniversary of the flood relaxing.

"It was so nice to enjoy Canada Day in Virden and Elkhorn, because last year, in those two towns, I was supposed to be at events, and everything was cancelled because we were trying to survive," he says. "It was so nice to have that time and reflect—we all came together when we really needed to, and I am so proud of our communities in this Arthur-Virden area."

In Saskatchewan, Moosomin MLA Don Toth says he hasn't been looking back on the flood too much, because he's been looking up to the skies for a rainfall, which is what Saskatchewan needs.

"It's quite ironic that a year ago this time we were battling water all over the place, and now we are looking at getting rain to finish off the crop," he says.

Toth says that local governments and the provincial government have taken steps towards being better prepared for a flood.

"I would think that not only are local governments more prepared and have a better understanding of how to move forward, but I know the provincial government is as well. With the disaster assistance program that was implemented with the federal government, initiatives have been put in place to give communities and individuals the opportunity to address the devastation of the significant floods," Toth says.

"For people who didn't live through the 1950s, it was a reminder that we're not immune from excessive moisture at periods of time, and a reminder that it doesn't hurt to plan ahead and at least have some plans in place in case another excessive moisture period comes upon us so that we can address it."

The provincial disaster assistance program (PDAP) was set up to help individuals and municipalities recoup losses suffered in a disaster not covered by insurance. According to PDAP, they received 4,887 claims for the damage caused in the 2014 flood. As of July 6, 83 per cent of those claims are now closed, and PDAP made 4,200 payments equaling around \$46 million.

Of the 3,253 principal residential claims received, 93 per cent of the claims have been filled.

For the July 10 storm that hit Moosomin, PDAP received 43 principal residence claims, three displacement claims, four renter claims, and 15 small business claims.

Toth says that in his constituency, he's heard the odd complaint that individuals still have not received a payout.

"There has been the odd person (who hasn't received funding), which surprises me. Yogi Huyghebaert was Minister of Environment when big rains hit and flooding of 2011, and was quite amazed, as they got into the PDAP files then, that there were claims that were six to eight years old that hadn't been completed yet, so he put in place a process to try and make the program more efficient," Toth says. "But I am still hearing of the odd one."

There's been a few files where there's been some challenges in interpretation as to who is really responsible here, or there's files where PDAP just got behind or files have been misplaced. When that happens, we go to the minister, and speak with ministerial staff and get them to take a look and review the file, and most of the time it comes down to a technical detail that was missed, and shortly after the file is closed."

According to a Ministry of Government relations spokesperson, there are two claims from the July 10 flood in Moosomin that are still open, and PDAP is working currently to resolve and close those files. The overall closure rate for the 2014 flood events is 93 per cent.

In most cases, the residential claims that are still open are from individuals who are still doing repair work and have not submitted their paid bills for repairs and replacements.

Tamie Folwark, program director for PDAP, says that of

the non-residential outstanding claims, many are municipal claims, which are larger and take more time to conclude.

"With the remaining claims, most of them are municipal claims, and those are huge claims—we identify damaged sites as project sites, and some of those municipal claims could have up to 300 damaged sites, so how they do the repairs is dependent on the weather and contractor availability—it could be various reasons why," Folwark says.

At the time of the floods, PDAP had recovery centres set up, including in Moosomin, where they had planned to close the centre just before the second rainfall event hit the town, leading them to stay longer and help individuals, some of whom had now been flooded twice, file the new claims.

Folwark was on the ground in Moosomin at the time, and says it was a difficult time for residents, which made getting claims filed accurately and in a timely manner a challenge.

Sometimes, when we're at these recovery centres, people just want someone to listen, so we sit and listen, we take applications, we try to explain what we need, but at that point in time, it's very overwhelming for people, so we will follow up later, but that's one of our challenges, is getting the correct information in to be able to process their claim properly," she explains. "We do realize people are thinking about their house in that moment, so we will follow up and just remind them that they need to get this in so we can get their claim processed."

Despite the challenges, PDAP was well staffed to deal with claims, with full staff, around eight adjusting firms on contract, and around six engineering firms.

Looking back a year later, Folwark says it's not surprising to still see municipalities dealing with the fallout of the disaster a year later.

"It's expected—going back to the municipalities, getting contractors out to rural communities is an issue—each case is unique, and it depends on what the situation is," she says.

For SGI, the flood of 2014 was one of the busiest times in recent history for claims work. Claims were handled in a triage system, in which the worst claims were handled first, as they could have been individuals who lost their entire homes in the flood.

"Summer storm season is a very busy time for SGI Canada. I know that 2014 was one of the worst years as far as storm claims go," says Kelley Brinkworth of

SGI. "We have a system where our staff works overtime and we have adjusters come from other claim centres around the province work on files, so we reallocated resources to areas where we need the help the most. We also hire independent adjusters as well to help out with that sheer volume of work—it was certainly a very busy time of the year, but the past few years have been like that."

According to Brinkworth, SGI received 1,155 claims for the first storm event, for which SGI has incurred a cost of \$31.4 million. For the July 10 storm event in Moosomin, there were 74 claims, incurring a cost of \$1.1 million. Brinkworth did not have an exact number of claims that are closed, but says that most of the claims are settled.

"Some people, when they are rebuilding, are having to wait for a contractor. So, when there's a claim, customers can accept a cash settlement based on the estimates of the repairs, or they can choose their own contractor to have the repairs done, and payment is made to the contractor either by progress payments or a final payment once the customer agrees that everything is satisfactory," she explains. "So, to consider a claim closed, that means it's paid out, but in some cases, people are still rebuilding, so the final payment hasn't been made to the contractor."

In some cases, claims have been rejected because some individuals did not have sewer backup as an optional coverage in their insurance policies.

"This is a devastating situation, and when your home is ruined, and you're losing belongings, some people unfortunately didn't have sewer backup coverage, and that is coverage that has to be in place before a loss occurs. I imagine there were disappointed people for that very reason," Brinkworth says.

Now, SGI is trying to promote preventative measures through social media and online campaigns, promoting things like sewer back water valves and ensuring sump pumps can drain outside if there is another flood event.

Even with preparation, some feel there's little that could have been done to make last year easier on those affected.

"What Moosomin faced last year—there's no real way to just mitigate totally what happened in that heavy downpour," Toth says. "Now we are working with local governments and trying to determine how to mitigate both for today and preparing for the future so we don't have the same challenges we did last year."

# We could have stayed at Moosomin Lake forever . . .

Some vacations require months of planning. It can take weeks and weeks to find the right location, good travel partners, suitable hotel rooms, great food and access to entertainment and beaches.

This summer, however, I stumbled on the "vacation of my dreams" without any prior notice at all. I wasn't even planning a holiday as I plotted how to incorporate my daughter into a work assignment.

My work mission was to take photos of the 6th annual fireworks competition in Moosomin, Sask. I thought it might be fun to have my four-year-old daughter tag along for the experience, so I planned to drive the two hours to the Moosomin Regional Park during her nap time. After that I hoped to snap some excellent photos, plunk her back in the car and drive home. I was smart enough to throw my tent in the car . . . just in case. The sun happened to be shining invitingly as I drove into the scenic Moosomin Regional Park and spied an ideal lake-side camping spot.

So, my four-year-old and I set up our tent and pretended like we had been planning this trip for months, even though we had set out without food, water, lodging or bookings of



Christalee Froese

any kind. We spent the afternoon in sun-soaked bliss on the shores of Moosomin Lake. After the sand castles were built and the snail shells had been collected, we dined on hotdogs and burgers under a prairie sky.

Around 9 p.m. we set up our chairs on the shoreline, cracked open two cans of iced tea bought at the park store, nestled a bag of Popcorn Twists between us and got ready for the show.

From the minute the first fireworks punctuated the evening sky, we were mesmerized. For 29 full minutes we sat in awe of the explosive show set directly overhead of our heads. The fireworks were so stunning and so close that my daughter would sometimes reach up as if she could hold them in

her hand. I took my photos, we cozied up joyfully in our tent and then we decided that if we could make it one night in a tent, surely two nights wouldn't be a problem.

The second day at the beach was even better. We made friends with our next-door tenting neighbors, we had pancakes for breakfast at the park store, we bought a jar of entertaining buttons at the local flea market, we jumped in the bouncy castles, we ate hotdogs and taco-in-a-bag for supper and we settled in again for entertainment evening #2.

The second fireworks show was equally as beautiful and breathtaking as the first. With the colorful explosions dancing artfully to the music and streaming light raining down on us, we couldn't have been more entertained. We snuggled in our tent again. In the morning, I informed my daughter that our impromptu vacation was coming to an end.

"But I wanted to stay here forever," she lamented. "What about your dad and brother at home?" I asked. "They can come here too," she said.

We did eventually head home. But if we would have depended on our hearts to make the decision, we might have stayed at the Moosomin Regional Park forever.

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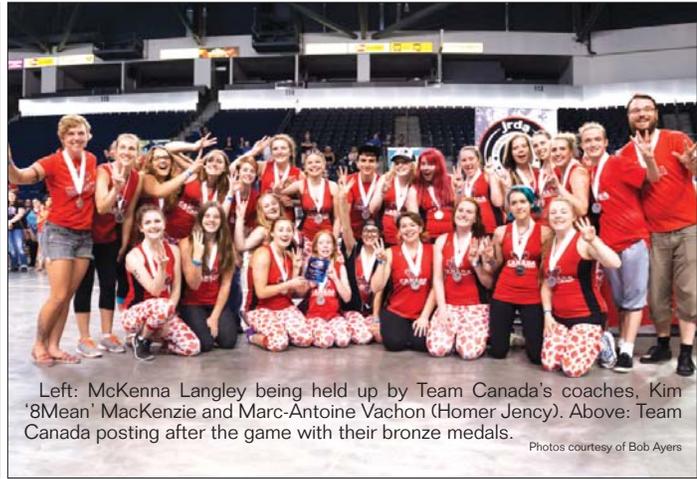
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Left: McKenna Langley being held up by Team Canada's coaches, Kim '8Mean' MacKenzie and Marc-Antoine Vachon (Homer Jency). Above: Team Canada posing after the game with their bronze medals.

Photos courtesy of Bob Ayers

## Rocanville teen competes with Team Canada in Derby Championship

BY JULIA DIMA

McKenna Langley first took an interest in roller derby when she was around nine. At school in Rocanville, she received a note that the Gapland Rollers were recruiting junior roller derby players, and Langley signed up right away. Though she had to wait some time until there was more interest in junior derby to get her start, the moment she was on skates, she fell in love.

She remembers liking the unique and spunky outfits that roller derby is known for, as well as the intensity of the games—getting to shove and push her way around the track is something Langley still loves about the game.

She stuck with the junior roller derby team out of Rocanville, the Smalltown Smashers for years, and now, at 15, Langley has been playing with the senior team, the Gapland Rollers. Typically, in derby, players are considered junior if they are under 18, and the Rollers accept players at 16. However, Langley has built her skills up over the years, and is a competitive member of the Gapland Rollers. For her, derby has become a family.

"My teams, I'd say, are like another family to me, because we all become so close," Langley explains.

As a teen, Langley says derby helped her grow not only her athletic skills, but her personality.

"I used to not have a lot of confidence, but after derby, I felt like I could do anything," she says.

That confidence she'd built up in her years of derby encouraged Langley to take things to the next level.

This year, she applied for tryouts to compete at the Junior Roller Derby Association's World Cup in Kent, Washington. This was the first year the JRDA has held the event.

"I don't really know why I wanted to try out. I saw that there was going to be a team—and this is the first time ever that they are holding a junior world cup. I was pretty confident that I could make it," Langley says.

Tryouts were held across the country in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Toronto. Langley went to tryouts in Edmonton, where she and 30 other skaters were selected. There are 30 skaters selected for each tryout, and the final team selected had 30 players.

"You have to show them stops and stuff, and that was the first hour and a half of the tryout, and then we scrimmaged for an hour afterwards," Langley explains. "You also had to be really positive—if you get mad, you can't have that happen out there, you always have to keep doing it."

At tryouts, Langley says she felt like she was competing at the same level as the other skaters, but she was too focused on her own performance to pay close attention to other people's game.

"I had a lot of confidence going in and coming out of it. I didn't really notice how others were doing, I was just focused on myself," she says.

After tryouts, Langley returned home to Rocanville, and had a suspenseful month and a half of waiting before finding out she made Team Canada.

"When I found out I was so happy. They emailed my mom and she called me at school, and I started freaking out and running down the halls telling everybody—it was a happy moment," Langley says. That was in December, and the team did not get together until May for their first practice, which was held in Calgary. The team only had three practices before hitting the ring for the World Cup. They practiced first in Calgary, and again in Toronto in June, and their last practice was the day before the World Cup started, July 7.

"It was cool to travel. We were doing derby the whole time, but we got to see some stuff, and it was cool to just be there. I've never been past Manitoba going east before," Langley says of the traveling.

During each practice, the teammates were sharing rooms, and hoping to get to know each other. In only three practices, the team had to be ready to work together and represent Canada in the games.

"The Calgary practice was okay. We didn't really know each other and were just starting to get introduced. But in Toronto, we were getting to know each other well and we were comfortable with each other, and when we got to World Cup, it was just like we were friends, and things were better," Langley says. "The more we knew each other, the better we played with each other."

Team Canada was among four teams competing, along with Team Australia, Team USA East and Team USA West. They played their first game on July 8 in the morning against USA East.

"We got beat by quite a bit, but I felt like we played well, so it didn't feel like we really lost," Langley says. "It was pretty mind-blowing to wear a jersey with a maple leaf on it—it felt really good, and so cool to do, because not a lot of people can say that they represented their country."

Canada played six games over the two-day championship, and Langley skated in all six. On Sunday, it was championship day. They played Team Australia for third place and won 258-114. Then, the team went up against USA East in the battle for

silver. Canada lost, and took bronze in the games with a score of 145-67. USA West won the world cup this year, beating the East team 194-139.

At the end of Team Canada's game against USA East, Langley says the bronze did not feel like a loss at all.

"We felt good after that game, so good. We didn't even care if we lost, we were just happy with how well we played and that we were actually there," she says. "After the last jam, we stood up and I wanted to cry, because it was such a great experience to be able to play and meet all the people, and that's when I thought, 'Ah! I actually made Team Canada and I actually did it.' It was mind-blowing all over again."

Throughout the games, Langley says she did not feel nervous, but she was tired after skating in six games over two days. She says that seeing her family—her mom, sister, dad, a family friend, and her boyfriend—in the stands kept her motivated through the tougher parts of the tournament.

"It made me feel better to have them there, every time I looked up at them, I'd get a thumbs up or something, and it just made me smile and remind me that I have to do this," she says.

At the end, Team Canada packed up their gear in the changing rooms, and made it home to their respective towns and cities. Langley says that while she made friends over the weekend she is keeping in touch with, saying goodbye was tough.

"I didn't want it to end. I knew it was going to end, but I didn't expect it to end, I guess. I am just going to miss everybody. It was so much fun," she says. "I don't think I really wanted to let go of it, and I haven't really."

Now, Langley goes back to skating for the Gapland Rollers as #22, 'Bones N' Beauty' as a tougher and more confident skater after competing at the team Canada level. In two years, when the next world cup is held, Langley says she will definitely be trying out again to represent her country at the event.

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|  <p><b>2014 Ford F150 Limited</b><br/>16,000 Kms, Local, Loaded Truck<br/>Stock # 5T191A<br/><b>\$47,928</b><br/>\$375 B/W</p> |  <p><b>2010 Ford Edge</b><br/>Warranty to 200,000 Kms<br/>Stock # 5T193A<br/><b>\$17,998</b><br/>\$144 B/W</p>               |  <p><b>2010 Ford F150</b><br/>Low Kms, Platinum<br/>Stock # 5T033B<br/><b>\$30,129</b><br/>\$236 B/W</p>                                 |  <p><b>2015 Ford F350</b><br/>Platinum, 6.7L, 4X4 So Many Adds.<br/>Stock # 5T184A<br/><b>\$64,981</b><br/>\$501 B/W</p> |  <p><b>2013 Chevy Silverado 3500</b><br/>Duramax, LTZ, Moonroof, Nav.<br/>Stock # 5T014A<br/><b>\$51,956</b><br/>\$405 B/W</p> |   |

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