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Carolyn Arndt  
Branch Manager



## Fewer paramedics, longer waits in rural Manitoba

By Dale Davison  
EMPIRE ADVANCE

The Manitoba Association of Healthcare Professionals (MAHCP) say new data from Shared Health reveals a two-year decline in the number of paramedics available to attend emergency calls in rural Manitoba, from 519 in December 2023 to 485 in December 2025.

At a press conference on April 23, MAHCP President Jason Linklater said, "Government has repeatedly committed, to Manitobans and to paramedics, that they will fix this crisis. They have failed to retain paramedics where they are needed, with more than 70 paramedics lost (in Manitoba) since October 2023, and they are not educating or recruiting enough to fill the growing gaps."

In a letter to Health Minister Azoma Asagwara the MAHCP claims that Shared Health is actively reducing the level of safe emergency medical care available to Manitobans by eliminating vacant Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) positions and replacing them with lower-skilled Emergency Medical Responders. The PCP positions are only vacant because Shared Health is not posting them, particularly in Interlake-Eastern and Southern operational zones."

While MAHCP did not get a direct response from Minister of Health Uzoma Asagwara, Deputy Minister Silvester Komlodi replied stating that no funding has



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

Paramedics available to attend emergency calls in rural Manitoba, drop from 519 in December 2023 to 485 in December 2025.

been removed from PCP positions, and that "some of this funding has been used to hire Emergency Medical Responders (EMRs) to ensure that ambulances can continue operating in communities facing staffing shortages. This approach is being used to maintain service, not to replace PCPs, and it is an approach that municipalities have requested SH take."

However, Kelly McMechan, Reeve of Municipality of Deloraine Winchester stated, "Paramedics can begin assessing people right away...If we could fill all the vacant positions, we could have a paramedic respond to emergency medical calls within 20 minutes. Right now, there's a good chance you're waiting up to an

hour. My community sponsored a resolution that would get people training for those open paramedic positions right away and pay them while they train. That plan received near unanimous support at the Association of Manitoba Municipalities (AMM) convention last fall."

Linklater said, "Our big concern with EMRs is that there's no funded pathway for EMRs to become primary care paramedics...If they just hire EMRs, without that pathway it's a permanent reduced level of service for rural Manitoba."

*Read more on the Manitoba paramedics on page 3...*

**Inside...**



**EVERYTHING FOR THE FARM** P12-13



**ARTS WEST SHOW** P2

# Sinclair artist captures People's Choice award

By VEA Staff  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The 2026 Westman Region Juried Art Show on April 25 was hosted by the Killarney-Turtle Mountain Arts Council, and drew an enthusiastic crowd.

While every piece is professionally adjudicated, the public has an opportunity to vote on their favourite. This year the People's Choice Award was presented to Glenda Cairns Poirier of Sinclair for her 11x14-inch oil painting, Pilgrims.

Best in Show selected by the jurors, was awarded to Jacqui Beckett of Moosomin, Sask., a long-time member of the Hamiota Arts Club, for her 8x10-inch soft pastel work, Keith's Calf.

The two 2026 jurors, Lucie Lederhendler of Brandon and Leona Brown of Winnipeg, provided written feedback on every submitted work.

Juror Leona Brown reflected on the experience of judging art, stating, "Judging work is an honour, but extremely difficult. I have to feel awe and an electric jolt of intent. Then the shapes, values, and colours must be orchestrated to create an emotional experience and a dialogue with the viewer. The best paintings make you ask questions."

A total of 120 artworks were on display, including 68 adult entries, 41 youth entries, and 11 from Touchwood Park (a Neepawa community association that provides support for adults living with intellectual disabilities).

The works were created by artists from 23 communities: Oak Lake, Shoal Lake, Moosomin, Hamiota, Brandon, Killarney, Neepawa, Melita, Alexander, Boissevain, Virden, Shilo, Rapid City, Minnedosa, Reston, Pipestone, Ninette, Hartney, Redvers, Kenton, Sinclair, Deleau, and Portage La Prairie.

### Travelling Gallery

Jurors selected 20 artworks—17 adult, two youth, and one Touchwood Park entry—for the Travelling Gallery. These pieces meet the size criteria for touring (framed dimensions between 11x14 inches and 26x26 inches).

The Travelling Gallery will be exhibited over the next year in 18 communities across the Westman region. The 2026-27 touring schedule will be available soon at the Arts West Council website ([www.artswestcouncil.ca](http://www.artswestcouncil.ca)), along with photos and a blog about the show.



PHOTOS BY ARTS WEST COUNCIL

People's Choice Award was a creation of Glenda Cairns Poirier of Sinclair. She also received an honourable mention for this oil painting, Pilgrims.



Best in Show was awarded to Jacqui Beckett of Moosomin, Sask., a long-time member of the Hamiota Arts Club, for her soft pastel work, Keith's Calf.

THEATRICK PLAYERS PRESENTS...

## Fireside Follies Pub Night

1970's Themed Fundraiser for the Wallace District Fire Department

Virden Legion Hall  
Friday, May 29  
Saturday, May 30  
Doors open at 6pm  
Show starts at 7pm

**Featuring skits from the Carol Burnett Show.**

- Photo booth with props
- 50/50 draw each night
- Live auction for personal table service
- \$5 Pizza by the slice—served at intermission

**Attendees must be 18+**

Tickets \$30 Advance Only

2 performances featuring local talent!

Join the fun and dress up in 1970's costumes!!

Tickets on sale on May 4, 2026  
Farley Kempthorne—463 Seventh Ave

# Lawn & Garden Open House

## Thursday, May 14 | 3:00 - 7:00

Join Us For  
Event Exclusive Offers | Give-A-Ways | Los Bros Food Truck | Door Prizes

Product Demonstrations from:



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## Jolene Toder wins Women of Distinction Award

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Jolene Toder has captured a Business Leadership and Entrepreneur Award through the 2026 YWCA Westman Women of Distinction Awards. Now living at Oak Lake Beach, Toder began her business, JT Interiors, when she was an Elkhorn resident.

Toder said she was initially surprised at her nomination by Val Caldwell, who remarked, "It was a true privilege to nominate you and share with the community what a remarkable woman you are. Not just your success as an entrepreneur, but your generous spirit, dedication to your family, and steadfast commitment to making the world a better and brighter place."

She said, "I was extremely shocked to even be nominated, let alone to win it."

Preferring to stay in the background, when she was first approached about the nomination Jolene put the brakes on.

But at her sons' urging, Toder accepted the nomination. She was asked to provide an overview of her business, her role in the community, her team, and her efforts to support and mentor women.

At the awards evening on April 15, she was surrounded by her family and friends. As her sons, seated further down the row, were chatting back and forth, they sent her a text. She calls, "It said something like, 'A lifetime of hard work, you so deserve this.' That's when I started to cry. That means more when your sons say it."

Recognizing other nominees in her category as "amazing women," Jolene had no formal response prepared, but in response to the award and to the hundreds of congratulations on Facebook she said, "I will begin by saying what an honour it was to be nominated alongside the other four women in this category..."

"Thank you to the YWCA Westman, Val Caldwell, my team, and my friends and family. Thank you for the bottom of my heart."

### JT Interiors

What began as a small interior design business more than 20 years ago, Toder's JT Interiors has grown into a



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jolene Toder with her award - Business Leadership and Entrepreneur - is surrounded by her family: Erin Coulter, Logan Toder, Jolene, Chance and Layne Toder, and Jolene's mum (Nana) Joan Fletcher.

full-service operation offering in-home and online consultations, as well as 3D and virtual reality design.

Built around flexibility while raising a family, Toder's business has expanded alongside a strong, primarily female team of skilled professionals.

"The reason my team works so well on the design part is that it's mostly women ... From our cleaners, to our painters, to our tile installers, to our cabinetry, to our blinds ... we have this amazing network of women who are just smart, brilliant and overachievers."

She says JT Interiors has been built on collaboration, mentorship, and respect across the trades she works with.

She contrasts her business with what we may have seen on HGTV: "Women yelling at the trades, and trying to get by that stigma — that that's not what we're here to do. We're here to lighten your load. We're going to make this really easy. ..."

"We're supported by some of our trades who are men, who have respected a woman's input the whole time."

"I just love the fact that we are now supporting women in trades, supporting women in small business ... Even our seamstress, our reps are women — there's just so many ..."

"I still decorate at Home Hardware seasonally. When the season changes, those are my girls coming in behind and helping us out. It's been fantastic."

## Fewer paramedics, longer waits in rural Manitoba

*continued from page 1*

Wayne Chacun MAHCP Director for Prairie Mountain Health South noted that B.C. and Saskatchewan have increased funding for training EMRs to become PCPs. He added, "In the BC model, it (costs) \$3 Million and they had many more recruited into that program than we're looking to in Manitoba... In our view, the responsibility is there for government to meet whatever the cost is to ensure that happens."

Chacun stated, "Currently there's about 100 PCP education seats in the province. That number has not changed in any significant way in the past decade... We feel that the seats need to be substantially increased in Manitoba. Increasing it from 100 to 120 isn't going to cut it. We need at least 50 to 100 more seats. And these need to be accessible in rural Manitoba... If people can get educated where they work, they're more likely to stay."

Manitoba needs more young people entering the paramedic profession, but past sponsorship programs that supported recruitment are no longer in place, MAHCP says. The organization is urging the province to reinstate those supports, including hiring candidates committed to a paramedic career and paying them while they work and complete their primary care paramedic training, Chacun explained.

Chacun stated, "Currently, primary care paramedic (PCP) education is only available in person in a few communities. These are all full-time, in-person only options, but if we want to fill rural paramedic vacancies, we need to deliver paramedic education in the rural areas."

"Flexible part-time and distance learning options should also be available for paramedic education. The Nurse Practitioner program at the University of Manitoba offers both full-time and part-time options. Students can complete their coursework remotely through online learning."

MAHCP is calling on the provincial government to implement a series of measures to rebuild the paramedic workforce. These include increasing the number of primary care paramedic (PCP) training seats, with a focus on rural access, and creating a subsidized "earn-as-you-learn" pathway to help emergency medical responders (EMRs) upgrade to PCPs. The association is also urging Shared Health to post all vacant PCP positions, introduce recruitment and retention incentives for hard-to-fill locations, and cover travel and accommodation costs to encourage temporary shift coverage there. In addition, MAHCP is proposing a mentorship premium for paramedics working alongside EMRs, to recognize the added responsibility.

## Letter to the Editor RE: Choosing the right leaders

My concern is the Urban attitude that appears to be trying to dominate our world. In this last week, there was an AMM conference in Brandon. One of the topics was Escalating Threats and Violence to Municipalities. For what it is worth from my experience as a Reeve, I sent the following note to AMM in Portage. My involvement with AMM executives, tells me probably this note will be crumpled and put in the garbage pail.

I was once the Reeve for 8 years on a local council and from my experience would like to comment on the topic of escalating threats and violence to members of Municipalities.

First, we seem to live more and more in a world about ME and I instead of WE and US. Whether it be a community person or staff or councillor in the municipality, it seems that if it's not for me then we have a problem.

My involvement observed more than this. I always felt that there needed to be some minimum qualification parameters in order for someone to be qualified to run as a councillor. People say this would not be democratic, but if you want the world to improve, you should be guiding winners and not losers to run as a council representatives. The issues I observed were:

- Some councillors made decisions on yesterday negatives and not tomorrow positives or would vote on hate or promote fear with change as there was no foresight.
- They were not caught up with today's world so how can you make decisions for tomorrow.

- They could not understand or accept new technology.
- They are afraid to make a decision, so would blame someone else for their own lack of a decision.
- They could not manage their own small business, so what qualifies them to make \$10,000,000 decisions.
- They could not handle money, and they cannot understand the difference of investment compared to wasteful spending or finding value with spending.
- They would hire people who they knew instead of for the proper qualifications.
- Computer skills should be a requirement in today's world.

Why should a character with questionable conduct that can only follow, have an opportunity to be in a leadership position. You would want someone with ambition and not a freeloader.

There are those that were irrational and radical so their decisions were blurred and could be public s-t disturbers with false information perhaps you could say dishonesty prevailed with the public.

All in all, there are many rural councillors that need better qualifications to represent their constituents. Their Old Boys Club attitude was fill their own pocket with personal benefit therefore you can see how some community people who are stressed can react in a threatening manner if their councillor is not qualified or is there for the wrong reason.

Vince Heaman  
Virden, Manitoba

### Virden & Area Food Cupboard

The volunteers of the Virden & Area Food Cupboard want to thank the people and businesses of Virden and surrounding area who have supported us over the last 25 years enabling us to provide food to those in need in our community.

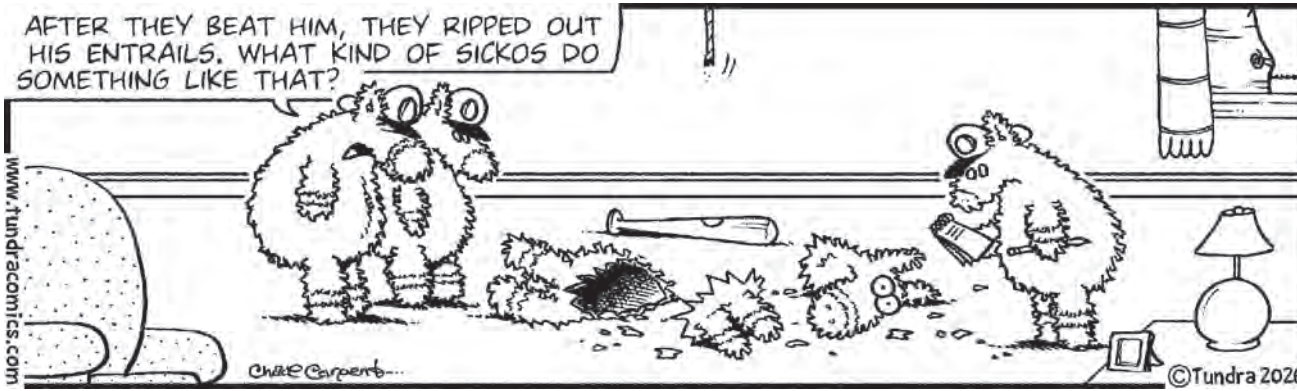


You are invited to an afternoon coffee and dessert party on May 8th at Sacred Heart Catholic Hall from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.



# Tundra

By Chad Carpenter

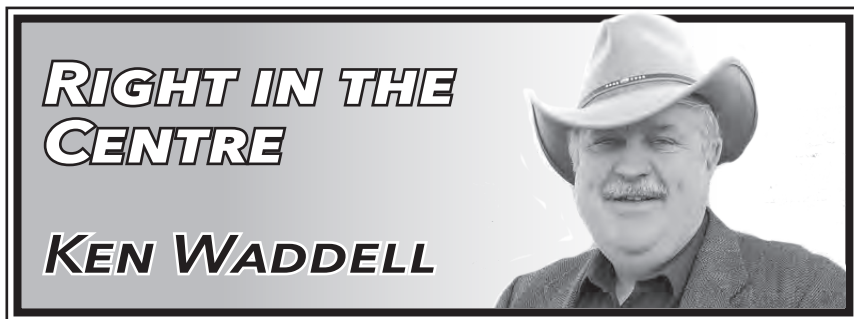


Hidden in our house basement are a number of projects. The most prominent one is boxes and boxes of photos and memorabilia. The family photos date back to around 1900 and as the decades have gone by, the production of photos has elevated.

The earliest photo is one of my paternal grandparents on their wedding day. My parents kept a lot of photos as well but due to the busy-ness of life kept them from compiling them in an orderly fashion. When my Dad and Mum died in 1986 and '87, it fell to me to organize the photos. It went pretty well but it was emotionally gruelling. As many people find out after the passing of their parents, questions wave over you. Like, why didn't I ask them about this event or that photo. Fortunately, I have a pretty good memory, had fairly talkative parents and so I was able to piece together the narrative. Grandparents were born and raised in Scotland and northern England, immigrated in 1911 and 1913. They lived in Montreal, then Christieville. After the loss of the farm and a child they moved to Emo, Ontario and then to Winnipeg. After grandfather's early demise to cancer, grandma gathered her four adult boys together and somehow they made a living. They all worked. In fact the second oldest boy went to work as a watchmaker's apprentice when he was only 10, back in the Quebec days. My mother and father met through the local church group.

My maternal grandparents had come from Edinburgh, worked various places, lived on a farm at Wapella, Saskatchewan and then, also after losing a child, moved to Winnipeg. They lived in the Somerset block where Grandpa was the caretaker. I have a precious piece of paper in my possession with the names of business men signing and attesting a reference for Grandpa. I never met with either grandfather as they passed away 16 and 20 years before I was born.

## Picture this



I have long roots in south-western Manitoba. In 1933, my parents established a small hard scrabble farm near Muir, Manitoba. Where's Muir you may ask? It's south and east of Gladstone and nearby school districts include Silver Stream and Golden Stream. Quite frankly, they had a very tough time there and when WWII broke out, my dad left mum and my two brothers on the farm and "joined up" with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles army unit. My wife Christine was born and raised at Scarth, Manitoba, about eight miles south of Virden.

The Waddell family moved into the St. James area of Winnipeg. After the war, dad, mum and my two brothers moved to Holland, Manitoba and on slightly better farm, they lived there for 40 years. So that brings us to 1987 when this somewhat saddened man gathered up the boxes of pictures and dived in. It was emotionally draining. That is perhaps the reason that the small mountain pictures hasn't gotten all the attention they should have received.

But the time has come for a completion of sorting pictures, discarding the poorly focussed ones and labelling the rest.

I know it's somewhat foolish, but I want our kids, our four grandkids and four great grandchildren to know at least some of the family history as to

where we came from and where we have been.

In our life together, Christine and I and our family has been through some interesting times. There are pictures of babies, young boys, 4-H calves and community parades. There have been many building projects. We have now been in our current house for 16 years but in the 56 years of marriage we have lived in 12 different homes. Christine says that every building we have lived in was left in better shape than when we arrived. She also says a good wife can put up with unpainted Gyproc for three years and yes, she has proven that a few times. Our ancestors did whatever was needed to survive as have many other families. Even in our lifetimes, we have had many careers including university newspaper publisher as early as 1968, university politician and research assistant. Then came being an Ag-Rep, a farmer, an auctioneer, farm advisor, community newspaper publisher and a would-be politician. Now being a publisher for 36 years would hopefully dispel doubts from my earlier career where critics might have been tempted to say this guy can't hold a job.

Wish me luck with the latest task at hand.



## And a warm welcome...

This may come as a surprise to many of you; I am an introvert. There are hours of solitude before and after public times; long walks, quiet sitting, reading and some game playing. People are important to me, and I want to show respect, acceptance and caring. Sometimes it takes an effort. Probably the same for many others, but unless we speak of it, we feel alone.

This line of thought began after a conversation with my sister. She had visited a church in another town. My first question was if there was anyone she knew that attended there. One couple, but they were away that Sunday. She mentioned how at home her heart felt with the four part singing and the basic sermon, and how welcoming the members had been. There was a time when our faith family was an extension of our birth family and the sense of belonging was real and significant. May that still be so. It's important to me to become friends, at least friendly, with other people in my church and community. Years ago when Ed and I began attending a new to us church, my goal was to speak to at least three people each Sunday. My rule was that the conversation could not be limited to the weather! Every person is so unique and each one of us has an important story - a desire to tell it, and a need to be heard.

There used to be a custom that at one point in a service you were encouraged to shake someone's hand, and exchange a greeting. The pandemic changed that. There is one handshaking story, told by my very favourite old neighbour - God bless him -, that changed the way I see welcoming time. Mr. Pete was a guest in a church, he never said if it was a large church or a small church, he simply said that for all the warm words of welcome, there was no actions that showed that value. As the congregation was invited to rise, mingle and greet someone, he stood as well. Watched for a moment and realized that he was not going to be approached. So he firmly placed his right hand into his left hand, gave it a warm welcome shake and sat back down. I have so much love and respect for this gentleman, (and I know with him being long gone I should say I 'had' rather than 'have, but I have, and will always have that love and respect for him) that I still want to go speak to that fellowship! And, perhaps I do carry a grudge?

The fact of the matter is that if you want friends you need to show yourself friendly. Not as easy to do as to say. There are different personality types - thank goodness!- different lines of interest and hobbies, again thankfully, and we all have such very different building blocks. Some of us struggle with lack of self esteem, and I can attest to the fact that counselling helps, and some of us are simply quieter people. And that's ok! We find our family. We find a warm welcome.

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Facility Bookings: 204-748-2440

Emergency After Hours: 204-851-5540

## Summer Employment Opportunities

### Virден Public Swimming Pool

**Head Lifeguard/Assistant Head Lifeguard:**

- 2-3 years previous Instructor experience plus certifications listed below.

Applications will be accepted until April 30, 2026 at 4:00 PM.

Please include the following along with your resume and cover letter:

- Copies of all relevant certifications (required)

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

Faye Pope - Office Manager,  
Town of Virден ~ Box 310, Virден, MB, R0M 2C0  
Email: office.manager@virден.ca

## Employment Opportunity

### Manager of Utilities

The Town of Virден is accepting applications for the full-time position of Manager of Utilities.

Under the general direction of the Operations and Facilities Manager, the position oversees and manages the full spectrum of utility services (water and wastewater) and supervises Operations staff with certifications in any of the four water and wastewater operator disciplines. They will assist the Operations and Facilities Manager with the direction and work planning for Utilities. They will be expected to communicate professionally with both residents and contractors. The position will provide administrative support and assistance to the Operations and Facilities Manager in this area.

Full job description is available on the Town of Virден website.

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

Neil Smith, Chief Administrative Officer  
Town of Virден  
Box 310, Virден, MB, R0M 2C0  
Email: cao@virден.ca

## Tax Prepayment Discounts

The Town of Virден offers tax prepayment discounts as outlined below to taxpayers wishing to pay an installment or installments on their 2026 property taxes.

Those wishing to prepay may pay an amount or a series of amounts that in total does not exceed the amount of their 2025 property taxes. The discount rate is equivalent to an effective annual interest rate of 3%.

Month of Payment	Discount Rate	Savings on \$1000.00
May	1.25%	\$ 12.50
June	1.00%	\$ 10.00
July	0.75%	\$ 7.50

Tax prepayments made in the months of August, September or October will be accepted at par and can be made via Online Banking, Telephone Banking, E-Transfer, or through our Drop Box located at the main doors of our office at 236 Wellington Street West.

## Public Notice: Spring Clean Up

### April 28 – May 19

- Town crews will pick up refuse excluding industrial waste
- Leaves and grass must be bagged or boxed
- Occasional branch trimming pickup only
- All material must be placed on the boulevard or lane
- To ensure pick up or for more information, please call the Town Office at 204-748-2440.

### Upcoming Council Meetings

May 5 & 21 ~ Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM  
Financial Plan Public Hearing May 7

## Cemetery Donations

### September 1, 2025 – April 15, 2026

- The Norsworthy Family
- Jack & Lois Forsyth
- Glynis Van Damme
- Karen Manser
- Evelyn Jorgensen
- Glenda Clarke
- Linda Lane
- Herb Manser
- Donna Smith
- Len Collier
- Lawrence Langlois
- Betty Anderson
- Lorraine Langlois
- Jeff Jorgensen
- Shirley Gibson
- Richard Ward
- Doug Gatey
- Keith Pearn
- Tonya Schneider
- William Downing
- Marie Plaisier Jack
- Judy Poole
- Gladys McNeill
- Richard Wark
- Alex Grieve
- Lillian Wadham
- Lucy Younge
- Kent Mathison
- Lorie Coughlin
- Judy & Brian Mytopher
- Raymond Nield
- Nield Family Foundation
- John & Helen Godophin Fund
- Dellan & Ian Cameron Fund
- John Lund Fund
- July L Poole
- Jo-Anne Milne
- Evelyn O'Dell
- Dale Van Loo
- Myrtle Woolderidge
- Kelly Weber
- Janice Simpson
- Gina Reiner
- Denise Mayo
- Karen Naumiuk
- Eleanor Opper
- Shelley Andres
- Carol Polk
- William Elliott
- Margaret Gabrielle
- Linda Plaisier
- Marilyn Schur
- John Cameron
- Heather Patterson
- Welsh Doug Leslie
- Karen Anderson
- Linda White
- Caroline Grieg
- Karen Hopley
- Mary Anne Hagan
- Tom & Bev Naylen
- Bonnie LaPante
- Maxine Chacun
- Donald Blakely
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- Rolla Lund Fund
- Glen Gardiner Fund
- Helen Carscaden Fund
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## HELEN DRYSDALE

### OUT OF HELEN'S KITCHEN

Today's recipe book featured is the "Reunion Recipes, 1917 to 1994" of J.M. Young School and Eden Consolidated School from Eden Manitoba. The cookbook was published with a twofold purpose, to raise funds for the new playground structure and to celebrate the 1994 Eden school reunion. In 1917 several local schools joined together to form Eden Consolidated School. The school was a large two story brick building with classrooms on two levels. The furnace and the washrooms were in the basement, and the attic was used for storage. This large school building offered high school classes. Pupils living more than a mile away were transported by horse and van with hired drivers.

In 1962 a new school was built and it opened in 1963. This new elementary school had a gymnasium, a science lab and a kitchen facility. The school was named J. M. Young School in honor of long time school trustee James Miller Young. In 1970 five more classrooms were added and a resource media center. The old school was demolished after the new school was expanded. The high school students were bused to Neepawa.

Does anyone recognize some of these teachers' names?

"Stella Whaley (Birnie), Emma Dianne Randall, Mrs. Margaret Lowry, Mrs. Vera Birnie, Orma Baker, Remi Bouchard, Don Clark, Mrs. Dorothy Cook, William Jordan, Richard Hanke, Eleanor Harris, Robert Hobbs, and lastly Mrs. Doris Griffith." Doris taught at Eden School for 31 years. She donated her scrapbooks from her years of teaching to the Beautiful Plains Museum.

#### Lentil pizza

Betty Anne Aitken (Scott)

- |                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| 1 1/2 cup lentils       | 1 bay leaf                             |
| 3 cups water or stock   | 2 medium sized potatoes                |
| 1/4 cup yogurt          | 1 tsp. each: sea salt, thyme, oregano, |
| 1 large onion, chopped  | 1 tsp. each: basil, garlic powder      |
| 1 green pepper, chopped | 2 cups tomatoes, finely chopped        |
| 2 Tbsp. butter          | 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese       |

Cook lentils and bay leaf in water or stock for 45 minutes or until they are soft. Remove bay leaf. Mash lentils add one half cup chopped onions, dash of basil, oregano and garlic powder. Cook potatoes and mash finely adding approximately 1/4 cup yogurt and 1 tablespoon butter. Add salt and seasonings. Sauté tomatoes, peppers and onions until thick and sauce like. Butter an oven proof dish, place lentils in it, cover with onion-tomato mixture and top with mashed potatoes. Top with mozzarella cheese and bake in preheated oven at 325°F to 350°F oven, approximately 30 minutes or until the cheese is lightly browned and bubbly. Makes six servings.

#### Picante Potato Pie

Warren Babcock

- 2 1/2 cups frozen hash brown potatoes, thawed
- 5 eggs, beaten
- 2/3 cup picante sauce
- 1 cup shredded Monterey Jack or Swiss cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 green onions, chopped
- 6 slices bacon, crisply cooked and crumbled

Combine all the ingredients except bacon, mixing well. Pour lightly greased 9-inch pie plate. Bake at 350°F for 25-30 minutes or until set. Remove from oven. Sprinkle with bacon, continue baking for 5 minutes more. Serve with additional picante sauce.

#### Banana Coffee Cake

Elizabeth Sumner, Principal from 1976 – 1980

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 cup butter or margarine         | 2 cups sugar                         |
| 2 eggs, beaten                    | 1 tsp. vanilla                       |
| 2 1/2 cups mashed bananas         | 3 cups flour                         |
| 2 tsp. baking powder              | 2 tsp. soda                          |
| 1 cup sour cream                  | 1 tsp. cinnamon                      |
| 1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar | 1 package semi-sweet chocolate chips |

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream together butter and sugar. Add beaten eggs, beat until smooth. Add vanilla and mashed bananas; mix until smooth. Sift together flour, baking powder and baking soda. Add to banana batter gradually and alternating with sour cream. End with dry ingredients. Pour one half the batter into a greased 9X13 inch cake pan. Combine cinnamon and brown sugar. Sprinkle half this mixture over batter. Top with one half of the chocolate chips. Repeat layers. Bake 45-50 minutes. Serves 8-12.

#### Rhubarb Matrimonial Cake

Cynthia Le Boutillier (Makwaychuk)

- |                     |                                      |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2 1/2 cups oatmeal  | 2 1/2 cups flour                     |
| 1/2 tsp. salt       | 2 tsp. baking powder                 |
| 1 tsp. baking soda  | 1 1/2 cup brown sugar                |
| 1 3/4 cup margarine |                                      |
| Filling:            |                                      |
| 7 cups rhubarb      | 1 1/2 cups sugar                     |
| 1 tsp. lemon juice  | 1 pack strawberry or raspberry Jello |
| 2 1/2 Tbsp. tapioca |                                      |

Filling: Combine all the ingredients; cook until rhubarb is soft. Do this before and cool well.

Rub the first seven ingredients together as you would for matrimonial cake. Press one half the crumbs into a 9X13 inch cake pan. Spread filling over the bottom layer. Top with remaining crumbs. Bake at 350°F for 45 minutes.

## Four bands in the AUD to support arts fundraiser



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Teagan Verner explains her visual art will be a door prize to advance ticket holders.

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

If you believe in the arts, if you love live music, the big band sound and jazz of any kind, you won't want to miss this concert coming to the Virden AUD Theatre.

Arts Mosaic board member Teagan Verner is not only a visual artist, but has lived and breathed music.

At the concert, you'll hear the Brandon Community Band, Melita Jazzers, Vincent Massey Senior Jazz and the Westman Jazz Orchestra.

"I basically lived in the Crocus (Plains) band room when I was in high school. I was there from 7:30 in the morning on a Tuesday all the way to just about 9 p.m. ... most of my days spent in the band room."

Verner has put together a May concert for the AUD Theatre featuring four bands in support of

local school music programs and Arts Mosaic.

Arts Mosaic manager Alix Potrebka explains: "Teagan is a member of two of the bands performing, as well as sitting on our board, so she is uniquely passionate about the success of all the programs benefiting. She is also lending her skills as a painter to the fundraiser, as she is creating an original painting for the door prize."

A featured piece by the Brandon Community Band will be band member Paul Routledge's arrangement of "Quartet for Band," a tribute to his mentor, the late Wally Ost.

Verner is excited about the music and about the concert's purpose.

"I'm hoping we sell out of seats because it is a fundraiser ... for not only Arts Mosaic, but also for the three participating school band programs. [The Brandon] Com-

munity Band is part of Crocus' band program. Melita Jazzers is part of their school band program and Vincent Massey is a school band program."

Potrebka says: "Support the love of music in Westman with a lively night of jazz music. Join us Tuesday, May 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the AUD Theatre in Virden."

### VIRDEN LIONS HALL



CALL TO BOOK YOUR  
SPECIAL EVENT  
204-264-0785

230 Nelson St W • Virden, MB

Hall capacity is limited based on current Manitoba Public Health restrictions/guidelines; renters and attendees must comply with up-to-date Manitoba Public Health Orders.

# Fire destroys a Griswold area home



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Multiple fire trucks worked hard to try and save this home but did not win this fight. The family was unharmed.

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On Sunday, April 26, a family who live near Griswold, Ernie and Debbi Thiessen, lost their home to a fire. Most importantly, the family is unharmed.

Daughter-in-law Jolene Thiessen said the family got their cars to safety but were without a phone immediately following this disaster. She said, "They are safe but have lost nearly everything."

Chief David Houston of Sifton Fire Department said crews responded to the structure fire at 7:40pm Sunday with 12 of their members and two water tankers. They called in Whitehead and Sioux Valley Dakota Nation fire departments to supply two more water trucks each, with crew.

Houston said the blaze was well underway when

the Sifton firefighters arrived and that the cause of the fire was as yet undetermined.

Virden paramedics and Virden RCMP attended the scene, as they do when a structure is involved.

Jolene's Facebook carries an appeal to support Ernie and Debbi:

"In the week following the fire a Thiessen Support Fund has been set up at Fusion Credit Union in Oak Lake for anyone who would like to offer financial support. We hope that the strength and generosity of our community can help ease some of the burden they are facing. Find details at [www.facebook.com/jolene.i.thiessen](http://www.facebook.com/jolene.i.thiessen)



Public Notice is hereby given that Enbridge Pipelines Inc. (Enbridge) intends to conduct the following Pesticide Program from June 1, 2026 – November 15, 2026, to control noxious weeds on Enbridge ROW's, temporary workspaces, stations, and various facilities along the Enbridge Mainline and Bakken corridors. The herbicide active ingredients to be used include:

- MCPA Ester
- Saflufenacil
- Carfentrazone-ethyl
- Pyraflufen-ethyl
- Bromoxynil
- Clopyralid
- Glyphosate
- Dicamba
- 2, 4-D
- 2, 4-DB
- Aminopyralid
- Propyzamide
- Indaziflam
- Chlorsulfuron
- Fluroxypyr
- Aminocyclopyrachlor
- Aminopyralid
- Diflufenopyr
- Metsulfuron-methyl
- Picloram
- Mecoprop-P
- Adjuvant

Any person may, within 15 days after the notice is published, send a written/email submission to the department below, regarding the control program or register with the department their written objection to the use of pesticide next to their property.

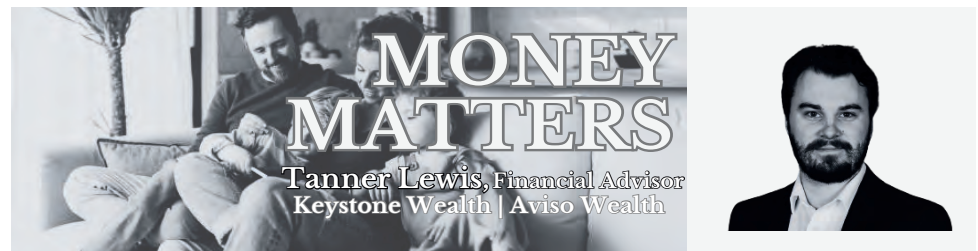
Environment and Climate Change  
Environmental Approvals Branch  
14 Fultz Boulevard (Box 35)  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
R3Y 0L6  
[pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca](mailto:pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca)

# Hidden Treasures Donations



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Hidden Treasures, Judy Lochhead(L) and Marilee Smeltz (R), presenting a donation to Senior Helping Hands, accepted by Keri Vinck (middle) on March 11, 2026 at the Annual General Meeting. Senior Helping Hands, was given \$950. This was for the purchase of a 70" TV and wall mount.



**MOST COMMON MISTAKES IN FARM SUCCESSION PLANNING**  
Farm succession planning isn't just about passing down land—it's about preserving a family legacy, ensuring financial security, and maintaining harmony across generations. Yet many farm families make critical mistakes that can derail even the best intentions. Here are the three most common pitfalls and how to avoid them.

**Mistake #1:** Many farmers delay succession planning until retirement is imminent—or worse, until a health crisis forces quick decisions. This often leads to rushed agreements, tax inefficiencies, and family conflict. **How to Avoid It:** Start early. Begin conversations years in advance and create a roadmap for ownership transfers, tax strategies, and retirement income. Early planning gives you flexibility and peace of mind.

**Mistake #2:** Passing down farmland and equipment without considering tax consequences can trigger significant capital gains and estate taxes. Families often underestimate these costs, leaving heirs with unexpected bills. **How to Avoid It:** Work with professionals to design tax-efficient strategies using tools like estate freezes, trusts, and lifetime capital gains exemptions. Proper planning can save thousands and protect your farm's financial health.

**Mistake #3:** Succession plans often fall apart because family members aren't on the same page. Assumptions about roles, ownership, and fairness can lead to resentment and disputes. **How to Avoid It:** Hold family meetings and document decisions clearly. Transparency ensures everyone understands the plan and feels included, reducing the risk of conflict.

Succession planning is more than a financial exercise—it's about protecting what you've built and ensuring it thrives for generations.

By planning early, you create stability for your family, clarity for your business, and confidence for the next generation. It's not just about avoiding mistakes—it's about building a legacy that lasts.

At Keystone Wealth Management, we understand the unique challenges farm families face. Our team works closely with you to:

- Develop a customized succession plan that aligns with your family's goals and business needs.
- Optimize tax strategies using proven tools like estate freezes and capital gains exemptions.
- Facilitate family discussions to ensure transparency and reduce conflict.
- Coordinate with accountants and legal professionals for a seamless, stress-free process.

Our goal is simple:

- help you protect your farm, your family, and your future.

Start early, plan for taxes, and keep communication open. These steps will help you protect your legacy and give the next generation a strong foundation. With Keystone Wealth Management by your side, you can make succession planning a smooth and successful experience.

Mutual funds and other securities are offered through  
Aviso Wealth, a division of Aviso Financial Inc.



**BE ON TIME!**  
Advertising  
deadline:  
**12 noon  
Tuesday**

# Manitoba's Cost-of-Living crisis deepens as inflation tops the provinces

Submitted  
PC CAUCUS

WINNIPEG — Manitoba continues to face some of the worst affordability pressures in the country according to Statistics Canada's latest Consumer Price Index (CPI) data, with the province tying for the highest inflation rate among all provinces and leading the nation in several key household cost categories.

Manitoba posted an overall inflation rate of 3%, tied for the highest in Canada. There are also stark increases in everyday expenses that are putting significant strain on Manitoba families.

Food prices remain a major driver of rising costs. Manitoba recorded the highest food inflation rate in the country at 4.9%, making groceries increasingly unaffordable for many Manitoba families. Within this category, fresh and frozen meat prices jumped a shock-



ing 12.6% compared to last year, a sharp increase that affects staple meals and household budgets across the province.

Dining out has also become more expensive than anywhere else in Canada. Manitoba saw the highest inflation rate for food purchased from restaurants at 5.2%, further squeezing Manitoba families who rely on prepared food due to time, work, or caregiving demands.

Housing-related costs present another significant challenge. Manitoba experienced the highest increase in owned accommodation costs at 5.3%, reflecting rising expenses associated with homeownership, including maintenance, utilities, and financing pressures.

Even more striking is the burden of property taxes.

Manitoba recorded the highest property tax increase in the country at 19.5%, a steep rise that directly impacts homeowners and renters alike, as increased costs are often passed along through higher rents.

"These numbers paint a clear picture: affordability in Manitoba is worsening across the board," said Midland MLA Lauren Stone, PC Critic for Finance. "From groceries and restaurant meals to housing and property taxes, Manitobans are paying more for the basics than Canadians in any other province."

With inflation pressures touching nearly every aspect of daily life, the latest CPI figures underscore the growing financial stress facing Manitoba families and the urgency of addressing cost-of-living challenges in the province.

# Tax Season

By Gerry Nolan  
RIVERS BANNER

It is income tax season again. It is a never-ending season it seems. Yuk!!

It all started on September 20, 1917, through the Income War Tax Act. It was created as a [Temporary] measure to finance the war and act as a [inscription of wealth] to match the inscription of men. Prior to 1917, the federal government relied on tariffs, which were insufficient to cover wartime debt. President Donald Trump said just the other day that with Tariffs being an income to the United States, families may not have to pay tax any more as the tariffs would be sufficient to run the country. Not sure on that one!

Some of the key details on the origin of the Canadian Income Tax are that the government needed funds for war expenses and managing the resulting debt. Sounds fair enough!

It was to be a "Temporary" measure. The finance minister at that time was Sir Thomas White who introduced the tax and asked that it be reviewed

after the war, but it was never reviewed. I think the government today could do that and do away with the tax, couldn't they?

The initial rate in 1917 was to be 4 per cent for single people and higher amounts for married people. The Income War Tax Act was officially made a permanent part of the fiscal system in 1948.

Financing the war was going to be costly. The Government's debt quintupled from 335 million dollars in 1914 to 1.6 billion dollars by 1919. The government had introduced mandatory military service [conscription]. There was high public demand to force wealthier Canadians to contribute to the war effort.

While income tax may seem natural and inevitable to us today, it was met with resistance and considered a significant burden. It still is! It does seem though Canadians pay the tax with no resistance at all!

Now, married people and single people have identical federal personal exemption at around 15,000 dollars. The top federal rate is 33 per cent. When you add provincial tax rates, the total marginal rate is 54.8 per cent. Let that sink in!

The Canadian Revenue Agency collects this money to pay for the government operation expenses and to deliver services. The money is used for hospitals,

schools, police, libraries, roads, prisons and CBC.

The government redistributes money to low-income families, employment insurance, old age pension and social assistance. Deadline day to pay your tax is April 30.

What the government does not tell you is when you have paid into all this during your life is that when you collect on any of the pensions, you are TAXED again!

I understand why we pay taxes, I just wish I could actually see where the tax dollar goes to improve our country. The prisons full, the roads a mess, the police short-handed, the hospital staff overworked and we have shortages of EMS staff.

It seems to me we give other nations billions of dollars and penalize the people in Canada with all the shortages in Canada. Some questions for you to consider. Have you looked at your pay stub closely? What does Canada get in return for helping other countries financially?

Every election, the first thing a party will promise is that tax will go down, they will guarantee that. Do not be fooled by that, taxes are not going down anytime soon. The wealthy will get wealthier, the poor less, thus making it easier for the government to control you.

# Canadians want federal government to halt theft of news content by AI companies

Submitted  
BY NEWS MEDIA CANADA

TORONTO, ON--(COMMUNITYWIRE)--71 percent of Canadians agree the Government of Canada should take action to prevent artificial intelligence companies from taking and repackaging news content without permission or providing compensation, according to a new survey conducted for News Media Canada.

"Canadians want the federal government to halt the theft of news content by AI companies, and there are immediate concrete steps the government can take," said Paul Deegan, president and chief executive officer of News Media Canada.

"First, the Minister of Industry should direct the Com-

petition Bureau to conduct a market study into the state of competition with respect to search and AI, with a view to separating Google's crawler into separate crawlers—one for AI and one for search.

Second, the Government should clearly indicate that the Copyright Act will not be amended to include a text and data mining exception.

Third, Public Services and Procurement Canada and Treasury Board should work together to ensure those on the Government of Canada's list of interested artificial intelligence suppliers commit to the principles of transparency, consent, and attribution with respect to all copyright-protected news content."

"Real news, created by real journalists, involves fact-gathering, factchecking, as well as editorial and legal

review, and that costs publishers like me real money," said Dave Adsett, chair of News Media Canada and owner of The Wellington Advertiser.

"We fully support building safe, trusted, and fair AI systems so long as they are not built and maintained at the expense of those who create the underlying intellectual property that feeds them."

The online survey of 2,404 adult Canadians was conducted by Totum Research between December 2025 and January 2026. The maximum margin of error is 2.0% at the 95% confidence level.

About News Media Canada News Media Canada represents more than 500 trusted news titles in every province and territory. For more information, visit [www.newsmediacanada.ca](http://www.newsmediacanada.ca).

# Judging clinic trains new faces for ag fairs



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Judy Oakden of Hamiota is thrilled to be a door prize winner at the Winnipeg judging clinic. The organizer, at random, invited participants to make the draws. Judy blindly reached into the watering can of tickets, drew and when the ticket number was read out, no one was as surprised as she did draw her own number. It was meant to be.

**By Anne Davison**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

“There’s a lot of clubs who are struggling to find judges for their exhibitions,” said the president of the Manitoba Horticultural Society (MHS), Linda Wall. What’s a competition without a judge? So, when the Hamiota Agricultural Society presented the opportunity to participate in a judging clinic, Judy Oakden and I, Anne Davison, took advantage of learning from experts to become certified judges of exhibits at agricultural society fairs. Hand crafts including wood carving, grains, produce, flower displays, photography, preserves, baking and junior exhibits reflect talent, training, skill and creativity. Be it a loaf of bread, basket of blooms, children’s art or a sheaf of wheat, these are celebrated, shared and become an inspiration at local agricultural fairs. Not to mention the fun of competition. The Manitoba Association of Agricultural Societies (MAAS) / Manitoba Horticultural Association

(MHA) clinic was a full day of classes in Winnipeg on April 25. Mid-day lunch provided a grand opportunity to fraternize. We enjoyed talking with a retired biochemist who worked in a wheat laboratory, a judge from Birtle, a fair director from Miami where their ag society is 135 years old, and a botanist with decades in the flower business. Woodcarver, Ric Remillard was a fast-talking wealth of information about everything wood, tools and carving art. Judging criteria for ag fairs and horticultural exhibits included pointers that could also help exhibitors and directors. Although I was baking fluffy biscuits and ‘scratch’ angel food cakes at the age of 10, and stirring up white sauces from memory, yet I learned a lot. To round out a full day of training, MHS president, Linda Wall explained that judging criteria would be common to horticulture, MAAS and 4Hs. She said, “We promote the education of horticultural societies and garden clubs... as a means of beautifying the province.”

Pam McFarlane, the clinic organizer, explained the process of certification. The training means you can become a novice judge in the categories you have trained in and be invited to shadow an experienced certified judge. After shadowing for one competition, you can then be invited to judge along with a registered judge at your next fair? This second time you’re called as a judging novice, an unpaid opportunity for experiencing the pressure of judging along with a certified judge. McFarlane said it is also about gaining confidence. “Having been through these two experiences, do you want to go on to become a registered judge now, or would you like to remain novice and continue to train? That is your decision.” Of note, another MAAS judging clinic is being planned for Oak Lake this spring. This clinic is to include fabric art (quilting) among other disciplines. Those interested should contact the Oak Lake Ag Society.

# Ready Set Grow

**By Gerry Nolan**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

It is almost time, if the weather would warm up, to be planting your garden and flower beds. One thing I just recently discovered is that Dehydrated Alfalfa Pellets are a high fibre, nutrient dense forage supplement for livestock, especially horses and a slow-release organic fertilizer for gardens. It is made out of 100 percent fresh, hot air dried Alfalfa. The pellets provide consistent protein without the dust of hay.

The benefit is that they are high in fibre and can easily be broken down. You can also use Beet Pulp to increase hydration. Combining these 2 products is great for horses as well!

Dehydrated Alfalfa Pellets are hard and are green in colour. They serve as an excellent organic fertilizer. It contains Triaccontanol, a growth stimulant that promotes plant development. You can use it for roses, vegetables, garden beds and container pots. It can be spread directly or soaked in water for faster decomposition. One of the benefits of the pellets is easy storage and low wastage

The pellets are a cheap fertilizer, a bag costs around \$20. It can be purchased at the Valleyview Agro Co-op. As I said, it can be applied directly to your pots. Water well and these pellets will begin to dissolve, thus getting into your soil. You can also put some pellets into a pail and let it soak for about 2 hours and then reach into your pail and break down any pellets that have not dissolved. You can use your bare hands, no need for gloves. By breaking down the pellets, it will give you quicker fertilizer use for your garden or flower beds. The pellets will absorb the water! Just spread some pellets or pellet mud, as I call it, around your plant, water well and watch it grow.

For the flower beds, it may work better if you put the pellet in your bed in the fall, thus they get a quicker start in the spring. I think most people water their flowers daily so in the spring, give your beds lots of water.

Dehydrated Alfalfa pellets are the cheapest fertilizer for a thriving garden, why not give it a try?

## NOTICE

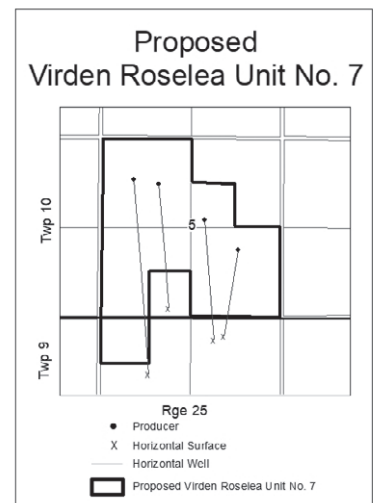
### Under the Oil and Gas Act Viriden Oil Field

Corex Resources Ltd. has made application under The Oil and Gas Act for approval to form Viriden Roselea Unit No. 7 and within implement a waterflood Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR) operations, within the Lodgepole formation. The map below shows the proposed boundaries.

If no valid objection or intervention is received in writing by Manitoba Business, Mining, Trade and Job Creation, Petroleum Branch, at Suite 360 - 1395 Ellice Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3G 3P2 before **May 22, 2026**, the Minister may approve the application.

Copies of the application can be obtained from:

Peter Parkinson  
Corex Resources Ltd.  
Suite 3400, 700 2nd Street SW  
Calgary, AB T2P 2W3  
(403) 718-6371,  
PeterP@corexresources.ca



The application may be viewed in full at: [manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/applications/index.html](http://manitoba.ca/iem/petroleum/applications/index.html)



# Life in the slow lane

By Gerry Nolan  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

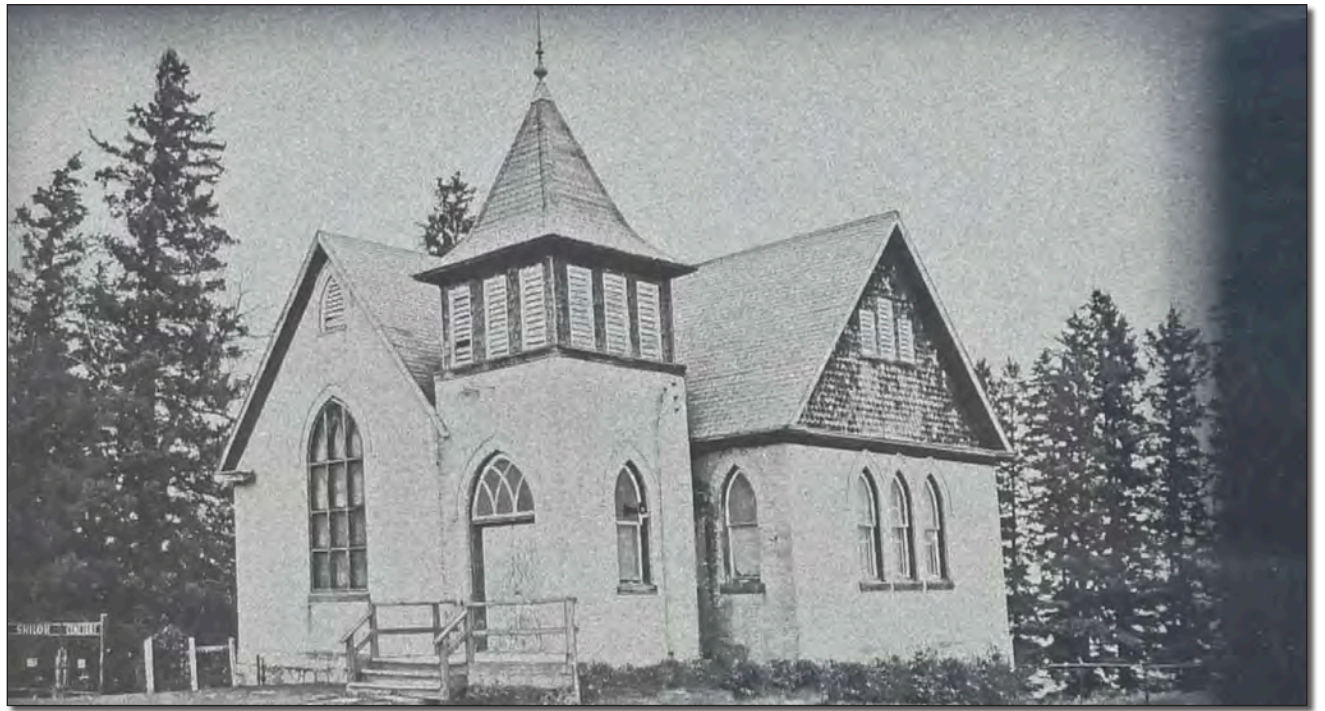
As a youngster growing up south of Harding, the church we attended was Shiloh United Church. At one time as you can see in the picture it was first a Methodist church, then a Presbyterian church before becoming a United Church. Our family did not go to church every Sunday, but my mom Edna Nolan used to play the organ or piano. I believe our first minister that I can recall was Reverend Armstead followed by Reverend Ken Beal. There were probably others, but I forget who they were.

Shiloh Church no longer stands but a cairn is in its place. The cemetery is beside where the church stood. I purchased a cemetery plot in 1982 for \$8. I am sure it is more than that now.

Mrs. Edna Sangster was my Sunday school teacher. Later in life when I taught Sunday School, I came to appreciate her more for all the work and time she put into the lessons she taught us. Trust me, it isn't easy to prepare a lesson.

Other memories of Shiloh Church were white gift Sunday. The Sunday School picnic day where we played ball which was organized by Mr. Lloyd Bond.

There were also the fowl suppers. It was time for the community to get together and break bread together, talk about harvest and in general just visit.



Shiloh United Church.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

One of the fowl supper stories is that my mom took 2, count them 2 pumpkin pies to the fowl supper. Now you could go back for seconds or thirds, just eat as much as you wanted. Well brother Garth liked the pumpkin pie so much that at the supper the beggar ate all of mother's pumpkin pies. And he was not one bit sorry about that either! I will have to ask him if he still likes pumpkin pie? Are you kidding me, he loves pies!

The Church was not only a place of worship, but also a place in our community that stood out. Many weddings were performed there along with funerals. Most of the people in our community are buried there, may they rest in peace. My parents Melville and Edna rest in Shiloh cemetery so there are frequent visits.

## CBC should go where other media can't - not where they are



By Tim Shoultz  
PUBLISHER, ST. ALBERT GAZETTE

CBC should step in only where local media has vanished, not duplicate efforts in towns with established dailies, TV, radio and online news.

I listen to a lot of podcasts when

I'm driving around town – everything from Canadian history and politics to British satire to a lot of media industry podcasts from Canada and the U.S. If you're a podcast listener, you'll know that there's a lot more ads on them lately, from local car dealers to tech platforms to mattress ads. (So. Many. Mattress. Ads.)

I was listening to a podcast recently when I heard a new ad that surprised me.

"Local news is in decline across Canada," said a strident voice over some stirring music.

"And that's bad news for all of us. Rumours and misinformation fill the void, and it gets harder to separate truth from fiction."

OK, you've got my attention, strident voice actor. Go on.

"That's why CBC News is putting more journalists in more places across Canada, reporting on the ground from where you live, telling the stories that matter to all of us. Because local news is big news. Choose news, not noise. CBC News."

It's a good thing I don't drink coffee in the car, because I probably would have choked at that point.

Don't get me wrong: I'm not a CBC hater. I think a country with as much geography and as little population as Canada absolutely needs a public broadcaster to knit the country together with national and regional coverage, and to cover the communities that just can't support private media outlets to serve them.

But there's the rub: CBC spends a tremendous amount of its resources covering communities that already have local news outlets – some of them, like us, locally owned and operated. That's unnecessary duplication, at your expense.

And they're adding more.

In addition to its \$1.4 billion in funding from the federal government and the hundreds of millions more it pulls in advertising and subscriber fees (competing with private media in the process), CBC is getting \$7 million a year from Google as its share of the Online News Act. This is the same fund that has provided funding to community news organizations like ours. At Great West, we gave our share directly to our local reporters, bringing their wages up for the first time in years.

CBC used that money last year to hire another 30 reporters in communities across Canada, which is great. The problem is, it's not in places like Gibbons or Legal that have no community news, but towns like Red Deer and Medicine Hat, which already have daily newspapers, private TV station, multiple radio stations and online news outlets. Towns like Banff, that are already served by community news outlets like our very own Rocky Mountain Outlook – a bureau they're now expanding to two reporters.

Better still, it's poaching those reporters from community news companies – two last year from our company alone, offering wages we can't even come close to, even with our new funding.

I have no problem with CBC stepping in to fill the gap in actual news deserts – communities that have lost their local news organizations, either recently or many years ago.

But covering communities that are well-served by local media just because CBC doesn't have a presence there isn't useful – if anything, it could make it harder for those local outlets to survive. I have a problem with that.

And I really have a problem with them spending their government money advertising their expanded competition with community media.

Here's an idea for the CBC: look to the United Kingdom, where the BBC's Local Democracy Reporting Service funds 165 reporters for news organizations across the country, with the stories they create shared with more than 1,100 media organizations.

I sure wouldn't complain about hearing that on a podcast ad.

## Manitoba NDP to ban Social Media for kids NDP Leader Wab Kinew makes announcement at Annual Fundraising Gala

By Evan Krosney  
PROVINCIAL SECRETARY MANITOBA NDP

Winnipeg, Treaty 1 Territory & Homeland of the Red River Métis Nation - Manitoba NDP Leader, Wab Kinew, announced the party would move to ban social media and the use of AI chatbots for children and youth at the party's annual fundraising gala.

"These platforms are not neutral, they are harming kids," said Kinew. "They are built to maximize engagement at the expense of children's wellbeing. We owe the next generation of Manitobans a simple promise: freedom. Freedom from distraction. Freedom from artificial comparisons and unhealthy pressure. Freedom to be a kid."

Kinew drew a parallel between predatory pricing, where corporations capitalize on our personal data to charge customers different prices for the same products, and social media platforms that exploit children's vulnerability, exposing them to online harms and intentionally creating an addictive user experience that negatively impacts childhood development.

As the movement to protect children from social media gains momentum across the globe, Manitoba will be the first province in Canada to take decisive action.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

#### Notice of Dust Control Program

Homeowners along gravel provincial roads and main market roads in unorganized territories may apply to have dust control applied in front of their homesites at a cost of \$200 for a single application.

The formal application is available from your local Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure office. The deadline for these applications will be **no later than May 22, 2026**.

For more information, please contact one of the following Transportation and Infrastructure offices:  
Steinbach 204-346-6266      Brandon 204-726-6800  
Dauphin 204-622-2061



# Herb and Zelda "Adventures in Camping"

By Nancy Jo Moller  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

"Fictional names Herb and Zelda have been used to protect the innocent from

laughter."

As a recent retired farm couple, they've decided to start doing some activities that they never had time for before. Zelda said, "let's get a camper, it will be fun" with no idea of what would make a suitable camper, where to go and what to expect when they arrived. Off they went shopping for a camper, truthfully it probably took less time buying their first house. E-brandon was the place to find what they needed.

First thought was, "wouldn't a motorhome be ideal"? They could carry everything along, just park, Zelda could serve coffee and sandwich enroute. This works well but they forgot about arrival at the far end. A tow car could be handy. Also check the size of camping lots, do you need a pull-through or can your driver back into a regular spot. Also is there room for a tow car to park? Can the motorhome, if a longer length, navigate the roads into the selected camp site? This was all knowledge acquired on the first couple of trips. So, the decision after not fitting into a family's cabin driveway near Kenora and ending up parked along a neighbour's lot that maybe a motorhome wasn't ideal.

So, Herb said, "let's get a smaller fifth wheel", it will be half ton towable, even though they had a 3/4 ton truck this was a consideration. Remember to check the 'GVW' Gross Vehicle Weight to know what you can legally tow. The driver never wants to see the flashing lights of a Department of Transport (DOT). This was much better, until reality hit, a small, confined sleeping area meant that elbows and heads were bumped during preparation for bed. Okay, maybe this wasn't ideal. Let's try it for a couple of nights, it's going to get better. Wrong, every time it was used became a comedy show. The RV mattress was upgraded for better sleep, that just meant a higher probability of Herb hitting overhead shelves with his head. After one too many thumps on the

head, Herb said, "Enough, we need something bigger."

So, Zelda agreed, "let's trade it on a larger trailer". They went off and the trade went smoothly. Having taken the barely used camper to the dealership with a 3/4 ton truck, everything switched easily and the new camper towed behind like a dream. How smooth would camping be, more room, more luxuries – even an island and fireplace. Well, a week later, they took that truck to the vehicle dealership and the new 1/2 ton they had ordered came home. It's GVW rating said it would pull the camper. No, not going to happen, first time hooked on and the back end sunk until the mudflaps were laying on the ground, someone had made an error. Don't believe everything you read, obviously Youtube isn't always right either, they had shown the same truck pulling similar camper. So, let's go trade the truck, minimal miles, let's call it a learning lesson. Okay, now home with a new 3/4 ton, ready to roll. Nothing can go wrong now.

Well, as so often does happen for retirees, health changes. Gone was the idea of going south in their camper for the winter. Well, where do they go? Never planned on just sitting in a campground in Canada, what amenities should they look for? What is needed? Are power outlets different at each one? What type of power service do we need and do we have the proper connections? Full service or do you have a generator? Do they have noise rules with generators? What type of spot works best for their camper? Can they take



Parked in the trees for a not so restful night.

PHOTO BY NANCY JO MOLLER

the family pet? What amenities do you need or want? Pool or not? Recreation trails, convenience stores, the decisions are endless. Herb and Zelda's heads were spinning. But now they have all the equipment – hoses, plug adapters, portable BBQ, lawn chairs. What should they do – carry on or sell everything and forget the idea?

Herb and Zelda realized they were over their heads in this unknown camping life, BUT...too proud to ask advice.

In the end, if unskilled, talk to your local RV dealers, explain your plans. Take advice and let them outfit you with the best fit. In the meantime, research local campgrounds in your planned vacation area. Suggestion would be to book a local stay before wandering too far with your new rig, this ensures you have all equipment/supplies available in the camper and are prepared for a restful vacation.

'Stay tuned next week for future retirement misadventures.'



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# Camping tips and hints for everyone



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1. Make s'mores.
2. Write an original campfire song.
3. Use sleeping bags to run a "potato sack" race.
4. Go on a nature scavenger hunt.
5. Create a BINGO board using items in nature.
6. Play a game of flashlight tag.



## Top 12 Essentials Camping Checklist



- ✓ Tent
- ✓ Sleeping Bag
- ✓ Pillow

- ✓ Water
- ✓ Soap
- ✓ Fire Starter
- ✓ First-Aid Kit
- ✓ Multi-Use Tool or Pocket Knife
- ✓ Flashlight or Head Lamp
- ✓ Toilet Paper
- ✓ Quick-Dry Towel
- ✓ Garbage Bag

## Campfire Safety

87% of wildfires were caused by humans in 2019, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. You can help prevent wildfires while camping by following these safety tips from the USDA Forest Service:

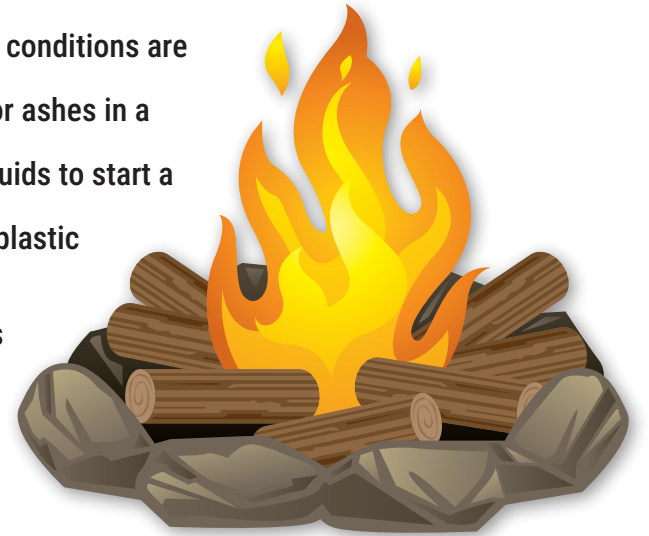
### DO

- Make sure your campfire is a safe distance from tents or anything that could burn.
- Create a ring around the campfire using rocks, and make sure the area surrounding the ring is cleared of leaves and debris.
- Keep pets, kids and playing a safe distance from the campfire.
- Allow the campfire to burn out into ashes whenever possible.
- Use water to drown campfire ashes, then stir and add more water until the ashes are cold.

### DON'T

- Don't start a campfire if conditions are windy.
- Don't bury warm coals or ashes in a campfire pit.
- Don't use flammable liquids to start a campfire.
- Don't burn glass, cans, plastic or garbage.
- Don't leave a burning campfire or warm ashes unattended.

For more information about wildfire prevention and campfire tips, visit [smokeybear.com](http://smokeybear.com).



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# SPORTS

## SPORTS NOTES: HAYWARD RINK STICKING TOGETHER AFTER CANADIAN SILVER

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

After a successful season, skip Shaela Hayward is pleased that her curling rink will be back together for another campaign.

The Carman product is the daughter of Diane Hayward and former Virden resident Darcy Hayward. This past season, her rink won the 2026 Co-ops of Manitoba Junior Provincial Championship. It finished second at the New Holland Canadian Junior Curling Championships in Sudbury, Ont.

"Playing at a Canadian championship is unlike anything else in our sport," Hayward said, "Getting to represent your province on the national stage is an honour. Our team worked so hard this year to win provincials and go to Canadian Juniors, so just being there is really rewarding. I've made a lot of friends and connections at Canadian Juniors over the years and it's always good to play against them at these big championships."

The Manitoba rink lost its first two games at nationals, but heated up, winning their last six round-robin contests. After posting a 6-2 round-robin record, it beat Newfoundland and Labrador 6-2 in the quarter-finals. Hayward skipped the team to a come-from-behind 7-5 win over Nova Scotia in the semifinals.

"Obviously starting 1-2 wasn't how we planned on starting our week, but after that, every game was pretty much a must-win if we wanted to make playoffs," Hayward said. "We were so motivated to try and make the playoffs and really gave it our all in every game to give ourselves a chance. Once we secured a playoff spot, we just settled in and battled as hard as we could. There were some great crowds for the playoffs and I think we fed off of that."

Hayward's rink includes third India Young, second

Keira Krahn, and lead Dayna Wahl. Krahn and Hayward have curled together since they were about 10 years old. Young joined them a few years later. After taking a year off, she rejoined the rink for this past season. A former skip of her own rink, Wahl was added to the team before last season.

"Our team is staying together after a very successful year and can't wait to see what we can do on the women's circuit," Hayward said. "I think I'm most looking forward to being the underdog again and seeing how we can compete against more experienced teams. Our team has already started planning for next season and we can't wait to hit the ice in the fall."

In addition to curling this fall, Hayward will be attending Red River College in the business administration program with a focus on marketing.

At the Empire-Advance deadline, the rink was competing in the finals of the U25 NextGen Classic in Edmonton.

### Collier Commits

Virden's Rebecca Collier has committed to compete for the Brandon University women's soccer team. The squad is the three-time defending Manitoba Colleges Athletic Conference champions. Collier is a goalkeeper who has recently played for the Minnedosa Mustangs. Look for more on this student-athlete in



PHOTO BY TEAM HAYWARD

Skip Shaela Hayward, second from left, led her rink to the silver medals at the New Holland Canadian Junior Curling Championships.

a future issue of the Empire-Advance.

### VCI Baseball

The Virden Collegiate Institute baseball team opens its home schedule on May 3 against Killarney at 4 p.m. Its other home games are May 6 vs Neelin at 6 p.m., May 15 vs Boissevain at 12 p.m., and May 20 vs Reston at 6 p.m.

Head coach Curtis Plett said the team is "striving for strengths in the pitching and defence side of the ball." The offence, he said, will hopefully take care of itself.

The Golden Bears include AAA players Reed McGrath and Brayden Rowan. As well, it will rely on other strong Grade 12 players such as Luka Muhmutovic, Owen Charles, Beckham Clarke, and Brodie Cameron.

## OIL CAPITALS FINISH MJHL SEASON IN LEAGUE FINALS

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Oil Capitals' successful 2025-26 season came to an end in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Turnbull Cup finals.

The team fell 6-2 at home in game four. Niverville won the championship series 4-0 to secure its first ever MJHL championship. It was the third time the Oil Capitals have competed in the league finals. The other two were against the Steinbach Pistons in 2023 and 2018. When asked what he was most proud of about the season, Virden head coach and general manager Tyson Ramsey said:

"I think the way our team played and how much we improved as a group. Obviously, getting back to the Turnbull Cup final is also a big accomplishment and, even though it didn't go the way we wanted, I am proud of our group for giving everything they had."

In 2024-25, the Oil Capitals just missed qualifying for the playoffs. This past season, the Oil Capitals put together a 12-game winning streak between Jan. 11 and Feb. 10 to catapult them to the top of the MJHL MGEU West Division. They finished the regular season with a 39-14-3-2 record.

In the playoffs, the No. 3-seeded Oil Caps swept Neepawa, 4-0. The Virden team beat the No. 2-seeded Steinbach Pistons, 4-2, in a semifinal series.

### MJHL Finals

In the MJHL finals, the Oil Capitals fell 4-1 to the top-seeded Nighthawks on the road in the opening contest. In game two, 1,263 fans cheered the team on at Tundra Oil & Gas Place. It lost 3-1 before falling in game three 6-3 on the road. For game four in Virden, there were 1,296 fans. During the playoffs, Ramsey praised the fan support the team received.

Niverville goalie Austin Dubinsky was named the Turnbull Cup playoffs Most Valuable Player. He was 12-1 in the playoffs with a 1.31 goals against average.

### Game Four

#### Nighthawks 6, Oil Caps 2

The Oil Capitals grabbed an early lead on a Dysen Drake goal in the first period. The visitors from Niverville scored on a power play to tie things up at 1-1 by the end of the first frame.

Niverville scored three goals, including one on the power play, to open the second period and took a 4-1 lead. Oak Lake Beach's Tyson Draper got one back for Virden. The score was 4-2 after two periods of play.

The Nighthawks scored with the man advantage in the third to make it 5-2. They added an empty net goal in the final minutes.

Virden goalie Micky Gross made 24 saves and stopped a penalty shot. Dubinsky made 39 saves for Niverville. Scoring for the Nighthawks were Evan Panzer (two), Marlen Edwards (two), Kole

Mears, and Hayden Wheddon.

### Playoff Leaders

Hometown forward Bryce Bryant paced the Oil Caps with nine goals and 19 points in 14 postseason games. He finished tied for the league lead in playoff points with 19 in 14 games. Bryant had nine goals.

Liam Goertzen was second with eight goals and 16 points. Brooks Siemens led the team in playoff assists with 11. Austin Osiowy paced the team's defencemen with 10 points, while Nate Schaefer was just behind with nine. Goaltender Braxton Burdeny backstopped the Oil Capitals to all eight of their playoff wins.

Dysen Drake was the team's and league's top rookie scorer in the playoffs. He recorded 10 points, including seven goals, in 14 games.

### Prospect Camp

The Oil Capitals are already hard at work getting ready for next season and beyond. The organization hosted its Comfort Inn & Suites Spring Prospect Camp last weekend. It featured 60 players, including several area residents.

"There was a good group of players that we are excited about for next season and will come back to main camp, but there were also some really good younger players who will be really good players in our league in a few years, so we are excited to keep track of them and how they develop," Ramsey said. "There is a lot of good young talent in the province and some of our local players are right at the top of that list."

## SPORTS

# HARD WORK IN AND OUT OF THE ARENA DRIVES COLLEN'S SUCCESS



PHOTO BY EASTERN WYOMING COLLEGE

Abby Collen is wrapping up her college rodeo career.

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Virден's Abby Collen has succeeded in the rodeo arena and academically at Eastern Wyoming College.

The daughter of Ann and Wendell Collen competes in barrel racing and goat tying for her Torrington, Wyo.-based school. This summer, she will officially complete her program in veterinary technology.

"I have truly enjoyed having Abby as a valuable member of the EWC rodeo team," head coach Whit Peterson said. "She is a hardworking student who is as dependable as they come. As the current EWC Rodeo President, Abby has done a tremendous job fulfilling her responsibilities and leading the team. She sets a strong example both in and out of the arena. I will certainly miss having her on the team in the future."

Collen has embraced the challenges her two rodeo events bring.

"I enjoy the horsemanship and partnership that is involved with barrel racing," she said. "I enjoy the adrenaline rush of goat tying as well as the chal-

lenge that comes with getting off my horse and then reading the goat."

The EWC rodeo team competes in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association. It has more than 135 member colleges and universities. EWC is part of the Central Rocky Mountain Region, which consists of institutions in Wyoming and Colorado as well as one in Nebraska.

"I have really enjoyed many things about rodeoing for EWC," Collen said. "We get to practice every day, and we have great facilities and livestock, thanks to our great coach, Whit Peterson. Whit has truly done a great job building this rodeo program and supporting his athletes. Another thing I really enjoy is being a part of the Central Rocky Mountain Region. We have got to travel to some beautiful places and compete in some really fun rodeos."

Before her time at Eastern Wyoming, she studied and rodeoed at Dawson Community College in Glendive, Mont., from the spring of 2023 to the spring of 2024.

"I really appreciate the time I spent at Dawson Commu-

ity College," Collen said. "It opened my eyes to college rodeo. I also met so many wonderful people who made huge impacts on my life."

No matter which school she was at, Collen has excelled academically. She earned spots on the honour roll at both institutions. Collen will officially wrap up her program in July after the completion of a clinical experience.

"This program has been challenging to manage with rodeoing; however, I have enjoyed the hands-on learning we have received at EWC," she said.

During her rodeo career, Collen has been supported by her parents and her brother, Laramie. The latter competes for Howard College in Big Spring, Texas.

"My parents have supplied me with all of the tools and knowledge to rodeo," Collen said. "They continue to support me through my college career. They watch all of my brother's and my rodeos; they are our biggest fans. My brother is also a big supporter. He always has a wise word when I am struggling or need a confidence boost."

## MJHL REPORT

**MJHL HOCKEY**  
**DEREK HOLTOM**

In the end, the Niverville Nighthawks would not be denied their destiny.

The Nighthawks clinched their first-ever league championship Thursday night in Virден as they beat the Oil Capitals 6-2 to win the Turnbull Cup in four straight games.

Niverville dominated the playoffs, posting a 12-1 record over three rounds. The Winkler Flyers were first to fall, and the Waywayseecappo Wolverines second. Wayway, in fact, was the only team to take a game off the Nighthawks, so kudos to them for giving the champs a bit of a scare.

Overall, this MJHL playoff will not be remembered for being very competitive or having any sense of drama. There were no Game 7's, only one Game 6 (Virден beating Steinbach to advance to the league final), and four sweeps, including the league final.

Niverville now advances to the Centennial Cup, where they will face the top junior A teams in Canada who still play under the Hockey Canada umbrella – the BCHL does not take part in this event after breaking away from the national hockey organization.

This year's event takes place in Summerside, P.E.I., May 7-17. Three of nine teams have already punched their ticket to the event, including the host Summerside Western Capitals, the CCHL's Rockland Nationals, and

the NOJHL's Greater Sudbury Cubs.

Good luck to Niverville in their first-ever national championship.

• The vacancies continue to pile up in the league as teams scramble to get coaches in place ahead of the league AGM slated for June.

The Winnipeg Blues are looking for a new head coach and general manager after they parted ways with Josh Gratton. The Brantford, Ont., native coached the Blues for the past two seasons, guiding them to an overall record of 27-79-8-2. He also served as an assistant coach on the Team Canada West team at the 2025 World Junior A Challenge.

The Blues have not qualified for the playoffs since the 2021-22 season, and usually end up battling the Winnipeg Freeze to stay out of last place in the East Division.

Since the Blues converted to more of a pay to develop type of franchise they have struggled to be competitive with the top teams in the league. Whoever the new coach is, they'll have their work cut out for them.

• The Neepawa Titans are also looking for a new coach – an associate coach to join Ken Pearson behind the bench.

The Titans spent many years in the MJHL wilderness, but Pearson has got the Titans back to being a playoff team, though post-season success has eluded them so far.

The Titans are coming off a season where they finished 28-28-1-1, 10 points out of second place and five out of third. They were swept out in four games by the MJHL league finalist Virден Oil Capitals in four games in the first round.

• That is another wrap for me. Thanks all for reading – we'll see you in August for the start of the 2026-27 MJHL season.

## Correction

RE: Letter to the Editor by Karen McKinnon

Last week in the April 24 issue of the Empire-Advance a mistake was made in the Letter to the Editor, RE: In my opinion-Floor Crossers April 17, 2026

A Response to Gerry Nolan's Opinion piece regarding Floor Crossers from Karen McKinnon

It should have read: MP's who join another party or sit as an Independent receive the same remuneration from the House of Commons.

**Greg NESBITT**  
MLA for Riding Mountain

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gregnesbittmla@mymts.net  
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Burlington Place, Shoal Lake, MB



# Royal Canadian Legion, Viriden BR. #8 to remember battle of the Atlantic

By Kel Smith

VIRDEN ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION BR. #8

VIRDEN - It's the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion in Canada. One of the events of celebrating will be a presentation on the Royal Canadian Navy's participation in the 'BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC' in World War 2 (Lest We Forget).

The event will be held on Thursday, May 7th, 2026 at 7:00 pm at the Club Room of the Royal Canadian Legion in Viriden. Please, be seated by 6:45 pm. The Legion is located on the corner of Wellington Street West and 8th Avenue South. There is no charge to attend this event as a Viriden company is sponsoring it.

The presenter is the noted Canadian Historian and Re-Enactor Ed James. He will have with him authentic Royal Canadian Navy equipment, uniforms,

and props to aid with the presentation. He, himself, will be in the authentic RCN dress of the period. There will be a 'Question and Answer Session' at the end of the presentation. After the Q & A the public is welcome to come to the display tables to see the items and props.

All ages are invited to the Legion in Viriden to hear this amazing presentation about an important naval event in our country's history. Get up close to Canadian History as presented by Ed James. He has done his research and has the knowledge.

Parents and grandparents are encouraged to bring their tweens and teens to this event.

Notice to the Media: If you wish an interview with Ed James then phone 1-204-845-2630.

Your Viriden Legion contact is Kel Smith at 1-204-748-3321.

"Lest We Forget"

## REF MEMORIES

REF TO  
WRITER

GERRY  
NOLAN



I went to the second game of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League final between the Niverville Night-Hawks and the Viriden Oil Capitals. It was a really good game and congratulations to all the members of the Oil Capitals on a great season.

The officials I thought were doing a great job of the game but I guess the Niverville coach had a different opinion. I believe the officials had about enough of him and at one point, the coach signalled for a time out as the line that was on the ice for their club was out of gas, so he used his teams timeout. This reminded me of a game in Grandview that I was officiating.

The coach from Grandview was on my case right from the start of the game, and I just remembered some things he was

yelling and sort of decided there would be a time when Gerry would have the last say.

Now if you watch official signals you will know that when you call a timeout that your hands go above your head and you tap the palm of your hand with your fingers from the other hand, that is timeout. The signal that a referee uses for unsportsmanlike conduct is in front of you, you tap the palm of your hand and the fingers tap underneath the palm of the hand. A technicality for sure, but still a little something in his back pocket for an official to use.

This coach who would not quit yelling at me calls a timeout using the unsportsmanlike sign. I skated over to the bench and asked him, are you calling time out? He said of course I am

you..... I skated over to the timekeeper and official scorer and told them that I was assessing the coach a bench minor penalty for delay of game. I took my time getting ready to resume play but of course was waiting for the announcement that the coach had been assessed a bench minor. When the coach heard the announcement and my linesman confirmed the call to him, he went a little off the deep end to say the least. It probably did not help that I had a smirk on my face, as my buddy Randy Kalynuk would say, chickens come home to roost. Of course, I threw the coach out of the game and it seemed to get really quiet in the rink.

I talked to some of the players on Grandview about what had gone on. Many of them said that I should have thrown him out sooner and had no problem with what I did.

Oh yes, the coach was suspended for two games. Possibly, I did not handle this situation correctly, but I had the last say, and that was final!

# Bloody Jack's ties to Viriden

By Jennifer Jaffray

VIRDEN PIONEER HOME MUSEUM

A few months ago, I was asked to write a newspaper article about a fascinating historical connection. I struggled with how to tell the story while keeping descendants anonymous. For that reason, certain names have been withheld, although many details are part of the public record.

Before Christmas, I was contacted by Mathew Torgerson, who has developed a strong interest in the story of "Bloody Jack." It has, in many ways, become a personal research pursuit for him.

"Bloody Jack" was John Krafchenko, who carried out a string of robberies in Manitoba in the late 1800s and early 1900s. On Dec. 3, 1913, he entered the Bank of Montreal in Plum Coulee and stole \$4,200. As he fled, he fired a shot at bank manager Henry Arnold, killing him instantly.

Krafchenko later hid in Winnipeg, where he was eventually arrested. He was tried, convicted, and hanged on July 19, 1914, at the Vaughan Street Jail.

Born in Romania in 1881, Krafchenko immigrated to Canada with his family at age seven. They settled in the Plum Coulee area. After his mother's death, his father remarried and had more children. Krafchenko was said to have had a close relationship with his stepmother.

He spent time in both Canada and the United States, committing several bank robberies. He later returned to Romania, where he met and married Fanica. In 1906, the couple returned to Canada and settled again in the Plum Coulee area.

Krafchenko continued his criminal activities, robbing banks in the Plum Coulee and Winkler areas and remaining on the run much of the time. In

1913, he and Fanica welcomed a son, John Jr. At the time of Krafchenko's execution, the child was only a few months old and, as an adult, had no memory of his father.

This is where the story might typically end—but where Viriden's connection begins.

Mathew was particularly interested in what became of Fanica and John Jr. Census records from 1916 and 1921 show them living in Viriden, first on Nelson Street and later on King Street. During that time, Fanica worked as a domestic servant and later as a cook at the Viriden Hospital.

After 1921, however, the trail seemed to disappear.

I researched the matter for some time before setting it aside. About a month later, I received an email from a couple living in another province. The husband explained that his wife's grandmother and father had once lived in Viriden. He shared a name similar to Fanica's—spelled slightly differently—along with a surname.

He had located a 1931 census record showing this woman living on King Street with her son, John.

The similarities were striking.

The surname provided by the family was distinctly Romanian. Combined with matching dates and locations, the possibility that this was the same Fanica became increasingly likely. It would make sense that she changed her name in an effort to move beyond her husband's crimes and create a more stable life for her child.

After further discussion with Mathew, I contacted the out-of-province family and asked if they were familiar with the story of Bloody Jack. I explained the recent

inquiries and suggested a possible connection.

I recommended that the woman consider taking an Ancestry DNA test to help confirm the link.

As it turned out, she had already completed one.

Mathew then reached out to known relatives of Krafchenko from the Plum Coulee area, some of whom had also completed DNA testing. With their permission, I was able to compare matches.

The results aligned.

The woman is, in fact, a granddaughter of John Krafchenko.

It appears that Fanica adopted a different surname—possibly her maiden name—and relocated, likely in an effort to distance herself and her child from the notoriety surrounding Bloody Jack. In doing so, she created a new life and, it seems, successfully shielded her family from that past.

She must have been a remarkably strong and resilient woman. Being a single mother in 1914, in a society heavily dependent on men for financial stability, would not have been easy.

Helping people uncover their family history is deeply rewarding. Everyone deserves to understand where they come from. At the same time, such discoveries can be difficult to process.

I reminded the family that every lineage contains challenges and complexities. Times were different, and the actions of previous generations do not define those who come after.

Fanica clearly chose to move forward—and did so successfully. Her descendants were able to live normal lives, unaware of this history until now.

I was pleased to help Mathew find answers and to provide this family with a clearer understanding of their past.

Visit our website  
[www.empireadvance.ca](http://www.empireadvance.ca)

# Food Cupboard to celebrate 25 years at upcoming tea

## Virден & Area Food Cupboard

**Submitted**

By SHIRLEY GIBSON

The upcoming tea at Sacred Heart will be an opportunity to celebrate 25 years of service to the communities. Here's how the work of volunteers has unfolded.

Discussions began in late 2000 by a group of six concerned individuals to establish a food cupboard for Virден. The first hampers were distributed in May of 2001 to five families.

Today we are giving out 40 - 45 hampers twice a month. Hampers are given out on the second and fourth Thursday of every month with the exception of December when we only do one as Christmas Cheer does the other one. Clients must register to

receive a hamper. They either call or text 204-512-2321 by 4:00 p.m. on the Monday before hamper day. We do hold to the registration deadline to allow our volunteers time to sort out the requests, order the amount of bread and milk and pack the hampers. Currently for packing we have one Grade 5 class from VJH and one class from VCI who assist with the packing and two volunteers to assist handing out the food for packing.

Two of our volunteers do the registrations and we have four groups of four or five volunteers who give out the hampers on Food Cupboard day. We also have three volunteers who take month about to do the shopping to fill the shelves after hamper day. In total we currently have 18 volunteers

because a few of us do more than one job.

We live in a very generous and supportive community. We receive donations from many individuals and businesses, some of the schools and churches hold food drives at different times of the year, Red Apple and BDO hold food drives as well. We also have a donation box at Valleyview Coop which always has non perishables left in it. Fall also sees the donations of many fresh fruits and vegetables which our clients really appreciate.

We appreciate being able to use the Sacred Heart Catholic Hall to store our food as well as our deep freezers and to be able to pack and give out our hampers from there.



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# Virден Roots Musician Brendan Lyons Playing with Gord Bamford

By VEA Staff  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Brendan Lyons grew up in Brandon, MB. His parents weren't musicians but when Brendan started fiddling with a small Casio keyboard, he was immediately signed up for organ lessons. Music got serious in grade seven when he sat down with a drum kit for the first time. Music and volleyball ran parallel for the next decade. While attending Brandon University he studied physics, math and computer science thinking he was going to attend grad school to pursue nuclear physics or aeronautical engineering. One afternoon while visiting with friends he decided, more or less on the spot, to head west to attend MacEwan University where he studied drum set performance. When he graduated he was presented with the MusiCounts Fred Sherratt Award.

His country career began with a coffee. A guitar instructor at university introduced Brendan to a pair of working musicians who turned out to be members of Hey Romeo, one of the busiest country acts in the province. From there the phone kept ringing. He received a call to play the drums for Aaron Goodvin, followed by a call to play for the Canadian Country Music Awards (CCMA) broadcast with Meghan Patrick. Since then, he has appeared on the CCMA broadcast with Gord Bamford, Dallas Smith and Dean Brody. Brendan has also had an opportunity to work with Brett Kissel, Kalsey Kulyk, Alli Walker, Andrew Hyatt, Shawn Austin, Jojo Mason and many other amazing artists. Brendan is a two-time Country Music Alberta Drummer of the Year and a three-time CCMA Drummer of the Year nominee. Music has taken him to Australia, Spain, Mexico and coast



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Musician Brendan Lyons.

to coast across Canada.

When the pandemic shut live music down in 2020, Brendan - already a user of a collaboration platform called Sessionwire - volunteered to help a new customer get set up. This person turned out to be a Grammy Award winning producer. The onboarding calls kept coming, the role kept growing and five years later Brendan is a Managing Director at Sessionwire, running day-to-day operations alongside the company's founder. It takes up about three quarters of his working week. The rest is still music - touring, recording and running sessions out of his home studio in Spruce Grove where he lives with his supportive wife and two daughters.

Playing in Virден means something special to him. His parents Blair and Dawn grew up there

and both sets of grandparents lived in Virден — John and Evelyn Critchlow, Nana and Papa, on his mom's side, and Chuck and Virginia Lyons on his dad's — and the Lyons family made regular trips down for Christmas, Easter, and the occasional visit in between.

Brendan has only played in Manitoba a handful of times in the last decade and a half. He is looking forward to playing with Gord Bamford for such an important event, as well as seeing many of his relatives and friends in the Virден area.

The Gord Bamford Concert on May 8, 2026 at Tundra Oil & Gas Place is a special event raising funds for the YWCA Westman Women's Campus Project. The Virден Community Chamber of Commerce can be contacted for more details.

## Elkhorn School Fun Fair strongly supported



PHOTOS BY ED JAMES

All these great photos show a variety of activities in the Elkhorn School gymnasium raising money for school projects.

By Ed James  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

It's an annual spring event at Elkhorn School that students look forward to—much like the school Christmas concert.

The school fun fair gives the parent-teacher group an opportunity to raise funds for items not covered by government funding. These extras may include academic resources, sports equipment, field trips, or healthy living initiatives that arise during the school year.

On April 23, the event began with a hamburger barbecue organized by the senior class as a fundraiser for their graduation activities. Organizers reported strong sales.

The school gym and several classrooms were set up with a variety of games and activities where children—and even some adults—could try their luck. Successful attempts, such as scoring a goal or landing



a ringer, earned participants prize tickets.

These tickets could then be redeemed in the prize room, where several tables were filled with toys and gifts to choose from.

Some of the most popular attractions included the fish pond, hockey shot, bouncy castle, cake walk, and a new addition this year—the frog hop game.

Many of the games were run by older students, giving them an opportunity to learn responsibility and fairness.

For adults and older attendees, the silent auction and rainbow auction drew significant interest. In fact, organizers had to print additional bidding numbers due to high participation.

Both auctions featured a wide variety of items, many donated by local families and businesses from



Elkhorn, Virден, Moosomin, Fleming, McAuley, and Brandon. Several prizes included gift certificates and event tickets.

Home and school members were very pleased with the turnout, which reflected strong community support for the school and its activities.

# Elkhorn Ag Society plans race track improvements



PHOTO BY ED JAMES

Shown here is the starting gate area at the Elkhorn Ag. Soc. grounds that has to be expanded to give the race wagons more room to start from.

**By Ed James**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Elkhorn Ag. Society has been around since 1893, with its spacious grounds located on the west side of the community. Over the years it has seen many improvements and thousands of visitors of all ages from all over the world.

During the summer months it is a very active place, with its ball diamonds, camping site, a commercial kitchen site and its dirt race track. The grounds are the site of the annual summer Elkhorn Elks Western Weekend chariot and chuck wagon races, the Ag. Soc. arts and crafts and produce show and competition, and the site is popular as a wedding social site and family reunions. The site is big enough for the large rental tents.

This will mark the second year for the once-a-month pop-up market held on the site. This event brings in vendors and customers from areas on both sides of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

Over the last few years the leadership of the area chuck wagon race groups have expressed some concerns with the race track, having a problem with rocks along the track area.

Local contractor Tutthill Ltd. has for several years been supplying sand and gravel to the race track problem area at no cost. This service would include the grading of the track areas.

However, the Agricultural Society board members feel it's time for a major overhaul of the track. Also, the racers have requested that a fence be moved further back at the race starting gate, to allow the teams more room to turn out at the starting gate.

The cost of these improvements is unknown at this time and their applications for government grants is not a guarantee of sufficient funding. So the board has decided on holding a 50/50 draw that's a bit different. The way it is set up, the more tickets you buy, the cheaper the tickets get, therefore giving you more chances to win.

Ticket sales have begun and will be sold until May 18, when the draw will be made, with 50 per cent going to the winner and 50 per cent going towards the track upgrades.

The board hopes that the 50/50 draw will get lots of support, so the improvements can be made to the track that will continue to make the Elkhorn Ag. Soc. site a popular Westman attraction.

# Sunrise Credit Union Releases 2025 Annual Report

**By Heather Merckx**  
DIRECTOR, BRAND & MARKETING

Sunrise Credit Union held its annual general meeting virtually on April 21, 2026, attended by 130 members and staff combined and 10 guests.

The meeting marked the release of the Sunrise Credit Union 2025 Annual Report, which contained the audited financial statements. The statements reflect a Net Income of \$13.1 million, Loan Growth of 11.3%, Deposit Growth of 6.8%, and Total Equity of 9.07%.

Sunrise President and CEO Tim Klassen noted that 2025 brought both challenges and opportunities. "I am proud to share that Sunrise Credit Union remains strong, resilient, and positioned for sustainable growth."

Klassen reviewed several key achievements from 2025, including Sunrise Credit Union's strong commitment to supporting community initiatives through both financial contributions and staff volunteerism. Over the past year, Sunrise invested more than \$615,000 into local communities through its Building Communities Grant Program, as well as donations, sponsorships, and scholarships. In addition, Sunrise staff contributed more than 8,600 volunteer hours in our communities.

Other highlights of 2025 included upgrading the Sunrise mobile app with improved security and user experience, changed the core baking platform to enable quicker enhancement implementation and overall vendor relationship, and made online applications for small business loans faster. "These

improvements reflect our commitment to meeting members' evolving expectations while maintaining the personal service we're known for," Klassen commented and added, "We will continue to listen to our members, adapt to changing needs, and build a credit union that future generations can rely on."

Fred Greig, Chair of the Sunrise Credit Union Board of Directors, reflected on the organization's strong performance over the past year. "Looking back, it is truly remarkable what Sunrise has accomplished both financially and socially in a very turbulent global environment. I believe this speaks to the hard work and vision of our staff and directors over the years, which requires our acknowledgement and appreciation," said Greig.

Chair of the Nominating Committee, Agnes Kokke gave her report, while welcoming three new directors, Kendra Custance, Darcy Champion and Michael Langdon, along with re-elected Director Carol Hodgson. Kokke expressed her profound gratitude on behalf of Sunrise to retiring directors, Daryll Logeot, Janice McClelland, and Fred Greig.

### About Sunrise Credit Union

Sunrise Credit Union was formed in 2008 and offers personalized service to approximately 35,000 members across 19 branches with over 240 staff. Sunrise Credit Union serves Baldur, Boissevain, Brandon, Cypress River, Deloraine, Grandview, Hartney, Holland, Laurier, Melita, Minnedosa, Reston, Sandy Lake, Shoal Lake, Ste. Rose du Lac, Strathclair, Treherne, Virden, and Waskada.

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We thank all applicants in advance, however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.



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## Coming Events

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**DATE: THURSDAY, MAY 7TH, 2026**  
**AT 7:00 PM IN THE LEGION CLUB ROOM**

... PLEASE, BE SEATED BY 6:45 PM  
Part of the Branch's 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion in CANADA

Noted Canadian Historian and Re-Enactor Ed James will give a presentation on the Royal Canadian Navy's ... World War Two ... "Battle of the Atlantic" With Authentic RCN Equipment, Uniforms, and Props! He will be in the RCN authentic dress of the period.

No Charge ... Sponsored by a local Virden company.

Get Up Close To Canadian History!

ALL AGES INVITED TO ATTEND THIS PRESENTATION WITH A QUESTION-AND-ANSWER SESSION AFTERWARD!

Before leaving the Club Room on the 7th take in all the artwork in the Virden Legion's Club Room ... 8th Ave. S. & Wellington St. W.

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## Tender



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### NOTICE OF REGISTRATION OF PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATE FOR GENERAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION

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Rural Municipality of Ellice – Archie

Prospective municipal election candidates must register with the Senior Election Official (SEO) during the registration period before they may begin to accept contributions, incur expenses, fundraise or borrow money for their campaign.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that I will be receiving candidate registrations:  
 For the office of head of council: Between May 1, 2026 and September 22, 2026  
 For the office of councillor: Between June 30, 2026 and September 22, 2026

at the R.M. of Ellice – Archie office at  
 318 Railway Avenue, McAuley OR 331 Main Street, St. Lazare  
 during the regular hours of business.

To obtain a registration form contact the SEO at the telephone number listed below.

Box 67 – 318 Railway Ave OR Box 100 – 331 Main Street  
 McAuley, MB R0M 1H0 St. Lazare, MB R0M 1Y0  
 Ph: 204.722.2053 Ph: 204.683.2241  
 Fx: 204.722.2027 Fx: 204.683.2317  
 mcauley@rmofellicearchie.ca stlazare@rmofellicearchie.ca  
 Hanah Judd, Assistant SEO Constance Tanguay, SEO

## Manitoba Community Newspaper Association Province Wide Classifieds

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The successful applicant will have experience with Microsoft Office programs, excellent communication skills, a strong work ethic, be detail oriented and efficient at multi-tasking. The ability to maintain client confidentiality is essential.

Our firm is a busy general law practice serving our client base in southwest Manitoba. We invite interested applicants to submit a resume by mail or email to our office in confidence by Friday, May 29, 2026 to:

McNeill Harasymchuk McConnell  
 Box 520  
 Virden, MB R0M 2C0  
 Attention: Anique Timmerman  
 or by Email to: [anique@mhmlaw.ca](mailto:anique@mhmlaw.ca)

While we thank each applicant for their interest, only selected candidates will be contacted for an interview.



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Interested candidates should submit a resume with three professional references by:

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 Mail/Drop-off: R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth Municipal Office  
 154023 PR 257 Box 2200 (Corner of 83 Hwy & PR 257) Virden, MB R0M 2C0

We appreciate your interest in this position. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. However, only those applicants chosen for an interview will be contacted.

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# Virден Music and Arts Festival honours Brenda Lund during speech festival

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The co-chairs for Virден Music & Arts Festival, Judy Poole and Sherridan Reimer, can relax a little now with another festival season in the books, so to speak. Sessions began in March and drew to a close with speech arts that finished on Wednesday, April 22. April 30, the visual arts display in the Station Gallery came down.

Festival participation involves schools and individuals and touches hundreds of families and friends, but it is only a success because of the volunteers who organize, plan and participate both at the festival and in the months surrounding the sessions.

At last Wednesday afternoon's speech competition Brenda Lund was recognized for her continuous support for the festival.

In the AUD Theatre, Poole invited festival convenor Joyce Davies to join her as they invited Lund to the front.

Poole said, "It is my honor, on behalf of Virден Music & Arts Festival, to make this special presentation to someone who has been a very, very powerful volunteer..."

Lund has lent her support to Virден festival for some 60 years. Poole continued, "Her involvement with the festival began when she was a teacher at the Mary [Montgomery] School, when she brought classrooms to perform at the festival.

"Next, she was a mom who supported her own children to enter the festival, and throughout that time, she was a festival committee executive member. And then, finally, she was a very faithful volunteer who would take the money at the door or supervise the people as they came and went through those doors at the back.

"And then she was also, on top of that, a great patron of our festival, and we thank her very much for that."

Lund is senior among the ranks of the many volunteers, teachers, businesses and adjudicators who encourage youth and adults in the arts.



The duet by VJH students Daphne Holleman and Athena Schellander is just one entry among many entertaining poetry presentations on the final day of speech arts competition in the AUD Theatre. These girls received a medal for their performance. Adjudicator Loretta Thorleifson commended their character colours (purple spots) in this expressive dramatic recitation.



PHOTOS BY ANNE DAVISON

At the April 15 piano session piano adjudicator Kimberly Sundell is working with Emery Strachan, a competitor in several Level 5 classes.



Brenda Lund (centre) is honoured with a presentation from Virден Music & Arts Festival committee - Joyce Davies (L) and Judy Poole.

## Miniota News

Submitted  
BY LINDA CLARK

Noreen Stowe and Dorothy Brown, grandparents of Abby Stowe, attended Abby's beautiful bridal shower at Rocanville on April 18. Also attending from Miniota were Krista and Khloe Brown, Marcie Lewis, Tricia Lelond and Kathy Meekins from Isabella. Abby's marriage to Andryn King is an event of May 30. Congratulations, Abby!

Don and Sandra Armitage have returned from their winter months holiday in the RGV (Rio Grande Valley) in southern Texas. They report having a great winter enjoying many different activities and hot weather.

Sandra writes: "One of the highlights this year included a tour of the King Ranch near Corpus Christi. The King Ranch was founded in 1853 and still comprises 825,000 acres — the largest in North America. Founded by Richard King, it is now a National Historic Landmark. It was there that the Santa Gertrudis cattle breed was

developed from the Brahman line. The ranch operation has diversified to include citrus production, cotton growing, overseas farming, retail businesses, turfgrass production, quarter horses, a Texas Kitchen in Houston, and a partnership with Ford to produce the F150 King Ranch line of trucks. In 1854, King went to Mexico and found a village of people suffering from extreme drought and lack of income and food. He promised the people jobs, housing, and food and education for their families. They came and became known as the King's Men, or Kininos. There are still descendants who live and work on the ranch today. The story of the family ranch is an impressive one, of people working as a team and for community.

"Another highlight was a tour of the Walmart Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas. Bentonville is the headquarters for Walmart, and the offices cover a square mile of the city. In the museum, we learned the history and were able to ask questions to the hologram, Sam Walton. Our friend who hosted us worked for the family corporation and had many extra interesting details to provide.

Walmart has had a huge impact on this city and the family still contributes substantially."

Sunday, April 26, a work bee was held at the sports grounds to get the ball diamonds in shape for the upcoming season. Once again, many children are enrolled for the baseball season, and it will be a hub of activity.

April 22, a beautiful day, saw many students and adults join Ryder Fenty and his family on a walk around Miniota to support them in raising funds for the Manitoba Cerebral Palsy Association. Ryder, friends and family usually participate in the Cerebral Palsy Bike Race in Brandon; however, this year, they sponsored their own event. Congratulations to Ryder and his Redneck Team on such a great event!

Councillors Linda Clark, Delbert Cole, Darcy Oliver and Trent Peel attended the spring Municipal Convention held in Brandon this past week. Pat Cole and Sandra Peel accompanied their husbands to the city.

Congratulations to Ms. Stacy Paull and her Grade 5-6 class on their Dramatic Choral Speaking presentation at the Virден Festival on April 22. They received the Elkhorn

Chamber of Commerce award for the highest mark in Choral Speaking Grades 4-6.

The Miniota United Church Women served a roast beef supper on Sunday, April 26, at the Miniota Community Hall, with over 250 people enjoying the meal. Group leaders Pat Lelond, Enid Haines, Barbara Lynn Hodgins and Joan Gurr did a great job of organizing the delicious meal, along with all our good cooks and those who helped out that day. The crowd from many surrounding communities was greatly appreciated.

Our area narrowly missed the snowstorm this past weekend that our neighbours, Saskatchewan and Alberta, received. We are all praying for beautiful spring weather so our farmers can get on the land.

April 28 is Pay It Forward Day, but any day is really a good day to do a small kindness. Do one thing to pay it forward — one act of kindness, no matter how small.

"Our mission is to lift others up. And when we're not able to help, the kindest choice we can make is to avoid hurting anyone." — Mother Teresa

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# Celebrations and congratulations!

Virден and District Health Auxiliary celebrates and congratulates four long-term members of Manitoba Auxiliaries who collectively have 125 years of service! left to right Vi McKietiuik (45 years), Donna Lyons (20 years), Merle Browning (40 years) and Glynis Danielson (20 years).



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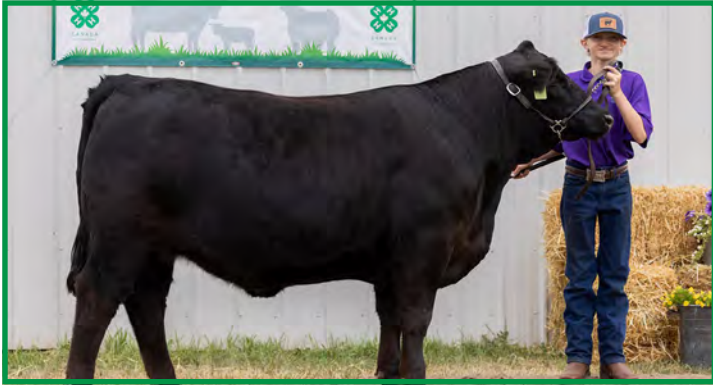
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Ryker's Steer:  
M.E.A.T. Mike

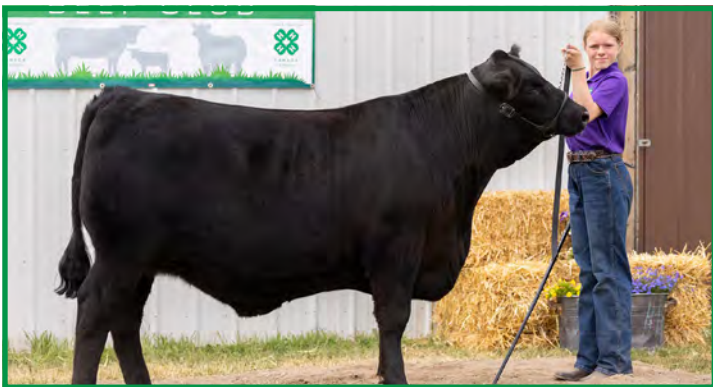
## Fountain Tire

The name "M.E.A.T.

Mike" stands for "My Extremely Appetizing T-bone" an acronym to reflect the "M" cattle year. Mike was a homegrown Angus steer raised without steroids, growth hormones, or antibiotics.

Mike was 705 lbs on December 15, 2024 and weighed 1264 lbs on July 8, 2025.

Ryker would like to once again thank Fountain Tire of Virden for purchasing his 2025 4-H steer.



Kassadee's steer: Bob was his "given" name by the Lawrence family, so he was known. Bob represented excellent qualities of the Angus breed and was sired by a N7 Stock Farm bull. This bovine was raised without steroids, growth hormones, or antibiotics.



Bob first stepped on the scale at 800 lbs on December 15, 2024 and completed his program year at 1286 lbs.

Kassadee would like to extend her thanks once again to Sparwood & Crude Energy for jointly purchasing her 2025 4-H steer.



Kander's Steer: Blackstin, a black Angus steer, was from 13K, a first time calver, and a bull my Dad, Michael Wright, raised. 100% homegrown and raised without steroids, growth hormones or antibiotics.



Blackstin started off smaller at 685 lbs on weigh day, December 15, 2024, and grew to 1130 lbs on sale day.

Kander once again wants to express his gratitude to Canalta Hotels for purchasing his first 4-H steer.



## Showmanship

Cloverbud Showmanship

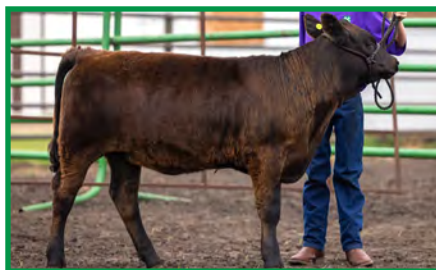


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