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JUNE 26, 2026 | EMPIRE: VOL 121 NO 45 / ADVANCE: VOL 140 NO 47 | PUBLISHING FRIDAYS

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Flying and Flapjacks at Air Andrew

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE ADVANCE

The smell of maple syrup filled the air at the Virden Regional Airport, which is located on the north side of highway number 1, on the suitably named Tiger Moth Rd. It is a very clever choice for a road name, as "Tiger Moth" encompasses both the beautifully patterned insects that fill the fields surrounding the tarmac, and a famous model of vintage aircraft. This perfect nod to both nature and aviation set the stage on Saturday, June 20 for the Virden Area Flying Club Inc.'s annual pancake breakfast. The event took place in one of Air Andrew's beautifully engineered and spacious hangars. This gathering brought many bright-eyed children and adults alike who were interested in all things transit related, or simply, all things tasty and breakfast. Guests attended from Virden and surrounding towns such as Pipestone and Elkhorn to take in the morning's festivities. With the blue skies ahead of everyone, the pancakes were endless.

For many of the locals, and kids especially who attended this event, it was their very first time being so close to an airplane.



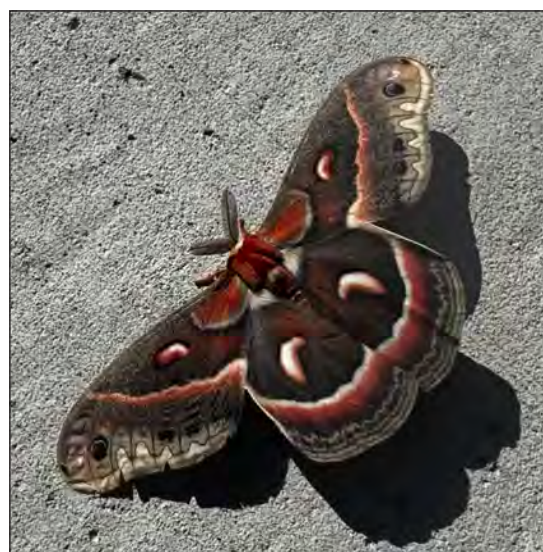
A Cessna on the tarmac.

Photo By Lauren Halowaty

For a few early risers, it was their first time flying in one! With June providing us with more gloomy and rainy days, the Virden Flying Club lucked out with the clearest of blue skies, and fluffy white clouds. The sun shone down on the tarmac, warming the hangar perfectly for the guests to enjoy their yummy breakfast, coffee, and OJ.

For some, planes and flying are exciting but also quite foreign, however after witnessing Saturday's

Pancake Breakfast event hosted by Virden's Flying Club, it was as clear as the morning blue sky that aviation is more about camaraderie and a shared passion for the industry than anything else. All proceeds from the pancake breakfast go directly back into Virden's Flying Club Inc. For a smaller town, events like these remind us that when we come together and with little community support, the sky is the limit for what we can achieve.



A Tiger Moth found on the Tarmac.

Inside...



FARMERS' ADVOCATE
P19-20



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P7

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MHSRA 2025-26 Finals qualify competitors for Nationals

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

High school and junior high rodeo students from across Manitoba along with several students from eastern Saskatchewan competed in provincial finals. Trucks, trailers and campers filled Virden Ag Society grounds from June 12 – 14.

Manitoba High School Rodeo Association Finals got underway Friday and finished up Sunday. It was a full schedule as Gr. 12 graduates were recognized, and rodeo Queen and Princesses were crowned.

MHSRA secretary Dawn-Rae Gray said, “This is the first Queen Contest held in 10 years and the first Junior Princess Contest EVER for MHSRA!”

Halle Gray was crowned Queen during the final day of rodeo. Jo-Hannah Logan was Jr. Princess and Finley Ross, the Jr. Runner Up Princess.

Based on horsemanship, personal interview, impromptu speech, modeling, prepared speech, personality, appearance and a written rule book test, the girls competed before judges Colleen Chapman and Cathy Gerrand of Virden and Jody Lenfesty of Saskatchewan.

The royal contestants had sold 50/50 tickets leading up to the contest. From the sales 25 per cent of the total pot went to the three girls for their scholarship when they graduate grade 12; 25 per cent to gifts and prizes for contestants; 50 per cent to the draw winner which happened to be one of the judges - Colleen Chapman.

Clouds, wind and the threat of a squall did not stop rodeo. The opening ceremony at 10am Friday featured riders circling the ring flying the colourful sponsorship flags. Canadian flag bearer was Jill Goff. Our anthem was sung throughout the weekend by Kelsey McGee (Deloraine) and Billie Cowan (Gains-

borough, Sask.).

In the rodeo prayer, announcer Pam Bond gave thanks for “the Western way of life and the values it teaches” and prayed for protection for competitors, livestock and travelers, courage for contestants, humility in victory, good sportsmanship and “the grace to always do what’s right.”

There are 14 MHSRA Gr. 12 graduates, with six from Virden, and Hamiota.

Virden Collegiate

Dawson Brown, has competed in team roping as header and tie down roping for seven years.

Amelia Crawford, has competed in barrel racing, pole bending, goat tying and breakaway roping for five years.

Stetson Cutler, has competed in team roping as heeler for two years.

Leigh Day, barrel racing, pole bending and breakaway roping for seven years.

Maddie Warkentin, has competed in barrel racing, pole bending, breakaway roping and trap shooting for six years.

Hamiota Collegiate

Hudson Bond of Kenton, has competed in barrel racing, pole bending, and breakaway roping for seven years.



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

In a bucking event, Garrett Gompf aboard the JH Saddle Steer.

The 2025-26 student executive has been Hudson Bond of Kenton (president), Jill Goff of Carman (vice-president), Andee Cowan of Gainsborough (secretary), Sadie Brown of Virden (treasurer) and Jo-Hannah Logan of Lenore (Jr. High rep).

The MHSRA Finals results

Prizes are important and thanks to many sponsors, awards presented at the Junior and High School Rodeo Finals include Year End Buckles and prizes to 5th place in each event. Saddles are awarded to All Around Jr and High School Cowboys and Cowgirls. Reserve All Around receive breast collars. (Full results available on MHSRA webpage.)

Elkhorn Community Walk for Alzheimer's



PHOTO BY ED JAMES

Spectators cheering on the walkers fundraising for a cure.

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

I am sure that there are many of us in the Westman/East Sask. Area that have had to struggle seeing someone close to us affected with Alzheimer's. It's a terrible disease that steals the minds and emotions of friends and loved ones, that make us become strangers to them. We lose the person we love, even though they are standing right next to us! Recently all over Canada, there have been Walks for Alzheimer's Society, sponsored by different groups to promote a greater awareness of this disease and raise some revenue to help find a cure. The community of Elkhorn recently held a walk organized by the local S.A.I.L. program leader Karen Mitchell and The I.G. Wealth Management Group. After the walkers registered, they were given a bottle of water, a chance to win a T-shirt prize draw and a map that showed three different walking routes, based on your ability and age. In fact, the walkers ranged in ages from four months to over 90 years old! The walkers came from the local school, the local day care centre, the Twin Valley Co-op Food store staff and the local senior home complete with wheelchairs and willing pushers! During the walk, the weather was a mixture of sun, rain, cloud and cool temperatures, but the overall attendance and spirit was good. At the end of the walk if you were up for an ice cream cone, K & T Kitchen on the main street was offering a discount on all ice creams and all the weeks tips would go towards the Alzheimer Society fund. Said Karen Mitchell, “We were very glad about the turnout, for the event despite the weather issues, but what made it most successful was the multi-generational support and turn out for the event. We all have an Alzheimer person in our lives. “

Lead Local. Run Local. Shape the Future.

School trustees make decisions that shape classrooms, communities, and futures.

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your leadership ensures local priorities are heard.

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Lead. Run. Be part of public education in Manitoba.

This is your chance to lead, support, and shape education close to home.

Contact your local school division to learn more about how trusteeship looks in your community.



Election Day is October 28, 2026

elect2026.ca

2026
Manitoba
School
Trustee
Elections

Woodworth Legion golf tournament



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

Second place winners select from the table of prizes donated to the Woodworth Legion Golf Tournament.

By Gerry Nolan
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Woodworth Legion golf tournament is an annual event. Hamiota Golf Course hosted the tournament which is a best ball format held on June 20.

A total of 52 golfers took part on a beautiful sunny day. The best ball foursome that won the tournament were Dave Van Richer, Hal Elliott, Paul Lucas and Rob Johnson.

The ladies' longest drive was Mary Lou Hunter. The men's longest drive was Ryan Carter. The longest putt went to John Finnie and the closest to the pin was Logan McGonigal. The Whyte men, Craig and Danny barbequed the steaks and the Ladies Auxiliary served the rest of the supper to golfers and fans alike.

Thank you to Donnie Carter who organizes the tournament and does all the leg work to have such a successful event. Thank you to all the golfers who golfed and supported the Legion. See you all next year!

Donations boost Health Auxiliary



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A donation from the Virden Lions Club has allowed the Health Auxiliary to purchase two IV pumps/library kits for the hospital. Pictured with Thelma Quinn and Gwen Clarke of the Auxiliary are Lions Ben Veselovsky, Joan Veselovsky, Paul Pennycook, Cassandra Hume, Lloyd Williams, Alex Grieve, Jim Tapp and Bryan Hayward.

Trip to the west



PHOTO BY GERRY NOLAN

Farmstrong Restaurant in Armstrong BC.

By Gerry Nolan
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

My wife Celia and I headed out to British Columbia to see my daughter Carma and her husband Randy Smith. There were some very beautiful country but one thing that was awesome was a supper we

had at Farmstrong. It was a beautiful drive to get to this place up high in the hills. After a lot of twists and turns in the road we arrived at our destination. As we drove up to the restaurant, it was very nice looking, yet somehow very different from any food place I had been to before.

After parking our car, we walked up to the entrance where we picked up the menu and decided what we wanted to have for dinner. After deciding what we wanted, we walked up to the desk, where two girls met us and we placed our food order.

Next, we were escorted into the restaurant and seated, and they took our drink order.

Now what was unique about this place was it was a barn that had been used for livestock at one time but had been converted to a restaurant. There was a space between each board on the walls, and the roof had been tinned. Now they are not open year-round but were open this evening.

The tables were huge, that could have seated at least 8 people on each side. The seats were pews that had been taken out of a church yet were quite comfortable. There were

ladders that went from the floor up to the big beams that were used to support the building. It was totally awesome! They also had a huge screen that could be pulled down for people to watch a movie-on-movie night. Over in one corner there was a stage for a band to play if it was entertainment night.

The food was all cooked outside of the restaurant in a cook house. The meal was delicious and the atmosphere was just excellent. We had a great time! There was a lot of food in the portion size for our meal so when it came to dessert the 4 of us shared carrot cake.

If you're ever near Salmon Arm, British Columbia, put this place on your must-see list. Enjoy a great dinner at really affordable prices and enjoy the drive up and down the hills. You will not be disappointed!

Whyte's Lumber celebrates 80 years



PHOTO BY GERRY NOLAN

Whyte's Lumber Ltd, Est. 1946.

By Gerry Nolan
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On Friday, June 19, Whyte's Lumber celebrated 80 years of service to Kenton and surrounding area. Owner, Craig Whyte, his family and staff celebrated by hosting a luncheon which included beef on a bun, potato and macaroni salads and, of course, cake.

A little background on the business shows that John Whyte purchased the business in February 1946 after returning from World War II. They sold building materials, petroleum products and coal. Eventually John Whyte made the decision to enter the general insurance industry. John and his brother, known as Uncle Geordie. Uncle Geordie was known to pretty much everyone in and around the Woodworth district.

John passed away in 1970, so Uncle Geordie took over the business while Craig Whyte went to post secondary school. Craig returned to take over the family business. Uncle Geordie worked alongside Craig for a few years then retired.

Craig Whyte has run the business, and it has grown steadily and is well known throughout Manitoba. Many contractors come to Whyte's for lumber! The insurance part of the business was sold a few years ago to Guild Insurance.

Approximately 200 people showed up for the celebration lunch to congratulate Craig and his family on this momentous occasion.

Congratulations Craig on such a huge anniversary. It is truly amazing that in this day and age that a family business can survive and continue to grow and operate in such a small town. Eighty years and still going strong! It is the best lumber store by a dam site, in Kenton Manitoba!

Greg NESBITT
MLA for Riding Mountain

204.759.3313
Toll Free 844.877.7767
gregnesbittmla@mymts.net
#7 - 515 4th Avenue
Burlington Place, Shoal Lake, MB

Tundra

By Chad Carpenter

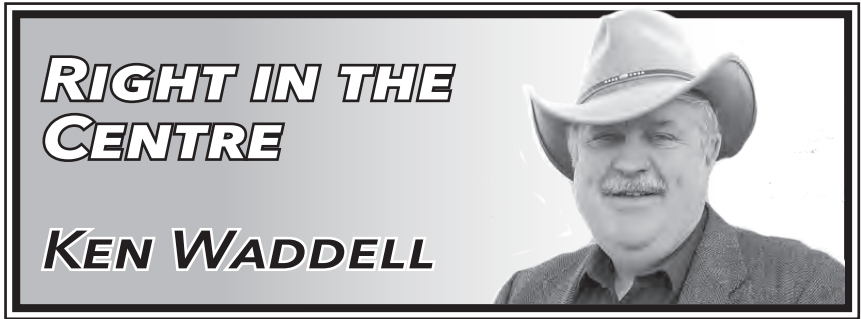


Housing crisis no surprise

There is some disturbing, but not surprising news, on the housing front. Many people can't afford to buy a home as the spread between price and income is just too high. There are many other factors as well. A lack of smaller affordable houses is one factor. The unwillingness of the construction industry to build smaller affordable housing units is another factor. Builders will tell you that they can't cover costs and make a profit by building anything less than over-the-top luxury houses. Modest style houses don't seem to cut it financially apparently.

CBC has announced that the Federal and B.C. governments plan to use up to \$3 billion to buy vacant condo units and turn them into affordable housing. These housing units are all higher end, expensive condos that aren't selling. Recent data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation shows that as of last month, there were 4,376 completed condos sitting empty in Metro Vancouver, a 76 per cent increase from the year before.

CBC says, "B.C. is facing a glut of empty condos. Thousands of Metro Vancouver units are sitting empty and some developers are facing insolvency. Now, some housing experts are questioning a plan by the federal and provincial governments to buy some of those vacant units and turn them into affordable housing. They say it amounts to a multibillion-dollar bailout for developers who refuse to lower prices to reflect a sluggish real estate market. "How much of this is really a way of helping out the industry versus, I think, a bailout in terms of bad business decisions by some of these developers?" asked Andy Yan, an urban planner and director of Simon Fraser



University's City Program. Yan has a lot of questions about the plan by Prime Minister Mark Carney and B.C. Premier David Eby to spend up to \$3 billion to buy vacant condos in "priority growth areas" and turn them into affordable housing. Yan has crunched the numbers, with his analysis showing that a third of all condos without owners in Metro Vancouver cost over \$1 million. He questions how deep a discount the governments can get to make those units truly affordable."

The longer they are on the market, the lower the price. Without a bailout, there will be bankruptcies. The question is should our tax dollars go to developers that build houses that are too big and too expensive to start with? I think not.

We have been hearing for years now that Communist (Socialist) China has been driving their economy forward by not only over building houses but whole cities with schools, rec centres and hospitals, many of which are nearly empty. The Chinese bubble may have burst and perhaps Canada is not far behind.

There are other issues in Canada's housing industry. One is the emphasis on building garage-ma-halls, luxurious 3-4 bedroom homes with double and triple garages with every amenity known to mankind and at

prices that show a profit. We need a total switch in housing ideas in Canada. We need smaller homes! No dammit!, every kid doesn't need their own bedroom with a Queen size bed. Building codes have gotten out of hand as well. When you drive through any town or city, there are many houses that are just fine that were built with 2 x 4s. Two-by-six is nice but it shouldn't be the law and that's just one example.

Local housing by-laws are ridiculous with rules about modular homes that are silly and restrictive. Millions of families have raised their kids in houses that only had 33 foot wide lots. People would be aghast at buying a new house today that was that narrow but that is just one of many concessions that need to be considered.

One concession that shouldn't be considered is bailing out Vancouver condo buyers. They over reached and perhaps deserve to go bankrupt. Perhaps that will signal common sense building instead of the excessive luxury being pushed at consumers.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this column are the writer's personal views and are not to be taken as being the view of the Banner & Press staff.



Simple pleasures...

It's been a full ten years since I left the acreage and moved into town. There is a pretty impressive list of home and yard improvements since July of 2016. Some were small projects, some really not so small. Some in the home and some outdoors. One of the first things that got changed was removing the awnings and shutters from the windows on the west side of my home. Then there was a massive water feature; I couldn't figure out how to make it work and it really isn't my style. There had been a snow stopping hedge on the north side of the driveway. It also frequently needed trimming. That is now part of my vegetable garden, the part that needs to be fenced against the neighbourhood long eared jack rabbits. Had a custom tree guy come in and remove a massive beech tree that was so close to the house that its branches were scratching the roof and seeds clogging the drains.

Oh, and then there was a fake brick raised flower shrub bed under the living room window and along the walkway. That got cleaned up and I now have a deck that I really appreciate. Oh, and a rose bush that had been damaged and the growth was all from below the graft. The tree, the water feature and the rose bush were all surrounded by those little white decorative stones...so many little white stones...

Where am I going with this? There was one more front yard scene that troubled me. The evergreen, probably planted the year the home was built, sat alone, center of a mound of brown stuff, some pine straw, some cedar chips. And under those layers, over a layer of landscape fabric, another layer of little white stones! I had no idea what I wanted to see out there, but knew that the lone tree with the brown surround wasn't cutting it! I sent a photo to one of the grands, the one that gave me the clues as to how to decorate the hearth after I got rid of the massive TV that had filled the space. There is an app - of course there is!— you enter what you have and they give you ideas of what could be. There were several options that I could choose.

The real work began when I slowly and systematically sifted through the brown stuff to remove all the little white stones. And there were many. Then I got a grand to help me move the concrete bird bath from the back yard and settle it under the tree. A start. A posting on social media connected me to free hostas. Thank you! I picked them up and got them planted. One of the suggestions was to add colour, so off to a greenhouse for a handful of annuals. The weather has been perfect for transplants. Another option is/was to add rocks — I think I will pass on more stones!

The project took time and effort. Every time I turn down my street and every time I glance out the window, my heart is content. Sometimes it truly is the simple things.

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Miniota News

Submitted
By LINDA CLARK

Congratulations to the Miniota Grade 5-8 students who brought home the Park West banner for the school attaining the most points at the Grade 5-8 Track and Field meet held in Shoal Lake. The K-4 students held their track meet on June 19, with a few intermittent rain breaks. The school year will wrap up with Awards Day on June 26, along with field trips. Wishing all students, staff and families a wonderful summer vacation.

Congratulations to Blair and Sadie Gardham on the birth of their daughter, Presley-Jo Annette, on June 19. Presley-Jo is a little sister for Georgia and is also welcomed by grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

Congratulations to Lori Watters and Marco Ryden, who were married on June 20 at their campsite at the Miniota Golf Course, followed by a wedding supper and evening celebration with family and friends at the Arrow River Hall.

Attending the ceremony were the bride's mother, Trudy Watters; Lori's daughters Cassidy and Evan Simard and Raegan Miller and Jayce Soder; Marco's daughters Sydney (Dylan) and Livia (Deacon), and his son Ethan; as well as Marco's brothers Dorvis (Heather), Jason and Koen.

Friends and family from Miniota and area travelled to Erickson this past weekend for the Little Valley Jamboree to support Reese Sheane and his parents, Mallory and Joey Sheane. Each year, the Little Valley Jamboree raises funds to support two area families who have children with medical needs. Locally, many donated money to this worthy cause while others donated prizes for the auctions.

The two families were presented with cheques in the amount of \$13,000 each. In addition, \$15,000 was donated to Ronald McDonald House and \$5,000 to Swimmingly Inc. Mallory and Joey are very thankful for the incredible community support they have received for their son Reese.

Word has been received of the death of Jack Reynolds in British Columbia on June 17. Jack was raised in Miniota and was the eldest son of the late Lawrence and Verna Reynolds. Our

sympathy is extended to his wife Mary and their family, his brother Ken, and members of his late sister Wilma Kryshewsky's family. A private family service will be held in Miniota at a later date.

Our community also extends sympathy to Courtney and Luke Muir and their family on the death of Courtney's grandmother, Bev Bridgman of Rivers. Grandma and Grandpa Bridgman were regular supporters of their great-grandchildren's events in Miniota.

Linda Clark, accompanied by her siblings Donna Gammack of Garson and Harold Reid of Brandon, travelled to Edmonton for the memorial service of their cousin Jack Reid. Jack, the eldest son of the late John and Evelyn (Hanlin) Reid, was born at Isabella. Also attending were Steve and Cathie (Hanlin) Maric of Winnipeg.

Quote of the Week

"Someone asked me what I admire most in a person. I said, the ability to leave people better than they found them... To have conversations that heal instead of hurt. To make people feel safe instead of judged. To be the reason someone walks away smiling instead of questioning their worth. That's a rare kind of beautiful." — Maryann, Tiny Buddha.

Town Office: 204-748-2440

Viriden Landfill: 204-748-6033

Tundra Oil & Gas Place: 204-748-2736



Animal Control: 204-851-5881

Facility Bookings: 204-748-2440

Emergency After Hours: 204-851-5540

🍁 Canada Day Hours 🍁 Closed July 1

The Town office, Tundra Oil & Gas Place and the Viriden Landfill

Dutch Elm Disease Program

Dutch Elm Disease and Emerald Ash Borer monitoring are underway for the season.

- Provincial inspectors will be driving or walking around both public and private properties.
- For more information, please contact 204-945-7866 or email treeline@gov.mb.ca

Tax Prepayment Discounts

The Town of Viriden 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
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.

Upcoming Council Meetings
July 14 & August 11
Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM

Vibrant Viriden

Viriden Self-Guided
Garden Tours



Viriden's Best
Gardens Contest

Sunday, July 19, 2026

If Interested in Participating and for more information please email: vibrantviriden@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page: Vibrant Viriden

Notice of Registration of Prospective Candidate for General Municipal Elections

Town of Viriden

Please be advised that a general municipal election will be held on October 28, 2026.

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 Town of Viriden office, 236 Wellington Street West, Viriden, MB, during the regular hours of business.

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

Registration forms are available for pickup at the Town of Viriden office.

Rhonda Stewart, SEO
Phone: 204-851-0769, Email: rlstewart64@outlook.com
Dated at Town of Viriden, Viriden, MB on April 14, 2025

Summer Day Camp registration open

Email Tara Davies should you have any questions at: events.program@viriden.ca

HELEN DRYSDALE

OUT OF HELEN'S KITCHEN

Canada's 159th birthday is fast approaching! It's an opportunity to celebrate what it means to be Canadian. Today's recipes celebrate the "multi pot of stew" we are as Canadians from our First Nations Peoples to the people whose forefathers came to Canada to our newest Canadians who chose Canada as their new country. They all have embraced Canada and brought with them their traditional recipes. Nothing tells Canada's story better than its diverse cuisine. Enjoy!

Bannock was first introduced to the Indigenous by the Scots and it quickly became a favorite to the Indigenous across Canada.

Basic Bannock - Indigenous/Metis

3 cups flour	1 tsp. salt
2 Tbsp. baking powder	2 Tbsp. sugar
1/3 cups butter or shortening	1 1/2 cups water

Add ins if desired: raisins, fresh berries, cinnamon sugar, chopped nuts etc.

Mix flour, salt, baking powder and sugar together. Rub butter into the flour mixture. Add enough water into the mix to make a stiff dough. Knead dough for 3 minutes. Let rest 25-30 minutes. Make into round disks about 1/2 inch thick and fry in an oiled frying pan over medium heat. Cook Bannock till golden brown and flip to brown the other side.

To cook over an open fire on a stick; take bark of your sticks so as not to get the bitter bark taste. Make a 12" rope and twist around the stick and cook turning the stick as each side bakes until golden and crispy. Wonderful served with syrup.

From England-Bangers and mash

- (sausage, gravy and mashed potatoes)

1/2 Tbsp oil	8 sausages
1 large onion, coarsely diced	2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tbsp flour	2 cups beef broth
1/2 tsp salt	1/2 tsp black pepper

Hot mashed potato

Cook sausages: Add oil and sausages to a frying pan and cook over medium high heat. Turn occasionally until browned all over and cooked through. Remove sausages onto a plate. Turn heat down to medium. Leave about 2 tablespoons fat in the frying pan to sauté the onion and garlic. Cook for 4-5 minutes. Remove onions. Add the flour to the frying pan and mix into the remaining fat. Cook for a few minutes stirring all the while. Add the beef broth a little at a time bringing the broth to a simmer. Cook, stirring all the while for 2-3 minutes or until gravy thickens. Add more salt and pepper to taste. Add the onions and garlic to the gravy. Serve the sausage and gravy over hot mashed potatoes.

Filipino Pancit Recipe

My Filipino neighbour brought me a plate of food recently and Pancit was part of the plateful. So yummy!

1 pound chicken breasts, cut into 1/2-inch chunks	2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
8 ounces dried Bihon Noodles	1 large yellow onion, diced
1/2 tsp. salt	2 med carrots, peeled and cut into matchsticks
2 cloves garlic, minced	1 cup snow peas
2 cups green cabbage shreds	1/2 cup soy sauce
Salt and black pepper to taste	1 medium lime, cut into wedges
2 green onions, diced	

Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large frying pan on medium-high heat until shimmering. Add chicken pieces, sprinkle on salt and cook until tender and fully cooked through. Transfer the chicken to a plate and set aside.

Add the remaining oil to the pan. Add the onion and garlic. Stir-fry until softened, about 2 minutes. Stir in your mixed vegetables and cook for 3-4 minutes until they're slightly tender. Meanwhile cook the noodles. Add the cooked chicken pieces, soya sauce, desired salt and pepper and noodles to the pan. Stir-fry until combined, 1 to 2 minutes. Garnish with the green onions and serve with lime wedges.

Saskatoon matrimonial cake

You can not get more Canadian than this dessert! Many of we older folk remember going out with our parents and pails to pick saskatoons in our "secret patch."

Middle:

4 cups fresh or frozen saskatoons	1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup water	2 Tbsp. lemon juice
1 1/2 Tbsp. cornstarch	1/2 tsp. almond flavoring

Base and topping:

1 cup oatmeal	1 cup flour
1/2 tsp. salt	1 cup brown sugar
3/4 cup butter	1/2 cup slivered almonds

Put the saskatoons into a pot. Add the water and sugar. Bring to a gentle simmer. Mix the cornstarch with the lemon juice and add to the saskatoons, stirring all the while. It will thicken fairly quickly. Add the almond flavoring and set aside. In a bowl combine the oatmeal, flour, salt and brown sugar. With a pastry blender or your hands work the butter in until the mixture is crumbly. Add almonds. Press half of the base into a 9x9" pan. Place the Saskatoon mixture over, then sprinkle the remaining crumbs on top. Lightly press the topping down. Bake at 350 F for 30-35 minutes or until golden brown. Eat warm as a dessert or cold as squares.

Manitoba Historical Society to Announce 2026 Endangered Historical Resources

List includes Kenton United Church

By Dr. Gordon Goldsborough
MANITOBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Winnipeg — On Tuesday, 23 June 2026, the Manitoba Historical Society (MHS) will unveil its 2026 list of ten historical resources at risk. The announcement will take place in the Salon A Conference Room, Richardson Concourse, under the historic Richardson Building at Portage and Main.

The 2026 list, in reverse chronological order, includes:

- "The Wall" (1977) art installation – Portage Avenue & Main Street, Winnipeg
- Multi-family housing complex (1975-76) – 738 Nassau Street South, Winnipeg
- Leaf Rapids Town Centre Complex (1970-71) – Leaf Rapids
- Mariapolis Collegiate (1962) – Mariapolis, Municipality of Lorne
- Ogilvie/Pool "B" Elevator (1923?) & Pool "A" Elevator (1927) – Napinka, RM of Brenda-Waskada
- Ruthenia Community Hall (1931) – Ruthenia, Municipality of Rosburn
- Manitoba Government Display Building (1926-27) – Fairgrounds, Brandon
- Manitoba Air Photo Library (1923-2025?) – 14 Fultz Boulevard, Winnipeg
- Kenton United Church (1904) – Kenton, RM of Wallace-Woodworth
- Upper Fort Garry Gate (1853) – 130 Main Street, Winnipeg

The embargo lifts at the time of public announcement on 23 June 2026. Recipients who do not agree to this embargo are asked to destroy this notice without sharing its contents.

"Each year, the Endangered List reminds us how quickly Manitoba's heritage can slip away if we are not attentive," said Lawrence Prout, Chair of the Manitoba Historical Society. "These things—large and small, urban and rural—tell the story of who we are. By drawing attention to their vulnerability, we hope to encourage thoughtful discussion and collaborative action before they are lost."

Additional background on each of the ten entries is provided on the attached pages. Lists from previous years (2019-2025) are available at www.mhs.mb.ca/news/endangered10_2025.shtml

Founded in 1879, the Manitoba Historical Society is a volunteer-run, registered charity dedicated to the preservation, promotion, education, and research of Manitoba's heritage. The annual Endangered List highlights resources that, in the Society's opinion, warrant public attention and consideration. The MHS does not claim engineering or structural expertise and acknowledges that additional information may exist

regarding the condition of these resources.

For more information, contact Gordon Goldsborough, Acting Executive Director, at 204-782-8829 or gordon@mhs.mb.ca.

Kenton United Church (1904)
– Kenton, RM of Wallace-Woodworth

The United Church of Canada has had a profound impact on Manitoba through its blend of social activism, community service, and rural ministry. Rooted in the Social Gospel tradition, a movement energized by events such as the 1919 Winnipeg General Strike, the church became an advocate for unemployment insurance, old-age pensions, universal health care, and other reforms aimed at improving daily life.

Its presence was especially strong in rural Manitoba. When Methodist, Presbyterian, and Congregationalist congregations united in 1925, the new denomination instantly became the province's largest Protestant body in terms of buildings. A provincial architectural survey in the 1980s documented over 450 relevant church buildings across the predecessor traditions.

Today, the United Church faces a marked decline in Manitoba. Demographic change, shrinking congregations, and a severe shortage of ministers leave many communities without stable leadership. Once-central rural churches now struggle to sustain programs, maintain buildings, and attract new members, affecting not only congregations but the wider community life they long supported.

Kenton is a clear example. Its brick Presbyterian church, built in 1904 and becoming a United Church in 1925, has been an anchor in a multi-point charge with Hamiota, Oakner, and Shiloh. Yet it now faces the same pressures as other rural congregations. Aside from a well-attended Christmas service in 2023 and one early in 2024, it has been largely vacant. As the only church remaining in town, it might find new life as a

community church serving a broader spectrum of residents or, like other rural churches, through a creative adaptive reuse that preserves this architectural landmark.

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APPRENTICESHIP YOUR WAY TO A CAREER

By Nancy Jo Moller
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

With the high cost of living and not being able to afford full-time schooling many individuals are now following the path of apprenticeship. This allows the person to “earn while you learn” in a skilled trade. Hands on training gives an individual the chance to gain experience in either a trade specific company or one with numerous trades. While working, you accumulate employment hours for both your level with the Apprenticeship Board and Employment Insurance. Typically, 80 percent of your time is spent on the job under a certified mentor and 20 percent is in classroom instruction. Annually apprentices are required to attend college to complete the theoretical or technical part of their training. During college attendance, your employer grants a leave of absence to attend apprenticeship courses. The worker can apply for Employment Insurance while attending their apprenticeship course, so they still have some income available and then once their course is completed, they return onto their employer’s payroll. As the worker gains employment hours and passes each level of their training, responsibilities and wage increase.

Programs vary from two to five years depending on the trade complexity. Apprenticeships can be completed in over 50 designated trades in sectors like carpentry, construction, electrical, mechanics, plumbing, refrigeration, welding, cooking, hairdressing to name just a few. A full list can be viewed on the Apprenticeship Manitoba website.

When you complete your required work hours and pass the certification exam, you become a fully certified journeyman. This means you are awarded a Certificate of Qualification, commonly known as a Red Seal, recognized across Canada. As a qualified journeyman, you have several avenues available from leading a crew to starting your own business.

Does this interest you? Talk to the Manitoba Apprenticeship Board and local employers to get the process started as soon as you can. Contact your local



PHOTO BY METRO CREATIVE

Talk to the Manitoba Apprenticeship Board and local employers to get the process started as soon as you can.

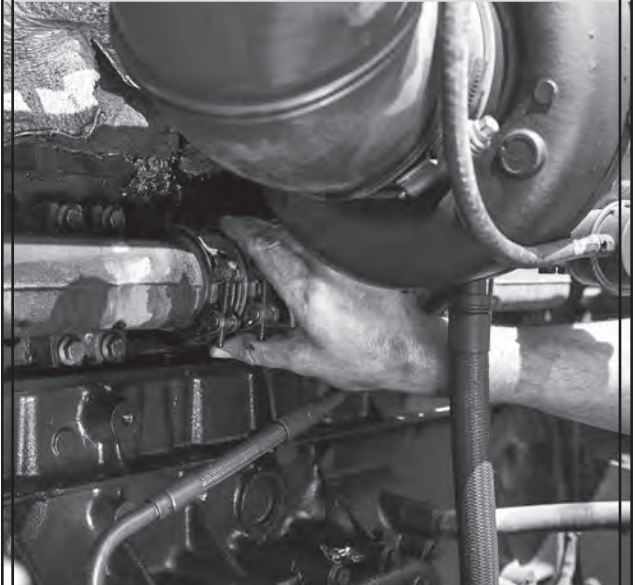
trade company to inquire if they have an apprenticeship position available, then contact Apprenticeship Manitoba to apply and register your Apprenticeship Application. Once complete you will sign an Agreement with your employer to log hours towards apprentice levels and certification.

If you have worked in a specific trade before, please contact Apprenticeship Manitoba to see if you are

eligible to challenge a level in your field. You may be able to move up a level and be closer to your Red Seal with previous work experience. Experienced tradespeople with sufficient hours may be sponsored by their employer to challenge mentorship certification.

Remember also as a current apprentice that local businesses may be interested in having you transfer to their company to complete your trade levels.

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My Favorite Victorian Artifacts

Windows into the Past



Victorian Toast Holder.

By Corr Rossouw
VPHM

Among all the historical objects I have encountered, three Victorian artifacts stand out as my favorites: a Victorian butter holder, a Victorian toast holder, and a Victorian hair wreath. Each item reflects the craftsmanship, values, and daily life of the Victorian era, while also telling a unique story about the people who once used and treasured them. Together, they provide a fascinating glimpse into the elegance and sentimentality of the nineteenth century.

Victorian Butter Holder
The Victorian butter holder is one of my favorite artifacts because it combines beauty and practicality. Made from silver-plated metal and decorated with intricate engravings and ornate handles, it was designed to keep butter covered and presentable on the dining table. During the Victorian era, formal meals were important social events, and even everyday items such as butter dishes were crafted with great attention to detail.

What makes this artifact especially appealing is how it transforms a simple household object into a work of art. The engraved floral patterns and decorative lid demonstrate the Victorian love of ornamentation and elegance. Looking at this butter holder reminds me that Victorians valued presentation and took pride in creating beautiful dining experiences. It is a perfect example of how even ordinary objects could reflect wealth, refinement, and craftsmanship.

Victorian Toast Holder
The Victorian toast holder is another favorite because it represents the sophistication of Victorian dining customs. This elegant metal stand was used to hold slices of toast upright after they were served. Keeping the toast separated prevented it from becoming soggy and allowed it to remain crisp until eaten.

The graceful curves, decorative feet, and detailed metalwork make this object much more than a simple kitchen accessory. It reflects a time when table settings were carefully arranged and meals followed



Victorian Butter Holder.

formal traditions. I admire the toast holder because it demonstrates how Victorians paid attention to even the smallest details of daily life. It is both functional and artistic, showing how practical items were often transformed into decorative pieces that enhanced the dining table.

Victorian Hair Wreath
Of the three artifacts, the Victorian hair wreath is perhaps the most meaningful and emotionally powerful. Hair wreaths were popular during the Victorian era and were often created using the hair of family members. Hair was woven into intricate floral designs and arranged in decorative displays, often under glass. These wreaths served as keepsakes that celebrated family connections and preserved memories of loved ones.

The hair wreath is particularly special because it was handcrafted from dried prairie flowers and strands of hair. Unlike modern photographs, which can be easily copied and shared, a hair wreath was a deeply personal and unique

memorial. Victorians often created these pieces to honor family members, especially after a death, making them symbols of remembrance, love, and family history.

This artifact is one of my favorites because it tells a deeply human story. It reflects the Victorian fascination with memory and mourning, while also showcasing incredible patience and artistic skill. Every strand and flower was carefully placed by hand, creating a lasting tribute that has survived for generations.

Why These Artifacts Are My Favorites: These three Victorian artifacts are my favorites because they each reveal a different aspect of Victorian life. The butter holder highlights elegance and hospitality, the toast holder reflects refined dining customs, and the hair wreath represents the importance of family, memory, and remembrance. Together, they show that Victorian people valued beauty not only in art but also in everyday life.

What I find most fascinating is how these objects have survived for over a century and still tell stories today. They allow us to connect with the past in a personal way, helping us understand how people lived, celebrated, and remembered their loved ones. Their craftsmanship, historical significance, and ability to preserve human stories make them remarkable artifacts and treasured pieces of history.

Police Report

Submitted
By WESTMAN RCMP

During this week, Westman RCMP received a total of 68 calls for service. Some of these calls for service include 22 traffic offences, 1 False Alarms, 2 Assaults, 3 Wellbeing Checks, 2 Assistance to General Public/Other Agencies, 2 - 911 Calls, 1 Break and Enter and 3 Mischief.

On June 14, during a routine patrol in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 140km/hr in a 110km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$442.

On June 16, RCMP received a call from an unwanted person at a residence in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation. As members were enroute, members received information the situation had escalated to multiple people physically fighting. Members along with ambulance attended the residence and located a 21-year-old male victim who had been stabbed in the back. The victim was transported to Virden hospital where he received medical attention. Members gathered evidence and collected statements and located a 19-year-old female accused. The accused was arrested and charged with Aggravated Assault, Possession of weapon for dangerous purpose, fail to comply with Probation Order x2 and was remanded into custody. RCMP continues to investigate.

On June 16, during a routine patrol in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 135km/hr in a 110km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$378.

On June 19, during a routine patrol in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 131km/hr in a 100km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$456.

On June 20, during a routine patrol in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 123km/hr in a 100km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$351.



CHARITABLE GIVING: HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR IMPACT

Giving back to charity feels good, but it can also be a smart financial planning strategy. In Canada, donations to registered charities qualify for valuable tax credits that can help reduce your overall tax bill while supporting causes that matter to you.

A little planning can make your charitable dollars go further. Donations can be combined with those of a spouse or common-law partner to maximize tax credits, and unused donation credits can be carried forward for up to five years. This flexibility allows you to claim credits when they provide the greatest benefit.

For those looking to make a larger impact, a donor-advised fund can provide both flexibility and tax efficiency. Contributions generate an immediate tax receipt, while allowing donations to charities to be distributed over time. Investments within the fund may also grow, increasing the potential support available to charitable organizations. Charitable giving can also play an important role in estate planning. Including a gift to charity in your will or naming a charity as a beneficiary of assets such as an RRSP, TFSA, or life insurance policy can create a lasting legacy while helping reduce taxes payable by your estate.

Investors may benefit from donating publicly traded securities rather than cash. When appreciated securities are donated directly to a registered charity, capital gains tax may be eliminated, and the donor receives a tax receipt for the full market value. This approach can provide greater tax savings while increasing the value of the gift received by the charity.

The most effective charitable giving is often planned as part of an overall financial strategy, particularly during higher-income years or following the sale of significant assets. By taking a thoughtful approach, you can support the organizations you care about while making the most of available tax incentives.

Smart Giving Checklist

- Verify the charity is registered with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA).
 - Review available donation receipts and carry-forward credits.
 - Explore donor-advised funds for added flexibility.
 - Update your estate plan to include charitable gifts.
- Consider donating securities to enhance tax savings.

Charitable giving is about more than generosity—it is about creating meaningful impact. With careful planning, your donations can benefit both the causes you love and your long-term financial goals.

Mutual funds and other securities are offered through
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Wheelie excited for the ride!

Grand Opening of the Oak Lake Bike Playground



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

L-R Caleb Hughs-McKinnon, Rachelle Stannage, Carolyn Roulette, Anita Plaisere, Tammie Rozier, Fusion Fat Cat, Counsellor Scott Phillips, Counsellor Dave Roulette, Ariya Eiriksson, Sadie Bailey, and Chloe Bailey all took part in the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the Oak Lake Bike Playground.

By Jessica Coulter
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On June 20, 2026, the Oak Lake Bike Playground had their Grand Opening! Located on Oxcart Trail, the bike playground is now a part of the Park which features a slide, swings and other fun kid activities and plenty of open grass for a picnic or a fun game of kick ball or catch.

The Fusion Fat Cat was on scene handing out stickers, tattoos and Fat Cat Account

Information.

NRG Signs from Virden made the sign for the park, and it looks fantastic. The sign outlines a few guidelines for using the bike playground for all including, 'Ride at Your Own Risk', 'Wear a Helmet' and 'Respect the Park and Other Riders'. It also tells everyone of the fantastic organizations who helped make this dream a reality, Fusion Credit Union, Full Circle Fund, Oak Lake Regional Community Development Board

(OLRCDB), Cochrane Stock Farms, Virden RCMP and Oak Lake Farmer's Market.

"I had the cake made at Virden Valleyview Coop, one of the best places to get a cake from," says Rachelle Stannage, EDO of RM of Sifton. "a big thank you to the Municipal Staff-Albert Logeot and Bobby Willman for all their help over the years and for keeping it so well maintained."

Next week, the Empire-Advance will have the story behind the bike park.

Shift happens, especially with a vintage manual transmission

Dirty Word Customz Annual Car Show



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

Excellent paint jobs on these Kenworth and Peterbilt big rigs at the Annual Car Show.

By Jessica Coulter
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

When it comes to classic cars, trucks and bikes, people from all walks of life can come together and appreciate their vision and efforts to bring out the vintage mixed with the modern. It is not about how much money is invested; it is about the journey to bring your dream to re-

ality and share with like minded people.

On June 20, Dirty Word Customz held their annual car show in the parking lot of the Oak Lake Golf Course to coincide with the Oak Lake annual golf tournament. It was a great combination of golf carts and modern/vintage vehicles. The car show started at 1pm and ran to 4pm.

Two fantastic food trucks came out for the

day to feed the hungry crowds, Los Brothers with their terrific Smash Burgers and Sullivans Delights with a great selection of Deli options.

Lifelong friendships are formed by the camaraderie found at these events, from the smallest item like dice hanging from the mirror to the classic paint jobs, something will always start a conversation between two car guys.

Clubbin' it on the weekend

Oak Lake Annual Golf Tournament



Kim Raven and Andrew Enns try their luck playing the putting game at the Virden Ag booth on Saturday afternoon.



PHOTOS BY JESSICA COULTER

Marina Enns attempts a putt on the green at Oak Lake Golf Course. Marina was also the winner of Ladies Closest to the Pin at this years tournament.

By Jessica Coulter
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On June 20, 2026, the Oak Lake Golf Course hosted their 8th annual Oak Lake Golf Tournament. Tee off started at 10:30am.

A total of 64 golfers came out for a chance at winning this years tournament. Special Hole Winners: Men's Longest Drive - Noah Motheral; Men's Closest to the pin - Chris Kobialko; Men's Longest Putt - Chris Kobialko; Ladies Longest Drive - Kim Kelly; Ladies Closest to the pin - Marina Enns; Ladies Longest Putt - Sandy Hayward.

The fee to sign up for the tournament was \$40 and includes a lunch of burgers and hot dogs.

On display at this years tournament was a 2025 Kioti Commercial LT 60" Zero Turn Mower with a huge cheque sitting in front of it. This cheque was presented to the Oak Lake Golf Course last December and was used to purchase the new mower for the grounds. The mower was purchased from Virden Ag and Parts. Virden Ag and Parts were also a part of the day with a booth full of fun prizes (hats, shirts, golf balls, etc...) to be won by any willing to play the games.

There were multiple fundraising draws being held including Hidden Ace, 50/50 and Chase the Ace for everyone attending to enjoy. The Chase the Ace also went that night for \$2,172.50 to Terri Baker of Oak Lake.

Dave Horn won the 50/50, \$270. Barry McNish and Kim Kelly both won \$250 cash. There was no prize for the "winner" of the tournament as it was just a fun game.

The band, Tangle Box performed from 6 to 10pm for the golfers. A great way to wind-down after a beautiful, warm and perfect golfing day.

The organizer of the whole day was Alayna Bailey who did an amazing job. This event could not have happened without a terrific team of volunteers, Dale Champigny, Scott and Ev Green, Tammy Hall, Karen Slack, Alayna and Jeff Bailey, Barry and Gail McNish. The tournament brought in over \$10,000 for the Oak Lake Golf Course.

Poetry in motion was a delight to watch

By Nancy Jo Moller
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

A bright sun and clear sky welcomed the Reston Horse Show on Sunday June 21. A busy program with twenty-one classes in the open division was scheduled before lunch break meant that horses were lined up and ready to enter the ring with no delays. It was obvious how much time is spent training these horses by their actions in a noisy environment. A trusting horse is poetry in motion and an important part of show and home life.

It was nice to hear the friendly banter between competitors as they put their horses through the course. Smiles and congratulations were exchanged during and after classes. The equine community is a welcoming place and while competitive spirit exists, helping hands are always available.

The Judge apologized during the 38 yrs and over showmanship class that she hadn't realized how far entrants would have to trot beside their horses. When receiving her first-place prize, the winner of this class stated, "I think she just felt sorry for me having to go that far."

The English Division brought out the breeches and helmets reminiscent of fox chases in England. The horses were put through their paces – walk, trot, canter as the riders tried to hear directions over the



That trusting bond that horse and rider share.



English division riders putting their mounts through the course.

traffic passing by. The instant obedience of horses showed the effort that is spent training to make these horses bullet proof.

The costume class always brings smiles to the spectator's faces, and this one was no different. First the two princesses rode in on their pony in their flowing purple gowns.

Their pony and them both earned respect for their poise. We were then transported back to the familiar "101 Dalmatians" show. Cruella and her two spotted escorts were a howling success. A little red devil sported a grin as they rode by showing true horsemanship.

As the show neared lunch, the question of

where participants and spectators could get lunch echoed through the crowd. When one dedicated set of grandparents heard that there wasn't a canteen available, the offer to cook lunch and provide water for the hungry crowd was instantly made. True showmanship doesn't just exist in the ring;

it means that there is no hesitation in going the 'extra mile' when required.

The show continued after lunch with fourteen more classes including the Western division with pleasure, horsemanship and

Ranch Rail classes. The Manitoba Gymkhana Rodeo Association held their show after the open division. Classes of Western Pleasure, Reining, Poles and Barrels continued through the afternoon to the delight of the spectators.



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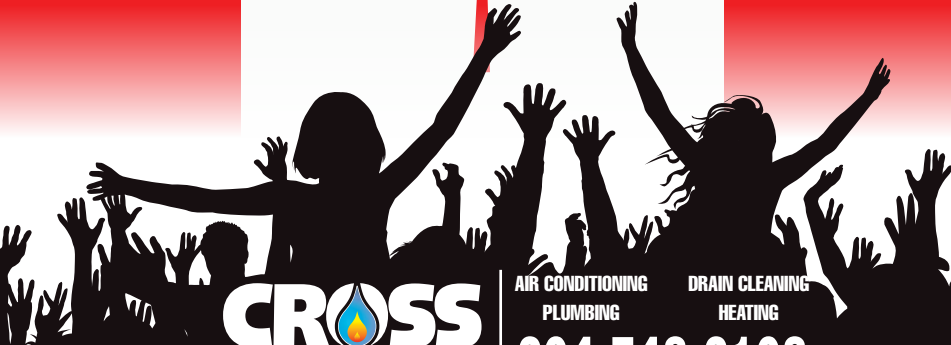
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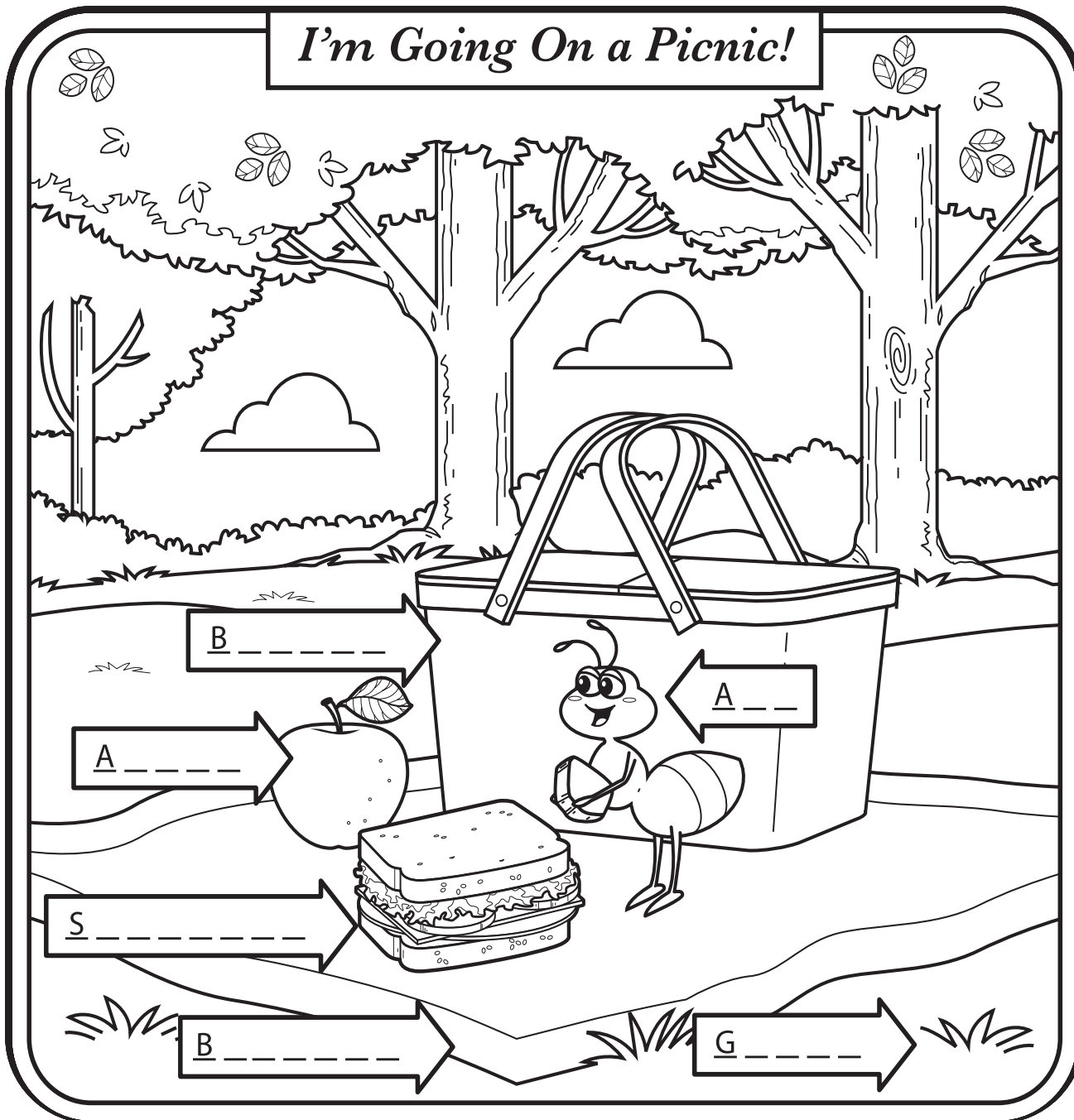


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SPORTS

POOLE THRIVES AS VETERAN PRESENCE ON YOUNG DINOS SQUAD

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

With so many new faces in the lineup, McAuley's Jake Poole became an important piece for the University of Calgary men's hockey team, contributing as a scorer while providing leadership and a strong defensive presence in his third season.

"Jake is now a leader on our team, and is counted on to produce offensively, but is also a big part of all aspects of our team and typically plays against the other team's top players," U of C Dinos head coach Mark Howell said. "He controls the game with his puck protection skills and can score with his quick release and accurate shot."

Poole, the son of Robin and Dana, appreciated the challenge of incorporating many new players into the team. He helped the Dinos finish third in the always-tough Canada West conference standings with a 19-9 record.

"What I enjoyed the most in my third year was having around 15 new players and having a great group of players to make the year enjoyable," Poole said. "We were able to make the semis and lost in three, which sucked being so close to heading to nationals and the league finals."

A skilled forward, Poole was a key contributor in the Dinos' success. With 29 points in 31 games, he ranked third on the team in scoring. He was second in goals with 14.

The 6-foot-2, 212-pounder was named the Canada West BioSteel Men's Hockey Player of the Week on Nov. 4. He scored twice and recorded two assists for four points in

a come-from-behind win over MacEwan University.

Earlier in the season, Poole lit the lamp twice and had two helpers in a four-point outing in a victory over the University of Regina. The next day, he had two assists as the Dinos beat the Cougars again.

In addition to scoring goals, making plays, and defending, the U of C squad looked to the veteran to help lead.

"With having 15 new players, being able to be a leader felt easy, especially being an older guy," he said. "I wanted to show the new guys by leading by example and showing them what it takes to be successful. Also being around to answer any questions they have."

Although the Dinos lost, a highlight of their season was participating in the Crowchild Classic. The event features the University of Calgary Dinos and Mount Royal University Cougars hockey teams facing off against each other. The most recent edition drew a record crowd of



PHOTO BY DAVID MOLL

Jake Poole celebrates a University of Calgary men's hockey team goal.

13,324 to the Scotiabank Saddledome. Poole scored the Dinos' lone goal.

Poole, who is pursuing a multidisciplinary degree in the U of C's arts program, appreciates how his family has backed his pursuit of hockey.

"My family has always supported me," he said. "My parents have come to Calgary many times to watch me play and always will help me if I ever need anything. I wouldn't be where I am without their help, that's for sure."

VIRDEN VIPERS LACROSSE CLUB COMPLETES STRONG FIRST SEASON ON THE FLOOR

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The inaugural season of the Virden Vipers Lacrosse Club gave local athletes a new opportunity to compete while helping grow interest in one of Canada's fastest-growing sports.

With support from the Manitoba Lacrosse Association's grassroots program, the local organization launched in mid-April. The season ran through June 17 and attracted 37 players, including two female athletes, across the U7-U9, U11 and U13-U15 age groups.

Camaraderie was a key aspect of the program. Bowen Bennett said the best part of playing lacrosse was "playing with friends," while Everett Horn said "playing with my friends and scoring goals." They were up to the challenge of learning a new sport. Horn said the hardest part was "learning how to cradle," while Bennett thought it was "learning to catch the ball."

The formation of the club was inspired by sessions held in early spring by Brandon's Wheat City Lacrosse coaches at Mary Montgomery School. Vipers Lacrosse Club chairperson Lisa Pearn said, "Many of the students were talking about wanting to play, including my son Thomas. I talked to a few parents and put out a question on Facebook asking about interest in starting a club. The response was overwhelming."

Pearn contacted the Wheat City Wranglers, who connected her with Shawna Ducharme. Ducharme helped get the club sanctioned with the Manitoba Lacrosse Association, created a registration page, and volunteered to be the organization's coach.

A board was established that included Pearn, Breann Bailey, Jenna Mills, Mike Higginbotham, Tracy Koop and Lindsay Kenderdine. Pearn noted that Higginbotham "was a pivotal volunteer as he stepped up and worked as an assistant coach to Shawna during the whole season. He ran practices even when Shawna could not be there and we are really hoping that he wants to continue on as

a coach next year."

The club adopted its Vipers nickname after soliciting suggestions through a Facebook questionnaire. The suggestions were put to a vote and the Vipers came out on top. The organization has an eye-catching logo.

The club started out holding practices once a week in the Mary Montgomery School gym. The sessions were moved to the Virden Junior High School outdoor rink and increased to twice a week. The season finished with practices at Tundra Oil & Gas Place.

"Our new club didn't join a league this year," Pearn said. "We concentrated on building skills and learning strategy and game play for the beginning of the season. We then took part in LAX days in Neepawa, Carberry, here in Virden and in Rivers."

The LAX days, Pearn said, allowed "our players to go join with other players from other clubs to play and learn new skills."

"It is high energy and it was fun to play on different teams and meet new people," Virden player Kolton Schweitzer said of the LAX days.

The Virden club hosted a LAX day at TOGP on June 6. It drew the Wheat City club as well as organizations from Neepawa and Carberry. Each player competed in two games.

"We had club parents donate some wonderful raffle prizes as well as donations from the Winnipeg Blizzard and Saskatoon Rush (of the pro National Lacrosse League). We were able to make enough money from raffles and 50/50 to pay all of our ref wages for the day."

The club hopes to grow enough to field its own squad in LAX days next season and maybe a tournament or two,



PHOTO BY SHAWNA DUCHARME

The Virden Vipers Lacrosse Club hosted a LAX day at the Tundra Oil & Gas Place.

Pearn said. This season, players wore their own jerseys from home for practices and then another club's garb or borrowed pinneys for LAX days. It is pursuing purchasing jerseys for next season.

"Community support has been huge in getting our club started this year," Pearn said. "We requested sponsors to help us purchase jerseys for the club for next season and were able to find enough sponsors to order a full set of jerseys for next year, including goalie jerseys. We have had community support come in from the Legion Ladies Auxiliary and Tundra thus far. The other lacrosse clubs in our area were amazingly supportive in helping us get started. They lent us extra lacrosse sticks, a portable box goal for practice, a set of shot clocks for LAX day etc."

"Although we have a long way to go in being completely outfitted with everything we need to make our club run, we have lots of grants we will be applying for and lots of community support. It was a great first season and I am excited for the future."

SPORTS

SWBL: COCHRANE LEADS OILERS PAST DODGERS, ROCKETS BATTLE FOR PLAYOFF BERTH

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Chase Cochrane helped set the tone on the mound last week as the Virden Oilers earned a win over the Oak River Dodgers, one of the South West Baseball League's stronger clubs.

The young hurler limited the Dodgers, who lead the SWBL North Division, to only one run on three hits in a 6-1 win on June 18. He struck out four in the complete-game performance.

"Chase was awesome," Oilers veteran Tanner Lewis said. "He's thrown plenty of innings for us the last two years, but this was his first start as an Oiler. He had great command of all his pitches and kept Oak River guessing and off balance. There weren't many hard-hit balls and, when they put the ball in play, our defence made the plays. It was nice to see Chase have that kind of success. He's thrown so well for us and I'm glad he got the results."

The Oilers backed up Cochrane with not only strong defence but also timely hitting. After Oak River scored its lone run of the contest in the top of the first inning, the Oilers responded with three runs in the bottom of the frame. They added another run in the fourth and two more in the sixth inning.

"We went in with good approaches and timely hits with runners in scoring position," Lewis said. "A couple good steals and smart decisions on the basepaths allowed us to get into those situations. It was nice to see some hits and bounces go our way."

Lewis swiped two bases and drove in a run. Brayden

Rowan, Tyson Draper, Owen Charles, Keifer Johnston and Bo Bootsman also each had an RBI.

Also last week, the Oilers fell 6-1 to the Hamiota Red Sox on June 19 and 4-1 to the Brandon Young Guns on June 21.

The Oilers (2-10-0) were to play in Reston on June 30, after the Empire-Advance deadline. The team wraps up the regular season on July 5 in Rivers.

Reston Rockets

The Reston Rockets are battling for one of the SWBL North Division's four playoff spots. As of June 22, the Rockets' 6-6-0 record had them in fourth place in the division. Hamiota was just behind at 5-6-0, while the Young Guns sat in third with a 5-4-0 record.

The Rockets were 2-1 last week. The team fell 22-2 to the Deloraine Royals before bouncing back to beat the Souris Cardinals 11-5 on June 18. The game was knotted up at 4-4 entering the sixth inning. Reston pushed seven runs across the plate to take a stranglehold on the game. Jack Kirkup and Aiden Jasper each drove in three runs, while Jamie Williamson had two RBIs. Logan Flannery started on the mound for Reston and allowed four runs, three earned, on four hits over five innings. Williamson earned the win as he did not surrender a hit in two innings of relief.



PHOTO BY MARLA WILSON

Virden Oilers played the Wawanesa Brewers on Sunday, June 14.

On June 20, the Rockets blasted off and held on for a 12-11 win over the Brandon Young Guns. Reston led 7-4 after the first inning, 9-4 after the second, and was up 11-4 following the third frame. A fifth-inning run made it 12-4 for Reston. The Young Guns scored one run in the sixth and then six in the seventh, but were unable to tie things up.

John Patmore hit a home run, had two doubles, and batted in three runs. As a pitcher, he earned the win as he allowed one earned run and eight hits while striking out nine.

MINIOTA'S FOUILLARD REACHES THREE STRAIGHT NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Few players can say they competed in three straight national championship finals, but Miniota's Kasey Fouillard accomplished the feat during a unique four-year career with Assiniboine College.

The daughter of Mike and Melissa Mitchell competed in her first American Collegiate Hockey Association Women's Division II national tournament in 2023. At that event in Marlborough, Mass., which is in the Boston area, Brandon's AC Cougars fell in double overtime in the national semifinals. The next three years, the team made it to the finals — once more in Massachusetts and twice in Maryland Heights, Mo., a St. Louis suburb. In all four of Fouillard's seasons, Ontario's Sault College won the championship.

While most student-athletes compete for two or three seasons for the Cougars, Fouillard opted for four. What prompted her return for the 2025-26 campaign?

"What brought me back from my fourth year of college hockey was that I wasn't ready to let go of such a fun and learning opportunity," she said. "This community of a team and the family that comes with it has had such an impact on my journey and I just felt the need to give it one last go."

From her earliest years in hockey through her four seasons at Assiniboine College, Fouillard was strongly backed and encouraged by her family.

"The support that my family has provided for me over these past couple years of me playing is just beyond my perspective," she said. "They have always been there for me and have cheered me on every game every step of the

way till the very end and I couldn't be more grateful for my parents, my grandparents, my friends, my teachers, my teammates and coaches. I am truly blessed to be surrounded by such great people."

Fouillard capped her college career in fine form. Over three pool play contests at the national tournament, she scored once and recorded four points. In the Cougars' two Final Four games, Fouillard had a goal and an assist.

"Kasey saved her best hockey for nationals and she raised her game to match the moment," AC head coach Charles Tweed said. "Her line with Victoria (Mann) and Veronica (Smarz) scored some big goals for us at the tournament and helped us move on to the final day."

In their national semifinal contest against Boston College, Fouillard opened the scoring in the first period. In the second frame, she earned an assist on a goal that made the score 2-2. The Cougars prevailed 3-2 in overtime. In the final, Assiniboine College fell 1-0 to Sault College.

During the regular season, Fouillard, a forward, was third on the team in points (36), goals (17), and assists (19) in 25 games.

"Kasey is an incredible two-way hockey player," Tweed said. "She's the most honest hockey player I've ever coached in that she competes equally as hard on defence as she does on offence. When your veteran centre is working hard on both sides of the puck, it really helps lead the team in the right direction as everyone else has to fall in line and compete across all 200 feet of the ice. Kasey, and her family who were at every game cheering her on, will be missed by the Cougars program as she's been an incredible ambassador for Assiniboine."

Fouillard and fellow fourth-year player Madison Haliuk captained the Cougars. Tweed said, "Their leadership was



PHOTO BY COUGARS ATHLETICS

Kasey Fouillard spent four seasons with the Assiniboine College women's hockey team.

invaluable to the group as we had a relatively young team with a dozen rookies."

Academically at AC, Fouillard earned a diploma in digital art and design and an advanced marketing certificate. This past school year, she studied administrative skills. Fouillard is interested in travelling and trying to "grow my personal design portfolio or start a full-time career position."

Bright eyes of youth enjoy end of school year trips!

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The local area schools are almost finished for the 2025/2026 school year. With the last major events being report card day and the grade 12 graduation ceremony. However, the end of the school year also holds one other special event, the year end trip for many of the younger grades, their teachers and aides. Such was the case for the grade K to 2 students, from the Birtle Elementary School in the Prairie West School Division and the Elkhorn kindergarten students in The Fort La Bosse School Division. Both groups made separate day trips to the Elkhorn Antique Auto Museum during the morning hours. Both groups not only had a great time exploring the Auto Museum and its many unique cars but also got to tour the old one room schoolhouse, the old century farmhouse and the recently restored Kirkella church. At each of the locations there were guides and volunteers to show the children around and explain the items on display and answer their many, many questions.

Over the two-day period, 70 children toured the museum displays along with their teachers, aides and even the bus driver. While at the car museum they had so many questions about the different car types, that they had never seen before, while at the farmhouse, the volunteer guide showed the children how food was prepared in the old days and how a farm family lived over 100 years ago. In the one room schoolhouse, they got to sit in the old double seat student desks and learn what a school

day was like many years ago and how important it was to get a good education. In the restored church building, it was a very different experience for the children as the majority, had never been in a church before and had many questions for the guide. This Anglican Church built in 1906 was taken apart in Kirkella, SK and reassembled in Elkhorn by a dedicated group of volunteers, bringing new meaning to the rebirth of a building. Back at the auto museum, the antique fire engine was very popular with all the children!

After a busy morning of visiting and learning it was time for a hot dog lunch put on by the museum and to enjoy the grassy play area. On two occasions during the school visits, some adult tourists, traveling down the TCH stopped by to visit the museum and joined the children in the visits. On the first visit the Birtle students had an extra treat with part of the afternoon spent at the Elkhorn Water Splash Park. Said the teachers and other staff with the tours, "The museum was not only a great fun event



PHOTO BY ED JAMES

This 1906 Anglican Church was resurrected in Elkhorn from its original home in Kirkella, Sk.

for students and staff, but it was a chance to learn about the past and to see so many things, they knew nothing about, that at one time were everyday common items and practices." Kim Hudon, the museum's summer manager said, "I was happy how both days went for the children". As a former high school and university teacher, I found, the younger children to be a bit of a challenge at times. But the eagerness to learn and ask questions made it all worth while and a learning lesson for me!

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SPORTS

SPORTS NOTES: BRYANT HEADS TO VANCOUVER ISLAND, LOCALS CELEBRATE 'JACKS' 50TH

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Bryce Bryant is headed west in pursuit of his NCAA Division I goal.

It was announced last week that the son of Daren and Roanne Bryant had signed with the British Columbia Hockey League's Cowichan Capitals, who are based in Duncan. The 2006-born forward is seeking an opportunity to play at the NCAA Division I level, the highest in U.S. university athletics.

For the past three seasons, Bryant starred for his hometown Virden Oil Capitals. He was a Manitoba Junior Hockey League First Team All-Star and helped propel the Oil Caps to the MJHL finals.

"The past three years with the Oil Caps have been unreal," Bryant said. "I honestly couldn't have asked for a better place to play, with a team and a coaching staff that gave me every opportunity to grow and succeed.

"Everyone knows the game has changed a ton over the last few years with all the NCAA rule changes and Junior A league changes. Sometimes I wish all those changes would've waited just a bit longer, but at the end of the day you play the cards you're dealt.

"The decision to sign in Cowichan definitely wasn't easy. I've always pushed myself to play at the highest level I can, and with everything changing at the NCAA level, a lot of college programs want to see guys developing and contributing at higher levels. Going into my 20-year-old season, I felt like I needed to challenge myself to a whole new level to get the best chance possible for another NCAA opportunity.

"The Oil Caps organization and the fans should be proud of what's being built here. So many players are being developed and moved on to the next level. All the changes taking place right now are really putting

pressure on leagues like the MJHL to push harder and offer even more value to players and fans alike. This will end up being a good thing for everyone moving forward.

"I know fans can get confused with all the moving parts sometimes, but—the Oil Caps are going to win a championship, and they're going to keep developing players the town and the fans can keep being proud of.

"There's no doubt in my mind they'll have another great team this year, and I'll still be their biggest fan—even from a few provinces away. Not to mention, my parents will still be proud Oil Caps billets for the 10th year running.

"I want to thank the entire Oil Caps program, Coach Rammer (Tyson Ramsey), and all the amazing fans who've supported me over the years. And to all the young players dreaming of Jr. A hockey: if you want to develop and push yourself to the highest level possible, the Oil Caps and the town of Virden is a great place to be."

Bryant is currently uncommitted at the NCAA level. He previously committed to Bemidji (Minn.) State University. In 2024-25, Bryant played three games for the BCHL's Cranbrook Bucks. He also has spent time in camps and preseason contests in the Western Hockey League.

Lumberjacks' 50th Anniversary

On June 12-13, the Dakota College at Bottineau men's hockey team celebrated its 50th anniversary. The North Dakota school program racked up 10 national



Oil Cap's Bryce Bryant is aiming for the NCAA div. 1 level.

championships at the National Junior College Athletic Association level and now competes in the American Collegiate Hockey Association ranks.

Virden's Wendell Collen played for the Lumberjacks from 1987-89 when the school was known as North Dakota State University-Bottineau. A walk-on who earned a spot on the team, Collen helped the Lumberjacks finish second in the nation and win the MICH League championship in 1987-88. He was a member of the 1987-88 squad that was later inducted into the school's Hall of Fame. Collen attended the Lumberjacks' anniversary celebration and said, "It was great to see old teammates, coaches, school staff and local supporters." He has fond memories of his time with the team.

"After playing two years of AA, four years of AAA and two years in the MMJHL, this was the first time I played for a coach who got paid for what he did," Collen said. "Gary Warren was a one-man show, he did it all from recruiting, equipment manager, trainer, coach, counsellor, to bus driver. NDSU-Bottineau has always been known as 'The Little School Who Could.'"

"My time as a Lumberjack—I experienced two of the best years of my life, from a development aspect as a player, student and a person. I learned to set goals, work hard to achieve those goals as a member of a team and as an individual. The greatest life lesson I learned was how to deal with adversity, and to never give up no matter how the cards were stacked. ...

"I am a Lumberjack forever; I will always bleed green, Long Live Those Lumberjacks!"

Some of the other current and former area residents who suited up for the Lumberjacks are Danny Senff, Kyle Martel, Pierce Martin, Cam Hodgins, Brett Braybrook, Kirby Braybrook, Allan Ward, Craig Lane, Billy Patmore, Tod Wallace, Sheldon Rapley and Jason Poole.

STANLEY CUP HAS BEEN WON



The Stanley Cup goes to the Carolina Hurricanes. They defeated the Vegas Golden Knights to take Lord Stanley back to Carolina. They proved to be just too much for their oppon-

ent and are National Hockey League Champions for the 2025-26 season.

Seth Jarvis and Jordan Martynook, two Manitoba boys will indeed celebrate the occasion

and good on them for that. Nik Ehlers who previously played for the Winnipeg Jets was also on the winning team and will really enjoy his summer.

Well, that is a wrap on this year's Stanley Cup playoffs.

It all starts again in September, but in between there is the National Hockey League draft and also free agency which begins on July 1. You will not run out of hockey stories all summer.

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- Have the ability to work independently with minimum supervision
- Possess a valid Class 5 Driver's License
- Have the ability to operate and maintain a variety of municipal equipment
- Have the ability to work in Rapid City, Oak River or Cardale
- Possess or the ability to obtain a Level 1 classification Manitoba Water Certificate

Please submit a resume, a cover letter that includes a copy of a Driver's Abstract to the R.M. of Oakview municipal offices at Rapid City or Oak River by Monday, July 6, 2026 at 12:00 noon. Resumes may be reviewed as soon as June 29, 2026.

A detailed list of duties can be found at www.rmfoakview.ca or by contacting the following:

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10 Cochrane Street	435 - 3rd Ave
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Phone: 204-566-2146	Phone: 204-826-2515
Fax: 204-566-2126	Fax: 204-826-2274
Email: info@rmfoakview.ca	Email: adminrc@rmfoakview.ca

Thank you to all applicants for their interest in this position, however, only those selected for interviews will be contacted.

Notice



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

DEVELOPMENT PLAN – TRANS CANADA WEST PLANNING DISTRICT

Under authority of *The Planning Act*, the Planning District Board will hold a public hearing at the time and location listed below to hear from and receive representations from any persons who wish to make them in respect to the following:

BY-LAW NO. 61, TO ADOPT A DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR THE TRANS CANADA WEST PLANNING DISTRICT (INCLUDING THE RURAL MUNICIPALITY OF WALLACE-WOODWORTH, AND THE TOWN OF VIRDEN)

DATE, TIME, AND LOCATION:

Monday, July 13th, 2026 at 7:00 pm
Tundra Oil & Gas Place
900 5th Ave.
Virden, MB

FOR INFORMATION, PLEASE

CONTACT:

Alleesha MacDonald
Secretary-Treasurer
Trans Canada West Planning District
(204) 748-7239

A copy of the proposed materials may be arranged for review through the contact above.

Help Wanted

VIRDEN ADULT LITERACY CENTRE (VALC) PROGRAM MANAGER

Position Summary

The Virden Adult Literacy Centre Program Manager leads and coordinates adult literacy programs that help learners improve their reading, writing, math, digital, and life skills. This role oversees program delivery, supports staff and volunteers, tracks learner progress, manages reporting requirements, and builds relationships with community partners.

Hours: 10 hrs/week (flexible) throughout the school year, Sept – June.
Salary: \$25/hr to start.
Closing date: July 17th, 2026

Key responsibilities:

- Plan, organize, and oversee adult literacy programs.
- Supervise instructors and volunteers.
- Coordinate learner intake, assessments, and goal setting.
- Monitor learner progress and program outcomes.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with community organizations.
- Manage program budgets and funding requirements in Excel.
- Prepare reports for Government agencies and VALC Board of Directors.
- Promote literacy programs through community outreach.

Qualifications/Skills:

- Grade 12 Diploma (postsecondary education an asset but not required).
- Experience with computers, technology, Microsoft Word and Excel.
- Experience managing programs, staff, or volunteers.
- Knowledge of adult learning and literacy programs.
- Strong communication, organization, and leadership skills.
- Experience with budgeting, record keeping, reporting and community partnerships an asset.

The VALC Program Manager is committed to creating a welcoming learning environment that helps adults achieve their personal, education, and employment goals.

Please email your resume to: applevdn@mymts.net; Call 204-748-2384
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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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Notice

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE
OF: RINO MORIN, late of the Virden,
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ALL claims against the above estate, supported by Statutory Declaration must be sent to the attention of: Abisola Bamigboye, Estates Administration, at 155 Carlton St Suite 500, Winnipeg MB, R3C 5R9 on or before the 30th day of July, 2026.

DATED at Winnipeg, Manitoba, this
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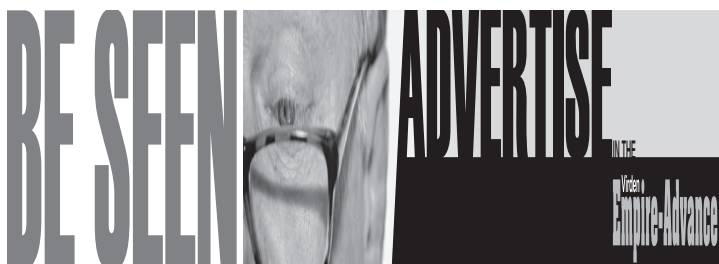
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RCMP staffing rebounds in Virden

By Dale Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

RCMP Monthly Report

At the June 18 Town council meeting Sergeant Amy Doan and Corporal Dan Guignard presented the RCMP report for May. The detachment responded to 103 calls during the month with many of the calls traffic-related within the Town of Virden. Four impaired driving investigations resulted in charges being laid. The detachment responded to seven false alarm calls during the month. This number was unusually high and highlighted the strain false alarms place on police resources. Coun. Travis Penner asked how many alarm calls ultimately turn out to be legitimate break-ins. Cpl. Guignard explained that true alarm-related break-ins are not common. Guignard said, "In my whole career, that's actually pretty rare. A handful in my whole career that I personally went to."

Staffing Updates

Staff Sergeant McAuley is scheduled to begin work in Virden during the second week of July. The detachment has recently received a new

member who will be based in Melita but would assist with policing responsibilities in Virden and surrounding rural municipalities. Another officer is expected next week, and an additional member at the end of July. That member will replace an officer who had previously been suspended from the Virden position but resigned from the RCMP in May, allowing the vacancy to be filled quickly. Coun. Tara Maxwell commented, "I'm happy to see where we've replaced this staff because paying for someone to be on suspension is hard to justify to the taxpayers." Sgt. Doan reported that interviews for the municipal employee clerk position had concluded and a hiring decision was expected shortly. Applicants formerly expected a two-month process due to security clearances and background checks but approvals have become faster than in previous years as documents and questionnaires can be filed electronically. Mayor Tina Williams asked whether staffing shortages had affected public access to the detachment office. Sgt. Doan confirmed that the detachment currently has three detachment assistant

positions and one municipal employee position. The municipal employee position is vacant, and one detachment assistant has been absent due to illness. As a result, staffing levels have been reduced by half, forcing the office to close its front counter daily between noon and 2pm. Doan stated that the employee who had been off work was expected to return at the beginning of July and with the hiring of a new clerk staffing levels should return to full strength by the end of the summer.

Community Outreach

The Town recently organized a pre-school bike rodeo, and Mayor Williams noted that she had met one of the detachment's new officers during the event. The officer walked around with the children and spoke with them as part of a community outreach effort designed to help young children become comfortable interacting with police officers. Williams said, "We want them to talk to police...If you have trouble, you stop and talk to them (creating) positive relationships." Sgt. Doan said, "We are going to be participating in red serge on Canada Day."

Virden to install professionally developed trail system

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

A Trails Master Plan is in the works for Virden. At the June 18 Town of Virden council meeting administration provided councillors with a written report asking council to approve hiring a company to create the new trails plan. Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Jarred Jaffray said, following a request for proposals that nine companies responded. He said, "We did get proposals from all the way across the country from B.C. to New Brunswick." While all companies had experience in creating trail systems, Jaffray said, "We looked for specific Manitoba companies," noting that the terrain is

different in Virden, compared to coastal areas. Sustainability, project timelines and cost were all deciding factors and Urban Systems was the business that staff recommended to council. Coun. Travis Penner asked about the quote costs and why Urban Systems was their choice. Jaffray said the project budget is \$75,000 and the applicant quotes "were within a couple thousand dollars each other." Urban System's Manitoba experience and plans for sustainability set them apart. This Canadian consulting firm designs, plans, and builds active transportation networks, multi-use paths, and green spaces across Western Canada. Coun. Tara Maxwell expressed excitement to see the trail system get underway. She asked, "My one

question is, are these all going to be nature trails or are these also going to... be more than nature trails? Jaffray responded, "It will be a complete trails master plan. Yeah, they're going to include everything." Coun. Lynette Grumpelt asked if a Virden feature, the CP Rail underpass between Sixth Ave. to Fifth Ave. would be included. Jaffray said, the trail's purpose would bring connection to the underpass and other town features and to some locations outside town as well. Hearing the quote came within the \$75,000 budget, council approved hiring Urban Systems to create and install Virden's Trails Master Plan. Staff says that work on Virden trail system could begin as early as this July and be completed near the end of April 2027.

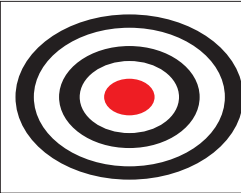
Town Council hears of Spray Park repair, cemetery upkeep

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Chief Administrative Officer Neil Smith presented council with a report on current issues and projects. He said of the civic centre renovations, "A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the former court room space has finally been executed. And we've managed to get a little map of the floor (plans) attached to that agreement to make things clear in terms of where the town operates and where the court is allowed to operate." A cost-sharing agreement with the province is in place for the next step of well treatment works. Drilling work for the new Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) cell for everyday garbage got underway last week. Repairs to the spray park pipes have been on-going. This unexpected work is a result of damage that occurred during winter months to the water lines in the spray park.

Smith said, "It's a winter thaw breakage, which unfortunately spray parks in colder climates are well known for," adding, "The operations manager has a plan for next winter that he's going to put RV antifreeze in the lines." Coun. Travis Penner responded asking, "As long as they're blown out properly, they're okay, right?" Smith said that repair and maintenance costs can be high for spray park installations. CAO Smith said he intends to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) "for cemetery lawn care services in the fall just to allow council to assess potential costs of a level of service increase." And he'll draw up a cemetery by-law for council to consider. He noted that "a previous contractor's service was north of \$70,000 per annum." He's seeking to ensure competitive and fair pricing from various potential vendors. Coun. Travis Penner said, "I really like your idea on the cemetery. There's only one little concern I have about that is when we, if I remember correctly... when we decided to not renew that

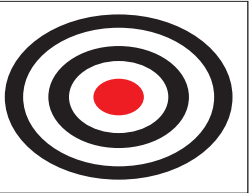
agreement, first of all, it was because of the cost. "But secondly, it was also justifying some extra staffing in our public works department..." He said, "My concern would be, do we still have that extra staffing, and are we going back to spending that same money again? In other words, are we losing efficiency?" Smith replied, "That's got to be a budget discussion in committee as a whole, but we can't do very much without some firm potential numbers to consider. If the level of service isn't good enough for council or the public, hopefully there will be some pricing that allows us to consider what we adjust." A new manager of utilities has been hired. Kevin Haines has accepted the position and will begin his employment immediately. Smith says he has more by-law work ahead with a water and sewer regulation bylaw, deemed to be a significant project, and will also create an asset management policy as well to be brought forward to committee as a whole (all of council) when the documents are ready for review.



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SUBMITTED PHOTOS

A Colony Farm Safety event was hosted at Rolling Acres Colony on June 12., with 320 students from 13 colony schools participating. The day started with a prayer and was followed by a keynote speech from Genji Maendel- the father of a 15-year-old son who lost a foot in a grain auger. A dedication to loved ones who lost their life to farm accidents was also held, with two candles lit and kept burning all day in memory of Kayla Waldner, age 12, of Riverside Colony; and David Kleinsasser, age 55, of Westview Colony. Waldner accidentally lost her life in 2023. Kleinsasser passed six months ago due to a farm related incident. The safety presentations had a wide range of topics, with sessions bearing a primary focus on farming. Shown here are just a couple scenes from the eventful, and educational, day.

Pictured left: Ron Wallman, a teacher at Goodhope Colony School, talked about ATV safety. Pictured right: Richardson Pioneer representatives emphasized dust awareness with the youth.

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Meeting the season's challenges



PHOTOS BY ROB WADDELL

Large seeding outfits, like the one pictured here, spent long hours getting the crop in the ground this spring. Seeding season was late this year but the big units did their job for the most part and lots of rain has made the crops grow. In some cases, hail, wind and excessive moisture has damaged some crops. After a long season, farmers will be happy to park the big rigs and move on to other tasks.

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