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A Strong Start to Virden's 100th Anniversary Celebrations



PHOTO BY BETH MCCONNELL

Legion cooks, and volunteers included: Jo-Anne Milne, Hank Kyle, Ryan Bochek, Gwen Bochek, Kel Smith, Brian Grenier, Wendy Gill, Jim Kyle, Debbie Sararas, work hard to cook up food for the large crowd.

By Beth McConnell
EMPIRE ADVANCE

Virden's 100th anniversary celebrations kicked off on Saturday, July 18, with a bustling pancake breakfast that filled the Legion Hall from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. The morning set the tone for a week-end built on community spirit, generosity, and shared pride — and by all accounts, the turnout exceeded expectations.

Kel Smith summed it up simply: "Very good turn out."

Hank Kyle, who helped coordinate the event, noted just how busy the morning became. "I made three trips to the grocery store because we ran out of food, and we thought we had plenty. The 100th anniversary committee is extremely happy with the turn out." His comment captured both the scale of the crowd and the enthusiasm that carried the event forward.

The breakfast itself was a hearty spread prepared by Legion chefs and volunteers: scrambled eggs, sausages, and golden pancakes served hot and fresh. The hall welcomed people of all ages, staying true to the organizers' goal of creating a family friendly event. Pricing was intentionally accessible — free for children five and

under, five dollars for kids six to ten, and ten dollars for teens and adults. As many attendees remarked, you'd be hard pressed to find a better breakfast at those prices.

Community support played a major role in making the morning possible. Wendy Gill expressed her gratitude on behalf of the organizers: "Thank you to everyone for making it possible, and to P&H for donating the pancake batter. All the volunteers that made it possible, we couldn't do it without them." Volunteers kept the kitchen running smoothly, while sponsors ensured the breakfast remained affordable for everyone who came through the doors.

The hall was filled with families, neighbours, and visitors — a blend of generations sharing tables, stories, and the excitement of a milestone celebration. From toddlers enjoying their first community breakfast to longtime residents reflecting on Virden's history, the morning carried a sense of togetherness that set the perfect tone for the anniversary weekend.

As the celebrations continue, the pancake breakfast stands out as a reminder of what makes Virden special: people showing up, pitching in, and celebrating side by side. If the opening event was any indication, the community is more than ready to honour 100 years — and to do it together.

Inside...



**MILK RUN
FUN**

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**VIBRANT
VIRDEN
GARDEN TOUR**

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"A Sense of Duty", an interview with a British veteran in Virden community

By Beth McConnell
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

As part of the Legion's 100th anniversary, local British veteran, former police officer, and current Town Councillor, Marc Savy, sat down to share his experiences—from joining the military at 17 to the role remembrance still plays in his life today.

What inspired you to join the military?

Marc: It really wasn't my parents' idea—my parents had plans for me. At 17, I felt those weren't my plans. My grandparents raised me while I was at boarding school, and my grandfather was a First World War veteran. His stories inspired me. One day I walked into the recruiting centre on George Street in Edinburgh, met a sergeant who told me what I should do, and that was it. November 1977—I was 17.

Where did you serve, and what was your role?

Marc: I served during the Cold War with the British Army. Most of my career was in Germany, but also in Great Britain and Canada. I spent the best six months of my career in Canada. I did a few shorter tours elsewhere too.

What did you learn that still guides you today?

Marc: Teamwork, leadership, and the ability to work alone or with a group in stressful situations. A sense of duty and esprit de corps—being part of something bigger. I also learned practical things: ironing, sewing, cooking, cleaning. Discipline. You cleaned your weapon, your equipment, then yourself. Those habits shaped me as a man, a police officer, and now as a councillor for the Town of Virden.

How did your service shape the person you are now?

Marc: I grew up in the Army. Not at school—there. The relationships, the role models, the responsibility. It made me who I am today. It shaped my 27 years as a police officer, too. In my experience, the best police officers were ex hockey players or veterans.

What was it like returning home after service?

Marc: Different for me. I met Shelley in Canada and married halfway through my service. So home was home—she was with me everywhere. If you were single, you went back

to the barracks with 20 or 30 soldiers. Being married meant having a place to relax.

How does the Legion support veterans?

Marc: The Legion does a fabulous job. It was formed 100 years ago so First World War veterans could keep that camaraderie. Today, there aren't many veterans around—maybe four or five of us on a Friday—but the Legion keeps the stories alive and supports veterans however it can.

What role has the Legion played in your life?

Marc: I've attended Remembrance Day services since I was about 13. My first was in Dumfries, Scotland, as an air cadet. I saw grown men cry and didn't understand until I spoke with them afterward at the Royal British Legion. They were remembering hundreds who didn't come home. Here in town, the Legion is a place where everyone is welcome. You can still talk to like minded folks.

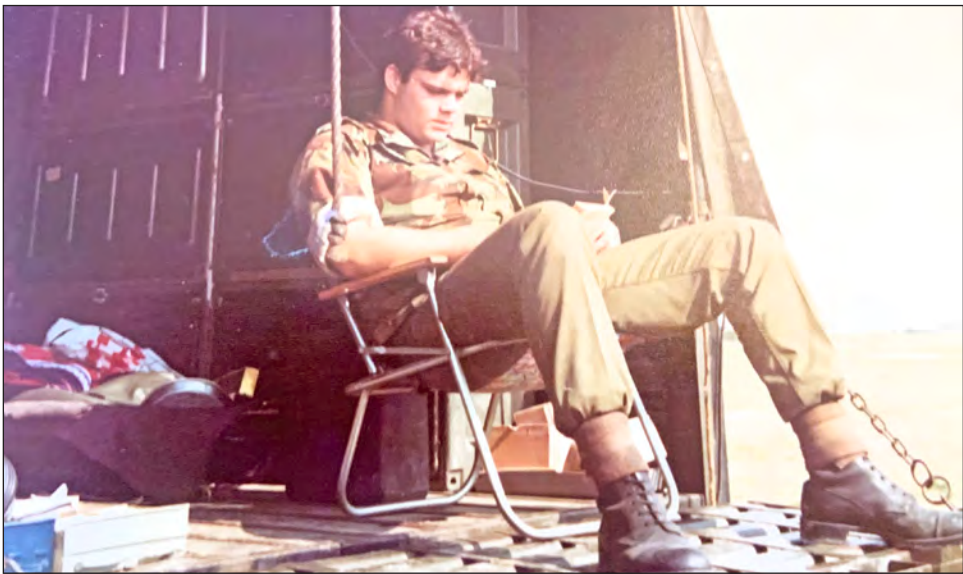
Why are Legions important in small towns?

Marc: So that we don't forget. If the story stops, the Legion stops. They must keep supporting veterans, cadets, and the community.

How has the Legion changed over the years?

Marc: It has changed a lot, but in a good way. They've kept the etiquette—like removing hats out of respect—but they've adapted to modern times. They used to be open several nights a week; now it's one day plus poker night and special events. Everything is run by volunteers. The closure of the cadet corps has been hard, but it's because they can't find instructors.

What does Remembrance Day mean to you?



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Marc Savy in the late 70s from his time serving in Europe.

Marc: It's personal reflection. I think about people I knew who aren't here anymore—whether killed in action, passed away later, or still suffering. Mental health is a huge issue. I remember people returning from the Falklands who were changed. Remembrance Day is about remembering them.

What do you wish young people understood about military service?

Marc: It's not what you think—getting yelled at or waking up at five. Basic training is hard, but after that, the friendships and sense of duty make it worthwhile. There are many careers. You're accepted no matter where you're from. I encourage young people to ask questions if they're considering it.

Why is it important to keep telling veterans' stories?

Marc: So, we don't forget the sacrifices made by young men and women. Schools here do a great job—they hold their own Remembrance Day ceremonies and invite veterans. Starting young is important.

Are there local veterans who should be especially remembered?

Marc: All of them. Living or dead. I remember John Newman, who lived to 100 and served in the Winnipeg Rifles. But every veteran deserves to be remembered. Don't see them as an old person in the corner—see what they did for their country.

How has the community supported veterans?

Marc: The community has always supported veterans. The challenge is accessing mental health services—most are in Brandon or Melita. More local support would help. But overall, the community steps up.

What hopes do you have for the Legion's next 100 years?

Marc: That it's still here and still supporting veterans—whatever form the military takes in the future.

Virden Ag Grounds "Round Building" to be demolished



The "Round Building".

PHOTO BY BETH MCCONNELL

By Neil Smith, CAO
TOWN OF VIRDEN

The Town of Virden is advising residents that

the 2026 rodeo season will mark the final chapter for the Round Building located at the Virden Ag Grounds. The iconic

structure, adjacent to Tundra Oil & Gas Place on 5th Avenue South in Virden, is scheduled for demolition later this

summer.

It was determined last year that the interior of the building had degraded beyond the point of repair regarding safety and general financial feasibility for any future use. As cost estimates to repair the building were nearly \$300,000, the structure will be demolished after this year's rodeo, potentially making way for future projects.

"The Round Building was built on the exhibition grounds near the turn of the century. The upper storey accommodated the judges for the horseraces that were popular at fair time. The lower level served for exhibitions of cooking, handwork, school entries and grain samples." Hometown Virden: Pioneers and Progress, Virden Millennium History Book Committee.

Celebration of Life

Clare and Joyce Cawston

Please join with friends and family from 2-5pm on August 5th 2026 at the Virden Legion Hall Clubroom for this "Come and Go" event celebrating the lives of Clare and Joyce. All are welcome with sandwiches and hot beverages to be served. Beer and cocktails will also be available in the clubroom.

We look forward to seeing everyone on August 5th!!

The Royal Canadian Legion Is 100 Years Old!

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Royal Canadian Legion has been a mainstay in so many Canadian communities over the last 100 years. It has been there in times of war, peace and disasters. It helps active Canadian military personnel, veterans, their families and youth organizations.

With 2026 marking the Legion's 100th anniversary, many branches across Canada have been holding special events to celebrate the milestone.

Recently, Virden Legion Branch No. 8 held a successful pancake breakfast, serving 125 meals. Later that day, the branch hosted a New York strip steak supper, with seating for only 100 people on a first-come, first-served basis.

The doors to the Legion Hall opened at 5 p.m., with people

already lined up for the \$20 meal, complete with all the fixings and a beer to wash it down. Non-alcoholic drinks were also available.

When the event was over, 60 steak suppers had been sold. The steaks were grilled by Legion members Brian Grenier and Ryan Bochek, while other Legion members served the meals and handled dishwashing duties.

Said Hank Kyle, a longtime Virden Legion member, "We hoped to have a steak sellout, but the short notice for the event and perhaps the heat of the day were a factor. Overall, we are happy with the day's events."

In the fall, the Virden Legion branch, working with teachers and students at VCI, plans to put together a time capsule to be opened on the 200th anniversary of the Legion.

As always, "Lest We Forget!"



Legion members Brian Grenier and Ryan Bochek grill steaks.

PHOTO BY ED JAMES

Elkhorn Royal Canadian Legion hosts PTSD lunch and speaker

By Ed James
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

PT.S.D. is now a well-known and accepted medical condition in most of the world. However, it was not always understood by the medical community or the general public.

In past wars and other conflicts, it was called war neurosis, shell shock, battle fatigue and combat stress. While in the trenches of the First World War, military leaders considered it a form of cowardice, not understanding the conditions brought on by modern battle methods and devastation. In fact, during the American Civil War, the condition was known as "Soldier's Heart."

Today, PTSD is an everyday reality, but it is still not fully understood or accepted by some people or groups.

One of the main stumbling blocks about PTSD is the public's perception of military personnel, first responders and several other stressful occupations. People in these roles are often seen as super tough in body, mind and spirit, and able to handle anything they are given.

This public mindset becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for frontline workers. The result is that these professionals do not want to be branded with the stigma of being weak.

Of course, this is not true, as all of us have a breaking point, and many of us are good at hiding the stress and pain until it is too late.

Recently, the Elkhorn Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 58 hosted a special lunch to introduce Chad Kennedy, a survivor of PTSD, who is walking across Canada with his chase car partner, Al (Butch) Percy, to create greater public awareness of PTSD.

The Royal Canadian Legion was a fitting site for the event as the organization is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. Over those years, the Legion has always been a strong supporter of Canada's military forces, veterans and their families in times of war and peace. In recent years, it has also recognized the many unsung heroes among frontline and first responder workers.

Mr. Kennedy was introduced by Elkhorn branch president Garth Mitchell following the lunch, which drew a small crowd.

During his presentation, Mr. Kennedy stepped down from the stage and sat among the audience. His talk was honest and heartfelt as he shared his own personal battle



Chad Kennedy survivor of PTSD speaks in Elkhorn Legion Hall on Friday, July 17.

PHOTO BY ED JAMES

with PTSD as a soldier and later as a law enforcement officer, a struggle that cost him family, friends and his career.

For the past six years, he has conducted the Canadian PTSD Awareness Walk, which he calls "From Sea to Sea for PTSD."

He began in Sarnia, Ont., and he hopes to reach Vancouver by the last week of September.

At each stop along his journey, in both large and small communities, his message is that PTSD exists among our families, friends and neighbours, many of whom suffer in silence and are afraid to ask for help for fear of being seen as weak.

Kennedy stressed that help is available and encouraged people never to be afraid to ask for it before PTSD destroys what is most important in their lives.

At his presentations, he has an information display about PTSD, including where and how to get help. The display also includes a small selection of "Sea to Sea for PTSD" items to help offset some of the daily operating expenses of the walk.

The lunch at the Legion raised \$200 for a scholarship for children who have

lost parents to PTSD-related deaths.

On average, Kennedy walks 30 kilometres a day, stopping for hydration breaks and to share his message with people he meets along the road.

Speaking about his first visit to Westman, he said he felt very welcomed by many friendly people he met in the small communities, which often held hidden gems of Canadian history.

In closing, he said, "My message is universal for everyone I meet about PTSD and operational stress injuries (OSI's). It's important to know the signs, to talk about it and to ask for help before it's too late."

Greg NESBITT
MLA for Riding Mountain

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VIRDEN LIONS HALL



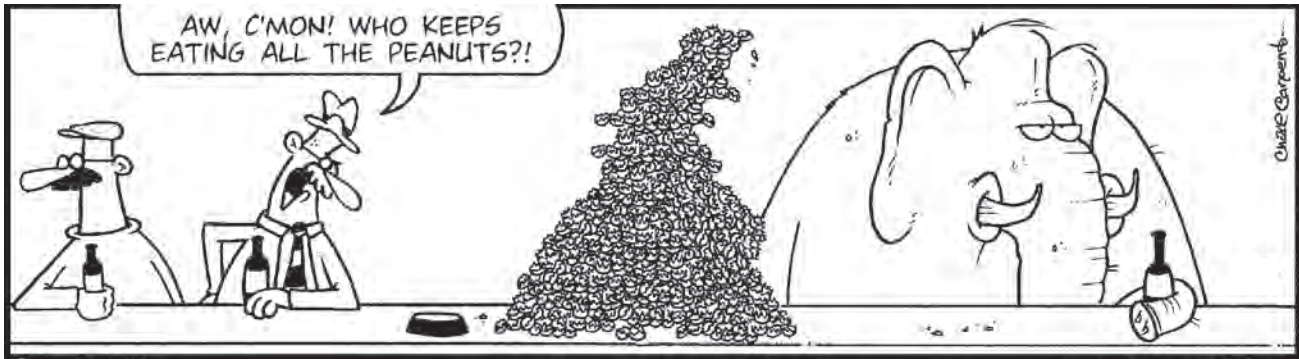
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Tundra

By Chad Carpenter



Many changes in the world of news and newspapers

I have noted a few times in this column that, over the past number of years, 20 or more Manitoba community newspapers have closed up shop. Almost all were corporately owned, unlike most community newspapers in Manitoba, which are privately owned.

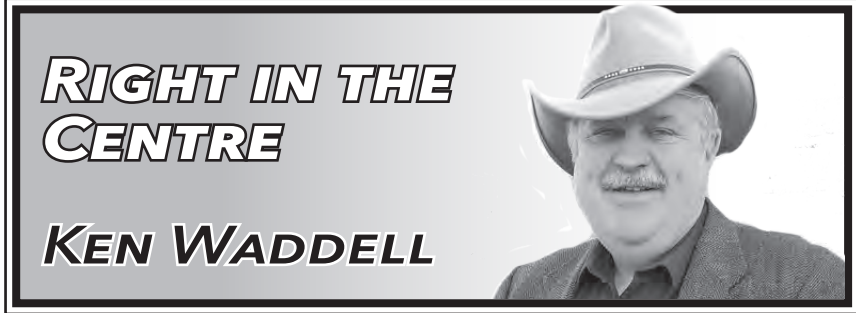
There are only two corporately owned community newspapers left in Manitoba after last week's announcement that the Winnipeg Free Press is closing its last two Winnipeg weekly community news editions. At one time, the Free Press had five weekly community newspapers before reducing that number to two a couple of years ago. Now it has none in Winnipeg.

The Free Press' two remaining community newspapers are the Steinbach Carillon and the Brandon Sun's weekly edition, Westman This Week. As a long-time lover of newspapers, rural communities and the written word, newspaper closures sadden me greatly.

The latest threat to community newspapers and the factor that caused the demise of the two Winnipeg weeklies, is the removal of flyers from newspapers by Transcontinental Printing and its distribution arm, Targeo. TC has decided to move to an ad-bag system and will distribute bags of flyers through Canada Post under the brand name Raddar.

I am not sure how that will work, as up to 50 per cent of Canada Post mailboxes are labelled "Consumers' Choice," meaning those customers have opted not to receive flyers. Consumers' Choice is one of the reasons we don't use Canada Post. There are other reasons, but that was a major factor in this paper no longer being delivered through Canada Post.

Canada Post approved \$30.8 mil-



RIGHT IN THE CENTRE
KEN WADDELL

lion in bonuses for its managers and executives in 2025, the same year it recorded its largest pre-tax loss ever and accepted a \$1.03-billion taxpayer-funded bailout, according to government records obtained by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation.

I am not sure in what alternative universe an executive receives a bonus after hundreds of millions of dollars in losses.

In the television world, Corus Entertainment, owner of the Global Television Network and multiple radio stations, says programming changes across Canada will result in dozens of job losses. Five of those positions are in Manitoba. There have been many other cuts at internet and television companies.

Most media outlets, including newspapers, television and radio networks, receive government subsidies. The most notorious is the CBC, which receives more than \$1 billion every year.

There is also the Canadian Journalism Labour Tax Credit, under which news outlets receive a tax credit for each journalist they employ. In addition, there is the Local Journalism Initiative, while Google funding is distributed by the Canadian Journalism Collective.

A couple of years ago, the federal government announced an agreement with Google over Bill C-18, the Online News Act. The tech giant had

threatened to limit Canadians' access to news on its platforms, similar to the approach taken by Meta.

Under the agreement, Google will pay Canadian news companies \$100 million annually.

Google has officially become the world's most profitable company, reporting \$116 billion in net income over the past year.

Meta took a different approach and blocked access to Canadian news content, including this newspaper. Facebook's parent company, Meta, reported a net profit of \$62.3 billion in 2024.

Large internet companies should be compensating news outlets for their content because they make a great deal of money from news content produced by other people.

There is something I have been wondering about for a while. With all the subsidies coming directly from government, as well as through government-mandated policies, will the day come when all media income comes from government? Or is that part of the plan, so that no news organization will hold government to account?

It is moving closer to reality.

I hope and pray that the media can continue to hold governments and businesses to account. But that means newspapers must stay local, produce good content, and continue to earn the support of advertisers and readers.

Homebodies

Rita Friesen



The night of the fireflies...

These tiny little portable flashlights have fascinated me since my childhood. We had a set of paternal relatives that lived several miles away, close to a set of railway tracks and with wet low lands nearby.

Back then, we cautiously captured the flying insects, keeping them in glass jars and watching the flickering glowing lights. We always released them before heading home, never thinking of trying to relocate them. I never noted them around our farmyard, perhaps too dry and not as much natural habitat.

The years we lived on the acreage east of Neepawa it was common to spot, and watch, the fireflies, usually on a humid evening in late June. On the east side of our home was a second floor balcony. One evening, before last rounds, I stepped out on the balcony. I simply stopped and stared. And then I summoned the grandson that was spending time with us that summer. We stood there, surrounded by fireflies.

They settled on the railing, on the balustrade, on us. Watching the miracle, it seemed a reflection of the Milky Way, so numerous and so twinkling, a band that flitted and sparkled above the dry creek bed. I don't know how long we stood there, in real time. The saying 'time stood still' applied that evening. The silence — even the highway traffic had stilled, the broken darkness, the beauty, we simply stood.

That moment of beauty took me back to a summer night in 1974. Travelling home from Carman, the announcer on the radio suggested that anyone that could get away from bright lights hasten to do so. The Northern Lights were putting on a quality show. I was away from any lights, miles from home yet miles from the nearest town. I pulled over and stepped out of the vehicle. Now this was Southern Manitoba, near Carman, and the lights were dancing directly above me. These last few seasons we have been blessed with incredible photos of the aurora borealis. That summer night outshone them all. In the perfect silence, one could hear the angels singing as they danced across the night sky.

The colours were brilliant, they moved, melded, and spun. Hues so intense one could only marvel. That segued to a summer night on a boat dock at Camp Koininea. A night of a meteor shower so stunning that we broke curfew for all who wanted to witness the wonder of falling stars, shooting stars, meteors flashing and reflecting in the still lake water.

By nature I am a night owl. The quiet of the dark invites me to sit and think a bit. I am ever thankful that my home here in town is close to the tracks, away from too many bright lights. I can step away and again see the wonder of the Northern Lights, the brilliance of the night stars, and every once in a while — the fireflies. It will be on a warm, humid, summer night, and there they are. Waiting for me. And so, as an anticipated guest, I pause and admire. I no longer feel the need or desire to capture them. I simply admire and wonder.

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Check your mailbox!

2026 property tax notices have been sent out.

If you haven't received yours, please contact the Town Office at 204-748-2440.

2026 property taxes are due by October 31, 2026.

YOU'RE INVITED!

SOD TURNING CEREMONY

Wallace District Fire Station No.1 Renovation & Expansion Project

This project is made possible with funding received through the **Manitoba Growth, Renewal and Opportunities for Municipalities (GRO)** program.

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LOCATION:
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NEW DATE

Manitoba

Tax Prepayment Discounts

The Town of Virden 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
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
August 11
Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM

Employment Opportunity Sanitation II Position

This is the senior position in the garbage collection division of the Public Works Department.

This position requires an individual that is in good health and capable of carrying out the physical requirements of the job and able to pass a medical examination. A high school diploma or equivalent is required as well as a Class 3 with Air driver's license.

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

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

Faye Pope, Office/HR Manager
Town of Virden
Box 310, Virden, MB, R0M 2C0
Email: office.manager@virden.ca

REGISTRATION PERIOD

NOW OPEN!

MAYOR & COUNCILLOR

MUNICIPAL ELECTION

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 Virden office, 236 Wellington Street West, Virden, 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 Virden office.

Rhonda Stewart, SEO
Phone: 204-851-0769,
Email: rlstewart64@outlook.com
Dated at Town of Virden,
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Youth accidents high, a tragic weekend

Submitted
D MEDIA RCMP

Manitoba RCMP is urging everyone to take steps to stay safe following a tragic weekend on the water, on the roads and on the trails that saw two different suspected drowning incidents and two fatal collisions in a 39-hour period – all involving young people.

These incidents include: On July 18, at approximately 3:40 a.m., an 18-year-old Dauphin male died following a single-vehicle collision on Highway 20 near Road 156 North, in the RM of Dauphin. It appears

the driver of the vehicle may have lost control while rounding a corner and went into the ditch.

On July 18, at approximately 12:40 p.m., two boys – ages 13 and 10 – are believed to have slipped into fast-moving rapids at Nutimik Lake in Whiteshell Provincial Park and did not resurface. The RCMP Marine Unit – supported by the Hutterian Emergency Aquatic Response Team (HEART) and Lac du Bonnet RCMP – continue to search for the youths today, with divers searching in the falls while patrols are made along the shoreline.

On July 18, at approximately 2:50 p.m., a 16-year-old male youth from Virden died following a collision in Oak Lake, in the RM of Sifton. The youth had been riding his dirt bike with friends when he struck an unmarked guy-wire.

On July 19, at approximately 9:30 p.m., an 18-year-old male went swimming at a gravel pit in the RM of Hanover, went under the water and didn't resurface. Divers from the RCMP URT joined St. Pierre-Jolys RCMP officers at the scene earlier today.

"The death of any young person is a tragedy that dev-

astates their families, friends and entire communities. We offer our deepest sympathies to those who have been affected by these tragedies," said RCMP spokesperson Melanie Roussel. "We know summers in Manitoba have so much to offer, but we are urging everyone to take precautions and make safe choices – whether you are on the water, on the road or riding off-road."

Additionally, there were some close calls, including:

On July 18, at approximately 5:20 p.m., an off-road vehicle rolled over on Gosselin Road in the RM of De Salaberry, injuring three youth – a 15-year-old female, 13-year-old female, and nine-year-old male. All were sent to hospital with minor, non-life-threatening injuries.

On July 19, at approximately 2:25 p.m., a motorcyclist lost control of his bike on the off-ramp entering

Portage la Prairie, causing the bike to tip over. The 47-year-old driver was taken to hospital with what appeared to be serious injuries but has since been upgraded to stable condition.

The RCMP encourages Manitobans to take the following advice when on the water:

- Don't swim alone;
- Don't overestimate your swimming abilities;
- Be aware of currents and strong waters;
- Never dive head-first into a body of water;
- With children, don't rely on water wings, swim rings and other inflatable toys to replace adult supervision;
- Children should be kept within an adult's sight and reach at all times when in and around bodies of water; and
- Wear a lifejacket while boating or doing water sports.

When driving on the road, motorists should follow the rules of the road, drive to conditions, wear

a seat-belt and drive sober.

For people riding on off-road vehicles (ORV), drivers are reminded to:

- Learn about the area you're riding in and ensure you are carrying your cellphone and/or GPS device;
- Tell someone where you're going and when you expect to be back. Better yet, ride in a group of two or more;
- Wear your seat belt if your ORV is equipped;
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
- Not carry a passenger unless your ORV is designed for two riders;
- No person should be operating an ORV without a helmet – and it must be securely fastened;
- No person under the age of 14 is allowed to operate an ORV unless supervised and accompanied by an adult;
- Not operate an ORV on a roadway. Crossing a roadway is permitted if you hold a valid driver's license.

HELEN DRYSDALE

OUT OF HELEN'S KITCHEN

Sweet red strawberries benefit your memory, boost your immune system, keep your heart healthy and are just delicious. Apparently, they got their name from the way they grow. They "strew" baby strawberry plants away from the mother plant. So, we are really eating "strew berries". Strawberries are ideal candidates for strawberry desserts like fresh strawberry pie and they're a must in any summer fruit salad. They're also the perfect topping on a big stack of pancakes.

Fresh strawberry pie

This pie is so easy to make and so yummy to eat.

5-6 cups sliced fresh strawberries

2/3 cup sugar

2 cups water

3 Tbsp. cornstarch

1 small box of strawberry flavored Jell-O

1 (9 inch) prepared graham cracker crust or baked pie shell

Mix sugar, water and cornstarch together in a medium-large saucepan. Stirring all the while, bring to a boil. Turn down the heat and cook for one minute or until thickened. Stir in the package of Jello. Let cool slightly for a few minutes. Fold in sliced strawberries, toss until well coated. Pour into prepared crust. Chill until well set, about 2 to 4 hours. Serve topped with whipped cream.

Strawberry pancakes

A great summer breakfast or lunch.

3 eggs

1 cup of mashed strawberries

2 cups milk

4 Tbsp. oil

1 1/4 cup white flour

1/2 cup whole wheat flour

2 Tbsp. sugar

3 tsp. baking powder

1 tsp. cinnamon

Fresh sliced strawberries for serving

Beat the eggs. Add the strawberry puree, milk and oil and mix well. In another bowl mix the flour, sugar, baking powder and cinnamon together. Add to the wet ingredients and stir just until moistened. Cook on a hot griddle turning only once when bubbles cover the unbaked side. Serve with fresh strawberries, syrup and whipped cream.



Police Report

Westman RCMP Service Report for July 12 to 18

Submitted
BY WESTMAN RCMP

During this week, Westman RCMP received a total of 73 calls for service. Some of these calls for service include 10 traffic offences, 7 False Alarms, 8 Assaults, 4 Assistance to General Public/Other Agencies, 7 - 911 Calls, 4 Mental Health Acts, 2 Mischief, 3 False Alarms, and 4 Utter threats.

On July 13, 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 134km/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 \$364.

On July 14, RCMP responded to a report of a Domestic Assault in the Town of Virden. Members received a call from a male victim who reported he was being physically assaulted by his partner. Members attended the residence and obtained statements from the victim. Members located and arrested a 47-year-old female who was charged with Assault, Assault with Weapon. The accused was released on condition and is scheduled to appear in court later.

On July 15, during a routine patrol in the RM of Sifton, 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.

On July 16, RCMP attended a residence in Sioux Valley Dakota Nation to follow up on a matter. Upon arrival, members spoke with the homeowner who allowed members inside the residence. As members

entered his residence, they located multiple unsecured firearms with ammunition in the plain view. The accused was arrested and a search led to the confiscation of 19 firearms, hundreds of rounds of compatible ammunition. Members arrested a 70-year-old male who was charged with Unsafe Storage of firearms and was released with conditions to appear in court later. RCMP continues to investigate.

On July 16, during a routine patrol in the RM of Pipestone, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 127km/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 \$403.

On July 18, during a routine patrol in Sioux Valley, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling well below speed limit. Members conducted a traffic stop and identified the driver to be a 41-year-old female. Members conducted police checks and confirmed the driver not having a valid driver license. The driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Drive without holding a valid Driver License, which carries a fine of \$203.

To report a complaint or non-emergency incident to RCMP please call 204-748-2135. For general inquiries or administrative requests including criminal record checks please call the administration line at 204-748-2046 Ext. 3, during regular office hours. If you are reporting an emergency, please call 911. If you witness a crime and wish to remain anonymous, please contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477. Crime Stoppers is entirely confidential and completely anonymous. The tip line is not traceable, and they do not subscribe to caller ID or call display.

Second cannabis retail eyes Virden

Council approves application

By Dale Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

When cannabis was legalized, a prairie farm family pivoted away from traditional agriculture to enter the regulated cannabis industry. Ken and Adam Carritt of Prairie Trichomes Cannabis now operate five cannabis stores. The family gained experience operating a licensed cannabis cultivation facility on their farm for approximately three years. Although growing cannabis ultimately proved financially unsustainable, the experience gave them firsthand knowledge of Health Canada's strict regulatory requirements.

Adam Carritt said that in his experience multiple cannabis retailers can coexist successfully because no single business serves

every customer. Looking at Manitoba as a whole, he believes there are few remaining small communities without a cannabis retailer, making Virden an attractive opportunity.

The Carritts attended a public hearing where Town council considered their request to renovate an existing commercial building and open a cannabis store in Virden.

Town of Virden development officer Cory Nixon confirmed that notices had been mailed to the property owner, the applicant, and 21 neighbouring properties within 100 metres of the site. No responses or objections were received.

He said that the application fully complies with all zoning requirements. The only reason council approval is required

is because a cannabis store is listed as a conditional use in the zoning by-law.

Nixon explained that when cannabis retail became legal in 2018 council amended the zoning by-law to designate cannabis stores as conditional uses. This ensured nearby property owners would receive notice, and council would have an opportunity to review each proposal before approval. That requirement remains in the current zoning by-law.

Nixon said that the business functions much like any other retail store. Customers enter, purchase a product, and leave, generating traffic patterns comparable to existing commercial businesses. He noted that the adjacent building is also a retail establishment, making the proposed use appropriate for the commercial zoning

district.

Coun. Jessie Cruikshank asked whether the proposed location near the highway was intended to attract travellers passing through Virden. Carritt acknowledged that highway visibility was one of the advantages of the Quonset-style building and suggested that it could become a useful way to attract passing customers.

Cruikshank also asked about the proposed hours and number of employees and Carritt said that each location typically employs one store manager, one full-time employee, one part-time employee and one casual employee with the business open between 10am to 10pm.

After closing the public hearing council approved the conditional use application.

OLD SAYINGS

REF TO
WRITER

GERRY
NOLAN



Here are a few more of old sayings that you may not have heard in awhile, but it may bring back to your memory other old sayings that have been around for awhile, so here we go.

"Well butter my biscuit". This is a phrase used to express great surprise or delight. It is like saying, I can't believe it, as you react to unexpected news.

Another one that people used to say is, "Well I'll be a monkey's uncle". It was used to express complete surprise, amazement or disbelief upon hearing unexpected news.

"Slower than molasses in January". This is a common meaning used for someone that is extremely slow. It refers to that molasses, which is thick on a good day does, not pour well in cold temperatures.

"Never look a gift horse in the mouth". It really means you should be grateful for a gift or an opportunity without critically examining its flaws. Pointing out the shortcomings for some-

thing given to you for free is considered ungracious.

Editor Note, I think it was common to check a horse's teeth to determine age. So if the horse is free it would be ungracious to question the value of the gift. KW

"People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones". It means that you shouldn't criticize or judge others for faults that you possess yourself. If your own character of behaviour is flawed, attacking others leaves you vulnerable to the exact same criticism.

"It costs an arm and a leg". This simply means something that is really expensive. Even today, almost anything you purchase would fit into that category. Food, fuel, vehicles etc... could fall into this phrase.

That's a wrap for this week. Get out and enjoy the outdoors, but don't forget the MOSQUITO spray. They are a hungry bunch of varmints!

Planning district maps future growth

Development plan heads toward final approval

By Dale Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On July 13, The TransCanada West Planning District held a public hearing to present its proposed updated development plan and receive final public input before the bylaw is passed. The Planning District includes the Town of Virden and the RM of Wallace-Woodworth.

Development plan update

Community planner Michael Blatz explained that Manitoba's Planning Act requires municipalities to maintain current development plans. The existing plan was adopted in 2019, and work on the update began in 2024.

The review included a community survey, technical background studies, stakeholder interviews and a public open house before the draft plan was prepared. Blatz emphasized that a development plan is a long-range policy document rather than a proposal for specific construction projects. Instead, it guides future decisions involving land use, housing, agriculture, infrastructure and economic development.

Growth projections

The study projects the planning district will grow by approximately 484 residents by 2049, creating demand for an estimated 214 additional homes. About 154 of those homes are expected to be built in Virden and another 60 in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth.

Blatz said the review found the current development plan has generally been working well, so the consulting team avoided major policy changes. The updated document reorganizes existing policies, supports a wider variety of housing types and updates flood protection standards to match provincial requirements.

Community input to the process identified infrastructure improvements and expanded recreational opportunities as top priorities.

Land use designations

Blatz reviewed the land use designation maps for the planning district, noting that nearly all land use designations are unchanged from the previous plan.

The only mapping adjustment occurs in Kola, where the Rural Residential designation has been expanded slightly to better match existing zoning.

Province suggests minor changes

The province completed its review of the draft plan and submitted approximately 29 comments. Blatz said no provincial department objected to the overall plan.

He said clarification is needed regarding provincial comments about development near water infrastructure, including Gopher Creek, because the wording is too vague to determine whether it referred to setbacks, drainage or other planning requirements.

Board members questioned several of the provincial recommendations.

One discussion focused on proposed wording affecting religious assemblies in rural areas. Members raised concerns that restrictions could unintentionally affect Hutterite colonies or rural churches and questioned why similar policies did not appear to be applied consistently elsewhere in Manitoba.

Blatz also explained why he did not recommend accepting Manitoba Transportation and Infrastructure's suggested changes regarding commercial development along highways. He said larger regional commercial developments can appropriately locate along major transportation corridors because they require efficient highway access and also serve the travelling public.

Public access and next steps

Board members agreed the provincial review comments should be made publicly available alongside the draft Development Plan to improve transparency.

Staff will prepare a spreadsheet summarizing each provincial recommendation before posting both the draft plan and the comments for public review.

The board will review the remaining provincial comments at an upcoming Planning District meeting before proceeding with second reading of the bylaw. Following provincial approval, the plan will return for third reading and formal adoption.

BE SEEN

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Will you be the people's voice?

It's campaign season for municipal and school board positions

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Municipal councillors make decisions that affect everyday lives. The fall municipal elections are important and to help keep them in the public eye, current councillors from the RMs of Sifton, Pipestone and Town of Virden have been willing to share their thoughts and experiences.

Trent Forsyth has been a councillor in the RM of Pipestone for one term and he intends on running again.

Why do it? His philosophy plays into a desire to serve his municipality: "I was taught to leave something better than I found it."

He has no regrets in his choice to enter municipal politics.

Semi-retired, Forsyth continues to run a few head of cattle. And while the council position is not fulltime work (nor is the remuneration) it's gotten busier and can mean full days.

Challenges?

He says it's a challenge "to give the same service without raising taxes" adding that Pipestone is fortunate to have oil industry revenue that some

places don't have.

Forsyth says the pandemic brought changes. "People approach everything differently since Covid," but says, "I'm their voice," adding that what he can't answer he takes to council.

What's rewarding? "Seeing things get done, projects completed, making a difference to benefit people's lives."

What's surprising? Forsyth points to the weight of the work but says, "It is what you put into it. If you're going to do a good job, it's going to be time consuming."

And he admits to some sleepless nights, taking it as "part of the job."

While Pipestone has a ward system, council pulls together for the whole municipality and Forsyth says of council, "They're a great bunch of people to work with ... right across the province," including those he's joined on committees.

Tara Maxwell (formerly Cowan) first joined Town of Virden council in 2014. She's currently one of four women on the seven-member council.

"Serving on council is both a responsibility and a privilege," she stated. "It is about listening to the community, working collaboratively, and helping

make decisions that affect people's everyday lives."

Why do it?

I do it because I care about the community and want to contribute in a meaningful way. Council gives me an opportunity to help shape the future of our municipality and advocate for the needs and priorities of residents.

Challenges? One of the hardest parts is balancing different perspectives and making decisions when there is no perfect solution. The time commitment can also be significant, especially when reviewing reports, attending meetings, and responding to community concerns.

What's rewarding? The most rewarding part is seeing projects come to life and knowing that council's work can have a positive impact on residents. It is especially meaningful when community members feel heard and appreciate the effort that goes into improving local services and infrastructure.

What's surprising? "What surprised me most was how much work happens behind the scenes. Many people see the final decision, but not the hours of preparation, discussion, and collaboration that take place beforehand. I was also pleasantly surprised by how dedicated municipal staff and fellow council members are to serving the community."

RM extends tax discount deadline

Wallace-Woodworth council meeting July 14

By Dale Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Although the RM submitted its 2026 financial plan to the Province in April, tax notices had still not been received by July 14, leaving property owners with insufficient time to qualify for the usual early-payment discount. To ensure taxpayers were not disadvantaged by the provincial delay, council approved extending the discount deadline to Aug. 31, 2026.

Kola waste disposal ground

Council reviewed the second draft of the Kola Waste Disposal Ground Closure Plan. CAO Iris Vercaigne explained that consultants had incorporated the revisions requested by council, including correcting property boundary information and reflecting council's intention to continue operating the site as a low-profile transfer station after closure.

Council members stated that the provincial regulations did not recognize the difference between small rural waste disposal grounds such as Kola and much larger urban facilities.

Kenton water meters

Council considered a resolution requesting assistance from the Manitoba Water Services Board for upgrades to the Kenton rural pipeline system meters. Vercaigne explained that the existing meters installations were original infrastructure and lacked many modern components.

The proposed upgrades would improve measure-

ment accuracy, flow control, pressure monitoring, dual backflow prevention, tamper-resistant sealing, regulatory compliance, and the long-term reliability and sustainability of the rural water distribution system. A resolution requesting both technical and financial support from the Manitoba Water Services Board was carried unanimously.

Tendering policy

At a recent Western Caucus meeting a presentation from the Manitoba Ombudsman's Office raised questions about whether municipalities could legally give preference to local contractors. While municipalities naturally want to support local businesses, councillors explained that advice from Manitoba Municipal Relations has always been that procurement policies should not favour local bidders and should generally accept the lowest tender. The Ombudsman's Office, however, suggested municipalities could include provisions allowing preference for local contractors, creating confusion over which interpretation was correct.

Coun, Mark Humphries said, "Their advice is not to put anything in your procurement policy that favors local tenders." Coun. Val Caldwell added, "And yet the Ombudsman's office was saying you can put a provision in there that says we give preference to local tenders." Councillors agreed that the lowest bid is not always the best value if a contractor has a documented history of delays, poor workmanship, or failure to complete previous projects satisfactorily.

Nature Conservancy Funding

Council reviewed a funding agreement involving the Kirkella Community Pasture and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. The agreement would provide approximately \$80,000 in grant funding to support conservation and infrastructure projects.

Variance approved

Council approved a Variance Order submitted by applicant Kevin Ruckelman on behalf of landowner Carolyn Gonty to reduce the required rear yard setback from 25 feet to 10 feet to allow the construction of a four-season sunroom on an existing single-family residence.

Council approved a Conditional Use Order for applicants Louis Berg and Adam Bajus, on behalf of landowners Andre and Anna Berg to permit the placement of a CSA-certified modular home within the Rural General Zone.

Paying the bills

Council approved an invoice from Samson Construction for \$37,179.45 related to the Cemetery Bridge design and replacement project.

Council approved the sale of a Spector semi-trailer and approximately 30 dumpsters from the Kenton landfill to the RM of Sifton for \$12,000.

Council reviewed a \$356,263 invoice from Russell Ready Mix Concrete covering gravel crushing in Wards 1 and 2. While examining the invoice, councillors noticed discrepancies between the quantities shown for each ward. Rather than risk approving an inaccurate invoice, council agreed to table the matter until a correct invoice could be verified.

Be On Time!

Advertising deadline:

12 Noon on Tuesday



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Canada Post and the Shuttering of Community Newspapers

Submitted

PAUL DEEGAN, NEWS MEDIA CANADA

The shuttering of Winnipeg's Community Review means 200,000 households will no longer get the benefit of a free community newspaper delivered to their door. It also means that more than 800 people who deliver the paper and their families will be affected.

This is an unforced error that never should have happened. How did we get here? The answer is complex.

First, there is a high degree of concentration in the flyer printing market in Canada. Montreal-based TC Transcontinental enjoys the dominant position in the marketplace thanks, in part, to a 2012 Competition Bureau-approved asset swap.

Second, municipal and provincial politicians have passed environmental regulations, however well-intentioned, have unintended consequences. Former Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante passed a municipal bylaw that led to the end of distribution of Publisac (a plastic bag with flyers and a community newspaper). Several provinces, including Manitoba, have imposed extended producer responsibility levies on printed newspapers. Ontario's Premier Doug Ford made the wise decision to exempt newspapers from this kind of stealthy journalism job-killing tax in his province.

Third, Canada Post is the biggest culprit. TC Transcontinental, which had distributed Publisac door-to-door in Quebec, formed a strategic partnership with Canada Post, which as a Crown corporation was not beholden to municipal bylaws. They bypassed Mayor Plante's new regulation by distributing a curated bundle of flyers called Raddar through the national postal service. Unlike Publisac, Raddar did not include a community newspaper. On the sidelines of this saga, news

publisher Métro Média and its more than 30 hyperlocal publications — including 17 print newspapers — shut down.

In partnership with Canada Post, TC Transcontinental recently expanded its Raddar offering across Canada. It is understood that Canada Post — which has a mandate to "charge postage rates that are fair and reasonable" — is offering TC Transcontinental rates below what it is offering to community newspapers. To its own benefit, the Crown corporation has effectively shut community newspapers — their private sector rivals — out of flyer distribution, lessening competition substantially in that market.

This is not the first time community newspaper publishers have felt the squeeze of Canada Post in the flyer distribution market. As of January 2024, community newspapers with commercial inserts were no longer exempt from Canada Post's Consumers' Choice program, which allows Canadians to opt out of receiving 'junk mail'. Canada Post made that decision without stakeholder consultation or economic/social impact analysis and failed to recognize that community newspapers — with or without an insert — are not 'junk mail'; they are a social good.

The juxtaposition of the shuttering of Winnipeg's Community Review at the same time as the revelation of \$30.8 million in bonuses at Canada Post has not been lost on community newspaper publishers across Canada.

What should Ottawa do about it?

First, Joël Lightbound, the Minister responsible for Canada Post, should ensure the Crown corporation is treating community newspapers fairly and offering them comparable pricing to what it offers to TC Transcontinental.

Second, the House of Commons Standing Committee

on Canadian Heritage should conduct hearings into the role Canada Post can play in the sustainability of community newspapers — ensuring the relationship is one of partnership, rather than predatory and parasitic.

When a community loses a newspaper, like Winnipeg's Community Review or Métro Média's publications in Quebec, the information vacuum can lead to people getting their news from less than reliable sources — like AI and social media — which can create division that drives people apart. Without a check on local government, corruption, mismanagement, and wasteful spending often flourish, which can result in higher municipal taxes and borrowing costs.

It was not foreign Big Tech monopolists like Google and Meta that caused Manitoba's largest community newspaper to shutter. It was Canada Post.

And it's not like we weren't warned...

Thirty years ago, in his review of Canada Post's mandate, George Radwanski recommended that postal service get out of delivering unaddressed junk mail (i.e., flyers), concluding that the Crown corporation engaged in inappropriate practices that created unfair competition for private businesses like community newspapers.

As a former Toronto Star editor-in-chief, Radwanski knew the news business. He noted that Canada Post was actively siphoning advertising revenue away from the news industry and adroitly cautioned that the state-granted mail delivery monopoly should not be in the business of crippling the financial health of newspapers.

A healthy democracy demands a healthy community news media ecosystem. Let's level the playing field and restore competition in the flyer distribution market before more community newspapers shutter.

Paul Deegan is president and chief executive officer of News Media Canada

Paper Cups Now Accepted in Manitoba Blue Bins

By Clara Buelow, Director, Marketing & Communications

MULTI-MATERIAL STEWARDSHIP MANITOBA

Manitobans can now place empty paper cups in blue bins across the province, including empty coffee cups, fountain drink cups, and other hot and cold paper beverage cups.

The change follows work led by Multi-Material Stewardship Manitoba (MMSM) in collaboration with the City of Winnipeg, the Canadian Beverage Container Recycling Association (CBCRA)/Recycle Everywhere, and recycling service providers to review processing requirements, market conditions, and local recycling data before adding paper cups to Manitoba's recycling system. Communities and partners across Manitoba have been notified of this update to the list of accepted materials.

"This is an important step forward for recycling in Manitoba," said Christa Rust, Executive Director of MMSM. "Adding paper cups to the blue bin removes a long-standing exception and makes recycling simpler, clearer, and more convenient."

Paper cups are a common everyday item, but they have historically been difficult for recycling programs to accept because of their liquid-resistant coating and the dyes used in some cups. They can now be accepted because MMSM and its partners have confirmed they can be sorted with mixed paper and responsibly recycled through Manitoba's existing recycling

system.

"Adding a new item to a recycling program requires careful review of processing requirements," said Mark Kinsley, Superintendent of Waste Diversion with the City of Winnipeg. "The City is glad to work with MMSM on this important improvement to recycling."

Here's what Manitobans need to know the next time they have a paper cup to recycle: empty the cup, remove the lid, and put the cup in the blue bin. Coffee cup lids are not accepted in Manitoba's recycling system.

MMSM is working with CBCRA/Recycle Everywhere to support clear and consistent public communication across the province, helping ensure Manitobans receive aligned recycling information whether they are recycling at home, in public spaces, or on the go.

"We congratulate MMSM on the expansion of blue box material coverage," said Ken Friesen, Executive Director of CBCRA/Recycle Everywhere. "Strong collaboration between producers, municipalities, stewardship organizations and the public is essential to building a greener future for us all. We look forward to continuing to work together to improve recovery for Manitoba."

Restaurants Canada has also welcomed the update.

"Restaurants are committed to reducing waste and improving recycling. We welcome this practical



change, which makes it easier for restaurants and Manitobans to recycle paper cups," said Jillian Rodak, Vice President, Sustainability, Restaurants Canada. "It's a great example of how

industry, municipalities and recycling partners can work together to deliver simple solutions that benefit both the environment and the communities we serve."

Miniota News - Miniota Shirtsleeve Classic

Submitted
By LINDA CLARK

Miniota Shirtsleeve Classic, July 15-19 — Well what a weekend once again! Hats off to the Miniota Community Centre Board and the many volunteers for all the volunteer hours and food to make this a great weekend. The funds from this weekend are instrumental in keeping on the heat and lights for the hall and rink for the coming year.

A special acknowledgement to Bob Gardham and his crew for the ice once again, despite the heat and all the challenges. Also to our caretakers, Sonya and Tamra, for keeping our facilities neat and tidy.

The activities began on Wednesday with 2-on-2 curling. As well, draws were held on Thursday to accommodate the large entry of 18 rinks. For this event, no winners are declared; however, a cash envelope is provided for the winner of each game.

The curling bonspiel then ran from Thursday evening to Sunday with 24 rinks entered. Winners were as follows:

- A Side: 1st – Scott Gray; 2nd – Doug Kyle.
B Side: 1st – Gerry Oliver; 2nd – Anesha Heaman.
C Side: 1st – Darren Cuthill; 2nd – Ryan Lelond.
Blind Calcutta:
A Side: 1st – Meaghan Kyle; 2nd – Beth Lelond.
B Side: 1st – Lucinda Still; 2nd – Ryan Brown.
C Side: 1st – Cory and Tristan Gardham; 2nd – Darrell Elliott.

An Open Golf Tournament was held from Friday to Sunday. Golfing results were as follows:

Championship Flight Men Under 55:

1. Dusty Morton
2. Aiden Lewis
3. Foster Couvier

1st Flight:

1. Mark Couvier
2. Jordan Howard
3. Jed Leeson

2nd Flight:

1. Dusty Hill
2. Kevin Halipchuk
3. Keenan Lewis

3rd Flight:

1. Jacob Kirk
2. Kyle Lee
3. Bryan Rhodes

Championship Flight Men 55+:

1. Rod McKean
2. George Krieser
3. Terry McTavish

1st Flight:

1. Cam Gregory
2. Dale O'Greysik

2nd Flight:

1. Terry Joseph
2. Dean McConnell

Juniors:

1. Lincoln Judd
2. Maddy Couvier

Ladies 55+ Championship Flight:

1. Shawnda Krieser
2. Sandy Hayward
3. Sheila Sheane

1st Flight:

1. Dienna McConnell
2. Paula Pengelly
3. Cheryl Foster

Ladies Under 55 Championship Flight:

1. Sharon Ellerington
2. Tiana Delalleau

Friday evening the Washers Tournament took place in the skating rink. Winners were:

1. Rodney and Loree Gardham
2. Brady and Brittany Brown
3. Courtney Muir and Candace Armitage
4. Jason McKenzie and Ted Haggarty

Saturday activities began with the pancake breakfast at the Miniota Fire Hall put on by our local department. Two hundred and fifty people enjoyed pancakes, sausages and coffee. The department raffled two \$300 meat packages and the winners were Bob Clark and Irene Bryant. Thanks to the Miniota Fire Department for the great breakfast. The kids loved touring and sitting in all the fire trucks.

Saturday also saw the beach volleyball tournament take place. Teams consisted of four players, ages 12 and up, with the winners being:

1. Lincoln Judd & Friends
2. Austin McKenzie & Friends
3. Khloe Brown & Friends

Fifty-six shooters participated in a turkey shoot held at the Miniota Gun Club grounds. Results were as follows:

- Ladies: 1st – Nicole Sheane (28XX)
Men: 1st – James Shaw (28X)
Juniors: 1st – Kade Lelond (25)

Saturday activities for the kids included Gardham Farms' and Muir Farms' animals for the petting zoo; inflatables from Black Jack Rentals; a Family Treasure Hunt around town; face painting and tattoos, Hair Tinsel, Braids and Beads by Claire Armitage; and a huge sand pit for treasure hunting.

MCC served up a smoked beef supper to around 200 people on Saturday evening, and the day concluded with a dance in the rink with the live band The New Highway 25 Repaved. A great evening of dancing and visiting with new and old friends.

Sunday saw six teams on the diamonds for the annual Slo-Pitch Tournament. Winners were:

- A Side: Diamond Dawgs (Birdtail)
B Side: The Outlaws (Langenburg)
C Side: The BTS Sluggers (Birdtail)

The other three teams were from Miniota and they fought hard but just couldn't get the win.

Winner of the Cow Plop Action was Archer Gardham.

The Miniota Fire Department held the Fireman's Rodeo on Sunday for all the kids, and what a great way to cool off on an extremely hot day.

The 20th Annual Tractor Pull was held on Sunday afternoon with results as follows:

- 5,000-lb. Class: Kyle Gurr (Farmall 350)**
6,000-lb. John Wythe Memorial Class:

1. Murray Gurr (Farmall 460)
2. Kyle Gurr (Farmall 460)
3. Murray Gurr (Farmall M)

7,000-lb. Class:

1. Ed Jaemen (Farmall 560)
2. Kyle Gurr (IHC 560)
3. Murray Gurr (Farmall 560)

8,000-lb. Class:

1. Murray Gurr (IHC 650)
2. Kyle Gurr (IHC 650)
3. Andy Decorby (Case 500)

9,000-lb. Class:

1. Kaden Hall (Case 930)
2. Ryley Hall (Case 930)

3. Will Cutthill (IHC 660)
- 10,000-lb. Class:**

1. Ed Jaemen (WD 9)
2. Mark Gill (JD 820)
3. Murray Gurr (660 IHC)

12,000-lb. Class:

1. Kyle Gurr (IHC 806)
2. Will and Darren Cutthill (IHC 660)

Twenty-five teams enjoyed the Car Rally, highlighting our area, plus a chance to sit in an air-conditioned vehicle for an opportunity to cool down. The Saline Bandits took the honours this year. They are Dallas and Jerri Judd, Danni Judd and Tyler Huston, and Ben and Kandi Howard, Katie and Blair.

Wythe Birthday celebration

Saturday saw a small group of friends gather for visiting and supper to celebrate this year being their 70th birthdays. Here for the gathering were Jim Forsyth and his wife Debbie, Dennis Kowal and his wife Debbie, Ron Carr, Margie Fraser and her husband Gerry, Brian Oliver, Bruce Mitchell and Gerrie Taylor.

Home for the Weekend

Many journey home for this weekend, for it is a chance to catch up with old friends. I know I will miss some, but a few travelling from a distance were: Ken and Jody Still, Brandon; Dannica and Conan, Peace River, Alta; Kittie Laite, Ottawa; Julie and Kevin Halipchuk, Reese and Carley, Winnipeg; Liz Hargrave, Hudson, Alec, Savannah and Isabelle, Walsh, Alta.; Kathy Taylor and Tom Swiston, Winnipeg; Jim and Debbie Forsyth, Carman; Angela Kokorudz, Calgary; JR and Brigetta Laxdal, North Dakota; Kally Greer, Colton Greer and his fiancée, Jessica Young, Onanole; Mikayla Young and friends, Ottawa; Kelly Armitage, Souris; Perry and Teri Van De Kerckhove, Souris; Wayne and Tracey Bryant and family, Hinton, Alta.; Lori and Kim Frattinger and family, Hinton; Nathan Argue and his wife, Whitecourt, Alta; Claire Armitage, Saskatoon; Hailey Gardham, Baldur; Curtis and Jess Williamson, Emiline and Lila, Regina; Ted Haggarty, Brandon; and Keenan Lewis and his fiancée, Trisha Rowe, Sofia, Oaklan and Ryder, Winnipeg.

Members of the Wythe family were home for the weekend for the interment of their parents, John and Joyce Wythe, at the Miniota Cemetery, and they enjoyed visiting with many at the hall and rink.

The weekend concluded with a cold plate supper for approximately 100 folks in the hall and more visiting at the beer gardens. Our community is also appreciative of the many who came from surrounding towns to enjoy a meal out.

MCC Secretary-Treasurer Anna Oliver commented on the weekend, "Thanks to our board and all the volunteers who run this huge community event. I feel it gets bigger every year and the support never fails us."

And the weekend is not over until cleanup has been completed, so again board members and volunteers gathered at the hall, rink and sports grounds to clean up all the facilities, and their work was rewarded with supper. Thank you to all for going the extra mile even though tired after a busy but wonderful weekend.

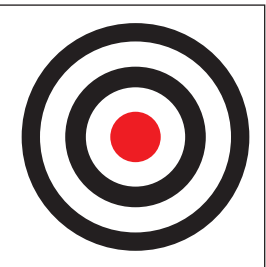
Our deepest sympathy to Tracey and Blaine Peel and their family on the death of Tracey's father, Harold Ladyka, on July 15 in Winnipeg. Harold and his late wife Anne lived in Miniota for several years.



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Miniota plays hard during Shirtsleeve weekend

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

When a small town like Miniota hosts a five-day event, which the Shirtsleeve Classic weekend has become, you can be sure that families are returning from afar to their roots and visitors from the surrounding areas are coming to compete, dance, eat and have fun.

Events kicked off Wednesday with 2 on 2 curling. The curling classic began Thursday and continued through Sunday afternoon.

Throughout the weekend there was something for everyone: a car rally, washers tournament, golf, beach volleyball, beer garden /canteen, pancake breakfast, kids' bouncy castles and petting zoo, a turkey shoot, slo-pitch, meals and a dance featuring The New Highway 25 Repaved. A tractor pull and cold plate supper finished up the events on Sunday.



PHOTOS BY ANNE DAVISON

Top: Four-player teams of volleyball are in full swing Saturday morning at Miniota sports ground.

Right: At Miniota Shirtsleeve pancake breakfast, Prairie View Municipality Councillor Linda Clark, Miniota Fire Chief Nick Young, and Firefighter Brian Oliver seated at the fire department donation booth and 50/50 ticket sales.



A round of turkey shoot competitors on Miniota Gun Club range: Angela Kokorudz (Alberta), winner of the round Stephanie Bollee (Snow Lake), Aaron Cassels (Thunder Bay), Ian Petrowski (Winnipeg) and Alexie Touchette (Winnipeg). The shoot was hosted by the Gurr family of Miniota who supplied firearms, and shooting stands. A host of sponsors supplied prizes.



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Friday, July 31
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Saturday, August 1
4:00 PM & 7:00 PM

Sunday, August 2
1:00 PM & 4:00 PM

Beer Gardens - Friday Travis Barre
Saturday Clubbing Fraggles "80s
Pop & Party Rock" live all day
Sunday Lyle Baldwin
"Country Classic Sunday"

Children's Entertainment
Saturday & Sunday

Cornhole Entries

\$20/team 30 team limit
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Slo-Pitch Tourney

Sponsored by EDCC
Entries to Devrin 204-441-4111
Cash prizes

Barrel Racing

1:00 PM
Entries to Cynthia 204-851-2910
Minimum \$500 added money

LIVE Calcutta SATURDAY 2:30 PM in Beer Gardens, Silent Calcutta (sold same as other years)

\$1,500 Dash for Cash

Sponsored by Third Dimension Industries



Home Made cooking Concession
Booth open all weekend

Wallace District Fire Dept
breakfasts Saturday & Sunday

Oak Lake Fair: 138 years of tradition



Staff members Tammy Hall, Shelly Riglin, Kendra Stothers, Val Podobni, and Celine Krantz of the Oak Lake Care Centre were all smiles alongside their students Kacey Ryall, Sadie Bailey, Emmett Krantz and Wyatt Krantz after capturing first place for Best Decorated Commercial Float.

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The local agricultural fair circuit concluded last weekend as the 138th Annual Oak Lake Fair took over the community from July 17 to July 19, 2026. Hosted by the Oak Lake Agricultural Society, the three-day event served as the final stop of the region's traditional 'Milk Run,' drawing residents and visitors alike for a weekend packed with heritage, competition, and family entertainment.

The festivities kicked off Friday evening at the Hall with a performance by musical guest Lyle Baldwin. As night fell, a brilliant fireworks display illuminated the sky at dusk, officially launching the weekend's celebration.

Saturday morning brought the highly anticipated Oak Lake Fair Parade, which filled the local streets with a vibrant display of beautifully decorated floats, classic vehicles, and vintage tractors. Competition was fierce

among the entries, but it was the Oak Lake Care Centre that won the prize for best Decorated Commercial Float. The rest of Saturday offered a packed itinerary highlighting the area's deep agricultural roots and community talents. Early risers filled up at the Valleyview Co-op Pancake Breakfast before taking in a full day of events, including the Light Horse Show, the high-energy Bacon Chase, which is exactly as it sounds, chasing pigs, and the start of the Slo-Pitch Tournament.

Meanwhile, the Exhibit Hall showcased the community's domestic arts, featuring competitive categories in baking, sewing, canning, and floral arrangements. A major highlight inside the hall was the incredible display of kids' art and schoolwork, proudly submitted by the Oak Lake Community School with dedicated competitive categories for every single grade.

Afternoon spectators were treated to a yummy Beef



The Exhibit Hall showcased wild floral arrangements, canned and baked goods, art and quilts and even animal sculptures crafted with food!

Stew and a Ranch Horse Competition, capped off by the adrenaline-pumping Lawn Mower Pull Competition just as the Beer Gardens opened for the evening.

The fair concluded on Sunday with a focus on fellowship and tradition. A combined community worship service was held at St. Alban's Anglican Church Museum, followed by a sunny afternoon picnic at the Hall hosted by the local Garden Club.

Of course, an event of this scale only comes together through a lot of team effort. The entire weekend was made possible by the many amazing volunteers who poured countless hours of hard work and heart into the fair, proving once again how much Oak Lake thrives on community spirit. With excellent attendance, delicious community meals, and a brilliant showcase of local talent, the 138th Oak Lake Fair successfully put a cap on another memorable summer season.

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GAME DAY TICKETS

 GENERAL ADMISSION	\$18
 YOUTH ADMISSION (8-17)	\$10



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ONE GOAL.



LET'S GO
OIL CAPITALS!



The horses are miniatures but the stakes are big



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Amanda Forbes from Virden and red ribbon winner, Whisper.

By Anne Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

At Hamiota Fair Miniature Horse Show, Glenda Goerzen of Selkirk was thrilled to win a Grand Championship. Through the 'milk run' you might say she scored a hat trick.

She attended Shoal Lake, Hamiota and Harding and says of her horse: "JEM Be Dazzle Bobbi was a pleasure to travel with, taking it all in stride, and winning Grand Championship under 34 inches at all three.... and even taking home a first place in the 3-year-old futurity driving class at Harding."

Another miniature owner, Amanda Forbes said she's happy to be back in show biz. Two of her miniature horse entries to the Hamiota Fair are also JEM horses, bred by the late Mary Ann Bartkewich. One, a black beauty and another a cremello (cream body, mane and tail with blue eyes).

Forbes' is planning to drive her miniature horses as they mature. She's returned to miniature horse showing, after a five-year hiatus. With her recent move to an acreage near Virden, Forbes is into her second show season.

Kimberley Dinwoodie of Portage la Prairie had a string of horses at Oak River Fair, Monday July 13, and at Hamiota Fair. Some of them also Bartkewich breeding.

"I got real lucky on this one, because she's already got her Hall of Fame," said Dinwoodie.

It's a prestigious recognition program that awards lifetime championship status to the breed's best. To qualify, a Miniature must score 70 points in either Halter or Performance including five Grand Champion competitive wins.

The award is presented in the USA, but points may be collected at Canadian shows.

Dinwoodie was showing a string of eight horses, less than usual, but she was missing a helper. However granddaughter, Presley Dinwoodie an experienced show person, was along.

Dinwoodie said it's more difficult for Canadians with a limited show season to accumulate points toward Hall of Fame. "Down in the States, it's every weekend, from January 1st... because they're, like, summer all year round in some states...."

For that reason, 'milk run' fairs play a key role for Miniature Horse show circuit.



**Jubilee Stage
Victoria Park**

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Seventh Ave S. and
Seymour St W.

In case of rain:
The Legion Hall
(540 Eighth Ave S.)

July 2

Sponsored by ValleyView Co-op

Daelyn Fefchak

July 9

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Virden Ukulele Club



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Valleyview Realty
TUNDRA OIL & GAS



The Legion

will be hosting a BBQ at each concert!

6:15PM-7:00PM \$10/\$11/\$12

Half the proceeds from the BBQ will go to a different community organization each week.

Harding Agricultural Society hosts 122nd Fair



PHOTOS BY GERRY NOLAN
The Heavy Horse teams returned to the fair this year with thanks to Shaun Hunter for bringing it back with help in the ring from Mel Hunter.



Guest Bob Good and president Trav Hunter officially opened the fair. In his speech Bob mentioned the first Harding fair was held on October 3 in 1904. There were two farmers and three head of livestock that day. From small beginnings great things will come forth.



Ron Sangster Memorial Supreme Champion Female (White Cow/Calf Pair) won by Stepler Farms, Miami MB



PHOTOS BY WENDA BEST
Ron Sangster Memorial Supreme Champion Bull won by Freyburn Farms, Oxbow SK



Friday, July 17 started with a pancake breakfast, which was served by from left to right, Don Carter and Logan McGonigal in the front and by Blake Krahn operations manager of Valleyview coop, Vaughn Wilson Valleyview coop President and Ken Hutchison. A crowd of well over 300 attended the breakfast.

By Gerry Nolan
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The 122nd Harding Agricultural fair was held on Friday, July 17. Although the fair was down in exhibitors this year due to the flooding, closed roads and the storms we have had in this area, Harding fair would be deemed a success once again.

The breakfast crew served 300 people. The Community Club served a daily total of 180 cold plate meals. The Woodworth Firemen and a few local volunteers looked after the gates with a total attendance around 400.

Loree Wedderburn's Saskatoon pie entry won the Grace Kent Memorial class and Best pie award. She donated it to the Ag Society to auction off as a fundraiser. The syndicate of Cam and Shelley Ramsey, Ag-Land Farms and Double H Farms purchased the prize-winning pie for \$650.

Heavy Horse hitches were from Boulder Bluff Clydesdales, Strathclair;

West Spring Percherons, Minnedosa and West Oak Acres, Westbourne. They exhibited three 4 horse hitches and two 6 horse hitches. Sponsorship for heavy horses came from BASF, Syngenta, Cargill and Prairie Gateway Tourism.

Light horse winners were as follows: Champion Pony shown by Morgan Rampton of Cromer. Champion Light Horse shown by Lisa Moore of Brandon and Costume Class winner was Lane McLeod of Virden.

Thank you to the Harding Community group for the delicious meals and all the volunteers like the Woodworth firemen who tended the admission gate and all those who do their thing to make the day so wonderful. Thanks to Mark Hunter for the caretaking of the grounds which were in great shape. See ya all next year!

The writing of this article was assisted by Wenda Best from the Harding Ag Society. Thank-you Wenda.



Jim Wilson Memorial Supreme Champion Breeders Herd won by Jaymarandy Livestock, Beausejour MB.

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Jaleesa Moore (Reston Early Learning Centre) & Avery Brigden (Tundra)



SPORTS

ROCKETS' TEAM-FIRST APPROACH PAYS OFF WITH PROVINCIAL SILVER

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Players with varying levels of softball experience came together to form a Reston Rockets team that powered its way to a silver-medal finish at the Softball Manitoba U13 A Provincial Championship.

The team drew players from Reston, Hartney, Melita and Pierson. Their softball experience ranged from first-year players to athletes competing at the AA level. The Rockets won the Southwest Girls Softball League title. The squad compiled a 7-1 record at the provincial tournament, which was held July 3-5 in Winnipeg.

"Our strengths as a team would be our team as a family," head coach Terri Williamson said. "Each player wanted their teammates to do well and supported each other as teammates. We had strong pitching and catching, and all the girls bought into strong, aggressive base running. When we got the runner on, that runner was going to score. Each and every player on the team contributed to us winning the SWGSL and silver medal at provincials.

"I'm not sure the last time Reston, Hartney, Melita or Pierson won a medal at softball provincials, so it goes to show how great these girls did this season and how proud they should be of the season they had."

The team entered the season with a straightforward objective. "Our goal as a team was to improve every practice and every game," Williamson said. "To set a goal, accomplish it and set another goal with hopes that we would be playing our best softball by league tournament and provincials.

The girls all bought in and improved by leaps and bounds from the start to the end of the season. They bonded quickly as teammates and put in the work to improve as

players and as a team."

On the biggest stage of the season, the Rockets displayed their team-first mentality.

"It was a team effort the entire weekend. From big hits, defensive plays and great base running, everyone on the team contributed in one way or another," assistant coach Mandy Flannery said of the provincial tournament.

The Rockets went 4-0 in pool play. In their first two playoff round games, the team defeated Bonivital Flash Green 7-5 and Bois-sevain 16-13. Reston beat MacGregor 8-5 in the semifinal.

"The girls got up quick on MacGregor and battled through the heat and exhaustion to secure the win," Flannery said.

In the final, the Rockets lost 6-4 to Brandon's Sunrise Credit Union. Manager Chantal Coe said the "girls fought hard trying to catch up, but came up short by two runs. They still brought home a silver medal."

She said she enjoyed several aspects of working with



PHOTO BY MANAGER CHANTAL COE

The U13 Reston Rockets won the silver medals at the Softball Manitoba U13 A Provincial Championship. Left to right: Mandy Flannery (assistant coach), Aubrey Harkness, Stevie Smith, Austyn Arndt, Dallas Williamson (assistant coach), Devyn Hay, Brynn Jones, Andie Williamson, Piper White, and Terri Williamson (head coach). Front: Braeley Hobbs, Peyton Flannery, Adelyn Bugg, Ellie Green, and Addison Coe.

this team.

"They are a great group of girls. They all have positive attitudes, even if they are down a couple runs. They all work great together as a team and go on the ball field to have a great time."

SOFTBALL REPORT: GOLD RUSH PERSEVERE TO WIN BRONZE



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The U17 Virden Gold Rush won the bronze medals at Softball Manitoba U17 A Provincial Championships.

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The U17 Virden Gold Rush used their experience to earn provincial bronze.

The team defeated the MacDonald Storm 7-4 in the third-place contest at the Softball Manitoba U17 A Provincial Championships. The event was held July 10-12 in Steinbach. In the provincial semifinal, Virden lost 7-4 to the Springfield Heat, who fell to Hamiota 8-7 in the final.

"Many of these players have significant experience in big-game situations and understand the preparation, focus and what it takes to succeed at a high level," Gold Rush head coach Chris Masson said. "Their focus and ability to put their first loss and only loss of the weekend behind them, regroup, and move forward allowed them to win the medal game."

The coach noted it was a significant achievement to earn a medal in a deep field. After going undefeated in

pool play, the Gold Rush knocked off Stonewall 7-3 to advance to the semifinal against Springfield.

"They handled themselves with determination and grit throughout the weekend," Masson said. "Despite very difficult conditions, including three games on Sunday in the extreme heat, the team remained focused and competed at a high level throughout the tournament."

The head coach said there were several things he enjoyed about working with this team.

"This is a dedicated group whose love for the game and strong understanding of it are evident in the way they compete," Masson said. "In addition to the players, I was impressed with the families and parents that pitched in throughout the weekend and did lots of little things to help in any way that they could."

The team included players Aidan Gonty, Callie Stuart, Casey George, Ceanna Mitchell, Courtney Cochrane, Ella Clarke, Jasmyne Andries, Joelle Barkley, Kaiya Walton, Skylar Higginbotham and Zoe Drummond; and coaches Chris Masson, Darcy Clarke and Dustin

Higginbotham.

U17 AAA Magic

The Westman Magic hosted the Softball Manitoba U17 AAA Provincial Championships in Brandon on July 16-19. The Brandon-based squad earned the bronze medals. The team included Virden's Paige Rampton and Rose Cochrane from the Oak Lake area.

By finishing third, the Magic earned a spot in the Western Canadian championships in St. Albert, Alta. Aug. 6-9.

U19 AAA Magic

The U19 AAA Westman Magic, which includes Virden's Alexa Banga, did not compete in the provincial tournament in Winnipeg on July 17-19. Instead, the team opted to wrap up its season playing in the Red River Rage tournament in Fargo, N.D. The Magic were 3-0 in pool play and lost in the Gold Bracket semifinals.

Banga has committed to study and play at Vermont State University Castleton.

GOLD RUSH'S TEAM CULTURE LEADS TO PROVINCIAL BRONZE

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Teamwork, positivity and resilience helped the Virden Gold Rush battle their way to a bronze medal at the Softball Manitoba U15 A Provincial Championships.

At the provincial tournament, which was held July 10-12 in Winkler, the Gold Rush only lost one game. They beat Brandon Keller Development 6-3 for bronze.

"I honestly believe our success came from the culture this group created together," Virden head coach Clayton Canart said. "Before provincials, we sat down as a team and the girls set their own goals. They wanted to win a medal. We then talked about what it would take to give ourselves the opportunity to achieve those goals. The girls came up with things like quality at-bats, staying positive, communicating, playing strong defence, flushing away mistakes quickly, staying focused, bringing energy and most importantly, being a team."

"They lived those values all weekend. The conditions were extremely hot and humid, but they never let that become an excuse. They continued to compete, encourage one another and battle through adversity. As coaches, we couldn't have asked for a better effort. We always tell the girls that while we can't control the outcome of every game, we can control our effort and attitude. They did exactly that, and I think that's what ultimately led to their success."

Although the Gold Rush doubled up their Brandon opponents in the bronze medal contest, Canart said Keller Development "had a deserving weekend as well and played very well in the tough conditions." Regarding his team's play in that contest, he said:

"The bronze medal game was a great example of this team's character. Everyone contributed in some way, whether it was making defensive plays, quality at-bats,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Virden Gold Rush captured the bronze medals at the Softball Manitoba U15 A Provincial Championships. The team included: back row, left to right: coach Clayton Canart, Luca Wooldridge, McKinnley Walton, Peyton Canart, Georgia Grieve, Laney George, Demi Hodson, Ava Canart, and coach Peyton Stuart; front row, left to right: coach Stephanie Malcolm, Kaylee Malcolm, Sadie Stuart, Heidi Perrin, and Mia Pearn.

encouraging teammates or simply bringing positive energy. We didn't rely on one player to carry us. It truly was a complete team effort. The girls stayed composed, communicated well defensively and continued to compete right until the final out. They earned that bronze medal together."

At the provincials, the Gold Rush were 3-0 in pool play. They beat Mitchell 8-4 and Miniota 7-0 in the playoff round before falling 6-4 to Steinbach in the semifinal. Steinbach beat Winkler 9-8 for gold.

Asked what he enjoyed about working with this group,

Canart said, "Without question, their willingness to learn. This group was incredibly coachable. They listened, asked questions, accepted feedback and genuinely wanted to improve every day. They were also simply fun to coach. They supported one another, celebrated each other's successes, picked each other up after mistakes and made every practice and game enjoyable. As coaches, we always hope to leave a positive impact on our players, but groups like this leave an impact on us as well. I'll remember this team for a long time because of the character they showed and the effort they brought every single day. Winning the bronze medal was a wonderful accomplishment, but seeing these young athletes grow in confidence, resilience and teamwork throughout the season was every bit as rewarding. I'm incredibly proud of every one of them."

The head coach was proud of how quickly they came together. Canart said they "didn't have nearly as much time to practice together as we would have liked, but you never would have known it watching them play. They built trust in one another very quickly and genuinely enjoyed being around each other. From a coaching perspective, that's something that doesn't always show up on the scoreboard but makes an enormous difference."

Canart was pleased with the resilience the Gold Rush displayed during the provincial tournament.

"Every team experiences adversity at provincials," he said. "Whether it was the extreme heat, tough innings or momentum swings, our girls continually responded instead of dwelling on things they couldn't control. Bringing home a provincial bronze medal from a tournament of 38 teams is certainly something to celebrate, but I'm just as proud of the way they represented their communities, their teammates and themselves throughout the tournament."

In a team tradition, the Gold Rush played a double-header against a Moosomin squad in Fleming, Sask., the week before the provincial tournament. It is a highlight for the players because of the opportunity to play under the lights and on the beautiful Fleming diamond.

"I may have been a little optimistic when I scheduled the start time," Canart said. "By the time we finished the second game, it was nearly 12:30 a.m. The girls can now honestly say they played so long that they finished their softball game the next day. Thankfully, all of our parents were great sports about it. I'm guessing there were a few tired moms and dads at work the following morning, but it turned into one of those fun team memories that everyone will laugh about for years to come."

"At the end of the day, that's what makes a sport special. Winning a bronze medal is something the girls should be incredibly proud of, but it's the friendships, shared experiences and memories, like playing softball into the next day, that they'll remember long after the scores have faded from memory."

BULL RIDING



A bull named
Taking Care of
Business.

PHOTO FROM FACEBOOK

By Gerry Nolan
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

As you may have guessed by now, I like watching bull riding. The men who ride these animals are some of my favourite people. With the Virden Indoor Rodeo just around the corner, it reminded me again of a bull rider who lost his life. Bull riders may be a little crazy to try this sport or profession, but they entertain us and we love it!

Not all rides are successful, such as the one that Lane Frost took on a bull named "Takin care of business".

Lane Frost was a professional bull rider who died on July 30, 1989. He died from severe internal injuries he

sustained during a pro bull riding event at the Cheyenne Frontier days in Wyoming.

After successfully riding the bull for 8 seconds, Frost dismounted. During the landing the bull turned and struck Lane Frost in the back as he was down on the ground. The impact broke several ribs which severed an artery leading to his heart and caused fatal internal injuries. Lane initially managed to stand up and call for help before collapsing in the arena. He was rushed to a local hospital but was pronounced dead upon arrival, at the age of just 25.

The Lane Frost tragic accident later inspired the widespread adoption of

protective safety vests in bull riding and was the subject of the 1994 film, 8 seconds.

Lane Frost had been a professional bull rider for 8 years. On August 2, 1989, his funeral service was held in Atoka, Oklahoma with an estimated crowd of 3500 people in attendance.

In honour of Lane Frost, Tuff Hedeman dedicated his 10th round ride in the National final rodeo. Hedeman rode the bull for an astonishing 16 seconds. Tuff stated prior to the ride, "I am gonna ride him for an extra 8 seconds for Lane!"

To all the rodeos that are going on, stay safe cowgirls and cowboys, and thanks for all the rides!

SPORTS

VIRDEN YOUTH SOCCER CELEBRATES SUCCESS AND LEADERSHIP



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Virden U10 soccer team earned the silver medals at a tournament in Nesbitt.

By Robin Wark

EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden U12 soccer team capped a strong campaign with a league championship.

Their victory highlighted a successful season for the Virden Youth Soccer Association. The local U12 squad also earned bronze at a tournament in Nesbitt before defeating Killarney 3-2 to capture the league title.

“Our success this season came from the dedication, determination, and teamwork of every player on the roster,” U12 coach Lucy Boynton said. “Each athlete contributed in their own unique way, whether it was through leadership, effort, skill, or encouragement of their teammates. As the season progressed, the players continued to improve and support one another, creating a strong team culture that helped us overcome challenges.

“We also owe a tremendous amount of gratitude to our parents and families. Without their commitment to driving countless hours to practices and games in Hartney, Nesbitt, and other communities, this season would not have been possible. Their support both on and off the field played a huge role in our success. Seeing all of that hard work pay off when we secured the championship was incredibly rewarding for everyone involved.”

The coach said she felt “incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to coach this group throughout such a memorable season.”

“What I enjoyed most was getting to know each player and watching them grow both as athletes and as teammates. This group is full of unique personalities, and every player brought something special to the team.

“Like any group, we experienced our share of

ups and downs, but what stood out most was their resilience. They never gave up, even when faced with difficult situations or tough opponents. While they occasionally needed reminders and guidance, they are still a young group of players, and their willingness to learn was impressive.

“Off the field, they are energetic, funny, and full of personality. On the field, however, they understand the importance of hard work, teamwork, and supporting one another. Watching them come together, improve throughout the season, and ultimately achieve their goal was one of the most rewarding coaching experiences I have had.”

Boynton said it was an incredible season from start to finish. The team was strong in league play. Before the postseason, it captured bronze at the Nesbitt tournament.

“Although the results were not exactly what we had hoped for, those games became an important learning experience,” Boynton said of the tournament. “The players realized that success requires a full effort for the entire game and that they were capable of overcoming adversity.”

In the playoffs, Virden beat Boissevain in the semi-finals. Boynton said it was a hard-fought victory and “gave the team confidence and momentum.” In the championship game, which was played in Nesbitt, the Virden players were “focused and determined,” the coach said.

“We took an early 1-0 lead, but Killarney responded and went ahead 2-1,” Boynton said. “Instead of giving up, our players showed tremendous resilience. Following a halftime team talk and encouragement from one another, they came out with renewed confidence and energy. The second half showcased the character of this group as they battled back, tied the game, and

eventually scored the winning goal. The team came together at exactly the right time, and their belief in one another ultimately made the difference.

U10 Finish Second

The Virden U10 soccer squad fell in the league finals in Nesbitt. Earlier in the season, it earned silver at a tournament in Nesbitt.

Coach Cynthia Braybrook said this season “was a big personal step for me as I have never coached before. I enjoyed meeting new families and watching a group of kids who don’t really know each other grow together as a team and play some really good soccer.”

Club thanks Carene for 12 years of leadership

Virden Youth Soccer Association president Miranda Dryden-Careme is stepping down after 12 years leading the organization. On social media, the club posted, “There would not be a program at all without Miranda.” Julie Hole, who will become president after serving as vice-president, said:

“Miranda has been instrumental in keeping Virden Youth Soccer running for many years now. The board has been pretty fluid, but she has been a constant since she started, becoming president just halfway through her first year on the board.

“Miranda has put in countless hours into registrations, organizing equipment, managing adult and youth coaches, and even plans out and paints the fields each year. She manages travelling teams, contacting other organizations across southwest Manitoba and figuring out how many kids we have and what kind of age groups we can bring to games and tournaments.

“I have spent the last few years as a board member, knowing that I would be taking over eventually, and I am still in awe of all she does and am so grateful to be able to pick her brain about any part of the program.”

SPORTS

OILERS FINISH PERFECT WEEKEND WITH PROVINCIAL TITLE



The Virden Oilers competed for a provincial championship on one of Canada's oldest diamonds, located in Dugald.

By Robin Wark

EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Oilers went undefeated to claim the Baseball Manitoba Senior A Provincial Championship.

"We played well defensively and threw strikes all weekend, which helped with limiting stress on our pitchers," Oilers player Keifer Johnston said. "OC (Owen Charles) was very good for us all weekend at third, which can be a tough spot for an 18-year-old. We strung hits together this weekend, and guys like Bo (Bootsman) and Dex (Dexter Whittle) came up big for us on Sunday."

The local squad defeated the host Springfield Braves 5-3 in the title tilt on July 19. It was the Oilers' fourth win of the weekend.

"We got off to a quick start as we did all weekend," Oilers veteran Tanner Lewis said of the championship game. "Timely hits and good at-bats in the first inning gave us a 3-0 lead. Chris Hendrickson, who we picked up from Wawanesa for the tournament, threw really well for us in the finals. He attacked their hitters and didn't walk many. When they put the ball in play, our defence was excellent and it was all weekend and made some timely plays to get us out of some jams."

"Everyone contributed in one way or another, whether a big hit, stealing a base and being aggressive on the base paths, making those defensive plays when we needed it, to the guys on the bench providing energy. It was a full team effort."

The July 17-19 tournament was played in the community of Dugald in the R.M. of Springfield. Visiting teams were impressed with the facilities.

"The diamond atmosphere was like Field of Dreams," the Oilers' Leif Wilson said.

Gerald Palidwor, the president and the general manager of Springfield Baseball, said, "Braves Field in Springfield is the second oldest continually operating baseball grounds in Canada behind Labatt Field in London, Ontario. We are the third oldest in the world in the world, we believe."

"It was pretty cool to play one of the oldest sports on a historical diamond," Wilson said.

The Oilers were part of history in the tournament's opening contest. After work was completed the night before, the game was the first ever at the diamond with dugouts.

Virden earned a 13-3 mercy-rule victory over the Carberry Royals in that July 17 contest. Reed McGrath pitched four innings for Virden, while Jeff Peel threw for one.

The next day, the Oilers completed a sweep of



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The Virden Oilers captured the Baseball Manitoba Senior A Provincial Championship.

their pool play games with a 10-0 shut out win, by the mercy rule, against the North Winnipeg Pirates. Hendrickson pitched that game for Virden.

In a semifinal game on July 19, the Oilers defeated the Carman Cardinals 5-2. Bootsman hit a three-run home run in the bottom of the sixth to help power Virden to the finals.

"In the semi, Reed threw really well keeping Carman at bay and the defence behind him really played well," Bootsman said. "We were fortunate to have some timely hitting from some guys and that got us into the final."

Pitching was a strength for the Oilers at the provincial tournament. Lewis noted that Hendrickson "was great for us all weekend, as were our other pitchers Reed McGrath and Jeff Peel. We didn't have to use our pitching depth because these three guys threw so well that we didn't have to use anyone else."

In addition to Hendrickson, the Oilers had picked up the Brandon Young Guns' Bradley Schoonbaert for the tournament. Lewis said he "gave us some clutch hits, and fit in seamlessly with our group."

The youthful Oilers team was 3-12 during the South West Baseball League season. Tyson Draper and Toby Troughton tied with the Brandon Cardinals' JT Martine for the league lead in stolen

bases with 11. Braeden Lewis, who hit for a .375 average, paced the Oilers with 10 runs batted in during the regular season. Whittle batted .400.

McGrath led Virden with 33 innings pitched. Among team members who threw more than four innings, he had the top earned-run average at 3.18.

The Oilers won their final game of the season 11-4 over the Rivers Comets, who finished second in the SWBL North Division. Draper said a combination of factors played a part in that July 5 road win.

"Starting with Reed McGrath, throwing the entire game for us. He allowed six hits over the entire game and allowed only one earned run. Our defence made the plays they had to as well in the field. Most importantly however was our offence. We struggle as a team to score runs at times and we exploded with 11 runs in the game. We were creating hits and doing it at the right time."

That momentum seemed to carry over to the provincial tournament.

"We are very proud of what we were able to accomplish this weekend," Tanner Lewis said. "It was a tough start to our year as we struggled to find some wins in close games, but facing that adversity got us ready for this weekend, and it's a great way to end our season, you always want to end the year on a winning note, and we were able to do just that."

SPORTS

13U ROCKETS EARN TOP FOUR FINISH AT PROVINCIALS

By Robin Wark
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The 13U Reston Rockets proved they are among the province's best teams

on the diamond.

The squad finished in the top four at the Baseball Manitoba 13U Tier 1 Provincial Championships, held in Altona on July 10-12. The Rockets' time at the event ended in the semifinals.

"Finishing among the province's top teams is an achievement these athletes should be proud of," Reston head coach Derrus Gray said. "Their determination, resilience, and team-first attitude were key ingredients in a memorable provincial championship run."

A bronze medal game was not played. However, Gray explained that in the tournament's format, the Rockets placed third overall. The squad earned its provincial berth by winning the Oil Dome qualifier.

"Competing at the Tier 1 Provincial Championship in Altona was an honour for our Reston Rockets team and an opportunity we did not take for granted," Gray said. "Representing the Oil Dome region at the highest level of provincial competition is something our players, coaches, and families can be very proud of."

The Rockets' success went beyond their provincial finish, Gray said.

"Beyond the results, one of the most rewarding aspects of coaching this group was watching them grow together throughout the season. Their work ethic, willingness to support one another, and commitment to improving each day made them a pleasure to coach. They competed hard, represented their community with class, and never stopped believing in themselves or their teammates."

The Rockets fell 7-6 to La Broquerie in their opening game of the provincial tournament. However, the team rebounded in impressive fashion.

"Although the team suffered its first loss of the tournament, the players responded exactly as coaches hoped they would," Gray said. "Rather than dwelling on the setback, they regrouped, learned from the experience,



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The 13U Reston Rockets competed against the province's top teams at the Baseball Manitoba 13U Tier 1 Provincial Championships.

and refocused on the games ahead. Their ability to stay positive and resilient allowed them to bounce back and continue competing at a high level. The response to adversity was a reflection of the character this group has built over the course of the season. This group has demonstrated resilience all season long, and that characteristic was on full display throughout the weekend."

In its second game, Reston romped past Lunder 13-3. It beat Brandon 7-6 and Winkler 7-4 to finish pool play with a 3-1 record.

"The team benefited from strong pitching, timely hitting, and impressive depth throughout the lineup," Gray said. "Equally important was the cohesiveness of the group. The players genuinely enjoy competing alongside one another, support each other through challenges, and trust one another in key moments. That chemistry

helped the team stay focused and confident against some very strong opponents."

The Rockets lost 13-3 to Mitchell in a semifinal contest. Mitchell defeated Seine River 12-8 in the final.

"Hosted at a beautiful facility by an outstanding organizing committee, the championship weekend showcased some of the best 13U baseball talent in Manitoba," Gray said. "Altona proved to be a fantastic host community, providing a first-class experience for athletes and spectators alike."

The Rockets roster included Merrik Bugg, Nolan Bugg, Zack Campbell, Declan Cook, Jack Fraser, Asher Gray, Jace Guthrie, Liam Kristof, Hank Olson, Colby Paul, Tucker Seitz, Ben Sterling and Andie Williamson. The coaching staff consisted of Derrus Gray, Dallas Williamson and Dwayne Bugg.

TORONTO BLUE JAYS

REF TO
WRITER

GERRY
NOLAN



The Toronto Blue Jays who played in the World Series of baseball last season and were expected to easily make the playoffs this year are on the outside looking in. The way the second half has started for them, it's not looking good for the Jays to be in the postseason this time around. The Blue Jays sit in last place in the American league east division with a win-loss record of 46 wins and 53 losses as of this writing, with the Tampa Bay Rays the American

league leaders coming to Toronto this week. With only 63 games left on the schedule the Jays will be in tough to make the playoffs. There are several teams ahead of them in the wild card race, but again they trail in the race by a few games.

The first of August is the trade deadline. The question is do they buy or sell?

What has gone wrong for them this year? Injuries have really hurt them; they have played

all season really without Addison Barger who hit more than 20 home runs last year. Bo Bichette left in free agency and is in New York with the Mets.

They have not replaced either one of these bats offensively and are at or near the bottom of the league in hitting. Vladdy has lost his power, only six home runs so far this season. The team as a whole swings and misses at too many pitches that are out of the strike zone.

In a game the other night the pitcher of the visiting team walked the first two Blue Jay hitters in the inning. He threw nine pitches, eight of them were balls. Two runners on and nobody out, it looked like a promising inning. The next two batters that came to the plate swung at the

first pitch they saw. One flew out to an outfielder, the other fouled out to the catcher. Two pitches, two outs and the threat of a big inning is over. We have seen this happen too many times this season and nobody seems to be putting a stop to this. What is the Jays manager doing? Why is there no take sign?

This past weekend they lost the first game in a blow out. In the next two games they scored one run and that won't get it done this season. I would think they will be sellers this year in a couple of weeks.

The Blue Jays have some real good players; it is disappointing to watch them struggle. They gave the whole country a lift last season and we thank them for that. Next year Gadget, next year!



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Premier's envoy visits Virden

Province hears Virden's concerns

By Dale Davison
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Ray Bertholet is Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew's Community Outreach Worker for western Manitoba. Based in Brandon, he is one of three outreach workers in Manitoba, and on July 14 he attended the Town of Virden council meeting.

Bertholet travels throughout western Manitoba meeting with municipal councils, hospitals, community organizations, and individual residents. He pointed out that much of western Manitoba lacks government

MLAs because the region is represented by opposition members. As a result, his role is to serve as a point of contact between the communities in these ridings and the Premier's office.

He does not make decisions about the issues raised during these meetings, but he performs an assessment of the situation and either identifies possible avenues for further action or reports back to councils when no options exist.

Coun. Travis Penner asked whether Bertholet could help the municipality connect with the provincial govern-

ment about identifying a new water source. Bertholet confirmed that assisting with provincial contacts is exactly the kind of support he can provide. He explained that he regularly works with Directors of Ministerial Affairs across government departments and can help municipalities identify the appropriate officials, initiate discussions with agencies such as the Manitoba Water Services Board, and determine the proper channels for dealing with concerns.

Penner said, "Within the last few days, I watched Alberta celebrate a \$13 bil-

lion investment in a big data center, and I saw our Premier turn one down flat south of Winnipeg. I don't know what the implications are of that, but it just seemed to be a good fit for Manitoba because I know they're looking for power, and here we've got a lot of electric. What's the reason for that?"

Bertholet replied that Manitoba's electricity is not as plentiful as many people believe. He explained that the province is currently expanding electricity generation by constructing gas-fired generation facilities in Brandon and pursuing approximately 600 megawatts of new wind generation. He said, "There are two big businesses who would like to move into the province, but they haven't been able to secure the

power because of drought." Bertholet added that while major data centres require significant manpower during construction, they generate relatively few permanent jobs once they are in operation.

Coun. Tara Maxwell raised an issue about challenges faced by recreation organizations in the province. She explained that the provincial recreation consulting staff had declined dramatically over the years—from roughly 13 consultants to only a handful—and that with additional retirements, only three staff teams would soon be responsible for serv-

ing five regions.

Maxwell stressed that reduced recreation support would leave communities without essential assistance, despite recreation's well-known benefits in reducing mental health problems, crime and healthcare costs. Bertholet acknowledged the concern and committed to raising the issue.

In closing he told council to call him if they need to contact the Premier's office and said, "I'm all about communication. So, you will hear back from me. You may not like my answer, but you will hear back."

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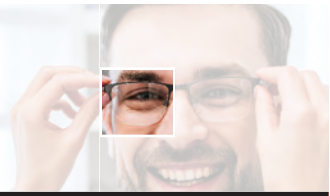
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Tim Horton's Camp Day



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

Tim Hortons Camp Day took place on Wednesday, July 15, 2026. During this annual event, 100 per cent of the proceeds from all hot and iced coffee sales at participating Canadian locations were donated to the Tim Hortons Foundation Camps to help send youth from underserved communities to life-changing camp experiences. The Virden officers came out to assist with the Tim Horton's Camp Day. Left to Right: Sargent Amy Doan, Owner Greg Crisanti, Corporal Dan Gagnard. Thanks to incredible community support, the Virden Tim Hortons raised \$5,617.00, the second highest total among all stores in Manitoba!

SAIL and Arts Mosaic



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Last week, Thursday, July 16, SAIL did an art project at Arts Mosaic. "It was fun to work on a small project and enjoy tea and snacks and a great visit at the same time," says Krista Pederson. Left to right Dianne Fehr, Krista Pederson, Jean Carr, and Donna Sutley. Arts Mosaic has this room set up in the train station to be creative. Their space is welcoming and free for all to attend.

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History: First Virden Mayor Robert Adamson

Virden Pioneer Home Museum

By Corr Rossouw

VIRDEN PIONEER HOME MUSEUM

Not many individuals hold as important a place as Robert Adamson, the community's first mayor. Serving from 1890 to 1892, Adamson helped guide Virden through its earliest years as an incorporated village, laying the foundation for the thriving agricultural and commercial community it would become. Although his time as mayor was relatively brief, his influence on the town's development extended well beyond municipal government through his work in banking, business, and community leadership.

Robert Adamson was born on January 13, 1852, in Stanochy, Forfarshire, Scotland, to David H. Adamson and Maria Torrance. He received a solid education and spent five years training in a law office before deciding to pursue new opportunities in Canada during the country's period of westward expansion.

After arriving in Canada, Adamson worked from 1872 to 1880 as a cashier for commercial firms in Toronto. These positions provided him with valuable financial and business experience that would later make him one of Manitoba's most respected early bankers.

In 1880, Adamson relocated to Manitoba, a province experiencing tremendous growth following the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway. He first operated a private banking business in Winnipeg before recognizing the opportunities developing in the new settlements of western Manitoba.

In 1888, Adamson established a private bank in Virden, making it the first private banking business west of Winnipeg. At a time when reliable banking services were rare on the frontier, this was an important achievement. Farmers, ranchers, merchants, and settlers depended on his bank for loans, savings, and financial services that allowed the local economy to grow.

When the Commercial Bank of Manitoba opened a branch in Virden in 1890, Adamson was appointed its manager, further strengthening his reputation as one of

the area's leading businessmen.

Virden officially became an incorporated village on August 2, 1890. As one of its most respected citizens and business leaders, Robert Adamson was elected the community's first mayor, serving from 1890 until 1892.

Although municipal government in the late nineteenth century was very different from today's, its responsibilities were significant. Adamson and the first council had to establish the systems needed for a functioning municipality, including creating local bylaws and regulations. Organizing municipal finances and taxation. Planning streets and public infrastructure. Supporting public health and sanitation. Encouraging business investment and settlement, and building confidence in the new municipality among residents and investors.

As Virden was only beginning to grow, nearly every municipal decision helped shape the community's future. While surviving records from Adamson's administration are limited, historians recognize several important accomplishments associated with his leadership.

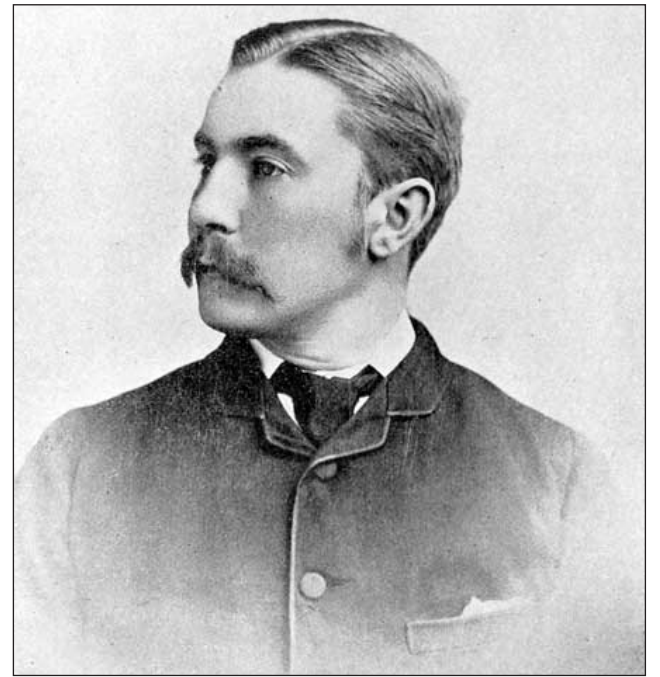
Adamson's greatest achievement was helping create a stable and organized municipal government during Virden's earliest years. His leadership ensured that the newly incorporated village developed orderly civic administration rather than remaining simply a railway settlement.

As both mayor and bank manager, Adamson encouraged investment in local businesses and agriculture. His banking experience made financing available for settlers and merchants, helping Virden become an important commercial centre serving southwestern Manitoba.

Leadership beyond the Mayor's Office

Adamson also served as the first President of the Board of Trade for the Rural Municipality of Dennis. The Board of Trade promoted economic development, transportation improvements, and business opportunities throughout the region, extending its influence beyond the boundaries of Virden itself. Robert Adamson married Effie Caldwell of Lanark, Ontario, in Winnipeg on June 21, 1882.

Together, they raised a family of six children, which



SUBMITTED PHOTO

First Virden Mayor Robert Adamson

included three sons and three daughters. Although little has been recorded about their private family life, raising six children while helping build a new prairie community would have required considerable dedication from both Robert and Effie. Like many pioneer families, they balanced business, civic responsibility, and family life during a period of rapid growth and change in western Canada.

Robert Adamson's legacy is closely connected with the birth of modern Virden. He was instrumental in establishing both the financial and political institutions that helped transform a small railway settlement into a successful prairie community. Establishing Western Manitoba's first private bank west of Winnipeg. Managing the Commercial Bank of Manitoba's Virden branch. Serving as Virden's first mayor from 1890 to 1892.

Virden Cadet Corps faces closure

Town of Virden council meeting, July 14

By Dale Davison

EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Council received correspondence stating that the Virden Cadet Corps is shutting down. Coun. Marc Savy explained that he had spoken with several former cadet instructors, who were deeply disappointed by the closure. According to the discussions with the former instructors, the Department of National Defence has decided to discontinue the local corps because it could not recruit two qualified cadet instructors willing to operate the program in Virden.

Savy said, "It is a shame it's happening, but it's trying to get the young officers trained, and that's their main issue. Myself and Mayor Williams have a lunch meeting with MP Grant Jackson. If we can get Mr. Jackson on our side, we will see what he can do with that."

All council members emphasized the value of the cadet program, describing it as an affordable opportunity that provided local youth with leadership development, travel opportunities, exposure to military activities, and experiences that many families otherwise could not afford.

Flood preparedness and wellhead protection

CAO Neil Smith presented his monthly report stating that the previous week had involved significant emergency preparedness activities due to rising river levels. The Town concentrated on protecting its wellheads, which are vulnerable to flooding. Earthworks and dike improvements were constructed around the wellheads, raising the protective berms to approximately highway

elevation. Smith described the work as a worthwhile long-term investment that expanded upon the smaller flood protection measures originally installed in 2014.

Although the municipality declared a local state of emergency as a precaution, the Emergency Operations Centre was never formally activated because conditions never deteriorated to that level. Staff remained in constant communication with Manitoba's emergency management officials throughout the event. The provincial government also supplied approximately 60 Tiger Dams and a trailer to the municipality, ensuring additional flood protection resources were immediately available if river levels continued to rise.

RCMP Monthly Report

Sgt. Amy Doan reported that officers responded to 76 calls for service during June consistent with previous months and with the same period in 2025.

Traffic enforcement continued to account for the largest share of calls within the town. Officers conducted targeted traffic enforcement initiatives and found issues with speeding, cellphone use while driving and impaired driving. The detachment plans to continue proactive traffic initiatives throughout the summer, particularly during evening hours, including roadside check stops and enforcement blitzes.

The detachment responded to four Mental Health Act calls during the month. Doan explained that these incidents require significant police resources because they often involve lengthy stays at hospital facilities. The temporary closure of services at Dauphin Hospital has also complicated the management of these files

by increasing travel time,

RCMP continued community engagement efforts during June. Officers hosted detachment tours, delivered a bicycle safety demonstration and were working to expand community outreach activities over the summer, particularly to help integrate new members into the community and strengthen public relationships.

Cemetery Bylaw

While the Town has long operated under Manitoba's Cemetery Act, discussions with Municipal Service Officers have made it clear that municipalities should also adopt their own local cemetery bylaw to govern operations. The Town has been complying with provincial legislation, but councillors agreed that the immediate priority is adopting a formal cemetery bylaw to properly manage the perpetual care fund and overall cemetery administration. Mayor Tina Williams explained that administration was already preparing to issue a request for proposals for cemetery mowing and maintenance services. The bylaw passed first and second reading.

Black Gold Classic

Council unanimously approved providing another \$500 sponsorship for the 2026 event, matching previous years' contributions.

Routledge street paving contract

Council considered a request for decision regarding the Routledge Street curb and paving project. Members approved awarding the contract to Meseyton Construction Ltd., the lowest qualified bidder, at a contract price of \$670,274.

Green Thumbs make Virden Vibrant



Sylvia Debarr's place looking absolutely magical.



Brad and Tricia Hayward's stunning yard.



A beautiful view of Carlyle McDougall's winning garden.



Sunrise Credit Union keeping things sunny with their floral display.

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The results of the annual Vibrant Virden initiative are officially in, shining a spotlight on the local green thumbs, manicured lawns, and standout storefronts that keep the community beautiful. Organizers shifted formatting for this year's event, moving away from traditional placements to focus on celebrating three distinct categories: Fruits & Vegetables, General, and Business. The change allowed the true spirit of Virden's gar-

deners to take centre stage.

In the Fruits & Vegetables category, 91-year-old Carlyle McDougall captivated organizers with his expansive vegetable garden. Tending to the massive plot entirely on his own, McDougall's impressive harvest includes a staggering patch of more than 300 potato plants.

The category also featured a new addition this year: the Virden Ag Prize. Sponsored by Virden Ag, the company generously contributed a \$150 gift card to enhance the contest. The prize was awarded to Brad and Tricia Hayward for their exceptional agricultural efforts.

The General category brought forward some of

the community's most breathtaking and precise residential properties. Among the standouts was Sylvia Debaar, whose fantastic yard caught the eyes of passersby and organizers alike. Meanwhile, local residents Joyce and Murray Davies showcased a yard defined by absolute precision and beauty, including a stunning sunken fire pit resulting in a landscape that photos could hardly fully capture.

For longtime resident Roger Hurst, gardening has yielded a private sanctuary. Hurst, a beloved former local teacher, has cultivated what organizers described as a "precious oasis" tucked quietly into his backyard, offering a peaceful retreat that reflects years of care.

Local commerce also put its best foot forward in the Business/Store Front category.

Top honours this year went to Sunrise Credit Union, recognized for its welcoming and beautifully maintained exterior.

Organizers extended a heartfelt thank you to all of this year's participants and sponsors, noting that the dedication of residents is what keeps Virden vibrant year after year.



Roger Hurst's captivating backyard oasis.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The Davies' breathtaking property.

Virden Pioneer Home Museum Glitter and Rocks



PHOTO BY LAUREN HALOWATY

Corr Rossouw, a summer staff member at Virden's Pioneer Museum designs a safe-for-children glitter 'tattoo' of a Hawaiian flower on Friday, July 17, during the museum's free glitter tattoo and rock painting event. Rossouw said that during the Summer, they will have Rock Painting once almost every two weeks, and to just keep an eye on their Facebook page.



August 13 & 14, 2026, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm
Exhibition Place at Red River Exhibition Park
3977 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB
FREE Admission & FREE Parking

From handcrafted cabinetry and metal fabrication to agricultural equipment and building supplies and more, the Hutterite Manufacturing & Associate Expo showcases outstanding prairie craftsmanship all under one roof. Browse an impressive selection of home, farm, and building products.

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Music in the Park



PHOTO BY LAUREN HALOWATY

Local band ‘Young at Heart’ performs harmoniously during one of their songs.

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Every Thursday evening since July 2, Music in the Park has been held at Victoria Park in Virden. Last Thursday featured the perfect atmosphere, with the type of weather that was comfortable for all ages to attend

and for everyone to enjoy some musical talent. Local band ‘Young at Heart’ performed on the Jubilee stage, singing classics from John Denver’s “Country Roads” to Miranda Lambert’s “The House That Built Me”, and a bit of everything in between. Members of the band even interacted with the crowd

with some humorous jokes, bringing smiles to everyone’s faces. The Royal Canadian Legion is celebrating their 100-year anniversary, so they partnered up with Music in the Park and other community groups to volunteer and supply BBQ food during the events. Fifty percent

Reston’s Creekside Music Festival



Attendees jam in a half-moon shape next to some shaded trees.

By Lauren Halowaty
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On the weekend of July 10-12 alongside the Pipestone Creek, 1km East of Reston and 2km North on Road 159, husband and wife duo, Arden and Debbie Wiebe hosted the 3-day event which took place on their very own property. “It’s a musician’s weekend, and is unlike any other music festival in the area”, said Arden Wiebe. While it’s been happening for five years, this was their second year hosting the event for all three days, and they were quite thrilled with the turn out. Genres such as classic rock, folk, bluegrass and classic country were all heard by the attendees and wildlife alike, which Arden says they’ve seemed to attract bears, coyotes and even cougars. Not to fear though, all the animals listen from a distance, but it’s just a real nature-based festival. There’s fireside jams and open mics, allowing the music to flow freely like the wind, rather than on a structured schedule. Some attendees made the trip all the way from B.C. specifically to be at this festival, and to also showcase their musical talents. Arden and Debbie want this festival to grow with attendees, and they hope they can spread the word about their festival. It’s hosted on the second weekend of July every year since they started it, and Arden spoke proudly about his eight acres of manicured property which guests can camp on for free, but donations are appreciated. Food and beverages are on a Bring-Your-Own basis, as are campers, but as mentioned, it’s a wonderful time for everyone who attends.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Boyfriend and Girlfriend duo, Steve and Camille perform for the crowd.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Hank Kyle on stage with members from the ‘Youth for Christ’ organization, receiving their proceeds for volunteering with the legion the week prior.

of the proceeds from the food booth are donated to the Legion to cover the cost of the food, and the other fifty percent are donated to the local organization that assists the Legion members and staff during the concert. It’s a great community incentive for organizations looking to raise some money and get some volunteer hours in. On Thursday, July 16, Hank Kyle, a member and comrade of Legion Branch #8

of Virden, presented Youth for Christ with their share of the fundraising proceeds from the week prior, which was just over \$400. Music in the Park also partnered up with Arts Mosaic and had an arts and crafts tent set up for the little music lovers to craft while they listened to some tunes. Music in the Park will happen again tonight at 7:00 pm at the Jubilee stage with a performance by

Revival. July 30 is a variety night featuring students of Susan Martens and The Teagan Verner Quartet. August 6 will feature Marielis Fernandez Mora and Mark Branker, followed by a break during Rodeo weekend. The event will then resume on Thursday, August 20, with the Virden Ukulele Club. Bring your own chair or blanket, and even your dog, and enjoy a great show!

2026

MISSION: POSSIBLE Success!

The annual CPMB Westman Stationary Bike Race raises funds to enrich the lives of our Members! Your generosity pays for much needed equipment like scooters, wheelchairs, adaptive bikes as well as supports adaptive hockey and accessible playgrounds in Westman.

CYCLING FOR CP provides ACCESSIBILITY, MOBILITY and FREEDOM in the community! CPMB gets no government funding so...your gift helps keep our lights on and, assists our Members in living more independent lives! Thank you, we could not do this without you! #CPProud

CP MB CEREBRAL PALSY ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA

Saturday, April 18, 2026

NEW Bike Race RECORD!

UCT Pavilion, Keystone Centre, Brandon

Thank you Virden— Together we raised *\$88,912.50!

Cerebral Palsy STATIONARY bike race

CP MB

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SAVE THE DATE: Sat. April 17, 2027 • Keystone Centre, Brandon