


# Empire-Advance


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MARCH 20, 2026 | EMPIRE: VOL 121 NO 31 / ADVANCE: VOL 140 NO 33 | PUBLISHING FRIDAYS



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Branch Manager

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## Virден Music & Arts Festival draws thousands of competitors



Virден dances to "Run the World" receiving 2nd place.

PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Streets and restaurants were busy last week as crowds – dancers and their families – came and went to festival sessions throughout Wednesday and Thursday. But have you any idea how many people, performers, audience, volunteers and professional adjudicators Virден Music & Arts Festival draws?

According to last year's reckoning the festival had help from 58 volunteers giving a total of 1,140 volunteer hours. Participants numbered 2,340 (counting school choirs) and audience numbers were about 2,100. There looks to be just as many entries this year.

This huge undertaking is in the capable and experienced hands of co-chairpersons - Judy Poole and Sherridan Reimer. Nicole Hunter is secretary and Marcie Barkley is treasurer. Throughout months of planning about 15 key people have been involved,

organizing various aspects of this event, from taking entries to finding adjudicators, coordinating sponsorship and awards and organizing volunteers.

Festival competition not only provides a goal for students and teachers but can stimulate creativity and provide new approaches as adjudicators for each discipline come with high credentials and experience.

The 2026 Virден Music & Arts Festival began with instrumental performances, March 9 and 10 with adjudicator Maureen Baird. A teacher and multi-talented musician, she is a saxophonist with Mark Humphries Big Band. (The band recently held a concert in Maryfield, Sask.)

read more about the dance competition on page 2...



**2026 PLAYOFF HOME GAMES**  
**FRIDAY, MARCH 20**  
**TUESDAY, MARCH 24**  
**VS. NEEPAWA TITANS**  
**PUCK DROPS AT 7:30PM**

## Inside...



**OIL CAPS AWARDS** *P10-11*



**EVERYTHING FOR THE FARM** *P12-13*

## THESE DEALS ARE FROST-TASTIC!



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2025  
JEEP GRAND  
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# Virден Music & Arts Festival draws thousands of competitors



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

Adjudicator Katey Rogowsky involves the festival dancers in her adjudication where she gives tips to bring out excellence. L-R Virден Hip Hop 16U (who received a high mark of 93), Hamiota 14U Hip Hop class, Churchbridge U12 Hip Hop (top mark of 92), Hamiota U12 Hip Hop, Virден U12 Hip Hop dancers.

*continued from page 1*

### Dance

This past week, Katey Rogowsky, a teacher at Steppin' Time Dance Studio for 14 years, adjudicated dance solos and groups on Wednesday and Thursday. Saskatchewan performers were from Churchbridge and Carlyle. Manitoba groups included Roblin, Hamiota, Spruce Woods, Brandon and Virден.

### Vocal

The festival takes a break until vocal sessions begin April 12th.

Adjudicator Janelle Wilts, from Brandon has years of teaching experience, she will perform with

Konektis Choir at the Canadian National Choral Conference and Festival this spring. Vocal sessions will include soloists, groups and choirs spanning modern music to traditional and folk. Early sessions include musical theatre, pop or contemporary tunes and show music. From the very young to adult performers, vocalists hail from Kola, Virден, Elkhorn, Moosomin and Oak Lake.

### Piano

Pianists will perform before adjudicator Kimberly Sundell. She's broadly educated in music theory and performance. Her students have even performed in Carnegie Hall. She's said to impart not only a love of music, but valuable life lessons to her students as well.

Piano sessions begin April 15. Students from the communities of Virден, Reston, Rivers, Sinclair, Maryfield, Kola, Oak Lake, Moosomin and Cromer will tickle the ivories. Students from beginner to level 8 are on the program and for a treat, multi-generational duets perform Thursday evening. All classes play on the grand piano in St. Paul's United Church.

### Speech

Beginning April 20, students from K to high school will perform solo, in groups, and in choirs. Classic wisdom and humour to the latest verse and dramatic monologues can be heard by students from Virден, Miniota, Kola and Reston on the Aud Theatre stage.

Adjudicator Loretta Thorleifson has her work cut out for this large event of Virден Music & Arts Festival. With a varied background, Thorleifson is an expert in speech arts. She's also a musician and plays with the Celtic quartet, On the Edge. She grew up in the Oak Lake countryside where "milking cows, making music and reciting poetry were all part of the rhythm of the day."

### Visual

Visual art will be on display at the CPR Historic Centre (Station) throughout the month of April. Virден artist Joel Desjardin, whose works have been featured in the Westman Travelling Gallery and Rural & Northern Art Show, will adjudicate the work that will include photography, calligraphy, pottery, puppetry, fibre art and canvas artwork. Come April, you can check out the art at the Station gallery. Session times and participants are included in the programs sold at Virден Flower Attic & Gifts, or at the door during the sessions. Festival passes are affordable and available at the door.



## ANDREA GRAY

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# Easter

## COLOURING CONTEST

COMING SOON! THE EMPIRE-ADVANCE AND RED APPLE WILL BE HOSTING A COLOURING CONTEST FOR ALL THOSE WHO SUBMIT A COLOURED PICTURE IN THE APRIL 2ND PAPER. BE SURE TO GET A COPY OF THE PAPER AND COLOUR!!

# Play with Your Food raises \$1000



PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

This group is playing Wingspan. "It's the best game!" says Amy, who knows this game; (L-R) Shanda, Jody, and Amy.

**By Anne Davison**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Carmichael Outreach, a registered charity in Regina, will be able to help a few extra people because a group got together in Virden and had fun over food and board games. This simple day of board game fun drew 22 people together and raised just over \$1000 for charity.

Racquel Halland organized the event along the lines of similar events in Regina. The entries were managed by a system that a Brandon group – Glow (Gaming Ladies of Westman) uses.

Halland said she and three friends - Marcy Rowan,

Jennifer Lesnar, and Janice Barrate, (who all attended Saturday) typically have fun with games several times a year, which was another reason Halland went ahead with the event.

Game day started at 10am and was scheduled to carry on into the evening last Saturday. A table of food was available at this event held in Virden Collegiate's multi-purpose room and it turned out to be a great mixer as players made new acquaintances.

Halland says it was a successful day that she'd like to repeat. "We'd really like to have one next year again, but for a local charity now that we know what we're doing."

# Humour and facts make for a fun-filled Trivia Night



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Victors pictured are: Bruce and Adella, Brent and Rosie, James and Anita.

**By Oliver Nolan**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

On Friday, March 13, the Oak Lake Golf Course Clubhouse hosted one of their bi-weekly trivia nights. The trivia officially began at 6pm and ended by about 8:30pm. The turnout for this trivia night was 20 people. There were 4 teams that were primarily preset by booking a table together. Team size ranged from 4 to 8 people. It was a very fun and slightly competitive night! Questions were announced by staff and answers were to be written by each team. At the end, teams passed their answer sheets to other teams to be corrected and scored. If you were lucky, you could get bonus points for being funny! The winners (Bruce and Adella, Brent and Rosie,

James and Anita Plaisier) were determined by most correct answers by the end! There was a wide range of topics including St Patrick's Day, NHL, Product Slogans, 80's Tv Shows, Board Games, and a variety of Random Questions to finish off the competition! By far the weirdest/funniest question was definitely "Why do you wear green on St Patrick's Day?" With the answer being "Because the Leprechaun couldn't find you!" Throughout the night there were definitely a few questions that nobody had an answer for, neither the victors nor the other competitors. Dinner was also available to purchase from the clubhouse as well as an assortment of drinks. All in all it was a very entertaining and enjoyable evening!

## JOIN US!



Tori Elliott, Publisher for Touchwood Editions, will be doing a presentation on Thursday, April 9, 2026 at 7pm at the Reston District Library.

We are excited to host our hometown girl in our library.



### Reston District Library

220 4th Street, Reston • 204-877-3673

## ATTENTION ALL VETERANS OF THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES AND ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE & ALL FIRST RESPONDERS

(Fire Fighters, Paramedics, RCMP, Manitoba First Nations Police Service, Sheriffs, Conservation Officers, Safety Officers, etc.) You and an escort are invited to the Annual Veterans and First Responders Appreciation Banquet sponsored by Branch #8 of the Royal Canadian Legion on Thursday, April 9th, 2026 with the Meet and Greet from 5:30 pm to 6:00 pm ... Banquet Starts around 6:30 pm. Dress is dress uniform, business suit, high-end casuals, or duty dress if on service. This is open to all current serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces living in the Virden Area. We would like to know numbers prior to Good Friday, April 3rd if at all possible in order to purchase the right amount of groceries. Send your reply to Comrade Kel Smith at 204-748-3321 or e-mail to kelvonsmith@wgcwave.ca. This is as our guests with the community's sincere thanks.

Attention to the Public in and around Virden. It is the intention of the Branch to hold a Mother's Day Supper on Sunday, May 10th in the Legion Hall. The price will be reasonable as a community service. The meal will be enjoyed by all ages.

More news to follow!



## PUBLIC NOTICE

### PESTICIDE CONTROL PROGRAM

Public Notice is hereby given that the Province of Manitoba intends to conduct the following Pesticide Control Programs during 2026 within the province right of way.

1. To control invasive plants and noxious weeds on Manitoba Provincial right of way.
2. The herbicides include: Dicamba, 2,4-D amine, 2,4-D Choline, 2,4-D Ester, 2,4-D, Mecoprop-p, Dichloroprop-p, Aminopyralid, Metsulfuronmethyl, Diflufenzopyr, Fluroxypyr, Imazapyr, Triclopyr, Picloram, Aminocyclopyrachlor, Chlorsulfuron, Saflufenacil, Iron (as FeHEDTA), Glyphosate, Clopyralid, Bromacil, Acetic Acid, LI 700, Non Ionic Surfactant, Flumioxazin, Diuron, Indaziflam, Florpyrauxifen, mineral oil, Methyl Ester & Ethyl Ester.
3. The proposed dates of application for this program will be from April 15, 2026 to October 31, 2026.

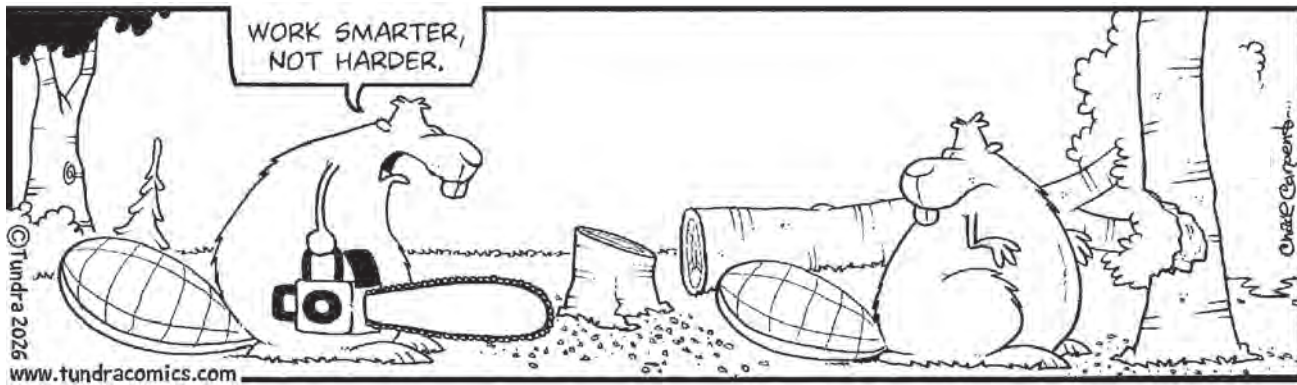
The public may send written submissions or objections within 15 days of the publication of the notice to the department below.

Manitoba Environment and Climate Change  
Environmental Approvals Branch  
Box 35, 14 Fultz Boulevard, Winnipeg MB R3Y 0L6  
pesticideusepermit@gov.mb.ca



# Tundra

By Chad Carpenter



www.tundracomics.com



Homebodies

RITA FRIESEN

## 'But never on a Sunday'

Way back in the 50s and the 60s, the Chordettes, Connie Francis and Bing Crosby all sang 'Never on a Sunday'. It was about being kissed, any day but Sunday, for that was the day of rest.

That never on a Sunday meant something very different in my early years — no work on a Sunday, never on a Sunday! That didn't apply to doing the farm chores or meal making. It certainly applied to abstaining from extra work — no gardening, laundry or unnecessary fencing. It also applied to sports; no sports of any sort, not team sports, not solo sports — no sports. Sunday afternoon, following church attendance in the morning, was given over to family time, aunts and uncles stopping by for a visit and 'faspa'. After the mandatory afternoon nap! Faspa was a Sunday late lunch; cold meat, buns, cheese, pickles and dessert. Not a lunch and not a supper, more a tide me over till tomorrow repast. Our classmates were pretty evenly divided in these customs. Those not of the Mennonite faith could play, dance and sing any day, including Sunday.

In my teens this custom gave way to practicality. There was Sunday morning worship service, but after my father returned to university and began teaching, he needed Sunday to get farm work done. For several years he attended summer school, so hay making and bale hauling often fell on a Sunday, as did sheep shearing. If you want to farm, there are obligations. Even then, the arrival of a family member brought everything to a halt — people were/are important.

When I married Ed, he held Sunday as a day of no work. There was acceptance of sports, organised and independent. So many Sunday afternoons we filled the family vehicle — a 13 passenger van, with the children and their friends and headed off to the city to the Pan Am Pool, or out to the Pembina Hills for tobogganing. A good baseball game or a snowmobile derby were certainly acceptable activities.

I was privileged to be a stay at home wife and mother until our youngest child was in grade eight. This brought about a change in my time allocations. When I carefully explained that by spending a few hours in the garden, or doing a few loads of laundry, I was relaxing, and making the week ahead easier. It wasn't really working, it became a form of recreation. Not every Sunday. And quilting on a Sunday afternoon wasn't really work either, a hobby, really. It took a bit of adjustment for the family, and before you knew it, a few hours working on a project vehicle on a Sunday afternoon wasn't work either!

Just like beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so is the definition of work. I still don't believe in unnecessary hard work on a Sunday.

Just what I need/want to do! "Oh, any day that you like the best, and day that is but my day of rest... But never ever on a Sunday, a Sunday, a Sunday 'cause that's my day of rest" Bets that if you're over 80 you're humming that tune!

## Less worry, more action please

We need to be mindful of world events, but there are several comparisons that can be made between events such as the war in Iran and events of a generation or two ago.

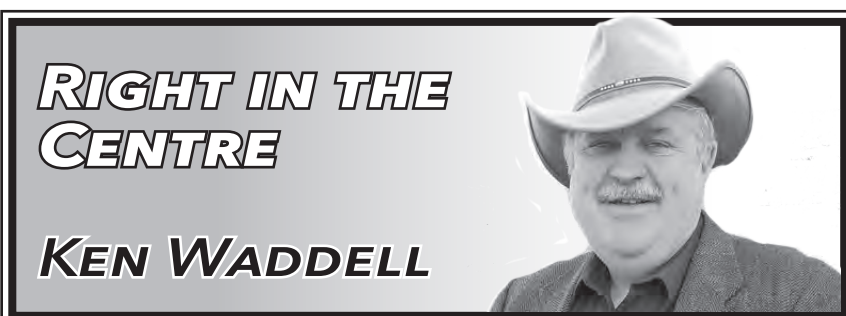
The Iran war, and its associated battles in the Middle East, have been going on for thousands of years. To our way of thinking, the middle eastern countries are very tribal and there are many tribes even within one country. The middle east wars seem to be about the usual issues of land and resources but, in contrast to many other wars, they have a strong cultural and, dare I say, religious bent to them as well.

Western wars seem to be more about resources compared to the middle east where the religious influences appear to be prominent.

There is also the factor of instant news coverage. In the wars of the 20th century, news from the battle front was days old before the people "back home" knew what was going on. Now, the cell phone and the internet shows the horror, destruction and death almost instantaneously. It's mesmerizing.

As has always been, war is very hard on families of the victims, the wounded and the displaced. However, with today's instant viewing technology, the trauma, the anxiety and the fear that's generated brings war right into our homes and workplaces.

One of my co-workers says that the worst thing that has happened to the news world is the 24 hour news channels. War events and destruction are played and replayed for days so the not only is there the original shock, the trauma is reinforced for days. The 24 hours news channels' have to fill the air time, and so rep-



Right in the Centre

KEN WADDELL

“There is one more thing we can do and that is pray.”

etition seems to be the way to fill the channel's programs. Personally, I can't watch more than a few minutes of that kind of news at a time. The news announcers and commentators are just too annoying.

It may seem crass, but there is little we can do about wars in other lands. We are traumatized yes, and gas prices are very high. Food prices are being affected even more than what has become normal. I was reminded, while watching snippets of the Oscars Sunday night, we can do one thing. One Oscar winner opened his thank-you speech by saying "God is good". That's true and there is one more thing we can do and that is pray. It may well be the best thing we can do.

And while the war in Iran has been centuries in the making and now weeks in the bombing and killing, we need to look closer to home. We can be kind to ourselves, our families, our neighbours and fellow Canadians.

We should also remember that we need to be aware of local, provincial and national situations. We have

elections coming at all levels. We will have local elections scheduled to happen this fall with others to follow.

We need to stay informed about what we as local residents, Manitobans and Canadians can and should do. Yes, we can care and we can pray. But we also need to be involved. Not many of us are prepared to run for office, but we have an obligation to get involved, encourage others and work for the electing of officials at all levels. And yes, don't forget school board elections as well.

If we spent (or perhaps I should just say, if I spent) as much time preparing for our future as we (or I) do watching TV and the internet, we might all be better off.

If anybody says, there's nothing we can do, they are wrong. We can pray, get involved and take action.

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

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Town Office: 204-748-2440

Virден Landfill: 204-748-6033

Tundra Oil & Gas Place: 204-748-2736



Animal Control: 204-851-5881

Facility Bookings: 204-748-2440

Emergency After Hours: 204-851-5540

## Equipment Operator II Employment Opportunity

The Town of Virден has an opening for a permanent full-time Equipment Operator II position to work primarily in the Public Works Department, although the individual could be required to assist in other departments if necessary.

This position requires an individual that is in good health and capable of carrying out the physical requirements of the job. A valid Class 3 with air Manitoba driver's license is necessary. This position is generally scheduled for 7:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday, but this could vary depending on requirements of the Employer, weather, or other circumstances.

A detailed job description, with wage rate is available at the Town Office.

Please forward resumes, complete with covering letter to:

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

## Flower & Garden Caretaker Employment Opportunity

The Town of Virден is seeking to employ a self-motivated individual to assist in its annual planting and seasonal maintenance of flowerbeds, planters and hanging baskets throughout town.

Preference will be given to individuals who have graduated from or are enrolled in a recognized green space management course. Individuals with similar experience and training are encouraged to apply. Applicants must hold a valid driver's license.

This position will run from May to September, and will remain open until filled.

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

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

## Tax Prepayment Discounts

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

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

Month of Payment	Discount Rate	Savings on \$1000.00
March	1.75%	\$ 17.50
April	1.50%	\$ 15.00
May	1.25%	\$ 12.50
June	1.00%	\$ 10.00
July	0.75%	\$ 7.50

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

## Summer Employment Opportunities Virден Public Swimming Pool

### Head Lifeguard/Assistant Head Lifeguard:

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

### Lifeguard/Instructor:

Certifications Required for Supervisor, Assistant Supervisor and Lifeguard/Instructor

- Willing to obtain, or currently hold valid First Aid Certification with Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Certificate of C-Level or higher
- Valid National Life Guard Service (NLS)
- Valid Water Safety Instructor (WSI)
- Valid Assistant Water Safety Instructor (AWSI)
- Valid Life Saving Instructor (LSI)

### Assistant Lifeguard:

Certifications Required for Assistant Lifeguard

- Willing to obtain, or currently hold valid First Aid Certification with Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Certificate of C-Level or higher
- Valid Bronze Cross Certification or Red Cross Assistant Lifeguard Certification

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

- Preferred position of interest
- Copies of all relevant certifications (required)

Applications will be accepted until April 1, 2026 at 4:00 PM.

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

## Upcoming Council Meetings

April 14 & 28

Council Meetings start at 7:00 PM

## Programs/Events Leader & Assistants Summer Employment Opportunities

The Town of Virден has the following employment opportunities available for the summer of 2026:

**Programs/Events Leader** – this position, starting July 6, 2026, will be primarily responsible for the coordination of the planning, implementation, operation and evaluation of the Community Day Camp programs for children 5 to 11. Other duties may include planning and assisting with other community programs and events.

**Programs/Events Assistants** – these three positions, starting July 6, 2026, will be primarily responsible for assisting at the Community Day Camp. Other duties may include assisting with other community programs and events.

The positions listed above will both be subject to 40 hour work weeks, which could include evenings and weekends. The successful applicants must be self-starters, possess exceptional organizational and time management skills and communication skills. The ability to work with children and the general public is imperative. An original Police Information Search (criminal reference check) and Child Abuse registry search will be required prior to the commencement of employment.

Detailed job descriptions are available at the Virден Town Office or on the website at [www.virден.ca/p/employment-opportunities](http://www.virден.ca/p/employment-opportunities).

Resumes will be accepted until Friday, April 17, 2026 at 4:00 PM.

Please forward resume with cover letter to:

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

## HELEN DRYSDALE

### OUT OF HELEN'S KITCHEN

The Salvation Army began its work in Canada in 1882 and quickly began giving help and hope to those in need in this country. Capt. Joe Mallion arrived in Neepawa in 1887 and built the first Army Hall. In 1890 the Grace Hospital in Winnipeg was started by The Salvation Army, initially as a rescue home for women and children, then incorporated as The Salvation Army Grace General Hospital in 1904, becoming the first Salvation Army hospital in Canada.

In the 1970s, when I was a nurse's aide at the Care Home the veterans of WWI talked about how the Salvation Army followed them right to the front lines and set up canteens and served hot food, coffee and donuts to the fighting men. They provided letter-writing supplies and stamps, mended clothes, prayed with them, and played a major role in boosting morale of many young men who found themselves far from home and frightened. They had fond memories of the "other Army Persons" and devised the affectionate nickname of "Sally Ann" for them.

The Ladies Home League of Salvation Army was founded in 1907 in London, England by Florence Booth as a "help one another society" for women with the fourfold aim of worship, education, fellowship and service. Neepawa had a Chapter of this group. In 1969 the Neepawa's Chapter published a cookbook called "From Our Kitchen To Yours". Names like Ada Kaye, Hazel Griffith, Grace Gwyer, Mrs. Shirley Katsky, Lizzie Buchanan, Mrs. K. Huband, Effie Ames, Mrs. Stanley Sykes and Mrs. Rose Tyack appear in this cookbook.

From the cook book "Blessed is she who serves laughter and smiles with every meal."

#### Cabbage salad deluxe

Lil Walker

1 lemon Jello powder	2 Tbsp. vinegar
1 cup boiling water	3/4 cup Miracle Whip
1/2 cup finely chopped celery	1 tsp. grated onion
2 cups finely chopped onions	

Dissolve Jello powder in the boiling water, add the vinegar. When partially set whip in the Miracle Whip and the vegetables. Put in a mold and keep in the fridge. This is very good.

#### 20-minute casserole

Mrs. Agnes Willerton

3 Tbsp. minced onion	1 cup cooked mixed vegetables
1/4 tsp. salt	dash of pepper
1 can condensed soup	1 1/4 cup hot water
1 cup canned or cooked meat or fish	1 1/3 cup Minute Rice

First grease a 1 1/2-quart casserole, then add the ingredients as given in order. Oven is set at 375°F. Bake uncovered for 10 minutes, then stir. Cover and bake 10 minutes longer. If desired garnish with pimento. Makes 4 servings.

#### Date nut loaf

Mrs. George De'Ath

1 cup chopped dates	3/4 cup boiling water
1 tsp. baking soda	1 egg
3/4 cup brown sugar	1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. vanilla	1/4 cup melted butter
1 1/3 cup flour	1 tsp. baking powder
3/4 cup chopped walnuts	

Place chopped dates in a bowl, add baking soda, pour boiling water over dates, mix well and let stand to cool. Beat egg until light, add the brown sugar, salt and vanilla and melted butter. Combine with date mixture. Stir flour and baking powder together, combine with date mixture. Add the chopped nuts and mix. Pour into a greased 9x5 inch loaf pan. Bake at 350°F for 50-60 minutes.

#### Carrot marmalade cookies

Mrs. W. Sumner

1/2 cup margarine, room temp.	1/2 cup sugar
1 egg	1/2 cup orange marmalade
1/2 cup shredded carrots	2 cups flour
1/2 tsp. salt	1/2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 - 3/4 cup of raisins	

Beat the margarine, sugar and egg together until light, then add marmalade and carrots. Stir in the flour, salt and baking soda. Add the raisins. Drop by small spoonfuls on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350°F for 12 to 15 minutes. Yield 4 dozen.

## Miniota News

Submitted

BY LINDA CLARK

The U13 Miniota Elkhorn hockey team travelled to McCreary for U13C Provincials this past weekend. Unfortunately the boys did not make it to the finals. Hope you all enjoyed the tournament! Next year!

My apologies for an error in last week's news concerning sympathy to the Gilchrist

family. The correction: it should have read Todd Gilchrist predeceased his mother Donaleen and not Mark Gilchrist.

Sympathy is extended to Enid Haines and family on the passing of her nephew Rodney Haines of Virden. Sympathy also to Rodney's son Zaine Haines of Elkhorn and to his sister Michelle Menzies of Shoal Lake. Rodney was the son of the late Judy and Wilson Haines.

Happy St. Patrick's Day! An Irish proverb - "A gentle word opens an iron gate."

# Police Report

## Westman RCMP Service Report for Mar. 8 to 14

Submitted

BY WESTMAN RCMP

During this week, Westman RCMP received a total of 84 calls for service. Some of these calls for service included 42 traffic offences, 3 Assistance to Canadian Agencies/General Public, 2 Assaults, 2 Mischief files, 1 Wellbeing Checks, 5 False Alarms, 4 Break and Enters and 1 Mental Health files.

On Mar. 9, during routine patrols in the Community of Sioux Valley, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 109 km/hr in a 60 km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$692.

On Mar. 10, during routine patrols in the RM of Sifton, RCMP conducted a traffic stop with a vehicle as police could not read the license plate. Upon arrival, the driver was identified and observed with open liquor and cannabis inside the cabin. The driver provided an oral sample which resulted in a positive result. The driver was charged with Operating a Vehicle while having a blood alcohol level above the legal limit which carries a fine of \$113, driving without a valid driver's license which carries a fine of \$298, Unlawful Transportation of Cannabis which carries a fine of \$237, Unlawful Transportation of Liquor which carries a fine of \$237 and a 72 hour driver's license suspension.

On Mar. 10, members of Westman RCMP received a call for a dangerous weapon at a residence in the Community of Sioux Valley. Information that was provided indicated that three suspects followed the two victims to their residence and had bear sprayed them prior to fleeing from the scene. Members attended and obtained statements from the victims and were able to identify three suspects who were located and then arrested without incident. All three suspects were charged with Assault with Weapon and Possession of Weapon for Dangerous Purpose and are scheduled to appear in court at a later date.

On Mar. 13, members of Westman RCMP received a call for an intoxicated male who was causing disturbance at a residence in the Town of Virden. Members attended the residence and located the male suspect who was intoxicated and was on active conditions to not to be at that residence. The male was arrested for Failure to Comply with Probation Order and is scheduled to appear in court at a later date.

On Mar. 14, during routine patrols in the RM of Wallace-Woodworth, RCMP observed a vehicle travelling at a high rate of speed. Radar confirmed the driving speed of 129 km/hr in a 100 km/hr zone. A traffic stop was conducted, and the driver was issued a Traffic Offence Notice for Speeding, which carries a fine of \$429.



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 EFFICIENCY  
MANITOBA

# Virден Legion Music Jam

March 15, 2026 - Virден Legion Clubroom

By Nancy Jo Moller  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

A group of 15 musicians gathered to spend an enjoyable afternoon united in their love of music. The atmosphere brought back childhood memories of a group of friends sitting around a kitchen table playing a few tunes, chatting about the neighborhood.

Attendees came from four directions to meet in the middle. From Moosomin to Brandon and Reston to north of Virден, everyone arrived in good spirits carrying their favorite instruments, guitars in a variety of well-known manufacturing names along with a mandolin and an ukulele. One attendee told a few jokes to lighten the mood before singing with

her accompanist.

Their renditions of old-time favorites like 'Pure Love', 'Under the Boardwalk', and more modern tunes like 'Margaritaville' filled the clubroom from 1 to 5 pm. As individuals took their place in the spotlight, they discussed what chords their song choice would be played in. Fellow musicians started strumming and soon the entire group was harmonizing. Each musician took a turn at the microphone and played two selections. Once all had played, a short coffee break was taken. After the break, the participants began again with another round of two songs each. Near the end of the afternoon, the melody of 'Danny Boy' had everyone swaying in their seats.

This event was organized by SAIL



Musicians keeping the beat during Virден's Music Jam.

PHOTO BY NANCY JO MOLLER

(Seniors Access to Independent Living) and is held on the third Sunday of each month during the fall and winter. The last one for the season will be April 19, 2026. If you

enjoy a relaxing afternoon listening to favorite classic songs, try to attend this event.



## LIFE IN THE SLOW LANE

Melville and Edna Nolan farm south of Harding, MB.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

By Gerry Nolan  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Over the next few weeks, I will be sharing life stories from my childhood and youth. Raised on a farm 3 miles south of Harding on a half section of land, I will give you a glimpse of how things were on a farm way back some seventy years and compare it to today's farm. As I learned in Scotland this past summer about the way of life back hundreds of years ago and how it has changed since then, I will attempt to bring back to life the way it was years ago in Canada.

So here we go. I may do some jumping around at times, but bear with me as I try to get it together.

Melville and Edna Nolan raised three sons on that farm. My brothers Lynn and Garth were 10 and 7 years older than me. All of us were born in December. I guess winter was long and Dad got an early start seeding in April! Do the math.

We were raised on a mixed farm of grain, cattle, pork and poultry. Our farm site was on a bit of a hill and the house still stands there today. It has changed a lot over the years but is still a reminder of what I learned from those early days.

Raised up the hill from old 21 highway, we had a huge ravine that ran through our farm. It flooded pretty much every spring when the snow melted so it was quite the site to behold. From our view from the hill, we could easily see the farms of Wally and Dora Gray and Austin and Elma Gray, our neighbours. At that time there was a farm about every half mile or so. On the road from Harding to Sioux Valley, which is about an 8-mile run, there were 20 plus farms on that stretch including a mile or so to the left or right, which includes the Bond, Graham, McLaughlin and Stevenson farms. As of today, I believe there are about 10 farms left that have homes on the site.

Farmers grew and produced whatever they could to live. Crops to feed the animals and grain to be sold and taken to the elevator. Milk cows, beef cattle, pork, poultry and horses were found on our farm. We rarely went to town

to purchase food as it was all at home. Mom of course would buy flour, sugar, salt and all the other ingredients for baking, canning and preserving fruit and vegetables.

With three boys that could eat like crazy, she had to fill them up somehow. So the garden was of huge importance. We also had trees in the ravine that produced Saskatoons and Pin Cherries for jam. Rhubarb was grown in the garden as well as pumpkins. Yum, pumpkin pies, my brother Garth had a weakness for mother's homemade pumpkin pie. Sometimes the rest of us did not get so much, if he was first to the kitchen.

All summer long, was baking, preserving and canning, which was stored in the basement or the old ice well. Our beef and pork was butchered and stored in Kenton at the Locker plant which was owned and operated by Doug Parker. It was put into the freezer plant with assigned containers with locks on them. Doug had all sorts of knives and saws at his disposal. Butchers' tools have not changed that much really! Dad and Mom butchered their own poultry, and we were expected to pluck and gut and also help out singeing the chickens and turkeys. I did not like doing that, but if you want to eat you have to help out, so I learned to do it!

Carrots were stored in old milk cans and potatoes in the coolest part of the basement. Sometime in March we had to snag the potatoes, take the stems off as they would grow again soon enough. Onions were hung in the basement from the beams. Mom would buy a case of apples which was stored in the basement. A slice of apple pie and a slice of cheese, darn that was good. Pears, apricots and peaches were purchased in the fall to make preserves. There was a lot of work put in to feed the family, but I never ever heard mom complain, she loved to do it. Oh, the homemade bread and buns, biscuits, cinnamon buns, cakes, pies, pudding and cookies. All home made! I'm out of here, I got to go and make something homemade to eat. All this talking about food is making me hungry. See you next week!

Mom, someone's asking me to send them nudes. what do i do?

## NOT SURE WHAT TO DO NEXT?

Report to **cybertip!ca**

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## Notice of Environmental Act Proposal

Manitoba Environment and Climate Change invites public comment on the following proposal:

**CAMP MACK LTD. - ASPEN GROVE CAMPGROUND  
ONSITE WASTEWATER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM -  
(FILE: 6284.00)**

Camp Mack Ltd. is proposing the construction and continued operation of an onsite wastewater treatment system, including an existing septic tank, effluent pumping system, and a new sand mound septic field system designed to service an existing 200-site seasonal recreational vehicle campground with peak flow rate 36,000 litres per day at SW 25-09-25 WPM, approximately 8.7 km west of Oak Lake, Manitoba.

This proposal can be viewed at [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries)

Anyone affected by the proposal who wishes to provide feedback should submit their comments using the online form at [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries) by April 19, 2026.

Information submitted in response to this proposal will be available to the proponent and placed on the public registry per Section 17 of The Environment Act.

Environmental Approvals Branch  
Manitoba Environment and Climate Change

Box 35, 14 Fultz Boulevard

Winnipeg MB R3Y 0L6

Toll-Free: 1-800-282-8069

Website: [www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries](http://www.manitoba.ca/sd/eal/registries)

**Manitoba**

## Positive vibes flow like strong current Virден Lion's battery collection



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Virден Lion's Club collected 43,000 pounds of batteries and radiators for donation. The load was made up of 22 pallets, 20 full of batteries and 2 full of radiators. The depot in Winnipeg accepted the batteries and gave the Lion's Club approximately \$15,000. This money will be used by the Lion's Club to help support local organizations in the Virден area. L-R Gerald Ogilvie, Paul Pennycook and Giovanni Colangelo.

## Wallace-Woodworth prepares budget



FILE PHOTO

Rural Municipality of Wallace-Woodworth office on Jan. 23, 2024.

By Dale Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

At their Mar. 10 meeting Wallace-Woodworth council completed first reading of the 2026 financial plan and posted a draft of the document on the RM website. The plan projects a balanced budget of \$10,817,487.03. The financial plan was presented to ratepayers at a public hearing in Kola on Tuesday, Mar. 17 after the Empire-Advance deadline. Look for a full report on this budget in next week's paper.

On Jan. 13 council

passed a resolution authorizing Stan Rampton to construct tile drainage across the unused municipal road allowance at SE 4-11-24. The resolution stated that all conditions that applied to the permission would be accepted by any future landowners. At the Mar. 12 meeting council approved an amendment to the agreement allowing the applicant to trench across the undeveloped road allowance instead of using directional drilling.

Spring road restrictions are scheduled to

begin Mar. 19 in line with the Manitoba Highways start date.

Council approved support for the upcoming Manitoba Oilfield Hall of Fame fundraising supper on April 9.

### Councillor Reports

Councillor Caldwell attended the Prairie Gateway Tourism meeting.

Councillor Stambuski attended the Vet Board meeting as well as the Manitoba Auto Museum annual general meeting.

Councillor Kinnaird attended the Virден Employment Skills meeting.

## In my opinion: State of the World

By Gerry Nolan  
RIVERS BANNER

The war in the Middle East has jacked fuel prices up to an unbelievable height in just three days. They are climbing daily and will likely continue to do so for as long as the war goes on. Is this really true or are gas prices climbing because someone just wants to GOUGE the customer. I believe it is gouging!

It's not only the pump prices that are rising, but also your cost of living will rise. The freight companies will be adjusting and increasing their prices and the consumer will pay for that. So in the last couple of weeks the cost of living has increased. Did your wage go up to cover this increase? Nope!

In a time when prices are soaring, the unemployment rate climbs, the government seems numb to what is happening in Canada. But there is no shortage of giving up a few more billion to other countries. Maybe they should be looking after Canadians first, then the rest of the world, instead of the world first and our country going deeper and deeper down the sewer.

Why is the government not stepping up to put a halt to this nonsense? I believe the government wants you to depend on them, lean on them, rely on them and in exchange you lose your freedom! They tried scaring us with the Covid crisis. Rendering us useless, driven by fear.

Just some random questions for you to think about. Why is there so much crime in the world? Why is there so much anger and hate? What is driving us to bigger and terrible situations? Why all the school shootings? What about the increase in drugs that we hear of daily?

Our courts seem silent and are way behind in criminal cases.

I feel sorry for the RCMP officers who arrest and then have to go re-arrest criminals who do not show up for their court day. The media tell us the jails are full and of course, the media is always correct, right? There is no room for more inmates, it's too crowded.

If you stop here and ask the question, why is this happening? Obviously to the powers that be and this came from Justin Trudeau, let's soften sentences to criminals. Wow, that is really working, isn't it? Perhaps he was trying to just protect himself when the truth about the freedom convoy came out! Through the past few years the climb is rising, dramatically.

I would say we haven't seen anything yet! When greed, pride of life, lack of respect and just overall lack of morals in our world takes over, it will fall to pieces

Maybe, just maybe, when they took the Lord's prayer out of our school, people stayed away from church. People coming to Canada and politely living the Canadian way, instead of bringing their agenda with them, maybe we would not be in this mess. Christians are persecuted for their faith, yet the Christian faith is the foundation of our country. The moral decay in the world and in our country is growing at an alarming rate. Think about it? What path is the world on? We are once again in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah, and we all know how that ended! Can you spell atomic bomb? If you don't believe me, look it up or better yet, look up!

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



**Virден Area  
Foundation Inc.**

**Grant Application deadline**

**March 31**

**[www.virdenareafoundation.com](http://www.virdenareafoundation.com)**

2026 Virден Area Foundation Grant intake is now open. Applications and grant criteria are available online at <https://virdenareafoundation.com/grant-information>. Did you receive a grant in a prior year? Your completion form needs to be submitted before your organization is eligible to apply for additional funding. If you have questions or need assistance please reach out to [vaf@rfnow.com](mailto:vaf@rfnow.com) or 204-851-6769.

# Secrets of ancient breadmaking revealed in Virден seminar

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Sourdough Chocolate Cake sounds strange and special, as does Sourdough Discard Cheese-It Crackers. These are just a couple of the recipes that sourdough students took home from Saturday afternoon's session in Virден. But things can go wrong when baking with this ancient method and for that reason, Tara Davies, Town of Virден events and programming coordinator arranged a hands-on learning session.

Merina Gunn from Carberry demystified sourdough baking for a class of 19 adults in Virден's Aud Theatre upper room. She's been baking with sourdough for a decade and began to share her knowledge within the last year.

Gunn used a whole wheat flour, King Arthur brand. However, she encouraged people to use any flour they prefer in feeding their sourdough starter and in baking the end-products. Sourdough is adaptable to many grains and recipes.

"You can use it in muffins, cakes, cookies, everything," says Gunn, adding that this was the original leavening additive, long before baking powder or commercial yeasts became available.

The Encyclopedia of Food Microbiology states: "One of the oldest sourdough breads dates from 3700 BCE and was revealed in Switzerland, but the origin of sourdough fermentation likely relates to the origin of agriculture



PHOTOS BY ANNE DAVISON

Sourdough starter needs feeding and that's what the class is doing.

in the Fertile Crescent and Egypt several thousand years earlier."

Gut health is a term we hear more of these days. Sourdough has a reputation for healthy digestion. While bread has been eyed as an unhealthy carbohydrate in some circles, baking with sourdough is a healthier alternative and interest is on the upswing.

"There's a lot of science on sourdough. Because it's super good for you. Sourdough is the bread to have..." Gunn says, adding, "That's why a lot of people that are diabetic or have high blood pressure go to this kind of bread. And like I said, when you add a different kind of grain... it adds different kinds of

vitamins."

Her class was practical. She supplied the class with a small jar of starter along with the flour and water to feed it, a process that she guided the group through. Measurements are important with sourdough baking. For that reason, Gunn uses a kitchen scale which can accurately measure grams, ounces, etc.

A handout supported her two and a half hour training session and Gunn answered questions at the close of the afternoon. For those who want to use organic flour, she suggested a producer in Newdale (Engrained Flour).

In several draws winners took home sourdough related items.



Kim Houston of Oak Lake receives instructions from Merina Gunn on how to use the item she won in the draw, a bread lame for scoring the top of the formed sourdough loaf prior to cooking.

# Local fundraisers bring new comforts to Elkwood Manor



PHOTO BY ED JAMES

(Back L to R): Noreen Baskerville, Annamae Perry, Martina Mower, Marilyn Clayton and Beth Canart; (Front L to R): Lil Jackson presenting a cheque to Elkwood Manor Administrator Lyndsay Cooper, in front is the palliative care cart.

By Ed James  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Canada has a large population of senior citizens. Many still live in their homes and are leading active lives in their communities. However, some seniors, due to a variety of reasons cannot live on their own anymore and for that reason we have senior care homes.

Rural Manitoba has many senior care homes, that can keep the residents close to their families and the places they lived. Elkhorn has two such facilities, The Lodge and The Manor, that I have visited many times to play my old-time record music shows. The music seems to make them come alive and remember past times, family and friends.

Sometimes these senior homes need a special piece of equipment, that their budget cannot afford or is not covered by government funding. In many of these rural communities, these special needs items are supplied by different community service clubs by different fund-raising events in their area. These can take the form of raffles, bake sales, luncheons, bingos or meat draws. In the last few years, I've noticed that the "Chase the Ace" events have been very successful in fund raising.

Recently two groups in Elkhorn made substantial donations to the Elkwood Manor. One was from the Elkhorn Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary #58. They donated \$762.12 from the proceeds of their recent winter soup and sandwich lunch program. Some of that money was from additional donations made at the lunches, by individuals who were attending.

The presentation was made by Auxiliary member, Margaret James, who also announced that at a later date the donation will be matched by an anonymous donor to a maximum amount of \$1500. These donations will go towards the Elkwood Manor courtyard project.

On the same date another donation was made by The Elkwood Manor Health Auxiliary of almost \$4000 from a fundraising ticket draw for a one week stay (anonymously donated) at the Puerto Vallarta vacation condo in Mexico. The funds from this draw will also go towards the courtyard project. The prize winners will be published at a later date.

At the same event, the Elkwood Manor Health Aux. presented a cheque to cover the cost of a palliative care cart to be used by those supporting a family or friend within palliative care. The cart allows the visitors to have an in-room source of hot or cold drinks, with the necessary dishes, kettle and coffee maker supplied. The cart is also equipped with ports for charging electrical devices. The use of this cart helps family members stay by their loved one during their final days.

Said Lindsay Cooper, the Elkwood Manor manager, "This is an important piece of equipment to help look after our residents. For a small community, this donation to the manor shows that they have a very big heart and want to help the seniors and the staff at the Manor. The support we receive at the Elkwood Manor is second to none."

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# SPORTS

## BRYANT, PLAISIER NAMED CO-MVPs AS OIL CAPS HAND OUT AWARDS



MVP - Ty Plaisier and Bryce Bryant.



Rookie of the year - Cohen Lewko.



Top Defenceman - Nathan Schaefer.

PHOTOS BY VIRDEN OIL CAPS



Top Defensive Player - Marshall Light.



Top scorer - Bryce Bryant.



Unsung Hero - Colten Worthington.

**By Robin Wark**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Bryce Bryant and Ty Plaisier have gone from cheering for the Virden Oil Capitals as kids to being the hometown team's Most Valuable Players.

Bryant, the son of Daren and Roanne, and Plaisier, the son of Shawn and Debra, were presented with the Manitoba Junior Hockey League squad's Stillwater Adventures MVP Award at the team's final home game last week. Each earned a share of at least three team awards.

Speaking about being named co-MVP, Bryant said, "It was very cool to receive that award. Especially to share it with another hometown boy meant a lot to me. From watching the team for so many years as a kid to now being able to have a big role in the team is really cool."

Plaisier, the team captain, was voted the

winner of the Fountain Tire Fan Choice Award. It is the fourth straight season that the defenceman has won at least a share of the award. Plaisier shared the 2026 Gardewine Hardest Working Player Award with London Hoilett.

Now in his final campaign with the Oil Capitals, Plaisier said of receiving three awards, "It means a ton to me. I've got to thank my teammates and Rammer (head coach Tyson Ramsey) for all the hard work they have put in throughout the year. I can't wait for playoffs to show the league what we got."

Bryant, a forward, finished second in the MJHL in points (81) and assists (53) in 54 games, while placing ninth in goals (28). He was an MJHL First-Team All-Star. Bryant received the Oil Capitals' MHM Top Scorer Award. Bryant shared the Twin Valley

Co-op 3 Star Award with Hoilett.

After playing in the Western Hockey League, Hoilett joined Virden to cap—pun intended—his junior career. He was sixth in the MJHL in goals with a team-high 32 in 57 games. Hoilett was third on the Oil Capitals in points with 58.

Colten Worthington was the team's second-leading scorer with 61 points, including 19 goals, in 48 games. He was named the Wallace District Fire Department Unsung Hero.

"Colten works extremely hard every day," Ramsey said. "He has done a great job in the middle for us, which is a position he hadn't played all that much. He is physical and strong on the puck and plays on our top powerplay unit. He is great in the dressing room and a leader on the ice."

In their second seasons with the Oil Cap-

itals, Carson Wright and Liam Goertzen shared the Alex Hotel Most Improved Player Award. Wright finished fifth on the team in points with 42 points in 55 games. Goertzen was eighth with 39 points in 54 contests.

"Carson and Liam have both taken their game to a new level," Ramsey said. "They were very good players last year too, but we feel they have improved their game on both sides of the puck. Both had very good offensive skills when they came to us last year, but we really feel that they have made a conscious effort to be better away from the puck and in our end of the rink. We are excited to see how much more they can add to their game in the playoffs and into next year."

Last year Marshall Light and Brooks Siemens shared the Most Improved Player Award. This time around, Light,

a forward from Moosomin in his final junior campaign, won the Black Gold Trucking Top Defensive Player. Siemens earned the CIBC Most Sportsmanlike Player Award.

Nate Schaefer received the Cross Plumbing & Heating Top Defenceman Award. He previously was named to the league's First All-Star Team. Schaefer was fourth on the Oil Caps with 46 points.

Cohen Lewko was named the Silverline Oilfield Services Rookie of the Year. While also playing for the WHL's Saskatoon Blades, he recorded 17 goals and 38 points in 46 games for Virden.

The Oil Capitals' Sunrise Credit Unions Most Community Minded Award winner was Tyson Ulmer. During the season, he was named to the RBC-MJHL Community Ambassador Team in recognition of his work in the community.

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# VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS AWARDS



3 star - Bryce Bryant and London Holett.



Community minded - Tyson Ulmer.



Fan choice - Ty Plaisier.

PHOTOS BY VIRDEN OIL CAPS



Hardest Working - Ty Plaisier and London Holett.



Most improved - Carson Wright and Liam Goertzen.



Most sportsmanlike - Brooks Siemens.

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# SPORTS

## U13 BROWN FINISHES FOURTH AT HOME AT SUCCESSFUL PROVINCIALS

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Last weekend, the U13 Brown Virden Oil Capitals competed with the province's best teams in their category and made many memories.

The team placed fourth at the Hockey Manitoba Co-ed Under-13 provincials. The March 13-15 event was held at Virden's Tundra Oil & Gas Place.

"Our players really enjoy playing at TOG Place," head coach Lonnie Brown said. "To add to that, our organizing committee did a fantastic job of not only rolling out the red carpet for the kids, but went above and beyond in creating an amazing atmosphere and highlighting the kids all throughout the weekend."

A unique experience was created at Tundra Oil & Gas Place with a players lounge, photo booth, an opening ceremony that had Virden Oil Capitals junior players leading each team onto the ice, and much more. The Manitoba Junior Hockey League's Oil Capitals were also part of a special moment for the U13 Brown Jr. Oil Caps.

"When we were going out for warmups for the semifinal games, the Oil Caps players surrounded the tunnel - just like the kids do at their games - and gave them high fives. I feel like that is a memory the kids will hold onto for a long time."

The U13 Brown squad started the provincial tournament beating Neepawa, with goaltender Kesler Brown recording the shutout. The Virden team fell 7-3 to Swan Valley. The Jr. Oil Caps defeated Gimli before losing 6-3 to Swan Valley. In the bronze medal game, Thompson prevailed 4-2.

"We faced more adversity throughout the weekend than we expected," Coach Brown said. "I was really impressed with how the group of players stayed close knit

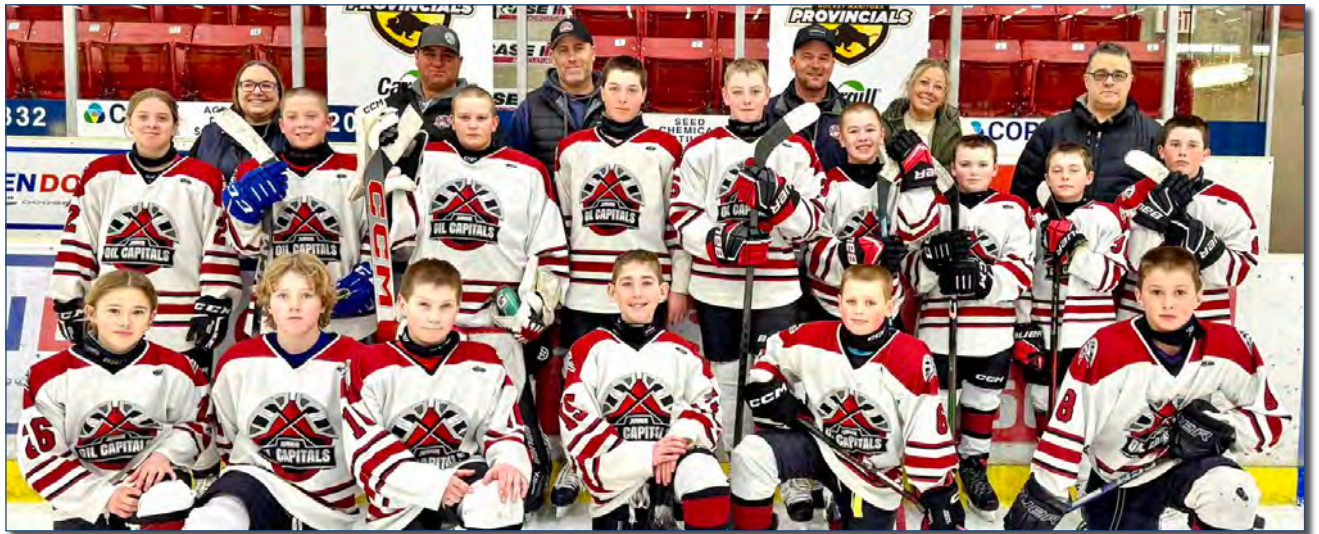


PHOTO BY SHARLA GEORGE PHOTOGRAPHY

The U13 Brown Virden Oil Capitals were the hometown team for the Hockey Manitoba Co-ed Under-13 provincials.

and maintained positivity as a whole."

Carman won gold at provincials, while Swan Valley received the silver medals. The Jr. Oil Capitals' Slone Brown was named to the Provincial All-Star Team on defence.

Regarding the tournament, Coach Brown emphasized, "our organizing committee did an unreal job of hosting. They should all be very proud of the entire weekend. Also, we can't thank the volunteers enough for stepping up and helping out and sacrificing their time even though they didn't have kids playing in our provincials. Last but not least, our officials did a terrific job throughout the whole weekend."

**U13 Hunter**

The U13 Hunter Virden Junior Oil Capitals placed

fourth at the Hockey Manitoba Co-ed Under-13 provincials in Morden, March 13-15. The Junior Oil Capitals downed Whiteshell 9-3, got by Norway House 5-4, defeated Notre Dame 8-4, and fell 4-0 to Cross Lake, which went on to win gold. In the bronze medal game, Portage won 4-2.

Regarding the provincial tournament, head coach Warren Hunter said, "I was most pleased with the confidence the team played with. I wasn't sure what to expect going into the weekend, but once we got up a few in the first game I could see the team start to believe in themselves. They believed they had a good shot at winning it all, which was really good for this group. They moved the puck very well and worked hard every game."

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# SPORTS

## REF MEMORIES

REF TO WRITER

GERRY NOLAN



Being the head referee in a game, I usually skated on the faceoff dots to the boards to stay away from the middle of the ice but also to get to the net quickly if I needed to. I did not want to get tied up along the boards because that was where there was usually body contact, or getting hit with the puck when someone was ringing it around the boards. I also tried to stay on the ice across from the players benches. I figured if a player or coach had words for me, he would have to be yelling pretty loudly from the players bench. In this case, I could give the bench a warning, that if it happened again, I would assess a bench minor penalty. I could give a particular player a misconduct or game misconduct if necessary. I did not like giving misconducts, but if an individual was persistent with me, the player usually paid the price. Most players, if they were venting at me, if I skated further from away from them usually settled down and the game went on.

When I was a linesman, things were very different. You were usually positioned just outside the players benches between center ice and the

blue line. I got to hear some real good trash talk, planned plays and some really funny one liners.

The better the teams involved in the game there was less chatter and more focus on the task at hand. Usually the real good teams in the South West Hockey League were very positive in their words. That doesn't mean to say there weren't verbal wars but they would be quickly forgotten at the drop of the puck.

Here are a couple of occasions when teams played hard against each, including fighting penalties, but huge respect for one another. I refer to a couple of games in Elkhorn, when the Elkhorn Canadians were matched up against the Cartwright Clippers.

One night Brad Mullin did something to one of the Elkhorn players that was not appreciated by Keith Orr. Keith was standing up for his teammate, like anyone would do, if it was your teammate that could not defend himself properly. Brad Mullin was the only known player at that time who had taken down Dave Semenko in a fight. Brad had huge hands. Keith challenged Brad and they started chuck-

ing knuckles. Keith came out on the short end of the fight, but he gained the entire Cartwright Clipper team's respect. Standing up for your teammate! I, being a linesman when play resumed, was in front of the Cartwright bench so I could hear what they were saying. There was admiration and respect for Keith to engage in the fisticuffs.

In a different game, but still the same two teams Kevin McLean, who could be a pest, could get under almost anyone's skin when he put his mind to it. Kevin was known to do some trash talking and was a fearless player. Kevin is skating down the left side of the ice and hits a player from Cartwright into the boards, a little hard with maybe just a little bit of a punch involved. I was again a lineman in the game. I am in front of the Cartwright player's bench. One of the Clipper player's yells hit that bastard. Somebody get him! Man I hate the way he plays. Danny Mullin says, yes I cannot stand him, but I wish he was on our team! Hal Haight says yea I wish he was on our team too. That is RESPECT!

Danny Mullin saw how valuable a player Kevin McLean was to his team and what he brought to the Elkhorn Canadians hockey team. Danny did not like him but he respected him. You do not always see that in this day and age. There seems to be a lot of lack of respect in our world today. It is not like it used to be!

## MJHL REPORT

MJHL HOCKEY

DEREK HOLTOM

We started with 13 teams and now we're down to eight. And so, here is our annual first-round preview.

Waywayseecappo Wolverines (29-24-3-2) versus Dauphin Kings (33-23-2-0)

**Preview:** These two teams didn't meet until Dec. 14, when the Kings rattled off the first of three straight wins versus the Wolverines. That may have been the match that lit the fire under the Wolverines who have a much better record than the Kings in 2026. Wayway also has points in their final three games against the Kings, going 2-0-1-0 in that stretch. In goal the Kings will look to Bryson Yaschyshyn, who has a save percentage of .911 – solid but right in line with both of the Wolverines' netminders bring Mariko Bercier at .911 and Jase Wareham at .909. The Kings don't have a player in the top 20 for league scoring. Instead they come at you with depth – they only have one 20-goal scorer (Matthew O'Sullivan, with 23), one 19-goal scorer (Ethan Stewart) and 11 players with 10 or more goals. Wayway is led by all-star Sebastien Hicks with 33 goals and 77 points. They have three goal scorers with 20 or more this year, including Ben Roulette (25 goals and 69 points) and captain Aidan Herring (22 goals, 45 points). Defenseman Kurt Rookes led all players with 26 assists on the power-play. His overall totals of nine goals and 46 assists show his offensive talent from the blueline.

**Prediction:** Wolverines in six.

Neepawa Titans (28-28-1-1) versus Virden Oil Capitals (39-14-3-2)

**Preview:** Virden dominated Neepawa this year, going 5-0-1-0 in their

six games, making them heavy favourites for this matchup. The Oil Capitals have a true game breaker in Bryce Bryant who is second in league scoring with 28 goals and 81 points. After that they are fairly spread out in scoring – they have nine players with at least 10 goals including London Hoi-lett (32 goals, 58 points) and Colten Worthington (19 goals, 60 points). Neepawa has seven players with more than 10 goals, led by Jack Clark (32 goals, 60 points), Logan Paquette (22 goals, 59 points), Cooper Kasprick (21 goals, 50 points) and Talen Wallis (23 goals, 44 points). Virden's No. 1 goaltender Braxton Burdeny has a save percentage of .9010, very close to Neepawa's Zach Burleigh who has a .904 percentage. Perhaps the most telling statistic is the team's plus-minus. Virden is 101, Neepawa is -6.

**Prediction:** Oil Capitals in five.

Winkler Flyers (34-20-2-2) versus Niverville Nighthawks (51-6-1-0)

**Preview:** The Flyers roared back from fifth place midway through the season to challenge the Terriers for third before settling for fourth, while the Nighthawks led the league all season long. Niverville was basically unbeatable all year, though most of their six losses came in 2026. One of those losses was at the hands of the Flyers, who also pushed the Nighthawks to overtime two other times. The Nighthawks, who have yet to win a playoff series, are led by the league's leading scorer Hayden Wheddon (36 goals, 54 assists, 90 points), Merik Boles (fifth in league scoring with 25 goals and 75 points, Adam Vigfusson (61 points in just 40 games), and Marlen Edwards (39 points

in 26 games). The Flyers counter with league MOP Niklas Gudmundson (29 goals, 74 points), Tanner George (30 goals, 68 points) and a deep team that has 14 players with 10 or more goals. In goal Austin Dubinsky led the Nighthawks with a save percentage of .931, while the Flyers counter with Liam Ernst, brought over at the deadline after former starter Leif Ekblad bolted for the USPHL. Ernst sports a save percentage of .919 and has four shutouts in 17 starts this year.

**Prediction:** Nighthawks in six.

Portage Terriers (39-18-1-0) versus Steinbach Pistons (47-9-2-0)

**Preview:** The two most successful MJHL teams in the last 10 years meet again in the playoffs. The Pistons owned the Terriers this year, winning five of six starts. Their only loss came way back on Sept. 26 when they lost 1-0 in overtime. The Pistons are the heavy favourites here, scoring 81 more goals than the Terriers this year while also allowing 50 fewer goals. The Pistons are led by Jack Greenwell (34 goals, 61 points), Brett Kaiser (46 assists, 59 points), and a deep with four 20-goal scorers and 13 10-goal scorers. The Terriers counter with rookie sensation Trevor Hill who led the league with 40 goals this year. Rhett Platt leads the team with 23 goals and 70 points, and another rookie Drayden Uhrina is third with 15 goals and 56 points. Only seven players have 10 or more goals on the Terriers. In goal the Pistons have two options - Easton Thvedt (save percentage of .926) or Chris Quizi (save percentage of .917). The Terriers counter with either Logan Cunningham (save percentage of .895) or Donovan Bodnar (save percentage of .890). Portage's goaltending was thrown for a loop after Mitchell Kathler (save percentage of .941) bolted for the BCHL.

**Prediction:** Pistons in four.

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# SPORTS

## FEMALE PLAYERS REPRESENT WEST WELL AT WINTER GAMES

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

At the Manitoba Winter Games, the local area was well represented on the ice

by female hockey players.

At the March 1-7 event in Thompson, the U14 West No. 1 team featured Kinsley Robertson, Virden; Langley Gerrard, Oak Lake; and Andie Williamson, Reston. Oak Lake's Anita Vachon was one of the coaches. Reston's Terri Williamson was the team's manager.

"It was special to me to have three players from our little corner of the province on the same team," she said.

Pipestone's Payton Flannery was on Team West No. 2. Former Virden resident Emma Ramsey was one of the coaches for that team.

### West No. 1

Team West No. 1 went 0-2 in pool play, lost in the quarterfinals and closed with an 8-1 consolation win over North.

"Unfortunately, we didn't come out on the winning side of most of our games, but they were close, and when you have a group of players who don't really know each other come together in a short time period and play that well, as a coach that's all you can really ask for," Vachon said. "We were able to pull off a win in our last game and that really boosted everyone's spirits. It was the best way to end the tournament."

Gerrard proved to be a versatile player for Team West, playing forward and defence. Vachon said:

"Langley is a quick little skater, she isn't the biggest player on the ice, but she was the least fearful. She got down into the corners quickly and got the puck out at the blue line — not much more you can ask from a winger. She carried that same confidence and fearlessness into the offensive zone regarding forechecking. When she got moved back onto D, the same confidence was there with an added level of comfortability and in being back in her regular spot on the blue line. She wasn't afraid to pinch and help the forwards down below the hash marks."

Robertson is an offensive defenceman who is also solid in her own zone. She was also used at forward.

"She transitions well, battles hard in the corners and in front of the net, and can carry the puck out of the zone and rush the puck well," Vachon said. "The hockey IQ is high, and will continue to get better, gets her stick in the right lane and puck awareness, head on a swivel, the little



PHOTO BY TERRI WILLIAMSON.

The U14 Team West No. 1 included Kinsley Robertson, Virden; Langley Gerrard, Oak Lake; and Andie Williamson, Reston. It was coached by Oak Lake's Anita Vachon.

things add up. She was a bit nervous to try forward, why I'm not too sure, she played well, knew where to be, even her forecheck she didn't hesitate, got right in there and fished the puck out, had lots of scoring chances."

Vachon coached Williamson on the Reston U13 Co-ed team. She said, "I know I put a bit more responsibility on her shoulders because I knew she could handle it. Her role was a shut down centre. She got matched up against some pretty skilled players on the other team. She is dominant in the faceoff dots; helps the defence, wingers, everyone out in the defensive zone. She's not afraid of the hard work it takes to be a centre. She adapted well to new linemates throughout the games. A big ask for her was playing with the defence who were trying out wing for the first time, and she did great on and off the ice, answering any questions they had about their new roles."

Vachon said she will likely remember the off-ice moments the most.

"Getting the opportunity to coach these players was an absolute privilege, I couldn't have asked for a better

group of players, coaches and parents. ... After our last game none of the kids wanted to leave the ice or the rink. We were out so late they had locked us out of the village. Luckily, it didn't take long to get back in, but you would have thought we had won the whole tournament with how late we celebrated and how excited the kids were."

### West No. 2

West No. 2 split its two pool contests, falling in the quarterfinals and the consolation playoffs. Flannery played up front.

"Payton was a key player for our team at the Games," Ramsey said. "She is a well-rounded forward with a high hockey IQ and a great work ethic. She was relied upon on both the power play and penalty kill, and made smart, heads-up plays to give our team opportunities to score."

Ramsey, now living in Brandon, said, "I enjoyed having the opportunity to coach a group of high-caliber hockey players and the chance to meet new athletes from all over Western Manitoba. It was an unforgettable experience and one that I will look back on with pride and appreciation for many years to come."

## VIRDEN MEN'S BONSPIEL A SUCCESS ONCE AGAIN

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Things were going the way of Hamiota's Travis Gregory and his rink at the Virden Men's Bonspiel.

Gregory skipped his rink to the Integra Tire First Event title. They were tops among the 37 rinks competing in the eight-day Virden Curling Club event.

"I'd say it was just one of those weekends where things seemed to work out for us," Gregory said. "Sometimes you get the breaks, sometimes you don't."

His rink included Wes Gregory and Brett Heaman from the Hamiota Curling Club as well as the Carberry Curling Club's Rob Van Kommer. The skip said:

"The weekend is always a good time, a great atmosphere, and the ice is always great there. Thanks to Jay (Kinnaird) and all the crews there to put that event on - never an easy task to do."

Kinnaird is one of the bonspiel's organizers. He said, "We had amazing ice, lots of fans, fantastic support from our local businesses, and some great competition at the VCC all week."

Dallas Burgess skipped his rink to the Virden Mainline Motors Second Event title. Justin West's

rink won the Four Seasons Third Event. The Kevin Barkley rink won the Valleyview Co-op Fourth Event.

Barkley started curling in his hometown Virden Men's Bonspiel when he was 12 or 13. He noted that it was maybe more than 25 years ago.

Barkley said he "enjoyed the whole spiel. I didn't curl much this year with chasing my kids from hockey rink to hockey rink. So it was just nice to get back to the curling rink ... catching up with curling buddies I haven't seen much this winter."

At the bonspiel, Brayden Stewart won the Virden



PHOTO BY VIRDEN CURLING CLUB

Integra Tire 1st Event Champions and the winners of the WJ Duncan Memorial Trophy went to the Travis Gregory Rink (pictured L to R: Marshall Duncan presenting, Travis Gregory, Wes Gregory, Brett Heaman, Rob Van Kommer, and Danny Pierrard presenting). They defeated the Blaine Stewart rink in the final.

Ford draw to the button for his Dean Stewart rink. From the Ken Wegener rink, Charles Cuthill won the Nielsen Seeds draw to button.

# SPORTS

## DU PLESSIS EARNS WINTER GAMES BRONZE

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

While a Manitoba Winter Games medal was a tangible reward, Mia du Plessis' sense of accomplishment ran much deeper than a podium finish.

The daughter of Jaco and Annemie du Plessis earned a bronze medal in the singles Star 6/7 mix figure skating category at the 2026 event. The Winter Games, featuring the province's top young athletes representing various regions, were held in Thompson from March 1-7.

"Winning a medal means a lot to me - showing all my hard work has paid off," she said. "Even if I didn't win a medal, I would still have been proud with myself and how I skated."

Du Plessis, representing the West region, was third in the short program. She posted the top score in the free program.

"Mia du Plessis won a bronze medal by keeping very focused during her warm-up off the ice and during the warm-up," West coach Lesley Wray said. "Although nervous, she skated a very nice and clean long program. I was very proud of her skating performance."

Du Plessis has been figure skating for four years, with strong family support.

"My family supports me by driving me to the rink everyday and driving me to all my competitions," du Plessis said. "They also cheer me along while I skate or compete."

She is one of six athletes who train at Skate Virden who competed at the Games. Du Plessis said, "I enjoyed having my friends there, and sharing the experience with them. And also making new friends along the way."

Waskada's Ainslee McGregor earned a bronze medal in the singles pre-novice mix category. McGregor trains with Skate Virden.

"Ainslee was a joy to work with during the Games," Wray said. "At warm-up during the free, she was so focused that I did not want to say anything to break it. Just a 'get it done' and 'you got this' and she produced. She locked in what she had to do and skated a beautiful program that won her a bronze medal. I was so happy after Ainslee's lovely performance. Luckily, after her skate, I was able to run around to the opposite side of the rink and join the team in the kiss and cry and dance with the team to celebrate their accomplishments."

Wray said she "loved coaching all of the athletes on Team West." She said she could not have done it without Elkhorn's Sara Chant. The former Elkhorn Figure Skating Club member, who trained with Skate Virden, served as the team's manager.

"Sara is a former competitive skater and kept the team well rested, hydrated, organized, and ready to perform," Wray said. "Not only did she do an amazing job keeping the team together while I was coaching and making schedules, she was also a ball of fun. The kiss and cry became a dance party after everyone's skate and the team did fun team building activities during downtime."

Elkhorn's Kaylee Malcolm was fourth in the singles pre-novice mix category. She had a strong free skate to move up in the standings.

"I loved watching Kaylee skate," Wray said. "She is a very fast skater and can spin even faster. Her step sequence and spins look easy, which makes me think she will be ranking quite high in the province next season. One to watch."

Virden's Evie McAdam's hard work was on display at the Winter Games. She was fifth in the singles Star 6/7 mix. Regarding McAdam's free skate, Wray said, "Evie's program was absolutely beautiful. It was clean and very nicely skated, landing both double jumps. I was very proud

of her skate. I almost teared up as I know she has improved so much this season."

Luke Greenbank competed in the singles Star 6/7 mix category. He is from the Moosomin area and competes for Skate Virden.

"Luke was definitely a favourite to watch for many," Wray said. "The speed skaters from Team West came to watch him and were very impressed that someone so small could do what he can. Luke took to any corrections during practice very well and was able to perform both programs beautifully. He is landing almost all of his doubles and is another one to watch."

His brother, Nate Greenbank, actually competed for Team East at the Winter Games. He was sixth in the singles pre-novice mix category.

"Being a close friend with Team West, he took part in most of our activities and skated with his teammate Ainslee in the pre-novice mix event," Wray said. "I was able to talk to him backstage quite a bit and wished him all the best every skate. He skated confidently and was not far off the podium."



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Virden's Mia du Plessis skated to a bronze medal at the Manitoba Winter Games.

## GREAT SHOTS, GOOD TIMES AT VIRDEN LADIES BONSPIEL

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The 2026 Virden Ladies Bonspiel featured great shots and a lot of fun.

Carberry's Alyssa Calvert skipped her rink to victory in the MHM Law First Event at the March 4-8, 24-team bonspiel. They defeated Anesha Heaman's Virden rink.

"We just had a lot of fun," Calvert said. "The ladies were so much fun in Virden. We have wanted to play for a few years but schedules didn't allow us to. We also appreciate when other clubs make an effort to come to our Carberry bonspiel, so we want to do the same."

Calvert's club team will be competing at provincials in Beauséjour March 26-29. Calvert said the rink "was looking for a spiel to play in before, and Virden was a good fit." The skip, who played in her eighth women's provincial championship earlier this season said of the Virden bonspiel "We had a lot of fun, the ice was great and we hope to be back."

Calvert's rink included Pam Robins, Monique Clement and Kelly Hofer. In the First Event final, it faced the rink of Heaman, Brittany Vinck, Whitney Strachan and Dayna Leslie.

"We never thought we would make it that far, so it was exciting to be playing in the final," Heaman said. "We had a good first four ends and then, unfortunately, fell apart and the game got away from us. But overall, we had fun and it was another great bonspiel as always. Those ladies do a great job and we wouldn't miss it"

The Heaman rink advanced to the final with an exciting semifinal victory over the Wheat City Classic team. The Heaman rink (red) was up by two in the eighth with its opponent sitting the two they needed to tie things up and force an extra end.

"There was an angle raise (blue onto red) so that our red would end up closer than one of their blues - leaving them only a steal of one and us still getting the win. The first shot I threw was too wide and missed it altogether, so

the next time we tightened up the ice and thought 'let's try again.' I had just the right weight to actually knock their blue onto our red and end up shot rock - leaving us the win in the eighth. It was very exciting and there were a lot of people watching. Definitely the highlight of our weekend."

Virden's Christel Kinnaird skipped her rink to the Sunrise Credit Union Second Event title. It included Hayley Senkowski, Kim Senkowski and Ashley Schultz. In the Four Seasons Sales Third Event, Cromer's April McKean skipped her team to victory. Her rink included Kailey Jorgensen, Lindsay Bootsman and Breena Davies.

"The ladies bonspiel is always a fun, well-run event," McKean said. "There are teams of all skill levels, which makes it enjoyable for everyone. The costume theme is always a highlight, and the Saturday night meal is great. The night usually ends with a few drinks and memories we laugh about for years. The (Virden Curling Club) has a small, welcoming feel from the moment you walk in and I look forward to it every year."



The Sunrise Credit Union Second Event winners at the Virden Ladies Bonspiel were Team Kinnaird: Christel Kinnaird, Hayley Senkowski, Kim Senkowski and Ashley Schultz.



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

The MHM Law First Event Winners at the Virden Ladies Bonspiel were Team Canart: Alyssa Calvert, Pam Robins, Monique Clement and Kelly Hofer.



At the Virden Ladies Bonspiel, the Four Seasons Sales Third Event winner was Team McKean: April McKean, Kailey Jorgensen, Lindsay Bootsman and Breena Davies.

# Small town, big stories - Kenton book club



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Kenton book club members. Mary Ann Stevenson, Celia Nolan, Leah Obach, Devon Caldwell, Leith Corney, Debbie Routledge, Rilla Hunter

By Gerry Nolan  
RIVERS BANNER

A glass of wine and a good book! Sip, Read, Repeat: Kenton's women's book club blends literature, laughter, and a little wine.

Started approximately ten years ago by Devon Caldwell, Leith Corney and Lorna Corney, members Debbie Routledge, Leah Obach, Mary Ann Stevenson, Devon Caldwell, Leith Corney, Rilla Hunter and Celia Nolan

make up today's membership.

The club usually meets once a month at the home of the person who selected that month's book.

This year each member chose an author and book choice; but this selection format changes from year to year, keeping it interesting.

April's book was chosen by Debbie Routledge and is titled 'Recipe for a Good Life' by Lesley Crewe. She is a Canadian author, and this is the

second book of hers that the group has read.

The members meet at the home of the person who selected that month's book. Discussion on the book's story line takes place accompanied by delicious appetizers and beverages. After determining the next month's book selection and meeting date, a yummy dessert ends the enjoyable evening together.

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# SPORTS

## ROCKETS BATTLE TO PROVINCIAL SILVER

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The U15 Reston/Melita Rockets did not lose a game in regulation on their way

to earning provincial silver.

The squad was 3-0-1 at the Hockey Manitoba Co-ed C provincials. The event was held March 6-8 in Arborg.

"Heading into the weekend the only expectation we had as coaches was that the players would show up to each game ready to play and battle hard for one another, and that they did," coach Drew Cochrane said. "We had 19 skaters and two goalies on the provincial roster and, although we could only dress 18 skaters each game, every single player played a huge role in the team's success."

In the gold-medal game, the Rockets fell 3-2 to the St. Eustache Jets in overtime. Reston was the No. 1 seed after the round robin, while the Jets were No. 2.

"We battled hard right from the start of the game; the goaltending on both sides was very strong," Kirkup said. "We found ourselves down 2-0 after two periods, so we had work to do heading into the third. We scored early on and then tied it up with around five minutes to go before the period ended in a tie.

"So we headed into overtime with a bit of momentum and had our chances to finish it early on, but St. Eustache pushed back and scored on an odd-man rush to finish it about three minutes into OT. It really stung for the boys, but they left it all out there and us coaches couldn't be happier with the way they played."

To start the tournament, the Rockets defeated Brandon 6-1 and shut out Cross Lake 9-0. The team got by Roblin 2-1. On the weekend, the Reston team had 19 goals for and only five goals against.

"Our goalie, Harry Whyte, played fantastic all weekend for us, the same way he has all season long," Kirkup said. "He only let up one goal in two games during Friday's round robin play, and he arguably stole the semifinal game for us against Roblin on Sunday morning, only letting in one goal again. He stood tall in the gold-medal game, as well keeping us in it right till the end, which allowed us to tie the game. Our (affiliated player) Ben Sterling backed him up for the weekend and was a great addition on the bench and in the locker room. A plus-14 goal differential



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The U15 Reston/Melita Rockets won the silver medals at the Hockey Manitoba Co-ed C provincials.

in four games at provincials is something to be proud of and just goes to show how well the boys played, both defensively and offensively."

The Rockets roster included Van Garrett, Jack Williams, Jake Sterling, Ravi Tilokani, Grayson Paul, Tyson Boulton, Jasper McKelvey, Owen Wray, Hunter Mitchell, Hudson Bell, Nolan Harris, Madex Dickson, Jaxon Guthrie, Nick Champion, Blayke Gray, Terrence McGinnis, Frankie Raynor, Grady Bugg, Ethan Minshull, Harry Whyte, and Ben Sterling. The coaches were Drew Kirkup, Jack Kirkup, Wade Dalziel and Dez Ramsey.

Jr. Oil Capitals at U11 B in Elkhorn

The Virden Junior Oil Capitals won the consolation finals at the Hockey Manitoba Girls U11 B provincials in Elkhorn March 6-8. The Junior Oil Capitals posted a 3-1 record and defeated Rock Lake in the consolation final game.

"Our U11 team worked hard and didn't give up," coach Ffion Penner said. "Each and every player contributed their best each and every shift."

The team appreciated the event being in Elkhorn for a few reasons. Penner said, "Having provincials close to home is fun. Lots of family and friends come out to support the kids."

Another reason was the volunteer support the tournament received. Penner said, "Thank you to all the volunteers that worked hard all week to make the tournament a success. Without the volunteers, it wouldn't be possible to have a tournament run that smoothly."

Elkhorn's Kim Mitchell, one of the organizers, echoed that sentiment when she said, "events like this wouldn't be possible without the many volunteers that step up to help. And our community is great at doing just that." A post on the Elkhorn District Community Centre expressed appreciation for the work of all of the volunteers. It stated, in part, "It takes a village and we have the best one!" As well, it noted the contributions of Shawnda Mitchell "who basically lived at the rink this weekend and made sure everything was running smoothly and kept everything updated."

## STRONG SEASON ENDS IN SEMIFINALS FOR OIL KINGS

By Robin Wark  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Oil Kings' season came to an end in the Tiger Hills Hockey League semifinals.

The senior team fell 3-1 to the defending champion and top seeded Killarney Shamrocks in the best-of-five series. Killarney advances to play the Hartney Blues for the THHL championship.

The Oil Kings lost 3-2 in double overtime in the fourth game of their semifinal series. It ended a successful campaign that saw the Oil Kings post a 14-5-0-0 record and finish fifth in the THHL regular season standings. Virden swept the Souris Elks 2-0 in the preliminary round of the playoffs and beat the Rivers Jets 3-1 in the quarterfinals.

"The thing I enjoyed the most was just the camaraderie of the guys this year," coach Tyler Campbell said. "We felt like a family more so than years past. We had good commitment, good guys - you could tell everyone was pulling the same rope. And I really hope that continues to next season"

There were many highlights of the season for the Oil Kings. One was handing the Shamrocks an overtime loss in game one of their semifinal series. Killarney did not lose in regulation in the regular season, going 18-0-0-1 with a shootout loss. Another highlight was the ongoing support the local senior

team receives.

"We had a great crowd at game four and they made the atmosphere electric in the rink that night and all through the playoffs," general manager Ryan Mathieson said. "We have tremendous support from the community from the big crowds, to the generous sponsors, and dedicated volunteers. We are deeply grateful for all they do to allow us to play senior hockey."

In his second season with the Oil Kings, Brad Bowles paced the THHL in points for the third straight winter. He had 75 points in 18 games as well as a league-leading 28 goals and 47 assists.

"In my opinion, he's one of the best senior hockey players in the province, if not the best," Campbell said earlier this season. "He knows what it takes to win, and it rubs off on everyone in the room. He makes everyone accountable. He has been a great addition to our team, and a big voice in the dressing room."

Tanner Koroscil also had a strong scoring season. He finished second in the league in both points (50) and goals (27), behind Bowles. Koroscil more than tripled the 15 points he accumulated in 10 games during the 2024-25 season.

Shawn Bowles, Brad's twin brother, joined the Oil Kings partway through the season and made an immediate impact. In eight regular-season games, he scored 14 goals and recorded 33 points.

At the other end of the ice, the Oil Kings boasted a strong goaltending trio as newcomers Riley Wallace and Duncan Paddock joined Eric Reid in defending the crease. Paddock led the team with a 9-3-0-0 record. Wallace posted a league-high 0.72 goals-against average, while Reid earned two wins for Virden.

### Semifinals

In the fourth game of their THHL semifinal series, the Virden team battled to keep their season alive. The game was tied 2-2 after the first period. Brad and Shawn Bowles each scored for Virden. Neither team found the back of the net in the second or third periods, or the first overtime session. Ty Enns scored the game winner in the second overtime session.

"I felt our team battled hard in game four and did everything except find a way to get the winner past (Brian) Archibald in Killarney's net," Mathieson said. "We played our best game in game four with everyone finding a role and contributing. It is always tough to come up short in playoffs especially, so when you are part of a group as talented and motivated as ours was, but that's hockey."

In game three, the Oil Kings fell 3-0 on March 10. Wallace made 37 saves. Archibald stopped 42 shots to earn the shutout for Killarney. The Shamrocks' scorers were Brock Sutherland, Bryce Enns, and Daniel Stagg.

# New graduates will help sustain nurse-patient ratios in ICU

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Manitoba government says intensive care unit (ICU) capacity will be strengthened as a record 45 nurses complete specialized critical care training this spring. Premier Wab Kinew and Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care Minister Uzoma Asagwara made the announcement earlier this week.

The nurses began their training on Jan. 5 and will complete the program on April 23, preparing them to work in ICUs and other high-acuity hospital settings. A new cohort will begin training on April 27, providing a steady supply of highly trained ICU nurses for Manitoba's health-care system.

"This training program is about building a stronger pipeline of skilled nurses for Manitoba hospitals," said Asagwara. "We are recruiting more nurses, expanding training opportunities and supporting internationally educated professionals so that more Manitobans can receive care from strong frontline teams."

"Strengthening Manitoba's health-care system will require a multi-pronged approach," said Darlene Jackson, president, Manitoba Nurses Union. "Training more ICU nurses is an important step toward safe staffing levels and the nurse-patient ratios Manitobans

deserve. When nurses have the support and staffing, they need, patients receive better, safer care."

However, Manitoba Association of Health Care Professionals (MAHCP) President Jason Linklater was critical of an unmet need for respiratory therapists in ICU care.

He said, "Respiratory therapists are leaving Winnipeg's ICUs and acute care centres faster than they can be hired. At Grace Hospital, where the Manitoba Government made an announcement about ICU nurses today, more than 40% of respiratory therapist positions are unfilled."

Linklater says that respiratory therapy training seats at the University of Manitoba will only graduate 16 this spring and the first-year cohort in the three-year program is only half full.

He says, "In January, MAHCP reported that 50 more respiratory therapists are needed to fill vacant positions at Winnipeg's three acute care sites alone, in addition to many more RT vacancies at hospitals and community programs across the province."

The government says that through Manitoba's Health Care Retention and Recruitment Office, more than 600 internationally educated nurses have engaged with the office, with many participating in the expedited nurse re-entry program, the minister noted.

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## Public Hearing



# 2025 FINANCIAL PLAN PUBLIC HEARING

**Friday, April 10th**  
**McAuley Council Chambers**  
**10:00 a.m.**

At this time the Council will present the proposed 2026 Financial Plan for the purpose of allowing any interested person to make representation, ask questions or register an objection.  
(In accordance with subsection 162(2) of the Municipal Act)

Copies of the proposed financial plan & the Presentation in full will be available on our website [www.rmofellicearchie.ca](http://www.rmofellicearchie.ca) or upon request at the municipal office at 318 Railway Ave, McAuley, MB or 331 Main St, St. Lazare, MB by April 6th, 2026 during regular business hours.

Questions or comments may be submitted to the CAO prior to the Public Hearing in lieu of attending in person.

Questions and remarks may also be directed by letter to our Chief Administrative Officer or by email to [mcauley@rmofellicearchie.ca](mailto:mcauley@rmofellicearchie.ca)

**Trisha Huberdeau, CMMA**  
Chief Administrative Officer  
PO Box 67, McAuley, MB R0M 1H0  
Email: [mcauley@rmofellicearchie.ca](mailto:mcauley@rmofellicearchie.ca)  
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# CLASSIFIEDS

## Help Wanted



### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

#### BUILDING, PLANNING AND MUNICIPAL BY-LAW INSPECTOR

The R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth is seeking a qualified individual for the position of **Building, Planning & Municipal By-Law Inspector**. This role is responsible for ensuring compliance with Manitoba's building codes, planning regulations, and all municipal by-laws (including zoning, property standards, nuisance) while administering development agreements and planning documentation for Trans Canada West Planning District on behalf of the Municipality.

#### Duties and Responsibilities

- Conduct building, plumbing, mechanical, zoning, and property standards inspections
- Review and issue building, plumbing, occupancy, and development permits
- Ensure permits and documents are uploaded to the Manitoba Municipal Reporting Online (MMO) system
- Enforce all municipal by-laws – property standards, signage, nuisance, noise, etc.
- Investigate complaints and issue warnings, orders, and violations as required
- Administer and monitor development agreements and planning documentation
- Assist with conditional use, variance, and subdivision applications
- Maintain accurate digital and paper records, inspection notes, and reports
- Provide information and guidance to residents, developers, and contractors
- Coordinate with RCMP, Peace Officers or Provincial agencies for joint enforcement
- Perform other duties as assigned by the CAO or Council

#### Skills and Qualifications

- Experience in building inspection, by-law enforcement, or municipal planning as asset
- Ability to read building plans and interpret zoning regulations
- Strong communication and customer service skills
- Manitoba Class 5 driver's license (clean abstract)
- Inspector certification (Parts 3 & 9) or trade background an asset

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#### LANDFILL SITE ATTENDANT – KENTON

The R.M. of Wallace-Woodworth is seeking a motivated individual for the position of **Landfill Site Attendant** for the Kenton Nuisance Grounds location. The Landfill Site Attendant assists the Transportation Superintendent in operating the waste disposal grounds in compliance with the Waste Disposal Ground Operating Permit for the site, municipal policies, and Workplace Health and Safety regulations.

Certificate in Landfill Operations is an asset. Applicant must be willing to take the necessary certification courses.

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Interested candidates should submit a resume with three professional references by:  
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We appreciate your interest in this position. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. However, only those applicants chosen for an interview will be contacted.

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We thank all applicants for their interest: however, only those selected for an interview will be contacted.

The start date is as early as May 25. The end date will be on the last week of August. Subject to the successful applicants availability.

Interested candidates should submit a resume by:  
 E-mail: [info@wallace-woodworth.com](mailto:info@wallace-woodworth.com)

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

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

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### EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY SENIOR ELECTION OFFICIAL (SEO)

The Municipality of Two Borders is accepting applications for the position of Senior Election Official (SEO). The next municipal election is October 2026.



#### Position Overview:

The SEO is appointed by the municipal council and is responsible for the general direction and supervision of the municipal election process. This includes ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation, managing election logistics, and maintaining the integrity of the electoral process.

#### Key Responsibilities:

- Interpret and apply The Municipal Act and relevant election regulations.
- Prepare and maintain the list of voters.
- Provide public notice of nominations and elections.
- Receive and verify nomination papers.
- Appoint and train election officials.
- Establish and equip voting places.
- Oversee advance voting and election day operations.
- Ensure proper vote counting and reporting of results.
- Conduct by-elections if required.

#### Qualifications:

- Strong organizational and communication skills.
- Ability to work independently and exercise sound judgement.
- Familiarity with municipal governance and election procedures.
- Must be non-partisan and maintain confidentiality.
- Previous experience in election administration is an asset.

#### Terms & Compensation:

- Appointment begins upon passing a council by-law.
- Hours vary, with peak activity in the months leading up to and during the election (typically Sept-Oct).
- Compensation dependent on skills and experience.

#### Application Process:

Interested individuals should submit a resume outlining relevant education and experience to:

Grace Carr, Chief Administrative Officer  
 Municipality of Two Borders  
 Box 429, 138 Main Street, Melita, MB R0M 1L0  
 Ph: 204-522-3263  
 Email: [info@twoborders.ca](mailto:info@twoborders.ca)

# SPORTS

## LEWKO SHINES IN ROOKIE SEASON WITH OIL CAPITALS

By Robin Wark

EMPIRE-ADVANCE

In a rookie campaign split between the Virden Oil Capitals and the Saskatoon Blades, Cohen Lewko has turned heads with his talent and play.

Playing for the Oil Caps, Lewko finished sixth in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League in rookie scoring. The 16-year-old forward was called up to the Western Hockey League's Blades several times during the season.

"Cohen is a very, very good player for a young guy," Virden head coach Tyson Ramsey said last week. "He is physically strong, thinks the game at a high level and has the ability to score. When he is physically involved in games, he is very hard to play against. He plays a gritty game and has the ability to adapt to whoever he plays with. He can play both wings and is a power-play guy for us as well. He has had a great rookie season to this point, and he will be a big factor for us in the playoffs."

Lewko capped the regular season with a hat trick and four points in a win over the Winnipeg Blues on March 15. In a victory against Portage on Nov.

15, he racked up five points, scoring a hat trick and adding two assists. He also recorded three assists in a March 9 win over the Winnipeg Blues. Lewko finished the season with 17 goals and 21 assists for 38 points in 46 games.

His MJHL totals would have been higher, but he played 15 games with the Blades this season. He recorded one goal with the Saskatoon club. Lewko said, "I've enjoyed being back and forth with Saskatoon. Every time I go, I feel I become a stronger and smarter player."

He has also appreciated various aspects of playing in Virden this season. Lewko said, "I've enjoyed being around the team this year the most and how great the atmosphere is in the room." He billets with Diana MacDonald and said, "she has been amazing, and it feels like a second home."

Lewko hails from Sanford. He played the last two seasons at the RINK Hockey Academy in Winnipeg. Lewko is excited for an opportunity to compete with the Oil Caps in the postseason.

"I am looking forward to playoffs this year as I haven't been able to have a real playoffs in the past couple years," he said.



PHOTO BY VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS

Virden Oil Capitals Cohen Lewko.

## OIL CAPITALS FACE TITANS IN FIRST ROUND OF PLAYOFFS

By Robin Wark

EMPIRE-ADVANCE

The Virden Oil Capitals and Neepawa Titans will clash in the first round of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League playoffs.

The best-of-seven series begins March 20 in Virden, followed by Game 2 in Neepawa the next night. The teams return to Virden for Game 3 on March 24, with Game 4 set for March 26 in Neepawa. If necessary, Game 5 will be played in Virden on March 28, Game 6 in Neepawa on March 29, and Game 7 in Virden on March 31.

"The key to playing any team is to play our game," Oil Capitals head coach Tyson Ramsey said. "We can be successful against anybody when we are fast, physical and structured. If we stick to our game and gameplan and we can be disciplined with our emotions and in our structure, I like our chances against anyone."

The Oil Capitals finished on top of the MJHL's MGEU West Division with 83 points thanks to a 39-14-3-2 record. The Titans were fourth with 58 points and a 28-28-1-1 record.

Last week, as the Oil Capitals wrapped up the regular season, two players earned MJHL Stars of the Week honours. Forward Cohen Lewko had three assists in one contest and four points in another. Goaltender Braxton Burdeny posted three wins and a 1.67 goals against average.

### Oil Caps 10, Blues 1

The Oil Capitals closed out the regular season with a 10-1 road win over the Winnipeg Blues. Lewko led the way with a hat trick and four points on March 15.

For the second straight game, Oil Caps defenceman Jett Deschamps was not in the lineup as he was called up by the Western Hockey League's Regina Pats on March 14. The Virden team bolstered its lineup by calling up three players from the U18 AAA Southwest Cougars: forwards Shane Elder and Taylor Lockhart and Virden defenceman Christian Pitz on March 14. Against the Blues, Elder

scored for Virden and had an assist. Lockhart scored his first MJHL goal. Pitz had an assist.

Carson Wright, Bryan Laing, Colten Worthington, Moosomin's Marshall Light, and Oak Lake Beach's Tyson Draper also had goals for Virden. Home-town product Bryce Bryant finished with three assists as did defenceman Miguel Bonin. Burdeny stopped 19 shots.

### Oil Caps 5, Wolverines 3

By five minutes into the second period on March 14, the Oil Capitals had built up a 3-0 lead in Waywayseecappo. They added two third-period goals on the way to a 5-3 road win. Scoring for Virden were Liam Goertzen, Lucas Laramee, Austin Osiowy, Laing and Draper. Nate Schaefer had two assists. Micky Gross stopped 35 shots. Manson's Kurt Rookes led Waywayseecappo with two goals.

### Oil Caps 7, Pistons 4

The Oil Capitals jumped out to a 3-0 lead and earned a 7-4 home win on March 12. Light had two goals and a pair of assists. London Hoilett also lit the lamp twice. Dysen Drake scored and recorded three assists. Virden's other scorers were Brooks Siemens and Osiowy. Wright had three helpers. Burdeny made 40 saves.

### Oil Caps 5, Titans 1

On March 10, the Oil Capitals scored three



PHOTO BY VIRDEN OIL CAPITALS

Virden Oil Capitals celebrating after their game against Steinbach on Thursday, March 12.

special teams goals and allowed one against en route to a 5-1 home victory. Gross turned away 31 of the 32 shots he faced.

"I thought we played a solid game," Ramsey said. "Goaltending was good, we defended pretty well for most of the game and we were able to pressure their defence to turn pucks over to create offence."

Hoilett scored on the power play to give Virden a 1-0 first period lead. The Titans equalized in the second period with a shorthanded goal. Marshall Light and Worthington scored at equal strength to give Virden a 3-1 lead. In the third period, Schaefer lit the lamp on the power play, while Siemens scored shorthanded. Hoilett and Worthington each had three points.

# St Patrick's Day Spring Fling



PHOTO BY NANCY JO MOLLER

Red Hat Ladies dazzled in Reston by Elvis impersonator.

By Nancy Jo Moller  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

## March 17, 2026 – Pipestone Albert Recreation, Reston

The atmosphere at the Spring Fling was true sunshine, the morning started stormy but cleared up in time for the audience to arrive safely.

Presented by Pipestone Albert Recreation and Seniors Helping Hands nearly 100 residents and guests joined together to enjoy entertainment that combined laughter and music. Daylin James dazzled the audience as he performed a medley of Elvis songs. He found Priscilla in the crowd and the moment was magical. As he handed

out teddy bears and kisses, one audience member stated, “she was never going to wash her cheek again.”

The sewing projects showcased by local quilters were extraordinary, imagination and skill was evident on every piece. From a Wolf Pack to a Saskatchewan Pool elevator, quilts included baby quilts, wall hangings and even a sport based one with all masterpieces exemplified life on the Prairies. The work on these pieces showed the dedication and skill used to create the quilts, it was evident that many hours of needlework was involved.

After the entertainment, local volunteers served refreshments and delectable desserts to the hungry crowd.

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