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MARCH APRIL 2015

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Mine Strike
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ON THE COVER

Mel Reich of Bakers Narrows, MB captured this photo of a local fox. Read more about this wily creature on page 42.



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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

All over northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, communities are coming together to do great things, thanks to the vision, and action, of local leaders.

In La Ronge, teacher Christine Ravenis is creating an engaging, real-world learning environment for students by bringing community elders and local experts into the classroom. Through her Northern Lifestyles class, students are gaining a deeper appreciation for their heritage and the natural world around them.

In Thompson, a collective of writers celebrated the publication of their first anthology last October. Three years ago, this group was just a seed of an idea in founder Amanda Holt's mind.

In Flin Flon, community choir volunteers are building barricades, crafting 19th century costumes, and working with vocal coaches to create a world-class production of *Les Misérables*. It will be a work of art 15 years in the making, a collective effort led by Crystal and Mark Kolt, artistic and musical directors of the choir.



Libby (Elizabeth) Stoker-Lavelle

For some, living in the north, far away from major urban centres, can be an isolating experience, especially during the harsh winter months. In each person, however, there is a seed of potential for connection, for personal growth, and for community contribution. As many of the stories in this issue show, when we have the courage to pursue our passions, to build on our desires for self-improvement, and seek out others with common interests, we can enrich our own lives, while building stronger communities—and inspiring others to do the same.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "E. Stoker-Lavelle".

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Letters to the Editor

Do you have an opinion, a photo or a brief story to share with Cottage North readers? Send in a contribution to our Letters to the Editor section!



Morley G. Naylor

Morley G. Naylor was born in Sherridon and has lived in Flin Flon since. For 32 years, he has travelled all over northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan with CBC TV and CBC Radio. "I've really come to appreciate the beauty and diversity of our area," Morley says. "There are so many stories to tell."

"Flin Flon Mine Strike" p. 10



Amanda M. Holt

Amanda Holt is president of the Thompson Writers' Guild. She writes novels, novellas, short stories and poetry, primarily for adults in the paranormal, horror and romance genres. Her paranormal cautionary tale "Beware the Silence" appears in the *An Unkindness of Ravens* anthology.

"Quirky Northern Writers Seek Same" p. 18



Dave Price

Originally from Wales, Dave Price arrived in Flin Flon—after a brief stint in New York City—in August, 1970. A

retired geologist, Dave is vice-president of Flin Flon Ski Club and also one of the founders of the Green Project, a collaboration aimed at forest restoration in Flin Flon and Creighton.

"Centaloppet" p. 28



Valerie G. Barnes-Cornell

Valerie G. Barnes-Cornell has been the reporter/photographer for the *La Ronge*

Northerner for the past eight years. She lives in La Ronge.

"Northern Education" p. 35



Jim Parres

Jim Parres is a prospector/geologist born in Timmins, Ontario, but raised in Flin Flon, Manitoba. He has co-authored

two Manitoba mining books, *The Nor Acme Gold Mine Story and Headframes, Happiness and Heartaches*, along with Marc Jackson. Jim also writes a column in the Snow Lake newspaper.

"Canadian adventurers" p. 31



Sheila Marchant

A longtime resident of northern Manitoba, Sheila enjoys capturing the natural beauty

of this region in poetry. She gathers inspiration everywhere, but particularly from her scenic views on her monthly bus rides from Flin Flon to Prince Albert.

"A Walk With My Dog" p. 44



Ian Graham

A graduate of the University of Victoria's writing department, Ian Graham has been with the Thompson Citizen and Nickel

Belt News since 2007, joining the newspaper as a sports reporter and photographer. He was named editor in August 2014.

"Ron Maclean is coming to Thompson" p. 9



Kelly Oswald

Kelly Oswald is a reporter for the *Flin Flon Reminder*. She moved to Flin Flon seven years ago, following her graduation from NBCC's Journalism program. Oswald enjoys the people, culture, and spirit of the community.

"Finding Om in Bakers Narrows" p. 9



Marc Jackson

Marc Jackson has lived in Snow Lake for 42 years. Marc writes, edits, and publishes Snow Lake's *Underground*

Press, as well as a syndicated column that runs Fridays in the *Flin Flon Reminder*, *Opasquia Times*, and *Nickel Belt News*. He has co-written two books.

"Near death inspires new life" p. 41



Penny Byer

Penny Byer moved to Thompson in the late '70s to open up the CBC North Country studio. An editor of employee publications with

a mining company and freelancer, she also teaches courses on communications and leadership.

"Jean Merasty" p. 46



Gerry Clark

Gerry Clark is a retired teacher whose whole career, starting in 1969, was at Hapnot Collegiate in Flin Flon. His

interests include drawing; photography, mostly wildlife but also sports, involving his four grandsons; and writing, mostly about local history.

"The Fox" p. 42



Calendar of Events March | April 2015

Here's what's happening in your community!

Bust the Winter Blues

Trivia Night, horse-drawn sleigh rides and a family dance have all become favourites at the Bust the Winter Blues festival. Held each March for more than a decade, the event is a joint Flin Flon-Creighton celebration.

This year's festival is set for **March 6 to 8** with activities for all ages including a snowmobile poker derby, a sugar shack, an ice fishing tournament, public skating, cards and crib tournaments, swimming and a craft sale.

Photo by Kelly Oswald

Flin Flon, Creighton & Denare Beach

March 6-8: Bust the Winter Blues Festival

March 8: 40th Annual Centaloppet, Flin Flon Ski Club. For details call Dave Price, 204-687-8653. See story p.28

March 8-9: Home Routes Concert: Ben Sures, 7 pm (Cranberry Portage, March 11)

March 19: Films Up North series: *All is Lost*, Hapnot Theatre, 7 pm

March 19: Blues musician Big Dave McLean with Jimmy and the Sleepers, Johnny's Social Club, 7:30 pm. For tickets contact Greg East, 204-687-0754

April 4: SPCA Fur Ball: benefit social featuring Guns 'N' Roses tribute band The Nighthtrain, Flin Flon Community Hall, 8 pm

April 10-11: Saskatchewan Dart Zones, Creighton Sportex

April 23-25: CFAR Leisure Show, Creighton Sportex

For more, visit www.cottagenorthmagazine.ca/calendar-of-events

Thompson

March 2-31: Anne Snihor Art Exhibit, Heritage North Museum

March 6-8: Winterfest 2015 and Rogers Hometown Hockey, TRCC

March 7: Home Routes Concert: Ben Sures

April 1-30: Jasyn Lucas Show & Sale, Heritage North Museum

Prince Albert

March 5: Comedian Ron James, E.A. Rawlinson Centre, 8 pm

March 30: Women of Ireland: Irish and Celtic song and dance E.A. Rawlinson Centre, 7:30 pm

April 11: Denzel Sinclair and the Saskatoon Jazz Orchestra, E.A. Rawlinson Centre, 7:30 pm

The Pas

March 1-29: Traces Exhibit by Janet Shaw Russell, Sam Waller Museum.

March 6: Home Routes Concert: Ben Sures, Sam Waller Museum, 7 pm

April 11: Home Routes Concert: Jason Freeman-Fox, Sam Waller Museum, 7 pm

April 12: Aurora concert, Sacred Heart Cathedral

April 13-29: The Pas Music and Fine Arts Festival

Snow Lake

March 20-21: Big Dave McLean with Jimmy and the Sleepers, Snow Lake Motor Inn

Need more info?

Creighton Recreation: 306-688-3538

Denare Beach Recreation: 306-362-2050

Flin Flon Arts Council: www.flinflonartscouncil.com, 204-687-5974

Home Routes: www.homeroutes.com


Thompson Recreation: www.thompson.ca, 204-677-7952

Heritage North Museum: 204-677-2216

E.A. Rawlinson Centre: www.earawlinsoncentre.ca, 866-700-ARTS


The Pas Arts Council: www.sites.google.com/site/artscouncilthepas, 204-623-7035

Sam Waller Museum: www.samwallermuseum.ca 204-623-3802



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Rocking it in La Ronge

By Valerie G. Barnes-Connell

It's Saskatchewan's official sport, and curlers from the La Ronge Curling Club celebrated with an open house January 21, a day the Saskatchewan government has proclaimed Curling Day in the province.

People of all ages and abilities participated in the event. Club president Glen Watchel taught the rudiments of the game to a group of potential young curlers.

"We didn't know what to expect and the place was full. We were very, very, very happy," Watchel said.

Seasoned curlers either assisted people trying out the game for the first time or participated in the weekly Super League game, rescheduled from its regular Thursday night berth for the festivities.

Others tried out various pieces of equipment including something they call the stick, which allows curlers to stand while delivering the rock, rather than hankering down.

The club keeps the curling rink busy three nights a week with regular curling on Monday and Tuesday nights and Super League activity competition on Thursday nights.

In support of youth curling, the club purchased curling practice sets called Rocks and Rings for the three elementary schools in La Ronge in fall 2014.



New and seasoned curlers turned out to celebrate Curling Day in Saskatchewan in La Ronge on January 21.

Photo by Valerie G. Barnes-Connell

Trappers' Festival captivates The Pas



Photo courtesy Northern Manitoba Trapper's Festival
Trappers' Festival organizer Jen Cook sawing a log with Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger at the official opening of Trappers Festival on Thursday, February 19.

The 2015 Trappers' Festival captured The Pas from February 19 to 22, merging traditional events like the World Championship Dog Races, jigging performances, and King and Queen Trapper competitions with newer highlights like a street hockey tournament and a snowboard and snowskate competition. This year Trappers' Festival organizers reached out to audiences in new ways, launching a new website and interacting throughout the weekend with festival-goers on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook.



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Ron MacLean is coming to Thompson

By Ian Graham

He may be less colourful than his frequent Hockey Night in Canada companion, but a visit to Thompson by Ron MacLean in March, as part of the Rogers Hometown Hockey Tour, will still be Thompson's biggest hockey party of 2015.

MacLean, who played straight man to the entertaining — or offensive, depending on your perspective — Don Cherry on CBC's *Coach's Corner*, will be in the Nickel City for a weekend of hockey festivities and to host a pre-game show followed by a viewing party for a March 8 Calgary Flames-Ottawa Senators game that will be broadcast nationwide on CityTV.

"The passion for hockey in this country is unrivalled," said MacLean in a news release announcing the 25 cities that will host the weekly Sunday night broadcasts. "Every Canadian has a connection to the game — it is part of our DNA, it is part of our communities."

MacLean will host a half-hour pre-game show live from Thompson prior to the broadcast, and will also make appearances in intermission and post-game shows.

Activities leading up to the broadcast will include meet-and-greet sessions with NHL alumni and local hockey heroes, a Hockey Night in Canada viewing party, a KidZone with hockey-themed activities, skills and drills competitions and live performances by local musicians.

Excerpted with permission from the Thompson Citizen



Photo by Cindy Smadella

Finding Om in Bakers Narrows

By Kelly Oswald

Peace and tranquility abounded at a yoga retreat held at Bakers Narrows Lodge on January 31. Shannon Smadella led the retreat along with guest instructors Kristen Imrie and Jelisa Wieggers. The all-day retreat drew 23 men and women interested in learning more, or expanding their practice, of this ancient, relaxing form of exercise.

An icy plunge for Flin Flon swimmers

By Libby Stoker-Lavelle

Daredevils in the Flin Flon area will soon have a chance to prove their mettle at the first annual Polar Bear Dare.

On Saturday, March 21, at the main beach in Denare, locals will plunge into an eight by 10 foot swimming hole carved out of the ice. In the weeks leading up to the swim, participants will collect pledges from friends and family members. Funds raised will go to the Flin Flon Trout Festival, which will be held in the last week of June.

The depth of the water at the Polar Bear Dare swimming hole will be about five feet, and the water temperature will likely be about 5°C. A lad-

der, rubber matting, warm-up shacks and first-aid assistance will all make the experience more comfortable for swimmers.

Event organizer Annette Last plans to be one of the first to hop into the icy lake. She experienced similar temperatures in a glacier swim in the Kananaskis River in Alberta.

"It really wasn't that bad," says Last. "We prepared by taking cold showers...so your body doesn't get such a shock."

To participate, pick up a package at Alpine Convenience, Di's Confectionery or Gateway Tempo, or simply turn up on March 21 at the beach with water shoes, swimwear, your pledges, and plenty of courage.



Workers assemble near community hall.

Sparling Collection

STORY BY MORLEY G. NAYLOR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE FLIN FLON HERITAGE PROJECT

Flin Flon Mine Strike of 1934

How a heated labour dispute brought clashes, a riot and communist hysteria to a northern mining community

Labour disputes and strikes are not uncommon in the mining industry, due in part to the boom and bust nature of the business, and dramatic fluctuations in metal prices.

Flin Flon mining operations have a noteworthy record of only two strikes over an 85-year mining history. The first took place just a few years after the gigantic metallurgical complex came in to being.

Setting the conditions

By July 1932, the newly constructed mining and smelting complex at Flin Flon was beginning to feel the pinch of the Great Depression. The large measure of job security within the Flin Flon area was due solely to the steady

payroll of the 1,200-plus employees of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company Limited (HBM&S).

In 1932, HBM&S, or “The Company” initiated a wage reduction of 18 per cent for single men and 15 per cent for married men, less one per cent for each child per family.

The company stated that this significant rollback was due to depressed base metal prices — mainly copper and zinc — and was fully justified to keep the mining operation in business.

Employees did not protest the pay cut, which was in keeping with industries across the nation in the midst of a worldwide depression. In fact, some sources indicate that more men were actually hired in Flin Flon to step up the tonnage of production and offset falling metal prices.

After the dramatic reduction in income imposed in 1932, most were not jubilant when, in May 1933, Manitoba Premier John Bracken imposed a wage tax of two per cent on all earners in the province.

At the same time, along with dissonance within the labour faction of HBM&S, a festering problem of unemployment and disparity had reached a boiling point. By mid-October 1933, the brewing trouble had reached a peak.

A delegation of unemployed and those on relief, represented by Pat Healy and Mitch Sago, pressed town council for a resolution to the crisis, leading to work projects such as the draining of Ross Lake Cemetery and wood cutting. The Canadian National Railway proposed building a station, and the young community’s town council lobbied Ottawa for funding for roads, bridges, a school, and a municipal hall. Flin Flon Mayor E.E. Foster sought government assistance, but by spring 1934, more than 60 families were reportedly on relief.

All of this irritation served to divide the fledgling mining town and place a strain on community relations as well as the local economy.

The worst was yet to come.



R.H. CHANNING
HBM&S president

Roscoe Henry (R.H.) Channing was president of HBM&S throughout the labour troubles of 1934.

Born in 1868, Channing studied civil engineering at the College of New Jersey, now Princeton University. Although he did not complete his final term and earn a degree, his career in the metals industry was an inspiration to mining men everywhere.

Channing's career began on the American iron ore fields, where he became the youngest mine manager on the Mesabi Range. He was famous for taking over the money-losing Cerro de Pasco mine in Peru in 1907 and, within three years, returning it to financial stability.

Around 1923, he took charge of the Harry Payne Whitney mining interests, disposing of properties in Oklahoma, Nevada, California, and New Mexico.

From 1924 his career in mining closely followed the development of the Flin Flon mine and metallurgical plant. Main stakeholders Jack Hammell and Tom Creighton had sold their interests to the Complex Ore Recoveries Company owned by Harry Payne Whitney and run by Channing.

Channing is credited with "proving up" the huge orebody by directing the research and tests required to allow the recovery process of the Flin Flon ore body, which had six minerals in combination. Channing played an integral role in the formation of the Hudson Bay Mining and Smelting Company with Harry Payne Whitney's son, Cornelius Vanderbilt (Sonny) Whitney.

Channing was remembered by a great many people. At the main gate entrance to the plant he would greet workers coming on shift, often by name, and then, later on, as he frequented the plant, he would ask questions and discuss conditions with the men. He wore a badge numbered one on his plant tours, and was always amused when workers wondered aloud who number one was.

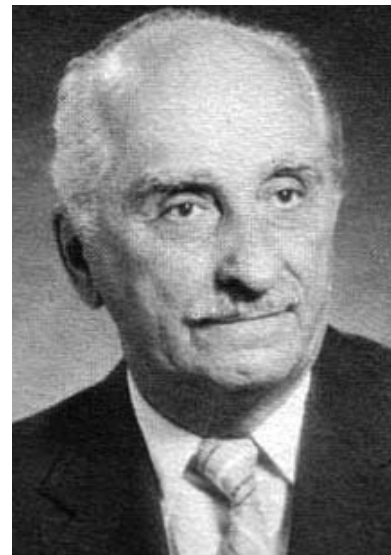


Photo courtesy Manitoba Historical Society

MITCH SAGO
Union organizer

Mitch Sago was one of Canada's most famous radical labour leaders. He was born in Winnipeg in 1914, and became a member of the Young Communist League around 1930.

Sago actively recruited others to the East Kildonan Branch of the YCL. He was a union organizer for the Workers Unity League (WUL) a labour central operated by the Communist Party of Canada, and the Mineworkers Union of Canada (MWUC).

In his lifetime, he was involved in scores of strikes and was one of the leaders of Winnipeg's Contingent for the famous On-to-Ottawa Trek of 1935. He was imprisoned between 1940 and 1942.

Sago was a key player in the 1934 Flin Flon strike, not necessarily for what he accomplished, but more for what he was unable to accomplish: to organize a union at HBM&S in Flin Flon.

MABEL "MICKEY" MARLOWE

Union agitator

Marlowe, 23 and secretary of the Canadian Labour Defence League, was brought in from Winnipeg to participate in the strike. Viewed as an outside agitator, she oversaw the women's auxiliary and picket group. She was rumoured to be pregnant at the time.

Marlowe played a major role in the women's blockade of the June 30, 1934 return to work vote at the community hall. She was charged and found guilty of inciting a riot and intimidation by threat, and paid a heavy price of one year's hard labour.

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MINESTRIKE

Strike action

By early 1934, angst among many of the workers was beginning to show. They had endured the pay reductions by the company, but now metal prices were recovering as the company declared a near \$800,000 profit for years 1931 to 1933. Most were unsatisfied with the wages, but past efforts to establish a union at HBM&S had been quickly suppressed.

At the beginning of 1934, a number of men were fired for involvement in union organization, and workers presented their demands to the company. Their demands were rejected by general manager W.A. Green, who was left in charge when company president Channing and superintendent and chief engineer R.E. Phelan travelled to Winnipeg.

The company refused to recognize the union, and workers walked off the job at 6 pm on Saturday, June 9, 1934.

From Winnipeg, Phelan said that under no circumstances would the company recognize the Mineworkers Union, which he claimed was affiliated with the Workers Unity League, a group formed to carry out the activities of the Communist Party of Canada.

Phelan announced that the plant could be closed for 10 years, saying that the company had the legal right to close and remain closed indefinitely.

Channing is viewed as having a softer approach. He reflected on the friendly relationship that had existed between the company and its employees, saying that once back to work the grievances of the employees would be addressed. He expressed his conviction that the union was not representative of the mine workers, and therefore did not have the authority to speak on their behalf.

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As in any labour dispute, issues become clouded or overlap into grey areas of quotes, misquotes, and attempts by both labour and management to seek the so called high ground to gain popular support. The major issues at stake, or positions, of both sides in the 1934 conflict can be summed up as follows.

Worker demands

- Recognition of the Mineworkers Union of Canada
- No discrimination for union activity, including reinstating those discharged
- An immediate end to the company-imposed pay decrease
- The number of employees not be reduced by layoffs
- Payday two times per month
- Eight-hour day
- Overtime of 1.5 x rate between eight and 16 hours and 2 x rate beyond 16 hours
- No touching or tampering with an accident scene until investigated by a department committee.

HBM&S response

- No recognition of strike committee
- No recognition of the Mineworkers Union of Canada
- Payday two times per month
- Consideration of negotiations once employees returned to work

HBM&S issued public statements noting:

The company had been more than fair with employees with wages and other amenities during a worldwide depression.

The company did not believe that the demands were from a majority of the employees and were the result of outside communist agitation.

Communist hysteria

Emotions ran high on the idea that communists had infiltrated the ranks of the working people at the plant.

On June 11, Foster wired the attorney general in Winnipeg requesting information on the Mineworkers Union of Canada; the attorney general's office in turn, contacted the Department of Labour in Ottawa.

The response indicated that the Mineworkers Union of Canada was organized in 1925, and became affiliated with the Workers Unity League (WUL), a labour central operated by the Communist Party of Canada, in 1931. The WUL was the Canadian sector of the Red International of Labour Unions, Moscow, an agency of Third Communist International, which was an organ of Soviet control over the communist movement with a stated purpose to promote world revolution.

The response also noted that union officials claimed only fraternal relations with the Russian body. Nevertheless, this revelation was a fatal blow to the strike.

The strike committee went before town council claiming affiliation with the WUL, the Amalgamated Mine Workers in New Brunswick and other unions which had succeeded in improving working conditions elsewhere. The committee denied affiliation with any form of communism, though the strikers did not deny earlier communist connections.

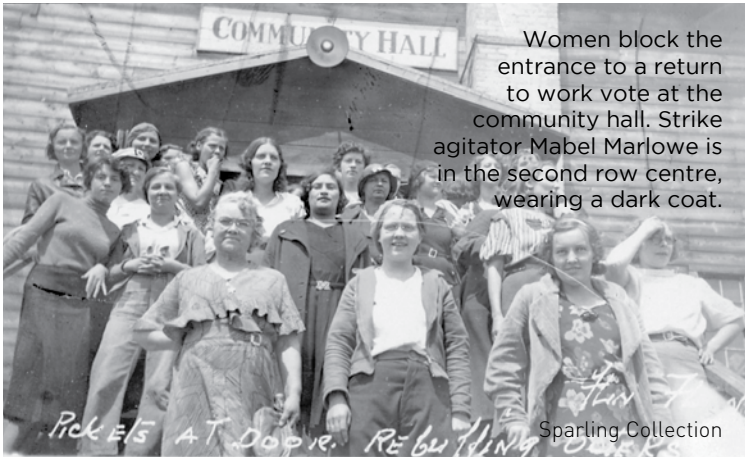
This revelation created a less than enthusiastic attitude by the mayor and council toward the workers and strike committee.

Phelan, perhaps more than Channing, characterized company sentiment with an emphatic denunciation of the union, claiming that their

affiliation with the WUL "classed them as Red organizers."

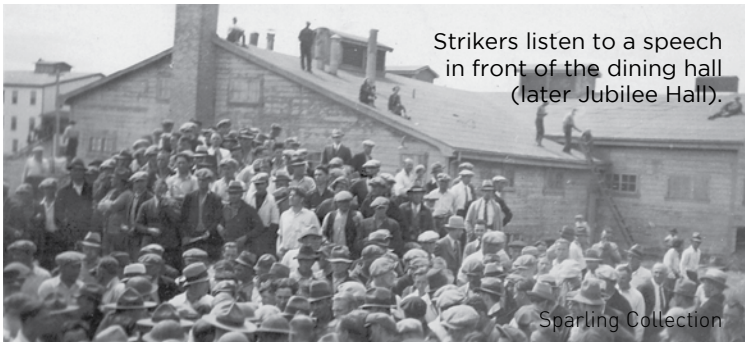
During the course of the month-long strike, citizens banded together to form the Anti-Communist League, drawing up a constitution to effectively stamp out the influence of communism from the lives of Flin Flon's working men and other citizens.

A resolution to support the objectives of the new organization, which endeavoured to uphold and maintain British law, was passed by the municipal council at a meeting on June 25, 1934. Various organizations took a stand in opposition to the outside agitators being allowed to remain in Flin Flon. These groups, including the Board of Trade, Knights of Columbus, BPO Elks, Canadian Legion, and the Anti-Communist League petitioned the strike committee for removal of the agitators from the community.



Women block the entrance to a return to work vote at the community hall. Strike agitator Mabel Marlowe is in the second row centre, wearing a dark coat.

Sparling Collection



Strikers listen to a speech in front of the dining hall (later Jubilee Hall).

Sparling Collection



RCMP during the final week of dispute.

RCMP on Picket duty. Flin Flon strike.

Women line the stairs of the community hall

As the strike progressed, the women of the town organized a strike committee auxiliary and a picket detail headed by Mabel Marlowe, the young agitator from Winnipeg. An independent back-to-work vote was to be taken on June 30. The women, mostly workers' wives, lined the path and stairways to the Flin Flon Community Hall where the workers were to vote.

The scene was not a pleasant one. As voters came within reach, women scratched men's faces, tore their clothing and threw eggs, mud and pepper while shouting profanities.

The RCMP attempted to escort potential voters through the picket line, several fist fights broke out and the men were severely pushed around and roughed up. Soon the area became a riot zone, a mass of men and women struggling and cursing. By afternoon the vote was called off.

The RCMP are called in

When the strike broke out, Foster wired the Manitoba premier for assistance in law enforcement in the new municipality. Bracken sent approximately 32 RCMP officers by special train. They guarded supply trucks, essential services, and maintained law and order in the community.

Trouble was feared and emotions ran high. Council was presented with a petition for the closure of all beer parlours and liquor vendors to help keep the peace and reduce violence. The membership of the newly formed Anti-Communist League swelled to 300; the campaign against radicals and agitators grew.

The strike is broken

The unrelenting supporters of the Anti-Communist League had a devastating influence on the efforts of the workers to unionize under the

Mineworkers Union of Canada. At best, the workers had lukewarm support from the mayor and council after the communist affiliation was revealed.

Green stated that HBM&S "would under no circumstances recognize the workers union nor accept their demands." Premier Bracken reputedly felt that the employees had been duped.

Near the end of the strike, more RCMP arrived from Winnipeg and Regina by train and Lac du Bonnet by plane. In a crackdown, the constables patrolled in twos and threes and quietly arrested the strike agitators one by one, including Mabel Marlowe, on the grounds of unlawful assembly and intimidation at the June 30 riot.

The workers had been backed into a corner with very little hope of organizing a union or placing any pressure on the company to meet their demands.

By July 4, the RCMP strength had been bolstered to 92 men.

MINESTRIKE

The strike was all but over. In an attempt to broker an amicable agreement, Bracken conferred with HBM&S and Flin Flon's mayor and council.

After a series of meetings with numerous entities, Bracken recommended that back-to-work posters be printed and circulated throughout Flin Flon.

He issued a notice to the employees of HBM&S stating that, in his opinion, the plant had been closed down due to the activities of Communist organizers working through the Mineworkers Union of Canada. The notice stated that he had impartially interviewed representatives of every department of the company and every organization in Flin Flon in an endeavour to obtain a fair and just appreciation of the situation. He thought that those who had gone on strike had been misled as to the relationships of the organization that they were joining, and assured workers that they had no reason to doubt Channing, who had stated that the plant would be reopened when a majority of men decided to return to work.

July 9, 1934 was proposed as the date when the workers would begin returning to work, with protection of the men and their families having been assured by Bracken.

Aftermath and gains

On July 9, the company whistle blew. Under the watchful eye of armed RCMP, over 700 workers began their long march back to work, led by the 67-year-old Channing. Over the next few days, workers straggled back to their jobs; the nearly 200 who didn't return were fired.

The Flin Flon strike of 1934 was over.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17



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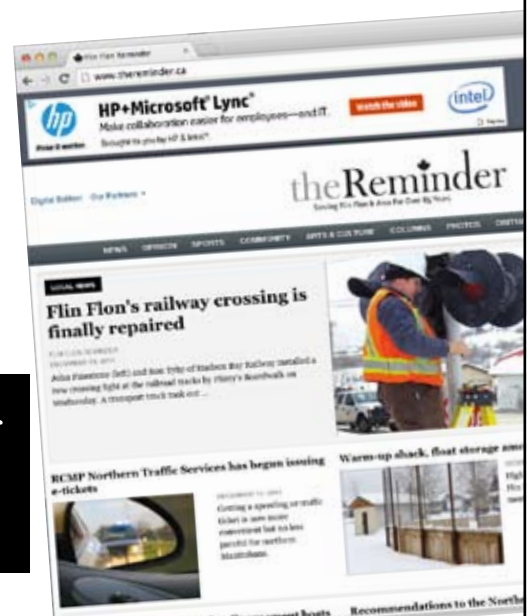
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NEWS SERVICES SPORTS COMMUNITY ARTS & CULTURE COLUMNS PHOTOS CONTACT

Flin Flon's railway crossing is finally repaired
A long-awaited repair project on the Flin Flon Railway (FFR) has finally resulted in a new crossing light at the railroad tracks by Flin Flon's south end on Wednesday. A transport truck took on...

RCMP Northern Traffic Services has begun issuing e-tickets

Warm-up check, float storage and...

An Interview with Mitch Sago

In 1985, Jim Mochoruk interviewed Mitch Sago about his work as a union organizer in Flin Flon from 1933 to 1934. This edited version of the interview reveals Sago's recollection of the events that unfolded.

SAGO: The assignment I got, along with Eddie Edwardson, to organize a union in Flin Flon, was at the request of a chap by the name of Sundquist. He said he would take care of our lodging and our food [so] Eddie Edwardson and I were assigned to go to Flin Flon and to organize the miners there at that time. This was in 1933.

Q. Now, was [Sundquist] a representative of some of the other miners who wanted to bring in a union or was he asking on his own?

SAGO: My understanding was ... that a number of miners had been talking for some considerable length of time that it would be good if someone came and organized a union, because they sure wanted one. It was a company town.

The other thing [that we tried to make sure of] was that [The Company] could never identify any of the groups by watching Edwardson or myself on the street or visiting [union members'] homes, or what have you, and talking to them. We were very careful about that.

There were two places where we felt free to talk to people, and we were careful even then.

One was the beer parlour at Foster's hotel ... We would go in and on payday the practice was to put all those tables together for the full length of the beer parlour and each guy would order for the table as a whole.

Now, we were allowed to sit in with the boys and many times we sat in with people who had nothing to do with the union and we had no intention of asking them to come in because we didn't know them that well. But we did it in order to create an atmosphere and a feeling that we were just there to have drinks and to participate socially. There wasn't a fixed pattern, so that somebody could identify certain people [as union members].

The other place where we used to meet was in the Red Light district, in the houses of ill-repute, up on The Hill.

The women knew what we were doing. For their [own] reasons they wanted to see a union because they were quite sympathetic to the situation [of] the people who worked for The Company. So I had free access to all these places and so did Edwardson [and] this was where we would meet some of the fellas.

As far as anyone was concerned we were in there for a drink, but actually we were in there to have a discussion with one or another person. We were very careful who we sought out in these places, who we spoke with and it proved to be successful.

Q. Was there a lot of pressure put on the workers by the Company?

SAGO: Oh yes. The intimidation was quite brutal. Edwardson...on his way home from some interview that he had arranged quietly someplace was brutally pushed into Ross Lake and warned that if he didn't get the hell out of town there'd come a time when he wouldn't get out of Ross Lake – that would be it, that's where he'd die. I had such warnings, too.

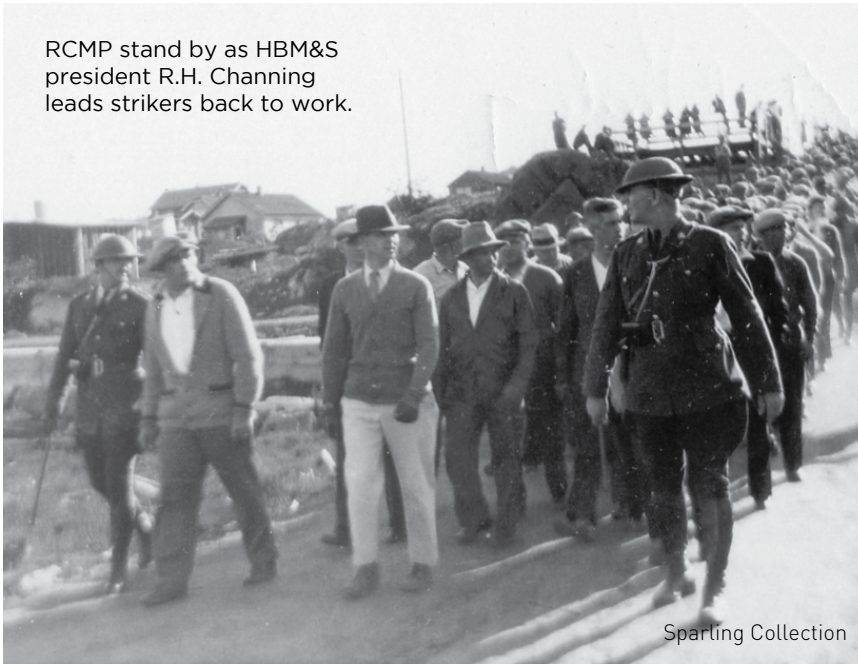
Q. Were these threats directly from Company management?

SAGO: Oh yes. These were company stooges who were doing the job. I remember going to the washroom in the hotel one day and three of the stooges came in and told me, "We want you outside, we're going to fix you so you're never going to come in here or anywhere else." But when it became clear to Edwardson and myself that we had such high visibility that we were actually being rendered useless in terms of meeting people, talking to people, and being seen with people, we contacted the Winnipeg office. They agreed that you can't continue working with people because they are afraid they are going to be fired — you better come in and we'll take some other steps. And that's when we returned to Winnipeg.

Reprinted courtesy of the Manitoba Historical Society.

A more complete transcript is available at www.mhs.mb.ca.

RCMP stand by as HBM&S president R.H. Channing leads strikers back to work.



Sparling Collection

While the workers' demands were not met, and unionization was stopped in its tracks, some important gains were made from the strike. The company adopted a twice-monthly payday and negotiations on other issues were opened up for discussion. The company established the Employees Welfare Board, composed of elected representatives from the workforce, to deal with employee grievances. The company also promised to reduce electrical power rates to relieve some of the financial burden (HBM&S owned the Island Falls generating station). Rates

were reduced on June 20, 1934 – midway through the strike.

In addition, one half of the original 1932 wage cut imposed was retracted; the second half of the pay cut was not retracted until 1935.

Since that time, Flin Flon HBM&S employees have seen one other major strike, a trade union dispute in 1971, which closed the plant for about five months.

Additional historical photos of the Flin Flon mine strike can be found on the Cottage North website at www.cottagenorthmagazine.ca

This photograph may show the arrest of Mabel "Mickey" Marlowe.



Photographer unknown

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Quirky Northern Writers Seek Same

How the Thompson Writers' Guild came to be

STORY BY AMANDA M. HOLT

PHOTOS BY YAWHANN CHONG

A Thompson Writers' Guild member reads from the group's first published anthology, *An Unkindness of Ravens*. The anthology is sold through the guild, and online through Amazon, Smashwords and Lulu.



One by one, they came out of the woodwork, approaching the display table. Some walked by several times before zeroing in on the sign-up sheet.

I knew there were writers in Thompson – there had to be. But where were they? I hadn't spotted any lurking at the other tables as I scrawled in my journal, or typed maniacally at my laptop, at Grapes Restaurant, long after breakfast had been cleared away.

Questions about my kind nagged me: Where were the writers in Thompson hiding out? Were they solitary creatures? How many writers were there? What were their genres, their writing styles? Were they struggling with their projects, as I sometimes did? Were their muses generous, temperamental or altogether absent? Were they perhaps in need of inspiration, encouragement, or feedback?

My own writing habits seemed to wax and wane. I felt that keeping in touch with other writers would keep me on-task, more accountable for my own productivity.

Advice columns for writers often steer authors toward joining a writers' guild or critiquing group — and it makes perfect sense. Just as musicians have jam sessions with each other, exchanging energies and ideas, writers' circles can compare their notes and woes — not to mention the social benefits of gathering like-minded peers!

It seemed like such a shame that Thompson didn't have a writers' group ... none that anyone I asked, or that the helpful staff at the library knew about, anyway.

A collection of authors helping authors achieve their writing goals? Such an idea would come to strike a happy chord in the hearts of writers here in Thompson, just as it had elsewhere in communities around the world.

Seek and ye shall find

In 2012, realizing that I wanted to stay in Thompson a while longer, and determined to seek out other authors, I decided to invest the time and energy in starting a local writers' group. The annual Health & Leisure Mart slated for that September was the perfect opportunity to gauge if there were local authors interested in developing and participating in one.

With my gal pal Tina at my side for moral support, I set up the bait: a colourful display with motivational slogans, handouts of writing tips, rationale and advice for forming a writers' group, a sign-up sheet and me—one amateur authoress hoping to recruit others. To my delight, there *were* writers in Thompson.

One by one, they came out of the woodwork, approaching the display table. Some walked by several times before zeroing in on the sign-up sheet.

There was one adult who wrote inspirational Christian romance. A screenwriter. Poets. Some who signed up had even been published. Some hadn't finished anything yet, and weren't certain if they ever would. They asked: did that qualify them as writers? Of course it did! They wrote, didn't they?

One woman who joined that day had published horror fiction, and had two teen daughters who also wanted to join. A pair of adult sisters—a novelist/poet and a fan fiction writer—came with their middle-aged mother in tow. Others were retirees, ready to pen that great Canadian family saga.

The sign-up sheet soon filled with the names and contact information of over forty brave souls. To me that list seemed like the proverbial desert o-

asis I had stumbled upon in hoping to quench my thirst.

I didn't pretend to have it all figured out. I had never been a member of a writers' guild — I had only ever read about them. The library was lending us basement space for meetings every second Saturday. As for other details: the format that meetings would follow; when or how we would hold writing contests or produce published works; how we would distribute information to members...all of those details would have to be sorted out later.

Growing pains and gratifications

In year one, we went through all kinds of growing pains. We kept asking each other, "What do you need from a writers' guild?" The answers helped guide us as we tried to ascertain the services and resources we should provide. Lacking organization, we seemed to lose valuable members while we tried to find our footing and create a meaningful structure that focused on achievable ends (an agenda, fundraising goals, publication goals, tracking achievements such as members' participation in NaNoWriMo*) while also allowing for time to socialize.

Despite fluctuating attendance at meetings in that formative year, we gained members who recognized the potential of the group. They would prove to be visionaries who keep our purpose clear: writers helping writers achieve their goals.

Collectively, our members are bottomless wells of ideas; we keep each other motivated and inspired. Drawing from diverse life experiences, aptitudes and literary interests, we assist

fellow authors in navigating writing obstacles, plotlines and pitfalls.

Now, two years later, I am humbled by how far we have come and how large we've grown.

The Thompson Writers' Guild (TWG) is more than 80 members strong, with virtual members who do not attend meetings due to scheduling or distance, but participate in other ways. They submitted artwork, stories, and poetry for our last anthology; donated books for our book sale; shared links to contests; and networked with other guilds.

Our anthologies

Through fundraising with used book sales, the guild bankrolled the publication of our first anthology, *An Unkindness of Ravens* which we edited, designed, uploaded, and promoted ourselves. The anthology contains works of spooky fiction, eerie poetry, and a creepy graphic novel, created by members whose ages range from 10 through 50-plus. Our members are currently preparing their submissions for our second anthology.

Room to grow

Now in our third year, we have established an executive board, created a Facebook page, and promoted awareness of the TWG by participating in two more Health and Leisure Mart events. We are working toward achieving non-profit organization status and providing workshops to writers. We are eager to accept new writers of any genre, from manga and graphic novels to blogging, poetry, creative non-fiction, short stories, essays or novels.

*NaNoWriMo, or National Novel Writing Month, is an annual global writing contest. From November 1 to 30, writers attempt to complete an original 50,000-word novel. In 2014, more than five TWG members achieved that goal. For more information on NaNoWriMo, visit www.nanowrimo.org



Are you a writer seeking fellow wordsmiths?

Here's a list of groups & organizations available to northern Manitoba & Saskatchewan writers

FLIN FLON WRITERS' GUILD

Founded in 1983, the Flin Flon Writers Guild is a contact and support group for writers in the Flin Flon, Creighton and Denare Beach area. Prospective members are always welcome to attend meetings, which are held at the NorVA Centre (177 Green Street) on the second Saturday of each month (Sept to June) at 1:30. Meetings include optional sharing of works in progress and writing response exercises, as well as occasional lessons by members. The guild has hosted numerous workshops, readings, and open mic nights, and organizes an annual poetry evening in April. More information can be found at www.flinflonwritersguild.wordpress.com

MANITOBA WRITERS' GUILD

The Manitoba Writers' Guild was founded in 1981. The guild provides professional and personal support to Manitoba writers. Writers of all levels of experience are welcome to join. For information visit www.mbwriter.mb.ca.

THOMPSON WRITERS' GUILD

Writers who live in the Thompson area are welcome to attend meetings every second Saturday from 2 to 4pm in the basement of the Thompson Public Library. The next two meetings are March 7 and March 21. Membership in the Thompson Writers' Guild is currently free. For more information email thompsonwritersguild@gmail.com.

THE PAS WRITING CIRCLE

A group of local writers recently founded this circle as a respectful environment to write with others and share writing. Writers are encouraged to drop in or join the circle at The Pas Regional Library Annex on Tuesdays, (except for the 1st Tuesday of the month) from 7:30 to 9:00. To learn more, call The Pas Regional Library at (204) 623-2023.

PRINCE ALBERT WRITERS GROUP

The Prince Albert Writers Group meets on the first and third Tuesday of the month at 2:00. The group has existed for over 40 years and welcomes anyone who wishes to join. Every two years the group makes up an anthology with every member contributing to the content. Visit www.princealbertwritersgroup.com for more information.

SASKATCHEWAN WRITERS' GUILD

Founded in 1969, the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild represents writers in all disciplines and at all levels of achievement. Membership is open to writers and those interested in Saskatchewan writing. For information visit www.skwriter.com.

PHOTO: Contributors to the Thompson Writers Guild anthology celebrate at a book launch at the Thompson Public Library in October 2014. Back row: Penny Byer, Amanda Holt, Ian Graham, Valerie Wolfe, Ellora Reddy, Jui Sarker, Leigha Mellish, Fae Wolfe. Front row: Yawhann Chong, Savannah-Rose and Chesa Hickey, Robyn Foley.



Daniel Dillon



BRINGING A DREAM TO LIFE

The Making of Les Misérables

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LIBBY STOKER-LAVELLE

An immense amount of talent, devotion, and heart is going into a local production shaping up in Flin Flon this spring. The Flin Flon Community Choir (FFCC) is mounting the huge musical *Les Misérables* in May 2015.

Graphic designer and part-time rock musician John Bettger never intended to audition for a role in *Les Misérables*, but fate had other plans for him. Last fall, Bettger was rehearsing for a show with Band on the Run alongside Mark Kolt, musical director for FFCC and one of Flin Flon's most accomplished musicians.

"They wanted me to do some backing vocals on some tracks," recalls Bettger. "Susan [Lethbridge] held the mic to my face and I started singing. Mark was playing, and he kind of leaned forward and glanced at me. He was like 'Who is that guy? Where did this come from?'"

Bettger, who plays bass, drums and

guitar, had never sung in a choir or acted before. His curiosity was piqued when Kolt approached him after the concert, suggesting that he audition for *Les Mis*. Word got around quickly. "The next day, I got a call and a Facebook message from my mom, and text messages from Crystal [Kolt, Mark's wife and FFCC artistic director]. They were all saying 'You should audition ... audition, audition, audition!'"

Buoyed by this encouragement, Bettger decided to go for it, thinking he might get a small part in the production. To his surprise, he received a call from Crystal Kolt a few weeks later. He had been selected for the role of Jean Valjean, the lead in the musical.

"I'd never heard *Les Mis* before," he recalls. "I'd never heard it or seen it, so it was kind of a big shock. I was like 'Oh wow, that's awesome that I got the lead part...but I have so much to do!'"

For Bettger, the road to *Les Mis* has

been a short and unexpected one, but for the community choir, this is a production years in the making.

The journey to *Les Mis* began 15 years ago when Crystal Kolt first applied for a licence to produce the musical in Flin Flon. Most musical theatre productions are copyrighted, and both amateur and professional theatre organizations must obtain a licence in order to legally perform the production.

Les Mis is the longest running musical to date and remains one of the most popular musical theatre productions worldwide; for an amateur theatre company, getting a licence to perform the musical is unlikely.

While Crystal Kolt kept applying for the rights for *Les Mis* and setting aside the refusals, the choir went forward with other musical theatre productions, producing Broadway musicals *Evita*, *Titanic*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Beauty and the Beast*, and *Chicago* as well

“The opportunity to learn from a professional director was one of the things that pushed me to volunteer. I could not have anticipated how much I would learn.”

Stacy Becker **ASSISTANT DIRECTOR**

as the premiere production of *Three Brides for Kasos*, and two productions of *Bombertown*, a musical written by Mark. With each production Crystal Kolt aimed to raise the bar, challenging performers and crew members to expand their skills, while also bringing in professionals to add new dimensions to the productions.

“Our first professional hired was a sound technician for our original musical *Bombertown*,” explains Crystal Kolt. “We progressed from hiring a sound technician to a lighting technician. When we were given the rights to produce *Titanic*, we decided that we wanted to give northern audiences the opportunity to hear a musical theatre production with orchestration. That is when we started coming up with a formula to hire qualified musicians. We contacted the University of Brandon, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as professional independent musicians. That led to connecting with a network of musicians from both provinces.” Through fundraising, grants, and donations from community organizations and businesses, the FFCC has been able to increase the number of professionals brought on board for each production.

Last spring, Crystal Kolt’s ship finally came in: Flin Flon had been granted the rights to produce *Les Misérables*.

Raising the bar... and leaping over it

Les Mis, as the production is widely known, is based on a French novel written by Victor Hugo. The story follows

protagonist Jean Valjean through a tumultuous life in 19th century France. With 11 principal actors, a 48-person ensemble, period costumes and complex battle scenes to be staged, *Les Mis* is a huge undertaking for a professional theatre company. For a volunteer-based community choir in a small northern city, it might be seen as downright crazy.

For Crystal Kolt and her team of drama-lovers, however, it is a dream come true, an opportunity to push the limits on what an amateur theatre group can create.

“Every time we raise the bar, we learn so much, meet more people, learn more about this art form that we love, become stronger internally as an organization, and ultimately can offer a better product for northern Manitobans and Saskatchewanians,” says Crystal Kolt. “It is always a little frightening to jump up towards that bar. I admire all of the people in our organization that eagerly accept the challenge.”

With characteristic ambition and optimism, Crystal Kolt started making calls and composing her dream team from local and provincial talents. For the first time in the history of the organization, the FFCC decided to take a major leap forward and hire a professional director. Based on the advice of several colleagues, Crystal Kolt ultimately selected Ann Hodges, a seasoned director whose credits include Manitoba Theatre Centre, Calgary Opera, Prairie Theatre Exchange, Edmonton Opera, Vancouver Opera, Great Canadian Theatre Company, and Opera Lyra.

Hodges’ breadth of directing experience, and her openness to working with amateur, emerging and professional artists made her a perfect fit for the FFCC. Hodges’ career is based in Winnipeg, so she worked with the FFCC to develop a schedule that would enable her to work in intensive periods with the cast and crew over the four-month production period and return to her other responsibilities in southern Manitoba in the interim.

Hodges spent one week in January and one week in February in Flin Flon and will return in April for the three weeks before the show opens on May 1. While in Winnipeg, Hodges provides guidance and feedback as needed online, but for the most part, the show is in the hands of the local support team: producer and artistic director Crystal Kolt, assistant director Stacy Becker, assistant second director Beth Heine, and stage manager Katy Anderson.

In a sense, this setup is ideal, as it enables the local team to learn from a seasoned professional and then practice those skills right away.

Two months in, the commitment and energy that the Flin Flon cast and crew are putting into the production are making it a rewarding experience for Hodges. “Everyone involved has a huge love for the project to begin with, and that is very infectious,” she says.

Over 100 local people are involved in the production on stage and off, and they are joined by a number of theatre professionals: fight choreographer Jacquie Loewen, set designer Dennis Wasylniuk, light designer Eric Bosse,

sound designer Chris Coyne, and 12 musicians for the orchestra. While Crystal Kolt and the FFCC hope the professionals will help bring the production to new heights, it is the volunteers who bring the daring dream to life, one tailored jacket, wooden barricade, and four-hour rehearsal at a time.

Learning process

“As a director, you can just direct the show, or you can empower people to become better artists,” Hodges ex-

plains. “I usually try to be the second type. Instead of telling you to exit stage left, I’ll try to help you figure out how to make those choices and explain what is informing the staging.”

Hodges appears to be meeting her target, as both actors and crew rave about how much they have learned in rehearsals so far.

“When I first started working with Ann on ‘I Dreamed a Dream’ she got me to answer a series of questions about *Fantine*,” says Katrina Windjack, who

was cast in the principal role. “It never occurred to me to ask those questions, but the answers really gave me insight into the character and how to play her.”

C.C. Trubiak, who plays Marius, noted that he has learned a great deal not only from Hodges’ instructions to him during rehearsals, but also her advice for other actors.

“Ann Hodges is incredibly creative, clear, and concise in her directing style, compassionate and positive yet very direct in conveying her needs and

Building the Barricade

Dennis Wasylyniuk **SET DESIGN**

Winnipeg-based set designer Dennis Wasylyniuk has been designing stage productions for over 40 years. He began working with larger productions while teaching in Thompson in the 1970s. Over his career he has designed about 30 shows, including three previous productions of *Les Mis*.

Once contracted for FFCC’s production, Wasylyniuk began his process in fall 2014, starting with data-gathering via Skype conversations and digital photos. Equipped with his knowledge of the spaces and scenes called for by the script, he assessed the available resources and physical environment for the production.

Les Mis presents a particular challenging for set designers due to the number of scenes to be staged.

“There are roughly 50 scenes or situations that have to be designed for,” Wasylyniuk says, “and

some of them last for only a few seconds.”

From Winnipeg, Wasylyniuk developed scale models and sketches for the musical, and in February he spent time in Flin Flon working with Ann Hodges to match the set design concept with her vision.

In the meantime, on the ground in Flin Flon, set manager Ken Pawlachuk ensures that all of the props get built on time and in line with the set design.

As performance dates inch closer, Wasylyniuk is producing a set of floor plans that document the planned layout for every scene or situation. He will oversee the execution of the plans on stage, making adaptations as needed.

Q. What is most interesting about this particular production in terms of set design?

A. *Les Mis* has a number of ele-

ments that make it a unique design challenge. The two most pressing ones are [first] the sheer number of scenes that have to be accommodated, all of which have to be in place at an exact point within a continuous musical score that doesn’t wait for anyone or anything.

The second is the challenge of creating the barricade in the second act. It is a crucial structure that most of the second act plays in and yet the score dictates that the barricade has to suddenly appear on stage during 27 seconds of music.

Q. Can you share your technique for handling this challenge?

A. The stage at the R.H. Channing Theatre does not allow for “flying” pieces of a set in from above, nor does it have much space to store parts of a set off stage, so I have designed this production in such a way that most of the set is in view for the whole show. It just moves and transforms to create different spaces. We use a lot of castors and wheels, on six moving platforms.

expectations,” says Crystal Kolt. “She is perfect for where we are right now as an organization.”

Creating authenticity

Fight choreographer Loewen, like Hodges, is based in Winnipeg, so she travels to Flin Flon to work with the cast in short, intensive sessions. She spent one week in Flin Flon in February, working alongside Hodges in rehearsals, and will return in April to work with the performers in the days leading up to the show.

With a profound understanding of stage combat, Loewen ensures that conflict scenes in *Les Mis* are safe for the performers; she also brings what she terms a “strong kinaesthetic sense” to the action on stage.

For Loewen, the key to good fight choreography is capturing emotional and physical truth in a fictional environment. “Even though it’s a musical, we want to believe it’s a real situation. You want to care about these characters,” she says. “It’s one thing to watch and think, ‘Oh, I remember that part where I was supposed to believe she was getting roughed up,’ then there is the more emotional sense of seeing someone who you’ve come to care about and worrying about what’s going to happen to her ... I think all art should move down from the brain to the heart.”

Loewen was impressed with the enthusiastic reaction she got from the cast, who were open to taking her suggestions and experimenting. “My job is to come here and build the thing that works, not babysit it,” she says. “It’s an exploratory process.”

Expanding musically

While working on *Les Mis* is a huge commitment for those involved,

it is also an enriching one for many participants.

Trubiak recalls how much he learned when Mel Braun, a vocal coach and professor at the University of Manitoba, worked with him, Bettger, and Craig Bancroft over Skype. Winnipeg-based tenor Aaron Hutton held a vocal session with the three performers as well. “It was fantastic because as an independent artist with no formal training, I valued the one-on-one time to broaden my skills,” says Trubiak, who plays the role of Marius. “The process for me has been one of great challenge but even more so, terrific pleasure. *Les Misérables* has presented a whole new world to me in terms of musical style.”

Hodges and Crystal Kolt both emphasize the importance of building these enrichment opportunities into the creation process for *Les Mis*. “I want it to be a good experience for everybody, and a rewarding experience that pays off in the future,” says Hodges. “Part of why I’m there is to pass on knowledge.”

Steady progress

Thanks to the hard work of the cast, crew, and support team in Flin Flon, Hodges saw marked growth during her last visit to Flin Flon, in mid-February. “It was satisfying and exciting to see how much progress they had made,” says Hodges, noting an improvement in confidence level for many actors, a better grasp of the music, and greater ownership of, and commitment to, their characters.

“It is very rewarding to see light bulbs go off, not just with the performers but the support team as well, assistant directors, the wardrobe staff, and set-building team. I saw so much of that happening, people stepping up and doing great work.”

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For the actors and crew, a sense of community and mutual support is key to their commitment to Les Mis. “Everyone is a tight-knit family, but very warm and welcoming,” says Bettger, who felt like part of the family

himself soon after joining the cast. “All the people I’m working with are such talented and wonderful people, you want to work with them. As exhausted as you might be, you just want to go there and be a part of it.”

Les Misérables will be performed on Friday through Sunday, May 1 to 3 at the R.H. Channing Auditorium in the Flin Flon Community Hall. Tickets are available now and can be purchased at Northern Rainbow’s End.



Lori Lawrence measures John Bettger, who plays the lead role of Jean Valjean, for one of his many costumes.

19th century costumes made in northern MB

Lori Lawrence **COSTUME DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION**

Lori Lawrence, a home economics teacher at Hapnot Collegiate in Flin Flon and member of the Flin Flon Community Choir, has worked on costume design and construction for FFCC productions for 19 years.

Many costumes are built from scratch, others are reworked from donated clothing or pieces created for past shows. Working with a team of fellow volunteers, Lori organizes upwards of 400 articles for a single show.

Q. How do you go about planning the costumes for a musical?

A. As soon as a musical show has been chosen, research begins with reading of the background information on the composer, his or her purpose in writing the story, the time period, and other versions of the musical that have already been presented around the world. Any shape of cloth or article of clothing becomes fair game as fabric for the creation of a piece for the show.

Living in the north does not always enable sewers easy access to a fabric store, but brief trips out of town, lists given to friends and neighbours, along with hunting through yard sale boxes provides a large amount of useful materials.

Q. How many people are working on the costumes for Les Mis?

A. Many period typical pieces are not easily accessible to our area so a group meets weekly to create those parts for the show. High school students, community members, and even the occasional visitor to our area have helped during past shows. A core group of seven to eight people, many of whom also sing in the choir, work cutting, sewing, and fitting the required garments.

Q. How many hours, on average, go into the creation of the costumes for FFCC musicals?

A. When an actor dons the appropriate articles of clothing the performance goes up a level, and more life is breathed into the scene. That elevation in energy and the satisfaction in the audience’s applause make the many hours taken to produce these products worth all the effort required. Love of the process prevents me from tallying the hours spent creating for stage.

THE ANNUAL VAL & IVOR HEDMAN

Centaloppet

STORY & PHOTOS BY DAVE PRICE

40 years of skiing, fun
& community



Skiers prepare for the 1978 Centaloppet

With the Flin Flon Ski Club preparing to celebrate its 40th annual Centaloppet this March, club vice-president Dave Price looks back on the history of a beloved community event

“What on earth is a loppet?” I hear you say. Fortunately, the Cross Country Canada website provides a detailed definition: “A great gathering of skiers who ski on a groomed trail either classic (diagonal stride) or free (skating technique) for various distances. Enormous amounts of food and drink are consumed during the event. After, there’s a party and celebratory banquet with awards and prizes and usually a dance. The loppet means different things to different people. For some it’s intense competition, for others it’s a re-

laxing way to spend a day outside, taking in the pristine beauty of the countryside or wilderness, and enjoying the home grown entertainment and great food and drink at the rest stops along the trail.”

Flin Flonners became familiar with the term in the early 1970s when we made contact with a group of friendly Scandinavian skiers in The Pas. A number of these—mostly Finns—had come over to work at CFI (now Tolko). Not only did they encourage us to develop our trail network here, they introduced us to racing and loppeting. At their cottages along the shores of beautiful Clearwater Lake, these hospitable folk also introduced us to the odd notion of steaming ourselves in their saunas, followed by rolling naked in the snow!

The Flin Flon Ski Club was established in the mid-1950s and was a hotbed of downhill skiing with rope-tows

on the Main and Baldy Hills. Then through the 1970s, Mother Nature decided to reduce snowfall in our area, which meant that maintaining those rocky downhill runs became problematic. That’s when a small group of us discovered the joys of cross-country skiing.

Ivor Hedman had been an active downhill skier since the early days of the club, but once cross-country took off, there was no stopping him, and he thought that everybody else should join him out on the trails.

Obviously the thing to do was organize a loppet. Ivor and his late wife Val, through their business Flin Flon Plumbing and Heating, put a huge effort into establishing the Centaloppet in 1976 and into sponsoring it for many years after that. The mass start for that first event was at Centoba Park—hence the name.



The 40th anniversary of the Flin Flon centaloppet marks the first year of its new name, after founders and long-time supporters Val and Ivor Hedman.

The idea was to bring together as many local skiers as possible once a year to ski along an easy and enjoyable route. You can race if you like, but the main idea is to be part of the crowd. We want to see grandparents and kids and everybody in between having fun out there.

For the more competitive, there is of course the prestigious Centaloppet Cup. This goes not to the first across the line, but to an individual, young or old, male or female, whose time has been adjusted according to an ingenious handicapping system. In the inaugural event, the cup was won by

CENTALOPPET 40 YEARS

61-year-old Fred Bradt; last year it went to 9-year-old Caleb Baynton.

In addition, there are always awards in a variety of categories such as happiest face, largest family, youngest skier, most dynamic and so on.

At the ski club's annual general meeting in April 2014, it was decided that the event should be renamed in honour of its founders and long-time sponsors.

This year, the mass start for the Val and Ivor Hedman Centaloppet will be held on Beaver Pond below the ski chalet at 2 pm on Sunday March 8. The finish—after an easy 3.4 kilometre ski—is at the chalet. All skiers are welcome, and there is no charge to participate. Register for the 40th Centaloppet at the Flin Flon Ski Club chalet between 1 and 1:30 pm on March 8. Visit www.flinflonskiclub.com for information.

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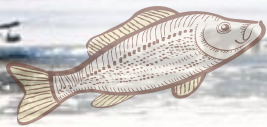
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THE MOODIE FAMILY

Canadian adventurers

STORY BY JIM PARRIS

Many of the Moodie clan have called the unique town of Cranberry Portage, Manitoba their home. Most of the Moodie men whom I knew worked in extensive remote areas of northern Manitoba in mineral exploration, commercial fishing, trapping, or guiding tourists. These men are the sons of Alex Dunbar Moodie and his wife, Rosa.

Alex Dunbar Moodie was the son of John Douglas Moodie and Geraldine Fitzgibbon. Those three saw more of this country, and had more adventures, than most Canadians can dream of; they are the main subjects of this story.

For many years, Tom Moodie, who still resides in Cranberry, had told me about his paternal grandfather, J. D. Moodie, and how he had risen through the ranks of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP). When I read an insightful book entitled *In Search of Geraldine Moodie* I discovered that Geraldine Moodie, a daring 19th century photographer, was Tom's paternal grandmother. Intrigued, I decided to research the Moodie family and found they had a colourful history.



A Geraldine Moodie portrait from a Cree sun dance Battleford, SK, 1896.

Photo by Geraldine Moodie
Canada Patent & Copyright Office /
Library & Archives Canada /
C-019000A



Geraldine Moodie / Library & Archives Canada / C-001814



Royal Canadian Mounted Police / Library &
Archives Canada / C-089351

Other Geraldine Moodie portraits now housed at Library and Archives Canada include an Ivalik woman and child, also known as Kookoolshook and child (far left) and a photo of an Inuit widow with three children, taken in Nunavut between the years 1904 and 1905 (left).



Photo by Geraldine Moodie, courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/C-001772
 Constable Alex Moodie (highlighted, top right) and his father, Superintendent J.D. Moodie (highlighted, left), with the Royal North West Mounted Police in Fullerton, Northwest Territories, now Nunavut.

A remarkable couple

John Douglas Moodie was born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1849 to George Moodie and Mary Hunter Smith. His parents naturally hoped he would do great things. J.D. proved to be a mighty man; his 32-year career as an officer in the RNWMP and NWMP is the stuff of legends, including tours of duty in western Canada, the western and eastern Arctic, and three years with the Canadian Mounted Rifles in South Africa.

Geraldine was born in Canada in 1854, the third child of Charles and Agnes Fitzgibbon. While Geraldine was on a trip from Canada to England in her 20s, she met her distant cousin J.D., who was serving in the first City of London Rifle Brigade.

The two married on June 8, 1878, in Surrey, England. They lived in England for several years, and their first child, a

daughter, was born there. The family moved to Canada in 1880, where their remaining children were born.

Geraldine Moodie: frontier photographer

Granddaughter of famous pioneer author Susanna Moodie, Geraldine Moodie broke new ground herself. She became a noted frontier photographer and illustrator while raising six children all over the country. Demonstrating a talent for painting from an early age, Geraldine helped her mother Agnes illustrate the book *Canadian Wild Flowers*, written by her famous aunt, Catherine Parr Traill. As she travelled with J.D. to many of his remote postings in Canada, Geraldine documented and illustrated the plant life in many of these areas. She began experimenting with photography early

in her married life and went on to capture remarkable images of the people and places of remote areas of Canada.

In 1998 Donny White, the director of the Medicine Hat Museum and Art Gallery, published *In Search of Geraldine Moodie*, in which he documents his 17-year search for Geraldine Moodie's photographs and artworks, which reside in various museums and archives across Canada, the United States and Great Britain.

White tells how much of Moodie's collection was largely forgotten since her death in 1945 and how his search became a serendipitous adventure.

"Piecing together a portrait of this remarkable woman was like working on a giant jigsaw puzzle," he recalls in the introduction to the book. "As each piece fell into place I became more determined than ever to discover the woman behind the lens."



Submitted photo

J.D. Moodie: a man of the law

J. D. Moodie joined the RNWMP in 1884 and moved to Calgary as a recruiting officer in 1886. He served in the Riel Rebellion and was often selected for special services. In the book *Klondike*, author Pierre Berton refers to an epic journey Moodie undertook in 1897, when he commanded a patrol to chart a travel route across the Rockies and through British Columbia to the Yukon gold fields. After 14 months of hacking and paddling through 2,600 kilometres (1,600 miles) of wilderness, Moodie arrived in Fort Selkirk on October 24, 1898. The trip consisted of a series of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, but Moodie conquered them with ingenuity and courage. It is a remarkable, unforgettable read.

Colonel Moodie later joined the Canadian Mounted Rifles (CMR) and served with distinction on two tours in the South African Boer War from 1900 to 1903. In 1903 J.D. was posted to Dawson City, Yukon, in command of a detachment of the RNWMP.

In 1906 J.D. and Geraldine moved to a posting in Hudson's Bay, where they lived for two years.

In 1909 J.D. Moodie returned to Halifax. Later that year he travelled to

Churchill and went on to build posts at Fullerton Inlet, Chesterton, and Churchill. In 1911 Moodie took a contingent of men from the RNWMP to the coronation of King George V.

J.D. retired from the force in 1915 and served as a police magistrate at Maple Creek until 1930.

Tom Moodie, now 75, is Alex and Rosa's youngest son and one of J. D.'s grandsons.

Tom has always been proud of his grandfather's storied career and recalls that J.D. followed the letter of the law very strictly. When stationed in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Tom recalls, one of J.D.'s duties was to act as magistrate, a task he carried out with much zeal. This attitude did not go over well with many of the local residents. Moodie was on a patrol in the Meadow Lake area of Saskatchewan, and he and his constables had run out of grub. Cold and hungry, they staggered into the camp of a local Métis trapper. He invited them into his cabin to warm up and partake of moose stew. Over supper, the trapper described the circumstances and location where he had shot the moose. Several days later, J.D. returned and issued the man a citation, after learning that the man didn't have the legal right to shoot the moose J.D. had so enjoyed eating.

Alex Moodie: building a legacy in Manitoba

Alex (aka Alec) Dunbar Moodie, Geraldine and J.D.'s third child, was born in Brandon, Manitoba, in 1881. He was anxious to prove his worth and went to work at age 14 as a cowpuncher on the 76 Ranch near Crane Lake, Saskatchewan. Later he worked at the Turkey Track Ranch south of Swift Current. By age 20, he had enlisted in the Canadian Mounted Rifles and

served in the Boer War in South Africa, like his father. Alex was transferred to the Canadian Scouts (military) and returned to Canada in 1902.

In 1906 the minister of the interior, Frank Oliver, instructed Alex to scout the Peace River area. Following that, Alex was ordered to pick up a pack-horse train to traverse The Pas territory, near the border of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Later that year, he joined the CP Railway in Calgary and became a locomotive engineer.

Moodie left the CPR in 1910 to take charge of an expedition to estimate the amount of merchantable timber ravaged by a forest fire in northwestern Ontario. After completing that project he returned to The Pas in 1911.

A few years later, Moodie met Rosa Collins, an Aboriginal woman from northern Manitoba. Rosa was the daughter of David Collins, the man now widely credited with guiding prospector Tom Creighton to the rusty sulphide showing that proved to be the main Flin Flon orebody of copper, zinc, gold and silver.

Rosa and Alex were married in 1914. From that time onward, Alex believed the great potential of northern Manitoba held his future. He was one of the first settlers at Cranberry Portage, on the east side portage of beautiful Lake Athapapuskow. Alex and Rosa had 14 children, eight boys and six girls, three of whom died young. Tom Moodie recalls that his grandfather J. D. did not approve of the relationship and disowned his son after the wedding. The two never spoke again. According to White's research, Geraldine continued to correspond with Alex.

Geraldine died in Midnapore, Alberta in 1945. Two years later, her husband J.D. died in Calgary. Alex passed away in 1962. Tom Moodie is the last living child of Alex and Rosa Moodie.



Could be Time for Some Financial Spring Cleaning

LENNA GOWENLOCK, EDWARD JONES

For many people, a weekend of vigorous house cleaning is a rite of spring. And spring can also be an excellent time to clean up your financial situation — with RRSP season and the filing of personal income taxes now behind you. Here are some actions that almost everyone can take to make their financial lives tidier.

Organize your financial records

If you find you always file your taxes at the last minute, now is the perfect time to organize your financial records, because you've probably got them close at hand. And it's not just a matter of having your brokerage and RRSP statements in nice, neat piles. Once you've got these documents together, you might see opportunities for consolidation. For example, you may have RRSPs with different financial institutions. By moving them all to one provider, you could save some fees, reduce your paperwork, and find it's simpler to manage your investments.

Assess your portfolio's diversification

Over time, you may have built a sizable investment portfolio. But if it lacks diversification, you may be hindering your progress toward your goals. While diversification does not guarantee a profit or protect against a loss, you may find it's the best approach. So look for opportunities to ensure ample diversity with different types of securities, taking into account your risk tolerance and time horizon.

Review your "systematic" investing

Many years ago, you might have started systematically moving money from your savings account into an investment. But perhaps the circumstances of your life changed and you needed money for other purposes so you reduced or stopped making those investments. Scrutinize your situation and see if you can get back on track with your savings through automatic investments. A systematic investment plan does not assure a profit, and does not protect against loss in declining markets, but is a great way to maintain your investing discipline.

Check your beneficiaries*

Beneficiary designations on financial documents are extremely important, because they may supersede even the instructions in your will. Over time, your family situation may have changed, through death, divorce, remarriage or the birth of new children, so you should periodically review all your beneficiary designations, as well as any estate planning documents that you have such as your will and powers of attorney.

Examine your insurance coverage**

When you have a young family, you need a certain amount of life insurance coverage to provide for some major obligations — such as your mortgage, education for your kids, or perhaps some retirement

funds for your spouse. But when your children have grown, your mortgage is paid and your spouse has decades' worth of retirement savings, your insurance needs may change. At the same time, you may find other uses for insurance. Take some time and review your insurance coverage with your financial advisor*.

Be a wise snowbird

For people returning to Canada after wintering south of the border, you may want to review what you want to do with your U.S. dollars. Instead of converting all of it back to Canadian currency, one convenient option to consider is purchasing some U.S. dollar bonds, which can provide income in U.S. dollars. You might also want to ensure that you have an optimal savings account set up. People who have investments in U.S. and Canadian dollars may find that having a savings account in both currencies is a wise choice to handle ongoing accrual from sources such as stock dividends and bond interest. While away, their money is working hard for them. When they come back, there's easy access to the funds, with everything consolidated to keep things simple.

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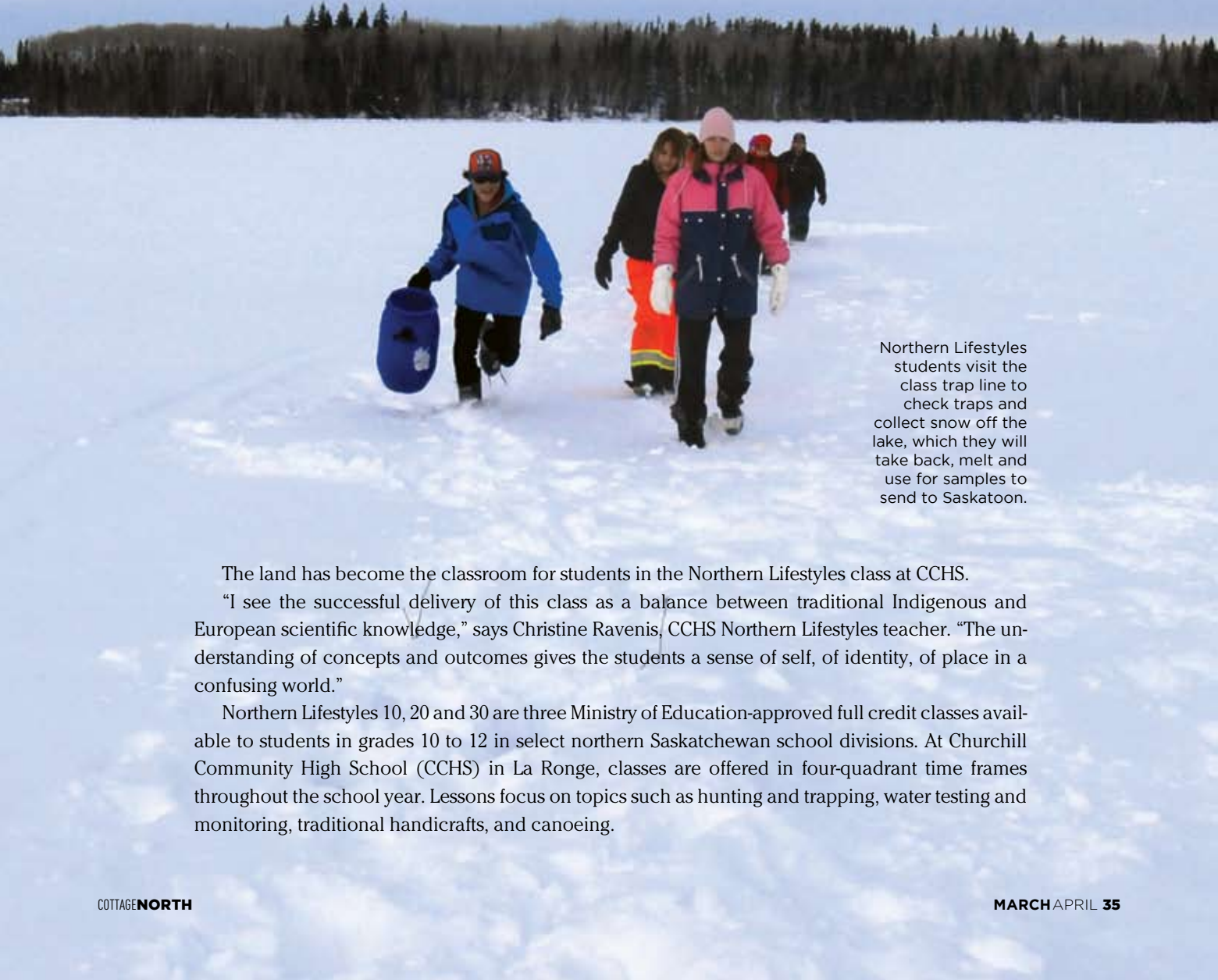
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Northern Education

A HANDS-ON APPROACH

STORY & PHOTOS BY VALERIE G. BARNES-CONNELL

In the small northern community of La Ronge, an innovative, locally developed class is challenging educational norms, and changing how students perceive their world



Northern Lifestyles students visit the class trap line to check traps and collect snow off the lake, which they will take back, melt and use for samples to send to Saskatoon.

The land has become the classroom for students in the Northern Lifestyles class at CCHS.

“I see the successful delivery of this class as a balance between traditional Indigenous and European scientific knowledge,” says Christine Ravenis, CCHS Northern Lifestyles teacher. “The understanding of concepts and outcomes gives the students a sense of self, of identity, of place in a confusing world.”

Northern Lifestyles 10, 20 and 30 are three Ministry of Education-approved full credit classes available to students in grades 10 to 12 in select northern Saskatchewan school divisions. At Churchill Community High School (CCHS) in La Ronge, classes are offered in four-quadrant time frames throughout the school year. Lessons focus on topics such as hunting and trapping, water testing and monitoring, traditional handicrafts, and canoeing.



While much of the class involves outdoor activities, there is also classroom work. Tom Sanderson, a commercial fisherman from La Ronge, teaches students about filleting, including small distinctions related to different varieties of fish. L to R: Jared Elderkin, Henry Bird, Joseph McKenzie, Keegan Hopper, Brayden Gale and Cody Schwan.



In this class you get a bunch of hands-on learning, You get to learn from your mistakes, you get to figure it out on your own, with guidance, and I just find that a much better way to remember what you learned.

Leah Howe, student

← Student Monty McKenzie looks on as class elder Ida Tremblay demonstrates how to skin a weasel. She instructs students to work around a gland that, if broken, would not only smell up the classroom, but the whole school. Tremblay delicately and patiently skinned two weasels, avoiding the gland on each.



← Pam Belcher from the Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES) and Joe Smultz, a professor with the University of Saskatchewan and volunteer with SES, teach students in the Northern Lifestyles class the rudiments of testing water quality.

Building connections

Ravenis sees herself as a class facilitator, rather than a teacher in the classic sense, as developing partnerships with community members, organizations and institutions is a large part of her role.

This focus on collaboration is integral to the design, and the message, of the lessons in Northern Lifestyles.

"It isn't just the act of going out and cutting wood together, learning how to use the saw, it's the act of us all being together, working with each other," says Ravenis. "There's a connection, a relationship that's built within the classroom."

The Northern Lifestyles curriculum is itself a real-life example of teamwork: the Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB), Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division

and Northern Lights School Division (NLSO) worked together to create the curriculum, and the class was approved by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education.

This approach seems to have rubbed off on the students.

"In other classes, no one talks to me and I just do my work," says grade 10 student Vivika Dussion. "When I come into this class, everybody's talking to one another, everybody's doing teamwork."

Honouring elders

The presence of an elder in the classroom is essential to Northern Lifestyles, as it is taught at CCHS.

Elder Ida Tremblay, a member of the Lac La Ronge Indian Band (LLRIB), has worked with these classes since 2011.

"My culture is very important to me," explains Tremblay, who sees her role as one of support, guidance and teaching. "We've lost so many things in our culture and I'm always happy to come to the school, and I tell them stories about a long time ago."

Tremblay grew up on northern trap lines, and she shares her knowledge of this lifestyle with the students. She has helped students make traditional products like mitts and mukluks, while also sharing the cultural and historical significance behind the handicrafts.

In the last quadrant, students made a moss bag, a traditional baby carrier that is still used by many First Nations.

"I told the kids how important those were a long time ago 'cause that was the means of keeping the baby warm and clean," says Tremblay. "We

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

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Jared Elderkin works on his snow shelter during an overnight winter survival camp. Northern Lifestyles' curriculum is seasonally based; in winter students develop skills in ice fishing, snowmobiling, trapping and winter survival.

continued to use them even after that because the babies were so cozy in them, and were able to sleep longer.”

Building northern knowledge through partnerships

Northern Lifestyles students at CCHS benefit from educational partnerships with such entities as the Saskatchewan Environmental Society (SES), University of Saskatchewan, University of Manitoba, Parks Canada, various branches of the LLRIB, SaskTel, the Ministry of Environment including conservation officers, the forestry management centre and wildfire fighters, and wildlife biologists.

The partnership with SES, for example, was piloted in fall of 2012 when SES staff members travelled to La Ronge and facilitated workshops on water monitoring and testing.

This relationship continues today,

with students testing water throughout the year in various outdoor situations. After freeze-up, the students collect samples from ice fishing holes or they melt snow, and follow procedures to ensure samples are tested and properly handled before they are shipped to Saskatoon. Students perform numerous tasks such as testing pH levels, sulphate and dissolved oxygen in the samples.

“The students gained knowledge of how we are so intricately connected with the water through knowledge of watersheds, water systems in northern Saskatchewan and issues around the protection of northern waters through the workshops,” Ravenis wrote in a report on the SES relationship.

In reflecting on the last quadrant, grade-10 student Leah Howe found she had gained a more profound understanding of water. For her, the learning in the class is “not at just a mental level, but an emotional level.”

Connecting the community to the classroom

In addition to partnerships with organizations, Ravenis has built relationships with individual resource people from the community. Students learn from locals whose skills relate to northern lifestyles, such as fish filleting, wilderness survival or safe chainsaw use.

For some of these local instructors, the teaching experience has brought unexpected rewards.

“One resource person dropped out of this school many years ago due to racism and whatever,” recalls Ravenis. “Never in his wildest dreams would he have ever thought that where he’s been from there to now, and the knowledge that he’s acquired and gained in small motors and in life experiences, that he would be standing in front of a group of high school students teaching them at this stage in his life ... And for [the



Teacher Christine Ravenis (seated, holding out a fork) encourages students in the Northern Lifestyles class to try fish eyeball, considered a highly nutritious food. From left, student Mandy Flatland, Northern Teacher Education Program (NORTEP) intern Gail Clarke, students Kaylara Gray and Jonah Ratt, Ravenis and students Henry Bird and Derek Elliot gathered around a campfire during a 2013 class.

students] to feel so connected to him and realize he's just like them, with the struggles that he's had."

Learning from the land

The Northern Lifestyles class has a trap line with a small cabin, which they use for collecting water for testing, trapping, snowshoeing, learning about the snowmobile and canoeing. In the last quadrant, the students worked with Murray Gillespie, a wild-life biologist with the Indigenous Land Management Institute of the University of Saskatchewan, which involved setting up trail cams (cameras) on the trapline so they could track and study woodland caribou. The equipment is on permanent loan to the class and a GPS unit has been added recently.

Patrick McCormick was a student in the last quadrant. He says he learned about the class when he was in grade 8, and has been waiting to enroll

ever since. McCormick is knowledgeable about the ways of the bush; in class he has an opportunity to share that knowledge and enhance his own.

"In this class we get to go out and do actual activities outdoors and we're still learning while we do them," says Vivika Dussion. "There are different ways of learning. When you are actually doing something ... you can remember it for a long time."

Throughout the year, Ravenis aims to expose the class to as much northern culture as possible, and connect students to unique areas of knowledge and ways of life.

"To be put in this spot is a sacred responsibility that I don't take lightly," she says. "It wouldn't be to the level it's at if it wasn't for the elders ... as well as the community members who recognize the validity and authenticity of what is happening in the classroom and its importance."

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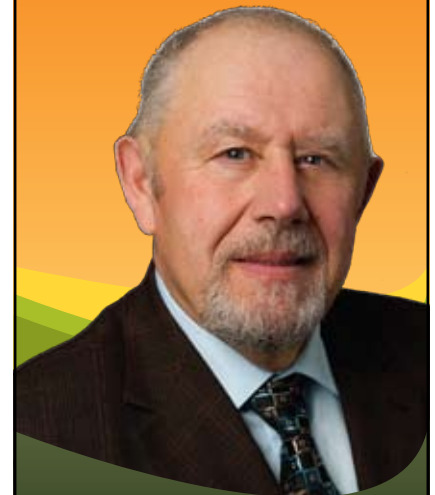
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Near death inspires new life

STORY BY MARC JACKSON

Carried on the din of winding guitar, staccato bass, and a strong backbeat, Robb Nash brought his message to Snow Lake's J.H. Kerr School secondary student body.

At first Nash's presentation had everyone smiling along with him, but as his narrative unfolded it became clear that his isn't really the type of story that makes one smile.

At the age of 17, Nash and a few friends were out for a joyride when they passed a car while speeding on an icy highway. They hit a semi head on.

Miraculously, three of the boys survived with just superficial injuries; however, Nash was severely injured. He lost a portion of his skull and actually died at the scene. He was revived and had a titanium plate put in his head, but the prognosis was not good. Doctors felt if he ever did awaken from his coma, he would be seriously brain damaged.

Nash did awaken three months later and regained his memory; however, his recall of the accident and the time shortly before it were completely erased.

These days, Nash shares his story so that others don't have to die before they live, like he did. He gave up a promising music career in order to carry his message to the people who need to hear it. Through the Robb Nash project, Nash and his band perform for youth around the country, and don't charge schools a fee for the performances.

At the Snow Lake high school, students hung on his every word. Nash was real; he spoke with emotion. Most of all, he'd been to some very dark places and made it back whole. He talked about teens who have heard his message and approached him afterwards, handing over suicide notes that they had written. He talked about kids who heard his words and decided to end long histories of self-abuse, contacting him months later to show arms that no longer felt the slice of a razorblade.

Nash's message was, in a sense, music to this crowd's ears.



Musician and inspirational speaker Robb Nash visited Snow Lake where he talked to students about how nearly dying in a car accident has turned his life in a new direction.

Photo courtesy Robb Nash

WILDLIFE

The Fox

STORY BY GERRY CLARK

Mel Reich photographed these two local foxes at play in Bakers Narrows, MB.

In many parts of the world, the fox is reviled, and in some places hunted to near extinction, but not here in Flin Flon. Here, foxes are loved and admired like no other wild animal. Nobody wants to see them hurt or injured, and many people even work hard at trying to befriend them.

There are more than 40 species of fox around the world, and the red fox is the largest, though their size varies widely from country to country. Foxes eat approximately a kilogram per day, and they are true omnivores; they eat just about anything, including plants, insects, and earthworms. Even jam sandwiches!

Foxes can run with the fastest, up to 72.4 kilometres per hour (45 mph), and they can jump a two-metre high fence.

Foxes generally live only one to three years. They tend to be monogamous, and though they don't generally travel in packs, families will stick together with unbred vixens and dogs (male



The red fox species can have a variety of coat colours including this fox with a darker coat, known as a cross fox.

Photo by Mel Reich

foxes) helping to raise the young.

Foxes are loners when they are foraging for food, but they are actually very social. They have 28 different sounds that allow them to talk to each other, and they can identify each other's voices from long distance.

Foxes are more like cats than dogs in many ways. For example, the eyes of a fox feature vertical slits for pupils (like a cat) which gives them great night vision. They are good climbers:

they stalk squirrels and birds on rooftops and up trees. Foxes will sometimes sleep in trees. They have an elegant walk that is more feline than canine. They walk on their toes! And they have whiskers not only on their face, but also on their wrists, which gives them improved balance and allows them to find their way through very dark places.

Although people have succeeded

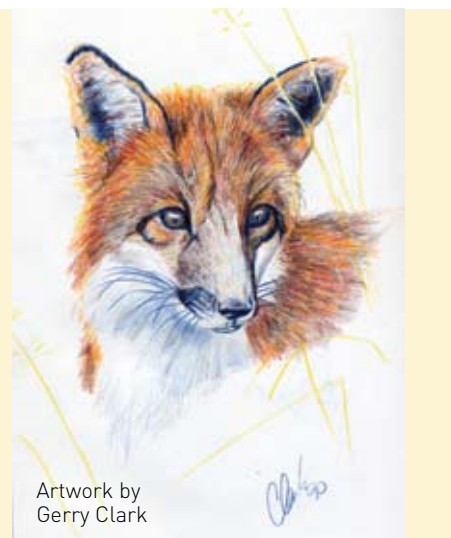
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Coats of many colours

The so-called silver foxes we see in the North are the same species as red foxes, but their scruffy dark coat shows that they have a slightly different genetic makeup (not unlike hair colour in humans). Numerous colour coats are possible within the red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) spe-

cies, including silver and cross foxes. Each documented variation is called a coat morph.

Foxes with different coat morphs can be born to the same litter, depending on parentage. In the past, silver foxes have been highly prized by fur traders.



Artwork by Gerry Clark

A Walk with my Dog

POEM BY SHEILA MARCHANT

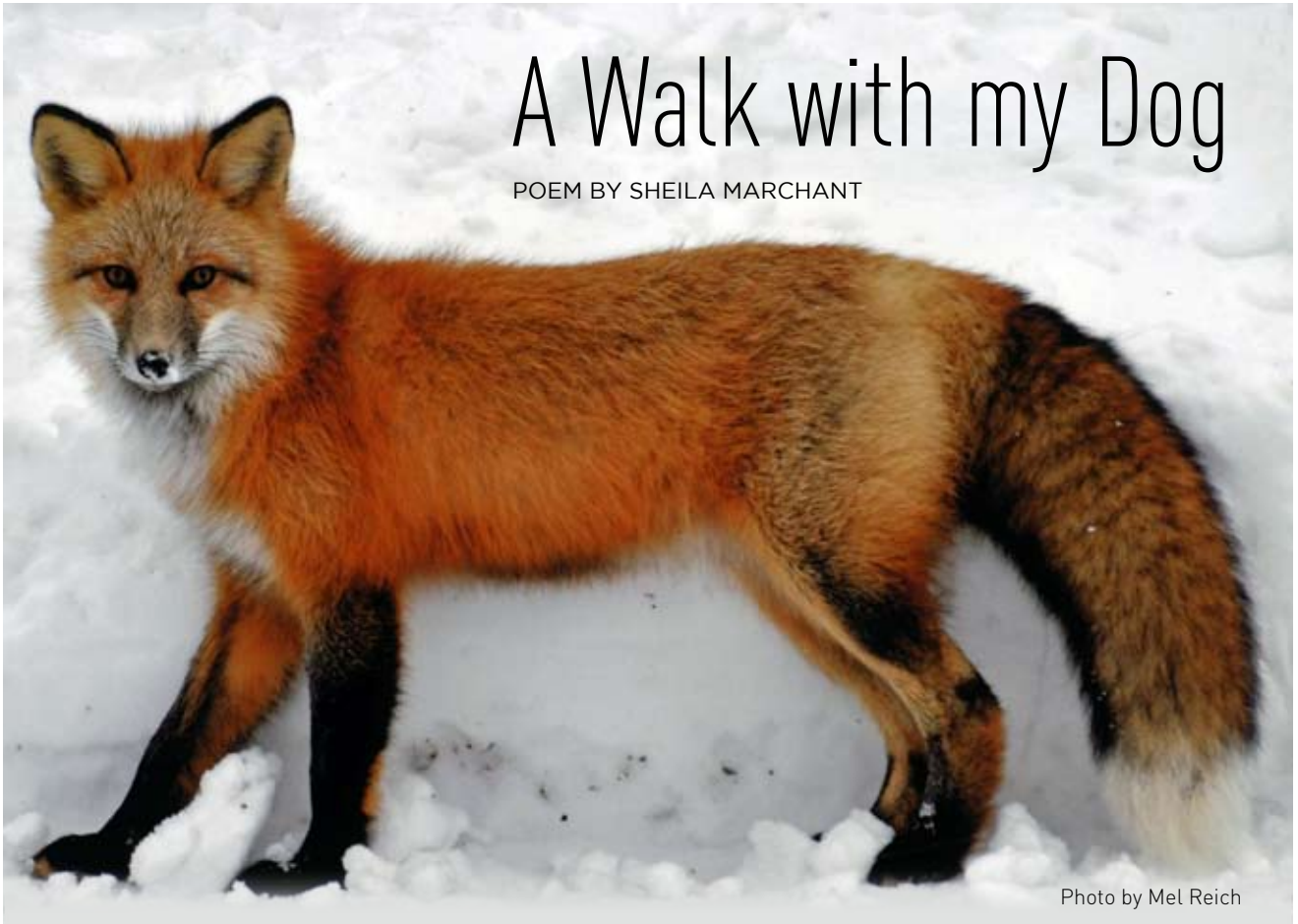


Photo by Mel Reich

He came out of nowhere, the fox from his lair
As though he were shaped from the mist in the air
And he paused for a moment to stand and stare
His posture, just briefly, a challenge, a dare —

But no lip was curled back and no teeth were laid bare
There was no ill will, not even a glare
For he must have decided — no threat from this pair
And the next thing we knew — he was no longer there

in befriending foxes, efforts to domesticate them are doomed to failure. Foxes are wild animals, no matter how trusting they become. They can't, for example, resist tunnelling, even indoors, so they can be very hard on carpets. And apparently the smell of their urine is worse than the scent of a skunk, which is something well-intentioned humans might discover too late.

What is truly impressive is the pervasiveness of the fox as a symbol in human culture. German general Rommell was feared and respected for his cleverness, and his nickname, Desert Fox, seems appropriate.

A silver fox in modern slang is an attractive older man like George Clooney. And we've all heard the words vixen, fox, or foxy lady.

Foxes are prominent in folklore around the world as sly, deceitful rogues. A good example is Aesop's Fables where many stories like "The Fox and the Grapes" and "The Fox and the Crow" cast the fox as a clever villain.

In popular parlance there are several expressions based upon people's perception of the fox as being clever. If you are 'out-foxed' you are outsmarted. Even Shakespeare made use of this popular symbol to make a point with

"...treason is but trusted like the fox" in Henry IV.

The list goes on and on: Zorro (whose name means fox in Spanish) always outwitted the bad guys; Disney's Robin Hood was played by a fox, who of course took from the rich and gave to the poor, and Swiper, the fox in *Dora the Explorer*, is always trying to sneak items away, hindering the adventures of the main character

In Finnish mythology, foxes were credited with causing the Northern Lights, and so the Finns call the phenomenon Revontulet, meaning fox fires.

a good taste

Pan-fried Pickerel 2 ways

Battered fish

Amie Roy and her husband Lee Raye found this simple recipe several years ago and have tweaked it to perfection over time.

Ingredients

- 4-6 pickerel fillets
- 2 cups flour
- 1 ½ tsp salt
- 1 ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 3 tbsp vinegar (estimated – adjust to taste)

Blend first four ingredients together and add water to make a heavy paste.

Blend in vinegar. This will make the paste frothy and add a slight vinegar flavour, so don't add too much.

Dunk fillets into batter. Fry in hot oil.

Serve with lemon wedges.

Crispy pickerel with rice pilaf

Cornstarch is the secret ingredient for crispier pan-fried pickerel, says Melanie Rodabaugh of Flin Flon, who shared this family recipe with us. She serves this with potatoes or a wild rice pilaf.

Ingredients

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 4-6 pickerel fillets | dash salt and pepper |
| ½ cup buttermilk | paprika to taste |
| 1 cup flour | cooking oil |
| 2 tbsp cornstarch | butter |

Dredge each fillet in buttermilk, then coat in a mixture of flour, cornstarch, salt, pepper and paprika. Heat oil and butter together in a large pan. Pan-fry fillets until brown and flaky – the thickest part of the fish should pull apart easily. Flavour with vinegar or lemon slices.

Wild rice pilaf

- 1 cup cooked wild rice
- 1 cup cooked white or brown rice
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- ¼ cup celery, chopped
- ¼ cup carrots, chopped

Sauté chopped onion, celery and carrots in oil. Add mixture of cooked wild rice and cooked white or brown rice. Serve warm with pan-fried pickerel.

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How a Thompson businesswoman is revitalizing Aboriginal culture through local partnerships

Jean Merasty

Building pathways to understanding

STORY BY PENNY BYER

“When I look at Thompson, I see that despite a population that is nearly one-third Aboriginal, there is very little Aboriginal culture here, in terms of dress and practising the teachings,” says Jean Merasty.

She is turning that tide with Tawipisim, a small business that teaches locals and tourists about Aboriginal cultural practices and ways of life.

The dream

Merasty grew up in Brochet, Manitoba. Her family was poor, and everyone had to work hard to make a better life for themselves. She earned her way through post-secondary education and a management degree.

In 1991 Merasty moved to Thompson and accepted a position with the Keewatin Tribal Council. She now works for provincial government.

Despite her success, Merasty still had a dream to operate her own business. In the summer of 2014, she launched Tawipisim, envisioning the business as a cultural tourism experience focusing on the Aboriginal — mainly Cree — culture of northern Manitoba. The business is named in honour of Merasty’s great-great-grandfather, who was known by the name Tawipisim before being given a European name. The word *tawipisim* means pathway to the sun in the Cree language.

Promoting cultural knowledge

Through a web of local partnerships, Merasty is offering tourists and locals the opportunity to understand Aboriginal cultural practices through jigging classes, birdwatching outings, drumming lessons, beading workshops and other unique programs.



Photo submitted by Jean Merasty

Jean Merasty (right) teaches dancing, beading and traditional Aboriginal crafts.

Five Tawipisim tipis serve as gathering places and as workshop venues where Merasty teaches a variety of crafts developed by Aboriginal people. In the beadworking workshops, people

learn to make hair accessories or moccasins. They can also learn to make dream catchers, prepare bannock, or practise the art of drumming.

Tawipisim is expanding its services to include an Aboriginal school of dance and music. Already in place is the jigging. “We are now adding traditional, jingle, fancy dances and the floor drum, as well,” says Merasty. “This is in preparation for the upcoming pow wow in early July.”

Merasty is partnering with other local organizations to organize this summer pow wow.

“Ideally, it would be a two-day pow wow and would be both a competitive and a traditional event. That would be good for the local economy. But if funding does not come through, we may just introduce the concept through a mini pow wow during Canada Day.”

Building partnerships

“The idea is to promote Aboriginal culture and dance,” she explains. “Although I do most of the planning and work myself, I also rely on other people and organizations. The partnerships are valuable.”

These partnerships include using the skills of individuals such as Ricky Pronteau, who teaches jigging. Or they can include organizations, such

as the Manitoba Métis Federation, which provides space for jigging lessons or Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakinak, which provides space for a pow wow club.

Cultural tourism, year-round

The various dancing, craft, drumming, fiddling, and cultural teaching classes are open to all age groups and to anyone who crosses the threshold of the tipi.

“I target tourists in summer,” Merasty says, “because there are not a lot of tourism-related activities in Thompson. People need to stop here en route to Churchill. I am linked to Travel Manitoba and to Tourism North’s websites. One of the tourist activities I hope to start this summer is canoeing and bird watching. Bird watching is supposed to be very popular with eco-tourism, and a canoe trip to Manassan Falls would be a wonderful experience.”

When the tipis are not in use for Jean’s planned activities, they are available for rental by the day or for weekend events in the summer months. “One of the local organizations has expressed an interest in doing some of their programming in the tipis,” she said.

Tawipisim is active in the winter as well. The pow wow club teaches adults and youth a variety of dances, like the jingle dance, fancy shawl dance, and grass dance.

During the colder months, Merasty plans programming and sews jingle dresses and other attire in preparation. These items will be sold through the business, along with moccasins, dream catchers, and other items.



Photo by Penny Byer

Thompson entrepreneur Jean Merasty offers tourists and locals the opportunity to understand Aboriginal cultural practices through her newly hatched business, Tawipisim. Learn more at www.tawipisim.com.

A social purpose

“I have a soft spot for homeless people,” says Merasty. “I try to reach them, so they can acknowledge their culture and be proud of it, so they know where they came from and what they can be. I know this is not a business practice, but I can use my business to help in this way.”

Merasty works towards this goal by maintaining a local employment database and helping those who may face challenges finding work.

“Maybe the person is new to Thompson or has limited job experience; maybe they are retired and want only temporary work; or maybe they have some other reason for having a

hard time getting into the workforce,” Merasty says. “Regardless of their challenges, I put them into a database, and when an employer is looking for part-time or temporary help on short notice, I can link them up.”

Merasty has large, diverse goals for a business that is basically a one-person show. Whether it is making jingle dresses, designing a website, or dealing with city zoning bylaws, she does most of the work. “I have helpers, sure. My daughter helps. Friends volunteer. Organizations step up to help. But right now it’s all baby steps. I am still looking for a permanent location. Once that happens, you will see it get bigger and better.”

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