

Plain & Valley

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Rebuilding the Métis culture, cart by cart

BY CHRIS ISTACE

Armand Jerome and Fabien Leclair are literally following the paths of their ancestors.

Jerome is related to Gabriel Dumont, a buffalo hunter and Métis general under the leadership of Louis Riel.

Leclair's family-roots come from the Waywayseecappo First Nation in western Manitoba.

Jerome and Leclair's ancestral trails meet in one place; Fort Ellice near St. Lazare. Dumont spent time there and the site was where the Waywayseecappo leadership signed Treaty 4 in 1874.

More than 130 years later, Jerome and Leclair are retracing a trek from Virden, Man. to Fort Ellice in Red River carts, the vehicle of important cultural significance as a symbol of the Métis people.

On Monday, about 12 people—five riding in two Red River carts and seven on horseback—started the 2009 Red River Cart Métis Journey. Jerome—the trek's organizer, trail boss and president of the Red River Métis Heritage Group based in St. Norbert, Man.—and Leclair were among them.

Last week, the group meandered along grid roads and dirt trails from Virden to Fort Ellice in time for a Métis celebration at the fort site on Saturday. This week, they trucked their carts and horses to Lebret, where they will continue their journey to Regina in time for an occasion on July 20 marking the anniversary of the Louis Riel trial.

Jerome said the Red River Mé-



Chris Istace photo

Participants in the Red River Cart Métis Journey amble along Heritage Road about 20 kilometres north of Virden last Monday on their way to Fort Ellice, where they held a Métis celebration on Saturday. The journey will end in Regina on July 20, the same day as an event marking the anniversary of the Louis Riel trial.

tis Journey, which has been held five times in the last eight years, is part of a resurgence in Métis culture, both among the public and among people with Métis

ancestry.

Culturally, the Métis are beginning to reclaim pride in their heritage.

"For over a hundred years after the fall of Batache, the Métis have been silent due to fear of persecution and discrimination. Because of this, they were only known as the forgotten people," Jerome said.

"This resurgence is changing all that and we are now coming back to claim our heritage . . . We are now in the process of resurrecting our culture and the benefit to all Canadians is the reclaiming and learning of a forgotten piece of Canadian history. These cart journeys are an integral part of this resurgence."

Last Monday's portion of the trek took travellers from Virden to a corral located about 20 kilometres southeast of Miniota, Man. It was a vision originally captured during the mid to late 19th Century; a pair of Red River carts crawling along the Prairie grasslands.

They travelled on a grid road last week—which had much of its gravel removed by the municipality to make it easier on the horses—but the sight was similar

to a drawing depicting Red River carts moving into the Assiniboine Valley that was published in the July 26, 1972 edition of the *World-Spectator*.

The carts wobbled along with the gait of the horses pulling them, their axles whining in a monotonous, high-pitched drone with wood rubbing wood on the entirely-oak vehicle.

Blue flags with the Métis symbol—the horizontal infinity symbol in white—flapped lazily in the breeze from poles attached to the back of the carts.

As the journey continued, riders chatted along the route, getting respite from the heat of the summer sun when a cloud passed by overhead. They move at a slow pace of about five kilometres per hour, but they trudge endlessly on as if trying to meet a deadline for a delivery of supplies to Fort Ellice like the Red River cart drivers did so many years ago.

Leclair, a resident of the St. Lazare area, said the trails they followed later last week were almost exactly like those followed in the 18th Century.

"Once we get past Miniota, we're on the real rugged trails," he said after completing the first

day of the journey last Monday. "We'll go across a bridge about half a mile up and we have about a one mile climb up a hill. It's a pretty gradual slope, but it's about one mile. Then we're on top of the prairies, on the plains there . . . It's an original trail. We're trying to stick to the Fort Ellice trails. This is what these carts are about; sticking to those old trails."

Jerome and Leclair built three Red River carts for the 2009 Métis journey.

The carts are basically fenced boxes set upon a single axle with two, five-foot-six-inch wheels and two 14-foot shafts leading to the horse or ox that pulls them.

The Red River carts were first noted on the Prairie in the early 19th Century in the northern United States. It was originally a small, horse-drawn vehicle with three-foot, solid wood wheels that carried up to 450 pounds. Due to their all-wood construction, the wooden axle rubbing against the wooden hub caused a "shreik" heard miles away. The original carts often required several axle changes during especially long journeys.

Continued on page 5



Chris Istace photo

Journey trail boss Armand Jerome and St. Lazare resident Fabien Leclair built three Red River carts for the 2009 trip to Fort Ellice and Regina.



Above, right and below: Some of the fireworks from the 2008 fireworks show at Moosomin Lake. The 2009 event will include two shows as part of the first-ever Saskatchewan fireworks competition.

Fireworks competition set for Regional Park

BY TAYLOR SHIRE

Moosomin Regional Park is putting on another "Family Day" weekend on August 1 and 2 but this year they have added a bit of a twist.

For the previous five years, Chico Ruggieri of Ruggieri Fireworks has come to the park and put on a fireworks display, but this year it will be a competition. Ruggieri Fireworks of Regina, along with Archangels of Winnipeg are coming to the park on the weekend of August 1 and 2 to put on Saskatchewan's first ever fireworks competition titled, "Living Skies Come Alive." Bruce Easton, Chair of the event for the last eight years, says both companies are very well known professional firework artists. He believes this year is going to be bigger and better than ever.

Janice Walker, secretary and treasurer for Moosomin Regional Park, is looking forward to this event. "I am extremely excited. This is going to be a very big weekend."

Ruggieri has been trying to get an event like this to the Moosomin Regional Park for quite some time. "I have been trying to get a competition going for eight or nine years in Regina but it never seems to work," Ruggieri said. Then he thought about Moosomin Regional Park and decided that it would be the perfect place.

Walker says there has been lots of interest from all over Saskatchewan and Manitoba so she expects a very large audience. She has received many calls from different places inquiring about the event.

This competition is being funded by local sponsors. Easton says this event is going to be "one of a kind." He also said, "We expect an outstanding crowd."

This competition is touted as a pyromusical fireworks display. It will be set to music and Walker thinks it will be absolutely wonderful. "The fireworks will be perfectly choreographed to music," Ruggieri added.

Ruggieri—who won the Canadian Fireworks Championships in 2005 in Sherbrooke, Quebec—says "These are going to be some of Canada's best fireworks."

"We have been told we have the perfect venue for an event like this," says Walker. That is why Ruggieri is so interested in Moosomin Regional Park. "There is a great venue there," says Ruggieri. Walker and Easton are very excited for this event as it is approaching quickly. Easton says they have been in preparation for months.

"This will be a great and fun event," Ruggieri says, "It will attract a lot of tourism to the town." He plans on bringing this competition back each year and hopes it will grow each year.

Each fireworks company will get one night to perform, one company on Satur-



day night and one Sunday night. These shows will be judged and a trophy will be handed out to the winner.

"The competitive spirit will be kicking in. A trophy and bragging rights will be up for grabs," Ruggieri says.

It will be a big weekend with many events planned, Walker says. There will be many children's activities in the morning including races, sandcastle building and an inflatable bounce tent in the afternoon. Walker says everyone can enjoy the day because there are activities ranging from a slow-pitch tournament and beer gardens to a farmers market. There will also be a free video show on a big screen for all to watch. On Saturday night, there will be a barbecue beef supper.

On Sunday morning, there will be a pancake breakfast with a barbecue pork supper to follow that night. Also on Sunday, there will be a Canadian Idol style event. Later Sunday night, the Jason Kirkness band will be putting on a cabaret.

Both Walker and Easton believe the first-ever fireworks show in Saskatchewan is going to be quite the event to witness. "People are going to see some different stuff," Ruggieri says, "It will be a step up from last year for sure. It is going to be very exciting."



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Population:

Town of Moosomin: 2,542
Half-hour radius: 20,000
One-hour radius: 30,000

Kin Place deadline extended to July 31

BY KEVIN WEEDMARK

With eight purchasers committed and four suites left, the deadline for buying into the second phase of the Kin Place life-lease condo project has been extended.

The Kin Place board decided Thursday to extend the deadline for people to commit to the project to July 31.

The board is planning to build a second phase of Kin Place immediately south of the current building.

The 12-unit building will be a mirror image of the current building, and will face Wright Road.

The building is limited to people 55 years of age and over. In a life-lease, individuals make an equity contribution and monthly payments. The equity contribution is returned when they leave the property.

Currently eight units in the proposed complex are spoken for, and project manager Jeff Cole says several other potential residents have expressed strong interest.

The board is hoping 12 tenants can be secured by the end of the month to ensure Kin Place 2 goes ahead.

"The board started looking at this as a way to meet two real needs, by providing housing for seniors, and by opening up existing housing for people moving in," Cole said.

"We're really hoping it will go ahead and we can meet those two needs. We know there are a lot of people interested. We just have to get 12 solid commitments and then we can go ahead."

Two meetings have been set up so that people interested in Kin Place 2 can find out more about the life lease project, and can tour the first Kin Place.


The meetings are set up for Wednesday, July 22 at 10 a.m., and Wednesday, July 29 at 1 p.m. Both meetings will be at Kin Place. Cole is hopeful the meetings and tours will result in more commitments. "We know this makes sense for a lot of people," he said.

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'Everyone deserves a family'

The long road to adoption

BY MONIQUE MCKAY

"Yes, all of these children are MINE!" is inscribed on Lisa Smythe's t-shirt. I am sitting on a well-loved couch in her and her husband Don's basement family room in Kipling, Saskatchewan. Eight framed candid photographs showcase the children in question. Ranging from their early twenties to just three years old, their rainbow faces tell you right away that this family has been chosen.

"Some of our children were born of our bodies," explains Lisa, "and some were born of our hearts." Three of Lisa and Don's children are biological, and five of them are adopted.

Don and Lisa are not Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. They are not wealthy, globetrotting celebrities with an entourage of nannies and housekeepers in tow, scooping up exotic, photogenic children in their wake. Lisa and Don's adopted children are all from Saskatchewan and they are each described as having "special needs."

This is the first of a triad of articles in which we will explore adoption in Saskatchewan in general, the Smythe's experience in particular, and some issues surrounding special needs children in our province.

Why adopt? The answer to that question is as individual as the people involved. In some cases, a person or a couple may be unwilling or unable to have a child on their own. Many have personal adoption stories; perhaps they themselves were adopted, or a parent or a relative was. Others adopt out of a sense of cultural commitment to children who share their heritage. Still others sit down at the dining room table of an evening, consider the faces gazing back at them, and think, "There's someone missing." That someone may be a child in need of a family, perhaps not living far from you right now.

"We live our faith," Lisa says when queried about her still growing family. "Some people in the church seem to say 'Let's just pray about it,' but we wanted to do more than just pray."

At the dinner table five of the Smythe children are just finishing their soup, their faces warmly lit by three fat red votives gracing the centerpiece. I'm too late to meet one of the boys; his medication makes him sleepy and he has gone to bed. I have, however, arrived in time for dessert; a homemade Victorian sponge cake. The children regard me curiously, bright eyed and glowing, except one little boy in glasses who keeps his attention fixed on the plate in front of him. As my baby and I sit at the far end of the table and chat, the little boy begins to peek at me. We make eye contact, and both smile, shyly. Soon he's glancing at me regularly, smiling . . . flirting!

One of their daughters brings Cruz, my baby, a pink rattle to keep him amused. Typically, he throws it on the floor about 10 times a minute, and each time with undiminished joy and alacrity, it's retrieved for me by the grinning imp on my right—the baby of the family, the three year old.

I'm beginning to embarrass myself by inwardly speculating what's "wrong" with each of the children, and which are the biological children. I can't tell. I'm sitting with a calm, positive, firm, and loving family. After dessert, Lisa dismisses the children to their evening absolutions; "You can go help with the laundry," she instructs the toddler on my right. Happily he bounds after his older siblings, casting another electric grin back at me as he disappears up the stairs.

Leah Deans, the Executive Assistant and Resource Director at the Saskatoon-based Adoption Support Centre, says that 95 per cent of the parents she deals with tell her they feel that they "were supposed to parent" the individual child they have adopted, that it was "meant to be."

The Adoption Support Centre is involved in all aspects of adoption in Saskatchewan, including private domestic adoptions, international adoptions, Ministry adoptions, and support and resources for adult adoptees, birth parents, teachers, social workers, and counsellors.

The organization was started as a grassroots gathering of adoptive parents in Saskatoon approximately 20 years ago and has been registered as a non-profit for 15 years. ASC's pride and joy is the largest adoption based lending library in Canada, covering topics from attachment to biographies. A \$25 annual fee gets you five editions of their newsletter, Adoption News, and access to the library; an agency agreement with Canada Post ensures the books are shipped to and from your home, postage paid. The organization also hosts and organizes workshops and conferences in Saskatchewan, and serves as an umbrella for adoption-oriented support groups province-wide. They receive a small annual grant from the Ministry of Children and Families, and two women share one full-time position.

Deans states that, ideally, most prospective parents would prefer a Canadian infant. Those determined to bring home a healthy, Canadian, Caucasian newborn need to be prepared to join a waiting list that is estimated to be at least seven years long. These adoptions can be fairly simple, requiring perhaps just a lawyer. However, most parents, says Dean, explore international adoption next. China is now being eclipsed by Ethiopia and other African countries as the most popular places to find a child.

International adoptions can run between \$15,000 and \$25,000, which Deans admits may seem like a huge amount of money, especially since not even one diaper

has been purchased yet. "But," she reminds us, "that lump sum can include a home study, airfare, document translation, courses, a large donation to your child's orphanage, a stay in the home country, and an agency's fee."

Her advice on international adoptions? "The road less traveled is not the one to take," she says, adding that unorthodox approaches to international adoptions, particularly private negotiations with birth parents, have

"If you've got the stomach for a life that's not perfect, a life that's sometimes messy—it's hard work, but I wouldn't change even one of our kids. They've taught us so much about patience, compassion, and acceptance."

—Lisa Smythe
Adoptive parent



"This is about the child. It's not about finding children for families; it's about finding families for children. We are child-focused and child-centred. Adoption is not what it was 30 years ago; people should not keep secrets."

—Leah Deans
Adoption Resource Centre

succeeded in the past, but very rarely.

A third option for prospective parents willing to open their homes and their lives to an adopted child is facilitated through the Ministry of Children and Families. In 2008 there were over 300 children who were permanent wards of the province, approximately 70 per cent of whom were of aboriginal descent. In 2008, 61 of those children were adopted; seven of them were infants, and four of those infants had special needs. Children 12 years of age and over must consent to be adopted by their prospective family.

The process is fairly straightforward. The interested party contacts an adoption caseworker at Social Services; for much of our readership, that would be Tracy Sandburg out of the Fort Qu'Appelle office. She would send you an application form, which would help you to determine what is referred to as your "range of acceptance."

For example, how old of a child are you willing to parent? Is gender important to you? Would you consider a sibling group, or facilitate a sibling relationship if you adopted a child who had brothers and sisters? Would you consider children of different ethnic backgrounds and would you be willing to help them develop and maintain a sense of cultural identity? Would you parent a child with learning disabilities, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorder, or who had been subject to some form of abuse? Suddenly that application isn't so easy to fill out, and individuals and couples need to examine themselves and their relationship very carefully.

"If we're not good, this isn't good." As she says "this," a small gesture of Lisa Smythe's well-manicured hand encompasses her warm and neat home, an 11-year-old child hanging her slim arms around her waist, a large-eyed toddler perched on the stairs.

The manicure itself, on a mother of eight, is evidence of a man willing to give his hard-working partner an oc-

casional day off. Lisa laughs and leans against her husband. "Every now and again I get a day just for me, to do what I like—go to the city, get a coffee, browse through Chapters." She gives a small shiver, and it's obvious what delight this simple and thoughtful gift gives her. But I've seen her book shelves; childrearing, emotional health, adoption stories, and thick tomes on autism and FAS fill them to overflowing. How much of a "day off" is it really? Nonetheless, she beams at her husband. "Don is my rock."

After your application has been reviewed and accepted by CAR (Central Adoption Registry), you will be placed on their waiting list until it appears likely that a child you are willing to adopt will be available.

As mentioned above, depending on your range of acceptance, this could be anywhere from immediately to nearly a decade. Upon your release from the waiting list, CAR would contact the appropriate adoption caseworker who would then initiate the home study process. This consists of perhaps five home visits covering everything from whether or not the smoke alarms are working to whether both individuals in a couple have realistic expectations of the adoption process.

A criminal record check for every household member over 18 years of age and a physician's report on the family's health are also elements of the home study. After or even during a successful home study, prospective parents begin to look at profiles of children they may be qualified to adopt.

"You get this profile," says Lisa, "and you agree to meet, and the child is nothing like the profile. Sometimes it's much worse, or it's just hidden—you have to peel off the layers. Sometimes you don't fall in love with the child right away. It's like a courtship, except you're already married. Building the relationship, understanding why they are the way they are . . ."

Leah Deans of the Adoption Resource Centre expounds further on what she feels makes adoption successful today. "This is about the child. It's not about finding children for families; it's about finding families for children. We are child-focused and child-centred. Adoption is not what it was 30 years ago; people should not keep secrets."

She explains that open adoptions, where birth parents may still be able to see their biological children, are becoming more frequent. "It's in the child's best interests," Deans insists.

She suggests that the modern family unit is evolving; step-families are becoming more and more common, and the challenges of parenting a blended family and an adopted family are more similar than many people realize.

The majority of children adopted through the Ministry have spent time in the foster system, and for a variety of reasons may not be the children first considered when a family decides to adopt.

Some of these children may be older; perhaps too much like a visit to the pound, puppies always find homes, whereas the two- and four-year-olds, the eight- and 12-year-olds, may often be left behind. Leah Deans has some interesting comments on this.

"You need to go home," she says of older children waiting for their forever families. "It doesn't end when you're 18 and the Ministry is done with you. You want somebody to call when your car breaks down on the side of the road, when you get that new job."

"In foster culture," Lisa opines, "the lack of permanency . . . so many kids grow up feeling like they don't belong anywhere. When the kids come here—we might not be perfect, but we're the end of the line. They belong here."

Inscribed above the doorway leading down to the children's bedrooms is the Smythe family motto: "Forever, for always, no matter what."

A significant percentage of children adopted through the Ministry may be dealing with special needs, and a huge portion of the ASC's lending library addresses issues related to raising kids facing such challenges. Despite better education for pregnant women and medical and medicinal advances, the number of children with special needs in Canada is steadily rising.

"Special needs children are the future's burden," says Lisa. "The more you do with them now, the less of a burden they'll be to the future."

All of the children she and Don have adopted are considered educable, meaning they can learn to care for themselves and become members of the workforce. "It's a lot of work now," admits Lisa, "but it will pay off."

"If you've got the stomach for a life that's not perfect, a life that's sometimes messy—it's hard work, but I wouldn't change even one of our kids. They've taught us so much about patience, compassion, and acceptance. So many people say, 'There's no way I could do what you do!' But we are not super special people. We have to learn as we go."

In the next article, we will spend a little more time with the Smythe family and their children as we lend further consideration to the joys and challenges of adopting Saskatchewan's children. As the parents, social workers and support workers interviewed each state, "Everyone deserves a family."

Monique McKay is a writer from Fleming, Sask, where she lives with her husband and children.

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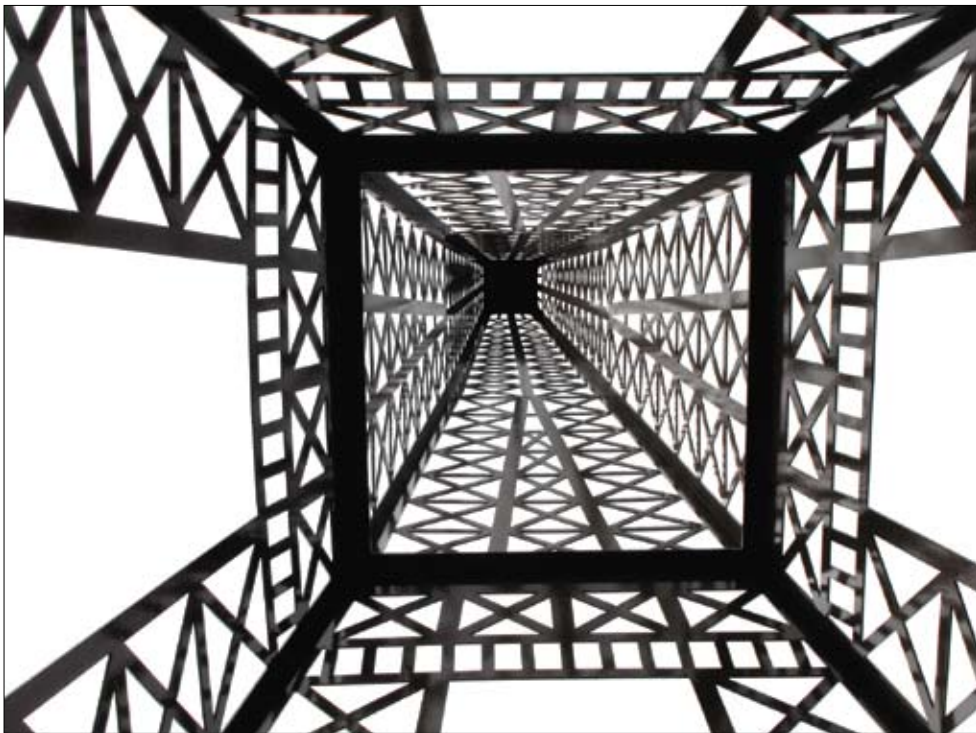
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Mini Eiffel Tower constructed in Montmartre

The town of Montmartre has successfully constructed a mini Eiffel Tower to go along with the town's "Paris of the Prairies" theme that is has adopted. A parisian-style cafe and condo building are also in the works in Montmartre.

Sylvia MacBean photos



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Cart to be built to honor Métis war dead

Continued from front

On longer supply trains, cart drivers operated up to five to six carts at once by having each ox or horse tied to the cart in front of them.

As the 19th Century continued, so did the development of the Red River cart, particularly when it came to its wheels.

The solid wood wheels were replaced by larger ones, first with four spokes, then with several, allowing the carts to carry almost twice as much weight. Some of the original carts had wheels measuring six feet high.

However, the cart remained completely metal free. This way, the totally wooden structure could be easily repaired with material found along the trek.

Today, it takes Jerome and Leclair about 150 to 175 hours to build a cart. Their carts are made completely of oak—still no metal, not even screws or nails. Everything is drilled, dowelled and tied as the original Red River carts would have been constructed.

"I was blessed to be born in this century, knowing the trouble we go through to build these carts and the work involved, and knowing that our ancestors had to do this by hand," Leclair said.

"The drilling of the hubs, they didn't have power tools to use. They didn't have planers. Can you imagine in those days when they had no power tools, when everything was done by hand, how long it would take? . . . We just take it for granted taking a saw and *shoom*, done. Can you imagine using a handsaw now? On hardwood?"

Building the Red River carts is hard, long work now and was harder, longer work then. However, Leclair has a new appreciation for his culture and for how his people survived on what is



Chris Istace

A Métis flag flaps in the summer breeze from a pole lodged in the back of one of the Red River Carts used in the 2009 Red River Cart Métis Journey.

Fabien Leclair (right) has a new appreciation for what his ancestors had to go through after constructing Red River carts with only materials used during the 19th Century.



now the Canadian Prairie.

"I understand now, once I've built the carts and being on these journeys, I'm starting to reflect back and it gives me more respect for my ancestors," he said.

Jerome said the cart has become more than just an interesting item from the past. It's now a significant symbol of a culture that helped found the West, especially during their journeys.

"The Red River cart remains, to this day, one of the defining sym-

bols of Métis culture," he said.

"For years, it was just on display in museums or in pictures in an attempt to portray a relic of a lost race and forgotten culture. We have taken the Red River cart out of this surreal universe and given the real world a true example of an authentic, life-sized cart being used on some of the original cart trails."

This important Métis symbol is being transported overseas, as well.

Manitoba Métis Federation president David Chartrand, who attended a ceremony marking the war in France and felt it was important to have a Red River cart built by Métis people over there.

"It's nice to get an opportunity to build that and to show that Métis were among the fallen on D-Day and during the Second World War," said Leclair.

For Jerome, the carts and the journey are crucial aspects of increasing the self-image of Métis people.

As Canadians become more aware of the influence the Métis people had on the country's history, particularly in the West, Métis people can be proud of their heritage again.

This effort begins with the telling of the Métis' side of the story of Louis Riel and the trial that led to his hanging, said Jerome.

"There is much information about this trial that has been neglected or surrounded by secrecy," he said.

"Our hope is that this awareness triggers questions that dissolve the secrecy and clarifies the truth. We believe that it is this pursuit of the truths about our culture that is part of the driving force behind our current resurgence. Once we fought for what we had. Now we fight for what we lost."

In the later part of the 1800s, the Métis used firearms to fight their battles for equality and acceptance.

Today, they're building a humble, two-wheeled cart and following the paths taken by their ancestors.

In this way, the fight continues.

Jerome and Leclair will be involved in the construction of another Red River cart following the Métis journey to Regina. This cart will be shipped to France and put on display in honor of the Métis people who died during the Second World War.

The memorial was initiated by

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June land sale yields \$18 million

The June sale of Crown petroleum and natural gas rights collected \$18.1 million, bringing total revenue from land sales for the 2009 calendar year to \$36.1 million.

While June land sales are historically "quieter," the \$18.1 million is an increase over the first two sales of the year. The June sale doubled the year-to-date total for 2009.

"There has been a steady upward progression in revenue raised over the first three sales of the year," Energy and

Resources Minister Bill Boyd said. "We remain cautiously optimistic that this upward trend will continue through the second half of 2009."

Boyd noted there has been a fairly steady increase in oil prices since the price bottomed out at \$30.28 (U.S.) per barrel on December 23, 2008.

"Current prices are around the \$70 (U.S.) per barrel mark, so it is more than doubled since December. Over time, growing strength in markets will be reflected in

increased activity in Saskatchewan's oil patch."

The June sale included two petroleum and natural gas exploration licences that sold for \$986,000 and 221 lease parcels that attracted \$17.1 million in bonus bids.

The Weyburn-Estevan area received the most bids with sales of \$11 million. The Swift Current area was next at \$2.9 million, followed by the Kindersley-Kerobert area with bonus bids totalling \$2.2 million and the Lloydminster area at \$1.9 mil-

lion.

Both the highest price bid for a single parcel and the highest price paid on a per-hectare basis go to LandSolutions Inc. The company bid \$1.5 million for a 129.5-hectare lease, and paid \$17,529 per hectare for each of two separate 64.75-hectare leases, all three of which are located 15 kilometres north of Stoughton in southeast Saskatchewan.

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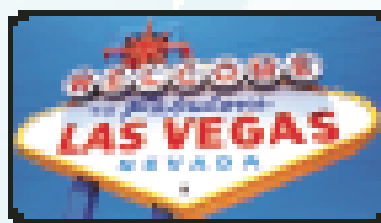
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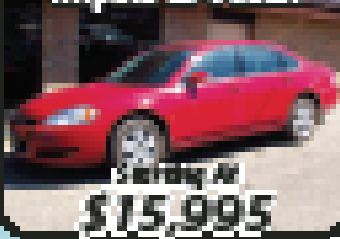
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Duck populations respond with wet spring

Water returned to Canadian and U.S. breeding grounds this spring and the ducks have responded, according to preliminary results of the 2009 U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Canadian Wildlife Services' Waterfowl Breeding Population and Habitat Survey.



Preliminary results of a 2009 U.S. Fish and Wildlife and Canadian Wildlife Services' survey shows duck populations have responded to increased water levels on Canadian and American breeding grounds.

The data on duck population and habitat trends in this annual report are used to develop the recommendations for the waterfowl hunting regulations for this upcoming fall.

"In spite of some variability in habitat conditions this year, the current strong duck populations reflect in part the good habitat conditions and sustained production on the Canadian Prairies from 2002 through 2007," said Jeff Nelson, CEO and Executive Vice President, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC).

"Clearly, birds will respond with a strong breeding effort if the necessary habitat and water exist."

The total pond estimate in the Canadian and U.S. prairies was 6.4 million, up 45% over 2008 and 31% over the long-term average.

Although the western Canadian prairies were fairly dry this spring, the birds have redistributed to the eastern prairies in Canada and the northern U.S. where conditions are much better in 2009.

The Canadian Parklands received below-normal precipitation this past winter and spring but the area continued to benefit from the wet conditions in 2007. While habitat conditions north in the boreal forest are considered good, the spring breakup was delayed by as much as three weeks and some lakes were frozen into early June.

Overall, habitat conditions in this important region were considered good, but goose production may have been negatively impacted in some areas.

The 2009 report estimated 42 million breeding ducks in the traditional waterfowl survey areas. This estimate represents a 13 per cent increase over last year's estimate of 37.3 million ducks and is 25 percent above the 1955-2008 long-term average. The report was full of good news for all ten species of waterfowl surveyed.

Of the commonly surveyed species, four of the 10 showed a significant increase, and six of 10 were significantly above their long-term averages.

Notable increases from 2008 include mallards (+10 per cent), canvasbacks (+35 per cent), northern shovelers (+25 per cent) and northern pintails (+23 per cent).

"2009 is a perfect example of waterfowl responding to water on the landscape," said Henry Murkin, DUC's Director of Conservation Programs. "Our conservation objective remains to ensure that during periods of good moisture the birds find the necessary basins and associated cover to enable them to respond to the opportunity provided by the wet conditions."

Murkin added that the 2009 ducks trends also reinforce the need to stay focused on species of concern like pintail and scaup.

These species have not returned to their long-term population levels in spite of improved water conditions.

"We must continue to focus our science efforts on these species to determine the main factors limiting their population levels and thereby allow conservation efforts to address those factors," Murkin said.

Permanent habitat loss reduces the value of the landscape to waterfowl no matter what the annual moisture conditions may be.

Nelson said that the increase of duck numbers and improved habitat conditions are proof that DUC's habitat conservation work is critical in the face of ongoing wetland drainage and degradation across Canada.

"We have targeted the top waterfowl producing areas as

being the best use of our investments," Nelson said. "We are also working closely with the federal and provincial governments to provide science and guidance as policies for sustainability are developed for Canada's agricultural and forest lands. Our goal is to provide land managers more reasons to keep wetlands on the landscape for the benefit of waterfowl while providing for other wildlife and people."

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A package of information is available by contacting **Sinc Harrison at 435-7319** or Chamber president **Kevin Weedmark at 435-2445.**

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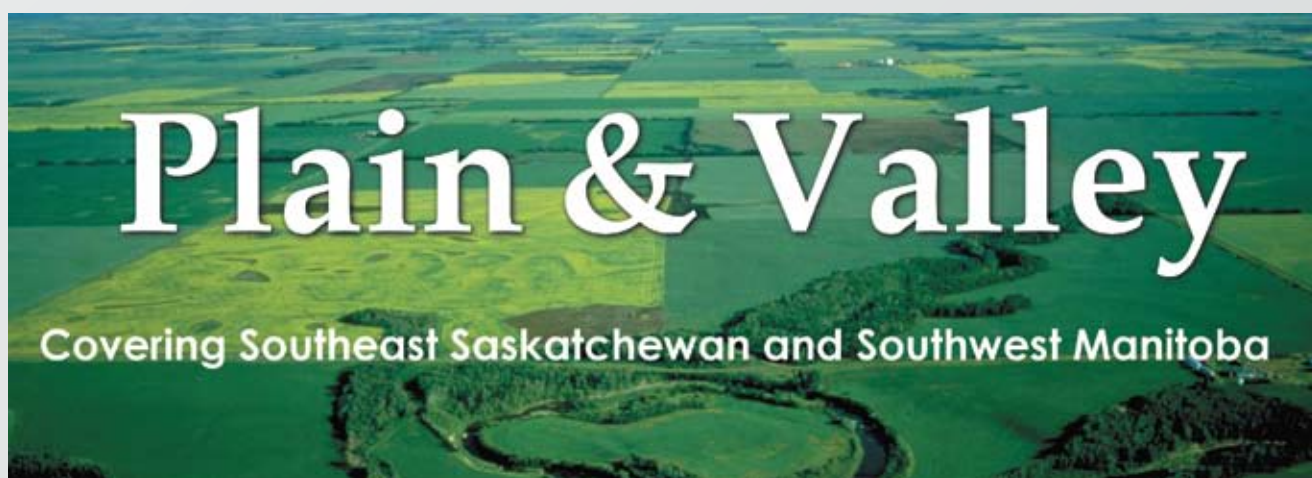
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Montmartre licenced daycare project becoming a reality

Four years after the initial application request to establish a provincially licensed daycare in Montmartre, the parent committee is celebrating a series of historic breakthroughs which will make the project a reality.

The first major breakthrough came in February of 2008 when Saskatchewan's Ministry of Education, Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) approved 15 funded spaces for Montmartre and area (10 more have since been approved). With this critical approval having been granted, a parent committee was formed consisting of Renate Selinger, Cory Chittenden, Dale and Ginette Brenner, Carla and Scott Dusyik, Susan and Cory Sebastian and Kevin and Cindy Giroux.

One of the next steps was finding a facility for the daycare centre. After many meetings and facility reviews, it was decided that the Montmartre School would be the most suitable location for the daycare. Other buildings were evaluated, taking into account location, purchase prices, renovation requirements and operating costs.

With the Ministry of Education recommending that child care centres be located in schools that have space, and the Prairie Valley School Division (PVSD) supporting a daycare in the Montmartre School, two classrooms in the middle-years wing have been designated as the location for Montmartre's new daycare.

The daycare initiative is a team project, involving the daycare board, PVSD, Ministry of Education, branches of Facilities and ELCC, Montmartre School, the Montmartre SCC, and the communities of Montmartre and surrounding areas.

The capital funding grants received from the Ministry will not cover all of the costs of renovations and expenses. Therefore, the daycare committee is busy planning some fundraising events to help minimize the loan needed.

Some of the renovation plans include new flooring, washroom facilities, kitchen area, appliances, furnishings

and the creation of a nap room, all to meet the provincial standards set by the Ministry.

"It will be an impressive facility," said parent committee member Renate Selinger. "We are planning for the long-term operation and viability of the daycare, so we are not going to cut corners in the renovation stage."

The parent committee is currently working closely with the Supervisor of Facilities of PVSD, Superintendent of School Services and now with an architect, to finalize the daycare design.

An estimated start date for the daycare renovation is July, 2009 with an estimated completion date of early 2010. Staff is currently being hired for all daycare positions. For more information, contact Renate at 424-2391, or Dale at 424-2040.

Province repeats record job numbers

For the second consecutive month, the number of people working in Saskatchewan has hit an all-time high, according to the new Labour Force Survey released recently by Statistics Canada.

There were 535,600 people working in Saskatchewan in June, breaking the previous record of 530,100 set in May.

Saskatchewan also continues to lead the country in job creation. From June 2008 to June 2009, the number of people working in the province increased by 14,500—by far the most of any province.

Overall, Canada lost over 340,000 jobs during that same 12-month period.

Premier Brad Wall said the provincial government's \$1.5 billion "economic booster shot" of infrastructure spending is paying off—helping Saskatchewan to create jobs and weather the economic storm.

Employment in the construction sector is up by 5,100—or 14.4 per cent—from a year ago.

Saskatchewan also has the lowest unemployment rate in Canada at 4.6 per cent, seasonally adjusted. Regina has the lowest unemployment rate of any major city in Canada at 3.4 per cent, while Saskatoon is second-lowest at 4.6 per cent.

Saskatchewan continues to show strong job growth for women and Aboriginal workers.

There are now 9,700 more women working in Saskatchewan than a year ago—an increase of 4 per cent, while Aboriginal employment is up 2,500, or 7.7 per cent.

Wall said there are still plenty of great opportunities available for those looking for work in Sas-

katchewan, with over 5,400 job openings posted on the saskjobs.ca website.

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Upgrades take Kemoca Park to next level

Over \$160,000 in upgrades make park a destination

Montmartre's Kemoca Regional Park has always been enjoyed by local residents. Now a series of upgrades has taken the park to the next level, turning it into a destination campground that offers full-service campsites, green technology and a user-friendly pool complete with 'easy-stairs' and a climbing wall.

"The park has always been the pride of the community, but now we hope to turn it into the pride of the province as permanent campsites and solar heating make it one of the most innovative regional parks around," said Kemoca Park Boardmember Nicole Dusyk.

Over the past year, the Kemoca Regional Park Board has undertaken four major projects:

1. Green technology—Solar panels have been installed at Kemoca Park in order to heat the swimming pool with green energy. This \$80,000 project includes a

Montmartre facility gets more than \$160,000 in improvements to campground amenities

full upgrade to the pool's pump system. Seventy-five-percent of the project's cost has been covered by a provincial infrastructure grant and a federal/provincial grant.

Board completes work on green technology, full service campsites, a swimming pool enhancement and a new park shed.

The remainder will be covered by Kemoca Park.

2. Full-service campsites - Ten campsites have been added to Kemoca Park, all of which have access to sewer, water and power. These sites may be rented for the entire season, with three already having been booked at a cost of \$1,100 annually. The total number of campsites available at the park is now 20.

The cost of this project was \$50,000, which was secured in the form of a loan from the RM and Village. It is hoped that campsite fees

will allow the park to repay this loan in a short period of time.

3. Swimming pool enhancement—The Kemoca Park Swimming Pool will be sporting \$19,000-worth of upgrades thanks, in part, to an FCC grant that has enabled the purchase of a climbing wall, easy-access ladder and three tot docks.

The \$8,000 FCC grant was supplemented by the generosity of the following local organizations: RM of Montmartre, Village of Montmartre, Montmartre Economic Development & Tourism Committee, Montmartre Lions Club and the Montmartre Recreation Board. Kemoca Park has contributed \$4,000 of its own money to this project as well.

4. New park shed - The former track & field sheds at the park have been replaced by a brand new \$12,000 multi-purposed shed which will house all of the park's tractors and equipment, as well as all of the

Montmartre School's track equipment, the Montmartre Minor Ball's equipment and the Montmartre Soccer Club's balls and supplies.

This project was funded by the Montmartre SRC, the Montmartre Soccer Club, Montmartre Minor Ball and Kemoca Park.

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Chris Istace photos



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1999	CaseIH	2366	Specialty rotor, chopper, spreaders, rock trap, pu w/swathmaster pu	\$109,500
1997	NH	TX66	Chopper, PU Header	\$64,500
1995	MF	8570	Chopper, chaff spreader, PU	\$52,500
1993	MF	8460	Chopper, PU	\$39,500
1986	MF	8560	Chopper, PU	\$24,500
1986	Gleaner	R50	PU, header	\$22,500

COMBINE HEADERS

YEAR	MAKE	MODEL	DESCRIPTION	PRICE
2007	MF	5100	36' Draper header, PUR, combine adapter, gauge wheels, transport kit	\$37,900
1998	NH	973	30', Flex, PUR	\$16,900
1997	Gleaner	400	30', batt & air reel	\$12,500
1994	Gleaner	400	25', PUR	\$9,500
1994	Gleaner	400	30', batt reel, as is	\$2,000
1996	MacDon	960	25', PUR	\$13,500

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1999	Hesston	565A	5x6	\$13,900
1999	Hesston	565A	5x6, auto tie	\$14,900
2002	Hesston	1275	16', s/s, reverser	\$20,900
2002	Hesston	1275	16', s/s rollers	\$18,900
1999	MacDon	5000	16', s/s rollers	\$12,500
2005	Bale King	3100	rh discharge, fine cut	\$10,900
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1998	Premier	2930	Turbo, 30', pu reel	SOLD
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Stop that stretching!

There's a perception that science is always reversing itself. If you don't like what science has to say about, say, the health benefits or risks of a particular food (eggs, for example, or coffee), you only have to wait awhile until a contradictory study comes out.

That's because science progresses in fits and starts. Researchers put forward a possible explanation, a hypothesis, for the results of an experiment. Other researchers attempt to duplicate their results and refine the hypothesis. Sometimes the hypothesis is completely discarded, and a new hypothesis gains sway.

But in the media, this slow process is seldom reported. It's much easier to pick up on the report of a single study—particularly if it has startling results—and present the hypotheses put forward by its authors as fact, rather than simply one possible interpretation.

I'm sure I've been guilty of that myself in this column, though I try to avoid it by using phrases which, if I could only charge a dollar to every reader for each use, would have long since made me rich: "One possible explanation . . ." "The researchers suggest . . ." and, of course, "More research is needed."

By this time you've probably twigged to the fact that I'm about to tell you that something you may think is a fact is anything but—and you're right.

Go to any gym, and you're likely to see people engaging in the time-honored practice of static stretching, bending themselves into a pose that pulls muscles and tendons tight and holding it for a few seconds.

They do this because they've been told, at some point, that it's important to "stretch out" before engaging in vigorous physical activity, in order to avoid injury.

Guess what? In all likelihood, they're wasting their time.

This isn't exactly news, or shouldn't be. As Cynthia Billhartz Gregorian points out in a story in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, it's been five years since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviewed 361 research studies done by its epidemiology program office and found no evidence that stretching either before or after exercise prevents either injury or muscle soreness.

In fact, some sports medicine experts say static stretching actually inhibits performance, decreasing power and speed, and can cause micro-tears in tendons, ligaments and muscles. Nor is stretching going to help you work out a strain: stretching it makes it worse, not better. Strained muscles should be rested, and then the focus should be on



Edward Willett

rebuilding strength.

So should you give up stretching altogether? (You know, just like you gave up coffee and chocolate before you found out both are good for you?)

No; but you might want to think twice about static stretching. Modern thinking—you know, as opposed to that old pre-2004 thinking—holds that dynamic stretching is the way to go: moving through stretches without pausing or holding a position, walking forward while grabbing the knee toward the chest, that kind of thing. A little jogging in place or skipping while swinging your arms, or going through the required motions of a particular sport at half-speed might help.

Now, static stretching does have some benefits. If you do it every day for three months, it will make you more flexible, for instance. "Senior athletes" can benefit by doing traditional stretching after—but not before!—their main workout, because it helps minimize the effects of arthritis and joint degeneration. And any athlete can benefit from static stretching after prolonged exercise because it reduces lactic acid accumulation in heavily exercised muscles.

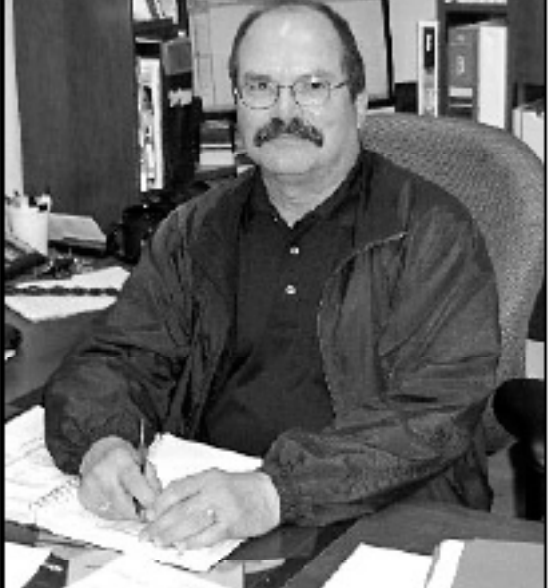
But beforehand? Not recommended.

When you think about it, our physically active ancestors didn't worry about stretching. As California doctor-and-author Dr. William Meller points out, "Can you imagine a caveman engaging in a program of stretching before heading out to chase down prey?" And I doubt most farm hands carefully stretched before going out for a day of tossing hay bales onto a wagon.


So why have we been stretching all these years? Because at some point, researchers decided it was good for us. Scientists continued to study the issue, however, and our knowledge evolved.

Which gives me great hope, because personally, I'm hoping for a study that says the whole "exercise is good for you" thing is similarly misguided.

If I find one, you'll hear it here first!



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