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Welcome to Lac du Bonnet Living

Welcome all local and international readers to the 11th issue of Lac du Bonnet Living.

Tourism is an important component of Lac du Bonnet's economy. To compliment that, we at Clipper Publishing Inc. – publishers of the Lac du Bonnet Clipper newspaper – annually take the opportunity to print a full-colour tourism guide focussing on the “four-season playground” that encompasses Lac du Bonnet while highlighting places of interest, recreational opportunities, events, culture and local history.

We would like to give special thanks to all those individuals who volunteered their time, supplied photos and articles and shared their knowledge and professional experience to shape this publication.

Enjoy.

Mark T. Buss, Candace Kekish and Marlene Hryσιο

Cover Photos Courtesy of Kristen McLean: Fireworks during the Lac du Bonnet Lions Canada Day Weekend Celebrations; View of the Winnipeg River from Lakeside Park; EllieAndra McLean at Leslie Park; Lorna and Cindy McLean walking along Lakeside Park, Town of Lac du Bonnet.

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Photo by Stu Iverson

Welcome to the Town of Lac du Bonnet

Hello and Welcome to the Town of Lac du Bonnet!

We are a strong and vital community where quality of life and opportunity live. Lac du Bonnet is a hub for outdoor activities year-round, located on the historic Winnipeg River.

Our schools and recreational facilities provide an awesome environment for learning and fun for everyone. The services and businesses located in our community can supply most all your wants and needs, whether visiting or planning on making Lac du Bonnet home.

Our unique location provides access to trails for hiking, cross-country skiing and motorized use with a well-established system and planned expansion in the works. Water-based activities are almost unlimited in the region with our boat launch giving access to some of the best multi-species fishing in Manitoba. Enjoy the day at the town dock and beach and you may see massive sturgeon jumping clear off the surface farther out from shore!

Community sports and artistic activities abound in our venues with curling, hockey, bowling, baseball and others. For music lovers we have The Listening Room at the

historic St. John's Anglican Church and of course the Fire & Water Music Festival every August.

Art shows and artisans within the region come to the biggest social and commercial event in North Eastman on Saturdays. The Farmers Market is where local producers, artisans and service providers gather to showcase their amazing and delicious goods and services to a very large and appreciative clientele!

You can't afford to miss the best fireworks show in Manitoba along with kids rides and various activities with a fantastic car show on the Canada Day Weekend.

With our partners in the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet, we are creating a new approach where change and opportunity are alive and flourishing in our entire community. We are after all from Lac du Bonnet. Come and be part of it all.

Ken Lodge
Mayor
Town of Lac du Bonnet



Welcome to the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet

On behalf of council and staff, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the Rural Municipality of Lac du Bonnet. We are situated a short scenic drive northeast of Winnipeg, and take great pride with our region being recognized as a "Four Seasons Playground."

Whatever your passion, there is something for everyone – enjoying our countless kilometres of scenic waterways, golfing at our region's many first-class golf courses. If fishing is your sport, you can book a fly-in trip or try your luck in our local waters, which play host to professional tournaments.

Nature lovers can enjoy our abundant wildlife, while walking a section of our Trans Canada Trail, or spend some quality family time at one of our many campgrounds.

If you enjoy history, tour the Lac du Bonnet District Museum or the Old Pinawa Historical Provincial Park.

In the winter, come and snowmobile our vast network of the best-groomed trails, snowshoe or cross-country ski our

region's wilderness trails. Try your hand at ice fishing at the Lac du Bonnet Wildlife Association's trout ponds.

Whatever the season, plan a day or weekend excursion and visit our website at www.rmoflacdubonnet.com

It's not only the recreational opportunities that our "Four Season's Playground" offers, but it's also the friendly people and overall quality of life, that make it our home. So, make us a preferred destination in the coming months, come for a visit, as many have, but then ended up staying for a lifetime.

On behalf of council and our committed municipal staff, I extend everyone a warm Lac du Bonnet welcome.

Loren Schinkel
Reeve
RM of Lac du Bonnet



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Photo: "Red Fox in Great Falls" by Rick McGregor

HERO'S Alliance Making Good Things Happen

Heroes. Every community has them. People who make good things happen, often unnoticed.

That is the spirit in which local grassroots non-profit, HERO'S Alliance, works in Lac du Bonnet. HERO'S stands for: Helping Everyone Reach Out to Support. The Alliance is made up of professionals and individuals representing health, education, family resources, mental health and government agencies. The volunteer group focuses on community health and well-being and food security. And that's what they've been striving for over the last four years.

Since 2019, HERO'S Alliance has provided mental health support with Lac du Bonnet Counselling, which offers counselling sessions half a day each week. Located in town, the program offers a sliding scale of fees, making access to services easier by reducing the barriers of transportation and costs. Clients using the program

are happy to have local resources and say the service not only helps them but their children and extended

family too. The program has been funded by the Andrew Dunn Foundation, Shepherd's Heart Fund, Mrs. Lucci's Family Resource Centre and McIntosh Farms. In the next few years, the Alliance hopes to create proactive programming and to engage men in accessing mental health resources.

In 2020, a grant from the Emergency Community Support Fund, through the Lac du Bonnet & District Charitable Foundation, helped HERO'S Alliance provide mental health supports for children, youth and adults during the pandemic. Programs for children, like Yoga for Life and Mindful Hikes, invited school-aged children to engage in anxiety reduction through physical activity and connection with the outdoors. In addition to programming, \$10,000 of

youth mental health resources were provided to local schools to bolster mental health education.



Ryna Wiebe, Coordinator of the Lac du Bonnet Mentorship program, with a participant at the Mason Bee workshop in the Community Garden last summer.



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HERO's Alliance Lunch is ON Us program provides over 800 free soup lunches monthly.



In 2021, the Alliance acquired a New Horizon's for Seniors Program (NHSP) grant that helped to restart the Youth Mentorship Program in Lac du Bonnet. Mentorship brings together adults and seniors with children or youth to enjoy time together doing activities. Mentorship is a simple equation. Time with someone special plus being present equals better overall health for the mentor as well as the mentee. Seniors and children and youth have been involved in group and individual mentorship. The program has also provided mental health support through SafeTALK workshops for suicide awareness. HERO'S is looking for sustainable support for the program in 2024 onward.

The Alliance created the Food Security Network (FSN) in 2021. Food security means all people have sufficient access to safe, affordable, and nutritious food. The Network includes multi-agency and individual membership focused on connecting people to existing food programs or creating new resources to fill the gaps. Out of the FSN, Lunch is On Us was created by Tracy Neurenberg. The program provides over 800 free soup and bun lunches monthly. Every Tuesday and Thursday people head over to the Lac du Bonnet Arena to pick up the wildly popular soups. Extra soups are frozen and provided at the Food Bank and other organizations. Lunch is On Us has received grants from the Lac du Bonnet and District Charitable Foundation, Mrs. Lucci's, the IERHA Five Dollar Club and Shepherd's Heart Fund. The program has also

received donations from Harvest Manitoba, local grocers, the Lac du Bonnet Food Bank, Lac du Bonnet Community Garden and people in the area. Funding, generous donations and the pay if forward money given by guests every week is heartwarming and essential to the success of Lunch is On Us.

In 2021, HERO'S launched the Lac du bonnet Community Garden, which operates now on its own, growing over 3,000 pounds of produce, distributed to the Lac du Bonnet Food Bank and Lunch is On Us, in the first three years of its establishment. An initial grant applied for by HERO'S Alliance from the Canada Healthy Communities Initiative Fund helped establish the garden and its infrastructure.

Hero's Alliance is built on collaborative efforts. Partnerships are key. Volunteers, the real heroes, make magic happen a couple hours a week. Chopping vegetables, delivering soup or taking a child bowling... in these small ways great things are happening for people in the Lac du Bonnet region. If you have time to help out, contact HERO'S Alliance at herosaliance.ca. Donations are welcome. If you require a tax receipt, please donate directly to the Town of Lac du Bonnet indicating how you would like the money used.

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Things on the Grow at Lac du Bonnet Community Garden

Nestled behind a windrow of willows and a few green ash, sits a two-acre secret. The sun and wind are just right, the soil rich and the people are friendly and knowledgeable.

The Lac du Bonnet Community Garden has become a thriving green space that has been giving back to the area in big ways in its first three years of development. It not only serves as a source of fresh produce, but also symbolizes strength and unity within the community.

The garden's partnerships are essential to its operation. The land provided by McIntosh Farms is rich and well drained. The farm not only provides the land but cultivation, use of equipment and consultation. The Town of Lac du Bonnet has provided essential partnership in helping to establish the irrigation system, repurposed decking for the community classroom and continued support from staff at works and opera-

tions. The RM of Lac du Bonnet is providing brushing this fall.

Garden plots are provided to the Lac du Bonnet and Area Food Bank whose volunteers were able to produce over 2,000 pounds of food in the 2023 season. In the past three years, garden produce has made its way to the Lunch is On Us program which uses the vegetables to make soup throughout the year. The community garden deeply values shared efforts for affordable, healthy food at a time when people are struggling to put food on their tables.

In Manitoba, the echoes of need have become increasingly audible, with a striking 30 per cent surge in food bank usage in 2023. A staggering 187,737 meals have been served thus far in the province, according to Food Banks Canada. They also list the national food insecurity rate at 18.4 per cent with 29 per cent of our citizens living at an inadequate standard of living.

An instrumental part of the growth and development of the Lac du Bonnet Community Garden has been generous donations and grants. A grant from Canada Healthy Communities Initiative in 2021 allowed for the basic elements of the garden to be established. A greenhouse was built, and a shed was installed and stocked with purchased or donated tools and equipment.

Other granting organizations have come forward to assist in making the garden open and accessible to all. The Lac du Bonnet and District Charitable Foundation assisted with additional greenhouse infrastructure. The Lac du Bonnet Lions Club assisted with accessible raised beds and tools along with an accessible pathway. Funds from Manitoba Justice Criminal Property Forfeiture Act were used for solar power and on-site security. Healthy Together Now, through the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, helped to establish a butterfly and pollinator garden. Additional funds

Four-year-old Levi Spence gives a gentle lift to a Monarch butterfly at the Lac du Bonnet Community Garden





Arranging the produce at the Lac du Bonnet Community Garden's fall pumpkin, squash and gourd sale

from Lac du Bonnet Ice Fishing Derby and Sinomine (Tanco Mining) helped make the space more complete. Further funding has been provided by Farm Credit Canada to help finish off the outdoor classroom and to install an accessible washroom facility.

Benefits of the community garden extend beyond taking home fresh produce. The garden is committed to creating an inclusive space for all community

members. Its accessibility breaks down barriers and empowers those facing challenges to actively participate in and enjoy the therapeutic benefits of gardening like spending time outside, getting exercise and building mental well-being. The garden also provides education to community about sustainable gardening practices and culture. Workshops held in the garden help to promote learning about beneficial insects. The pollinator and butterfly garden increases beneficial insect populations that will help pollinate gardens in the area. Over 100 Monarch butterflies were released in 2023.

As Lac du Bonnet continues to grow, the community garden remains a shining example of how collective efforts can cultivate positive change and nurture a stronger, more connected community. The garden is looking to other initiatives to increase access to healthy food. With the support of community and granting organizations, it seems the sky is the limit.

With community at its roots, the garden is living its mission to create a gardening community that increases food security and supports mental and physical well-being through inclusionary practices representing culture, ability, need, and sustainability.



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Heart & Soul: Preserving Lac du Bonnet History a Team Effort

by Jennifer Strassel

At the core of every organization is heart and soul. For the Lac du Bonnet and District Historical Society, that heart and soul is husband and wife team of Terry and Marlene Tottle.

A quiet and knowledgeable Historical Society president, Terry has a mind full of historical facts and, when prompted, is able to speak at length about the subject. The retired postal worker, with a background in archaeology, is a voracious reader of historical texts, keeping up on anything of interest.

Marlene, who once operated an antique shop near Anola, has a focused determination to see things through. Unlike Terry, she prefers stories of people and places, of the significance of artifacts, rather than dry historical fact.

Together, they form two halves of the same coin, well-suited to the job. They are the driving force of the Historical Society. Their work behind the scenes is often underappreciated, but it's their passionate efforts that help keep the lights on even as interest in local history wanes.

Terry and Marlene retired to their Lac du Bonnet area cottage in 2010 and soon joined the Historical Society's team of tireless volunteers. From the beginning, they strived for historical accuracy and



Terry & Marlene Tottle



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fought to keep interior details of the Hans Erickson Cabin authentic for visitors.

In summer 2011, after seven years of historical designations, restorations and political hang-ups, the Lac du Bonnet District Museum opened to the public.

For the past 14 years and counting, Terry and Marlene have dedicated their time, and in truth the majority of their lives, to museum operations and restorations on the St. John's Heritage Church and Arts Centre, ensuring the history of the community and surrounding area is not lost.

The Tottles are the caretakers. The first to pull the shutters in spring and the last to leave in fall. They spend countless summer days at the museum, waiting for visitors and filling hours as curators of the artifact and document collections.

They supervise the summer students, and in 2022, when the Historical Society was unable to find a summer student, Terry ensured the museum's doors stayed open by volunteering to fill the position himself. He dedicated many days each week just so visitors would still have the opportunity to learn about Lac du Bonnet's history.

Marlene's the first to ensure events, programs and fundraisers get full coverage in the Lac du Bonnet Clipper and on the Historical Society's website.

In 2017, Terry and Marlene led the Historical Society's efforts to obtain the town's oldest intact building, the deconsecrated

St. John's Anglican Church, saving it from its fate as a parking lot. Marlene saw the building through the historical designation, then relinquished control to the specially formed Preservation Committee. Over the past six years, extensive restorations and repairs were completed on the 118 year old building.

Terry and Marlene Tottle have been reluctant to be recognized in this way, but their hard work should not go unmentioned. For them, and other dedicated Historical Society members, it's all about sharing knowledge and spreading their passion for history.

Even with whispers of their approaching second retirement, Terry and Marlene continue to work as the Historical Society's heart and soul. Their tireless efforts have ensured the history of Lac du Bonnet is preserved for generations to come.

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Lee River Bed & Breakfast Welcomes You

by Rick McGregor

Andi and Dave Dekker had a dream. They were living in Ottawa and running their own business, but something was missing. They both wanted to live on the water.

Having both grown up in Winnipeg and having family in Manitoba, they started looking for a property. During a trip to the Keystone Province, they came across a listing just off of PR 520 in the RM of Lac du Bonnet. The house was on the Pinawa Channel, offering the

waterfront property of their dreams.

What they did not know before touring the house was that it had been run as a seasonal bed and breakfast for the last 15 years. Neither Dave nor Andi had ever



Dave and Andi Dekker

given a moment's thought to running a B&B but the property was perfect. After some discussion, they thought it might be a great adventure to continue on with the concept. In October 2023, they became the new proprietors of the Lee River Bed and Breakfast.

The house sits on approximately seven and half acres of land and covers 36,000 square feet of living space between the two floors. The main floor serves as the living quarters for the hosts, but also has a large kitchen where guests' breakfast will be prepared and served. It also offers easy access to an outdoor eating area when the weather allows. The previous owners operated during the late spring to early fall, but Andi and Dave plan to be open year-round.

continued next page



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They are both nature lovers and very active and see a market for appealing to hikers, sledders and cross country skiers in the winter months. The couple have started to immerse themselves in community activities in Pinawa and have gotten involved in curling, the local health auxiliary and have worked out a stay and play with the Pinawa Golf Club. They also plan to quickly start exploring the community offerings in Lac du Bonnet including the Lac du Bonnet Wildlife Association.

In addition to the main kitchen, sitting room and large deck on the main floor, the lower level offers a second kitchen and great room along with three guest bedrooms and two bathrooms. The second kitchen will offer guests the

ability to bring their own groceries and prepare their own lunch and dinner meals, something unique to B&Bs.

The property has its own boat launch, beach, dock, screened in porch, three-season room and a waterside gazebo and fire pit. Future plans include an outdoor kitchen as well, beginning with a barbecue for guest use. There are also 74 board games available.

Other expansion ideas call for converting the large, attached garage into a fitness centre. Down the road they plan to turn the large shed into a heated parking garage for snowmobiles and ATVs, offering riders the opportunity to have the snow melt from their machines and come out in the morning to a warm vehicle.



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Though they have yet to officially open, the hosts already have a number of bookings for 2024 from past guests. The property was always a popular summer destination for families who have typically been the largest demographic using the facility and Dave and Andi certainly plan to continue that tradition. With the proposed additions to the property, they see the possibilities of also hosting weddings, yoga retreats, golfing, hiking and fat-biking groups, along with many other possibilities,

In preparation for a May opening, they updated the living quarters with new beds, linens, lighting, ceiling fans and door hardware. Inside renovations, including fresh paint throughout, were scheduled to be completed long before opening day, leaving time for some outdoor makeovers before the guests begin to arrive.

Andi and Dave say they did get a lot of advice and help from the previous owners - and they were both in agreement that the most important guidance may have been to make sure they take some time for themselves. Running a B&B can be an 18-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week commitment, so they will be sure to take a few days here and there to enjoy the beauty of the property and surrounding areas and offerings for themselves.

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Boreal Ranch: A Farm to Table Experience

by Rick McGregor

How many of us have dreamt of leaving behind the hustle and bustle of city life and corporate jobs to retreat to a slower pace, the peace and solitude of nature and Mother Earth's glorious charms?

For Megan Schwabiuk and Rob Jounot, this dream started to become a reality during COVID when they, along with their two sons, Joe and Cash, moved from their home just outside of Winnipeg to their cabin on Lee River during the shut-down.... and they never went back. In a bold move, they bought a 100-acre lot just off Wendigo Road in the RM of Lac du Bonnet with a dream.

Both Megan and Rob are heavily invested in the betterment of personal health through healthy living and eating. Asking how they can live their fullest, most healthy life, they began in early 2023 to turn their new property into a true farm to table living experience. Taking what they had learned from their careers in the corporate and hospitality industries, health and welfare research, international travel and previous experience, they set about preparing and building on their plans. From these ideas and experiences, Boreal Ranch was born.

The cabin on Lee River was moved to the new acreage as a first step. Then fencing, turkey roosts, a chicken greenhouse and vegetable gardens were added. The property also includes kilometers of trails for hiking, skiing and biking, a creek and small lake, all of which factor into their plans for 2024 and beyond.

But the ranch is not just for their own enjoyment and nourishment. Part of the dream is to create a high-end Canadian experience for guests of the ranch and to have them get a little taste of what it is like to live in the Boreal Forest.

The first year saw the beginnings of a number of developments. They began an egg subscription program wherein people could sign up to a regular pickup or delivery of farm fresh eggs from pasture-raised chickens. As well, people could pre-order a chicken or turkey to be available later in the season; a program that sold out last year. In an effort to connect with the community, Friday night drop-ins were started to allow people to stop by the ranch to enjoy that farm to table experience. Whether visiting with the birds or picking up fresh

veggies and eggs or getting advice on healthy cooking, guests were invited to take in all that the ranch has to offer.

Other activities for guests included picking some of the plentiful wild raspberries and strawberries





growing on the ranch and enjoying a breakfast of freshly picked fruit, newly gathered eggs and a gourmet cup of coffee or tea.

Plans for 2024 include tripling the number of chickens and turkeys to supply the huge demand, increasing the number of laying hens for more egg production, hiring help for the garden, and adding a market garden. This will also include the development of a grocery market making it easy to pre-order a custom vegetable basket or even add eggs and eventually, meat. 2024 will also see the creation of a “boutique herb greenhouse garden”, allowing for the growth and sale of both medicinal and culinary herbs.

Future dreams for the property include building a guesthouse for people to stay at the farm, adding lambs, cattle and pigs

and incorporating events around holidays. These will include chef demonstrations of cooking with fresh herbs, making cocktails and beautifying face masks from herbs, and adding more people to help around the ranch. Picnics are also in the plans where guests can grab a basket of veggies, fruit and charcuterie and hit the hiking trails. The planting of an orchard and wild asparagus has also been discussed.



When asked what she saw as a key “win” in their first year, Megan replied, “Changing the way a lot of people eat. We have visitors that have traded in their breakfast cereal for farm fresh eggs from pastured hens. We have shown people what healthy living involves. Not just proper eating but healthy land and healthy animals. Turkeys that roam the pasture and eat grasshoppers and other natural foods and land that is regenerated regularly. You are very much what you eat”.

For more information on exciting plans for the future and directions to the ranch, see their webpage at www.borealranch.ca



Wildlife Photographer Rick McGregor

by Brian Choptain

Putting up a bird feeder in the backyard is a common practice for many people. It provides food for the local birds and a chance in the morning or day to relax and watch the local wildlife.

But for Alexander resident Rick McGregor, it started a journey that today has made him a wildlife photographer and writer about the birds and animals he has been able to capture through his lens.

“I was, like many people, familiar with sparrows, robins, crows, blackbirds and a few other common birds,” said McGregor. “After buying the cottage, we put up a bird feeder to see what we could attract. We started to slowly get different birds coming to our feeders.”

During the first winter, McGregor was surprised by seeing a red and gray colour bird at the birdfeeder. Soon after it was joined by several more.

“We were stunned by the beauty of these birds and set about to find out what they were. My wife had an old bird guidebook that had belonged to her mother, and we looked in there to try to find something that looked like the birds we had seen.”

At first Rick and his wife thought they had spotted white winged cross bills. It turned out to be the



similar looking male pine grosbeaks instead. He was hooked.

Seeing the different variety of birds visiting inspired McGregor to put up more bird feeders and watch what kind of birds were visiting.

“Soon our yard became home to a wonderful variety of birds from robins and orioles to evening grosbeaks, purple and gold finches and a wide variety of sparrows,” he said.

Watching birds quickly led to buying a camera and he began taking pictures of the local wildlife.

“Backyard viewing soon turned into driving the back roads looking for other birds and animals. Then we bought kayaks and expanded our searches to the waters of Pinawa Bay and Rice Creek, finding loons, herons and kingfishers.”

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Having a good zoom camera is important to photographing local wildlife. McGregor first started with a Canon Powershot SX60. The ability of the camera to zoom up to 65x zoom ability helps in taking photographs. However, McGregor then decided to buy a second camera - a Nikon Cool Pix P950.

The biggest difference between the two cameras lies in the Nikon's ability to zoom up to 2000mm digitally, or 83x zoom ability.

Since moving to the area in 2015, McGregor has photographed a large variety of birds in the area.

"I have photographed fifteen different types of sparrows. I do not know about you, but I always thought a sparrow is a sparrow and they are all the same," McGregor said. "Not so! In that same time span, I photographed well over 200 different bird types in the North Eastman region. Some are more difficult than others to find and photograph."

There are a number of animals and birds on the top of his list to add to his collection of photos. Lynx and bobcats, pine martens and wolves top the animal

list. The birds are headed up by black-billed cuckoos, short-eared and long-eared owls, and several varieties of warblers. Wild cats and wolves are very secretive animals and do not like humans, so they are the biggest challenge.

McGregor's passion for wildlife photography has also led him to start writing birding articles for The Lac du Bonnet Clipper showing the local birds and areas where you can see them when out driving around the North Eastman region. He is currently working on a webpage showcasing the birds and wildlife he has captured on his camera. In addition to this, he also sells his prints at Manitoba Made Events & Shop and I Heart Coffee/LDB Pure Water, both in Lac du Bonnet.



Pine Grosbeaks on a Flat Feeder

McGregor hopes his passion will inspire other people to follow in his footsteps.

"If I manage to make new bird enthusiasts out of some of you, all the better!"

You can check out Rick McGregor's website at <https://www.rjmlenscraft.com/>

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Agassiz Garden Club

Are you interested in working or playing with Dirt? In a pot in your house or in a garden in your yard? Agassiz Garden Club might just be the group for you. Whether you have years of gardening experience or are just starting out, we invite you to join our friendly group of small town and country dwelling gardeners.

Come join us for a meeting to learn horticultural tips from guest speakers, take garden related trips,



The Agassiz Garden Club tour stops at Donna Wold's home



A tour of Laverne Wojciechowski's pumpkin patch

participate in workshops, and share your green thumb with others. Social times at our monthly meetings held at Lac du Bonnet Lutheran Church, annual potluck dinner, and Christmas party are the perfect chance to make new gardening friends.

The two main events in Agassiz Club's calendar are a gigantic Plant and Bake sale in May and a Garden Show in August. Eager gardeners will line up at the Lac du Bonnet Community Centre Saturday, May 18 at 10 a.m. to look for bargain perennials, bulbs, tubers, seeds, bedding plants, trees and shrubs donated by club members and friends.

Adults and youngsters are invited to participate in friendly competition at the annual flower, vegetable, fruit, baking, canning, craft, and photo show. It happens Sunday and Monday, August 18 and 19 at Lac du Bonnet Community Centre. The exhibits are open for public viewing in the afternoon of the 19th. In order to plan your entries, phone 204-345-8419 for a prize list of all the

categories in the show.

To encourage community beautification, the Club maintains shrub and perennial beds at the Community Centre, plants floral containers at the Personal Care Home, supports the Community Garden, hosts a free heritage seed library at Lac du Bonnet Library, volunteers at Mrs. Lucci's Store, and enters a float in the Canada Day parade.



Carol Ladouceur's sunflowers

The Club is planning to organize a Kids Garden Club where children can learn the basics of gardening by preparing the soil, selecting vegetable/flower varieties, planting seeds, and watering. Watch for further information or call 1-204-770-9492.



April Obirek holding her prize winning butternut squash, along with her mother Susan at the Agassiz Garden Club flower show in August.

In order to learn more about this active organization's programs and events, Look for notices in the Community Events in The Clipper, check out Lac du Bonnet and Loving it and Positively Pinawa on Facebook, pick up a brochure at Lac du Bonnet Town Office, Library, or Senior's Club, or ask any member of Agassiz Garden Club.



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Time Spent Near Water Relieves Stress

Fresh air, combined with a quiet day on the beach or on the water is a winning combination when it comes to beating stress.

Numerous studies have found that spending time by water or in nature helps to psychologically restore us and enables us to handle day-to-day stress more effectively. This is particularly true of people with higher-stress lifestyles.

Observed benefits include a lowered heart rate, improved mood and concentration, and greater feelings of well-being.

Interestingly, the weather has been found to be an important factor that determines how much stress reduction is achieved when spending time by water.

Survey results, published in *The Journal of Environmental Psychology*, found that the positive benefits of spending time at the beach were more pronounced

when the temperature was mild as opposed to when it was hot.

In addition, the team of researchers, led by Dr. J. Aaron Hipp, professor of community health at North Carolina State University, discovered that the effects were even more pronounced when water level was taken into account.

Hipp postulated that busy beaches may be less good for stress-reduction than those with fewer people on them.

With plenty of overcast days that occur throughout our Manitoba summers, one may want to opt for a leisurely walk by the water rather than spending the day indoors.

The only thing one has to lose is stress. What one gains will be psychological restoration and a boost to their well-being.



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The World Health Organization anticipates depression to be the world's largest contributor to disease by 2030.

To combat that, Michael Depledge, chair of Environment and Human Health at the University of Exeter Medical School, says there is a clear correlation between close proximity to a body of water and better psychological and overall health outcomes.

hormones, boosting our mental health.

"For mental health and wellness we encourage individuals to take some time for themselves in an environment that they find relaxing to promote self-care," said Pat Olafson, regional director for mental health and crisis services for Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority. "Everyone is different and for some people that may be spending time with family

or friends and for others that can be spending time by water. What is most important is that the individual finds the activity meaningful."

Richard Shuster, PsyD, clinical psychologist and podcast host, says staring at water actually changes a person's brain waves and frequency and puts us into a mild meditative state. The smell of the breeze near waterways also contributes to a soothed state.

Shuster says the noises, smells and

visuals activate a person's parasympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for slowing people down and allowing them to relax.

There is a growing amount of scientific research that indicates spending time near water slows heart rates, reduces stress hormones and boosts mental health.



Paddling on the Bird River

Depledge has been studying the effects of so-called 'blue environments' for a decade. He says spending time near the water, promotes physical activity and general fitness, reducing the incidence of diabetes and other diseases associated with obesity. He adds it also slows down our heart rate and reduces stress



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A Roaring Good Time

Lac du Bonnet Lions Canada Day Festivities a Regional Highlight

The Lac du Bonnet Lions Club-sponsored Canada Day celebrations have become the community's signature summer attraction, which serves as a homecoming for many families and former residents.

Running from June 28-30, the weekend celebrations feature a Wonder Shows midway, a beer garden, mixed slo-pitch tournament, parade, show n' shine and live entertainment.

Great food is on the menu with pancake breakfasts at the Pioneer Club June 29 and 30 from 9-11 a.m. The Lions pickerel fry will be at the Lac du Bonnet Community Centre from 3-6 p.m. on Saturday.

The Lac du Bonnet Lions Fireworks Saturday night use the town dock chosen as the launch site. The 30-minute show attracts thousands of people from across the region to the hill at the nearby beach and provides a perfect view for residents of waterfront properties in town and in cottage country.

During the weekend, the Lions Club also ensures plenty of free fun for children by providing barrel train rides, face painting and a variety of activities at a family fun zone.



*Tonia and Bennett Cheetham celebrate
Canada Day in Lac du Bonnet*

Helicopter rides are scheduled for Saturday (weather permitting) with the Winnipeg River Car Show 'N Shine Sunday on Second Street.

The Lac du Bonnet Canada Day parade starts at 12:30 p.m. Sunday with floats, decorated bicycles and dignitaries riding down Park Avenue.

Receiving their charter in 1963, the Lac du Bonnet Lions Club has remained true to their motto by serving the community for 60 years.

This dedicated and hard working group of volunteers represent the community spirit Lac du Bonnet was founded on, and unselfishly extend a hand of assistance in virtually every event that takes place in the community.



RCMP lead the Canada Day parade

Fire & Water Music Festival Hits High Notes

Organizers of Lac du Bonnet's award winning Fire and Water Music Festival have put together an exciting line up of entertainment for the August long weekend event.

Fire and Water Music Festival is a three-day event (Aug. 2-4) featuring music and art with a focus on local and provincial talent. Held at the Lakers Water Ski Club site, the festival provides important opportunities for upcoming acts to introduce their talents to a broader audience and showcase their original material.

The festival is organized and run by volunteers, many of them being artists and musicians as well. The laid back environment of the festival encourages up front and personal contact with artists who often leave the stage following their performance and join the audience to catch the next act.

The 2024 lineup will be a good one with several well known Manitoba acts. Confirmed performers include Dirty Catfish Brass Band, The Dry Bones, The F-Holes, Two Crows for Comfort, Emma Petersen, Redboine, David Graham, The Prairie Sons and Listening Room Vibes among others.

The Dry Bones are the true energetic heroes of modern folk music. They are an indefatigable force with which to be reckoned. Boasting some of Canada's most celebrated performers and songwriters,

Leonard Podolak (The Duhks) provides the melodic hook and banjo hustle every band dreams of having while JD Edwards (Small Glories) is the soulful voice of the group adding guitar and harmonica. Nathan Rogers (w/Dale Brown, Unglud) plays guitar, stomp and kazoo. Jeremy Penner (Stanley County Cut Ups, The Duhks) is the newest member of the band, playing fiddle/violin and lending his voice to the harmonic tapestry while Gilles Fournier (Ego Spank, various artists) provides both warm undertones and driving bass lines.

Since 2011, Winnipeg's Dirty Catfish Brass Band (DCBB) has become a constant at local festivals and venues. Much like the

great brass bands from New Orleans, DCBB are dedicated to offering their community a gathering place to feel the joy of music and dance. Their monthly performances at The Times Change(d) High and Lonesome Club have become a constant sell out, offering both



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Dirty Catfish Brass Band

a family friendly early show and a late night performance, geared to reach all ages of music enthusiasts. Their positive and joyful approach to music has been an asset to many community organizations.

MCMA's 2021 Roots Duo/Group of the Year, Two Crows for Comfort are a touring folk-roots duo from Manitoba. Wandering troubadours Erin and Cory, accompanied by their pup, Elliot, travel across North America in an 18-foot camper, playing countless shows from coast to coast to coast.

Whether it's a major festival or intimate listening

room, Two Crows will have you whisked away to the coziness of your living room as they weave a warm blanket of fine crafted lyrics, powerful vocals and intricate harmonies. The duo's unique arrangements and memorable melodies will stay with you long after the night is over.

A five-time Manitoba Country Music Association award winner, Emma Peterson is known not only for her captivating performances, but for a powerful voice and all too relatable lyricism.

Growing up in Winnipegosis, those fond hometown memories continue to fuel the fire, and initially lit the spark on her country music career. Over the past few years, Emma has continued to perform at numerous venues across the province and beyond, including Dauphin's Countryfest and Niverville Fair, sharing a stage with some of the country's biggest stars, The Reklaws, Charlie Major, and Andrew Hyatt.

A smaller festival with an annual attendance around the 200-person mark, Fire and Water's board of directors would like to keep improving the event and tailor it for people to attend and enjoy live music.

For more information visit the Fire and Water Music Festival website at firewater.ca

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EMCA Celebrates 50 Years of Music

The Eastern Manitoba Concert Association (EMCA) is celebrating 50 years of bringing live musical entertainment to the North Eastman area.

An incorporated non-profit, volunteer organization, EMCA has maintained a professional venue for artists, provided educational opportunities for students and enriched the cultural life of Eastern Manitobans for five decades.

The concept of EMCA began about 1971 by two young mothers, Yvonne Oldaker (ballet tutor and examiner) and Joyce Hart (formerly with the Winnipeg Art Gallery).

The first concert was held in Pinawa's Kelsey House and featured a quartet. It was a financial success and proved that the community would support such an endeavour.

A second concert was held at the F.W. Gilbert School featuring a Winnipeg contemporary dance group, which gave way to subsequent performances.

Starting in the fall of 1973, a small group of Pinawa residents established what later became known as the EMCA and dedicated their volunteer efforts to continue bringing high quality entertainment to the



Maria Regnier and Sylvia Temis of Notas de 4 brought Latin flare to Pinawa.

Photo by Derrek Owen

area as a subscription series. Pinawa became a host for Overture Concerts run by world-class bassoonist George Zukerman of Vancouver. For six years, three or four performances were held annually in the Upper Lounge of Kelsey House, and later the Pinawa Community Centre.

In 1979, local volunteers took over the series and the independent Eastern Manitoba Concert



The sold-out crowd was enthusiastic in its appreciation for Elton John tribute artist Jeff Scott and his four-piece band.

Photo by Derrek Owen

Association was launched.

The EMCA formula is simple: quality concerts and a rewarding community volunteer experience.

In its beginning, the concert organization introduced primarily classical music but over the years, performances have become considerably more varied to include jazz, folk, Celtic, country, big band, comedy and some indefinable categories.

Fun, achievement, community enrichment, a quality venue, an audience for artists, and of course, enjoyment of the concerts defines the substance and value of EMCA to cultural life in Eastern Manitoba.

After 50 years of hard work and careful spending, attracting a faithful audience and paying its bills, EMCA is a favourite destination for performing artists across the country.

In celebration of this major milestone, EMCA brought forward a spectacular and ambitious line-up of shows for the 2023/24 season. They opened their 50th season spectacular in September with the first of eight concerts. The shows included a fun-filled tribute to Elton John, retro rockabilly and bluegrass, a magical Christmas harp show including ancient instruments, Celtic folk, country, comedy, a lively world-class brass quintet and even flamenco! The program selection committee went all out and the association went all in to provide a memorable program for their golden anniversary while maintaining low subscription prices.

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Lac du Bonnet Birding

by Kristen McLean

You don't have to go far or be an experienced birder to discover beautiful birds in Lac du Bonnet and the surrounding area!

There are over 300 bird species nearby due to the area's diverse habitats of prairie farmland, boreal forest, rivers, lakes and marshes and because the area is part of migration routes for several species in spring and fall.

The most important tips for bird watching are to be attentive and take your time. The birds are there; you'll be pleased with what you discover when you look! By taking a leisurely pace, you can spot birds that are hidden at first and avoid scaring them away.

It also helps to use binoculars or a camera with a zoom lens to get a closer look.

Several bird species can be found right within the Town of Lac du Bonnet. These are some of the birds that can be spotted in these areas:



*Yellow-bellied sapsucker,
Memorial Park, Lac du Bonnet*

Town Dock

- common loon
- mallard
- northern flicker

Memorial Park

- red-breasted nuthatch
- yellow-bellied sapsucker
- yellow-rumped warbler

Lakeside Park

- brown-headed cowbird
- common goldeneye
- eastern kingbird
- eastern phoebe
- red-breasted merganser
- red-headed woodpecker
- song sparrow
- white-breasted nuthatch

Other Areas in Town

These birds can be seen in public areas in trees, on the ground, and on power lines, not just at backyard bird feeders!

- oriole
- barn swallow
- blue jay
- chipping sparrow
- grey catbird
- killdeer
- mourning dove
- pileated woodpecker
- purple finch
- red-winged blackbird
- western kingbird
- yellow warbler

The serene nature surrounding Lac du Bonnet offers more opportunities to observe an impressive variety of birds. The Wildlife Association Ponds (trout ponds) attract birds like American tree sparrows, bobolinks, least flycatchers, palm warblers, sandhill cranes, and savannah sparrows.

On the Winnipeg River and Lake Lac du Bonnet, you can often enjoy the sight of American white pelicans, bald eagles and double-



*Eastern kingbird,
Lakeside Park, Lac du Bonnet*

crested cormorants. White-mouth Falls Provincial Park is another great place to see American white pelicans.

At the Pinawa Dam Provincial Heritage Park, you can see cedar waxwings, rough-legged hawks and spotted sandpipers. If you keep your eyes peeled, you can even see magnificent birds just while driving on highways and roads near Lac du Bonnet, like American kestrels, great grey owls, northern harriers and red-tailed hawks.

Lac du Bonnet and its vibrant natural surroundings are home and host to many wonderful birds. As you keep an eye out for them while doing other activities, or as you take some time specifically to search for them, you'll find many beautiful, charming and majestic birds to enjoy.



*American white pelicans,
Whitemouth Falls Provincial Park*



*Yellow-rumped warbler,
Wildlife Association Ponds*



*Baltimore oriole,
Lac du Bonnet*

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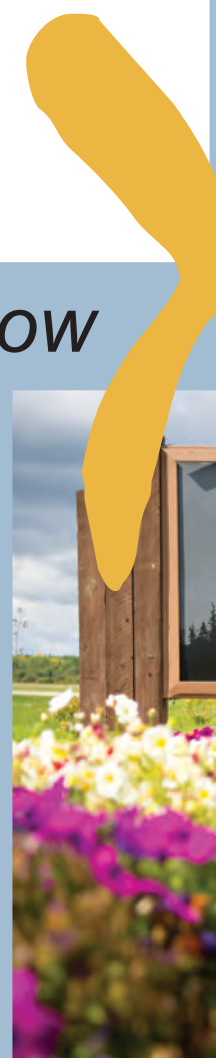
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Eastman SnoPals Volunteer Recognized

Dave Bruderer Named Canadian Congress Groomer Operator of the Year

Dave Bruderer of the Eastman SnoPals won a national award for his snowmobile trail grooming efforts.

After winning the Snoman's Groomer Operator of the Year in 2022, Bruderer was nominated for the same honour with the Canadian Congress of Snowmobile Organizations. He won that award in June 2023 at the International Congress in Moline, Ill.

"Our VP told us one night at a meeting," Bruderer said when asked how he learned he won. "I wasn't expecting it. I didn't even know they put a section award out. There are lots of other people who are just as deserving as I am. I don't know how I got picked. A lot of people put in lots of hours."

"Every snowmobile club is only as strong as its volunteer membership," Eastman SnoPals president John Fleming said. "The Eastman SnoPals are extremely lucky to have Dave Bruderer from Pinawa as a member of our club. Dave spent many hours volunteering with the SnoPals as he prepared trails for the season."

Living in Pinawa, Bruderer has been grooming trails for many years, going back to when he lived in Gilham. The retired Manitoba Hydro worker has been doing it long enough that he began before groomers were widely used. Back then, they dragged lines behind sleds.



Dave Bruderer (centre) accepts his award from the Canadian Congress of Snowmobile Organizations at the International Congress in Moline, Ill.

Photo submitted

"The enjoyment of doing it, riding the machines, clearing brush in the winter... You have to do something," Bruderer said.

Trail grooming is more than running the machine once or twice weekly in the winter, especially in the varied terrain that makes up the 325 kilometres Bruderer and his team are responsible for. The winter begins with packing trails and clearing brush. Monitoring swamp country and flooding rivers are also a groomer's responsibility.

During the summer and fall, groomers head out on quads to clear trails from fallen logs. There's brush clearing,

gravel hauling and sign installation as the weather turns. Last season, eight people were on the team, with the oldest being 77. Bruderer's wife Pat helps

out by monitoring the groomers online.

“You got to have quite a few people,” Bruderer said. “We clean all that up, sign it and then groom it once a week. High-travel areas we do twice a week. It’ll take the month of December to clean the trails, pack and sign them.”

“Two or three guys go out every day and work five or six hours. That’s enough. Most of us are retired.”

Snoman (Snowmobilers of Manitoba) has been the province’s leading supporter of snowmobiling for 40 years. The organization was established in 1975 to advance organized snowmobiling in Manitoba, coordinate matters of mutual interest for snowmobiling-related

organizations and develop and maintain the 13,000 kilometres of snowmobile trails and associated facilities throughout the province.



Bruderer and his team are responsible for grooming 325 kilometres of SnoPals trails

The Canadian Council of Snowmobile Organizations (CCSO) is a volunteer-led, not-for-profit national organization which through strong leadership provides support to members and provide a unified voice of organized snowmobiling at the national and international levels. The CCSO envisions that across Canada, organized snowmobile trail networks and riding areas provide a lasting legacy of responsible riding experiences that are highly valued, safe, enjoyable, sustainable and environmentally friendly.

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North Eastman Two-Day Trip with Snoman

The North Eastman region offers wilderness adventure at any time of the year. That opportunity is amplified in the winter as snowmobile clubs work together to develop an extensive maze of hundreds of kilometres of trails offering dense forest, abundant wildlife and breathtaking scenery

Snoman has put together an amazing two-day route through the region. You will explore the Lac du Bonnet area through the Agassiz Forest, across the Lee River through to the Seven Sisters Hydro dam catching scenic views of the Winnipeg River System.

DAY 1

Starting at South Beach Casino, head north on Trail 50 for a day trip consisting of 234 kilometres of scenic trail. Follow the map until you reach either Saffie's General Store or the Hillside Beach Store and Eatery to pick up some hot dogs and buns. After the stop, you will travel through the beautiful Jack Pine Forest. Pass through 'The Swamp' to Isbister Lake and into a mixed forest of pine, birch, and poplars. Follow the trail around until you get to the halfway point at the Red Deer Hut shelter to have lunch. Deer and foxes inhabit the Agassiz Forest around the Lac du Bonnet area. After a short ride, you hit Beausejour – the Snowmobile Capital of Canada as voted by snowmobilers like you. There are several different amenities there for all your needs. Then you are headed north through the Mars Hill Wildlife Management Area with winding trails and tall trees. Watch out for deer. You will travel along the Brokenhead River through the Brokenhead Ojibway Nation and then onto South Beach Casino for a lazy evening in the pool or on the casino floor.

DAY 2

Today you are headed east on trail 280 for a day ride of 238 kilometres. After a trip through the Agassiz Forest, you enter some scenic swampland. A little trip on the edge of Lac du Bonnet and across Lee River to get to an early lunch along the trail at Trappers. You will then head south into a beautiful, forested area on a very winding trail. If a shelter and hot dogs appeal to you there is Rose's Hut at the halfway point along this trail. For a later lunch, you can stop at the Pinawa Club, or you can call ahead and order at the Wilderness Edge Retreat and Conference Centre. A photo-worthy trail is along the diversion channel after leaving the Pinawa Club. This area is of course busy with hikers and cross-country skiers as part of the trail are shared with the TransCanada Trail so watch your speed. Then you will be arriving at the Seven Sisters Hydro Dam, where the scenic view of the Winnipeg River is.



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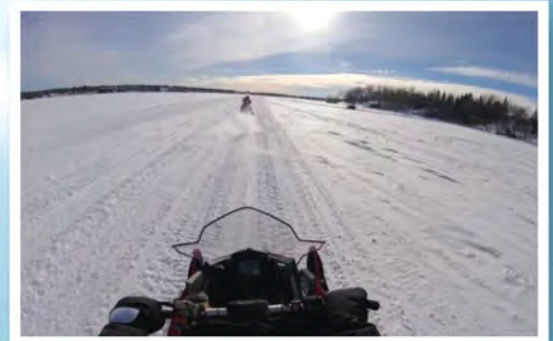
Lac du Bonnet is beautifully nestled in lush boreal forest and the Canadian Shield with open waters and plenty of healthy wildlife.

Enjoy snowmobiling or ice fishing in the winter, along with cross country skiing and the option to skate indoors or out. In summer, kayak the Winnipeg River, bike the Granite Groove Out, hike Blueberry Rock, or take a leisurely stroll on one of our many trails. Our beach features a large public dock and play structure that is in close proximity to many great restaurants and shops that showcase our welcoming personality.

Living in Lac du Bonnet will keep you busy as our community offers a variety of organized sports for people of all ages, such as hockey, pickleball, curling, yoga and more. Our dedication to health and wellness is of high priority, and we have ample resources available to all.

Community events like Canada Day celebrations, Fire & Water Festival, Harvest Festival, LdB Ice Fishing Derby and holiday activities are just some of our annual signature events you do not want to miss.

Our community thrives on our small-town environment, big hearts and year round community spirit. No matter the season, there is always plenty on offer. We invite you to join us and enjoy what makes Lac du Bonnet so spectacular.



Putting Local History into Words

by **Andrea Geary**

The more local author and researcher Jennifer Strassel discovers about Lac du Bonnet and area's history, the more she wants to know.

"Sometimes the research surprises me," she said, adding that uncovering one tidbit often leads to another story. "I realize they're all connected."

Strassel is a familiar name to Lac du Bonnet Clipper and Lac du Bonnet Living readers as she's written about 30 newspaper articles under the title, Window on Our Past, and five magazine features, all dealing with history of the community and Winnipeg River.

She began writing when attending Lac du Bonnet Senior School, and her passion led her to the University

of Winnipeg's Creative Writing program. Her university studies included history courses which fueled her interest in historical research. She also gained practical experience through her volunteer work with the Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society under the direction of Terry and Marlene Tottle over the past seven years.

Her first Window on Our Past article appeared in January 2020. Two years later, she expanded the series to include stories from Whitemouth and further along the Winnipeg River.

The Winnipeg River Heritage Museum in St-Georges officially reopened in June 2023. Strassel was one of the

volunteers who helped with the rebuilding work after a 2014 fire, conducting research into Winni-



Jennifer Strassel

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peg River history to use in creating exhibit panels. Her writing was compiled into a book, *People of the River*, released in May 2023 as a companion piece to the exhibit.

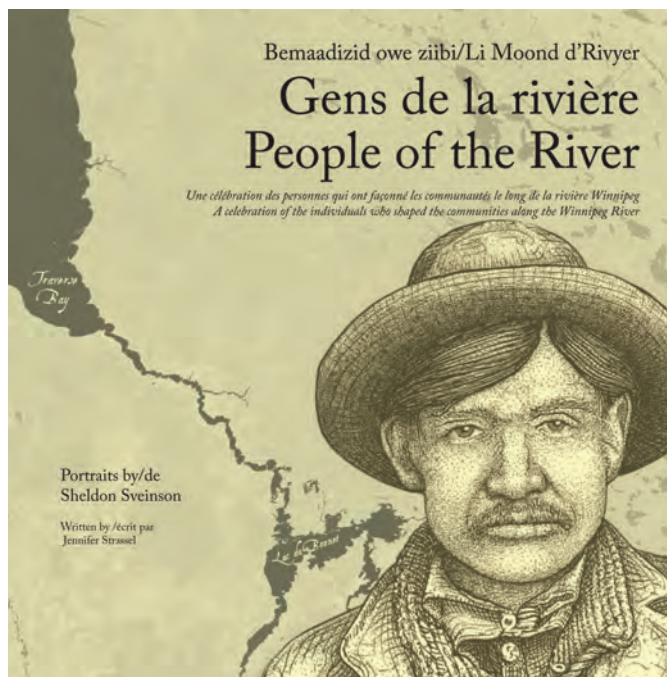
Strassel's history knowledge is taking another form as she uses it as the basis for writing fictional short stories. Last year she had stories published in five anthologies produced by Dragon Soul Press.

"I try to write from a place I know." In the *Reign of Fire* anthology, her story, *The Cartographer's Daughter*, draws on her research into the Manitoba fur trade.

"While these stories are vastly different from each other, they are all on the lighter side, with happy endings. Plus, they all have elements of me: small towns, history, and most importantly, a loyal dog joining in on the adventures."

Capturing the natural beauty of the Whiteshell through her camera's lens is another pastime that brings Strassel joy and inspires her writing. "Sometimes the best stories are the ones that you see."

Strassel said she's pleased to be able to offer pieces of Manitoba's history to the public through her ar-



People of the River front cover

ticles and short stories. "A lot of history is lost."

This year, she's working on more research and writing projects in the history and fiction fields.

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WINDOW ON OUR PAST

A Tale of Two Brick Plants

by Jennifer Strassel
Whitemouth Municipal Museum
Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society

In April 1899, shortly after Walter Wardrop hauled Lac du Bonnet's brick-making machinery from Whitemouth, samples of brick and tile displayed in the window of the MacPherson Fruit Company on Winnipeg's Main Street gathered significant interest. Experts considered the Lac du Bonnet clay products "equal to anything of the kind in the world" and the best "ever seen in this city."

By August, Lac du Bonnet bricks were in demand. Throughout the summer of 1899, the plant produced and stockpiled 50,000 bricks per day. In 1900, the plant produced "over a million bricks," all stored until the rail line arrived in 1901.

There were two layers of post-glacial clay along the Winnipeg River at Lac du Bonnet: the upper layer of

yellow clay produced a cream-coloured brick, while the lower layer of stiff, black clay made a dense, red brick.

By 1905, the clay pits were excavated to a depth of 20 feet, with an estimated 30 feet remaining. In 1911, plant manager William Wellman promised a year of "record business" for Lac du Bonnet bricks.

Hoping to capitalize on Lac du Bonnet's success, around 1914, John Wardrop (Walter Wardrop's eldest son) partnered with well-known St. Boniface brickmaker Albert N. McCutcheon, to establish a brick plant at Whitemouth, a half mile west of town on the main CPR line. The clay bed extended for about 200 acres and consisted of six feet of clay that produced grey bricks and eight feet of red brick clay.

By 1916, the partnership ended, and McCutcheon continued alone. In 1918, the feuding former business partners took their dispute to court, with



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Wardrop and McCutcheon blaming each other for incidents at the brick plant. The outcome of the case is unknown.

In 1919, the Lac du Bonnet brickyard used a steam engine to power the manufacturing process and employed 50 men. Late that year, McArthur put the brick plant up for sale alongside the rest of his Lac du Bonnet assets.

In March 1920, a “first-class brick manufacturing property” was for sale at Whitemouth. A couple of weeks later, John Wardrop (owner of the John Wardrop Brick and Tile Company) wanted to purchase brick-making machinery. It is unclear if John’s restart attempt was successful.

The dates of ownership during this period are vague. Some time after 1921, the Lac du Bonnet brick plant machinery was moved to Whitemouth, where Walter Wardrop and his sons, Dave and Walter Jr., established a brick manufacturing business.

By April 1924, the Whitemouth brickyard was for sale again. McCutcheon bought it, though it is unclear if he brought the plant into production. In August 1928, the “old brickyard” was a collection point for Seven Sisters railway construction materials. In 1930, McCutcheon sold the brickyard to Dave Wardrop.

The brick-making process used for 20 years at Lac du Bonnet continued at Whitemouth. Clay was harvested by men with shovels and loaded into carts brought

to the plant. Then, it was dumped into a large hopper. Rollers eliminated any lumps before the clay was mixed with water to the correct consistency and pressed into moulds. The formed bricks were air-dried for three to seven days, then hauled to the kiln shed, where heat and smoke cured each brick over 10 days and nights. Bricks were made in summer and shipped out to customers throughout the winter.

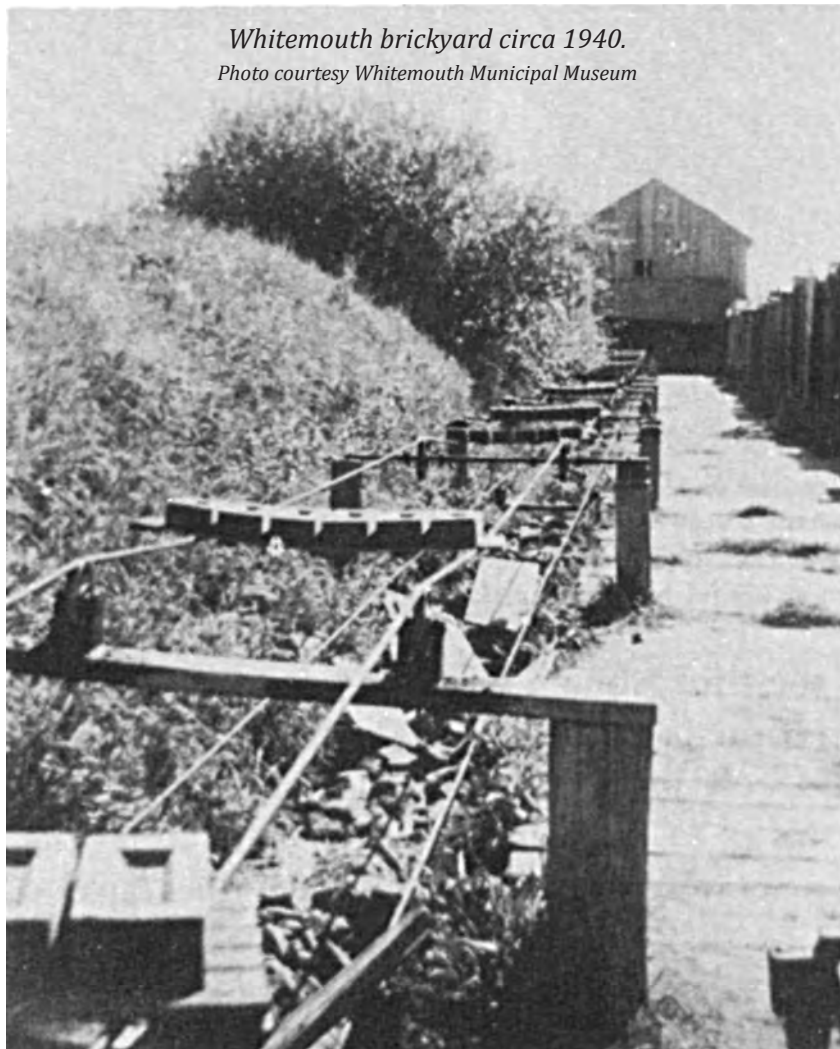
In 1933, Whitemouth was one of just three brick plants in Manitoba. Throughout the Depression, the brickyard employed local men, “keeping them off

welfare lists,” though the business was “never profitable” for the Wardrops. By 1945, Dave sold out to the Alsip Brick and Tile Company, Manitoba’s largest (and now only) brick manufacturing company.

At its peak in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Whitemouth brick plant had 52 (mostly local) employees and produced between 1.25 and 1.5 million bricks every summer.

By the mid-1950s, demand for bricks declined, and the industry moved towards cheaper and easier-to-produce concrete blocks. White-

mouth’s last bricks were made in 1957. A year later, the brickyard and buildings were dismantled, and the machinery moved to Alsip’s Winnipeg yards on Nairn Avenue, ending the Lac du Bonnet brick plant’s 60-year legacy.



Whitemouth brickyard circa 1940.

Photo courtesy Whitemouth Municipal Museum

- whitemouthmuseum.com
- ldbhistorical.ca
- jenniferstrassel.com

WINDOW ON OUR PAST

The Railway's Last Act

by Jennifer Strassel
Whitemouth Municipal Museum
Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society

By the 1960s, Manitoba's pioneer era was over. Hydroelectric generating stations powered most of the province. A labyrinth of all-weather roads connected farms to villages, towns to cities and transported tourists across the country in search of summer escapes. Railway companies saw a decline in their passenger service and communities faced decades of change.

After the Hydro tramway to Pointe du Bois was pulled up in 1963, the only users of Lac du Bonnet's CPR branch line were the grain elevators and mining companies. The first grain elevator was established in 1934 by the Canadian Consolidated Grain Company (CCG). The Inter Ocean Grain Company (IOG) opened a second one by 1950. That same year, a wild rice plant was built between the two elevators. By 1965, the United Grain Growers (UGG) had bought out the CCG and IOG companies, becoming the owner of both Lac du Bonnet grain elevators. The grain was shipped by train to the Lakehead (Thunder Bay) or Vancouver ports.

Loading docks south of the grain elevators facilitated the unloading of mined ore from trucks into train cars. The Tantalum Mining Corporation of Canada, Ltd. (Tanco) re-opened the Bernic Lake mine in 1967. It was fully operational by 1969 and shipping the rare minerals around the world.

Between 1969 and 1976, Dumbarton Mines oper-

ated an open pit nickel mine three kilometres north of Bernic Lake. Local and provincial trucking firms hauled the ore to the company's concentrator at Werner Lake, Ont. (only accessible from Manitoba). The nickel concentrate was then hauled from Werner Lake to Lac du Bonnet, where it was loaded onto box-cars and shipped to Sudbury for further processing.

In July 1972, the Canadian Pacific announced the closure of 22 stations throughout east-central Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, including Lac du Bonnet, Whitemouth, Molson and Beausejour, as part of the implementation of their service centre network across Canada.

In Lac du Bonnet, the rural municipality acquired the CPR station and asked that a group of citizens restore the building for a museum. Nothing came of the proposal, so by late 1975, the CPR station building was removed and the site leveled. The Casey's Hotel, who had been leasing part of the space since 1963, got a bigger parking lot.

In February 1982, UGG announced the closure of Lac du Bonnet's grain elevators. They were in need of costly repairs and, with only 150,000 to 300,000 bushels moving through the facility, UGG wouldn't consider building a new one. A compromise was reached. By August 1982, the south elevator, with a pit that was unable to stay dry and deemed too small to handle the modern farm truck, was demolished, hauled to the dump and burned.

By 1986, the limited service of the branch line was inconvenient and expensive. Tanco transferred all



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shipping to the main CPR line at Molson. By August 1987, all concentrated ore was trucked to Molson for storage at their new loading depot where, any day of the week, it could be loaded onto train cars bound for Thunder Bay and transferred to ships for the American and European markets.

The remaining grain elevator capabilities were limited. They only accepted cereal grains, so anyone growing small seeds or oil seed, such as sunflower or canola, had to take their crops elsewhere.

In October 1987, the invasive rice weevil was found in the grain boot and the UGG's operating licence was suspended. The UGG permanently closed the elevator, citing, once again, costly renovations. 750,000 bushels were shipped out of Lac du Bonnet, and the UGG required 1.5 to 2 million bushels to justify the cost of a new elevator. Farmers were concerned about the impact the closure would have on Lac du Bonnet.

On March 9, 1988, the last train operated on the Lac du Bonnet branch line, hauling grain from the elevator. Only wild rice plant operator, Harry Arseniuk, and the UGG photographer witnessed the historic

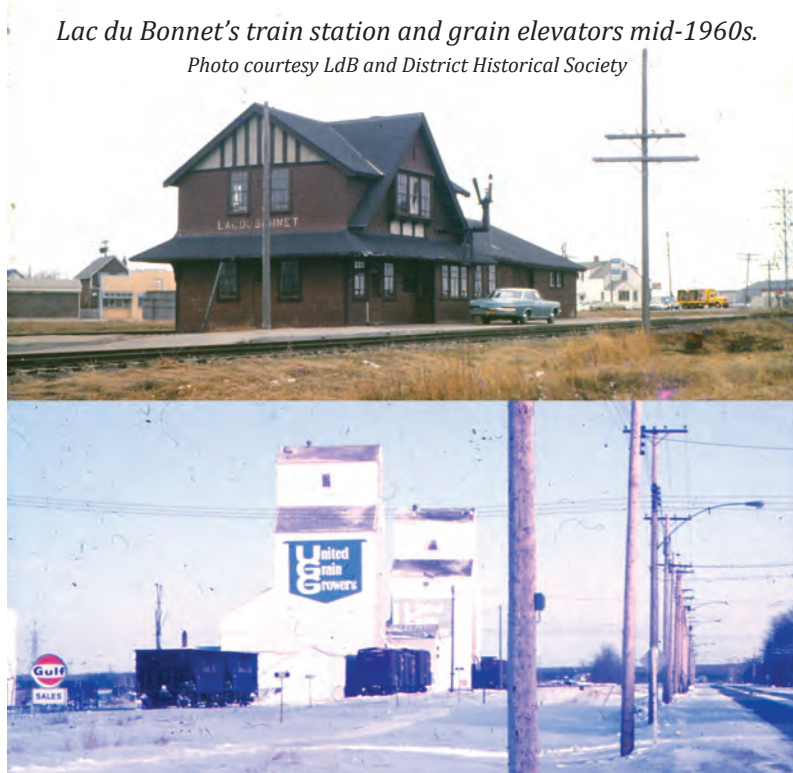
event. For the first time in over 50 years, farmers had to travel to River Hills, Beausejour or Libau to order seed, pick up fertilizer and sprays and learn about new products and crops. Political "red tape" was all that kept the CPR line in place.

By early December 1988, Lac du Bonnet's last grain elevator was demolished and hauled away to be burned.

The CPR filed an "application for the abandonment of the operations" of the railway in December 1989. By June 1990, contractors from Brandon were tearing out the tracks, beginning in Great Falls, to Lac du Bonnet, through Milner Ridge to Molson. The RM purchased a "switching section of track" for a future museum artifact. In three months, the 35 kilometres of rail line were gone. All that was left were years of negotiations with the CPR

over land ownership. In March 1998, the CPR donated the railway corridor of the Lac du Bonnet branch line to the Trans Canada Trail Foundation for use as an all season, multipurpose trail.

- whitemouthmuseum.com
- ldbhistorical.ca
- jenniferstrassel.com



Lac du Bonnet's train station and grain elevators mid-1960s.
Photo courtesy LdB and District Historical Society



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Building the Canadian Pacific Railway in Southeastern Manitoba

PREFACE:

Lac du Bonnet does not owe its existence to J.D. McArthur, or even to the Lac du Bonnet Mining, Developing and Manufacturing company. The community, and its neighbours, were only able to flourish because of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Lac du Bonnet's history could have been very different. In the wake of Canada's railway construction came bustling towns filled with promises for the future. Some survived, maybe even thrived. More often, they became empty, overgrown places. A forgotten name on a map.

Without the Canadian Pacific Railway, Lac du Bonnet would just be a widening of the Winnipeg River. Without the ability to transport the abundant natural resources to the rest of the world on a branch railway, the businessmen would have returned to the city and left the stock-piled cordwood, lumber and bricks to be reclaimed by nature. Without the businessmen to capitalize on the industry, immigrants from twenty-seven different nations would not have settled these lands and no community would have developed on the lakeshore.

This reality was avoided by the railway, nineteen miles away, that united Canada from coast to coast.

INTRODUCTION:

The Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Canada's first trans-continental line, has a long, complex and, at times, controversial history. Entire books have been written about it and selections of this history are taught in every school across the country. At the time, it was the longest railway in North America.

...

In 1871, many considered the building of an all-Canadian railway to be "insane recklessness." To connect with a number of small rail lines already in the East, railway builders would first encounter the Precambrian Shield, where they would have to "blast their way across 700 miles of granite wasteland," and go over "another 300 miles of muskeg." Then came the Prairie, an inhospitable grassland that required all construction materials and railway ties to be hauled in from elsewhere. Beyond it, a wall of mountains, before coming to the sparsely populated Pacific coast.

Critics said building a railway across Shield country was "one of the most foolish things" ever imagined. Consensus was for the rail line to divert south, through the United States to Duluth, before turning northwest into Manitoba and continuing across the rest of Canada. When British



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Columbia joined Canada in 1871, they were promised that, within ten years, a railway would connect them to the rest of the country. In 1872, civil engineer, Sir Sanford Fleming, organized a series of detailed surveys over multiple proposed routes across Canada.

•••

The Canadian Pacific Railway was built in pieces from the east, the west and the south. Each section was completed in four stages. First, surveyors located the line, curves and gradients. Second, the line was graded: bush was cleared and rock blasted to sixty-six feet wide, bridges were put over creeks and rivers, and low spots were raised and levelled. Third, wooden ties were laid across the grade and steel rails were spiked to the ties. Finally, the line was ballasted: crushed gravel filled between the ties to prevent shifting.

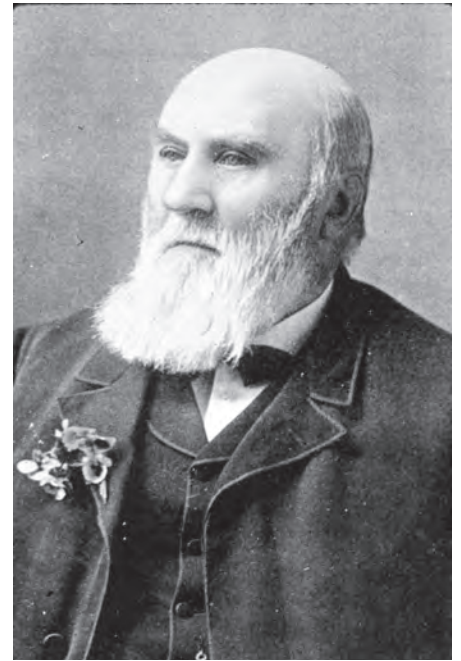
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The history of the CPR's construction in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario appears largely forgotten, overshadowed by the challenges faced throughout the Rocky Mountains. In reality, the miles of muskeg and rock between Lake Superior and Beausejour matched the engineering difficulties of the mountains. North of Lake Superior, and through to Manitoba, nature went to "extremes to thwart the railway builders."

Following the path marked by surveyors, the distance between Thunder Bay and Selkirk was just 435 miles, which encompassed two of the worst contracts on the entire line for natural obstacles: contract 14, from Selkirk to Cross Lake (Caddy Lake, in the Whiteshell), and contract 15, Cross Lake to Rat Portage (Kenora).

While crews chiselled through rock and backfilled bottomless muskeg across the Shield, the first railway to reach Manitoba actually came from the south: the 85 mile Pembina Branch of the CPR that ran from the United States border at Emerson, through St. Boniface, to Selkirk.

At the time of its incorporation in 1873, Winnipeg (which many still called Fort Garry) was a "muddy, disreputable village" with a population of 1,869 sprawled between Main Street and the Red River, that was isolated from the rest of the world.



*Railway Contractor
Joseph Whitehead, 1877*

*Credit: Archives of Manitoba Collection,
Western Canada Pictorial Index
(University of Winnipeg)*

By mid-August 1874, work had started on the long-awaited railway before deter-

mining where the Pembina Branch would intersect the main CPR line. Two weeks after CPR engineers located the line, well-known Ontario railway contractor, Joseph Whitehead, received the tender for grading the Pembina Branch between the "International Boundary and a point opposite the Town of Winnipeg." Ground breaking took place on September 19, 1874. Red River steamships had to transport all construction equipment, including shovels, from the US.

The Pembina Branch was to pass on the eastern side of the Red River, through St. Boniface to Selkirk, where it would connect with the proposed

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main CPR line. The idea was for the main railway to “run the straightest line from Rat Portage”, crossing at the mouth of the Red River at Lake Winnipeg, and angling northwest through the Lake Manitoba Narrows. Selkirk and Lake Manitoba provided vital access to the fishing and logging industries of the central and northern portions of the province.

St. Boniface was its own community and, without a bridge over the Red River, Winnipeg would not benefit from the railway. The citizens of Winnipeg formed a committee to persuade the government to alter the route of the CPR through Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie and the rest of Manitoba’s fertile western farmland. In December 1874, the committee determined that “scolding and threats” would do little for their cause, instead they “must appeal to the good sense and judgement of the government.”

While work on the main CPR line began, the debate between Selkirk or Winnipeg raged for years.

1875

While Whitehead’s crews continued grading the Pembina Branch, work progressed on the CPR main line.



Corduroy over muskeg with drainage ditches
 Credit: History & Folklore of the Whiteshell Park South

A call for tenders was issued for grading the CPR eastward from Red River to Lake of the Woods in March 1875. Contractors Sifton & Ward received contract 14, the seventy-seven miles from Cross Lake to Red River. The thirty-seven miles of contract 15 between Cross Lake and Rat Portage required further surveys to ensure accurate assessments, which delayed progress.

It was “generally understood” that the last portion to be built would be the “very rough and barren” country north of Lake Superior. Anyone conducting business in the North West resigned themselves to using the Dawson Road or relying on American railways for “many years to come.”

On June 1, 1875, a sod-turning ceremony four miles from Thunder Bay, on the Kaministiquia River, marked the beginning of westward construction on



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the CPR main line.

In Manitoba, Assistant Engineer, Harry W.D. Armstrong, noted that the surveyors “began the work of constructing Canada’s great highway at a dead end.”

To divide the surveying workload, the engineers were located at intervals in contract 14 at Tyn-dall, Beausejour, Shelley, Rennie and Telford, and in contract 15 at Ingolf, Kalmar, Invez, Oster-sund, and Keewatin (the “end of the Manitoba district”). These “resi-dent engineers” staked out the line and made “estimates for contrac-tors, sub-contractors and station men”, and maintained the tele-graph wire on their thirteen mile section. Government rations came by oxcart from Winnipeg, where they “floundered through hay marshes with about 500lb loads.”

Armstrong was based at Stoney Prairie, a “dry ridge sixteen miles east of Selkirk.” (This place would be renamed “Burgoyne”, and, in 1877, Beausejour.) He was accompanied by a “rod man, axe man and a cook”. They lived in tents until permanent houses were built near the end of summer.

Armstrong's thirteen miles included poplar to the west, and to the east, beyond the Brokenhead River, was spruce and tamarack swamp. They walked seven to eight miles daily, "wet to the knees in mud and water" as they "waded knee deep among the stumps." A "foot of moss" covered everything and below that, four feet deep, was a layer of ice that lasted through the summer.

Armstrong recalled that the "mosquitoes, black flies and bulldog flies were very thick." On one occasion, while he walked through the swamp, carrying his level over one shoulder, his hand was covered with mosquitoes, "their bills sunk to the hilt" and "equally thick" on any exposed skin.

1876

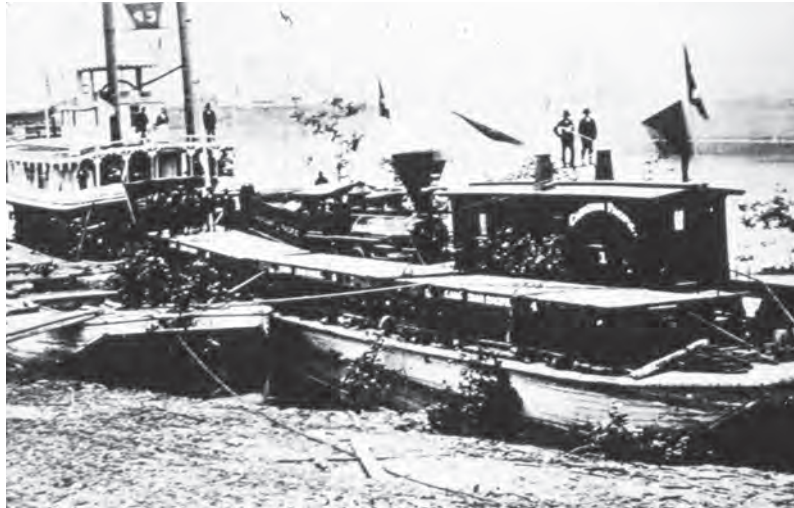
Very little actual work happened on either line in 1876.

On the main line, Sifton & Ward were looking for 200 men to grade contract 14, and more surveyors were sent out on contract 15."

In Beausejour, surveyor Armstrong continued to slog through the muskeg, marking out drainage and side ditches. The excavated material would be redistributed to make embankments upon which the rails would run. The subcon-

tractors, "mostly from US railroads," complained that they "didn't come here to dig canals."

By August, the tenders for contracts 14 and 15 were reissued to include not only grading, but track laying and ballasting. This meant "rapid completion" of the



Arrival of the Countess of Dufferin, October 1877

Credit: Archives of Manitoba Collection, Western Canada Pictorial Index (University of Winnipeg)

railway between the Red River and Rat Portage. Early estimates were that the main line, especially from Thunder Bay to Red River, would cost, on average, \$25,000 per mile.

Politics and profit schemes surrounding the tender process caused major delays that continued to the end of the year.

In the meantime, work on the Pembina Branch reached a standstill. The Canadian government declared that the railway "would not be finished until the Americans finished theirs." It seemed the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company was in no hurry.

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1877

By mid-January, on the main CPR line, crews were blasting rock “10 miles from the east end” of contract 14, about halfway between Rennie and Telford. The telegraph line was finished and a “considerable number of poles” were up in contract 15.

Joseph Whitehead received contract 15 and the track laying portion of contract 14. In January, he was looking for “300 men and a number of axes” so that railway ties could be cut for contract 14. His sawmill at St. Boniface also produced ties and other timber needed for the rail line.

By February, Whitehead started work on contract 15 with “less than 250 men.” Transporting equipment and supplies came at “great labour and enormous expense.” Winnipeg’s “exorbitant prices” for supplies meant that on contract 15, “it was like dining on gold dust and diamonds.”

In May, Whitehead “received orders to proceed at once with the grading and track laying on the Pembina Branch” from St. Boniface to the main CPR line at Selkirk and “over it as far as the Whitemouth River.” As a result, Whitehead wanted the locomotive he’d purchased “sent in as soon as possible” for use as a “supply train” for contract 15.

Sifton, Ward & Co. had already constructed temporary bridges over creeks and “a nine mile corduroy over the Julius muskeg.”

The Julius Muskeg, northwest of Whitemouth between Shelley and Molson (approx. four miles south of the Sun Gro peat farm on present day Hwy 44) was the “most infamous bog of all”: peat moss six miles wide, “depth unknown.” The surface was “deceptively level”, filled with the stumps of dead tamaracks, “their roots weaving a kind of blanket over a concealed jelly of mud and slime.” Long sections of interlaced log timbers were floated on top for quick passage.

A “large gravel ridge,” which Whitehead had been searching for, was discovered a mile north of Shelley,

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and east of Whitemouth “sub-contractors Ross and Rideout” were building a wagon road with ties. An “abundance” of hard pan (a dense soil layer below topsoil) and rock was the next obstacle.

In July, there were “more men at present working on contract 14 than any previous time since it was opened.” Wages were \$2 per day.

October 1877 – The First Locomotive

The first train to enter Manitoba, and the Canadian West, did not arrive along the rails. The steamer

Selkirk and three barges transported the “pioneer locomotive”, a caboose, and six flat cars marked with “Canadian Pacific in white letters” along the Red River from the United States.

On October 9, 1877, at nine in the morning, the Selkirk arrived in the city, “handsomely decorated” with “Union Jacks, Stars and Stripes,” CPR banners and “her own bunting.” The barge with the locomotive and cars, decorated with “flags and evergreens”, was

flanked by two barges “laden with railway ties.” Joseph Whitehead had “steam up in the engine and



Whitemouth River Bridge, circa early 1900s
Credit: *Western Canada Pictorial Index (University of Winnipeg)*



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notified the inhabitants that the iron horse was coming by the most frantic shrieks and snorting.” They were welcomed by large crowds on the riverbanks as “mill whistles blew furiously and bells rang out.”

They landed at No. 6 Warehouse (at the end of present day Lombard Ave.), where the “crowd swarmed on board” to inspect the engine. Two hours later, the Selkirk took the barges across the river to St. Boniface “where a track had been laid to the water’s edge.” The CPR Engine #1, the Countess of Dufferin (named for the Canadian Governor General’s wife), was unloaded, bound for work in eastern Manitoba, the only place in the province with rails upon which it could run.

On contract 14, crews were busy getting the line ready for the train. By late October, the CPR’s bridge builder, Major Bowles, had reached Whitemouth, and a Mr. Clarke followed, straightening the “path of the locomotive.”

“In anticipation of increased business during track laying”, the Keewatin House at Shelley was expanded and a general

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store, operated by “Paddy the Pedlar” was opened near the Whitemouth River.

1878 – CPR Mainline

While work on contract 14 (Selkirk to Cross Lake) was winding down, the contractors were beginning to realize the immense difficulties of contract 15 (Cross Lake to Rat Portage), which included “heavier operations” than contract 14 and required “more energy, skill and capital than any portion of the CPR between Red River and Lake Superior.”

In January 1878, new labourers were arriving daily for contract 15, drawn by Whitehead’s offer of \$2 a day wages. To capitalize on the influx of people, a Mr. Wright, “better known as Paddy the Pedlar,” opened a “house of entertainment” at Whitemouth that was “perhaps the best on the line.”

By the beginning of February, the Countess of Dufferin was “within three miles of Shelley station.” A temporary track was being laid across the Julius

Muskeg so that the engine could cross and “proceed east.” A “few patches of rock and a ridge of hard pan” about six feet deep were the only obstacles remaining on contract 14. “Large quantities of ties and cordwood” were cut along the line.

On March 19, the bridge over the Whitemouth River was finished and the Countess of Dufferin crossed it for the first time that morning. Ten days later, the track was “several miles east of Whitemouth.” Crews were laying track at a rate of “about three-fourths of a mile per day.” They anticipated reaching Rennie station by June 1.

On contract 15, rock excavations and heavy cuts were “well advanced.” “Twenty-two gangs of men”, with forty to fifty men in each, blasted rock on either side of a narrow section of Cross Lake. Work had also started near Ingolf.

On June 7, 1878, the steamer Cheyenne and two barges brought a second locomotive and twenty-five flat cars up the Red River for use on the Pembina

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Branch and contract 15. The engine arrived with no fanfare and was taken directly to the rails at St. Boniface.

By October, the track was progressing at a rate of “half a mile per day” and was nearing Cross Lake. Barges of nitro glycerine and dynamite were arriving throughout the month for contract 15. A devastating number of blasting accidents occurred throughout the year. Bits of clothing and flesh were often all that remained of the men.

In late November, the entire force of 1,500 men at work on contract 15 went on strike. A reduction of wages and inferior food quality were causing “considerable dissatisfaction.” It was a peaceful strike, without violence, and was over in a few days, allowing work to continue.

Cross Lake was “rapidly attaining” village status. In addition to Whitehead’s two camps, there were four hotels, “a number of private dwelling houses” and Colclough & Co. operated a store.

On December 6, 1878, Sifton, Ward & Co. finished their work on contract 14 and “discharged the last

of their men.” The iron rails reached Cross Lake and a portion had been ballasted. They held an auction in Winnipeg selling everything from horses and oxen to shovels and axes, and even log houses and office furniture.

1878 – Pembina Branch

By mid-February, a call for tenders was issued for “grading, bridging and track laying” on the sixty-three miles from “St. Boniface station southward to the International Boundary at Emerson.” By July, steel rails were arriving on “almost every boat.”

In mid-September, the American St. Paul & Pacific Company was laying track at a “rate of a mile and a half to two miles a day.” They expected to reach Pembina by mid-October. On the

flat Manitoba prairie, crews were able to lay “two miles of iron a day.”

On December 3, 1878, “after many vexatious delays” the Pembina Branch was finished. The first regular train arrived at the St. Boniface station with twenty passengers on December 9. Winnipeg, and the rest



CPR Train on the Pointe du Bois Line

Credit: City of Winnipeg Hydro Collection, Western Canada Pictorial Index (University of Winnipeg)

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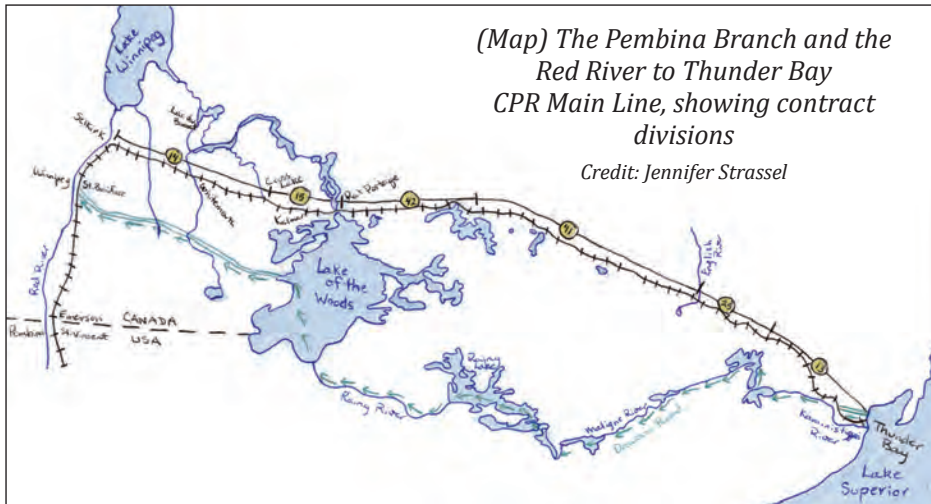
Chris Darker

of Manitoba, was now connected to St. Paul, Minnesota by 487 miles of railway.

the Railroad House had accommodation for up to seventy-five boarders and had large attached stables and outhouses.

1879

Cross Lake was becoming known as “a resort, which if not fashionable, affords every opportunity of enjoyment on its crystal waters,” boating or fishing. Rideout’s Hotel boasted that they were the “largest hotel in the North West, outside of Winnipeg” with accommodation for tourists and travellers, and a first class restaurant. Nearby,



(Map) The Pembina Branch and the Red River to Thunder Bay CPR Main Line, showing contract divisions

Credit: Jennifer Strassel

Meanwhile, railway workers toiled away on the Cross Lake trestle where “quicksand” continued to “absorb tons of material with no immediate prospect of elevating

the track” to grade. The “shallow expanse of water” deceived engineers. At times, the embankment was built six feet above the water, until the lake took

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“a gulp and the entire mass of stone, gravel and earth” vanished, and they would have to start again. Some were having second thoughts: it might have been cheaper to “have built iron bridges across the lake and bay.”

In addition to the slow progress of work, Whitehead was faced with worker strikes in May and October over unpaid wages, a reduction in the amount of wages and inadequate food. Throughout the year, large numbers of men quit the line and returned to Winnipeg. By December, Joseph Whitehead was forced to take on two more partners and replace his son, Charles, as manager.

Despite continued delays at Cross Lake, they were optimistic that the rails would reach Kalmar (Lake Deception) by January and Rat Portage by the following summer.

1879 – First Locomotive in Winnipeg

Winnipeg’s persistence had paid off: the CPR mainline was being rerouted, and on December 29, 1879, the first locomotive crossed into

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the city. There was no bridge across the Red River yet, so, John Ryan, contractor for the first 100 western miles of the CPR, laid rails across the frozen Red River to transport construction materials from the Pembina Branch into Winnipeg.

The CPR was now working from all directions. Construction had begun at Port Moody, BC eastward towards the Rockies. Winnipeg was the supply depot for the Prairies, where crews, on long summer days, laid up to five miles of track per day.

1880

By January 1880, Cross Lake was considered an “expensive blunder.” No one had bothered to measure the depth of the silt, but after years of work and “making no visible progress” enough sand and gravel had filled in between the rows of pilings (driven into the silt) to form a triangular embankment with “300 feet on one side and 200 feet on the other two sides.” It still required “a few thousand yards [of gravel] a

week to keep it up to grade,” but it was usable.

On January 22, the first engine across the Cross Lake “trestle work” was the Sitting Bull, bound for track laying at Ingolf. Several gravel trains also went over that day, “thoroughly testing” the work.

By this time, Joseph Whitehead had run out of money “in the muskegs along the Manitoba-Ontario border.” In February 1880, Michael J. Haney took over contract 15. He arrived to find the unpaid workers on another strike and promptly left for Winnipeg to get the wages. Provisions for the 4,000 men were also scarce, so Haney, with his legendary ability to scrounge, hired every available horse team to distribute 1,000 tons of supplies “over some of the roughest country in Canada” before the snow melted. Haney “accomplished the impossible” by mid-March.

Despite his failure, Joseph Whitehead did not leave Manitoba. In June 1880, he moved his St. Boniface sawmill to Whitemouth. With the abundant timber



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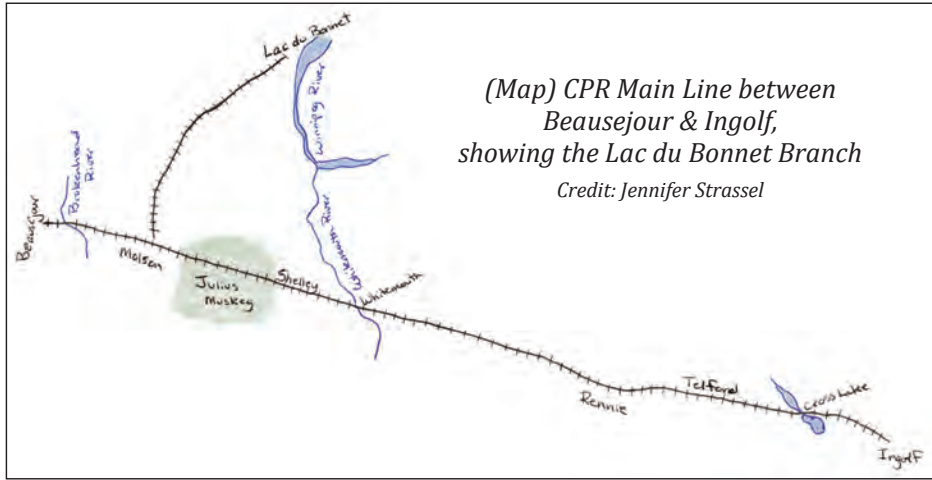
resources in the area, Whitehead and his son in law, David Ross, acquired numerous timber berths to capitalize on the demand for railway ties. The Ross sawmill operated at Whitemouth until 1905.

1881

Throughout 1881, work on the CPR east and west continued slowly. In the east, delays due to muskeg and rock were commonplace. In mid-July, the fill and pilings at Lake Deception gave way, fifty feet deep and 100 feet long. Until it was repaired, all traffic between Cross Lake and Rat Portage was suspended.

By December, advertisements were placed in

newspapers across Canada for an auction sale of Whitemouth town lots. Land speculators believed Whitemouth was destined to be eastern Manitoba's "future great city." They boasted of being "beautifully situated" on the Whitemouth River, among a "splendid agricultural country" with high quality soil for growing "grain and vegetables."



(Map) CPR Main Line between Beausejour & Ingolf, showing the Lac du Bonnet Branch
Credit: Jennifer Strassel

Whitemouth station was the best of "the whole eastern division" and included a ticket and telegraph office. The post office moved 4,000 letters and countless newspapers a week.

There were hotels, general stores and a few private

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residences. A “large, private lumbering enterprise” had plans for railways southeast to Lake of the Woods, and northward to Lake Winnipeg to access more timber.

The advertisements stated “now is the time to invest” before Whitemouth became “one of the greatest railway centres” in Manitoba, and the North West. What they neglected to mention was that Whitemouth was surrounded by miles of impassable muskeg and peat bogs. This resulted in hoards of biting insects throughout the summer months, effectively cancelling out their potential.

1882 – The Last Spike on the Red River to Thunder Bay Line

In February, the 135 mile line to Rat Portage was finished and in operation by the CPR.

Four months later, on June 17, 1882, the last spike on the Red River to Thunder Bay line was driven near Feist Lake, about 28 miles east of Rat Portage. Seven years after construction began, these 433 miles of CPR mainline was completed, and the event barely received a passing mention in the newspaper.

Lake Superior’s “armoured” northern shore prevented Winnipeg from being fully connected to the east

by rail. In the meantime, steamships brought supplies by water to Thunder Bay, where they were transported by rail to Winnipeg, and into the North West as far as Regina.

1882 – A Trip by Rail to Rat Portage

In July 1882, a reporter from Toronto’s Globe newspaper took a trip over the newly-opened line to Rat Portage.

The train ran three times a week, “returning from the east on the alternating days.” The trip took over nine hours, with long waits at some stations.

From Selkirk, the line ran “almost due east... through dense brush, for the timber is so small that it hardly can be called a forest.” Further east, the soil was

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poor for “agricultural purposes” and Whitemouth was the end of “arable land.”

The reporter described Whitemouth as a small village with “one saw-mill, a tavern or two, and three or four houses.” He had a “tolerably capable meal” in the dining room of the boarding house near the station, but overall, he did not agree with previous representations made “in roseate hues by Mr. Corrigan and his associates.”

Past Whitemouth, and all the way to Rat Portage, “millions upon millions of railroad ties, and thousands upon thousands of cords of wood” were piled along the line.

Beyond Cross Lake, the train “rode high upon an embankment” with “little lakes, dotted with islands, luxuriant with green foliage” on either side. At certain points, the curves were “so sharp” that, from the time the train left Cross Lake until it reached Rat Portage the end could hardly be seen.

1883 to 1885 – A Slow Roll to the End

In the west, by the end of 1883, the CPR main-

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line was near the Kicking Horse Pass of the Rocky Mountains. Trains passed regularly between Winnipeg and Calgary. 1884 and 1885 were spent in British Columbia's mountains.

On the Lake Superior line between Lake Nipissing and Thunder Bay, in 1884, fifteen thousand men and four thousand horses chipped away at the Precambrian cliffs with "staggering" amounts of explosives. There was "no single continuous line of track," so supplies were brought in by boat.

On May 16, 1885, the CPR line north of Lake Superior was finished. After ten years, Winnipeg was connected to Montreal and the rest of Eastern Canada by an all-Canadian railway.

Six months later, on November 7, 1885, the ceremonial last spike was driven near British Columbia's Eagle Pass. The first passenger train from Montreal arrived at Port Moody, BC on July 1, 1886.

The Canadian Pacific transcontinental railway was finally completed from coast to coast.

CONCLUSION:

The Lac du Bonnet branch of the CPR was built from Molson, along the gravel ridges and high ground of Milner Ridge, between 1900 and 1901.

At the same time, there was discussion of "double tracking" the CPR mainline across much of the country due to increased railway use and demand. The double tracking between Thunder Bay and Winnipeg started in 1902 and, due to the same problem spots as before, finished eleven years later in 1913.

Along Southeastern Manitoba's main CPR line, towns flourished, stagnated or disappeared completely. Beausejour became an agricultural centre after the land around it was drained. Molson and Shelley are empty place names along the rail line. Whitemouth endured as a small farming and logging community. Cross Lake was renamed (South Cross Lake on the northern side of the CPR tunnel, and Caddy Lake on the southern portion) and, since the 1930s, is popular for canoeing and cottaging.

<https://jenniferstrassel.com/>
<https://ldbhistorical.ca/>

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Coming Soon to Lucci's TOO – Fabulous Finds on Fourth...

Mrs. Lucci's Café & Ice Cream Parlour

Mrs. Lucci's was incorporated in 1998, and since then we have implemented a community profit sharing program, so that the majority of the profits generated at both of our two locations are reinvested in to the community in the form of programs and/or services.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of the people of Lac du Bonnet and the surrounding areas, Mrs. Lucci's has given back over \$371,000 to the many non-profit groups that do wonderful work in our community.

In June 2015 Mrs. Lucci's Resource Centre opened its second location in Lac du Bonnet, called "Lucci's TOO – Fabulous Finds on Fourth". It is a used furniture store that also sells a wide variety of housewares and home décor items. We very gratefully accept donations of any home related items that are in clean and sellable condition. Pick-ups can sometimes be arranged.

Volunteer groups work in the store every Saturday, where they are able to earn valuable income for their respective non-profit community organizations. Here

is just a sample of some of the community groups that volunteer in our stores; Lac du Bonnet Library, Christmas Hamper Committee, Fire and Water Festival, Two Rivers Services for Seniors, Pioneer Club, Historical Society, Lac du Bonnet Trails Assoc, Food Bank and many more.

A new addition coming this spring will be our Café and Ice Cream Parlour located inside of Lucci's TOO. We will be selling a variety of flavours of hard ice cream as well as lunch specials, baked goods, tea, coffee and other beverages. The café will be open from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., Monday to Saturday. Our new café will also serve as an educational venture, where we hope to be offering specialized programming such as; diabetes awareness, Heart Smart workshops, shopping and feeding your family on a budget, etc.

Community members who participate in our Adult Supported Living Day Program have an opportunity to gain valuable employment experience working in both of our second-hand stores, as well as in our new café venture, and they look forward to serving you all year round. Everyone loves ice cream, so stop in and give it a try!



Photos by Stu Iverson

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