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Jeremy Bray to meet with health minister

By Anne Davison
 RIVERS BANNER



Jeremy with his father Darren Bray on a family trip to B.C.

PHOTOS BY JESSICA COULTER

Although he is extremely physically disabled, Jeremy Bray shows remarkable aptitude and fortitude as he presses the Manitoba ministry of health to cover treatment for adults with his condition.

At 29, this Rivers man's life is severely limited by a progressive condition known as spinal muscular atrophy (SMA). He was diagnosed in early childhood with type 2. He uses his thumb to control his wheelchair and perform computer-based tasks, allowing him to work full-time. The cost of a treatment drug is not covered in Manitoba for people over 25. The clock is ticking as Bray presses on, not only with his day-to-day work, but also striving to have the age barrier lifted so he can access medical help.

There's light on the horizon. Bray has just received an invitation to meet with the Hon. Uzoma Asagwara next Tuesday, Jan. 21.

In an email interview, Bray explains what this meeting with minister Asagwara means to him, "I'm very much looking forward to speaking to Minister Asagwara in person. I hope I'm able to convey the urgency of the situation and that we can come to an understanding and a solution that involves adults with SMA getting treatment."

Most people have never heard of SMA, but statistically, it affects 1 in 6,000 babies born worldwide each year. Several drugs are now shown to be effective.

DRUG THERAPY

Bray says, "There are currently two medications available to treat adults with SMA: Sprinraza™ and risdiplam. Both have been shown to stop the progression of SMA in patients of all ages, and in some cases, reverse the effects of the disease, resulting in a gain of muscle function. Both treatments also cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per year."

In August of 2020, the United States food and drug administration (FDA) announced the approval of Evrysdi® (risdiplam), considered suitable for all ages and all types of SMA. By April 14, 2021, Health Canada had approved the drug. However, it was found to be comparatively less effective in patients age 18 to 25 and no trials were conducted with SMA sufferers over 25. The initial treatment cost was about \$300,000 and the province of Manitoba does not offer coverage for patients over 25.

"Unfortunately, because SMA is a rare disease, the clinical

trials for these treatments did not include older adults which is why the CDA (the agency which provides recommendations to the provinces about which drugs to fund) specified in their recommendations the fairly arbitrary age cutoff of under 18 for Spinraza and 25 for risdiplam," Bray explains. "It's important to note that every other G7 country reviewed the same data and now provide adults of all ages access to treatment. Also, the CDA simply makes recommendations about funding; provinces are free to broaden funding of these treatment, with Quebec and Saskatchewan having already done so."

I want to continue challenging people's notions of what life with a disability looks like," said Bray, "I work full-time as a consultant for the Louis Riel School Division in Winnipeg doing data analysis and computer programming. I'm able to work through the use of the thumb on my left hand which I use to operate my computer and drive my electric wheelchair."

read more about Bray's story on page 2...

Inside...



JETS TAME WILD, BEAT BISONS

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AG DAYS

P6-7

Jeremy Bray has the support

continued from page 1...

“It could be a month or a year, but I will lose the use of my thumb and therefore my ability to work and live my life with some degree of independence. After that, my disease will advance further, taking away my ability to speak and eat. I will get sick more often as my respiratory system fails and will be hospitalized regularly. Eventually one of these respiratory illnesses will take my life.”

“My number one concern at this time is losing my ability to work and be a productive member of my community. I’m glad to live in a country where those who can’t work are taken care of, but I never want to have to rely on government assistance. I take great pride in the education I was able to achieve and the calibre of work I can do.”

An example of the worth and will of the disabled, Bray says it best. “I want to continue challenging people’s notions of what life with a disability looks like for as long as possible.”

He says he’s not just looking for a blank cheque from the province. “Other provinces have implemented a model in which patients’ muscle function is tested regularly to determine whether they are benefitting from treatment and if not, they are removed from that treatment. CureSMA Canada and I are in support of these stopping criteria. I wouldn’t want to take a medication for the rest of my life if it wasn’t helping me.”

Bray lives with his family in Rivers and will be accompanied by his father Darren and Susi Van Der Wyk, executive director of patient advocacy group CureSMA Canada. His neurologist will also be joining remotely.

PUBLIC SUPPORT

Jeremy Bray’s story from CBC’s The National was posted online by Ian Froese on Dec. 19. Bray’s community is behind him, many have written to the premier and Asagwara and hundreds have shared online posts by MLA, Grant Jackson, who encouraged people to advocate. Jackson says he will be at the Legislature next Tuesday, although he’s not invited into the meeting.

From the Rivers community, Sheila Runions wrote to minister Asagwara: “Jeremy is very much a productive member of society who should not be sidelined from his occupation...there is much to fear without treatment: loss of his last muscle. Yes... his last. He can only use one thumb now, which he uses to work and move his power wheelchair. As a younger person, he had more mobility; he could turn his head to power his chair, he would talk and laugh such a great laugh. Now he has even lost movement in his face.... Would you please listen to me, and no doubt the plea of many other fellow residents? Exercise your power and make the right choice — the choice to fund Jeremy’s much-needed risdiplam....”

Bray is thankful for the support he’s received and says “My family and I are touched by the support we’ve received since my story went public. From members of our community to complete strangers, we would like to thank everyone who has written to the Minister of Health and continues to do so. Public pressure could be the difference-maker in this situation



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Jeremy and his mother, Tara, in Vancouver.

What is Hearsay?

UNDERSTAND THE LEGAL SIDE

JODI WYMAN



Viewers of TV shows and movies about lawyers will be familiar with the concept of hearsay. It’s one of the most common objections lawyers make during a trial. But what is it?

Hearsay is information you receive from another person but you are attempting to share it. It is the report of another person’s words by a witness.

These include statements like, “Bob told me the kids were home alone overnight” or “Brooke said my ex-husband is now working full-time”. The person making those statements would like those statements to be accepted as the truth.

The problem is that the person with the actual information (Bob or Brooke) are not present to testify or be cross-examined. This is why this hearsay evidence is not admissible in court.

Statements made by an accused in a criminal trial or by the other side of a family or civil case are admissible because the person who made the original statement is available to testify if the statement is not true. For example, in a custody trial if dad testifies “my ex-wife said she spanked our

son on Christmas Eve” it is admissible because mom can admit or deny the statement if she wishes.

There are however exceptions to the rule.

For example, if a witness quotes someone as part of their story but is not intending to present evidence, it is admissible. So if the witness makes comments like, “The police officer told me I was being charged with an assault and had to come to the station” or “James said it was cold out which is why I went back to the house for a sweater”, the statement is not intended to be admitted for the truth of it.

Also, there can be hearsay statements in “business records” such as hospital records or police files. The author of those notes does not necessarily have to attend court.

Because of the difficulty of obtaining evidence from children, often because a trial can be years after an incident, child hearsay can be admissible in court in certain circumstances. The Judges are primarily focused on whether the hearsay is important to the case and if it is reliable.



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BAKED ITALIAN CHICKEN DINNER



Ingredients
 cooking spray
 1 pound skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut into cubes
 1 (10 ounce) package frozen broccoli
 4 potatoes, diced
 1/4 cup butter, melted
 1 (.7 ounce) package Italian dressing mix

Directions
 1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Spray a 13x9-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
 2. Layer chicken, broccoli, and potatoes evenly into the prepared baking dish in the order listed. Drizzle melted butter over the top. Sprinkle with Italian dressing mix.
 3. Bake in the preheated oven until chicken is cooked through and potatoes are tender, 45 to 60 minutes.



FAITHFULLY YOURS

NEIL STROHSCHNEIN
What we really need



Cathedral; and finally during the small service from Maranatha Baptist Church in Plains, Georgia; I finally understood what made him the influential person he was as President and after he left office.

One of the clips that I viewed was of the eulogy Carter gave at the funeral of President Gerald Ford. He began by speaking of the healing Ford helped bring to the United States following the Nixon-Watergate scandal. He then spoke of the work that Ford had done on several international files, highlighting Ford's efforts to help Egypt and Israel negotiate a lasting peace. Carter respected Ford's work so much, he said, that he made sure Ford received regular briefings on these and other projects; and Carter welcomed Ford's insights and advice as he continued the work Ford had begun. It was a far cry from the "get back and get even atmosphere" that fills today's halls of government.

I was moved to tears by Carter's recollection of the meeting between himself, Egypt's Anwar Sadat and Israel's Menachem Begin in which they negotiated the Camp David Peace Accord. With an agreement in hand, Carter, Begin and Sadat boarded Air Force One for the flight to Washington, DC where the agreement would be officially signed. "On the way back," Carter said, "We made one phone call to Gerald Ford to tell him we had a deal." Three years later, after an assassin's bullet ended Sadat's life, Carter and Ford were together aboard Air Force One; flying to Cairo, Egypt to attend his funeral. Those hours aboard Air Force One, Carter said, were the beginning of what would prove to be the longest and strongest friendship and working partner-

ship between two ex-Presidents in American history.

A favorite quote of the late Ronald Reagan (who defeated Carter four years later) went like this: "There is no limit to the good that a man can do if he doesn't care who gets the credit." Presidents Ford and Carter lived by this motto. Ford was a healer. Carter was a builder. Together, they left their nation and their world in much better shape than it was when they found it.

Now-if they could do that in their time, why can't Canada's leaders do that today-and what is keeping us from demanding that they do so? I still pray for our leaders. But after watching Carter's funeral, I am asking God to bless our country, our neighbors and our world with what we really need-a moral and spiritual revival. More on this next week.

I spent much of January 7-8 watching video clips of people's reactions to hearing Prime Minister Trudeau announce his impending resignation and call for robust nation-wide campaign to find a new Liberal Leader and Prime Minister.

That experience left me disappointed in all our political leaders; wondering what, if anything will change after the next election, and desperately seeking something that would renew my hope for Canada and all Canadians. I found what I was seeking while watching a funeral that attracted more viewers from around the world in a single day than any of the video clips I watched could ever hope to draw.

The funeral, as you've probably guessed, was that of the 39th President of the United States, James Earl Carter, known to everyone as "Jimmy." As I watched the tributes offered during services in the Rotunda of the US Capital, in the state funeral at Washington's National

Rapid City 4-H Beef Club Report

By Swayzie Bootsman
RAPID CITY 4-H BEEF CLUB

The Rapid City 4-H Beef Club had weigh day and a meeting on December 8, 2024 at KCH Cattle Company. Weighing started at 2 pm, followed by a meeting and potluck supper. The weather was stormy but thankfully we had a pretty good turn out! Thanks to the Hinsburg family for sharing their facilities and warm house with us!

Congratulations to Zane Finley as the winner of the 1st Annual John Inglis Memorial Bursary. Zane purchased a purebred simmental heifer and we look forward to seeing him show her at achievement day!

A few upcoming events for our club are:

1. Lions meat draw at the Queens Hotel on February 7th
2. Judging clinic at MBFI on February 9th
3. Club speeches on February 11th
4. Area speeches on March 1st
5. Next weigh day on March 2nd
6. 4-H Fun & Rec in Neepawa on April 26th

The next meeting will be a meeting followed by a judging demo and activity on January 14, 2025 at the Valleyview Senior Centre at 7:00 pm.

From last weeks front page

D H L P U S E L B A T B P A M
 K W E U E R S J A P I V Z M O
 O T M S E C P I W B E R Y G E
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 Q E U S R E N N I W O G E S R
 P D K N K T K R S F U J S Z K

Word Bank

- | | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1. games | 2. second | 3. leader | 4. twelve |
| 5. tables | 6. prize | 7. wellness | 8. bull |
| 9. winners | 10. league | 11. renovations | 12. centre |

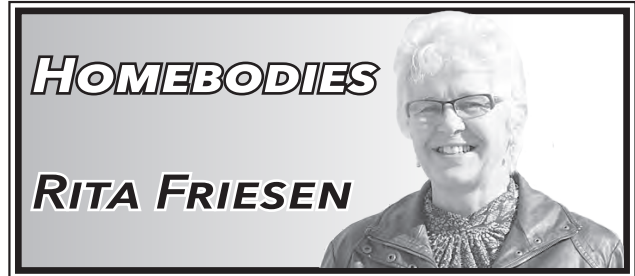
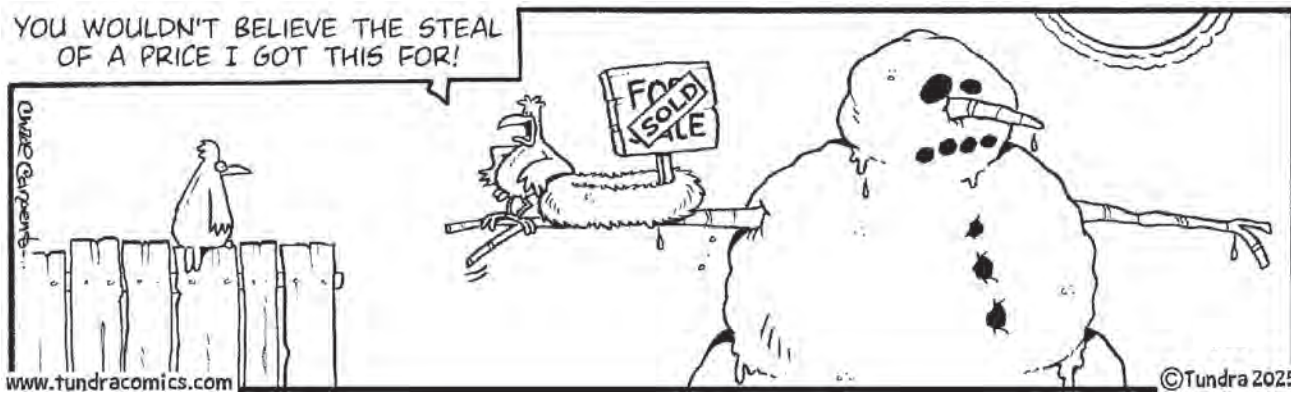
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 Children's Church during the message
 Bible Study - Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
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Westman Canadian Reformed Church
 Worship Services
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"Let the rivers clap their hands; let the hills sing for joy together." Psalm 98:8

Tundra

By Chad Carpenter



Winter wonderland...

Some housing and immigration questions

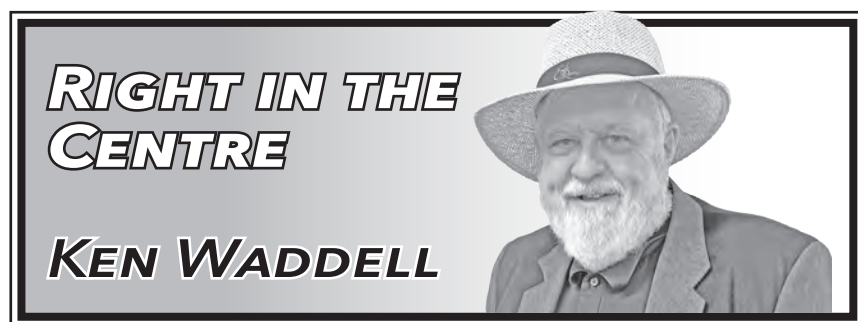
Population growth and immigration numbers are in the news again.

In 2023, 2,656 people left Manitoba, 25,591 people moved into Manitoba, 11,994 people died and 17,146 babies were born. The Province of Manitoba wants to bring in another 12,000 foreign worker immigrants in 2025. Companies are begging for more workers to fill waiting jobs in many sectors. Universities and Colleges are protesting cuts in foreign student numbers imposed by the federal government. Educational institutions have been charging much higher fees for foreign students than Canadians. There's a lot of forces at play here.

The federal cutback on foreign students is coming as many places in Canada simply can't find housing for the extra students or workers. An internet search on January 13, 2025 showed eleven real estate listings for Neepawa, 52 for Viriden, eleven in Rivers and 103 for Brandon. Some of those listings are empty lots so they are likely a year away from a liveable house. It appears that in rural Manitoba a serviced lot for a single family home runs around \$45-60,000.

The upcoming Liberal leadership race and the likely soon to follow Canadian election will be fought on many issues but two of the big ones will be immigration and housing. How many newcomers does Canada need or more importantly, how many newcomers can be housed?

In some smaller towns, there has always been the question as to why not convert unused retail space into housing. There is a general rule,



enforced, I believe, by the province that only the back half of retail main floor space can be used for housing. In Neepawa, new apartments have to have one and a half parking spots per residence. That seems restrictive.

Some rural towns have strict regulations against modular homes and almost no provision for so-called "Tiny Homes". That's a bit ironic as there are, in most small towns, some very small one bedroom houses that have been there for many decades. Back in the day, people built what they could afford as opposed to building the most you can finance nowadays.

Now this is an interesting point. If you add up all the homes in Canada and all the families or people that need homes, we likely have way more than one home per family. How so? Just count up the number of times where people own two or three homes and I don't mean rental properties. If you figure in all the cottages and summer homes, there are way more homes in Canada than we "need". If we lived in a communist country, and that wouldn't be a good thing, there would be more than enough houses as one family would only theoretically be "allowed" to own one home.

There's another little secret and that is Manitoba Housing. It has, at times, been a gong show where there are empty MH units in rural towns. Some have been sold off, some aren't rented and some have been let go to ruin. I guess that shows up the bad side of government owned housing.

The Conservative Party of Canada, or at least their leader Pierre Poilievre, claims to have a lot of solutions to housing. It looks like they could be in power in a few months so it will be interesting to see how they handle housing and immigrations.

One thing, when towns started to get a larger number of foreign workers, there were a few people who objected that the newcomers were "taking our kids jobs." It didn't take long to debunk that idea by simply asking, "Oh, where are your kids now?" The answer was often a city far away. Newcomers didn't take "kids' jobs", the kids left a long time ago and many wouldn't take the kinds of jobs newcomers would do anyway.

The next few months will be interesting times.

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

The daily walks are invigorating, breath taking, challenging and delightful. Several times this winter I have walked past the light pollution of our town, into the darkness, and simply gazed at the beauty of the winter night sky. There is the silence, there is the depth of darkness, and there is the glory of the stars, the moon reflecting on the snow, the vastness of our world. 'My little dog must think it queer to stop without a town house near'.(Robert Frost mutilated!) Arie sits patiently, a steady companion, alert for any unusual sound or movement, delighted with the tracks of deer and rabbits. We stand but for a lengthy moment for it is winter, in Manitoba. Day time walks have been wondrous this winter as well. We had the magnificent hoar frost, on the coldest days there are exhaust fumes lingering and fogging up the streets, and the stark dark of barren branches against the icy blue sky. These are the scenes I embrace, sense and feel—even after donning a quilted walking skirt, the warmest parka, boots and mitts for me and a warm jacket for Arie and applying foot wax on all four paws. There are days we grab two short walks for safety rather than one long one. This is a part of my winter wonderland.

There is another part! It is my winter wonder land. I wonder if it pays to clear the drive or wait until the next blow comes through. I wonder if my garden and lawn area are damaged when I scoop salty snow slush off the drive and out of the garage on to the sleeping yard. I wonder if I should be borrowing or buying a roof rake and removing some of the snow from the house and garages. I wonder if the wind chill indicates that Arie and I should skip taking a walk. One doctor advised me that if I thought it was too cold for the dog, perhaps it was too cold for me to be out long as well.

My winter wondering expands, and I am good at imagining...I wonder who would I call if the power went out while I was in full recline in my powered recliner!!! I had a test run of that a while ago. I am still agile enough to clamber over the side to safety, but it ain't pretty! That five minute trial also had me wondering where the flashlights and candles were and which ones needed new batteries. I wonder if we will see blizzards like I have seen in the past. I can't say that I ever walked on snow banks high enough to touch the telephone wire- back when we had lines and poles for our telephones- but I know folks who did. I can recall family members needing to be dug out of their farm homes, the snow being high enough to block exit by door or window. I can recall trenches deep enough that one could not see over the edge to the horizon for highway travel- Southern Manitoba, but I remember.

I shall attempt to focus on the wonderland, not the wonder land.

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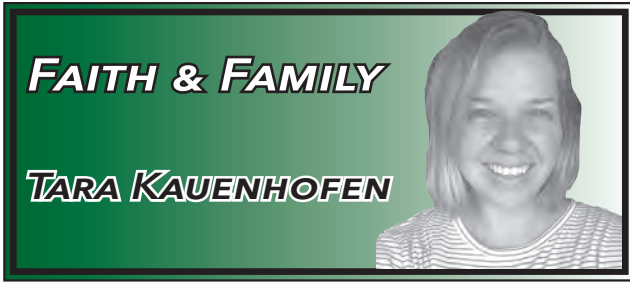
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Hours at the rink



During the winter months we spend a lot of hours at the rink.

Our oldest son plays U11 hockey this season and the commitment level for him has jumped exponentially and the skill level all around his team has also risen.

For the past two seasons, and part of this one, he has wrestled through the feeling of not knowing where he belongs on the ice, feeling less skilled than others, and not feeling quite in the right place.

For a year and a half we have seen his talent and confidence and skill grow in the goaltending position.

This was not what he thought he wanted at the time, this was not the goal scoring, power forward, glory position he had envisioned for himself when he plays mini sticks or on my dads backyard rink.

We have watched him wrestle through this, cry tears over what HE thought he wanted, grieve to some degree the vision and plans he had made for himself that weren't working out the way he thought they would.

This second half of season, he has come to admit that he truly LOVES the thrill of goaltending!

The tracking of the puck and the game, the heart racing adrenaline of someone coming towards him and slapping a shot at his head.

(Not my cup of tea and I might have a heart attack and finally get some grey hair from watching him yet, but hey! If he loves it, I'll breathe through!)

He has come to see his skill level and the improvement in his game, and understanding that stopping a shot is as important as scoring a goal!

He has stepped into his own, and allowed himself to let go of what he thought he wanted and what he thought the plans and the future would be.

This made me think about all the times I've wrestled with what God has asked of me, where my talents and giftings lie, where I thought my life would go.

The plans I had that God says no to, or that he says actually were going this direction.

Sometimes I fight tooth and nail to get away from him and his perfect plans that looked nothing like what I wanted.

Sometimes I kick and scream and pitch a fit.

Sometimes I grieve and cry over what I thought I wanted.

Sometimes we have to grieve and we fight back, sometimes we have to wrestle with the letting go of our human dreams and let the fear we feel of the unknown go and step out in faith.

Just like my son coming around, seeing and believing in his gifts and talents.

Just like him slowly loving the thing that he wrestled with in the beginning.

I always come to the conclusion that God's plans are far greater than mine.

That I CAN rest easy, in the knowing that he knows me, and that the plans he has for me far exceed my grandest imaginings.

January Blues



January is widely considered to be the most depressing month of the year and for many, this January will live up to those expectations. To understand why January feels like such a let down, we have to actually look at December. December is that incredibly hectic month of preparation for the Holiday Season with lots of expectations, socializing and busy schedules. By the end of the month your social battery is left drained and you are rolling into January with an empty tank. After the excitement of December, January can feel like a let down socially and emotionally. Many people experience feelings of emptiness as decorations come down. December's expenses can leave many families in financial trouble making financial strain a very real contributing factor to peoples moods in January.

It's very normal to experience feelings of discomfort as routines in January resume which can also account for feelings of melancholy. Returning to work and school after a break can feel very strange, this can be especially disconcerting for those who are neurodivergent and struggle with changes in routine or transitions. It can all feel especially overwhelming if workloads pick up once you are back to work and school, smooth, gradual transitions back into routine can make sticking to a routine more likely to be successful.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a specific type of mood disorder that occurs at specific times of the year like during fall and winter months when there is less natural sunlight. Symptoms of SAD can be feelings of sadness, fatigue, chan-

ges in sleep and eating habits, and loss of interest in enjoyed activities. January is a very common time of year for these symptoms to be at their worst. SAD can be treated using a variety of methods such as light therapy, counselling, medications, and Vita-

min D. So, if you feel you might be struggling with SAD, make sure to reach out to your health care team, get yourself a SAD lamp (easily available online) and ask your primary care provider about taking a Vitamin D supplement.

Imagine if you will, it's January 1st and you resolved to give up chocolate (this is how we know this is a work of fiction), now imagine yourself on January 3rd indulging in your favorite 70% dark bar and woops! Failed resolutions are a very real thing and another good reason that folks just don't feel their best in January. Often, people set resolutions

that are either too difficult or unachievable causing them to quit early. When it comes to resolutions, remember to set a resolution because it will motivate you and will make you feel good, don't do it for someone else, set goals that are achievable and if you don't know if your goal is achievable, ask a buddy.

To help keep away those January blues, make sure to plan something fun for this month (one thing at minimum), do extra self care, and most of all, give yourself extra grace this month dear reader, it's a tough one for a lot of us.

Holding a community event?

Contact us to help spread the news about your community event or fundraiser!

**RIVERS
BANNER**

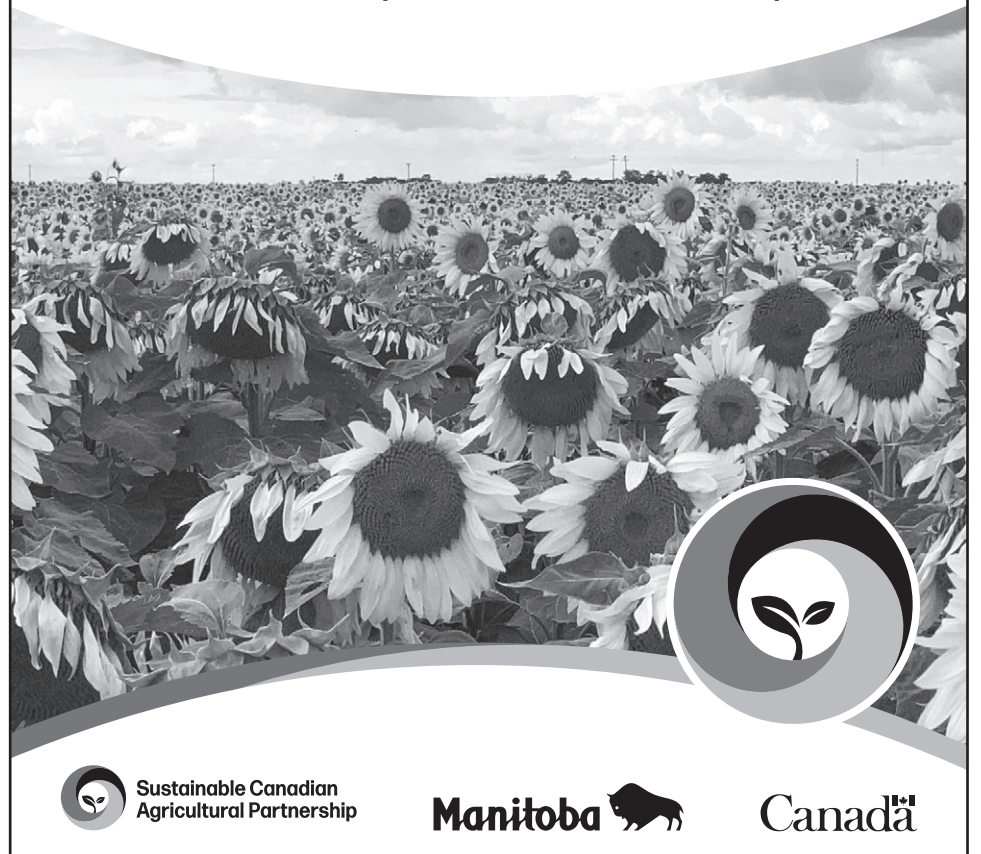
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The Keystone Centre - Brandon, MB. - January 21, 22 & 23, 2025

Five things to know before the show

Submitted
MANITOBA AG DAYS

Canada's largest indoor farm show will kick off the three-day event on Tuesday Jan. 21. This year's show will include over 550 exhibitors with both indoor and outdoor displays at the Keystone Centre, in Brandon Manitoba. Here are five things to know before the show:

1. This year's theme is Produced on the Prairies. The theme will be evident throughout the show as we bring you products, equipment and speakers who got their start on the prairies. At the top of the main ramp you will find our NEW, one-of-a-kind vendor market featuring different local food and beverage products each day. You can get a jump start on the show, and the theme, by joining us on Monday, Jan. 20 at the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba Dome Building for a food and beverage tasting event, beginning at 7:00 p.m. Tickets can be purchased for \$40 at www.agdays.com/craft-beer-event.

2. The Kickoff Breakfast will take

place at the Provincial Exhibition of Manitoba Dome Building from 7:30 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. on Tuesday, Jan. 21 and is presented by Heritage Co-Op. The Murray Auto Group shuttle bus will pick you up at your vehicle and deliver you to the doors of the Keystone Centre and Scotiabank has provided a safe and secure, complimentary coat check at the south end of the Flynn Arena.

3. Our biggest ever Innovation Showcase features seven categories and 34 contenders, and is presented by the seven brands of Glacier FarmMedia. Patrons can read about the innovations here and can visit the exhibitors at the show to ask questions, check out products first hand and see how these innovations might fit in their operations. Look for the green light bulbs hanging in the show to signify Innovation Showcase entries. The Winners of each category will be announced on Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 10:00 a.m.

4. This year's complimentary speaking program includes a line up you can not miss! For all the details head

to www.agdays.com/schedule There is something for everyone, with over 60 speakers and topics ranging from selecting canola varieties to managing your cattle herd and from planning for big yields to predicting global markets. The program includes 33.5 approved continuing education units for Certified Crop Agronomists.

5. Admission tickets are on sale now for the Early Bird price of \$15 per day. You can purchase your tickets at www.agdays.com/tickets 50/50 tickets are also on sale now at www.agdays.com/buy5050 (LGCA 4206-RF-44642) Last year's winner took home \$66,930.00! The winner will be drawn on January 24th at 9:00 am on Facebook Live. We are a not for profit show and any profits made on the show are paid forward to community projects and services through our Ag Days Gives Back Fund.

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Markets

Price Outlook for Oils & Fats: Implications for Canadian Canola - David Milke - Oil World
Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 11:15 a.m. in the FCC Theatre

Economic Outlook: Risks and Opportunities for Canadian Agriculture in 2025- Graeme Crosbie - FCC
Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 2:30 p.m. in the FCC Theatre

Geopolitics: What Lies Ahead? - Jacob Shopiro - The Beskope Group
Thursday, Jan. 23 at 2:00 p.m. in the FCC Theatre

Digging Into Cattle Market Data - Brian Perillet - More Than Just Feed
Thursday, Jan. 23 at 2:00 p.m. in the MNP Theatre.

Agronomy

Why Doesn't Your Nitrogen Stay Where You Put It? - Bryce Geisel - Koch Agronomic Services
Tuesday, Jan. 21 at 3:30 p.m. in the FCC Theatre

Did Verticillium Knock You Down in 2024? - Justine Cornelesen - Brett Young Seeds
Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 10:00 a.m. in the FCC Theatre

Pushing the Limits: More Bushels per Acre - Brian Hefty - Ag PhD
Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 10:30 a.m. in the FCC Theatre

Fertility? Tillage? Crop Rotation? How do They Compare? - Kristin Simmons and Ezra Aberle - NDSU
Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 3:30 p.m. in the FCC Theatre

ROI and Balancing Your Nutrient Profile in Soils - John Heard - Citizen at large
Thursday, Jan. 23 at 9:30 a.m. in the FCC Theatre.

Livestock Do's and Don't's of Banding Calves - Jodi Suchoplas - Cattle producer
Thursday at 1:00 p.m. in the MNP Theatre



Going Green With Implants - Dr. Kim Ominski, Betty Green and Dr. Mary-Jane Orr
Thursday at 3:00 p.m. in the MNP Theatre.

Produced on the Prairies Small Town, Big Dream - Steve Langston - Langston Lane Ltd.
Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 1:30 p.m. in the MNP Theatre

Produced on the Prairies Panel - The E Butchery on Main, Engrained Flour Co and The John Howard Society with moderator Steve Langston
Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 2:15 p.m. in the MNP Theatre.

Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 2:15 p.m. in the MNP Theatre.
Testing Ag Tech on a Commercial Farm - EMILI and Rutherford Farms
Wednesday, Jan. 22 at 3:30 p.m. in the MNP Theatre

The full speaker schedule can be found at agdays.com/schedule You are sure to find sessions of particular interest to you on each day of the show. Three-day show passes are available for just this reason! Visit agdays.com/tickets to purchase your admission tickets today.

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HAMIOTA STUDENT EXCELS IN UNIVERSITY RUNNING EVENTS

By Anne Davison
RIVERS BANNER

Emily Usick has put her love of the outdoors and her runs on the quiet Manitoba back roads to the test this season at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University) where she has done amazingly well in mid-distance running.

At her first track meet held at York University in November, she ran the 600 and 1000M races and surprised herself and others as she clocked a time that got her on the university's record sheet finishing fifth in a 600M run and third in the 1000M race.

"So that felt really great," says Usick. "That was my first race. I was able to get on to the record sheet for that opener race. Hopefully I can get further."

The Hamiota Collegiate Institute graduate, daughter of Orland and Sheri Usick, is completing a bachelor of engineering in aerospace this April. Before heading into her fourth-year she made up her mind to join the sports program. "I was about a week away from moving back to Toronto and I had it in my mind to try out for the basketball team." Although she knew it would be hard to get on that prestigious team, basketball was a sport she'd done well at in high school, as was soccer.

She didn't make the cut, but Usick is a serious student who has never shied away from her goals. Without knowing a soul in Ryerson, she left home the fall after her graduation from HCI to enter the university world in Canada's biggest city of 5.6 million to pursue an aerospace engineering degree. This fall, she was doggedly determined to make sports part of her university life.

She reasoned, "Whatever sport I was in, I felt that being fast was always my forte." Track and field tryouts were also ahead. "I was really close to not doing that, but I thought, 'oh why not, I'll show up.' We have a very small track and field team, so there was an opportunity to join, and I went for it." Her schedule let her attend all three weekly practice

sessions. "They have some really tough workouts. Hill runs... with exercises at the bottom of the hill."

Mid-distance running was not new to Usick. She has spent every summer at home, working in the area and this summer, began running more, as far as eight kilometres on the country backroads surrounding the Usicks' Oak River home.

"A lot of the time, I went for a run that was close to the distance I'm competing in for this next competition. Based upon where I live, I think it's actually kind of trained me to run that distance." What used to be a 10-minute run, over the Christmas holiday, she'd shaved to nine and incorporated cross training, swimming about 80 laps in at Brandon YMCA.

This fall, she was new to the track team. "Some people have been running, as their sport, for a really long time. I just want to see how far I can go with all the training I'm getting, at the end of the day I feel like I'm getting the most benefit, even just learning the techniques of running. Running is something you can carry on into your life...you just need a pair of shoes.

While winter practice often takes place indoors, she says, "I personally like being outside. I've done such long distances that I can almost explore the city (Toronto). It's also a way of transportation. It's been really fun that way."

Four more meets lay ahead for Usick and she's hoping for improved times before the end of March. Showing up for track tryouts has opened up a world of competition

and rather than conflicting with her academics, she says it has energized her for the work toward a Bachelor of Engineering.

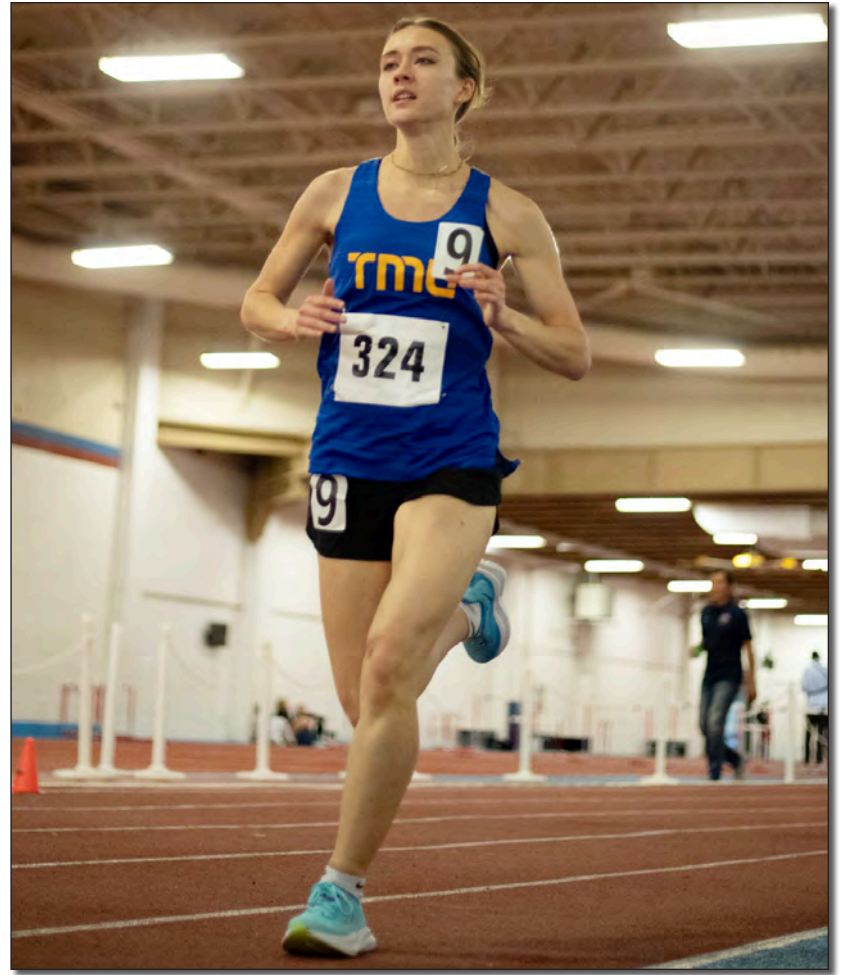


PHOTO BY AARON KELLY

Emily Usick running in her first university track meet.

Ecological Corridor Program Comes Up Short on Transparency and Consultation ~ Not Worth the Risk

Dennis Schindler, P.Ag. (Retired)

SENIOR LAND CONSERVATION SPECIALIST, MANITOBA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

I am prompted to write this in response to the Federal Liberal Government's recent announcement of funding for Ecological Corridors in the Assiniboine West Watershed District. On the surface, this \$1.2 million in funding appears to be a welcome addition to conservation programming in Manitoba. Once you dig deeper into the program guidelines and requirements, little detail or framework is disclosed, prompting valid questions from user groups on accessibility to the land, long term management plans, and the benefits such programming has in enhancing biodiversity and wildlife habitat in Manitoba and Canada.

The Ecological Corridor Program along with the Indigenous Protected Conservation Areas (IPCA) are two programs delivered by Parks Canada to meet the Federal Government's United Nations commitment to preserving 30 percent of Canada's land by 2030 ("30 x 30"). The overriding theme is to protect these areas according to Indigenous law and practices.

I will start with some background on the IPCA program. Parks Canada has identified 9 areas including 4 in Agro-Manitoba for this designation. Although the federal government has no direct framework or guidelines in place to establish these areas, they have chosen to request transfer of these lands from the provinces, establish a national park and turn over management of these parks to Indigenous peoples. While on the surface this initiative may appear to aid in the country's 30x30 objectives and satisfy reconciliation under Section 35 of the Charter of Rights, we have concerns based on similar initiatives in British

Columbia, where in some cases non-Indigenous access to these IPCAs has been terminated.

The Ecological Corridor Program complements IPCAs as they are co-designated as an IPCA. The twist, however, is that these corridors include both crown and private land with the potential to impact not only crown land access for hunting, angling, and trapping, but could also impact access to crown land for agricultural use, cottage leases, snowmobiling, and even hiking. The impact on private land use, municipal sovereignty over decision making, and the imposition of National Park management over large parts of our province should be a concern for all Manitobans.

Simply put, non-Indigenous hunters in some places in BC are no longer able to access land they have historically used for hunting. This raises large concerns for all other crown and private land user groups. If you read the fine print in the background documents, not only could our access be restricted, but this top-down program approach has the means to diminish rural, grassroots soil, water and biodiversity programming for generations to come and undo the goodwill and trust toward conservation programming in our rural areas.

The Manitoba Wildlife Federation (MWF) is opposed to the 30x30 federal programs and has started a Town Hall campaign to inform our members of these very real threats to hunting, angling, and trapping. In our travels, we came into contact with a group of agricultural producers in the Rivers/Oak River area who attended our town hall in Russell. They made us

aware that their local watershed district submitted an application for the Ecological Corridor program last June, and these landowners began asking questions on the details of the program. They have yet to receive satisfactory answers to their questions. As a result, we started working together to gather data and ask questions. In the meantime, the district saw fit to apply for funding and participated in the federal government funding announcement mentioned earlier, in spite of the local concerns. Unfortunately and regrettably, the local producer's concerns were minimized, marginalized, and dismissed, creating division and animosity within the community and the watershed district.

I would respectfully suggest the Watershed District Board take to heart the concerns of local residents (and a respected conservation organization) going forward and focus on rebuilding relationships in the rural and agricultural communities they serve. No grant from the federal government, no matter the amount, is worth alienating community members. MWF is committed to conservation and biodiversity programming in Manitoba. MWF fully supports grassroots watershed district activities, and watershed districts seeking funding from sources where there are no such strings attached. MWF acknowledges and supports all the great conservation stewardship work undertaken by agricultural producers (as part of Manitoba action in conservation and climate mitigation). Building strong, collaborative relationships with agricultural producers and key user groups is crucial for the success of a conservation program and plays a vital role in enhancing wildlife habitat and populations. It would be beneficial for all conservation organizations to keep that in mind.

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Key responsibilities of the position include:

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- Recruit and develop all municipal management and administration employees and develop a plan to attract and retain quality employees.
- Provide responsible financial planning and management of a budget of over \$4.6 million.
- Develop positive relationships and maintain open communication with all stakeholders and constituencies of interest to the Municipality.

Strong communication, analytical and leadership skills are just some of the requirements of the position. Ideally, you will possess technical skills and experience in organization oversight, human resource management, and municipal administration. Candidates who have post-secondary education in a relevant discipline bring an educational advantage to the position.

Hamiota Municipality has a population of 1,234 (2021) and is located in mid-Western Manitoba. The main industries are healthcare, education and agriculture. There are many outdoor activities to do year-round and continuing growth makes this municipality a desirable place to live.

The right candidate can expect a comprehensive salary and benefits package.

Individuals interested in this position should email a resume and cover letter to Hamiota Municipality at finance@hamiota.com.

The selection committee intends to review applications as received and interviews as early as January 27th, 2025, however, applications may continue to be accepted until the right candidate is found.

We thank all who apply and advise that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.

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- Hours of work may vary, but generally 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm

Qualifications:

- Basic knowledge of the grain industry
- Ability to operate mobile equipment ie. Forklift & Tractors
- Mechanically inclined (farm background is beneficial)
- Ability to work independently or as part of a team
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- Valid Class 5 license
- Relevant experience is preferred, but willing to train the right individual

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Employment Opportunity

Full Time, Operations Assistant

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Responsibilities:

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- Receiving and Shipping bulk seed commodities
- Perform service and preventative maintenance on all plant and mobile equipment
- Respond to all equipment breakdowns in a timely manner based on priority
- Demonstrate flexibility when tasks are re-assigned or altered
- Perform regular sampling to maintain high standard of seed cleaning

Qualifications:

- Basic knowledge of the grain industry
- Ability to operate mobile equipment ie. Forklift & Tractors
- Mechanically inclined (farm background is beneficial)
- Ability to work independently or as part of a team
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
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SPORTS

JETS TAME WILD, BEAT BISONS

By Robin Wark
RIVERS BANNER

The Rivers Jets flew to victory twice last weekend.

On Jan. 10, the senior team romped past the MacGregor Wild, 9-1, at home. The next night, on the road, the Jets used a strong third period to come from behind to beat the Melita Bisons, 6-3. As of Jan. 12, the Jets were 11-2-0-0 in Tigers Hills Hockey League play. Their next contest is Jan. 24 in Carberry.

Jets 6, Bisons 3

After two periods of play, the host Bisons led 3-2. The Jets' offensive engine roared in the third frame. The team scored four unanswered goals to secure the victory. Luke DeCorby got things started in the third period with a powerplay marker 31 seconds into the session.

"We didn't have the greatest first two periods, but in the third we got back to what our team strength is and played with pace," coach Ryan Lamb said. "We cleaned up our defensive zone play and that really cut down on Melita's chances. Having Luke tie it up so early really gave us a spark that we carried throughout the third period."

After DeCorby's marker came the game winner from Kayden Sutherland. Brock Paddock gave the Jets' a two-goal lead and Sutherland made it three to wrap up the scoring.

In the first period, Melita struck first with a goal from Nial Mills. Paddock and Sutherland lit the lamp to put Rivers up 2-1 at the first intermission. Second period goals

by Ethan Siemens and Will Brown put the Bisons on top, 3-2.

Jets goalie Riley Lamb stopped 27 shots. His Melita counterpart, Dez Ramsey, had 23 saves.

Jets 9, Wild 1

At home, the Jets had a dominant performance versus the Wild. Rivers led 2-0 after the first period and 5-0 at the second intermission.

"I was really happy with our overall discipline," Coach Lamb said. "We didn't get dragged into taking penalties and all three lines contributed to the win."

Defenceman Riley Shamray, the team's captain, led the Jets with five points - all assists. Paddock and Sutherland each had two goals and two assists for four points. Also scoring for Rivers were Jaxon Elmes, Riley Boles, Alastair McFadden, Joben Smith, and DeCorby. Braden Klippenstein scored MacGregor's lone goal. Riley Lamb backstopped the Jets to the win.

Leaders

Shamray leads the Jets with 22 points and 17 assists in



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

Rivers Jets victorious the last two weekends.

11 games. Sutherland and Joben Smith are second with 19 points each. Sutherland paces the team with 12 goals in 13 games. Paddock is second with nine. Three Jets had a team-high two powerplay goals: Boles, Layton Veitch, and Shamray. Veitch and Jaxon Heeney have scored short-handed. Paddock has a team-high 63 penalty minutes. As of Jan. 11, the Jets led the THHL with a 94.6 per cent penalty kill. Riley Lamb led the league in goals against average at 1.49 and save percentage at .942.

REF MEMORIES

REF TO WRITER

GERRY NOLAN



Somewhere along the line I became a mentor to some young officials. This was fun watching them develop into referee and linesmen in games. I worked on the ice with them as often as possible doing the two-man system as well as the 3-man system. These guys worked hard on their game and became top notch officials.

In Kenton there was Darren Good, Lance Routledge and Troy Smith. In Oak Lake there was Jeff Enns, Scott Clark, Stacy Dickson and of course, Kerry Smith. Smitty worked with these guys as well, so not all the credit to me.

These young officials developed quickly but not without trials. This way you learn the game. They were great because they were getting phone calls to go to other towns to officiate. I know they did a lot of games in Birtle so they spread their wings too.

You never know at what time you make an impression on someone, but here is a little story.

Troy Smith actually just told me this story this summer.

Troy was the head referee in this game, and I was doing lines with another person probably Lance or Darren. We were doing a game in Kenton versus a team from Brandon. Right from the get-go the Brandon coach is being a real ass. From the get-go, he questioned Troys calls and in general was loud and annoying.

Halfway through the second period, Troy has had enough and comes over to me and asks, Gerry if you were the head referee in this game, what would you do. I told Troy, remember the conversation I have had with you young officials. Eliminate the problem! If someone is being a problem, get rid of it. I also said if I was head referee I would have thrown him out in the first period. You are not getting paid near enough money to take his shit!

Troy looks at me, blows his whistle just as we are about to face-off, skates over to the Brandon bench and tosses the coach out of the game. The coach's jaw drops, and he left rather quietly. As I was escorting the coach off the ice I said to him, if you have anything else to say you will receive a gross misconduct. What is far worse than this, is the example you have been to your minor hockey team and to the town to represent. There was no other words spoken.

Troy really gained confidence from that game and became a better official.

Kenton Cougars senior team is playing in Rosburn. Kevin Laraway, who was from Oak Lake, was playing defense for Kenton. At one point during the game a Rosburn player is trying to get the puck from Kevin. The Rosburn player backs off and Kevin who had his skate on top of the puck, takes his foot off the puck. The forechecker comes at him again and Kevin puts his skate back on top of the puck. This goes on several times when the Rosburn player yells at Kevin to quit doing that to which Kevin responds, go tell it to your mommy. The Rosburn player just turns and skates away, shaking his head. Kevin gets control of the puck, makes a pass and the game resumes. Kevin could not remember that incident but I do!

Brian Braybrook from Virden is in a scrap one night. As the fight continues to go Brian says, can you not hit harder than that? The guy was shocked and withheld his punch which he stopped throwing. Brian did not stop and got a few extra punches in. Never heard that line except for when Brian said it and won the bout easily.

Murray Braybrook is in a fight one night and he and his opponent fall down on to the ice with Murray on top. Murray keeps punching his opponent but is punching him in the stomach. The receiver of these punches says he is hurting me, he is punching me in the stomach. My answer was guess you should not fight then. One of our favourite stories!

Brian Mytopher, who is playing hockey with Virden, has just served a 4-game suspension for spearing and this is his first game back, and they are playing in Elkhorn. On his second shift of the game, Brian spears a player from Elkhorn and I call the penalty. "Sorry Brian!" Brian replies, "You know I have just finished a suspension for spearing, and I guess well, Ger see you next year!" Brian sort of chuckles and skates off. I think Brian was just watching too many Philadelphia Flyer games when they were known as the Broad Street Bullies.

Dauphin versus Oak Lake midget game. Apparently in a

previous game Jason Taylor of Oak Lake had gotten under the skin of the Dauphin team and was sitting a suspension thus was not playing in the game.

In the second period Jason comes out of the waiting room, just standing at the doorway in the corner where the exit is. Of course there is a screen on top of the door that will not bend anytime soon.

The captain of Dauphin sees Jason and goes charging toward the door, with his team following him. They are jumping at it to try and knock it down. The only thing that gave was the players because they were not going to move that door. Jason leaves the rink and order is finally restored, but not before some serious penalties were assessed.

I gave the Dauphin captain a Game and Gross Misconduct as well as the Dauphin best player and the coach as well for failing to control his players.

I do not know what Jason did to them and I wondered why Dauphin did not like him. I liked Jason. I found him to be such a nice young man!

Last one for now. I am officiating a game in Elkhorn. Elkhorn is playing Rosburn in the old North Central Hockey League. Elkhorn wins the game 19 to 1. Rosburn coach and a couple of other guys come banging on the referee door and are going to lay a licking on me. The official's door is in the middle of the downstairs with each teams dressing room at either end. It is getting loud down there and they are pounding on the door. All of a sudden, I hear, "Hey, what the hell are you doing down there?" I hear the scuffle of feet that picking them and putting them down in a hurry. I peer out of the officials door and who do I see but the two Bowles boys Delbert and Garry standing in the hallway. Guess the Rosburn guys figured they better cut tail in a hurry or someone was going to get hurt!

Thanks, Debert and Garry for having my back, I never forgot that! When you consider this is senior hockey and you just lost by 18 goals, yep, my fault.

Second last one. Brian Glasman was a good player but had far too much to say. I had my run-ins with him and did not like the way he conducted himself on the ice, one night in Kenton, Donald Best of the Cougars had enough of Brian too. There was a short fight, and Brian is down in the corner, he came in second. I go over to Brian and I said, "Are you okay Brian?" Brian said to me, "Do you really care?" I said, "No I do not care; I was just trying to be polite!"

See you next time!

Strathclair Theatre Chorus receives strong applause

By Anne Davison
RIVERS BANNER

Hamiota community enjoyed entertainment on Saturday afternoon, Jan. 11 when Strathclair Theatre Chorus directed by Elizabeth Gebauer of Brandon brought 20 numbers featuring beautiful harmonies and stunning solo parts.

Held in Hamiota's elementary school gym before a large audience, the concert was a fundraiser for Hamiota United Church. Within the past four years the church completed some renovations. Going forward, church members hope to see further repairs to this landmark structure where weekly services are held and community weddings and funerals take place.

The choir's narrator characterized the concert repertoire as a performance that will bring back memories and continue to re-sound in the listener's mind. Popular numbers included Don't Sit Under the Apple Tree, The Hockey Song, The Log Driver's Waltz (women's acapella featuring Joanna Tolton), and Bridge Over Troubled Water (male acapella). Sound and lighting technicians brought out the best, along



The Strathclair Theatre Chorus, with Nicole McLenehan and Paula Hrycak on percussion.

PHOTO BY ANNE DAVISON

with Penny Menzies' piano accompaniment.

Choir members hail from Strathclair, Oak River, Shoal Lake areas, some with Hamiota roots. Minnedosa actor and veterinarian James Comrie soloed in Bless the Broken Road – a real treat. A powerful finale came with the audience rising for the Hallelujah Chorus from The Messiah.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR						Jan 17 18 Prairie Crocus Library Book Sale 11am - 2:00pm Rivers Mens Bonspiel
19	20 50 + Club Tile Rummy 1pm	21 50 + Club Pool 1pm	22 50 + Club Tile Rummy 1pm	23	24 Rivers Jets vs Carberry Plainsmen 8:15pm Kenton Open Bonspiel	25 Rivers Ladies Bonspiel
26	27 50 + Club Tile Rummy 1pm	28 50 + Club Pool 1pm	29 50 + Club Tile Rummy 1pm	30 50 + Club Floor Curling /Carpet Bowling 2pm Crib Night Rivers Legion 7pm	31 Rivers Legion Chili Cook Off! Starts at 5:30pm	Feb 1