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Hoops in motion

EXPRESS PHOTO BY CORRINE EINARSSON

Dancers from Gimli's Barvinok Ukrainian Dance Club take the floor during the club's annual Malanka celebration at the Riverton Hall on Jan. 31. Families, friends and community members gathered to mark Malanka, the Ukrainian New Year, through shared culture, music and movement.

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Arborg & District Arena calls on community support in Kraft Hockeyville bid

By Lana Meier

The Arborg & District Arena is calling on residents to rally together and help put the community in the national spotlight as it competes to become Canada's next Kraft Hockeyville.

The campaign invites people to share what the arena means to them and how it has shaped community life in Arborg and the surrounding district. From early-morning practices to late-night tournaments, organizers say the arena has long served as a gathering place where friendships are formed, volunteers step up and local pride is on full display.

Arena board chair Tom Chwaliboga said the timing of the Kraft Hockeyville 2026 contest could not be better, as the facility faces mounting challenges tied to aging infrastructure.

"Components of the existing ice plant are now 15 to 20 years past their life expectancy," Chwaliboga said, noting replacement costs are estimated between \$300,000 and \$500,000. While several parts of the ice plant have been upgraded or repaired in recent years, he said the most significant components are now due for replacement.

The arena serves hundreds of users each season, including minor hockey, rec hockey, figure skating, learn-to-skate programs, public skating, local schools and the Ice Dawgs junior hockey club. Chwaliboga said its impact reaches far beyond sport.

"There is no other place in the community where you can have 20 people sitting in a dressing room and see 10 to 12 different ethnic groups together," he said. "The arena is a melting pot for newcomers

and families to connect."

Built by volunteers, the Arborg & District Arena continues to rely heavily on volunteerism, which Chwaliboga described as the heartbeat of the facility. Coaches, managers and families staffing the canteen, along with year-round fundraising efforts, help keep registration fees affordable and cover minor repairs.

"There are always challenges with aging infrastructure," he said. "A new ice plant would reduce maintenance costs, improve efficiency and provide better ice for all user groups."

Winning Kraft Hockeyville would provide \$250,000 toward arena upgrades, helping ensure the facility can continue serving the region for decades. Chwaliboga said the investment would position the arena to meet community needs for the next 25 years.

"Our community is wonderful in supporting different community groups and organizations and always comes together to help each other," he said. "The Kraft Hockeyville contest will be no different. Young and old alike will come together to take Arborg to the finish line."

The Kraft Hockeyville program is open to legal residents of Canada aged 14 and older. Entries and community stories can be submitted online between Jan. 1 and March 1, 2026, with judging and public voting determining the winners. In addition to the top prize, the competition also awards one \$100,000 community prize and 11 additional \$50,000 prizes for arena improvements across Canada.

Residents are encouraged to share their stories

and show their support by visiting hockeyville.kraftheinz.com/community/arborgdistrictarena. Full contest details and official rules are available at krafthockeyville.ca.



Evergreen Staff Spotlight

Celebrating the People Who Make Our Schools Work

Meet Miya Comeau – School Secretary, Arborg Early Middle School

If you walk into Arborg Early Middle School, one of the first faces you're likely to see is Miya Comeau – and it will almost certainly be accompanied by a smile. Miya joined Evergreen in August 2025 as the school secretary, and in a short time she has become a friendly, trusted presence for students, families, and staff.

What drew her to the role wasn't just office work, but the chance to make a difference. "I value the idea of being a positive adult in the lives of the children at our school," Miya says. And she is – every day.

While most people picture a school secretary sitting at a desk answering phones, Miya is quick to point out that the job is far more dynamic. "There is so much more to this job than just answering the phone – I am on my feet almost constantly!" she laughs. From helping students, supporting staff, handling schedules, responding to needs, and keeping the school running, no two days are alike.

One moment that has stayed with her is when a student shared something personal and said they felt most comfortable talking to her. "That meant so much," Miya reflects. "It reminded me that this work isn't only about organization – it's about relationships."

What Miya loves most about Evergreen is the support and kindness she has experienced. "I love my co-workers and truly appreciate all the support I have received from ESD as I navigate this new career." And in just a few months, she has already seen how deeply the division cares about students: "I've learned how much effort and compassion the staff put into creating a safe and understanding environment for our students."

Thank you, Miya, for the warmth, kindness, and joy you bring to AEMS every single day. Evergreen is better because of you.

Interviewed by and pictured with trustee Penny Helgason



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Interlake-Eastern RHA releases draft design of new Eriksdale ER, invites public feedback

By Patricia Barrett

The Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority released a draft design of what will be a new emergency room at the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital in Eriksdale and is inviting the public to provide feedback.

A spokesperson for the IERHA said the ER redevelopment project represents a "significant upgrade" for patients, staff and the communities the hospital serves. It will expand capacity and improve patient care.

The draft design reflects initial feedback the IERHA had received last year from staff, physicians and community members.

"The new design for the facility has integrated valuable feedback from the community. In 2025, a public survey generated 142 responses, and in-person information sessions saw approximately 150 patients, clinical team members and members of the public share their thoughts on the project," said the spokesperson. "In addition, First Nation leaders from the areas serviced by the hospital were consulted on the project as part of commitments to community involvement."

That feedback helped shape aspects of the design, including enhanced privacy for patients at both the triage and registration desks, a dedicated family

space and a dedicated patient waiting area. The renovation will also provide enhanced treatment capabilities, improve physician call-room space and offer better connectivity to nursing care teams, said the spokesperson.

The design storyboards are on display near the entrance to the hospital, and people can make comments or send questions on site or via email to info@ierha.ca.

The provincial government announced last year that construction on the new ER is scheduled to begin in February after it awarded the construction-management tender.

The project, which will cost \$8.6 million, will renovate and modernize the ER and acute care areas of the hospital, increase capacity, improve patient flow, strengthen service delivery and better meet the health-care needs of the Interlake, health minister Uzoma Asagwara announced in a Dec. 8, 2025, news release.

Many people on social media acknowledged the great care they or someone they love had received at the Eriksdale hospital.

"BEST hospital ... took such great care of my hubby!" wrote Jeannie Gurr on the IERHA's Facebook site in response to the news of the draft design going on display.



EXPRESS PHOTO COURTESY OF IERHA

Staff at the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital in Eriksdale hold a draft design of the new emergency department that the province committed to build. The public are invited to weigh in on the design.

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Funding for this project [in part] has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the Agricultural Climate Solutions - On-Farm Climate Action Fund



Happy New Year

EXPRESS PHOTOS BY CORRINE EINARSSON

Members of Gimli's Barvinok Ukrainian Dance Club perform during the club's annual Malanka — the Ukrainian New Year — celebration at Riverton Hall on Jan. 31. The evening featured traditional Ukrainian dance performances, followed by dinner and social dancing. Music was provided by the High Profile band.



Community growth, progress mark strong year for RM of Coldwell

By E. Antonio

As 2025 comes to a close, council for the RM of Coldwell is reflecting on a year marked by steady progress, community investment and collaboration.

"We had many exciting things happen in 2025," council said.

One of the year's most significant milestones was the opening of a new doctors' office, which council described as a major step forward for local health services. The municipality also welcomed new business development with the opening of Northern Mods, a modular building company expected to contribute to local employment and economic growth.

Public safety was another key focus, highlighted by the purchase of a new fire pumper truck, an investment council believes will benefit the community for many years. Infrastructure improvements were also completed, including the replacement of the first block of Main Street sidewalks and curbs, extensive roadside clearing and drainage work, and expansion of the fairgrounds venue.

Several community-focused projects

advanced throughout the year. A new 24-niche columbarium was added to the cemetery, museum building work continued, and the annual ice fishing tournament saw continued growth in popularity. Recreation remained strong, with the grand opening of the ball diamond, a project council said was "many years in the making and completed by many dedicated volunteer hours." Upgrades were also made to the community pool, while the golf club reported a successful year.

Council said progress, both large and small, was worth celebrating, noting that reflecting on accomplishments by the municipality, businesses and community organizations was a highlight of the year.

Not all developments were positive. One of the most significant challenges in 2025 was the loss of the local credit union, a change that had a noticeable impact on residents and businesses. Despite this, council said the municipality remained financially stable, closing the year within budget and in a "good position."

Some planned projects were delayed due to timing, availability and financial constraints. Repairs to a local statue and the development of a flagpole area behind it were postponed, as was completion of the new museum building. Council said work continued with the museum board to keep the project moving forward.

Collaboration remained a cornerstone of municipal operations in 2025. A joint waste disposal site with West Interlake continued to operate successfully, while the newly formed North West Interlake Health Advisory Group brought together the RMs of Grahamdale, West Interlake, Coldwell and St. Laurent, along with the Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority, to support regional health planning.

Council said one of the most rewarding aspects of the year was seeing growth across multiple sectors, from health care and business to recreation and cultural services, supported by strong partnerships between the municipality and community organiza-

tions.

Resident feedback throughout the year was largely positive, particularly regarding timely snow removal within town. While weather-related transportation concerns were raised, council noted residents were seeing value in the services being delivered.

Looking ahead to 2026, council identified three main priorities: construction of a new or refurbished fire hall, transformation of the curling rink into a community centre and continued economic development. Approved projects for the coming year include further improvements at Lunder North Cemetery, completion of the museum building and ongoing strategic planning. Council noted both the fire hall and community centre projects will depend on securing provincial or federal grant funding.

As the municipality enters the new year, council emphasized its commitment to transparency and dialogue.

"We saw forward progress in 2025," council said, "and we hope to see even more in 2026."

Province expands hepatitis A vaccine eligibility to Peguis First Nation

By Lana Meier

The Manitoba government has expanded free hepatitis A vaccine eligibility to include Peguis First Nation as it responds to an ongoing outbreak in the province.

Manitoba Health, Seniors and Long-Term Care said the vaccine is now being offered to Peguis First Nation community members, visitors and close contacts aged six months and older. The expanded eligibility, already in place for Garden Hill, St. Theresa Point, Wasagamack and Red Sucker Lake, now includes Peguis First Nation community members, anyone travelling to or working in Peguis First Nation and people who have household visitors from the community.

The hepatitis A vaccine is highly effective in preventing infection, including when it is administered after exposure to a confirmed case. Eligible individuals can receive the vaccine through primary care providers, local public health offices, nursing stations and health centres.

As of Jan. 18, there have been 308 hepatitis A cases associated with the outbreak across Manitoba, primarily spread through person-to-person contact. Health officials say the overall risk of exposure to the general public remains low.

Hepatitis A is an acute liver infection caused by the hepatitis A virus. Some people, particularly young children, may have no symptoms. Others can experience symptoms

ranging from mild to severe, with sudden onset that may include fever, loss of appetite, nausea and vomiting, stomach cramps, abdominal pain, diarrhea, dark urine, clay-coloured stools and jaundice, or yellowing of the skin and eyes.

People with mild illness often recover within one to two weeks. The infection can be more serious for individuals with weakened immune systems, chronic liver disease or those over age 60, and severe cases can result in symptoms lasting several months.

The virus can spread through contaminated food or water, or through close contact with an infected person, even if they have no symptoms. Health officials recom-

mend frequent handwashing with soap and water after using the toilet, handling diapers, and before eating or preparing food. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if soap and water are not available.

Anyone who develops symptoms of hepatitis A is advised to contact a health-care provider, particularly if they may have been exposed to someone who is ill.

For more information, residents can contact their health-care provider, local public health office or nursing station, or call Health Links-Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257 (toll-free). Information on hepatitis A and vaccine eligibility is available on the Manitoba government website.

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REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER

Kieran Reimer



REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER

Jennifer McFee



REPORTER

Annaliese Meier



REPORTER/PHOTOGRAPHER

Patricia Barrett



ADMINISTRATION

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Manitoba pilots 24/7 snow clearing on Perimeter Highway

By Lana Meier

The Manitoba government is piloting round-the-clock snow clearing on Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway in a move aimed at improving safety and keeping traffic moving during major winter storms.

The province and the Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union have signed a memorandum of agreement allowing 24-7 winter maintenance operations on Provincial Trunk Highways 100 and 101, known collectively as the Perimeter Highway.

Transportation and Infrastructure Minister Lisa Naylor said the agreement will allow crews to respond more quickly when severe winter weather creates a significant public safety risk.

"This agreement is about keeping Manitobans safe and moving when winter weather hits," Naylor said. "Bringing back 24-7 snow clearing on the Perimeter Highway means crews can respond faster during major storms and provide a higher level of service when our communities need it most."

According to a provincial spokesperson, when the province is aware of a forecast major winter event — such as a blizzard or heavy snowfall — maintenance crews would be scheduled in advance to provide 24-hour coverage.

The goal, the spokesperson said, is to reduce both the frequency and duration of highway closures during extreme weather events.

While the province oversees winter maintenance, road closures are initiat-



EXPRESS PHOTO BY LANA MEIER

Blowing snow and drifting reduced travel to a single lane along Winnipeg's Perimeter Highway during a recent winter storm. The province is piloting 24-hour snow clearing on the Perimeter to improve safety and reduce closures during major weather events.

ed by the RCMP and can be triggered by several factors, including poor visibility or motor vehicle collisions. The spokesperson said the RCMP would have more detailed information on the specific parameters used to close highways.

The agreement took effect Jan. 22 and allows the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to activate continuous snow clearing on an as-needed basis when major storms are forecast or already underway. Operations would be carried out using two 12-hour shifts to provide around-the-clock coverage.

MGEU president Kyle Ross said the agreement recognizes the demanding

and often dangerous conditions faced by highway maintenance workers.

"MGEU members work hard to keep our roads safe and clear," Ross said. "This agreement supports 24-7 snow removal when it's needed, helping keep the Perimeter Highway open for those who rely on it."

The province noted that since the agreement was signed, there has not yet been a snowfall significant enough to require activation of continuous snow removal.

Officials said the pilot project is expected to reduce weather-related disruptions on one of Manitoba's busiest transportation corridors and improve overall winter driving conditions during extreme events.

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OUR EDITORIAL STAFF

Patricia Barrett -
Reporter/Photographer
Cell 204-407-6099 patricia@expressweeklynews.ca

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Interlake Tourism Association sponsoring GIFF's new winter film series

By Patricia Barrett

The Interlake Tourism Association (ITA) is supporting a new initiative from the Gimli International Film Festival (GIFF) to feature a film a month over the new year's winter season to help people beat the cold-weather blues and attract more visitors to Gimli.

GIFF's winter film series runs from January to April. Films are screened on the last Sunday of each month.

Interlake Tourism Association manager Dee King said the festival's winter series is part of the ITA's Tourism Development Grant program, which supports new tourism projects across the Interlake. ITA had selected GIFF as a grant recipient last year, providing financial support to launch the winter film screening.

"A crucial part of Interlake Tourism's role is to support local businesses and organizations that are creating new events and experiences, whether through funding, marketing support, or other opportunities," said King. "The Winter Film Series is a great example of a project that benefited from this early investment and is now helping expand year-round cultural programming in the Interlake."

In February, GIFF will be showcasing Icelandic director Hlynur Palmason's 2025 family drama *The Love That Remains*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival.

The English subtitled tragicomedy comprises a series of vignettes from a rural household grappling with the collapse of a marriage and its effects on the separating couple — a commercial fisher and an artist — and

their three children as they try to make sense of the pull of lingering attachment and shared memories over the course of a year. The film showcases Iceland's stunning rural topography and its changing seasons through ordinary scenes including hiking, ice skating, playing and commercial fishing at sea.

GIFF's winter film series started with *Sentimental Value*, a 2025 Cannes Grand Prix winner.

Screening films in the winter gives locals and visitors alike access to more arts-related activities during the off-season when they tend to hunker down as temperatures drop.

"We're especially excited to see initiatives like this activate the winter season, giving residents and visitors more reasons to get out, connect, and enjoy local arts and culture during traditionally quieter months," said King.

The next intake for ITA's Tourism Development Grant closes on Feb. 27, and application guidelines are available on ITA's website. The grant is open to local community development organizations, tourism groups, small or emerging businesses, nonprofits, new event or festival organizers, and more.

"It's a core feature of ours as organizations cannot do it alone; they need the financial support so they can focus on what they do best: the experience," said King.

The Love That Remains is scheduled for Sunday, Feb. 22 at 6 p.m. in Johnson Hall in the Waterfront Centre in Gimli.



With funding support from the Interlake Tourism Association, the Gimli International Film Festival is screening a film a month during the new year's winter season. Icelandic film *The Love That Remains* will be screened on Feb. 22.

Interlake-Eastern RHA welcomes pediatricians

By Jennifer McFee

Three new pediatricians in the Interlake-Eastern health region are currently accepting referrals.

Dr. Wail Seleem started in December 2025 and is based in Selkirk and Eriksdale. Dr. Hammam Akil started in October 2024 and is in Selkirk and Pine Falls. Dr. Carla Bowes is a developmental pediatrician who started in October 2025 and is working in Gimli and Arborg.

All three pediatricians are working as part of a team to serve communities within the Interlake-Eastern

Regional Health Authority. Contact your primary care provider to schedule a referral.

"For years, families in our region had no local pediatric specialists," said Dr. Scott Gregoire, vice-president of medical services and chief medical officer for Interlake-Eastern RHA.

"Having three pediatricians now serving our communities is a major step forward that will improve care for children and reduce the need for families to travel for essential services."

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Manitoba 

Architectural malpractice: Interlake investors just finding out data hacked last August in CIRO security breach

By Patricia Barrett

At least 750,000 Canadian investors had their personal and financial data stolen last August after hackers gained access to the IT system of a national investment regulatory body, and some of those investors in the Interlake said they're just finding out about it now.

The Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization (CIRO) is a private, self-regulatory organization that patrols investment and mutual fund dealers in Canada. CIRO has a mandate to protect Canadians from improper investment conduct and practices by overseeing the investment industry and ensuring compliance. CIRO obtains investors' personal and financial data "in the normal course" of carrying out its mandate.

Its IT system was hacked last August, resulting in access to and exfiltration of a suite of personal and financial information of investors - as well as investment brokers - that included legal name, date of birth, social insurance number, passport information, bank account number(s), financial information, gender, eye colour, height, address, telephone number, email address, beneficiary information, and criminal or civil disclosures.

Two investors whose data was sto-

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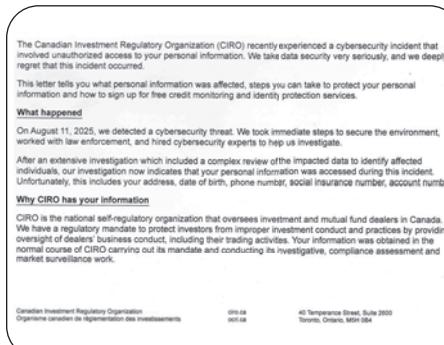
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A letter an investor received from CIRO indicates the data accessed "includes" their address, date of birth, phone number, social insurance number and account number.

len shared parts of a letter they received from CIRO informing them of the breach. One investor lives on the west side of the Interlake and the other is affiliated with an Interlake resident who lives on the east side. Neither wants to be identified and only one investor shared their concerns.

CIRO had announced on its website via a news release dated Aug. 18, 2025, that it had identified a "cybersecurity threat" on Aug. 11, 2025, and it proactively shut down some of its systems. It stated in that release that "Canadians' investments are not at risk."

That major breach of security flew under the radar of the two investors. And they were blindsided last week when they received a letter from CIRO.

"After an extensive investigation which included a complex review of the impacted data to identify affected individuals, our investigation now indicates that your personal information was accessed during this incident," states CIRO's Jan. 14, 2026, letter to the investor who agreed to speak with the paper. "Unfortunately, this includes your address, phone number, social insurance number, account number."

The investor said not only did they just become aware of CIRO's breach, but they had also not been given a heads-up from their financial institution.

"I learned about the breach last week and then received a letter in the mail on Friday [Jan. 30] confirming that my information may have been affected," said the investor. "I didn't receive any notification directly from my financial institution, which was frustrating."

As regards CIRO's failure to protect their data, the investor said their ability to trust has taken a hit.

"I'm careful about protecting my personal and financial information and I take that responsibility seriously, so it's disappointing to learn that data I trusted to others to safeguard

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IA Private Wealth Inc.*
Investors Group Securities Inc.

JitneyTrade Inc.

Kernaghan & Partners Ltd.
Lakeshore Securities Inc.
Mandeville Private Client Inc.
Nour Private Wealth Inc.
OMG Wealth Management Inc.
Omnivite Custom Wealth Management Inc.
Perry Securities Ltd.
Pollitt & Co. Inc.*
Portfolio HiWay Inc.
Queensbury Securities Inc.
Retire First Ltd.
RGF Wealth Management Ltd.
Rothenberg Wealth Management Inc.
Secteur Capital Management Corporation
Sightline Wealth Management LP
Stephen Avenue Securities Inc.*
Wellington-Altus Private Wealth Inc.

4. MANAGED ACCOUNTS

Acker Finley Inc.
Caldwell Securities Ltd.*
Cumberland Private Wealth Management Inc.
CWB Wealth Partners Ltd.

Webull Securities (Canada) Limited

6. INSTITUTIONAL
Barclays Capital Canada Inc.*
Beacon Securities Limited*
BNP Paribas (Canada) Securities Inc.
Cantor Fitzgerald Canada Corporation*
Casgrain & Company Limited
Citigroup Global Markets Canada Inc.*
Clarus Securities Inc.*
Cormark Securities Inc.*
Deutsche Bank Securities Limited
Eight Capital*
Goldman Sachs Canada Inc.*
Instinet Canada Limited*
J.P. Morgan Securities Canada Inc.*
Jefferies Securities, Inc.
JonesTrading Canada Inc.*
Laurentian Bank Securities Inc.*
Merrill Lynch Canada Inc.*
Morgan Stanley Canada Limited*
MUFG Securities (Canada), Ltd.
Paradigm Capital Inc.*
Peters & Co. Limited*
PGM Global Inc.*

CANADIAN INVESTMENT REGULATORY ORGANIZATION

A partial list is shown of banking and financial organizations that share client data with CIRO. About 750,000 Canadian investors had their personal and financial information stolen last August after hackers gained access to CIRO's system.

was compromised," they said. "I've always been an advocate for privacy and data protection, and this has affected my trust."

CIRO offered the 750,000 Canadians affected by the breach two years' worth of credit-monitoring services through Equifax and TransUnion, and the investor said they'll be taking up that offer, as well as keeping a "close eye" on their accounts. That said, they don't think two years of monitoring goes far enough as their stolen data could be used in perpetuity.

"Data like this can be misused years down the road, and long-term monitoring should be available to every customer who may have been affected. There's a limit to what individuals can realistically do to be secure. At some point, stronger protections have to be in place at a higher level, and government needs to act," they said. "I think CIRO and the financial institutions involved need to be transparent, communicate clearly and provide ongoing support to those affected. This shouldn't end with a letter - people deserve reassurance that real improvements are being made to prevent this from happening again."

CIRO's letter to the other investor is nearly identical, including its issue date, but it states the investor's date of birth was accessed in addition to other vital information.

Both letters indicate a possibility - by use of the word "includes" - that the two investors may have had more personal and financial information stolen than what the letters spell out.

CIRO lists on its website hundreds of financial institutions from which it obtains investors' data. These "dealers" include well known names such as BMO Nesbitt Burns, CIBC World

Markets, National Bank Financial, RBC Dominion Securities, TD Waterhouse Canada, Assante Capital Management, Aviso Financial, Desjardins Securities, Investors Group Securities, Richardson Wealth, Sun Life Canada Securities, and Morgan Stanley Canada. Credit unions offering investment services have partnerships with some of the large financial companies listed.

Hackers can do a lot of damage with stolen personal and financial data. They can clone it several times over and sell it on the dark web to other criminals or impersonate an individual to open a bank account, apply for loans, apply for credit cards, make purchases, steal the title to a property and sell it, apply for an additional mortgage, or demand a ransom in exchange for a promise to not sell the data. They can also attempt to access victims' accounts and change passwords.

Bill Buckels lives in the Interlake and is a retired systems analyst, software engineer and wealth systems manager. The *Express* asked him to explain what he believes happened as he used to build IT systems for large financial companies in Canada, the U.S. and internationally, including RBC Dominion Securities, National Bank, various stock exchanges and international banking systems. He said he knows how data security should be structured, and it's clear that CIRO's IT system was not built to do information hiding.

"In my day, the protocol was to hide client information and never transmit that data across the Internet. Ever. Not if you wanted to have system integrity. Internal IT systems can be set

Continued on page 9

Manitoba Merv predicts six more weeks of winter

By Lana Meier

Manitobans may need to keep their winter gear handy a little longer.

Manitoba Merv emerged on Groundhog Day Sunday and saw his shadow, signalling six more weeks of winter according to the annual tradition.

Merv made his prediction from a viewing platform at Oak Hammock Marsh, just north of Stonewall.

The forecast aligns with classic folklore, which holds that a shadow sighting means winter conditions will linger, while the absence of a shadow points to an early spring.

Despite the light-hearted nature of the prediction, Manitoba Merv's annual appearance has become a familiar winter tradition, offering a moment of fun — and a reminder that prairie winters are not quite ready to loosen their grip.

In Manitoba in 2026, the astronomical first day of spring — the vernal equinox — falls on Friday, March 20, 2026. That's the moment when day and night are nearly equal in length, marking the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere.

> CIRO, FROM PG. 8

up in such a way that there's a complete separation between transactions and clients so that client data would never be exposed," said Buckels.

"CIRO's security lapse is a serious breach of the personal and financial data of three quarters of a million Canadian investors. And what's equally serious is that CIRO didn't inform some of those investors - we don't know exactly how many - about what happened until maybe a month later or over four months later, according to the class-action lawsuit, after its system was hacked. This to me is criminal negligence on the part of the CIRO board. They enabled this data breach by not doing their proper due diligence with regard to IT and data security. The board is in charge; they have the keys to the place and they left all the doors unlocked."

He's questioning why CIRO needs to have investors' personal data in the first place as that information should be held only by banks and financial institutions.

"CIRO is a private oversight committee, not a police force, and it should never have been able to copy investors' data from the servers of banks and financial institutions. The system CIRO is using actually makes a second copy of client data - it's called cloning - even though it's encrypted. CIRO's system puts that copy on their own server, whose soft underbelly was exposed because CIRO failed to protect it. So if it can't protect its server, why isn't CIRO using an IT system that doesn't identify clients?" he said.

"CIRO could carry out its oversight duties by using a system that uses a transaction number it gets from a financial institution that's following a certain set of business rules, rules that

comply with regulatory oversight. The transfer of data should use the language of the so-called geeks and nerds who put everything in code. There should be no human-language data available to CIRO. This organization shouldn't be able to know investors' personal information The way to separate financial reporting from client information is through an information-hiding system."

When people used to go to HIV clinics for testing back in the 1980s at a time when there was a huge stigma around the virus, Buckels said the clinic would assign people a number instead of a name and do anonymous testing. CIRO should have had that kind of system - and should have that going forward - in order to protect client information.

In addition to CIRO's board being at fault for failing to secure investors' data, he puts the weak security protocol down to the attitude of Gen Y and Gen Z who are building the IT systems of today and failing to question systems that look at data from a "non-machine" point of view.

"When did CIRO implement this IT system? I guess we'd have to ask CIRO - and we'd have to ask Gen Y and Z, as well, as they invented these systems and these rules. This is like having the fox guarding the hen house," said Buckels. "I don't know any reason why CIRO would need to know client data. But they think it's okay to transmit it over the Internet and store copies of it on their server. There's a level of arrogance here, too, where they think their system can't be hacked, that whatever level of encryption they're using is secure enough to allow them to store sensitive data and do queries on their server. CIRO is not competent and should be shut down."



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Manitoba Merv, the province's Groundhog Day mascot, sits on the viewing platform at Oak Hammock Marsh near Stonewall on Feb. 2 during the annual Groundhog Day celebration. Merv saw his shadow, signalling six more weeks of winter according to tradition.

As for the role of banks and financial institutions sharing investors' data with CIRO, Buckels said he's sure they're "hiding behind regulation to deny their fiduciary responsibility."

He thinks two years' worth of credit monitoring is "insulting" as 750,000 Canadians will need new social insurance numbers, new bank accounts, new driver's licenses and so forth to better protect themselves.

He reached out to federal finance minister François-Philippe Champagne and the Manitoba Securities Commission to request a criminal investigation of CIRO under Section 219 of the *Criminal Code*, he said. CIRO committed "architectural malpractice" by abandoning foundational principles of information hiding and created a "sniffer's paradise" (sniffer refers to computing tools used to capture or intercept data packets flowing across networks).

The *Express* contacted CIRO, asking how many hours or days CIRO's system was breached, how far back in time the compromised data go, why CIRO needs to clone clients' personal information, how many years it has been cloning client data, how exactly is CIRO enhancing its IT system in the aftermath of the breach, whether it will continue to have future access to investors' personal data, and whether it thinks it's competent to continue its regulatory role.

Apart from the question pertaining to cloning data, CIRO's director of corporate communications and public affairs, Sean Hamilton, declined to answer the questions, saying the newspaper can find those answers on its FAQ page, news release and "about us" page.

The paper could not find answers to its questions through those sources.

Hamilton offered a statement deny-

ing that CIRO "clones or transmits" data, saying CIRO is on the receiving end for data.

"To be clear, CIRO does not clone or transmit personal information. CIRO receives information in the normal course of carrying out its regulatory mandate to protect investors from improper investment conduct and practices, and conducting its investigative, compliance assessment and market surveillance work," said Hamilton.

But CIRO is being sued for allowing the personal and financial information of 750,000 Canadians that it holds as copies in its system to be stolen. An application for a class-action lawsuit against CIRO was brought before the Quebec Superior Court on Oct. 6, 2025.

It states CIRO failed to implement adequate cybersecurity and data protection measures, and committed a fault inconsistent with the trust placed in it by registrants, investors and the public. And CIRO is being "summoned" to retain all investigation reports and findings related to the breach, including "copies of the stolen data sets."

The full text of the suit is available on Lex Group Inc.'s website.

In addition to offering credit monitoring through Equifax and TransUnion for two years, CIRO said in its letter to compromised investors that credit-monitoring service includes monitoring the dark web for Canadians' stolen data.

Equifax itself was hacked in 2017, resulting in a major data breach that accessed names, addresses, social insurance numbers and in some cases the credit cards of about 100,000 Canadians, as well as the personal data of 143 million Americans. The breach

Continued on page 14

Heart & Stroke report highlights growing heart and brain health risks

By E. Antonio

A new report from Heart & Stroke shows that heart disease and stroke continue to affect millions of Canadians, with lifestyle and medical risk factors on the rise despite decades of progress in prevention and treatment.

According to the report *By the numbers: the state of risk factors for heart disease and stroke in Canada*, more than six million people across the country are now living with heart disease or stroke — a higher number than previously estimated.

The report looks at a wide range of risk factors, including lifestyle habits, medical conditions and factors people cannot change, such as age and genetics. Lifestyle risks include diet, physical activity, tobacco and nicotine use, stress and sleep, while medical risks include high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diabetes.

"While there have been advances around understanding, reducing and managing risk, nine in 10 people in Canada have at least one key modifiable risk factor for heart disease and stroke," said Doug Roth, CEO of Heart & Stroke. "The good news is that almost 80 per cent of premature heart disease and stroke can be prevented."

Heart & Stroke's mission is to help Canadians beat heart disease and stroke, says Manitoba Mission Specialist Kaitlyn Archibald.

"We work together with people with lived experiences, sharing their stories and advocating for awareness, education and improved care," she said.

She emphasized that 90 per cent of Canadians have at least one risk factor linked to heart disease or strokes, and only about half of Canadians know their risk.

"That leaves a large number of Canadians who have a risk factor and don't know it," she added. "Now it's our job to help Canadians understand their risks and how to take action."

Luckily, she said Canadians can reduce their risk of heart disease and stroke by 80 per cent by keeping a healthy lifestyle.

Shauna Courchene of Sagkeeng First Nation, who was diagnosed with an atrial septal defect — more commonly known as a hole in the heart — in 2019, shared her experience of living with a heart condition.

Courchene was in her 30s when she received the diagnosis after visiting a new general practitioner, who detected a heart murmur during an exam. She was referred for an electrocardiogram (ECG) and later an ultrasound, where a cardiologist confirmed the defect. Unsure of its size, doctors or-

dered further testing, and Courchene ultimately underwent bypass surgery on March 1, 2023.

"I was raised by my grandma, who I watched suffer with her own heart disease, so I knew how serious it was to take care of your heart," Courchene said. "But when this started happening to me, it was scary knowing my health was at risk."

Since her diagnosis, Courchene said she has made several lifestyle changes, including eating healthier, staying active and managing stress. She has also committed herself to raising awareness about heart health within her family, among friends and throughout her community.

"When you have a diagnosis, it's important to remember you have to start small again," she explained. "Acknowledging the small gains you make in your daily life can really benefit you down the line."

Courchene continues to see her cardiologist at least once a year and has since returned to work full time, now prioritizing balance and rest to avoid overexertion.

While she said she was not aware of Heart & Stroke's resources during much of her journey, she is grateful for the support now available to her.

"There is so much invaluable information and support that I wish I could have taken advantage of," she said. "It would have eased me through that diagnosis, but now I try to take part in their programming and workshops whenever I can."

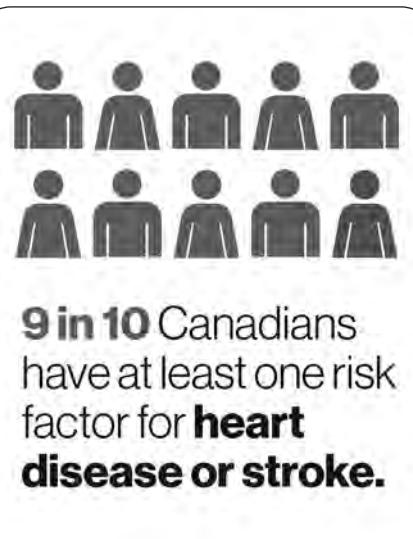
She encourages anyone concerned about their heart health to reach out for help — whether through Heart & Stroke, a doctor or a nurse practitioner.

"Please listen to your body, understand the risks and find out what the best treatment plan for you is," she added.

Heart & Stroke has a free online risk screening tool that gives users a full printable report outlining their risks. Upon completing the risk screen, users can take the printable health action plan to review with their primary care providers to discuss treatment plans, as well as discuss risk reduction options.

Risk for heart disease and stroke come in three categories: modifiable, such as healthy eating and lifestyle choices; medical, including high blood pressure, cholesterol and other health conditions; and non-modifiable, like genetics, air pollution and other factors beyond control.

From the Heart & Stroke report, *By the numbers: the state of risk factors for heart disease and stroke in Canada*, we learn that some trends show progress



9 in 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for **heart disease or stroke.**

February is Heart Month, and the Heart & Stroke Foundation encourages Canadians to learn about the risks of heart disease and find ways to reduce them.

for risk reduction. Adult smoking rates have dropped dramatically over the past several decades, falling to 11 per cent in 2024. However, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in Canada, and vaping is a growing concern, particularly among youth.

Other lifestyle risks remain widespread. Only about half of adults meet recommended physical activity levels, and fruit and vegetable consumption has been declining across all age groups. Nearly one in four adults report feeling highly stressed on most days.

Medical risk factors are also increasing. More than 8.2 million Canadian adults have high blood pressure, the leading risk factor for stroke, while more than one in four adults has high cholesterol. Nearly 3.9 million Canadians are living with diabetes — more than three times the number recorded in 2000.

The report also highlights how risk is not evenly shared. Indigenous peoples and some racialized communities, including Black Canadians and people of South Asian descent, face higher rates of heart disease and stroke due to longstanding social and health inequities. Women also experience unique risks at different stages of life, including during pregnancy and menopause.

Despite these challenges, the report notes a major success: deaths from heart disease and stroke have fallen by more than 80 per cent over the past 70 years, thanks to research, awareness, improved care and public policy.

Archibald shared that Heart & Stroke advocates for health policy change across the country to reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke in Canadians. This advocacy includes



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED
Shauna Courchene found out she had a hole in her heart in 2019. She now advocates for heart health awareness.

smoking, vaping and nicotine product restrictions, promotion of healthy eating habits and physical activity, alongside efforts for a national pharmacare program which passed in October 2024.

Worldwide, February is Heart Month, and Heart & Stroke uses this opportunity to, "stir the conversation on checking into your own heart and brain health," Archibald said.

"It's a time where we can encourage Canadians to be aware of their risk factors and support them however we can to have those conversations, advocate for their own health and provide them with the information they need to reduce their own risk factors for heart disease and stroke."

Year round, Heart & Stroke encourages individuals to learn more about their personal risk, talk with health-care providers and take steps toward healthier lifestyles. They also accept donations on their website with proceeds supporting their mission priorities of research and advocacy for improved heart and brain health for all Canadians in order to "promote health, save lives and enhance recovery."

More information, including the full report and a free online risk screening tool, is available at heartandstroke.ca. You can also reach out to Kaitlyn Archibald at Kaitlyn.archibald@heartandstroke.ca to learn more, or to get involved with Heart & Stroke volunteer efforts.

Arborg and Bifrost-Riverton holding open house on future of outdoor recreation

By Patricia Barrett

The Arborg-Bifrost Recreation Advisory Committee is hosting an upcoming "outdoor recreation open house" for residents to share their ideas and opinions on creating new outdoor recreation spaces and provide them with an opportunity to ask questions.

The town's baseball diamond and soccer fields — located behind the community hall, the arena, the pool and the curling club — have been earmarked for the construction of a much-needed new personal care home that the province has promised to build.

Arborg-Bifrost Parks & Recreation Commission director Tom Chwaliboga said the open house is an opportunity for everyone to provide feedback and ask questions.

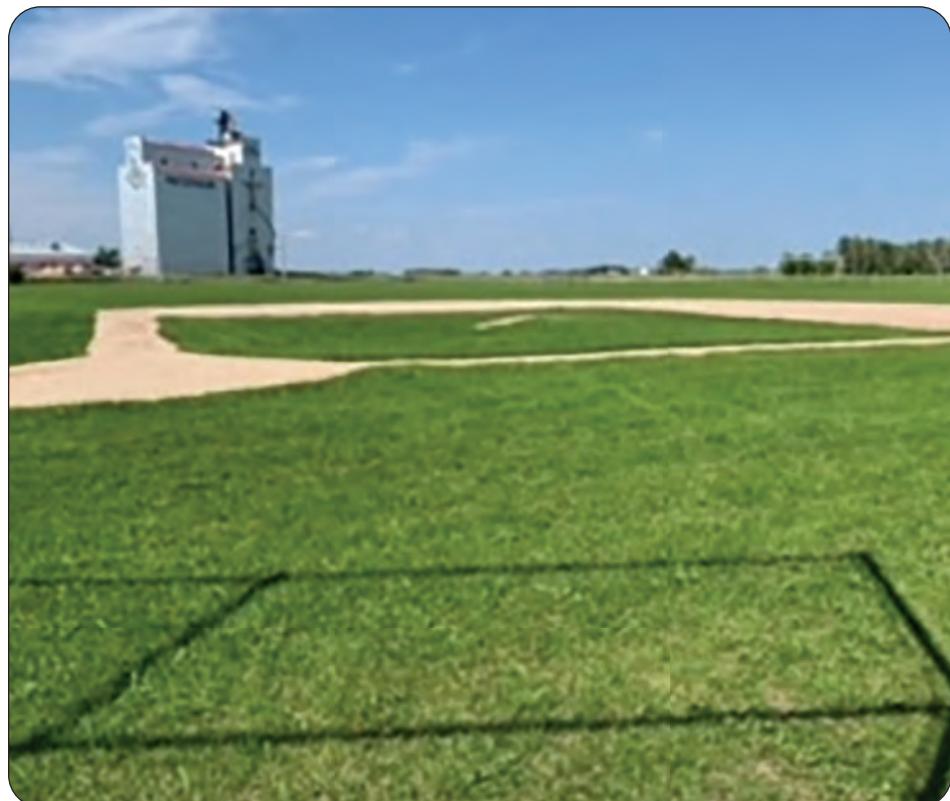
The advisory committee will give a presentation that will include background information on the proposed project, ideas from previous planning sessions and a question-and-answer session.

"This is has been a work in progress through both municipalities over

the past couple of years. We had met with the community in October 2023 to gather ideas from different user groups and we also had a survey," said Chwaliboga, who is a member of the advisory committee. "Based on all that information, we have a conceptual drawing of what this project may or may not look like. Things can change: the upcoming open house will give us ideas and suggestions of what else people might want to see. We're committed to going forward with the best possible project."

The advisory committee is composed of community members and representatives from both municipalities — the Town of Arborg and the Municipality of Bifrost-Riverton, said Chwaliboga, and its role is to "help direct, advise and work with the community to find out what they'll need for recreation and sports and leisure" in the coming years.

The open house will be held in Arborg on Monday, Feb. 9 at 7 p.m. at the Arborg-Bifrost Community Hall at the end of Ingolfs Street. Doors open at 6:30 p.m.



EXPRESS PHOTO TOWN OF ARBORG

The sports fields are shown behind the Arborg arena, pool and curling club. A new personal care home will be built on the site.

Ready, set, puzzle! Winnipeg Beach Community Centre hosts puzzle race March 8

By E. Antonio

Puzzle enthusiasts have something new to look forward to on Sunday, March 8, as the Winnipeg Beach Community Centre hosts its inaugural Puzzle Race.

The race begins at 1 p.m., with teams of four competing to be the first to complete a 500-piece puzzle and earn the title of WBCC Puzzle Race champion. The event was created as part of Winnipeg Beach Recreation's efforts to offer unique and engaging experiences for the community.

"It is important to us that we continue to show our town that we are dedicated to bringing new events, programs and activities to our community centre. Coming together as community members, friends and neighbours at local events gives so much back to our Interlake towns," said Steffanie Blair, Winnipeg Beach recreation attendant. "Not only are we boosting our economies, but we are also strengthening community bonds."

Participants of all ages are welcome to register, with each team consisting of four members. The registration fee is \$25 per team, and teams must

register by Feb. 25 to allow staff time to purchase the puzzles.

All teams will work on the same puzzle, racing to complete it in the shortest time. While there is no official time limit, only the fastest team will be crowned champion. The winning team will take home gift cards, Winnipeg Beach merchandise and bragging rights.

For Blair, success is measured by community enjoyment and engagement.

"Our goal is to get our community members excited about the events we are offering and to continue being excited about what new things are to come," she said. "The support we get at each event helps us plan the next one, and we are excited to continue bringing these to our community."

To register, visit <https://form.jotform.com/260145249492257> or scan the QR code on the event poster. Teams are encouraged to arrive by 12:45 p.m. to collect their puzzle, find a table and visit the canteen to purchase food and drinks before the race begins.



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Balanced Motion brings equine massage to Interlake communities

By E. Antonio

Balanced Motion is a new equine massage business dedicated to supporting the health and well-being of horses across the Interlake.

Owner and founder Amanda Mantik aims to become a trusted partner in equine wellness, offering tension-releasing massage services that benefit both horse and rider.

"A happy horse means a happy human," said Mantik, who is based in Ashern and recently completed an Equine Massage Mentorship Course. "From showing and training to mentoring and coaching young riders, my experience runs deep, and my passion for all things equine is unmistakable."

Equine massage helps release muscle tension, reduce soreness, improve flexibility and range of motion, enhance performance, improve circulation, promote relaxation and support long-term recovery and success.



"Whether your horse struggles with tight muscles, stiffness or general soreness, my hands-on approach supports both immediate relief and long-term improvement," Mantik added.

Mantik was inspired to pursue equine massage after witnessing the results firsthand when her own horse received treatment from Steinbach-based equine masseuse Karen Saindon. After seeing a noticeable improvement — and recognizing that Interlake communities lacked access

to the service — she decided to offer equine massage locally.

She works with horses of any breed, age or size, including those that may be shy or anxious.

"I have a natural ability to understand horses," Mantik said. "I bring a calm pres-



EXPRESS PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Balanced Motion is a new equine massage service operating in the Interlake. Pictured is owner and founder Amanda Mantik performing gentle, tension-releasing techniques with her own horse, Charlie.

ence that earns their trust, along with the determination to solve problems as they arise."

Each horse receives a personalized maintenance plan, with treatment frequency adapted to individual needs. Mantik recommends massage every five days for horses prone to tightness, though schedules ultimately depend on activity level and how much

riding is taking place.

Sessions last approximately one hour, during which Mantik builds trust with the horse, identifies areas of tension and uses soft, light massage techniques until release occurs.

"A subtle, quiet demeanour is one of the most important steps in healing," she said. "You need to let them know it's okay to be comfortable and okay to release tension. It's about building a bond with the horse and treating them as if they were your own."

While working, Mantik carefully reads the horse for signs of release, which often include yawning or a noticeably calmer demeanour.

"Horses can be impatient at first, but once they release the tension, they quiet down and allow you to do your job," she explained. "They begin to understand that you're there to help, not hurt."

Mantik learned her techniques through her Equine Massage Mentorship Course with Saindon, which included virtual lessons, meetings and hands-on training in Steinbach. She said it is rewarding to help both horses and their owners by relieving physical tension and discomfort.

She hopes to work with many horses throughout the Interlake and is available to travel to provide care. Appointments can be arranged by calling or texting 204-768-0088.

"Equine massage will help your horse perform better," Mantik said. "You only need to try it once to see how much it can help."

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"Building a Lasting Legacy"

Gimli councillor resigns, municipality looking to hire new CAO

By Patricia Barrett

Gimli council is down to four members after Coun. Andy Damm resigned last month.

Council reported that Damm had "submitted" his resignation on Jan. 24.

That leaves the municipality with Mayor Kevin Chudd, Deputy Mayor and Coun. Kurt Reichert, and councillors Richard Petrowski and Thora Palson until the next election this fall.

The *Express* reached out to council and the municipality, asking if they could share Damm's resignation and for a confirmation that the mayor does not know the reason why Damm resigned, as reported by a large media outlet last week. Council and the municipality declined to answer the emailed questions.

In a brand new initiative called a "Council Meeting Recap" that was started on Jan. 26 and posted on the RM's website, council noted that Damm submitted his resignation and also stated that council will not hold a byelection to replace him.

"Under The Municipal Act, Council may choose whether to hold a byelection when a vacancy occurs late in the term and quorum remains. With the next general election scheduled for October 2026 and quorum still intact, council passed a resolution not to hold a byelection, allowing the vacancy to remain until the general election," states the recap.

The *Express* reached out to Damm for comment.

OTHER COUNCIL NEWS:

- Council is looking to hire a new chief administrative officer.
- Council had appointed D.J. Sigmundson to the CAO position last year in mid-December to replace former interim CAO Valorie Unrau, who had applied for the position.

The *Express* asked the RM and council a number of weeks ago why it was looking for a new CAO when it just hired Sigmundson in December.

"D.J. was hired to help the RM through a transition period and to lead the process of recruiting the next permanent CAO," said communications manager and council spokesperson Christine Payne, responding by email to a number of *Express* questions. "A recruitment plan helps ensure the search is organized, fair and focused on finding the right long-term leader for the municipality."

Council put together a recruitment plan and is currently advertising for a new CAO. It will start reviewing applications Feb. 6, according to its advertisement for the position.

A CAO is responsible for the overall leadership and administration of a municipality including staff. The CAO works closely with a mayor and council, advising council of its responsibilities and legal requirements, and ensures an RM complies with Manitoba legislation, among other high level duties.

- The RM is seeking applications for a contract position of senior election official for the municipal election in October. Applicant review starts Feb. 12.

- Council passed a resolution at its Jan. 12 meeting to accept ownership of the Arnes Lutheran Church, recognizing its historical and cultural significance.

The church's volunteer board resigned last year and asked the RM to take ownership of the municipally designated heritage site.

"This acceptance is conditional upon approval by a judge of the [Manitoba] Court of King's Bench, as required by law," said Payne. "The RM will now begin the necessary court application process."

- Council approved a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Gimli Curling Club, outlining terms of "cooperation and facility access for upcoming events," said Payne. The RM forwarded the MOU to the club for its signature. Applicable facility rental fees are included within the MOU.

- At an in-camera session during its Jan. 12 meeting, council passed a resolution accepting the findings of an independent investigation involving Mayor Kevin Chudd. The investigation concluded he committed several transgressions.

Council voted to suspend the mayor without loss of pay.

"The resolution included acceptance of the independent investigator's summary report, which remains confidential as required by law, a full review of the RM's Code of Conduct and related policies to reflect best practices, mandatory respectful-workplace and conflict-resolution training for all council members, a requirement that the mayor issue a formal apology to the complainant, facilitated by the CAO, and a seven-day suspension of the mayor from all mayoral duties, effective Jan.



EXPRESS FILE PHOTO BY PATRICIA BARRETT

Coun. Andy Damm resigned from council in January. Council has decided to not hold a byelection to fill his seat. The next election municipal election is in October.

16–22, 2026, without loss of compensation," said Payne. "... Council has taken action based on an independent investigation under the RM's Code of Conduct bylaw."

- The Jan. 12 agenda of council that was initially posted publicly subsequently disappeared but has since been restored after a button that makes meeting agendas/minutes live was found to have been "inadvertently checked."

- During council's Jan. 21 committee of the whole meeting — which Payne said provides council with opportunities to review information, ask questions and explore options — council reviewed a training plan to strengthen governance practices.

"Council-wide training is a proactive, preventative measure to strengthen governance practices. Municipal councils function as a collective decision-making body, and the training is intended to ensure that all members are aligned on best practices related to respectful workplaces, conflict resolution and effective decision-making moving forward," said Payne. "This approach is common in governance matters and is designed to support a healthy, functional council, improve processes and help prevent future issues — not to assign blame to councillors who were not subject to discipline."



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Resident brings 24-hour fitness option home to Arborg

By E. Antonio

Arborg residents now have a place to work out any time of day, with the opening of a new 24-hour fitness centre in the community's downtown core.

Active Arborg Fitness opened at 365 Main St., in the former Little Elska space, after local resident Stephanie Dueck turned a personal hesitation about moving home into a new business venture.

Dueck said the idea took shape when she realized the lack of a gym in Arborg was one of the few things holding her back from returning to the community.

"Shortly after starting my schooling, I felt I needed to get out and do something — and that was going to the gym," she said. "I absolutely loved it. The gym community was so incredible. There was no judgment in the atmosphere and I felt at home there. The idea of moving back to Arborg and leaving the gym behind made me sad. I love Arborg and knew a gym is something the community needed."

The fitness centre offers members access to more than 20 pieces of workout equipment and operates 24 hours a day using key-fob entry.

"I want the gym to be accessible — and, to me, that means being available every hour of the day so people can come and work out whenever they please," Dueck said. "I want to see early-morning workers come for a quick session before work. I want to see beginners working alongside experienced people. It is my goal for this to be a safe, welcoming and accessible place for all, no matter the schedule, age or ability."

Dueck said entrepreneurship was not always part of her plan, but her time studying business at Red River College proved transformative, particularly during the pandemic.

"Life stopped at the exact time I was ready to launch into adulthood. Business school with Red River College brought me to the other side — the idea of going back to school restarted my life," she said.

Memberships are available on monthly, bi-annual and annual terms, with purchases currently made at the front desk. Digital options are expected to be added in the future. Dueck said she is still finalizing logistics related to allowing minors to hold memberships.

While she is currently the gym's sole employee, Dueck said she hopes to eventually offer personal training sessions or fitness classes and is open to partnering with trainers or contracting space for instructors.

Gift-certificate memberships are also available, allowing buyers to pre-pay for one month of access. Recipients receive a bar-code membership card valid for a 30-day period.

More information, including updates and announcements, is being shared through the Active Arborg Fitness Facebook and Instagram pages.

Dueck credited the support of friends and family for helping bring the project to life.

"My entire family has been so supportive and I definitely couldn't have gotten this far without them," she said. "I have been able to lean on them throughout this journey and they have all done a great job of just being there for me."



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Active Arborg Fitness owner Stephanie Dueck stands inside the community's new 24-hour gym at 365 Main St. in downtown Arborg. The fitness centre, located in the former Little Elska space, offers members around-the-clock access to workout equipment using key-fob entry.



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Pick up days: Thursday, April 30th &

Friday May 1st from 9 AM to 5 PM



> CIRO, FROM PG. 9

was caused by Equifax's failure to patch a software vulnerability.

The *Express* contacted the Manitoba Securities Commission (MSC), whose website notes CIRO's cybersecurity breach and states that CIRO wants investors with questions to contact them [i.e., CIRO].

The paper asked MSC how many Manitoba investors out of the 750,000 had their personal and financial data stolen, when MSC found out about CIRO being hacked, why financial institutions in Manitoba didn't notify their investment clients about the data theft, whether Docusign (electronic signatures) was part of the data breach, and what MSC is doing to protect Manitobans' data.

The commission did not respond.

Registration now open for high school ice fishing championship on March 10

By E. Antonio

The Manitoba High School Ice Fishing Championship continues to grow, returning to Balsam Bay for its third year on March 10. Balsam Bay is located on the southwest shore of Lake Winnipeg, just south of Gimli and north of Winnipeg Beach. Tournament organizer Dustin Bruce expects approximately 1,500 students from more than 70 schools to attend, with space still available for high schools looking to participate.

Bruce and co-convenor J.J. Ross first began hosting ice fishing derbies more than five years ago for St. James-Assiniboine School Division high schools. After receiving repeated requests from schools outside the division, the pair coordinated the inaugural provincial championship in 2024.

Since its inception, the event has expanded rapidly, and registration

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EXPRESS PHOTOS SUBMITTED

Registration is now open for the Manitoba High School Ice Fishing Championship, set for March 10 on Balsam Bay.

numbers for this year already point to a record-breaking turnout. For Bruce, the championship is about far more than competition — it's a hands-on way to teach fishing skills, responsibility and conservation.

"It's opened up a lot of different ways to teach about fishing and fisheries," Bruce said. "It teaches students how to prepare, and for us, it wraps up our fishing unit in a fun way. It also enables us to have important conversations about conservation. It's rewarding knowing we're leaving our resources in capable hands. That's the legacy behind it — teach them young and teach them the right way."

In the classroom, Bruce prepares his students by teaching them how to tie knots, prepare tackle, review the an-

gling guide, identify fish and understand the full fishing process.

"I want to make myself as useless as possible come championship day," he said. "I love seeing students able to do everything on their own."

The championship is a full-day event that blends education, community and friendly competition. Students have opportunities to engage with fishing and conservation professionals while competing for hundreds of prizes. Awards include trophies, banners and bragging rights for schools that reel in the biggest catches.

Schools from across Manitoba — including several from the north — have attended in past years. Bruce credits the strength of the fishing community for the championship's

continued success.

"What's cool is that all the organizations involved share similar goals of protecting our resources so we can all enjoy them," he said.

While teaching conservation to such a large number of students presents challenges, Bruce called the record-setting attendance an "awesome problem to have."

There is no cap on registration numbers, but teachers or group leaders must register their teams by 3:30 p.m. on Feb. 27. Individual students without adult supervision and teams without wristbands received through pre-registration will not be permitted

Continued on page 22

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A lifetime on the road

Warren/Stonewall
Freight owner
reflects on decades
of service, industry
change

By Jo-Anne Procter

After decades of hauling freight between Winnipeg and Interlake communities, George Williams is easing off the road — closing the chapter on a career that began long before he was old enough to drive.

Williams, 78, retired in December 2025 from Warren/Stonewall Freight, a family operation he quite literally grew up in. His father, Lloyd George Williams, purchased Stonewall Trucking around 1952, and by the time George was five years old, he was already helping out.

"My early days on the job were carrying empty cases of beer bottles," Williams said. "In those days, it was all by hand."

By Grade 12, Williams was already



running freight routes. He would attend school in the morning, walk home, then climb into a truck and head to Winnipeg — a routine he continued after graduating in 1966.

"I was only 17 or 18, and the legal drinking age was 21," he recalled. "The only reason the liquor commission warehouse would give me the booze to bring to Stonewall was because my dad owned the business."

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EXPRESS PHOTOS BY JO-ANNE PROCTER

George Williams has retired after more than 40 years delivering freight throughout the Interlake and surrounding communities with Warren/Stonewall Freight.

Williams officially took over the company in the late 1970s and never seriously considered another career.

"Life throws lots of curves at you," he said. "But I never really deviated from my path."

Over the years, Williams witnessed major changes in the trucking industry, none more significant than the shift from a regulated to a deregulated system.

"When the industry was regulated, you were called a public service vehicle," he said. "If you said you were going to provide daily service, you had to provide it."

Under regulation, rates were controlled by the province, and any increase required formal approval.

"If you wanted to raise your rates, you had to apply to Manitoba," Williams said. "And anyone who disagreed could come forward and voice their opinion."

Deregulation changed that landscape, allowing carriers to set their own prices and decide how — or whether — to serve certain routes. But Williams said his approach never changed.

"I never changed my mindset," he said. "Being reliable was part and parcel of the regulated era, and I carried that forward."

As the years passed, Williams said the industry gradually moved back toward tighter oversight — particularly around safety.

"They deregulated it, then re-regulated it," he said. "Now it's all on a

safety basis."

Drivers must complete multiple courses and certifications, including compliance training, safety supervision, dangerous goods handling and Manitoba Safety Certification for operating vehicles over 4,500 kilograms. Even mechanical work such as brake adjustments now requires specific licensing.

"You couldn't adjust the brakes on your own truck unless you had an S endorsement," Williams said. "Anybody coming into the industry now has a long list of courses before they can even say they're in business."

Customer expectations also evolved. In the early days, freight often arrived late in the afternoon — sometimes after stores had closed. Williams' father carried keys to every business they served.

"We'd put the freight in the store and lock it back up again," he said. "Nowadays, if you don't show up by noon or two o'clock, you're not giving good enough service."

Williams said trust unexpectedly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, as contactless deliveries became the norm.

"People got more trustworthy," he said. "Instead of signatures, I'd write their name down and ask if they were good with that."

Despite faster traffic and higher speed limits, Williams said winter driving has become more challeng-

Continued on page 17

> LIFETIME, FROM PG. 16

ing.

"Back in the '50s and '60s, trucks were limited to about 45 miles an hour," he said. "Now you're doing 100 kilometres an hour and getting passed all the time. Time is more important to people now."

Still, he said the relationships built over decades of deliveries were the most meaningful part of the job.

"Meeting people, understanding their businesses, getting to know their families — that was the best part," he said. "That happened all throughout the Interlake."

Some moments still stand out, including helping transport aerospace equipment during the Gulf War era.

"That gave me a little bit of pride," Williams said. "I felt like I was doing my part."

Motivation, he said, came down to determination and family.

"You were determined to provide for yourself and your family," he said.

Williams has often said that when you truly enjoy your work, it never feels like work at all — a philosophy that defined his decades behind the wheel and in business.

In 2006, Williams' long-standing commitment to the trucking industry was formally recognized when

he received the Manitoba Service to Industry Award from the Manitoba Trucking Association. The honour, presented by Trailmobile, is awarded to individuals nominated by their peers and acknowledges those who have earned widespread respect while making lasting contributions to the industry. At the time, Williams said the recognition was both unexpected and deeply meaningful, noting that acknowledgement from fellow truckers carried special significance.

After turning 78 and reflecting on a serious incident decades earlier, Williams decided it was time to retire.

"There's only so many miles you can put under your wheels," he said. "You follow your gut."

Retirement plans include tackling long-delayed projects at home and clearing out old freight trailers as he prepares for what he calls the next phase of life.

Looking back, Williams hopes he'll be remembered for his work ethic — something he credits to his father and generations before him.

"Our history is very important," he said. "Maybe someday people will think about me the same way I think about my great-grandfather."

If he had to sum up his years on the road in one sentence?

"Time has flown by."



15th Edition Celebration March 7-8



From left: Mike Chudd, Kevin Chudd, Peter Holfeuer, Susan Holfeuer

Susan and Peter Holfeuer, Co-Chairs of the Gimli Ice Festival, welcome the major support received from Chudd's PowerSports, Chudd's Chrysler and Chudd's Esso. This support very much aligns with the festival's and Chudd's shared commitment to celebrate our wonderful community, culture, heritage, and to also help stimulate the local economy when most needed.

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A Note from Evergreen Basic Needs

Evergreen Basic Needs would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all who supported EBN through 2025: governments: federal, provincial and municipal; foundations: both national and local; and businesses, organizations and individuals. This past year brought both challenges and opportunities but with the help of all, including our dedicated volunteers and staff, we were able to meet the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities.

The challenges continue on many fronts, whether it is the increased costs of food, housing and fuel, the increase in the number of households who have had to rely on the Food Bank or the uncertainty on the global stage. Through it all the EBN Food Bank and Respun Threads Thrift Store have maintained their ability to provide relief from food insecurity and basic needs to those we serve in our catchment areas of the RM of Gimli, Town of Winnipeg Beach, Village of Dunnottar and the RM of Armstrong. Whether it is a one-time need or ongoing assistance to get through a rough patch due to job loss or health concerns, EBN will be there.

The support that we have received will allow us to confidently continue with our mandate to help those who need help.

Thank You

Community rallies to build new playground at Fisher Branch Collegiate

By E. Antonio

Community rallies to build new playground at Fisher Branch Collegiate

After years of planning and fundraising, the Fisher Playground Enhancement Project Committee is celebrating a major milestone, with 75 per cent of the funds now raised toward a new playground at Fisher Branch Collegiate.

The project, led by a group of dedicated parents, staff and community members, aims to create a safe, inclusive and engaging outdoor play space for the school's approximately 80 middle years students in grades 5 to 8, while also serving the wider community.

As of Jan. 20, the committee had raised \$27,561.95 toward its Phase 1 goal of \$36,678.88, allowing organizers to finalize the design and place a deposit on the first phase of equipment.

"The new playground will provide a safe, inclusive space where students can be active, have fun with peers and recharge during the school day," said Fisher Branch Collegiate teacher Lindsay Rindall, speaking on behalf of the committee. "It represents an important investment in the well-being of our students and the broader community."

The current play structure at the school is small and outdated, offering limited opportunities for physical activity. Rather than dismantling it, organizers plan to expand the area by adding new equipment to create more options for movement and play.

Staff say many students are currently disengaged during recess and are



Scan the QR code to order soup through Fisher Branch Collegiate's Mitchell's Soup Company fundraiser. Orders close at 10 p.m. on Feb. 5.

not participating in physical activity.

The upgraded playground is expected to include modern, durable equipment designed to promote climbing, balance and cooperative play. The project is being completed in two phases, with Phase 1 already ordered to secure 2025 pricing. To begin construction, Phase 1 must be fully paid for, with Phase 2 to follow once additional funding is secured.

Fundraising efforts for the project have been underway for about five years. After several unsuccessful grant applications, the committee shifted its focus to community-driven fundraising, and the response has been strong.

Local groups and organizations have stepped up with generous contributions, including Cooking in Cultures, Fisher Branch Fit Chicks, the Fisher Branch Filipino Community, Festival of the Arts and the local Women's Institute. Students have also played a



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

Fisher Branch Collegiate is fundraising for a new middle years playground. Staff say the current play area is outdated and offers limited opportunities for physical activity. The project has reached 75 per cent of its Phase 1 fundraising goal, with community donations helping move construction closer.



The current middle years play structure at Fisher Branch Collegiate is worn and outdated, prompting a community-led fundraising effort for a new playground.

role, with a Grade 6 class contributing \$1,400 after winning the IERHA school anti-vaping poster contest.

Additional funds have come from Ukrainian Co-op's Fuel Good Day, private donations made through the RM of Fisher office, and a community cookbook fundraiser that raised \$4,809. A full donor list will be displayed once the project is complete.

"We are incredibly grateful for the continued encouragement and generosity of our families and community partners," said Rindall. "This project truly shows what can happen when a community comes together."

To raise the remaining 25 per cent needed before installation can begin, organizers continue to host fundraisers and welcome donations of any size. A current online soup fundraiser with Mitchell's Soup Company runs until 10 p.m. on Feb. 5, with 35 per cent of proceeds going directly toward the playground fund. A variety of soups are available, with each kit making eight to 10 two-cup portions. Orders can be placed by scanning the QR code; when prompted to enter a student's name, purchasers are asked

to enter Lindsay as the organizer name to ensure the order is credited to the fundraiser. All orders will be available for pickup at the school, with alternate pickup arrangements available by contacting Rindall and including a phone number with the order.

Donations can also be made in person at the RM of Fisher office, where tax receipts are available for contributions of \$20 or more.

Organizers are hopeful that with continued community support and potential grant funding, construction can take place in the spring or summer of 2026.

"If we can finish strong, we'll be able to move ahead without delays," said Rindall. "Every donation, every fundraiser and every show of support brings us closer to giving our students a playground they can enjoy for years to come."

For more information or to contribute, community members can contact Lindsay Rindall at 204-372-6459 or the RM of Fisher office.



Fisher Branch Collegiate is hosting a Mitchell's Soup Company fundraiser to support its new middle years playground. Each soup kit makes eight to 10 two-cup portions, with 35 per cent of proceeds going toward the project.

Local author brings Manitoba sasquatch story to young readers

By E. Antonio

Sasquatches, giant beavers and mysterious northern sightings aren't just campfire stories for Interlake author John Warms — they're the foundation of his newest children's book, inspired by a real encounter in northern Manitoba.

Interlake-based author John Warms recently published his first children's book, *The Girl Who Met Sasquatch*, earlier this summer.

Warms, who grew up west of Carman, said his inspiration for becoming an author comes from the people he has met throughout his life. Now the author of three books, he continues to collect and share stories of strange encounters experienced by both himself and others he has crossed paths with.

"All of my books are people-driven," Warms said. "You have to enjoy what you write about, and these unusual encounters have certainly piqued my interest."

A retired teacher who spent years working in Indigenous communities in the northwest region of the Interlake, Warms said he occasionally heard stories about large, frightening and unknown creatures. Over time, he noticed these sightings were common in remote northern communities, while many people in southern Manitoba were largely unaware of them.

"My delight is to share what is somewhat secret and let it be known in other parts of Manitoba and other parts of the world," he said.

Warms gathered stories from eyewitnesses describing extraordinarily large birds, bats, beavers, snakes, sasquatches and more. Before teaching in the north, he said he had not heard of many of these creatures, later describing the experience as "an absolute gold mine of little-known creatures," and the sightings themselves as "phenomenal."

Through word of mouth and storytelling, Warms collected account after account of these eerie encounters and compiled them into his second book, *Strange Creatures Seldom Seen*. His newest children's book expands on one of those accounts, telling the story of a young girl who encountered a sasquatch while camped beside a lake where her grandfather did commercial fishing.

The story follows five- or six-year-old Marlene, who, after flying to a remote location with her family, was tasked with periodically checking on her baby sister while her grandmother cleaned fish by the lake. On one particular trip to the hammock, Marlene noticed a terrible smell, looked up and found herself face to face with a sasquatch.

Although the encounter took place more than four decades ago, Warms said he has remained in contact with Marlene over the years not only to confirm details, but "also to enjoy the story again and again together."

The 40-page picture book — illustrated by Warms' granddaughter — invites readers into the day Marlene saw the sasquatch with her own eyes.

Warms said writing a children's book proved more challenging than his previous work, as it required transforming a real-life account into a child-friendly story young readers could understand and enjoy. Still, he welcomed the challenge.

"I enjoy thinking and getting inside the person who is having the experience," he said. "I like dramatizing the story from the clues that have been given to me, and then try to make it exciting for the reader."

For *Strange Creatures Seldom Seen*, Warms said he enjoyed putting on a "reporter's hat," gathering clues from across the province to determine what might be real and what might not.

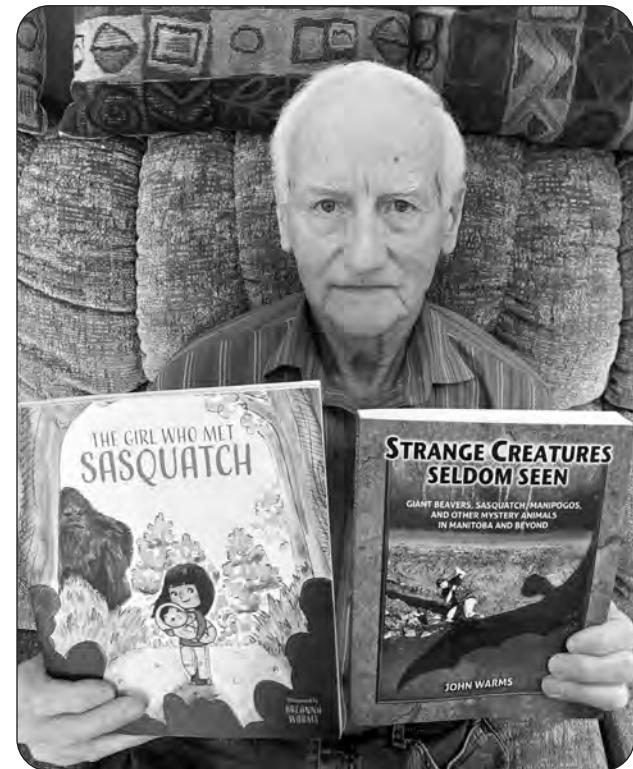
"I got so many witnesses from the north, south and everywhere in between that it made sense to me their stories matched," he said. "I report what I heard and give my conclusions and insights on these findings, like a comprehensive report."

Warms said he appreciates the opportunity to showcase the wonders — and mysteries — of Manitoba, something he finds both challenging and intriguing. For him, the excitement lies in realizing what creatures may roam close to home and uncovering secrets that remain unexplained.

He has personally witnessed three unusual creatures mentioned in his books: a giant beaver, a giant snake and a platypus-like creature. His favourite sighting was a black bear-sized beaver he saw west of Brandon in the Assiniboine River.

Based on evidence shared by Elders, Warms believes these beavers lived in large burrows. He noted that one southern Manitoba farmer discovered a massive bur-

Continued on page 20



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

John Warms is the author of *Strange Creatures Seldom Seen* and *The Girl Who Met Sasquatch*, books that explore stories of Indigenous Peoples' encounters with strange and unusual creatures.

Selkirk marks New Year with first baby of 2026

By Haley Cvar

Selkirk Regional Health Centre welcomed its first baby of 2026 with the birth of Arthur Wachal on Saturday, Jan. 3.

Arthur was born at 9:18 a.m. to parents Arielle Marshall and Tanner Wachal at Selkirk Regional Health Centre. He weighed seven pounds and measured 19 inches long. The family is from Winnipeg.

"Selkirk has a great labour and delivery ward, which is why we are grateful to have delivered here," Wachal said.

Wachal's mother, Charity, a registered nurse at the health centre, was present for the birth, along with Dr. Bunkowsky, who delivered the baby.

To mark the occasion, Arthur received a New Year's baby gift from the Selkirk Hospital Gift Shop volunteers. Chair Betty Milkowski presented the family with diapers, a playpen, toys, blankets and clothing, continuing a long-standing local tradition.

"This has been going on since the first hospital was built in Selkirk and the original ladies auxiliary was founded," Milkowski said, thanking volunteers for making the annual gift possible. "Congratulations to new parents Arielle and Tanner."

A total of 455 babies were born at Selkirk Regional Health Centre in 2025, compared with 443 in 2024.

Anyone interested in delivering at Selkirk Regional Health Centre can call 204-482-2150 or email prenataltake@ierha.ca to be connected with family medicine obstetrics or midwifery services. Tours of the obstetrics unit can be arranged by calling 204-785-7402.

The announcement was released by Interlake-Eastern Regional Health Authority.



EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED

From left: Arielle Marshall and Tanner Wachal accept a New Year's baby gift from Selkirk Hospital Gift Shop volunteers chair Betty Milkowski for their son Arthur, born Jan. 3 at Selkirk Regional Health Centre.

Royal MTC's *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* skates into Arborg and Gimli

By E. Antonio

Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad is a romantic comedy many Canadians will recognize, enjoy and love.

The two-hour play, written by Michael Melski, was first produced in 1999 and follows two divorcees who unexpectedly fall in love while watching their children play hockey at a local arena.

Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre (Royal MTC) is bringing *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* to life as part of its regional tour, featuring a fully Manitoban cast and crew. The production will make two stops in the Interlake: Arborg on Saturday, Feb. 21 and Gimli on Tuesday, March 17.

"*Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* fills me with the warmth we need on these cold days," said director Matthew Paris-Irvine. "It's a sweet and energetic romantic comedy about two single parents — Teddy and Donna — who learn how to love again while watching their kids play hockey."

Teddy — played by Devin Lowry — is a larger-than-life character who lives vicariously through his child, openly caring for and proudly sharing in their hockey journey. As Paris-Irvine said, "he's just like every hockey dad I have ever met."

Donna — played by Gwendolyn Collins — is described as shy and reserved, while still wanting the very best hockey experience for her child.

In total, two cast members and 10 additional individuals are working behind the scenes to bring *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* to the stage.

"It's the best touring team I could ask for to bring this all over Manitoba," Paris-Irvine added. He also gave a special shout-out to local volunteers who assist with set-up and tear-down in each touring community.

Paris-Irvine described *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* as "the most Canadian story" and said he has enjoyed working with the entire cast and crew. Despite the story centring on hockey, he believes anyone — whether a hockey fan or not — will enjoy the play, and might even enjoy it more.

"It's a story that we all love and yearn for. It brings so much joy, heartbreak and laughter — you have to love it," he said. "At its core, hockey is a peripheral part that shapes the story, but the story is about these two people coming together despite their past."

Paris-Irvine said he is most excited for Manitoba audiences to meet Teddy.

"Everyone has a Teddy in their life — he's a guy with no filter, and there's something enduring

> READERS, FROM PG. 19

row without knowing what could have lived in it.

"That's when things just clicked," Warms said. "As soon as I learned they lived in burrows — which farmers, road construction workers and grave diggers have exposed — I realized which animal was capable of making such tunnels."

His goal is to one day locate a burrow and place a camera inside to capture evidence. He also hopes to re-establish the giant beaver as the world's largest living rodent — a title lost when the species was labelled extinct.

Of the creatures he has yet to encounter, Warms said he hopes to one day see a giant bat, a species believed to live in large caves. Firefighters who

Presented by
Arborg Heritage Village
Saturday, February 21
7:30 pm
Arborg Bifrost
Community Centre
409 Recreation Centre,
Tickets: \$25.00
Available at
Arborg Pharmacy
or call 204-671-0203

Presented by
Kiwanis Club of
Gimli & District Inc.
Tuesday, March 17
7:30 pm
Gimli Theatre
Tickets: \$25.00
Available at H.P. Tergesen's,
Pharmasave, Gimli Theatre,
KC Enterprises

EXPRESS PHOTO SUBMITTED
Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre's *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* stops in Arborg on Feb. 21 and Gimli on March 17.

about that."

He hopes audience members walk away from the performance feeling hopeful and joyful.

"So much about this play is about the ability to form connections and have conversations that feel, at times, impossible. It shows us we can choose joy and choose each other to find our way through difficult situations."

The first Interlake stop for *Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad* is at the Arborg-Bifrost Community Centre on Feb. 21 beginning at 7:30 p.m. Hosted by the Ar-

have been near these sites have reported large collections of bones, according to Warms. If he cannot see the bat itself, he hopes to locate one of the caves they once inhabited and search for signs of life.

"The residue may be of interest to biologists," he added.

Warms is already planning his second children's book, which will focus on another young girl who reportedly saw a sasquatch in the woods near Fairford.

All of Warms' books are available on Amazon, with his two creature books also carried by Chapters and several small shops and art galleries throughout Manitoba, including Toews Printing in Carman and Red Sun Smoke Shop and Gas Bar in Rosser.

borg and District Multicultural Heritage Village (ADMHC), board chair Pat Eyolfson said the organization hopes to make the evening an inviting experience for all.

"Our goal is to make high-quality live theatre accessible to people who may not be able to travel hours to the city," she said. "We are incredibly grateful for the opportunity to partner with MTC and to offer a first-class professional theatre experience right here in the Interlake."

The final Interlake performance — and the final stop of the tour — will take place at the Gimli Theatre on March 17, also beginning at 7:30 p.m. The Gimli performance is hosted by the Kiwanis Club of Gimli and District Inc., an MTC regional tour partner for more than 35 years.

Kiwanis member Cindy Anderson said the event is important to both the club and the wider community, particularly as performing arts opportunities outside Winnipeg are limited.

"To bring this Royal MTC tour to Gimli is rewarding," she said. "Over the years we have seen so many remarkable plays enjoyed by all who attend. To hear the laughter, applause and comments as the audience leaves — it's a good feeling."

Both ADMHC and the Kiwanis Club are hoping for sellout crowds, with tickets priced at \$25 and available through local retailers.

"It means a lot to be able to offer something this special right here at home, and we hope everyone comes out to enjoy a great night together," Eyolfson added. "We are deeply grateful to MTC for partnering with us. It truly is an honour to work with such a respected and outstanding organization."

Tickets for the Arborg performance are available at the Arborg Pharmacy or by contacting ADMHC at 204-641-0203.

Tickets for the Gimli performance — taking place just two days before the Winnipeg Jets Town Take-over — are available at Pharmasave, H.P. Tergesen's, Gimli Theatre and KC Enterprises.

"It's going to be a fantastic hockey week in Gimli," Anderson said. "Thank you to our community for always supporting our MTC tour presentation — we look forward to offering this year after year."

Hockey Mom, Hockey Dad is recommended for audiences aged 12 and older. Adult themes, including explicit language, are present throughout the play. For more information, visit royalmtc.ca/festivals-events/regional-tour.

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THE EXPRESS
WEEKLY NEWS

Einarson claims fifth Scotties in extra end

By Haley Cvar

Kerri Einarson captured her fifth national championship Sunday, defeating Kaitlyn Lawes 4-3 in an extra end to win the Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Mississauga, Ont.

The Team Canada skip forced an 11th end before stealing the winning point to edge the Manitoba rink in a tightly contested final.

"Oh my God, what an amazing feeling," Einarson said during a post-game interview on TSN. "Just overwhelmed. I'm super proud of us. It was a grind this week and we had to make some big clutch shots to get ourselves into this final. So I'm super proud of my team and thank you to all the fans."

Lawes entered the championship game undefeated and was appearing in her first Scotties final since 2015, when she won the national title playing third for Jennifer Jones's Manitoba team.

Einarson struck first in the second end after Lawes's final stone came up light, allowing Canada to pick up an easy steal. Another Manitoba error proved costly in the fourth end when Lawes attempted a short-angle



EXPRESS PHOTO CP/CHRIS YOUNG

Canada's skip Kerri Einarson delivers a stone during the Scotties Tournament of Hearts in Mississauga, Ont. Einarson was named a second-team all-star at skip following consistent round-robin play.

runback wrecked on the guard, giving Einarson a second steal and a 2-0 lead.

Manitoba tied the game in the sixth following an uncharacteristic miss by Einarson. Her final takeout attempt, her rock did not connect and slid through the house, opening the door for Lawes to draw for two.

Lawes took her first lead of the game in the seventh when Einarson narrowly missed a double takeout, leaving one Manitoba stone biting the red ring for a single.

After two blank ends, the teams reached the 10th end with Lawes holding last rock and four stones in the house. Facing elimination, Einarson executed a precise angle raise for the single and force extra ends — a shot she described as one of the week's defining moments.

"All I thought in my head was, 'Just make this one for your team, Kerri, and take it to an extra,'" she said. "So, yeah, it was a clutch one. It's incredible."

The championship run capped a demanding playoff path for Einarson, who lost 10-2 in eight ends to Lawes in Saturday's



EXPRESS PHOTO CURLING CANADA/ANDREW KLAVER

2026 Scotties Tournament of Hearts champions, Canada's Team Kerri Einarson. Pictured, Kerri Einarson (skip), Val Sweeting (third/vice-skip), Shannon Birchard (second), Karlee Burgess (lead), Krysten Karwacki (alternate/lead) and Reid Carruthers (coach).



2026 Scotties Tournament of Hearts champions, Canada's Team Kerri Einarson with daughters Khloe and Kamryn Einarson.



EXPRESS PHOTO ANIL MUNGAL PHOTOGRAPHY

2026 Scotties Tournament of Hearts champions, Canada's Team Kerri Einarson.

1/2 Page playoff and had to advance through the semifinal to earn a rematch.

Einarson sealed the title with a steal in the 11th end, reclaiming the Scotties crown and the right to represent Canada at the upcoming world championship in Calgary — an opportunity she said remains deeply meaningful.

"It feels amazing," she said. "To wear the maple leaf is an absolute

honour, and we're so looking forward to playing here in Canada."

With the Scotties title secured, Einarson and her team will now turn their attention to the World Women's Curling Championship, scheduled for March 14-22 in Calgary. The event will see Canada host the world's top women's curling teams, with Einarson once again wearing the maple leaf on home ice.

League leaders Burak, Johnson named Arborg CRJHL all-stars

By Kieran Reimer

It was another big week for the Arborg Ice Dawgs and the Capital Region Junior Hockey League.

The CRJHL announced its 2025-26 all-stars amid a busy schedule that included three games for the Ice Dawgs.

Despite a sub-.500 record this season, Arborg has two of the league's top players, whose point production has put the team — and the league — on notice.

Second-year forward Brandon Burak, the current league leader in points, and rookie defenceman Tytan Johnson, the points leader among all defenders this season, were both named CRJHL all-stars for their outstanding play.

Burak's league-leading 42 points include 26 goals and 16 assists in 26 games, while Johnson has 31 points — eight goals and 23 assists — in just 22 games, which is also tied for the rookie scoring lead.

Two players from each CRJHL club

were selected as all-stars, with the La Broquerie Habs and Beausejour Comets each having three representatives due to their goaltending play.

On the ice, Burak and Johnson continued their offensive production over the three-game stretch, which Arborg entered riding a four-game point streak.

That streak was extended to five games with a point earned in a 5-4 overtime loss Wednesday against the host Beausejour Comets.

Burak scored twice and Dainen Jacobson added the other for Arborg, as the teams entered the third period tied 3-3.

After the Comets struck early in the final frame, Arborg's Cayden Ingimundson scored with under four minutes remaining to force overtime.

Beausejour's Logan Ashe scored the powerplay winner in overtime as the Comets continued their reign atop the CRJHL standings.

Arborg netminder Paxton Moore

finished with 47 saves, outduelling Beausejour's Alex Cavanagh, who stopped 26 shots despite the loss.

The two clubs met again Friday in Arborg, with the Comets taking control despite a near-even shot total.

Beausejour led 4-0 after the first period before a six-goal middle frame that saw both teams trade tallies.

Johnson and Noah Smolinski scored for Arborg in the second to make it 5-2 at one point, before Beausejour responded with another offensive surge to lead 8-2 after 40 minutes.

Burak added one for Arborg in the third to cut the deficit to five during a penalty-filled final period.

The teams combined for 194 penalty minutes, with Beausejour skating away with an 8-3 victory at Arborg & District Arena.

Moore and Zavery Wahoski combined for 27 saves for Arborg, while Beausejour goaltender Sawyer Abraham turned aside 31 shots in the win.

Arborg then struggled in the second

half of a back-to-back, falling 6-3 to the La Broquerie Habs on Saturday night at the HyLife Centre.

Burak again scored twice, with Bradley Kemkar adding Arborg's other goal in the loss.

La Broquerie built its advantage with a three-goal second period to take a 4-2 lead through 40 minutes.

The Habs capped the win with another multi-goal third period, as goaltender Caleb Legal made 14 saves.

Wahoski stopped 38 shots for Arborg despite the loss, as the Ice Dawgs dropped their third straight game.

They also slipped one spot in the standings following the Lunder Falcons' win over the Selkirk Fishermen on Sunday.

Arborg now sits sixth in the seven-team league with a 5-17-0-2-2 record through 26 games.

The Ice Dawgs return to action Friday night against the Fishermen, with an 8 p.m. puck drop at Arborg & District Arena.

Falcons back flying with win over third-place Fishermen

By Kieran Reimer

The Lunder Falcons aren't used to lengthy losing streaks.

Last Saturday, the Falcons' skid reached six games with a 4-1 loss to the St. Malo Warriors on home ice, with Daniel Masters scoring Lunder's lone goal.

Looking to avoid a disastrous seventh consecutive defeat in Sunday's home regular-season finale, the Falcons rediscovered their scoring touch

with a 5-2 victory over the third-place Selkirk Fishermen.

Despite being outshot 40-16, Lunder capitalized on its chances, beating Selkirk goaltender Johnny-Enns Demchuk four times through the first two periods.

Ty Sadowski, Liam Russell, Cristiano Almeida and Kolten Bell-Sinclair each scored to give the Falcons a 4-0 lead.

Selkirk pushed back with two third-period goals before Lunder's Dylan Care sealed the win with an empty-net goal in the final seconds.

Dylan Leclair made 38 saves to earn his fourth win of the season and Lunder's first victory since Dec. 13.

The win moved the Falcons ahead of the Arborg Ice Dawgs for fifth place in the Capital Region Junior Hockey League with a 5-15-0-3-2 record.

Lunder now prepares for a one-game week, travelling to St. Jean Arena on Saturday to face the St. Malo Warriors at 7:30 p.m.

Care and Masters, both named CRJHL all-stars last week, will lead the Falcons into the matchup. Care leads the team with nine goals and 21 assists for 30 points, while Masters tops the defence with nine goals and nine assists for 18 points.

> ICE FISHING, FROM PG. 15

to participate.

New for 2026, the championship will introduce three divisions based on school size:

A: fewer than 14 anglers;

AA: 14-29 anglers;

AAA/AAAA: more than 30 anglers.

Registration closes two weeks before the event to allow organizers and volunteers time to prepare prizes and pre-drill holes — an intensive, full-day task.

"It takes a lot of volunteers and manpower," Bruce said. "We drill 25 per cent more holes than kids. We head out Monday, camp on the ice and drill more holes at 4 a.m. It's exhausting, but another awesome problem to have."

Registration costs \$20 per student and includes a fishing licence for the

duration of the derby, a pre-drilled hole, and coverage for supplies and services. All remaining funds go toward prizes, as the event is non-profit. Each registered school also receives a welcome package designed to help build or sustain a fishing program.

"Our goal is to make it as easy as possible to just show up and start fishing," Bruce said.

Students are only required to bring a rod, bait, a chair and warm clothing. Food vendors will be on site, with lunch available for purchase.

Bruce emphasized the event is designed to be enjoyable regardless of fishing success. Based on feedback from previous years, schools understand the experience goes beyond catching fish.

"Just being in the atmosphere with

so many schools together makes it a once-in-a-kind event," he said. "Just being here is a reward in itself."

In addition to prizes for the longest and smallest fish, teams can win awards for catching no fish, as well as individual student prizes. Other activities include a fan-favourite push-up contest, ice plank challenge, casting contest, trivia and more.

"There are lots of ways to have fun," Bruce said. "We're more than just about fishing."

New this year is a photo contest encouraging schools to go ice fishing before the championship. Bruce said it promotes practice, helps students prepare and increases the likelihood of catching fish in a quieter environment.

Bruce's favourite moment of the day comes at the very beginning.

"Seeing all the students dash for a

hole when the starting horn goes off — it's just the coolest thing," he said. "I still get goosebumps every year."

He extended thanks to the many sponsors and volunteers who make the event possible, with a special shout-out to the Fishin' Hole in Winnipeg for donating prizes and offering school-wide discounts to educators.

"I encourage any teacher looking to buy supplies to go through the Fishin' Hole," Bruce said.

A full list of sponsors will be displayed at the championship. Anyone interested in volunteering — either by pre-drilling holes or helping measure and identify fish — is asked to email Bruce at dustin.bruce@sjasd.ca or scan the QR code on the event poster. Registration for the derby is also completed online through the QR code.

Samagalski gives back through youth curling clinics

By E. Antonio

Several Interlake youth recently got a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to learn from Manitoba curling standout Derek Samagalski, and they made the most of it.

The Moosehorn Curling Club hosted a free youth clinic on Jan. 17, followed by another at the Eriksdale Curling Club on Jan. 31. Both sessions featured hands-on instruction, encouragement and insight from Samagalski. From delivering stones to learning strategy, young curlers soaked up every moment of the experience.

Alanna Kiesman of the Moosehorn Curling Club and Whitney Hogue of the Eriksdale Curling Club said both days were filled with excitement, energy and enthusiasm, with smiles and laughter echoing throughout the rinks.

Kiesman said one of the highlights was watching how easily Samagalski connected with the kids and their families.

"Derek was so good with the kids and families," she said. "He made it

as fun as possible, was genuinely easy to talk to and left a positive impression on everyone."

Hogue agreed, noting she was impressed not only by Samagalski's coaching, but also by the young athletes themselves.

"The future of curling in Eriksdale is looking very bright," she said.

Both clinics wrapped up with participant draws, including a hand-signed jersey from Samagalski — a prized keepsake for the lucky curlers.

For Samagalski, hosting youth clinics is a meaningful way to give back to the province that has supported him throughout his curling career. He said one of the most rewarding aspects is watching young athletes build confidence and camaraderie in a fun, supportive setting.

"Beyond the technical skills, it's about confidence, teamwork and enjoying the game," he said. "Watching young curlers light up when something clicks for them — whether it's a first successful shot or understanding strategy — is incredibly rewarding."



EXPRESS PHOTOS SUBMITTED

The Moosehorn Curling Club and Eriksdale Curling Club recently hosted free youth curling clinics featuring Manitoba curler Derek Samagalski. Samagalski encouraged, mentored and inspired the next generation of curlers through on-ice sessions focused on technique, fundamentals and game skills. Both events were generously funded by community supporters, including Access Credit Union, which helped ensure the clinics were free to participants.



Kodiaks face busy week ahead

By Annaliese Meier

The Lundar Kodiaks remain 12th in the Price Division standings with a 2-15 record in Winnipeg High School Hockey League play following a tough outing last week.

Lundar dropped an 8-0 decision at home to Kildonan East Reivers on Jan. 30, as the visitors built an early lead and controlled play throughout the

game.

The Kodiaks face a busy stretch ahead, returning to Kildonan East for a 4 p.m. road game on Feb. 3. Lundar will then host Linden Christian on Feb. 4 at 4:30 p.m., followed by another home matchup against Murdoch MacKay on Feb. 6 with a 5 p.m. puck drop.

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MUNICIPALITY OF BIFROST-RIVERTON

Notice is hereby given that a copy of the VOTERS LIST may be revised at 329 River Road, Arborg, MB between the hours of 8:30am-12:00pm and 1:00pm-4:30pm. At this time staff will be available to update the voters list by:

- (a) adding the names of voters who are entitled to have their names on the list;
- (b) deleting the names of persons who are not entitled to have their names on the list; and
- (c) making such other correction of errors to the list as required.

VOTER ELIGIBILITY:

A person is eligible to have their name added to the Voters List if they are:

- 1) a Canadian citizen and at least 18 years of age on election day; and
- 2) a resident of the local authority for at least six months prior to election day, or a registered owner of land in the municipality for at least six months prior to election day.

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A maximum of two non-resident property owners, per property, are permitted to vote in a municipal election. In order to vote, each of these voters must obtain written consent from a majority of the registered landowners, and file this with the S.E.O. prior to September 20, 2026. When voting, you may also be required to provide proof of ownership and/or proof of identity to the voting official.

NON-RESIDENT VOTER QUALIFIED IN MULTIPLE WARDS:

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APPLICATION FOR PERSONAL SECURITY PROTECTION:

A voter may apply in writing to the S.E.O. no later than September 20, 2026 to have their name and other personal information omitted or obscured from the voters list in order to protect the voter's personal security. The application may be submitted in person, by mail or fax and must include your name, address and include proof of identity.

All changes to the voters list must be completed by September 20, 2026 in preparation for the municipal election to be held on Wednesday, October 26, 2026.

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Under the supervision of the Public Works Coordinator, the Disposal Grounds Operator operates the site in compliance with the Waste Disposal Ground Operating Permit, Municipal By-laws and policies, and applicable federal and provincial regulations.

The operator will be required to take the Manitoba Landfill Operator Certification Program and be responsible for various recycling programs. The operator must be physically able to lift 50 lbs and have a valid drivers license.

Posting will remain open until a suitable candidate is found. We appreciate your interest in the position, however, only those applicants chosen for an interview will be contacted. This position commences as soon as possible.

Interested candidates should submit a resume with three references to:

RM of Armstrong Office
1094 Highway 17 Inwood
P.O. Box 69, Inwood, MB ROC 1PO
Fax: 204-278-3437
Email: clerk@rmofarmstrong.com

THE **EXPRESS**
WEEKLY NEWS

TENDER FOR SALE OF LAND

RM of Bifrost-Riverton - NW 20-22-03E - 160 acres

The owner is accepting written tenders for the purchase of the above property near Arborg, MB. All tenders must be submitted in writing and include: tender amount, name, mailing address, phone number, email of the bidder and confirmation of ability to complete the purchase. A deposit of \$5000.00 by certified cheque, etransfer or cash is required from the winning bidder.

Closing Date of Tenders: February 20, 2026 by 5:00 p.m.

Possession/Closing Date: April 1, 2026.

The highest or any tender will not necessarily be accepted. The seller reserves the right to reject any or all tenders.

Submit Tenders to: Karen Borgfjord at
Box 376, Stony Mountain, MB. R0C 3A0
kareneb66@yahoo.ca
204-941-9124

Senior Election Official

 Applications are being accepted for the position of Senior Election Official (SEO) for the Municipality of Bifrost Riverton.

The SEO is responsible for the overall municipal election process and must be able to interpret and understand all aspects of legislation pertaining to the municipal election process and provide consistent advice to other election officials and to the public.

This position starts once appointed by council resolution with varied hours of work in the year of a regular election, falling in the months of September and October.

Duties will include:

- appointing other election officials as required;
- establishing and maintaining the voter's list;
- giving public notice of nominations;
- receiving and verifying the nominations;
- establishing and equipping the voting places;
- giving public notice of elections;
- printing the ballots;
- overseeing all aspects of the election on election day and all other duties as established in the Municipal Councils Election regulation and The Northern Affairs Act.

In the years when a regular election is not required, the SEO will be responsible to update and maintain the voter's list and to conduct by-elections, if required.

The successful applicant must have some election experience, strong management, communication and interpersonal skills. Computer experience would be a definite asset.

For more information about this position please email: info@bifriv.ca

The Letter of Interest from applicants should include education and experience and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. Letters can be delivered, mailed or faxed to:

Municipality of Bifrost Riverton
Box 70 329 River Road
Arborg, MB. R0C 0A0
Phone: 204.376.2391
Fax: 204.376.2742
Email: info@bifriv.ca

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

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BIRTHDAY



Celebrating Perry's 70th Birthday!
Join us
Saturday, February 7, 2026
from 1-4 p.m.
at
The Riverton Lutheran Church
for coffee and cake.

IN MEMORIAM



In Loving Memory of
Nadine Eyjofson (McNabb)
Taken from us February 5, 2015

Life is but a stopping place,
A pause in what's to be,
A resting place along the road,
To sweet eternity.

We all have different journeys,
Different paths along the way,
We were meant to learn some things,
But never meant to stay.

Our destination is a place,
Far greater than we know,
For some the journey's quicker,
For some the journey's slow.

But when the journey finally ends,
There awaits a great reward,
We find an everlasting peace,
With our loved ones and the Lord.

Miss you forever.
-Love, your family

OBITUARY

Harold Victor Schwitek

November 7, 1933 – February 2, 2026

Peacefully on February 2, 2026, Harold passed away at the Lakeshore General Hospital in Ashern, MB with his loving wife Pat at his side.

In keeping with his wishes, cremation has taken place and no formal service will be held.

Arrangements by:
ARNASON FUNERAL HOME
Ashern - Lunder
1-204-768-2072
1-866-323-3593

*Your memory will live forever
Engraved within our hearts*



Leonard Evanchyshin
April 9, 1955 - January 27, 2025

A year has passed since God took you away.
I miss you and think of you every day.
Your life was a blessing,
Your memory a treasure,
You are loved beyond words,
And missed beyond measure.

-Love always,
Marie



**Would you like to join our team?
Evergreen School Division
is looking for bus drivers!**

We require caring, safe drivers to be bus drivers for our students.



Pre-Register by Wednesday, February 25, 2026
Location: 234 Tudor Lane in the Gimli Industrial Park.

Contact the Transportation Office
at 204-642-6263 to register.

Course Dates: February 28 & March 1
Times: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm
Dress for the weather for practical components.

OBITUARY

Leslie Walter Mowatt

March 11, 1956 – January 21, 2026

Leslie Walter Mowatt passed away suddenly, with his family by his side, at Johnson Memorial Hospital in Gimli on January 21, 2026.

A longer obituary will follow.

A celebration of life will be held at a later date.

OBITUARY

John Morris Vigfusson

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the peaceful passing of Johnny on Tuesday, January 27, 2026 at The Betel Home in Gimli, MB.

Funeral service was held on Monday, February 2 at 11:00 a.m. at the Riverton Community Church of the Nazarene, 25 Main St. Menno Friesen officiated. Interment in the Riverton Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, please consider donating to the Betel Home Foundation, CancerCare Manitoba or Heart and Stroke Manitoba.

Many thanks to all the staff at the Gimli Health Center and Betel Home for their kindness and compassion in caring for Johnny.

góða nót elskan, hvíla í friði

Tributes: www.gilbartfuneralhome.com

Gilbart Funeral Home,
Gimli in care of arrangements.



OBITUARY

Randy William Cook

July 7, 1956 – January 28, 2026

Randy William Cook, aged 69, passed away peacefully in the early hours of Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital in Eriksdale after a battle with Stage 4 liver cancer.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, February 6, 2026 at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 185 in Lundar, MB. A luncheon will follow with a private interment to take place at a later date.

The Cook family would like to thank the staff at the E.M. Crowe Memorial Hospital for keeping Randy comfortable for the duration of his stay.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to CancerCare Manitoba Foundation Inc., 675 McDermot Ave., Room ON 1160,

Arrangements by:
ARNASON FUNERAL HOME
Ashern - Lunder
1-204-768-2072
1-866-323-3593

OBITUARY

Kim Jonasson

Peacefully, with family by her side, on Monday, January 26, 2026 at the Boundary Trails Health Centre, Kim Jonasson, aged 50 years, passed away.

Full obituary to follow.

Tributes: www.gilbartfuneralhome.com

Gilbart Funeral Home, Selkirk in care of arrangements.



OBITUARY

Karen Anne Copeland (nee Hancock)

February 9th, 1936 - January 20th, 2026

Karen Anne Copeland, beloved wife to Keith and cherished mother to daughter Kelly, son Kirby, daughter-in-law Penny, daughter Kami and son-in-law Craig. She also leaves behind her grandchildren: Kayla, Kain, Sammy, Nicholas, Grace, Kain's partner Shannon, Nick's wife Jaclyn, Kayla's partner Kyle, Grace's partner Kamen, her great-grandchildren Parker and Tatiana, also her brothers Gerry, his wife Betsy, Jim and wife Arlene.

She is preceded in death by her granddaughter Cymbeline.

Karen was born in Carrot River, Saskatchewan and met her husband Keith in high school in Portage la Prairie. During their 68 years of marriage Karen and Keith lived in Portage, Winnipeg, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia), Ottawa, and Gimli. Wherever Karen lived she was deeply involved in the upkeep and enrichment of the social fabric. She ran a figure skating club, majorettes, sewed costumes, organized carnivals and parades, she was a 4-H leader, taught

paper tote classes, and became social convener at her retirement home, and always encouraged creativity in any group she was in. Karen was joyful and outgoing and had meaningful friendships that lasted her a lifetime. Karen was an accomplished seamstress, baker and homemaker. She loved to skate, bike ride, ski, swim, golf and travel. Her children will always cherish their memories of the cozy and creative home she made for them.

As per her request, there will be no formal funeral.

To share memories or leave condolences, please visit www.ronaldmoffitmemorialservices.com

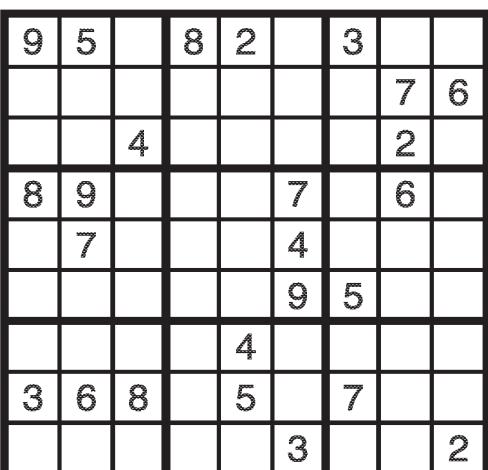
Arrangements entrusted to
Ronald Moffit Memorial Services
of Portage la Prairie, MB.



take a break

> GAMES

SUDOKU



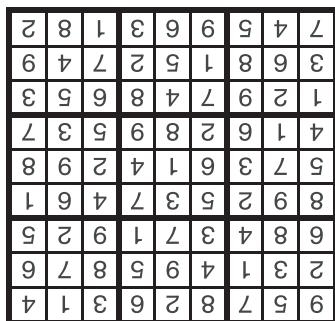
Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

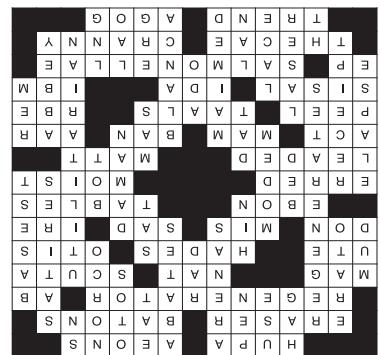
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!



Sudoku Answer



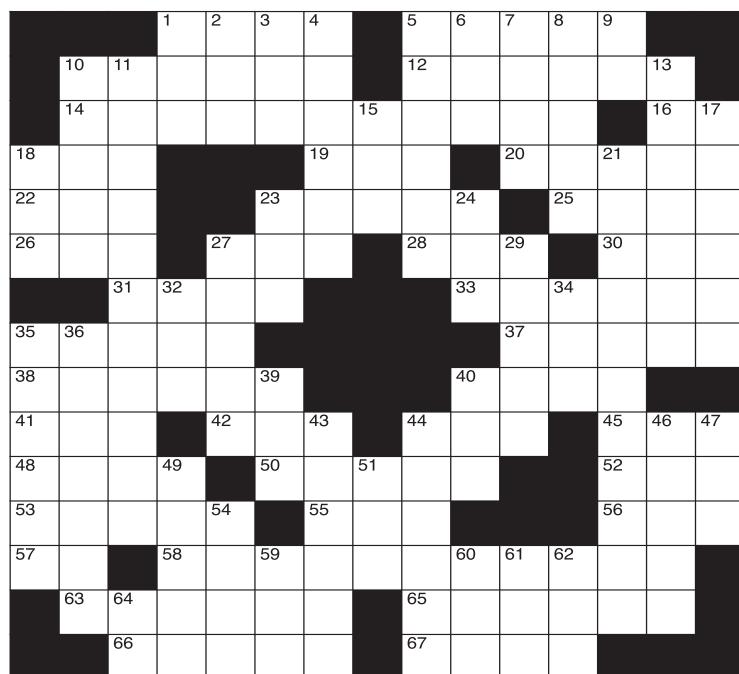
Crossword Answer

CLUES ACROSS

- Native American group of N. California
- Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- Tool to remove
- Rods
- One who renews
- They precede C
- Chatter incessantly
- King Cole, musician
- Insect parts
- One from Utah
- The world of the dead
- Singer Redding
- NBA legend Nelson
- Indicates wrongly
- Unhappy
- Anger
- Dark brown
- Some are in kitchens
- Made a mistake
- Damp
- Type of fuel
- Actor Damon
- What thespians do
- One's mother
- Disallow
- Swiss river
- A banana has one
- Philippines lake and volcano are two
- Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- Agave
- Journalist Tarbell
- One-time tech giant
- Indicates upon
- Intestinal bacteria
- Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- It goes with nook
- A fashion
- Very eager to hear or see



CROSSWORD

**CLUES DOWN**

- Witch
- Utilize
- Writing utensil
- Where rockers go to work
- Subsides
- Consume
- Greek mythological figures
- California mountain town
- Tin
- Muse of lyric and love poetry
- Animates anew
- Humorous criticisms
- Cool!
- Worst
- Wet dirt
- Designed to be useful
- Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- High schoolers' test
- Computer device
- Indian territory ___ and Diu
- A place to sleep
- AI tool
- Pass or go by
- Indicates a purchase
- A digital tape recording of sound
- More (Spanish)
- Disfigured
- White (Spanish)
- Church building
- Georgia rockers
- Type of surgery
- Much ___ about nothing
- Make by braiding
- Local area network
- Unit of work or energy
- Member of indigenous people of Thailand

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