

Senior Roadrunners open eyes at Nationals



The Senior Debden Roadrunners made a strong return to Nationals this broomball season, finishing 8th overall.

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

As the 2025-2026 senior broomball season started, Senior Debden Roadrunners coach Nadine Slobodian says her team had big ambitions. It had been a number of years since the Roadrunners had been to the Senior Women's Nationals as a complete team, and the team wanted to end that drought.

Boasting a roster filled with long-time veterans and up-and-comers from the U20 Roadrunners team that won Nationals four years in a row, the team was well placed to do so.

The only challenge at the outset was geography. With players coming from Debden, Shellbrook, Saskatoon, and Regina, Slobodian says the Roadrunners didn't hold practices; they just showed up at tournaments, played their hearts out, and won.

This worked for the Roadrunners through their first three regular season

tournaments, and it continued to work at Provincials in Bruno, where the team secured gold medals and clinched their sought-after spot at Nationals.

"The key to success at Provincials was everyone staying on the same page and communicating on the ice," Slobodian said. "We played our game. It worked out really well."

But, of course, winning gold at Provincials was the easy part (relatively speaking). The Roadrunners knew Nationals would be a whole other beast.

"Broomball out east is very different. They play a lot more than we do," Slobodian said.

"When it came to the bigger picture of Nationals, some of the girls had a goal of making A-side. But this year the goal was to see what we could learn and where we fit in."

With a few practices to prepare the team for the jump in competition (more practices, Slobodian jokes, than the Roadrunners have had in the past

15 years), the Roadrunners kicked off Nationals in Québec on a strong note by beating the Algon Crees 3-0.

They then lost a tough 1-0 game to the Dynamite, before tying the Grey Bruce Storm 1-1. Closing out the round robin portion of Nationals, the Roadrunners lost 1-0 to the Polar Ice, and beat Team Newfoundland 1-0.

The Roadrunners' 2-2-1 record relegated them to the B-side playoffs. Drawing the Polar Ice in a rematch for the B semi-final, the Roadrunners fell just short of redemption in a 2-1 loss.

Relegated to the B-side bronze medal game, the team lost 3-1 to the Eeyou Istchee Elites thanks to a last-minute empty net goal, placing 8th out of the 10 teams in the tournament.

"Everyone is really competitive and tried to level up what they could already do," Slobodian said, adding that the team also took instructions and feedback really well.

"Everybody being on the same page

with that competitive spirit helped us big time in the round robin portion of the tournament."

While an 8th place finish wasn't necessarily what the Roadrunners had hoped for once the tournament got going, Slobodian says her team has plenty to be proud of. Besides keeping every game close, the Roadrunners were the only team to tie with the Grey Bruce Storm, who went undefeated to win Nationals gold.

Additionally, goaltender Janelle Cyr received the 2nd All-Star Team Goalie Award for her rock-solid performance between the pipes.

Slobodian believes the Roadrunners opened a lot of eyes at Nationals this year. And with 13 players already committed to return for next season, the team is in a strong position to succeed.

"Hopefully next year, we'll keep pushing and level up," Slobodian said. "We'll take the things we learned from Nationals and apply them all year long."



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SLFN seeks federal support for birthing lodge

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

The Sturgeon Lake First Nation is calling on the federal government to commit to funding the community's new birthing and childrearing lodge, ahead of its upcoming opening on April 29.

The band's leadership made the calls ahead of a planned meeting with federal government representatives, including Jennifer Wheatley, the assistant deputy minister of Indigenous Services Canada's regional delivery sector, last Thursday, April 9.

The band's leadership notes that women in the community have had no choice but to travel away from home to give birth for many generations, leaving behind their family, language, and traditional cultural ceremonies during one of life's "most sacred moments."

The Shirley Bighead Birthing and Childrearing Lodge is meant to remedy this.

"Birth is sacred," said Chief Christine Longjohn in a statement. "It should happen surrounded by love, culture, and community."

Designed in accordance with the Inherent Birthing Law enacted by the Sturgeon Lake First Nation, which asserts jurisdiction over birthing under inherent rights and the Treaty 6 Medicine Chest Clause, the lodge will allow mothers from the community to give birth on their own territory with the support of Indigenous midwives trained in the community and in alignment with modern health standards.

Mothers from surrounding Indigenous communities will also be invited to give birth in the lodge, following traditional Cree ceremony.

"Research shows that culturally grounded midwifery care improves maternal and infant health outcomes," reads a Sturgeon Lake First Nation press release. "For families, that means babies entering the world surrounded by the people and practices that will shape their lives."

Chief Longjohn has long been an advocate for Indigenous-led birthing centres. In April 2024, at the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, she urged governments worldwide to fund and support such facilities, and called on Canada to lead by example.

"We have always had our laws on birthing and good childrearing, and these practices were interrupted

through colonial policies, such as Indian Residential Schools, the Sixties Scoop, the child welfare system, and the blatant systemic racism and discrimination that plagues our current healthcare system," Chief Longjohn said.

The Shirley Bighead Birthing and Childrearing Lodge has been years in the making, and the Sturgeon Lake First Nation says it has invested in workforce training, infrastructure, professional licensing, and community governance to open and operate the Lodge.

However, the First Nation says existing funding

and health resources are inadequate. To ensure the lodge can continue operating for generations to come, the First Nation is seeking dedicated federal funding through another stream.

"We are hopeful that, through ongoing partnership with Canada, the necessary support will be secured to sustain this care for our families now and into the future," Chief Longjohn said.

Following last Thursday's talks, Sturgeon Lake First Nation communication consultant Tina Pelletier said discussions with the federal government would continue.



The Sturgeon Lake First Nation is calling on the federal government to commit to funding the Shirley Bighead Birthing and Childrearing Lodge.

Community comes together during winter storm

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

True to its name, the Shellbrook Community Hall was a place for the community to come together and stay safe during last week's late winter storm.

Though it had snowed throughout the day on

Tuesday, April 7, the arrival of high winds and near-whiteout conditions starting around 5 p.m. left Shellbrook Kinettes members who live in town wondering how some people would make it home.

Consulting their fellow Kinettes via group chat, they asked what could be done to help people stay safe.

With what Kinettes Tasha Cyr calls a three-second plan, the decision was made to open up the Shellbrook Community Hall as a shelter during the storm. From there, they got the word out through social media and local businesses, and got to work, while Bud Strube dug out his skid steer and got the parking lot cleared.

"They took over and did what was best for our community," Cyr said, noting that the Kinettes who live out-of-town helped out however they could.

"These ladies got to the hall, organized blankets, had makeshift, somewhat comfortable sleep areas, had snacks and water for everyone, and a few games. One of our Kinettes stayed the night to make sure all our guests had what they needed. And just in case

others showed up in the middle of the night, which did happen."

All told, 15 people spent the night at the Shellbrook Community Hall. Meanwhile, Cyr says she heard more than a few stories of community members in both the town and in the R.M. of Shellbrook who opened their homes to people during the storm, either providing them with a place to sleep overnight or to wait for their vehicles to be freed from the snow.

"The love for our community and wanting to help truly is heart-warming. I can't say enough about how amazing these ladies are. It makes me really proud to be a part of this wonderful group," Cyr said.

"It really was the work of many to keep others safe."

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Volvo 4300B loader with grapple, and grapple Spray Coupe, balers, haybine, trailers, rock pickers and more!

POSTPONED UNTIL MAY 23

SAT., APRIL 25TH – 10:00 am – Bruce and Cathy Reinhart: Farm Auction – Medstead, SK
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Check Facebook or go to boeblerschirauctions.com or theauctionactionteam.com for more detailed listings.
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- work in a team setting as well as independently with minimum supervision

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- youth aged 15 to 30
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Applications complete with references will be received until **4:00 pm on May 15, 2026.**

Only those to be interviewed will be contacted.

Please submit resumes to Rhonda Saam at:
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U20 Roadrunners end Nationals dynasty

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle
Reporter

Four years of Canadian broomball supremacy came to an end when the defending champion U20 Debden Roadrunners travelled to Ottawa for the 2026 Nationals.

As coach Dean Demers explains, the team experienced its biggest roster turnover in the past five years this season, welcoming a large contingent of new and younger players.

"It takes a few months to get everybody to gel on the same page," Demers said.

"But we were still confident that through the three months of winter we could put ourselves in a place to have success at Provincials, play for the title, and win it. That was the goal from the beginning of the year."

Unlike hockey, the broomball season isn't made up of individual games played throughout the week. Instead, teams take part in tournaments during the winter months.

Though it took a few tournaments for the Roadrunners to get on the same page, they hit their stride just in



The U20 Debden Roadrunners ended their streak of Nationals supremacy, finishing fourth at this year's tournament.

time for Provincials in February and claimed their fifth consecutive Provincials gold medal.

"We were pretty happy with where we'd progressed," Demers said.

Going into Nationals in Ottawa, Demers knew that every team the Roadrunners faced would be good and every game would be a challenge for his young team.

Despite this, he remained hopeful that the Roadrunners would make the top four and earn the chance to play

for gold.

Nationals didn't begin in the Roadrunners' favour, however, as the team suffered a 2-0 loss to the Eastern Thunder, then played Eeyou Istchee United to a 3-3 draw. The team then closed out the round robin with a 4-3 win over Draveuses Sayabec.

With a 1-1-1 record, the Roadrunners drew the Bruno T-Birds as their quarter-final opponent, and played their way into the top four with a 1-0 victory.

The semi-final pit the

Roadrunners against Eeyou Istchee United in a rematch, and the team fell in a 3-0 loss to be relegated to the bronze medal game.

"Going to a tournament as four-time defending champions, those other teams get extra jacked up to play us and try to beat us," Demers said.

"That's what happened in the semi-final game. That team played a really good game. We barely had any chances to score. They smothered us pretty good."

Playing the Eastern Thun-

der in another rematch for the bronze medal, the Roadrunners once again couldn't find the back of the net. In the end, they lost 1-0 to finish in fourth, ending their Nationals title streak at four.

"We were very happy with how the team came together as the tournament went on. The girls' effort every single game... they played their hearts out every time," Demers said.

"We didn't lose because of a lack of effort. The girls tried their best to win every game."

Looking ahead to next season, Demers says most of the roster will be back. But with the Roadrunners no longer earning an automatic invite to Nationals as the defending champions, they'll have to qualify through Provincials if they want to make it to the tournament next year.

Of course, putting together a Nationals run is no small feat for a small-town team. Looking back at the past five years, Demers says none of it would have been possible without the managers, the coaches, and the players.

"With all of them together, we became a true team. That's what led to that success," Demers said.

School divisions struggling with school bus costs

By **KEVIN BERGER**
LJI Reporter, Clark's Crossing Gazette

Like every other school division in Saskatchewan, the Prairie Spirit School Division (PSSD) has struggled in recent years with the rising cost of transportation, and that includes the cost of school buses themselves.

In a recent interview with 650 CKOM, Saskatchewan School Boards Association president Dr. Shawn Davidson said the price of school buses has increased by 50 per cent in the past five years.

"A 53-passenger bus in 2020 was \$120,000; the ones being delivered now are \$180,000," said Davidson, who later added that the cost of new school bus parts has also risen.

The Clark's Crossing Gazette reached out to PSSD to find out if the division's experience had been in line with this figure.

The response was a definitive "yes." A PSSD spokesperson confirmed the cost of Prairie Spirit's buses has risen about 50 per cent in recent years.

The spokesperson said Prairie Spirit has 143 regular bus routes and a total of 185 buses in total, ranging from smaller 24-passenger buses to the large 83-passenger buses.

"Buses are needed for special charter trips for field trips and to accommodate repairs and maintenance on the regular route fleet. All Prairie Spirit buses are repaired and maintained by division mechanics," the spokesperson stated.

When replacement buses are needed, they are purchased through a request for proposals (RFP) process that includes postings on SaskTenders. There are three bus vendors in Saskatchewan, though school buses are manufactured in the U.S.

"In order to operate a safe and reliable bus service, new buses should be purchased on a regular schedule," the spokesperson stated.

Incidentally, the 2026-2027 budget will include bus replacements, though the number of buses

will be determined once the budget is finalized and approved, at which point an RFP will be issued.

On a related subject, Prairie Spirit has received provincial approval to sell its current bus garage in the Brighton area of Saskatoon and purchase a new facility for the Transportation Department.

The PSSD spokesperson indicated in an e-mail that the division was looking to relocate the bus garage due to the growth in the Brighton area.

Now that they have Ministerial approval, the division is actively looking for a new facility. However, despite getting the go-ahead from the province, the division will be funding this move on its own, as the Ministry does not provide money to school jurisdictions for non-school facilities.

Offering further evidence of the challenges school divisions face in funding student transpor-

tation, the Living Sky School Division announced in November that it was looking at selling its rural bus fleet to a third-party provider.

That change would affect students in Leoville, Spiritwood, Medstead, Hafford, Maymont, Cando, Wilkie, Unity, Cut Knife, Kerrobert, Luseland and Macklin.

In a letter to parents and guardians, Living Sky School Division director of education Brenda Vickers wrote, "We want to assure families that within the RFP, LSKYSD will require staff and routes be maintained as well as offer enhanced safety, technology, and training services beyond what the division is currently able to provide. Only if requirements are met, would a proposal be considered and move forward."

**VILLAGE OF MEDSTEAD
ASSESSMENT NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that the Assessment Roll for the Village of Medstead for the year 2026 has been prepared and is open to inspection in the office of the assessor:

From 8:30 am to 12:30 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm
on the following days:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from
April 10, 2026 to May 10, 2026

A Bylaw pursuant to section 214 of *The Municipalities Act* has been passed and the assessment notices have been sent as required.

Any person who wishes to appeal against his or her assessment or classification to the board of revision is required to file his or her notice of appeal, accompanied by a fee of \$100.00, which will be returned if the appeal is successful, the appeal fee is to be paid directly to the Village of Medstead.

The assessment appeal must be filed with the Secretary of the Board of Revision, Western Municipal Consulting, Box 149, Meota, Sask. S0M 1X0 by the 10th day of May, 2026.

Dated this 10th day of April, 2026.

Nicole Seidle, Assessor

FORM L

**Notice of Call for
Further Nominations
(Municipal By-Election)**

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given that nominations of the candidates for the office(s) of:

Councillor: Village of Marcelin (1)

will be received by the undersigned on the 22nd day of April, 2026, from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Marcelin Village Office, 105 Main Street,

and

during regular business hours on Thursday, April 9th, 2026 to Tuesday, April 21st, 2026, at the Marcelin Village Office.

Nomination Forms must be accompanied by a completed version of the Village's Public Disclosure Statement, as required pursuant to *The Municipalities Act* and *The Local Government Election Act, 2015*.

Nomination forms along with the Village of Marcelin Public Disclosure Statements may be obtained at the Marcelin Village Office.

Dated this 9th day of April, 2026.

Leanne McCormick
Returning Officer

Iran war delivers victory for no one

On May 1, 2003, after the fall of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, sitting U.S. President George W. Bush stepped out onto the deck of the USS Abraham Lincoln and gave what is now known as the Mission Accomplished speech.

Though Mr. Bush said there was still difficult work ahead in Iraq, the overall tone of his televised address was celebratory, as if American forces had already won the war.

Today, the infamous speech is a textbook example of the age-old wisdom of not counting your chickens before they hatch.

The war in Iraq, as the world swiftly learned, was far from over.

Indeed, the deadliest phase of the fighting came soon after “Mission Accomplished,” as opportunistic sectarian groups – like the terrorist organization ISIS – rose to fill the power vacuum and Iran sought to expand its influence in the Middle East.

The human cost of the regional chaos created by the War in Iraq was staggering.

In 2003 alone, an estimated 12,000 Iraqi civilians died in the conflict. And today, the civilian death toll is pegged at anywhere between 187,000 and 210,000.

Meanwhile, 4,500 U.S. troops were killed in the war, with another 32,000 wounded.

With spillover violence across Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Yemen, and Pakistan factored in, Brown University’s Costs of War Project estimates the civilian and combatant death toll at about 940,000.

And countless more, it’s believed, died not from violence, but from lack of access to healthcare, clean water, and food.

Though the mission in Iraq was supposedly accomplished in 2003, American troops didn’t fully withdraw from the country until the beginning of this year (troops remain in the semi-autonomous region of Kurdistan).

And, despite the war’s steep price, only 40 per cent of Iraqis believed their lives were better in 2023 than they had been under the iron fist of Saddam Hussein.

It’s worth remembering this today,



JORDAN TWISS
~
News Editor

because it’s hard not to see the parallels between former President Bush’s rhetorical blunder and the ongoing quagmire of the war (that supposedly isn’t a war) in Iran.

It’s as if current U.S. President Donald Trump watched Mr. Bush’s speech and thought, “I can do way better than that schmuck.”

After last June’s pre-emptive strike on Iran’s nuclear facilities, Mr. Trump proudly boasted that the country’s alleged nuclear weapons program had been “completely and totally obliterated.”

Despite this, Iran somehow unobliterated the program – which, according to Mr. Trump’s own director of national intelligence, Tulsi Gabbard, never existed in the first place – just nine months later, necessitating a second round of strikes on the country at the beginning of March.

The irony is rich. In 2011 (and again in 2012 and 2013), before his political ambitions became clear, Mr. Trump suggested then-President Barack Obama would go to war with Iran to distract from sagging poll numbers and his alleged failings as a negotiator.

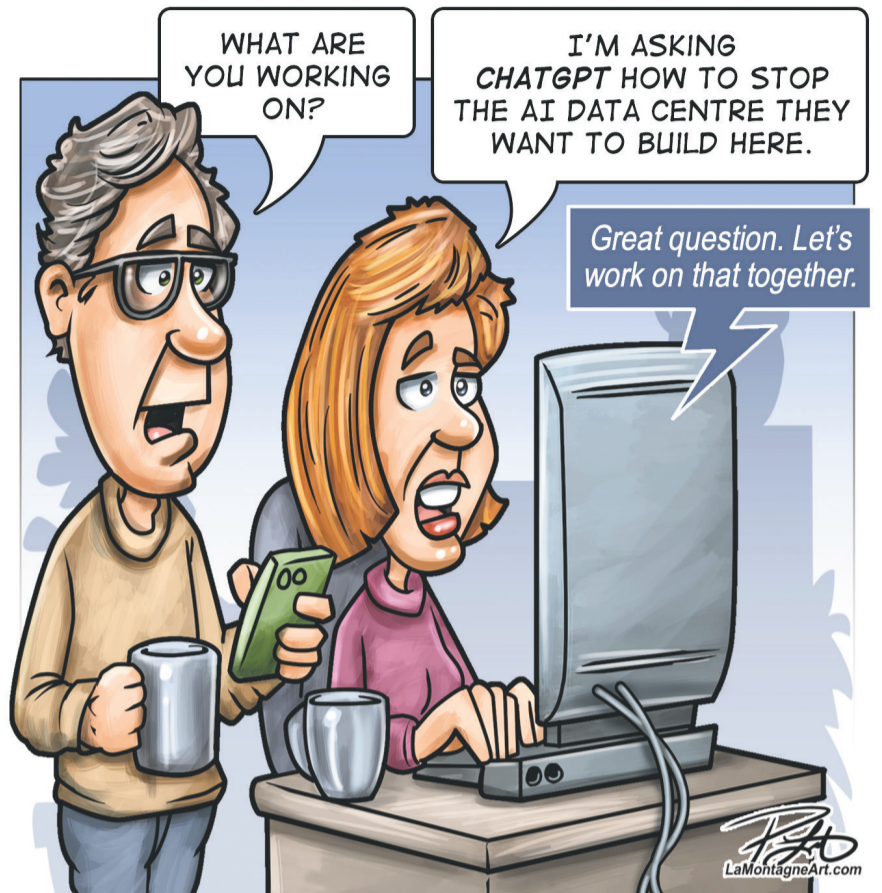
Instead, in 2015, it was Mr. Obama’s administration that signed an agreement with Iran, called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, to curtail its efforts to develop nuclear weapons.

And three years after this, Mr. Trump’s first administration walked away from this agreement in favour of reinstating sanctions on Iran, effectively leaving the country to resume its alleged nuclear weapons program – which has developed nothing over more than three decades of warnings.

Though Mr. Trump once claimed to believe that war was the result of a leader’s failings as a negotiator, every day of the War in Iran has seen him declare a new victory in the conflict.

And now, amid a tentative and fragile ceasefire, Mr. Trump hasn’t stopped declaring victory.

So, what exactly has Mr. Trump won? Well, that depends on what his goals were.



At the outset of the war, regime change wasn’t explicitly listed as an objective of Operation Epic Fury, until Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, was killed in the bombing.

Since then, Mr. Trump and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth have been all too happy to brag about achieving this goal.

The trouble is, much of Iran’s senior leadership remains intact and Khamenei was replaced by his even more hard-line son. In short, the regime is essentially the same, and now has even more grievances with America.

Before the war began, Mr. Trump told the Iranian people that the “hour of their freedom” was at hand. And last week, just days before he threatened to wipe out a “whole civilization,” he suggested they were happy to hear bombs falling because they want to be free.

But with Iran’s regime still mostly intact, and much of the country in ruins, freedom remains a distant dream for the people of Iran.

So, that’s 0-2 on political objectives.

Surely, the U.S. accomplished something militarily, right?

While it’s true that Iran’s military capabilities have been greatly degraded, the full impact remains unclear. What’s more, it’s not known whether Iran’s alleged nuclear weapons program has been re-obliterated.

Then, the U.S. must have won econom-

ically, right?

In addition to blowing through nearly \$50 billion (and counting), the war saw Iran seize control of the Strait of Hormuz, sending the price of oil skyrocketing and creating global uncertainty.

While everything became more expensive for us, Russia got richer thanks to the temporary easing of sanctions on its oil. And the easing of sanctions on 140 million barrels of Iranian oil could create a windfall of up to \$14 billion for Iran, in addition to money it stands to make if it starts charging ships to pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

Mr. Trump’s sons (Don Jr. and Eric) also profited from the war, with timely investments in military drone manufacturers that received government contracts. And Don Jr. also has investments in Polymarket, an online prediction platform that saw users make millions on suspiciously timed bets about the war, including when the U.S. would launch the first strike, the death of Iran’s supreme leader, and the ceasefire announcement.

Even Mr. Trump’s tentative ceasefire has been a muddled mess, with Israel continuing strikes against Lebanon, and the U.S. and Iran unable to agree on what they agreed to.

From start to tentative finish, the war in Iran has been a masterclass in the very same military blundering Mr. Trump once decried, and the world will be worse off for it.

Shellbrook Chronicle

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Publications Mail Registration #07621

Published Every Thursday Morning

P.O. Box 10, Shellbrook, Sask. S0J 2E0
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Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.;

Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.;

Advertising Deadline: Fridays at 4:00 p.m.

Websites: www.shellbrookchronicle.com

www.spiritwoodherald.com

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Funded by the Government of Canada
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Big River FN honours Fraser with star blanket

By **SHELLEY FRASER**
Submitted

The Big River First Nation honoured Shelley Fraser on Saturday, April 4, 2026, following Easter Mass, with the presentation of a star blanket, one of the highest symbols of respect in many Indigenous cultures.

The honour was presented at the Big River Reserve Sacred Heart Church. Fraser, who recently authored *The Morning I Walked Her Home*, received recognition for her years of generosity and charitable work within the community.

Fraser said she was surprised and deeply touched when Rose Morin approached her about presenting her with a star blanket. Morin, who designed the blanket, explained the community's decision, "Shelley has done a lot for us in the church and the community, including putting a bell on our church. We wanted to recognize and appreciate the efforts she did for us."

During the ceremony, Rose Morin and Leona Morin worked together to wrap the star blanket around Fraser, a gesture symbolizing protection, honour, and the community's collective gratitude.

Fraser addressed the congregation with heartfelt appreciation, saying, "I want to thank Rose and Leona Morin and everyone in the community for their kindness and appreciation that you have shown toward me over the

years and for making me feel welcome in your community."

She also reflected on her most formative years with the Sisters of the Presentation, noting that her time working closely with them from 2001 to 2007 had a profound impact on her life.

Fraser added, "The community has a lot of beautiful people here, and it was also a pleasure to work alongside the Sisters of the Presentation. One of the sisters, whom I had known for 44 years, was my mentor, and her presence was another reason why I chose to remain at the Reserve as long as I did. Those years from 2001 to 2007 were especially meaningful. We as a congregation and community achieved a lot of great things together, and it also provided some healing. No one achieves contributions alone; it takes others working together to make a positive difference. Although the two sisters I worked with have now passed, they were the ones who made it possible for me to integrate and continue to work within the community. The memories from this community will remain in my heart forever."

Fraser also worked alongside Rose Morin at Bingos, participated in fundraising efforts, and collaborated with many others in the community, contributing to initiatives that made a meaningful difference for the better.

Fraser continued to serve the parish and community until 2014, re-

maining active in church life and community initiatives.

In addition to her work at Sacred Heart Church, Fraser also made contributions toward St. Jean Baptiste

Church in Debden, supporting their parish and community efforts there as well.

Fraser is an author, registered counsellor, and educator.



Shelley Fraser (middle) is wrapped in a star blanket by Leona Morin (left) and Rose Morin (right). Also pictured, Fr. Zajac (back left) and two sisters from the Assumption of Nairobi.

Cub Cadet

SALES



DAYS



EVENT

SAVE BIG

ON SELECT CUB CADET PRODUCTS

ONE DAY ONLY, APRIL 22 SHELLBROOK AGRO

BBQ, ALL PROCEEDS TO LOCAL 4H CLUB 11AM - 1PM



RCMP news highlights

By **JORDAN TWISS**
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

A Big River man accused of trafficking drugs in the area has been sentenced to five years in prison by a Prince Albert Judge.

On Monday, April 6, in Prince Albert Provincial Court, Wilson Coutts was found guilty of trafficking meth, cocaine, and LSD, and also received guilty verdicts for charges of fraud, obstruction, and possession of the proceeds of crime under \$5,000.

Coutts' case dates back to the end of 2023. On Dec. 20, officers from the Big River RCMP Detachment performed a proactive traffic stop in the town. Though the vehicle failed to stop for police initially, it eventually parked at a local residence.

The officers' immediate investigation determined the driver of the vehicle had a suspended license and no vehicle registration. The driver, later identified as Coutts, also provided officers with a false name.

As a result of continued investigation, and a search of the vehicle, officers located and seized approximately 495 grams of cocaine, approximately 306 grams of methamphetamine, 111 LSD blotters, approximately 63 grams of an un-

known substance investigators suspected to contain fentanyl, and other drug paraphernalia in the vehicle, as well as more than \$2,400 in cash.

Coutts and the passenger of the vehicle, Marcia McMahon of Big River, were arrested at the scene. Both were charged with one count of possession of cocaine for the purpose of trafficking, one count of possession of methamphetamine for the purpose of trafficking, one count of possession for the purpose of trafficking, and one count of possession of the proceeds of crime, under \$5,000.

Additionally, Coutts was charged with one count of identity fraud and one count of resisting/obstructing a peace officer, and was hit with several traffic tickets.

During the trial, Coutts testified that he turned to drugs to cope with depression after his construction business went under due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To fund his addiction, he regularly drove to B.C. to pick up drugs and sold them in the Big River area.

While also initially charged with trafficking fentanyl, Coutts was able to convince the judge it was only for personal use and that he would never sell such a dangerous drug.

With credit for time served, Coutts

has two-and-a half years left in his sentence, which also includes a lifetime ban on owning or possessing any firearms or explosives.

Meanwhile, Marcia McMahon pled guilty to possession for the purpose of trafficking cocaine and meth and received a one-year sentence (time served) plus six months probation.

Teen accused in Debden robbery

A teenage boy from Pelican Lake First Nation is accused of breaking into a business on Friday, April 3.

According to police, the accused entered the business around 11 a.m. that day, threatened an employee with a firearm, and demanded money before fleeing in a vehicle.

Police say no physical injuries were reported.

Soon after, police patrolled for the vehicle and alerted nearby de-

tachments. Officers then located the vehicle on Highway 3 and activated their emergency lights to initiate a traffic stop, but the vehicle continued to flee at a high rate of speed.

Later, the vehicle got stuck on a side road and the driver was arrested by officers with the Blaine Lake RCMP, who also seized a sawed-off firearm and cash at the scene. Officers also determined the vehicle had been reported stolen in La Ronge on April 2.

Through continued investigation, the accused has been charged with robbery, pointing a firearm, unsafe storage and possession of a firearm, dangerous driving and possession of property obtained by crime over \$5,000.

The accused was scheduled to appear in Prince Albert Provincial Court on Wednesday, April 8.

Emergency strychnine use area expanded

By **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**
Submitted

The Emergency Use Registration for two per cent liquid strychnine has been expanded to allow a broader range of Saskatchewan rural municipalities (RMs) access for integrated pest management of Richardson's ground squirrels until November 2027.

"We heard from farmers and ranchers that further expanding the eligible area was necessary," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "This change better reflects regions with the highest Richardson's ground squirrel populations and ensures producers have access to the right tools to manage this pest."

Saskatchewan submitted a request to

Health Canada's Pesticides Regulatory Directorate last week to expand the eligible area to include RMs with the highest Richardson's ground squirrel populations while protecting species at risk. As a result, 208 RMs in roughly 15 crop districts in southern and western Saskatchewan will have access to strychnine.

The revised Emergency Use Registration includes measures to protect species at risk, including increased monitoring and carcass collection and disposal requirements, as well as enhanced mandatory training.

The Ministry of Agriculture is developing a Strychnine Stewardship Program to be delivered in partnership with the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities. Pro-

gram details will be shared through RMs once program details and manufacturing timelines are confirmed.

For the 2026 season, strychnine is expected to be available for a late-summer application. If strychnine becomes available before the spring application window closes, producers will be notified through RMs.

Richardson's ground squirrels cause significant agricultural damage by consuming crops and their extensive burrowing damages pastures and creates holes that pose a risk of injury to grazing livestock.

Program information and other Richardson's ground squirrel control options are available at Saskatchewan.ca/RGS-Control.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SPIRITWOOD: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 10am - 5pm; Wednesday 10am - 5pm; Thursday 1pm to 5pm; Friday 10am - 5pm

LEOVILLE: Wapiti Regional Library - Wednesday 10am - 4pm; Thursday 10am - 4pm

SHELL LAKE: Wapiti Regional Library - Tuesday 11am - 4pm; Wednesday 12 pm - 5 pm

BLAINE LAKE: Wapiti Library - Wednesday 1pm - 6pm; Thursday 1pm - 6pm; Friday 1pm - 6pm; Saturday 10am - 3pm. Contact us for more info 306-497-3130, www.wapitilibrary.ca.

BIG RIVER: Wapiti Library - Tuesday 11:30am - 5:30pm; Wednesday 11:30am - 4:30pm; Thursday 11:30am - 4:30pm. Phone # 306-469-2152

CANWOOD: Canwood Branch of Wapiti Regional Library Hours: Tuesday 9:30am - 4pm; Wednesday 10:30am - 5pm; Phone: 306-468-2501

DEBDEN: Wapiti Library hours: Tuesday 10am - 4pm; Wednesday 12pm - 6pm. Librarian: Aline Hannon

LEASK: Wapiti Library & Legacy Gallery Hours - Tuesday 9am - 2pm; Wednesday 2pm - 8pm; Friday 9am - 12pm

MARCELIN: Wapiti Library - Saturday 10am - 2pm; Thursday 2pm - 8pm. For information on all your library needs, please contact 306-226-2110.

SHELLBROOK: Shellbrook Branch of the Wapiti Library located at 105 Railway Ave., West (Provincial building). Library Hours: Monday 2pm - 6pm; Tuesday 2pm - 8pm; Wednesday 2pm - 8pm; Thursday 12pm - 6pm; Friday 10 am - 5pm (Story Time 10:30am - 11:30am); Saturday 10am - 4pm.

BIG RIVER: Alcoholics Anonymous Meeting - Every Wednesday, 7:30 pm @ Train Station in Big River (Railway Avenue)

LEASK: Leask Kindness Project - Saturday, April 18, 5pm at Leask Legion Hall. *One Night...One Community...Infinite Kindness in...Small and Simple Acts.* Potluck Supper, Fun, Fellowship & Dancing! Live Music by Turtle River Outlaws. FREE Admission but please bring a Potluck Dish to share! Non-perishable food items or cash donations for the Food Bank will be accepted at the event. For info please call Joanne (306-466-7735). Leask & Community Kindness Project funded by Anglican Foundation of Canada and SUMAssure.

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When the calendar flips to April, farmers tend to get itchy to climb in the tractor cab and start the wheels turning to plant another crop.

We've often heard spring seeding referred to as a multi-million dollar economic injection to the provincial economy — and it happens every year.

Certainly this year it does not look like seeding will be particularly early; the forecast suggests spring will be rather tardy in its arrival.

But that only heightens anticipation.

This spring has its clouds of uncertainty of course — primarily the blustering nonsense coming out of the White House every time president Donald Trump types on social media, or holds a disjointed press conference which rarely seem rational and only add to global uncertainty.

Still, the crop needs to go in the ground, so producers invest in what might be.

And, it's a massive in-



CALVIN DANIELS

vestment.

Large scale tractors and combines will cost upwards of \$1 million, without interest on a loan.

The crop itself costs for seed and fertilizer

and fuel and wages, just to put the seed in the ground.

Crop protection products to control weeds and pest are on the schedule for the weeks ahead.

Then the costs of harvest.

Every dollar the farmer invests ripples through a broader economy.

A truck driver gets paid to deliver fertilizer, which he spends on groceries, and rent and hobbies, which help keep store doors open,

in turn helping pay wages of the store employees.

Local workers have kids and that keeps the schools vibrant and teachers employed.

Family members will need doctors, who prescribe antibiotics, which keeps pharmacies open.

And the ripple spreads ever farther through taxes to keep skating and curling rinks open, and streets cleaned.

The interconnectedness is not necessarily thought about when you drive down a rural

road and see a farmer in his tractor cab criss-crossing a field, or when you see a yellow field of canola in the summer, but it is there.

Farmers at the wheel are a key economic driver for the province and the country.

It's something that has happened for more than a century and will for as long as people need to be fed. Farming has been massively important in creating Canada and it remains integral to what Canada is today.

Supply management key to Canada's food supply

By OWEN SCHALK
National Farmers Union

The topic of national sovereignty has dominated Canadian politics — specifically, how to protect Canada from an aggressive, expansionist United States that claims to want to absorb Canada as its 51st state. Prime Minister Mark Carney won the April 2025 federal election by portraying himself as a guardian of Canadian sovereignty. At this year's World Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Carney stated: "A country that can't feed itself, fuel itself or defend itself has few options. When the rules no longer protect you, you must protect yourself."

The sovereignty question is necessarily an agricultural one. To begin, discussions of national sovereignty must recognize that the Canadian state has consistently failed to respect the sovereignty of Indigenous nations, and that colonization continues to undermine Indigenous food systems. Canadian agriculture must do a better job respecting Indigenous communities on and off reserve. Indigenous food sovereignty is essential to addressing colonialism's impact on Indigenous food insecurity.

Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vulnerability of globalized food supply chains. The Trump administration's threats of tariffs reduced Canadian exports of beef, pork, and canola in the first quarter of 2025, revealing the risks and vulnerability of an export agriculture sector exposed to tariff threats and market volatility. However, due in part to Canada's supply management system, we are able to effectively weather external threats to our overall food security.

Supply management has three pillars: 1) production discipline (or quotas), 2) cost-of-production pricing, and 3) import controls. Production quotas are set to ensure reliable year-round supplies of farm products, while preventing overproduction and huge swings in prices. Farmers receive a price that mirrors their costs of production, based on a continually updated survey of farm costs from across the country, guaranteeing farmers a steady, fair income. And Tariff Rate Quotas allow only a limited amount of agricultural imports, thereby securing Canadian markets for Canadi-

an farmers. These three pillars unite to protect Canada's dairy, poultry, and egg farmers from a flood of cheap exports from massive, unregulated US agribusinesses, while ensuring Canadian consumers a reliable supply of Canadian products at predictable prices. If these policies were erased, Canadian dairy, poultry and egg farmers would be in the same unenviable boat as the small US farms which have been decimated over the last two decades.

For decades, Canadian farmers have faced many challenges related to farm consolidation, land inaccessibility, and generational loss of knowledge. These are pressing issues that must be addressed to guarantee reliable and affordable food for Canadians. Our unique system of supply management protects dairy, poultry, and egg farmers from these extreme forms of consolidation, and protects consumers from price changes due to international mechanisms like tariffs.

Donald Trump wants to break the market management policies that are integral to Canada's food security, and open up Canadian markets to US agricultural exports, namely dairy products from the Midwest. Fortunately, the Canadian government has vowed that supply management is not on the table.

Even so, Canadians who support a reliable and affordable food supply have reason to worry. For one, Carney has appointed as US ambassador a strident critic of supply management. Mark Wiseman, a former manager at BlackRock and a personal friend of Carney's, became Canada's ambassador to the US on Feb. 15. In April 2024, Wiseman wrote dismissively about "the sacred cow of supply management," claiming that

"through its import restrictions, production quotas and price controls, [supply management] secures the market for a protected group of settled players, impeding innovation and keeping prices artificially high for Canadian consumers." One wonders if, when the time comes, Wiseman will defend this popular and important system.

Additionally, Ottawa recently imposed sweeping cuts on Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the country's largest agriculture research department, and proposed amendments to the Plant Breeders' Rights regulations that will limit farmers' seed-saving rights. Such policies do not reflect farmers' best interests. Instead, they are reflective of Carney's beliefs that removing the government's regulatory role in agriculture will improve the economy — a belief that, as we've seen in the US, inevitably leads to the growth of large corporations, at the expense of small producers. This has disastrous implications for family farms.

Dismantling supply management's key tenets — production discipline, cost-of-production pricing, and import controls — would put Canadian farmers at the mercy of powerful agribusinesses, including those based in the US. Canadians should closely watch negotiations with the US to ensure that Carney's government doesn't allow Washington to erode supply management. Such an erosion would weaken the security of Canadian farmers, and of safe and affordable food for Canada as a whole.

R.M. OF SHELLBROOK NO. 493 ASSESSMENT ROLL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the Assessment Roll of the Rural Municipality of Shellbrook No. 493 for the Year of 2026 has been prepared and is now open for inspection in the office of the Assessor from 8:30 a.m. to Friday 4:00 p.m., Monday to Friday from April 30th, 2026 to June 5th, 2026.

A bylaw pursuant to Section 214 of *The Municipalities Act* has been passed and the assessment notices have been sent as required.

Any person who wishes to appeal his/her assessment is required to file his/her notice of appeal, accompanied by \$200.00 appeal fee per roll number with The Assessor, R.M. of Shellbrook, Box 250, Shellbrook, Sask, S0J 2E0, by the 5th of June, 2026.

Dated at Shellbrook, Saskatchewan, this 16th day of April, 2026.

Duane Storey
Assessor

R.M. OF SHELLBROOK NO. 493 SALE BY TENDER

The Rural Municipality of Shellbrook offers for tender Blk/Par B — Plan 101545084 Ext 21 Source Quarter Section NW-04-52-01-W3, ISC Parcel # 150195584. Property measures 29.88-meters frontage by 83.21 meters in length 1.79 acres.

All tenders must be submitted to the Rural Municipality Office, 71 Main Street Shellbrook, SK or by mail PO Box 250 Shellbrook, SK, S0J 2E0 by **4:00 p.m. April 30, 2026** in a sealed envelope marked "Property Tender RM Shellbrook". Tenders will be opened May 6, 2026 at 9:00 am during the Council Meeting.

The R.M. of Shellbrook reserves the right to reject any or all tenders. Highest bid not necessarily accepted. Successful bidder will be required to provide payment of tendered bid within 15 days of the tender being awarded. Property is sold as is, where is.

For further information please contact the R.M. office at 306-747-2158.

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Canwood Library activity highlights

By **BEV WYATT**
Branch Librarian

March was another wonderful month at the Canwood Public Library!

The Kids Club continues to be a popular

program to come and enjoy a good read, yummy home-baked snacks, learn something new, be creative and enjoy the safe, nurturing atmosphere. This month, participants focused on learning more about our

winter birds and marvelling at their hardy resilience.

Grade 3/4 students came from Canwood Public School to decorate Easter eggs, a long-time tradition led by Gerda Bruner. What a fun time, with students very much enjoying this creative endeavour.

The Women's Event, a guided relaxation session and sound bath led by Michelle and Lauren, was very well received. Many appreciated the opportunity to give themselves a break from the stresses of everyday life with this thoughtful, nurturing evening.



Grade 3/4 students from Canwood Public School enjoyed decorating Easter eggs.



Kids Club participants showcase their works of art.

Shellbrook seniors wrap up bocce ball season

By **LORRAINE THIBEAULT**
Shellbrook Seniors Assoc.

On the evening of April 6, at the Shellbrook Senior Centre, the Shellbrook Winter Bocce Ball League wrapped up its eight-week inaugural session.

Throughout the eight weeks, top teams fluctuated between Shari and Curtis Mortenson,

Diane Clements and Diane Roberts, and Paul Beaulieu and Linda Lundy. But the overall champions (highest number of games won) were the Diane Clements and Diane Roberts team, with 14 games won and 165 points.

Second place fell to Paul Beaulieu and Linda Lundy with 13 games won and 176 points. Third place fell to Shari & Curtis

Mortenson with 12 games won and 161 points. In the caboose were Lorraine Thibeault and Linda Greba with 6 games won and 133 points.

Weekly and championship prizes were provided by Shellbrook Bigway.

The Shellbrook Senior's Association hopes to host a Fall Bocce Ball League later this year.

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CTF: Carney should cut fuel taxes

By **FRANCO TERRAZZANO**
CTF Federal Director

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation is urging Prime Minister Mark Carney to cut fuel taxes to save Canadians money at the pumps.

"Carney says he's looking at how to 'cushion the blow' of high fuel prices right now and the fastest, simplest and easiest way for him to do that is to stop charging high gas taxes," said Franco Terrazzano, CTF Federal Director. "Politicians in other countries are cutting gas taxes and Carney should follow their lead."

Carney told reporters he is looking at how to "cushion the blow" that drivers are feeling when they're filling up their cars at the pumps.

The federal government makes gas more expensive with fuel taxes, sales taxes and fuel regulations.

Federal gas taxes cost about 26 cents per litre of gas at current gas prices.

Provincial governments also impose fuel taxes ranging from 7.5 cents per litre to 19 cents per litre of gas.

The federal government and every province east of Manitoba charge sales taxes on top of other fuel taxes. That means that as the price of gas and fuel taxes increase, the tax-on-tax costs Canadian drivers more money.

Drivers fuelling up in Vancouver, Victoria and Montreal also pay transit taxes at the pumps.

Total taxes in some cities cost up to about 65 cents per litre of gas.

Politicians in Australia, Italy, Spain, Ireland and Portugal cut gas taxes to provide their citizens with relief.

"Drivers are feeling the pain of high gas prices and taxes are making things more expensive," Terrazzano said. "Carney needs to immediately make life more affordable by ending all carbon taxes, cutting fuel taxes and eliminating tax-on-tax."

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Shellbrook Library March activity highlights

By **EDDIE HOEHN**
Branch Librarian

March was a marvelous month for the library. Participants enjoyed making a cardstock and fastener shamrock as well as a picture with Fruit Loops, marshmallows, plastic toy coins, and construction paper at the St. Patrick's Day Craft Program on Thursday, March 12.

The kids had fun creating their own inventions, monsters, St. Pat-

rick's Day or leprechaun scenes, and characters from the *Wizard of Oz* with Lego at Lego Club in March. Volunteer and local library board member Samuel Schafer ran Lego Club on Tuesday, March, 31. Participants used their imagination to create a robot or machine from Lego.

Participants were excited to listen and move to three children's songs

about leprechauns at St. Patrick's Day Storytime in March. Volunteer and local library board member Samuel Schafer presented Dr. Seuss Storytime on Friday, March 13. Participants listened to Samuel read *McElligot's Pool*, *The ABC Book*, and *Yertle the Turtle*. They enjoyed making a Fox in Socks head from a partial paper plate, tissue paper, googly

eyes, and cardstock.

Volunteer Marj Bradley presented Vernal Equinox Storytime on Friday, March 20. Participants listened to Marj read *The Spring Snowman*, *Spring is Here*, and *Abracadabra It's Spring!* Participants exercised their creativity by drawing a snowman and colouring in a picture from the book *The Spring Snowman*.



Calder shares his Lego invention.



Drogen shows off his Fox in Socks head.



Wyatt, Wesley, Ava, Raelynn, and Elijah with their St. Patrick's Day scenes or leprechauns for Lego Club.

Sask. NDP releases power grid plan

By **SASK NDP**
Submitted

The Saskatchewan NDP has released the Grid and Growth Plan: a practical, independently supported roadmap to deliver affordable, reliable electricity and strengthen Saskatchewan's economy.

The plan reins in rising power bills, reduces long-term financial risk, and takes the politics out of SaskPower.

"We have a choice about the kind of future we build in our province," said Carla Beck, Saskatchewan NDP Leader. "Scott Moe's path leads to rising costs and uncertainty for families, farms and businesses. Our plan delivers affordable power, good jobs, and a competitive economy.

"We have a better plan, grounded in evidence, and we're ready to put it to work for the people of Saskatchewan."

Independent modelling conducted by the Energy Super Modelers and International Analysts (ESMIA) — a firm used by the Doug Ford Ontario Government, the federal government, and the United Nations — shows Scott Moe's plan is the highest-cost, highest-risk option—driving up debt and power bills while increasing reliance on imports. By contrast, the Grid & Growth Plan will cost consumers less, reduce emissions, strengthen energy security, lower fiscal risk and debt exposure for SaskPower and generate over \$33 billion in economic activity

"The choices made at SaskPower show up on every bill," said Aleana Young, Jobs, Economy & SaskPower Shadow Minister. "Our plan is about keeping costs manageable, strengthening reliability, and restoring disciplined, transparent decision-making.

"It is a serious, pragmatic alternative to a government that has turned power into a political project."

The Saskatchewan NDP's plan takes a balanced approach to power. It invests in transmission, adds reliable natural gas, expands wind, solar and battery storage in the near term, and positions Saskatchewan well to adopt

nuclear as technology and costs evolve. It also creates real opportunities for First Nations, workers, and industry to participate in building Saskatchewan's energy future.

After nearly two decades in office, the Saskatchewan Party is doubling down on extending aging coal plants to 2050. SaskPower's own filings show costs for coal have surged to \$2.6 billion — nearly triple earlier estimates — while historic losses continue to climb.

Independent modelling shows Scott Moe's plan could add \$25–35 billion in new SaskPower debt, increasing financial risk and put-

ting further pressure on customers, while tens of thousands are already behind on their bills.

"Costs are rising, and Saskatchewan people are being left to carry the burden," Young said. "This is the most expensive path available, and it comes with the highest risk.

"Our plan lowers that risk and puts affordability first."

Beck added, "Sas-

katchewan is ready for a government that plans ahead and builds responsibly. We can deliver reliable, affordable power with a balanced energy mix and a clear path forward.

"It's time to get this right. It's time for change."

Saskatchewan people can view the plan in its entirety and provide feedback at GridandGrowth.ca.

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Minutes of an RM of Blaine Lake meeting

(Where necessary, the following minutes may have been edited for clarity or brevity.)

The Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Council of the Rural Municipality of Blaine Lake #434 which was held in the RM Municipal Office, on Tuesday, Feb. 17.

Present at the meeting were the following Council Members and Administration: Reeve Glenn Lamontagne, Division 1 — Michael Chudskov, Division 2 — Lee Dolezal, Division 5 — John Priestley, Division 6 — Lionel Casavant, and Administrator Linda Klimm.

Absent were Division 3 — Courtney Swystun, Division 4 — Alan Lavoie, and Assistant Administrator — Alan Tanchak.

The meeting was called to order by Reeve Glenn Lamontagne at 9 a.m.

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the Feb. 17 agenda with additional items. Carried

Priestley: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the Jan. 21 Special Meeting minutes as presented. Carried

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 accept the January 2026 Statement of Financial Activities, Income Statement, Budgetary Control, Chequing Account Statement and Bank Reconciliation as presented. Carried

Dolezal: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the List of Accounts for Approval for February 2026, including cheques #7756 to #7799 with the total payable amount being \$102,627.27. Carried

Mark Curry presented his lead hand report from 9:09 a.m. to 9:56 a.m.

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 direct Administration to install Internet at shop. Carried

Councillor Michael Chudskov de-

clared a Conflict of Interest and left Council Chambers at 9:48 a.m.

Priestley: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 accepts the quote from Nats Glass for \$2,225.25, and that Mark Curry be authorized to replace the grader windows in the old grader. Carried

Councillor Michael Chudskov returned to Council Chambers at 9:50 a.m.

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the Division #1 project of the Wingard road for the approximate 100 yard stretch of road on TWP #454 between RR #3050 and RR #3051 to rip rap the road and replace approximately 2 – 24" 40-to-50-foot culverts and that further investigation into costs be conducted. Carried

Priestley: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the presented Council indemnity totalling \$1,494.58 Carried

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the subdivision of NW 10-43-07 W3, that Council is not aware of any land uses in the vicinity that would be incompatible with the intended use of the proposed site being residential use, that Council is not aware of any facilities that could be affected by the proposed development, and that the proposed development is exempt from providing municipal reserve land or monetary consideration as it is the first lot subdivided from the quarter section. Carried

Casavant: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 hire Gary Mearns with collective bargaining assistance at a rate of \$180 per hour plus travel costs of \$0.50 per kilometre. Carried

Casavant: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 move in camera to discuss Personnel Matters compliant with s. 120(2) of The Municipalities Act, and on the basis that the discussions that take place

during the meeting apply to s. 16(1) (b) and (d) of The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the time being 10:20 a.m. Carried

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 move out of camera, the time being 10:28 a.m.

Priestley: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 cancel the 2025 RIRG Project previously approved in 2025 as the Blind Line Project. Carried

Priestley: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the payment for the 2026 annual fee for the Ministry of Agriculture sand and gravel lease payable to the Minister of Finance in the amount of \$367.37. Carried

Casavant: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the payment of the 2026 Municipal Invoice #2026714 received from SAMA in the amount of \$12,519. Carried

Dolezal: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the payment of the sign invoice #SARM299221 received from SARM in the amount of \$5,460.88. Carried

Dolezal: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the payment of the SARM Benefits Invoice #BEN140036 for Alan Tanchak in the amount of \$551.08. Carried

Lamontagne: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge receipt of the Invasive Plant Control Program (IPCP) grant of \$238.08 with respect to the 2025 tax year. Carried

Lamontagne: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge the SARM resolution for the reintroduction of strychnine as presented by Administration and that it be submitted at the SARM Convention. Carried

Lamontagne: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge the SARM resolution for in-

creased funding for the Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) Fund as presented by Administration and that it be submitted at the SARM Convention. Carried

Lamontagne: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge receipt SARM of the Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE) account payout of \$21,959.87 less an administration fee of \$1,097.99 for a net receipt of \$20,861.88. Carried

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge the quote received from Orion Industrial Services to replace the floor grate in the fire hall, and that payment be made in a 50/50 split with the Town of Blaine Lake in the amount of \$1,165.50 once an invoice is generated.

Casavant: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 schedule a ratepayers meeting for Tuesday, April 21, 2026. Carried

Lamontagne: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 direct Administration to order a debit machine from CIBC at a one-time fee of \$900. Carried

Chudskov: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge receipt of the road maintenance agreement from the RM of Leask No. 464. Carried

Lamontagne: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 acknowledge receipt of the Clearing-the-Path (CTP) Corridor Incremental Maintenance Funding received from SARM under the Rural Integrated Roads for Growth (RIRG) Program of total annual funding of \$18,210 for the 2026 tax year. Carried

Priestley: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 approves the development / building permit application for the commercial expansion at SE 13- 43-07 W3. Carried

Casavant: That the Council of the RM of Blaine Lake #434 adjourn, the time being 11:30 a.m.

Sask. domestic violence rates remain high

By SASK RCMP
Submitted

In 2025, Saskatchewan RCMP responded to more than 9,800 victims of family and intimate partner violence, continuing a trend of persistently high levels of both types of interpersonal violence.

Family violence re-

fers to any violence committed by spouses, ex-spouses, parents, children, siblings or other family members. Intimate partner violence refers to violence committed by current or former spouses or romantic partners.

In 2025, officers responded to 5,191 family violence victims, which

accounted for 30% of all violent crime victims, and 4,708 intimate partner violence victims, which made up 27%. Spouses and ex-spouses are included in both categories.

Both intimate partner and family violence saw decreases from 2024, when Saskatchewan RCMP responded to 5,269 reports involving family violence victims and 4,808 reports involving intimate partner violence victims.

These numbers contribute to Saskatchewan's high rates of interpersonal violence. In Saskatchewan RCMP jurisdiction, family violence occurred at a rate of 925 victims per 100,000 population

and intimate partner violence at a rate of 839 victims per 100,000 population in 2025. Rates for both categories of violence have remained high in recent years, with the five-year rates being:

Family violence

2021: 854 victims per 100,000 population
2022: 882
2023: 910
2024: 939
2025: 925

Intimate partner violence

2021: 846 victims per 100,000 population
2022: 844
2023: 820
2024: 857
2025: 839

Distribution across RCMP districts

Saskatchewan RCMP's North District

accounted for over 50% of family and intimate partner violence victims.

"These numbers show that both family and intimate partner violence continue to have a significant impact in our communities," says Cpl. Rob King, Saskatchewan RCMP interpersonal violence co-ordinator. "Even with a slight decline, the levels remain high, and we remain committed to working with community agencies to ensure people affected by these types of violence stay safe and connected to the support they need."

The RCMP Family Violence Initiative Fund is an annual program that supports commu-

nity partners working to prevent and respond to family violence. Eligible applicants, including non profit organizations and government agencies, can apply for up to \$25,000 in project based funding. Projects must focus on awareness and education, prevention initiatives, or supports for victims of intimate partner or family violence, while strengthening relationships with local RCMP

The fund is available to applicants across Canada. Applications for the 2026 – 2027 funding cycle are open until March 27, 2026. More information about the fund and how to apply is available on the program website.



CHECK IT OUT!

Shellbrook Chronicle Website
www.shellbrookchronicle.com

Spiritwood Herald Website
www.spiritwoodherald.com

Ball or strike? Let the 'robot ump' decide

"Well, it's one, two, three strikes you're out at the ol' ball game."

Maybe. Maybe not. Let's see what the ABS system says first before we send that batter back to the dugout.

Welcome to the 21st century. The computer age has become totally involved in our lives, so why not baseball, too?

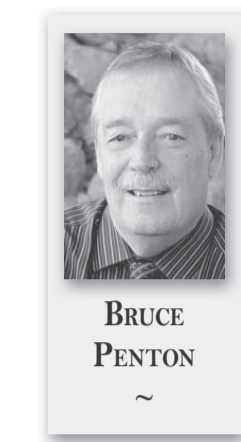
Starting this season, Major League Baseball — after extensive testing in the minor leagues and spring training games — has officially adopted the Automated Ball-Strike (ABS) Challenge System. Each team gets two challenges per game against perceived bad calls by the umpire and if they're successful, they get another one. Two botched challenges, however, and the team cannot challenge again.

To simplify things, the baseball world is referring to the new system as robot umps. Technology has advanced to such an extent that a number of specialized cameras set up around the ballpark

can zero in on the precise strike zone and tell whether a pitch was, in fact, a ball or a strike. If the pitcher, catcher or batter does not agree with the human umpire's decision on a pitch, a challenge can be activated with an immediate tap on the head. Technology then takes over and, within a couple of seconds, makes the ultimate ruling.

MLB says fans overwhelmingly approve of the new system but it's hard to believe that the umpiring union would be in favour. Too many overturned calls in the early innings of a game might get an angry fan base even more skeptical of the human ump's skills, and verbally ride him even more as the game goes on. If the technology shows an umpire regularly missing calls, his career might be on the line. Overall, though, the ABS system has shown umpires miss calls less frequently than fans might believe.

In a story from Florida, The Athletic says "catchers proved far better than



BRUCE
PENTON

batters at deciding when to call for the robot to step in" during spring training games. Patrick Bailey of the Giants was successful in 10 of his first 12 challenges, the story said.

The ABS system might have come in handy during the recent World Baseball Classic, when the U.S. defeated the Dominican Republic in a semi-final game that ended on a pitch called a strike that was obviously low and out of the strike zone.

One change to be expected from the introduction of the ABS system is managerial ejections. Famous umpire-baiters such as Billy Martin, Earl

Weaver, Bobby Cox and Lou Piniella would be muted in their objection to a pitch determined by a robot, although angry managers could still kick up a lot of dirt on a close play at home that they didn't like. Technology can tell whether a pitched ball was in or out of the strike zone, but a 'safe' at home call still needs the human touch.

Eventually, say those close to professional baseball, MLB may go fully ABS. Fans may be forced to yell "kill the robot" but they'd have trouble finding it.

• Headline at fark.com: "After having a torrent of ball-and-strike calls overturned in the first week of the MLB season, umpire C.B. Buckner undergoes an unscheduled vision corrective procedure."

• Mike Bianchi of the Orlando Sentinel, after a fan reminded him he said in 2009 that Dwight Howard, not LeBron James, would emerge as the NBA's dominant champion over the next decade: "Doctors bury their mis-

takes; sports columnists print theirs."

• Cathal Kelly of the Globe and Mail, on the terrible New York Rangers' season: "The Rangers don't need a rebuild. They need therapy."

• Steve Simmons of the Toronto Sun: "The New York Rangers, last in the Eastern Conference, will not raise ticket prices next season. The Leafs, two spots ahead of the Rangers, have already raised ticket prices."

• Cathal Kelly again, on the Canucks' poor season: "Some teams have the sort of year that gets everyone fired. Vancouver is having the kind of season that, in a more sensible world, would get the franchise's charter revoked."

• Janice Hough of leftcoastsportsbabe.com: "Now bodycam footage shows Tiger Woods on the phone before he would talk to police after his latest crash. He then told officers: 'I was just talking with the President.' Was Tiger asking for a pardon or to be named Secretary of Transportation?"

• Retired boxer George Foreman (snipped from sportscurmudgeon.com): "When I was a kid in Houston, we were so poor we couldn't afford the last two letters, so we called ourselves po'."

• Headline at theonion.com: "Panicked Dodgers Owner Has No Idea How He's Going To Come Up With \$414 Million Payroll"

• Another headline at theonion.com: "Victor Wembanyama Issued Technical For Punching Jumbotron"

• Steve Simmons of the Toronto Sun, after Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment CEO Keith Pelley said he wants the Leafs to be more 'data driven': "Will data be the first-pass-out-of-the-zone defenceman the Leafs desperately need? Will data measure heart or character, some of hockey's most important components? If data can play right wing on a line with Matthews, I'm all for it."

Care to comment? Email brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca

Sask. adds second mammogram unit

By **MINISTRY OF HEALTH**
Submitted

A second custom-designed mobile mammography unit unveiled in Regina today will begin visiting Saskatchewan communities next week. With two mobile units in operation, screening capacity will grow and bring lifesaving breast health screening services closer to home for more women.

The second unit, which features a state-of-the-art digital mammography machine and new furnishings, follows the recent launch of the first enhanced mobile mammography unit in January 2026.

"Expanding access to vital breast health services continues to be a priority for our government," Health Minister Jeremy Cockrill said. "We are putting patients first by ensuring Saskatchewan women have timely access to screening mammograms closer to home. I would like to thank the Cancer Foundation of Saskatchewan and its generous donors for making this second mobile unit a reality."

The two mammography units will visit 42 rural and northern communities each year.

With two units now traveling, more frequent visits are expected, and screening can be offered to more women in more communities across the province annually. Each mobile unit is projected

to screen approximately 6,000 to 7,500 patients each year.

The Cancer Foundation of Saskatchewan dedicated \$5.2 million toward its provincial breast screening enhancement campaign, which provided:

- \$2 million for the first mammography trailer unit, equipment and furnishings;
- \$2.2 million for this second trailer, equipment and furnishings; and
- \$1.0 million to purchase and install a new digital mammography machine for permanent screening sites based in Regina and Saskatoon.

The Government of Saskatchewan is providing more than \$475,000 annually to support the operation of both mobile units, helping ensure ongoing access to screening services for patients across the province.

"We are deeply grateful to our leadership donors - Mosaic, Orano and MNP - whose generous support set the stage for this campaign's success," Cancer Foundation of Saskatchewan CEO Nora Yeates said. "I also want to extend a heartfelt thank-you to Knight Cares and philanthropist Kevin Knight for stepping forward with more than half a million dollars to complete this campaign."

"Together, your collective commitment to expanding breast cancer screening will make a meaningful difference in the lives of women and families throughout Saskatchewan," Yeates said.

Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer among Canadian women and the second leading cause of cancer death. One in eight women in Canada will develop breast cancer in their lifetime.

The mobile units are equipped with digital mammography machines which offer screening mammograms, which are low-dose X-rays of the breast tissue that detect signs of cancer early. Approximately 75 per cent of breast cancers diagnosed through screening are early stage. Earlier detection allows for more treatment options and supports better health outcomes for women.

The Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and Saskatchewan Health Authority work together to deliver this mobile mammography program.

"The addition of a second new Mobile Mammography Unit ensures that even more women in Saskatchewan will have access to consistent, timely screening mammograms in rural, remote and northern communities through the BreastCheck program," Saskatchewan Cancer Agency President and Chief Executive Officer Deb Bulych said. "Putting another Unit on the road is an important step towards giving women the best possible chance at early detection and successful treatment."

Saskatchewan recently began lowering the age for breast screening without a doctor's referral as an important step

in cancer prevention. As of January 2, 2026, the women aged 43 years and older are eligible for screening.

Most healthy women, with no breast symptoms, should have a screening mammogram every two years. Screening mammograms are for women 43 and older who do not have lumps, discharge, skin changes, breast implants, are not in active follow up for breast cancer and have been breast cancer-free for five years.

"The addition of a second mobile mammography unit means improved access to breast screening closer to home for people across rural, remote and northern Saskatchewan," CEO of the Saskatchewan Health Authority Andrew Will said. "Together with our partners, we are expanding the reach of BreastCheck and increasing our mobile screening capacity, supporting earlier detection and better outcomes. We are grateful to the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation and its donors for their generosity in helping make this expansion possible."

To find a breast screening location near you and schedule a screening mammogram, visit the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency's BreastCheck program online at saskcancer.ca/breastcheck or call toll-free at 1-855-584-8228.

To learn more about donating to the Cancer Foundation of Saskatchewan's campaign for breast cancer screening equipment, visit: cancerfoundationsask.ca/donate.

Going vertical in the garden

By **PATRICIA HANBIDGE**
Orchid Horticulture

Spring is on the way! Now is the time to take a moment to say – where is my garden going this season?

Space in the garden is always a challenge so this spring, I encourage you to “reach for the sky and go vertical!” You might be wondering what I mean by vertical gardening which is simply exploiting the vertical space instead of relying on the horizontal which is the more traditional way to garden. Going vertical will give you more space but it is also a way to make your garden more attractive and more accessible. Imagine harvesting strawberries while standing straight up – instead of crawling

along the ground.

If you are an avid garden grazer, then vertical gardening has even more advantages. The fruit or vegetables that you harvest will be cleaner as they are not in direct contact with the ground. You will also find that you are losing less fruit/vegetables to moisture and rot again due to less contact directly with the soil. Air circulation is definitely better as well as any breeze will waft through those plants that are vertical. The only drawback to going vertical is you may have to water more often. However, perhaps it is the ideal time to install a simple irrigation system that suits your personal needs!

From the perspective of one who was rural and now is urban – adjusting to a much smaller space

and still managing to grow everything desired is challenging. How do you make the best use of the space you have? One solution that is definitely worth trying is to go vertical. Any plant that is a sprawled, a natural climber or needs staking can easily be grown vertically – with the suitable support.

Vertical elements can be utilized as working functions of the garden. They work well to screen unpleasant areas in the landscape; can provide shade or shelter from the wind; can soften stark vertical surfaces; can define use areas in the garden and can provide movement.

Looking outside right now to your garden space might help to encourage you to think about going vertical. If you think of the trees

in your landscape, they are an element that is always visible. If you incorporate other vertical elements in your garden, then those too will always be visible in every season - from both inside and out. After all, enjoying the garden in winter, we most often enjoy the view from in-

side your home where it is warm. Thus, elements need to be more prominent as they are not viewed in close quarters.

Think about incorporating some structure that has beauty itself. Ensure that the structure is suitable for the plant material it supports. Some easy plants

to use for your vertical garden include: cucumbers, sweet peas, tomatoes, melons, peas, pole beans, black-eyed Susan vine, morning glory climbing snapdragons, hyacinth bean, nasturtium, passion flower, grapes, Virginia creeper, hops, and more!!! Just ensure that you supply the suitable structure and remember that some plants need to be tied to the structure while others entwine themselves to the support.

So, this season... look ahead and plan to go vertical!

Hanbidge is the Lead Horticulturist with Orchid Horticulture. Find us at www.orchidhort.com; by email at growyourfuture@gmail.com on facebook @orchidhort and on instagram at #orchidhort.



Minutes of a Town of Big River Council meeting

(Where necessary, the following minutes may have been edited for clarity or brevity.)

The regular meeting of the Council of the Town of Big River was held in the Community Centre Board Room, 606 1st Street North, on Feb. 16, 2026, at 8 a.m.

Present: Mayor David Krawetz, Councillors Chad Dunn, Lana Meyers, Shirley Schwab, and Greg Sundby, and Administrator Noreen Olsen.

A quorum being present, Mayor David Krawetz called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

Schwab: THAT the Feb. 16 Agenda be adopted with the power to add. Carried

Dunn: THAT the Administrator's Report be accepted as presented. Carried

Meyers: THAT the Sewer and Water and Maintenance reports to Jan. 31 be accepted. Carried

Meyers: THAT the annual Ground Water Supply Raw Water Use Data Report and the Treated Water Use Report for wells PW19-01 Main Well, and PW19-02 Backup Well have been completed and sent to the Water Security Agency, such report be attached hereto and forming a part of these minutes. Carried

Dunn: THAT Erica Lasante attends the Class 1 Wastewater Treatment and Wastewater Collection Course being offered by ATAP Infrastructure Management Ltd., in Saskatoon, Feb. 23 to 27, with associated expenses being paid. Each class has a CEU value of 3.0 CEUs. Carried

Delegation: Former Big River RCMP Detachment Sergeant Heath Robinson and newly appointed Big River Detachment Sergeant Chris Doctor attended the meeting from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Sundby: THAT the minutes of the Jan. 19 Regular Meeting be adopted

as presented. Carried

Meyers: THAT the Statement of Financial Activities for the month of January 2026 be acknowledged. Carried

Dunn: THAT the bank reconciliation for the month of January 2026 be acknowledged. Carried

Schwab: THAT the journal entries for the month of January 2026 be acknowledged. Carried

Dunn: THAT accounts for approval to include EFT payments No. 171 to 196 and cheque No. 22235 through 22252 for a total of \$123,240.04 with the addition of Acres Industries Inc. in the amount of \$159,921.06, and Big River Truck & Trailer in the amount of \$2,250.32, be approved for payment. Carried

Krawetz: THAT the Council of the Town of Big River has no objection to the issuance of a Special Occasion Permit from Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority to be issued to the Big River Canada Day Committee, for the Canada Day Celebrations to take place at the Big River Community Centre (606 1st Street North) and adjacent fenced area to the Small Hall on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Carried

Dunn: THAT the Town of Big River approve the recommendation from the Big River & District Recreation and Cultural Board to combine the Municipal and Recreation Board security camera systems into one system;

and THAT the upgraded system include additional cameras in the gym, at the exterior curling rink, at the Zamboni room door, and at the kitchen access doors;

and THAT access to all cameras be available from the Town Administrator's office computer, the R.M. Administrator's office computer, and the Recreation Board office comput-

er;

and THAT Council approve cost-sharing with the R.M. of Big River for the upgrades outlined in the Prince Albert Alarm Systems estimate;

and further THAT any additional information received under Resolution #41/26 regarding Access Communications (public Wi-Fi, Live-Barn, and security camera systems) be forwarded to the Recreation Board for review and consideration. Carried

Dunn: THAT the email from Access Communications regarding sponsoring public Wi-Fi and Live Barn be forwarded to the Big River & District Recreation and Cultural Board for their consideration; and THAT, upon clarification regarding the security camera system options, the additional information also be forwarded to the Recreation Board. Carried

Meyers: THAT correspondence be filed as presented. Carried

Schwab: THAT the 2026 Big River and District Fire Committee Budget be accepted as presented; such budget be attached to these minutes. Carried

Schwab: THAT the Town of Big River is authorized to purchase high-visibility vests and jackets branded with “Town of Big River” for maintenance staff who enter residents' yards and properties, to ensure they are clearly identifiable and safe. Carried

Dunn: THAT the Board/Committee Reports be filed as presented. Carried

Council discussed the request from RFNOW Inc. to place a Point of Presence (PoP) site on Town-owned land across from the Water Treatment Plant on Block 11 Plan BB1645 (directly north of 98 1st Street - Block

K Plan CA3906). RFNOW noted that the site would function as a control center for a regional fiber network and would consist of a 12 ft. x 8 ft. building, along with a propane tank and backup generator.

Council reviewed the proposed monthly amount of \$200, plus \$200 per month for maintenance, for a total of \$400 per month, and considered the benefits of supporting the continued expansion of fiber services in the community.

It was agreed that once the lease agreement is provided by RFNOW Inc., the matter will be added to the next Council meeting agenda for consideration.

Meyers: THAT Council authorize the continuation of the sidewalk along 1st Street under the 2026 Sidewalk Continuation Project, funded through the Provincial Traffic Safety Fund Grant (PSE-JAN-2025-81 I PSE-JUL-2025-81); and THAT Smooth Rock Construction Ltd. be engaged to complete the work in the amount of \$50,000.00 and confirm the total distance of sidewalk to be completed. Carried

Meyers: THAT Council agrees to the request from the R.M. of Big River No. 555 to jointly proceed with WSP for surveying, detailed design, and tendering services in the amount of \$40,000, with the cost to be shared equally. Carried

Krawetz: THAT the Administrator attend the virtual SAMA training session on April 21 from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and the Annual Meeting virtually on April 22, 2026. Carried

Schwab: THAT the Town make a \$1,000 donation to STARS to help with growth and sustainability of STARS continuing to fly in Saskatchewan. Carried

Schwab: THAT the meeting be adjourned at 2:07 p.m.

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The family of the late John R Batty is so very grateful for the outpouring of support and condolences through visits, phone calls, messages, gifts of food and flowers during our time of loss. Thank you so much for those who helped us make John's celebration of life so special, and those who attended. Special thank you to Lori Saam for officiating at the very touching graveside service, Lynne Anderson, Beau Lac Funeral Home for helping with all the arrangements, and the Catholic ladies for catering. Lastly, thank you to those who made donations to STARS & KidSport at John's celebration. The sums of \$1,000 and \$350 were sent to these organizations respectively in John's memory.
Darlene Batty & Family

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St. John's - Shellbrook
Sunday School,
Worship Sunday, 11 a.m. (in-person and online via Facebook live)
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- UNITED CHURCH**
Big River
Sundays
11 a.m. - Worship at Anglican Church
Rev. Dave Whalley
306-747-2804
- ANGELICAN CHURCH**
Leask - All Saint's
Sunday Service - 9 am MP
St. Andrew's - Shellbrook
Sunday Service - 11 am MP
H.C. Service April 12 with Bishop Rick Reed
9 a.m. in Leask,
11 a.m. in Shellbrook
Minister's Warden:
306-922-5159
- PENTECOSTAL CHURCH**
Parkside
10:30 a.m. Worship
Pastor Lorne Valuck
306-747-3572
Shellbrook
Adult Study
9:30 a.m.
Sun., 10:30 a.m. - Worship
Rev. Jordan Clark
306-850-0429
Canwood
10 a.m. - Sunday School
11 a.m. - Worship
Pastor Lyndon Petten
587-973-2223
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Sunday 11 a.m.
Pastor Josh
1-780-690-2100
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10 a.m. - Sunday School
- PRESBYTERIAN**
Mistawasis
Sunday worship
11:00 a.m.
Rev. Stewart Folster
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Debden
Sun. Mass - 9:30 a.m.
Fr. Mariusz Zajac
Big River - Sacred Heart
Sun., 11:30 a.m. - Mass
Whitefish
Sun., 2:30 p.m. - Mass.
Victoire
Sat., 7:30 p.m. - Mass.
Fr. Mariusz Zajac
St. Agatha's - Shellbrook
Mass - Sunday 11 a.m.
St. Henry's - Leask
Mass - Sunday 9 a.m.
Mistawasis
1st & 3rd Sundays 1:30 p.m.
Fr. Tuan Doan
- SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST**
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Sat., 9:45 a.m. - Sabbath School
Sat., 11:00 am -Worship
Pastor Myshan Irving
306-747-3398

PRAISE & WORSHIP

Regular services, Sunday school and special services will be listed.

- PARTNERS IN FAITH**
Lutheran/United/
Christchurch Anglican,
137-2nd St. W.
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Worship 11:00 a.m.
Rev. Sarah Urano
- COWBOY CHURCH**
Spiritwood
Every 1st & 3rd Wed. 7 pm
Spiritwood Legion Hall
Pastor Rick Martin
- FIELDS OF HOPE (HOFFNUNGSFELDER)**
MENNONITE CHURCH
Glenbush
11:00 am Worship
- BETHEL**
Medstead
2nd Sunday, 10 am -
Worship
Pastor David Jensen
4th Sunday, 10 am - Worship
Pastor David Jensen
- MENNONITE BRETHERN**
Glenbush
10:00 am - Sunday School
Worship 10:50 am
- Gideons International of Canada**
Battlefords Camp
Phone Art Martynes
(306) 389-4633
- PARTNERS IN WORSHIP**
Shell Lake
Worship Services
Sunday 9:00 a.m.
Pastor Sarah Urano
306-841-7333
- LAKELAND COMMUNITY CHURCH**
(Corner of 1st Ave. and 4th St., Spiritwood)
Sun., 11 am - Worship
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Pastor Michael Kluthe
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