



## Studio 747 ends dance season in style



Senior lyrical dancers perform their award-winning routine, *Tell You About Her*.

By **JORDAN TWISS**  
*Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter*

The dancers of Studio 747 showcased just how far they'd come in chasing their dreams over the course of three dazzling, sold-out showcases on May 1 and 2, as another year of dance officially ended in thrilling fashion.

Where March's mini showcase is all about spotlighting solos and small group routines, the focus of the year-end recital is on the show-stopping group numbers that allow every dancer an opportunity to take the stage and show off the skills they've acquired throughout the year.

This year's dream-inspired dance show held to this tradition, serving up 27 routines, in ballet, jazz, hip hop, tap, and other styles, in an exciting two-hour package.

For his part, Studio 747 director Kelly Woodley couldn't be prouder of his dancers and how much they grew and progressed over the past few months.

"There are always challenges and hurdles along the way, but watching the dancers grow in confidence and skill made it all worth it," he said. "We had some amazing results and experiences at competition, which are really just the icing on the cake."

Fitting for a showcase titled "Chasing Dreams," Woodley says a personal highlight for him this dance season has been watching his dancers experience "breakthrough" moments — moments when they find their confidence or nail something they've been working on all year.

But while these moments are what he loves about teaching dance, Woodley says it's not just about what his dancers can

do; it's about who they are.

"Another big highlight is receiving compliments from other teachers, or competition staff, about how respectful our dancers are," he said. "This is a big focus, as I believe that we are not just training kids to dance, we are helping raise them into respectful young people who will go on to do great things."

On that note, Woodley hopes his dancers will remember this season for more than just the techniques they learned or the accolades they earned along the way. He wants them to look back on their dance years with fondness and joy, and remember the community they have through Studio 747.

In a community like Shellbrook — and in any community, really — Woodley says having access to dance is vital because it gives people a place to belong.

"It builds confidence, creativity, and connection — not just for the dancers, but for families and the community as a whole," he said.

"It's something that brings people together in a really special way. We are here to support young dancers as they grow into young adults, to give them a second home where they can be themselves, express their feelings through movement, and find a place in a loving team."

Though another dance season is at an end, and Woodley is always sad to see it go, big things are on the horizon for Studio 747, which will celebrate its 10th year in the fall.

Woodley says he and his team are already brainstorming ways to celebrate and make the next dance season one filled with joy from start to finish.

*More photos on page 9*



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# Big River student tops Mann Gallery art show

By **JORDAN TWISS**  
Shellbrook Chronicle  
Reporter

Aspiring Vincent van Goghs and Frida Kahlos recently had the opportunity to showcase their talents during the Mann Art Gallery's 15th annual High School Juried Art Show in Prince Albert, and one student from Big River High School was among the recipients of the show's top honours.

The Mann Art Gallery's High School Juried Art Show is all about providing youth with a platform to display their artistic talents and receive professional-level feedback to help them hone their craft, whether it be painting, pottery, sculpture, or photography.

More than that, though, it's a celebration of the importance of arts education and creativity, and an opportunity for young artists to find and grow their own arts communities.

Currently in Grade 12, Peter Smallboy became interested in art about six years

ago, when he saw some family members creating art. Starting with pencil drawings, he set out to prove that creating his own works of art could be easy.

"After I created a few pieces and liked how they looked, I got invested in it," he said.

Smallboy studies art at school and creates pieces in his free time at home. Though creating art is often a solitary process, he says that he hopes to inspire other people with his art and show them that they're capable of drawing too.

As for his own inspiration, Smallboy says he'll sometimes find things he likes on the internet. However, his favourite thing to draw is something he doesn't need the internet to observe closely: the human eye.

"I really love the fine detail in human eyes," he said.

Fittingly, it was his observation of his own eye that inspired him to create his charcoal piece for this year's High School Juried Art Show. Titled *Inner Sight*, the piece earned him the Best in Show award.



**Big River High School Grade 12 student Peter Smallboy won Best in Show at the Mann Art Gallery's High School Juried Art Show for his piece, *Inner Sight*.**

"I got a bit nervous [about getting negative feedback] at first. Other than that, I felt pretty confident when I entered," he said, noting that he had prior experience from entering last year's art show.

"I really enjoyed it. I want to get my art out there and seen

by a lot of people."

Though he went in to the show hoping to earn an award, Smallboy says he wasn't expecting to. This made it particularly exciting for him to receive the Best in Show honour.

With the end of the school

year and graduation just around the corner, Smallboy plans to attend art school in Red Deer. True to his goal to inspire others to try art, he says he hopes to one day become an art teacher and help young people recognize their own potential.

## Sask. RCMP renews grandparent scam warning

By **JORDAN TWISS**  
Shellbrook Chronicle  
Reporter

The Saskatchewan RCMP is once again warning residents about a grandparent scam that continues to victimize people across the province.

According to police, a grandparent scam is when a scammer targets an individual through emotion manipulation by claiming to be a family member in need of immediate money for bail or ticket expenses. The scammer can send someone to pick up payment in

person, or they may ask the victim to pay cash into a Crypto ATM, or online via e-transfer.

Scammers can use details shared on social media, dating apps, and websites to get information about loved ones. Artificial intelligence and stolen social media photos can also be used, and scammers often use the names of legitimate lawyers in correspondence.

Even though it's called the grandparent scam, police warn that anyone can be targeted and fall victim.

The RCMP notes that police, lawyers, judges,

and jails do not call people to get money, and that bail/fines are always paid at the courthouse. Additionally, there's no such thing as court-appointed couriers. Anyone who comes to your house to pick up payment is part of the scam.

In the Battlefords area in April, at least one person fell victim to a grandparent scam.

The RCMP offers the following advice to avoid being scammed:

- Stop! They will create a sense of urgency, making you feel like you need to act fast.
- Do not be afraid to say 'no' to the caller.

- If something feels off or you feel uneasy, call your loved one directly to verify if the situation is real – don't rely on the scammer's word.
- Never send cash to strangers and call your banking institution and police immediately if you believe you are a victim.

If you or your loved one has lost money or the scam is in-progress, call 310-RCMP (7267) or 911 in emergencies.

### Shooting suspect arrested

A man involved in a firearms incident on the Big River First Nation the evening of

April 20 has been arrested by police.

According to police, the Big River RCMP Detachment received a report of the incident at around 6:15 that evening. Initial investigation determined an altercation occurred between a male and a female outside a residence. During the altercation, the male pointed a firearm at the female and later discharged it.

Two individuals nearby approached to assist the female victim. The male suspect fled from the scene. The female victim and the assisting individuals did not report any physical injuries.

Big River RCMP immediately responded, along with Saskatchewan RCMP's Critical Incident Response Team and Police Dog Services. Officers searched the surrounding area for the male suspect with the assistance of a police dog

and a Remotely Piloted Aircraft System. At this time, the male suspect has not been located.

As a result of the investigation, 24-year-old Blaine Keenatch from Big River First Nation was charged with: two counts of weapons possession contrary to order, and one count each of discharging firearm with intent, possession of a firearm when knowing possession is unauthorized, assault with a weapon, assault, and pointing a firearm.

On Tuesday, April 28, officers arrested Keenatch on the Big River First Nation. He was scheduled to make his first appearance in Prince Albert Provincial Court the following day.

Saskatchewan RCMP's Warrant Enforcement and Suppression Team, the Meadow Lake Crime Reduction Team, Police Dog Services, and the Big River RCMP Detachment assisted with the arrest.

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# Highlights of a Shellbrook Town Council meeting

By **JORDAN TWISS**  
Shellbrook Chronicle  
Reporter

*(The following council highlights are not the approved minutes of council for April 27.)*

Shellbrook's Town Council held its regular meeting in person and via teleconference on Monday, April 27.

In attendance were Mayor Amund Otterson, Councillors Pam Boettcher, Cheryl Ledding, Brent Miller, Kathleen Nording, and Arlette Segberg, the town's CAO, Sigourney O'Halligan, and consultant Jim Puffalt. Also joining council for his first meeting was newly acclaimed councillor Rod Atkinson.

Mayor Otterson called council's regular meeting to order around 5 p.m., beginning with the customary Treaty 6 land acknowledgement in recognition of Truth and Reconciliation, before council approved the meeting's agenda, adopted the minutes of its March 23 regular meeting and April 9 special meeting, and proclaimed the week of May 17 to 23 as Royal Purple Week.

Following a brief review of received correspondence, including a

letter from the Village of Shell Lake indicating that it won't be contracting CSO services for 2026 due to budgetary constraints, council dove into the reports of administration and committees.

In her report, CAO O'Halligan noted that the new camera system equipment for the CSOs has shipped and an installation date will be arranged once it arrives. She also noted that the town is on top of the list to have e-ticketing set up this year, in coordination with SGI and the host MRF system.

Under the public works banner, she said town crew recently completed a water break fix on 3rd Avenue West. Meanwhile, the continuous freeze and thaw cycle over the past few weeks has resulted in a sewer main and catch basins freezing, leaving water to accumulate in the roads.

In the Prairie Rising Municipal Consulting report, the firm noted that a workshop to develop the town's Customer Service Charter had been held on April 27. Additionally, it said the town's Business Retention and Expansion Survey had been com-

pleted, and results will be presented some time in May.

In discussion of the water treatment plant project, Councillor Miller reiterated that the town can no longer sit on its hands and wait for grant funding to move ahead with the project. While Councillor Nording wondered how the town will afford the project without grants, Puffalt said the town needs to explore its options, to see if it can phase the project, or design it so that it can be easily added on to in the future.

In the hospital and clinics report, Mayor Otterson noted that he had the chance to speak at the SUMA Convention about the need for an ambulance bay in Shellbrook, bringing the matter to the attention of Minister of Health, Jeremy Cockrill. Mayor Otterson noted that Shellbrook is one of just two communities in Saskatchewan with a hospital but no ambulance bay.

Moving on to the mayor and council forum, Councillor Boettcher raised concerns about the lack of snow removal at the Shellbrook Theatre, noting that she nearly had to cancel the

Region 7 Drama Festival because the snow piled beside the building had blocked the emergency exits.

Noting that the theatre currently has issues with leaks on its east side, she said the town can't allow this to happen, or it won't have the facility for long. Councillor Atkinson added that it's an example of the need for accountability, while Councillor Ledding said it reflects poorly on the town when its facilities aren't ready for events it knows are coming up.

Council agreed that the town needs to do better as it works to transition to a customer service culture.

Continuing, Councillor Miller noted that he's received more complaints from ratepayers, on a wide range of issues, in the past month than in the whole time he's been on council. He pressed for the need to start taking these things seriously.

Closing out the mayor and council updates, Mayor Otterson noted that he'd attended a meeting about the pedestrian crossing at the intersections of Highway 3, Highway 55, and Main Street, and said

some fine tuning needs to be done on the design.

Mayor Otterson also said another project to run sidewalk from the rink to the highway had been brought up, but felt it would be more feasible to add sidewalk from 7th Avenue to the highway instead. Councillor Miller noted that this project might depend upon plans for the town's new K to 12 school.

Shifting to new business, council spent most of its time on bylaws, starting with the third reading for Bylaw 2026-002, the Admin Bylaw, which establishes the powers, duties, and functions of municipal officials and employees of the municipality.

Next, it gave third reading to Bylaw 2026-003, the Mill Rate Bylaw. As the final piece of passing the municipal budget, the bylaw raises the mill rate slightly to 7.79 mills from 7.57 mills.

Up next, council gave three readings to Bylaw 2026-004, the Special Tax for Fire Service. This bylaw needs to be passed annually. In return for a \$50 tax, taxed properties received \$25,000 in fire-

fighting coverage.

Carrying on, council gave first and second reading to Bylaw 2026-005, the Fees Bylaw, which sets out costs for municipal services and facility rentals. It then gave first reading Zoning Amendment Bylaw 2026-006 and OCP Amendment Bylaw 2026-007, which will rezone the former Shellbrook Funeral Home and an adjacent lot from Commercial to Residential.

Closing out the meeting, council approved a transfer of \$21,288 in Field of Dreams proceeds to reserves, carried a motion to host a fun swim on Canada Day, and agreed to support the Shellbrook Seniors' Association in its supplication for a Get Moving grant through the Sask. Parks and Recreation Association.



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## Hometown musicians provide toe-tapping music

By **LORRAINE THIBEAULT**  
Shellbrook Seniors Assoc.

On Monday, April 27, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m., local musicians Leo Stieb, Mitch Beaulac and Dave Hjertaas entertained 24 attendees at the Shellbrook Senior Centre.

From the music of the 30s and 40s to more recent tunes, Leo, Mitch and Dave had attendees moving to the beat, singing along, toe tapping, and thigh slapping. From sad songs to lively ragtime music, guests were well entertained for the full two hours.

This was the Seniors' Association's last performance for the spring. The Hometown Musical Performances will begin again in the fall. However, some of our hometown musicians will be a part of Shellbrook's Canada Day evening activities. Stay tuned for more information on Canada Day activities in Shellbrook.



Seniors enjoy the musical stylings of Leo Stieb (accordion), Mitch Beaulac (guitar), and Dave Hjertaas (keyboard).

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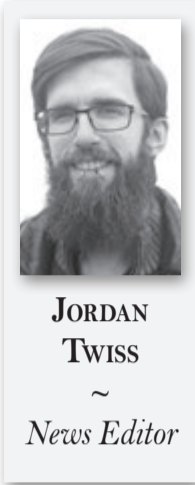
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## Humanity approaches AI's point of no return



**JORDAN TWISS**  
~  
News Editor

While the gulf between humans and animals isn't necessarily as wide as our anthropocentric mindset might lead us to believe, there's no denying that humans stand apart from all other living things because of our capacity to invent and innovate.

In the span of just a few thousand years (a blink of an eye, relative to the age of the earth and the universe), human ingenuity took us from an age of crude stone tools all the way to today's high-tech equipment. And every day, it seems, brings new advancement in one field or another.

Yet, for all that our inventing has accomplished, there's also a dark side to technology that casts a shadow over everything.

When he first had the idea for the internet, Sir Tim Berners-Lee believed it would unlock creativity and collaboration on a global scale never seen before. However, he also believed that in order for this to happen, it had to be freely accessible to everyone.

Today, an estimated 5.5 billion people regularly use the internet, suggesting that Mr. Berners-Lee realized his vision.

At the same time, it's nowhere near as "free" as he'd initially hoped.

In addition to the fee we pay to an internet service provider just to use the internet, each website visit is a transaction of sorts, in which we freely (or sometimes unknowingly) pay with our personal data.

And once the internet has our personal data, it can wield it against us – sometimes benignly to show us more of what we're interested in, and other times more exploitatively to further turn a profit.

On a smaller scale, the story of social media platforms like Facebook is eerily similar.

When he first created Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg didn't intend for it to become the social media behemoth that is now known as Meta.

Instead, he viewed it as a social mission to make the world more open and connected.

Social media has certainly connected people. But much like the broader internet, it's also become a farm for all our personal data.

And with Facebook's transition from social mission to corporate giant, it's engineered our data into personalized algorithms that keep us coming back for more – often at the expense of our mental health.

Indeed, just over a month ago, a California jury found Meta and YouTube liable for "negligent design" in what is being hailed as a landmark trial about the harms of social media. The platforms were ordered to pay \$6 million in compensatory and punitive damages.

Despite witnessing how his invention has evolved over the past three-plus decades, Mr. Berners-Lee still believes it's not too late to "fix" the internet, calling it a "battle for the soul of the web."

But what's happened with the internet is no different from what's happened with every significant human invention since the dawn of time.

In the race between technology and morality, technology always comes first, and the moral and ethical framework to govern it comes a distant second (if it ever comes at all).

We're seeing this on a larger scale than ever with modern AI.

Though AI has been around for decades, today's version is far more advanced and far more ubiquitous, capable of touching every aspect of our lives for better and for worse.

Where the internet opened the doors for e-commerce giants like Amazon to seize control of markets at the expense of local brick-and-mortar stores, and automation created assembly lines with fewer humans, AI could eliminate the need for human workers altogether.

Though numbers are hard to pin



down, some reports suggest that thousands of jobs are being eliminated by AI every month. And the pace is only certain to accelerate as AI becomes more sophisticated.

How are we to contend with joblessness on such an unprecedented scale?

There's nothing to suggest that anyone's even considering this question, much less close to finding an answer.

But this is only a single facet of the threat that AI poses to people.

Much like a human child, AI learns and develops based on what it's shown by its creators and users. And as the internet and social media show us daily, humanity is often as cruel as it is kind.

For every funny cat video that's fed into the AI blender, there's a post that's racist, or misogynistic, or homophobic, or anti-Semitic, or just flat out untrue.

Possessing no autonomous capacity to determine that those hateful and misleading posts are morally wrong and shouldn't be shared, an AI will see no reason not to do so.

And if you feed enough hate and ugliness to AI chatbots or algorithms, it's only so long before they start to reflect it back at you – and at other people who are using them.

It's little surprise, then, that we're beginning to see headlines about al-

ready mentally ill people who develop unhealthy relationships with AI chatbots and go on to take their own lives.

Nor is it surprising that, in the aftermath of the tragic mass shooting in Tumbler Ridge, B.C., we're learning that the shooter had made their intentions well known to OpenAI's ChatGPT, prompting the families of the victims to file a lawsuit against the company.

Since then, OpenAI claims to have "strengthened our safeguards, including improving how ChatGPT responds to signs of distress, connecting people with local support and mental health resources, strengthening how we assess and escalate potential threats of violence, and improving detection of repeat policy violators."

It's frightening enough in the context of an individual who chooses to commit an act of terrible violence.

But when a government agency – say the Pentagon, for instance – tries to extort AI companies into offering up their tools and platforms without safeguards or oversight, it's a whole new level of horrifying.

We find ourselves in the Wild West – the lawless, uncharted frontier of AI. If we don't turn back now, we might not like where the road leads us.

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# Mont Nebo hosts painting with local artists

By **BEVRA FEE**  
*Spiritwood Herald*  
Reporter

The community of Mont Nebo hosted 21 art enthusiasts at the local community hall on Saturday, May 2, with local artists Rigmor Clarke, Nadine Jones, and Donna Muller providing guidance.

The full day began at 10 a.m., with everyone introducing themselves and getting to know

one another. Once all artists had set up their acrylic, watercolour or pastel and canvas, the creativity ensued.

Each artist brought a picture of what they intended to transform into art, and the three artists leading the day were on hand to inspire, encourage and share their knowledge of the craft.

Participant Dave Corneliuson, an experienced artist who

once had aspirations of studying art, explained, "I had a scholarship to the British Columbia Institute of Technology in art when I was 13 but my parents wouldn't let me go as they thought I was too young. I have had a graphic arts business, designing t-shirts, and two years ago my sister bought me this kit, so I thought I would come out and see what happens — this is terrific!"

The art-filled day was planned by Donna Muller, who took her first art class from Rigmor Clarke in the 1970s. She says the idea came about because she has had people in the area asking her to try something different at the hall and they arrived upon the Day of Art concept. Muller's friend in the area, Nadine Jones, was on board, and Rigmor Clarke completed the artist consultant panel. Clarke, an accom-



A large painting turns out very close to the inspiration photo.



Rigmor Clarke (standing) was on hand to offer advice to new artist, Yvonne Combres.



Artists were advised to bring an image for inspiration and were guided by the professional artists.

plished artist who has exhibited nationally and internationally and has been recognized with the Saskatchewan Order of Merit, is as enthusiastic about painting now as when she took it up seriously over 50 years ago.

At 91 years of age, she nimbly navigated the hall and offered nuggets of experience and influence for the new artists seeking her feedback.



Sherry Mezzo refers to her inspiration pic while painting her sunset piece.

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# Sask Rivers grad rates up, attendance a challenge

By **MICHAEL OLEKSYN**  
*LJI Reporter,*  
*PA Daily Herald*

How the school division is progressing on their Strategic Plan was the focus for Saskatchewan Rivers School Division trustees at their most recent meeting.

Director of education Neil Finch gave an update on the Strategic Plan Progress Review at the boards regular meeting on April 20.

The update was initially part of the SCC Engagement event in February, but Finch wanted to further discuss it formally around the board table in an open meeting.

Finch said that the Strategic Plan Progress

Review was a chance to share both celebrations and challenges that exist in the division.

"Part of the progress review is to make sure that we are transparent," Finch said. "We want to be transparent about our celebrations. We want to be transparent about the areas that we've been improving in, and then also the ones that we feel are challenges that remain that maybe we haven't made a lot of progress on."

The five priorities remain the same: Learning and Innovation, Mental Health and Well-Being, Inclusion and Cultural Responsiveness, Citizenship and Relationships, and Governance and Lead-

ership. The report highlights the progress and challenges in each of these areas.

The division, like many others in Saskatchewan is having challenges in attendance but Finch is hopeful to see it improve. The division has been making concerted efforts through social media to help emphasize the importance of attendance and schools are taking on that challenge as well.

"I would say we're making improvements on it," he said. "I don't know that the data is changing yet, so we still need to keep working at it."

In looking at data, the division expects overall graduation rates to

keep improving every year up to 2030. The focus is on decreasing the gap between FNMI and non-FNMI graduation rates.

Graduation rates for all students increased to 83 per cent while FNMI graduation rates increased to 73 per cent, which is above the provincial average. Credit attainment also

improved over last year for FNMI students.

Challenges that still exist include overall credit attainment, which is below the provincial average. An early literacy gap also still exists, especially for students needing intensive supports. Attendance and engagement for students also remains a challenge.

Finch said the division's strategic plan is aligned with the provincial education plan, which help focus in on their priorities.

"We can really lose focus by having too many arrows in the air, and in education there's a lot of them, so we try to have just our strategic plan as what we come back to," Finch explained.

## Op-ed: Sask. can't blow this resource boom too

By **GAGE HAUBRICH**  
*CTF Prairie Director*

The government can't waste this massive windfall.

The price of oil is surging. That means that the provincial government is likely to end up with a massive resource revenue windfall this year.

That's a blessing for the Saskatchewan government that just released a budget that increases the provincial debt by \$3.4 billion and wastes more than \$1 billion on debt interest payments.

For every dollar increase in oil prices, the provincial government collects roughly \$16 million in extra revenue. With oil now trading up to \$95 per barrel, the provincial government could receive about \$560 million more this year from oil revenues. At \$75 a barrel, the government will take in about \$245 million extra.

This surge in revenue means the government could cut its borrowing this year by up to 17 per cent without lifting a finger. The key is for the government to show discipline instead of immediately spending the money.

Surely, this time, the Saskatchewan government will learn this obvious lesson: Resource revenue windfalls don't last forever.

The last big windfall for the government came in 2021. In that year, the government brought in 25 per cent higher revenue than the year before, largely due to increased natural resource revenues.

The average revenue increase was about one per cent in the five years prior.

But in 2021, the government increased spending by 25 per cent.

If the government had showed fiscal discipline and held the line at the previous year's spending, which was the highest in the history of the province, the government would have paid down the debt by \$2.5 billion instead of increasing the debt by \$1.4 billion.

That surplus could have paid off more than 14 per cent of the province's entire debt in one year. Instead, the government permanently ratcheted up spending.

The government was blessed with another 14 per cent revenue increase in 2022. If the government hadn't ratcheted up spending in 2021 and only increased it by population growth and

inflation, the province could have paid down the debt by \$4.4 billion that year.

That could have paid off an additional 28 per cent of the province's debt.

That's the power of fiscal discipline.

When you get a bonus at work, you shouldn't count on that extra money every month. You should use it to pay bills or make an extra mortgage payment, not take out a loan on a new boat.

The government needs to treat this windfall the same way. Then it needs to go further and look for savings to stop the debt from increasing at all this year.

The overspending needs to stop. Taxpayers can't afford it. But that can only happen if the government stops treating resource booms as a raise and realizes that it's just a one-time bonus.

The government needs to use this and any future windfalls to reduce borrowing and pay down the debt.

And in the future, the government should set up a resource revenues heritage fund to safeguard Saskatchewan's financial future.

Here's how it works: The government takes some of the resource revenue money that it gets every year and puts it into a fund that politicians can't touch and invests it.

The government can then earn interest off the revenue and use that to spend even long after the province's resources have run dry.

Alaska and Norway have had heritage funds for years and are reaping the benefits. Every Alaska resident got \$1,000 last year from the investments of its heritage fund. Norway's heritage fund covers about 20 per cent of its government's budget with its earnings.

That can happen in Saskatchewan. But only if the government chooses to treat resource revenues as a long-term asset instead of a short-term spending opportunity.

When the first-quarter update is released and is forecasting an increase in non-renewable resource revenue, that extra revenue can't come with extra spending.

That's the test that will show if the government cares about delivering for taxpayers.

Saskatchewan can't afford to blow another resource boom.

### 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)

**CANWOOD & LEASK:** Walter Willoughby Horticultural Society Bedding Plant Sales - Canwood Seniors Hall (640-2nd Ave E), Wednesday, May 20, Noon to 4pm. Leask Seniors Hall (231A-1st Street), Friday, May 22nd, Noon to 4pm. Pie & coffee/tea will be served at both sales for \$5.

**SHELLBROOK:** Musical Salute - Marking 100 years of the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 111 (101 2nd Ave E, Shellbrook). Saturday, May 23, 7pm. Music from WWI & WWII, 40s/50s. Honouring our veterans trivia games. \$15 per person, Cash Bar, Late Night Lunch. Funding for this project has been applied for through Veterans Affairs Canada.

**PARKSIDE:** Honeywood (Dr. A.J. Porter) Heritage Nursery Inc. *Provincial Heritage Site*, Parkside, SK - Season Opening: Friday, May 8! Open Daily 9 am to 5 pm. Annuals, new & old lily varieties, fruit & ornamental trees, assortment of perennial plants. Gift/garden Shop - Honeywood Jellies, Seed Potatoes & much more! Ph: 306-747-3307 or email honeywoodn8@gmail.com

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## Farm product bill levels playing field

Science is science, and while scientists don't always get it right, there remains a level of trust we should hold for the results – at least if we want to see positive steps toward the future. This is the case in agriculture as much as in any other field.

So, it is more than a little interesting to see Bill C-273, which would allow provisional approval for products like fertilizers and pesticides if already approved in at least two trusted jurisdictions. The private

members bill was introduced by Bow River, Alta., Conservative MP David Bexte last month.

If passed, the bill could make new products like feed, seed, and pest control solutions available more quickly in Canada.

That, at least on its surface, makes total sense.

However, the question that hangs over this is what constitutes a 'trusted' jurisdiction.

Before the bulldozer efforts of U.S. President Donald Trump to



CALVIN DANIELS

gut various programs stateside, and deregulate things in favour of big business and away from the core concept of public safety, we might have assumed the United States was "trusted."

Now, I doubt very much that this would be particularly wise, at least without a very close second look at whatever data is offered by, what appears from this side of the 49th, to be a gutted U.S. system.

If we cross the hurdle of assessing trust, then it certainly opens doors for fast-tracking some advancements in key production areas, such as fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides.

Canadian producers compete directly with those growing grains

under similar conditions in countries, such as the United States and Australia, so one hopes the playing field is as level as possible. But that has to mean access to the same general package of crop inputs.

It all goes back to science creating something, which reasonably should be accessible for producers worldwide if the development research shows it is safe.

That all said, in the end you cannot hand regulatory authority to another country.

Even if the bill passes, it should be seen as a temporary pathway that allows quicker registration for use than currently exists, but still have a Canadian review which will be the determining factor in complete registration here.

If that is the structure to ultimately be developed in Canada, then the bill could be a solid step in giving farmers access to advancements in a more expedient way on par with what farmers enjoy in competing countries.

## Sask. Ag value-added grows to \$8.4 billion

By **MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE**  
Submitted

Saskatchewan's value-added agricultural sector is showing steady growth, reaching a record \$8.4 billion in revenue for 2024-25, almost double the amount achieved 10 years ago.

"Thanks to the strength of this sector and the quality of our crops and livestock, Saskatchewan is on track to achieve its Growth Plan target of \$10 billion in value-added agriculture revenue by 2030," Agriculture Minister David Marit said. "Recent

plant openings and expansions demonstrate investor confidence in the province and position us for future growth."

"With more than 300 food processors employing over 5,000 people, value-added agriculture is playing a vital role in providing food security to over 160 countries across the globe," Trade and Export Development Minister Warren Kaeding said. "It also strengthens Saskatchewan's economy by keeping more value in the province, increasing investment, creating jobs and building opportunities here at home."

In 2024-25, food manufacturing made up close to 95 per cent of the province's total value-added revenue (2024-25 numbers are based on preliminary estimates provided by Statistics Canada). Saskatchewan's food manufacturing value increased by 150 per cent between 2012 and 2024, surpassing other provinces in the percentage increase.

Saskatchewan is also on track to achieve its Growth Plan target of processing 75 per cent of canola grown in the province with the opening of Cargill's new Regina facility and the expansion of the Louis Dreyfus Company (LDC) canola crush plant in Yorkton.

## Kids cook up fun in the kitchen

By **JORDAN TWISS**  
Shellbrook Chronicle  
Reporter

A new generation of kids is getting to channel their inner Gordon Ramsay, thanks to the long-awaited return of Shellbrook's Kids in the Kitchen program.

Originally offered by the Town of Shellbrook, the Kids in the Kitchen program has been revived by the Shellbrook

Kinettes as a three-session crash course to teach kids aged 8 to 14 basic kitchen rules and safety, what kitchen tools look like, the basics of ingredient measurements, and of course a few recipes for their cookbooks.

Shellbrook Kinette Anita Cruz says she got the idea because her own boys love being in the kitchen and were asking to participate in

the program again. After enough prodding from her sons, she brought the idea to the Kinettes and the group made it happen.

"Kids love being in the kitchen helping out, so we thought we would bring them a program where they could make some of their favourite foods and take the recipes home and share with their families," Cruz said.

"We hope they take away some wonderful memories and most importantly the fun and ease of being in the kitchen. It's an important tool to have in their

'life' belts learning how to be in the kitchen."

Twenty children registered to take part in the revived Kids in the Kitchen program, with more wanting to join in

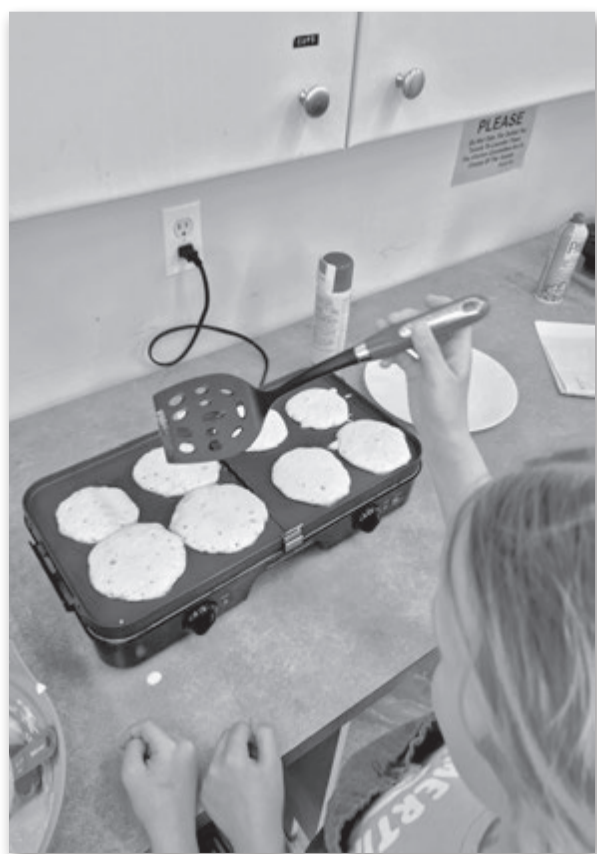
the fun. The first two sessions of the program were hosted at the Shellbrook Community Hall on April 26 and May 3, with the final session scheduled for May 17.

In session one, kids got to mix and flip some pancakes with berry compote and whipped cream. For session two, kids worked on their knife skills to cut up some veggies, and made their own bread for cheesy bread or grilled cheese.

Cruz says big plans are already in the works to offer the program a couple times per year.



Kids work to clean up after a day in the kitchen.



Kids learned the basics of making pancakes during session one.

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# Honeywood happenings

By **JUDY HARLEY**  
*Honeywood Nursery*

Well, that was quite the winter! More snow than we have received in a while! It just felt like it wouldn't stop, but here we are in the first week of May and the snow is almost all gone and the weather is warming up nicely. Thank goodness!

The nursery staff started working (officially) on Monday, May 4, getting the grounds and buildings ready for opening to the public (weather permitting) on Friday, May 8, (just in time for Mother's Day).

This will be a very busy week: moving the annuals and bedding plants from manager Janie Denton's place in Parkside; picking up some plants from Alexander's Greenhouse in Holbein; potting lilies and perennials; and setting up the gift shop.

Whew! That's a lot to accomplish in one short week!

Janie has been busy throughout the winter working on various projects.

Janie made a huge amount of jelly to sell at Gardenscape in Saskatoon and in the gift shop, as well as making some unique gift/souvenir items for the gift shop this coming season. She also started a huge number of annuals to sell at the opening of the greenhouse on May 8. What an amazing lady!

In addition to Honeywood's opening on May 8, Lilies in Bloom will

return on July 19 and A Touch of Autumn will end the season on Sept. 20. Honeywood is open to the public daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. from May 8 to Sept. 20.

Honeywood attended Gardenscape in Saskatoon again the last weekend of March and had a very busy, successful three days, meeting new and old friends and advertising the nursery site to everyone they met.

This season we welcome a new employee to take the place of Mark Diehl, our retired maintenance supervisor. Welcome to Honeywood Lee Denton! We look forward to having you officially join our team and look forward to implementing some of your ideas!

Honeywood did apply to the Canada Summer Jobs program again this year. We are very fortunate to have our application accepted to help us with the hiring of two young people to work at the nursery this summer.

We welcome back Kent Slemming, who you may remember worked at the nursery for four previous seasons. Kent will be with us for the season starting May 4. Our second student will start on July 2. We are looking forward to having them join us in the care and maintenance of the nursery.

We look forward to seeing and serving you whenever you come during the 2026 season!

Without the help of you, our friends and neighbours, Honeywood would not be the great place it is today!



These unique pots are among the items that will make an appearance in Honeywood's gift shop this season.

## Spiritwood Library highlights

By **HEATHER GATZKE**  
*Branch Librarian*

The Spiritwood Public Library took part in the National Canadian Film Day (CanFilmDay) on Wednesday, April 15. The theme this year was "Let's Dream Together", highlighting a variety of Canadian movies.

Watching a Canadian movie helps us understand the stories and lives of other Canadians. Watching a film together is like sharing a dream.

This year, Canadians need to roll up their sleeves, link elbows, and dream together more than ever.

The library chose to spotlight "The Sweet Hereafter" and "The Grizzlies" to have a double feature. "Can-

FilmDay" is presented by REEL Canada and is the world's largest film festival, happening in Canada from coast-to-coast and around the world.

Kids at the Spiritwood Public Library

had fun creating and flying styrofoam airplanes on Wednesday, April 22 as an early dismissal program. The boys got to create their plane with a variety of wing and tail fin styles, then let them fly!



Kids let their Styrofoam airplanes fly during the early dismissal program.

## Canwood library news



The Canwood Library recently hosted a wonderful morning of creativity. Beautiful cards were made as laughter rang out and a whole lot of fun was had. Faye Rainville generously donated materials for the day, sharing her wealth of knowledge and guiding participants through this process. Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to connect with their creative flow!

By **BEV WYATT**, *Canwood Library Board*

## Canwood Elks host fish fry



Though the weather was unbelievably poor prior to the event, approximately 175 people made the trip to the annual Canwood Elks Fish Fry on Sunday, April 26. The fish was delicious, along with all the fixings that went with it. For those who enjoy fresh fish and do not have easy access to it, there is just nothing quite like it. Yummy!

By **LORRAINE BENSON**, *Submitted*



Library guests were treated to a double feature of Canadian films for National Canadian Film Day on April 15.

# Studio 747 ends dance season in style



Intermediate ballet dancers perform *Over the Rainbow*.



Pre-primary ballet dancers perform *Bunny Hop*.



Senior ballet dancers perform *Forest Echo*.



Pre-intermediate jazz dancers perform *Mambo Italiano*.



Primary jazz dancers perform *Signed Sealed Delivered*.



Primary tap dancers perform *Pineapple Princess*.



Intermediate lyrical dancers perform *Ooh Child*.



Junior ballet dancers perform *Jet Set*.



Intermediate hip hop dancers perform *Battle of the Boybands*.

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# Minutes of an RM of Spiritwood meeting

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

The Regular Meeting of the Council of the Rural Municipality of Spiritwood No. 496 was held on Tuesday, March 16, 2026, in Council Chambers located at 218 Main Street in Spiritwood, Sask.

Present: Reeve — Shirley Dauvin, Division 2 — Dale Wasden, Division 4 — Steve Buban, and Division 5 — Heather Warkentin, Division 6 — Dennis Laventure, CAO — Colette Bussiere, and Foreman — Darcy Laventure.

Absent: Division 1 — Vacant, Division 3 — Terry Wingerter.

A quorum being present the meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m. Reeve Shirley Dauvin.

Warkentin: That the Foreman's report having been read now be filed. Carried

Laventure: That we purchase a 2026 F250 Service Truck and a 256 Power Mig Welder. Carried

Laventure: That the minutes of the Feb. 10 Regular Meeting of Council be approved as presented. Carried

Warkentin: That the Ad-

ministrators' report having been read now be filed. Carried

Wasden: That the verbal reports of council be accepted as presented. Carried

Wasden: That the bank reconciliation for the month ending February 28, 2026 be accepted as presented. Carried

Laventure: That the "List of Accounts" as listed on the attached Schedule "A" forming part of these minutes be passed for payment: Cheque No. 15448-15480 (\$38,412.06), EFT No. 2026-0025 - 2026-0042 (\$52,787.23), and Payroll File No. 0056, 0057 & 00507 (\$30,561.80). Carried

Buban: That the Statement of Financial Activities for the month ending Feb. 28, 2026, be approved as presented. Carried

Warkentin: That the Regular Meeting of Council for the month of May be rescheduled to Tuesday, May 19.

Warkentin: That the 2026 Gravel Crushing Tender be awarded to Venture Construction. Carried

Council: That the 2026 Gravel Hauling Tender be awarded to Kustaski Enter-

prises Ltd. and Bedrock Sand & Gravel Inc. Carried

Buban: That Council accept the list of lands in arrears as presented and attached to the minutes and that TAXervice be authorized to handle the Tax Enforcement proceedings on behalf of the municipality and to exclude from the list of lands, properties on which the amount of taxes in arrears is less than one half of the immediately preceding year's tax levy. Carried

Buban: That we request that Meeting Lake Regional Park Authority terminate the following leases for non-payment of property taxes: Lot 7 Blk 5, Lot 38 Blk 5, Lot 11 Blk 3, and Lot 19 Blk 3. Carried

Wasden: That we enter into an employment agreement with PCO Don Heide for the provision of pest control services for 2026.

Laventure: That the Council for the RM of Spiritwood No. 496 has no objections to SaskPower boring under the right of way to provide service to NW 35-54-11-W3 as per Service Order No. 20636573. Carried

Wasden: Council for the RM of Spiritwood does not have any objections to the

boring or right of ways adjacent to Hwy 24, for the installation of telecommunications cable. The municipality is not aware of any buried municipal facilities or planning any road construction projects relating to telecommunications cable install along Hwy 24 from Spiritwood to Leoville. Carried

Buban: That we acknowledge and file the Spiritwood Public Library reports and that we provide additional funding in the amount of \$2,647.80 for two (2) additional hours as well as a \$1,000.00 operating grant for the 2026 calendar year. Carried

Warkentin: That we consent to the removal of dead and dying woody vegetation (trees) within the Environmental Reserve (ER) fronting Lot 9 Blk 1 in South Shore Ridge. The applicant is solely responsible for all design, safety, and workmanship aspects associated with this approval and all work must be completed in accordance with the regulations of the Water Security Agency's Aquatic Habitat Protection Permit. Carried

Wasden: That we renew the

Permit with WSA to Operate Hygienic Waterworks located in the Organized Hamlet of Spruce Bay. Carried

Wasden: That we have identified break & enters, theft, drug use and speeding violations as issues that plague the municipality and respectfully request that the Spiritwood RCMP detachment focus their operational plan and allocate resources to the above issues in the next fiscal year. Carried

Wasden: That the council meeting be closed to the public at 12:15 p.m. under the authority of Part III of The Local Authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, to go in camera to discuss Human Resources. Carried

CAO Colette Bussiere left the council meeting at 12:15 p.m.

CAO Colette Bussiere returned to council chambers at 12:23 p.m.

The regular meeting of council was out of camera and resumed at 12:23 p.m.

Laventure: That the correspondence having been read now be filed. Carried

Laventure: That the meeting be adjourned.

## Sask. to boost ER disruption reporting

By **MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
Submitted

The Government of Saskatchewan is directing the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) to increase the frequency with which temporary emergency service disruptions are posted on the SHA website from once daily to at least twice daily, or as soon as practically possible.

On Nov. 10, 2025, the SHA launched a new process to provide patients, families, and communities with accurate and reliable information about emergency room availability. All emergency service disruptions, regardless of their length, are now posted publicly on the SHA website, with updates occurring daily at 4:00 p.m. As of May 19, 2026, the frequency of updates to the website will double, occurring twice a day at 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.

"Our focus remains on implementing our Patients First Health Care Plan to deliver innovative solutions to reduce

the occurrence of temporary service disruptions and ensure everyone in Saskatchewan has access to the right care, at the right time, as close to home as possible," Health Minister Jeremy Cockrill said. "It is important for Saskatchewan people to have reliable and timely information on health care service availability in their community. This is why our government is directing the Saskatchewan Health Authority to move to twice daily reporting of temporary emergency room service disruptions."

The SHA's service disruption webpage, found at [saskhealthauthority.ca/news-events/service-disruptions](https://saskhealthauthority.ca/news-events/service-disruptions), lists all affected facilities alphabetically and provides direct links from the SHA Facilities & Locations directory to community-specific disruption notices.

The Government of Saskatchewan is investing in practical solutions to strengthen the health care system to prevent temporary service disruptions. Investments in innovative strategies,

such as the Virtual Physician Program, Point-of-Care Testing and the Health Human Resources Action Plan, have helped to prevent more than 6,000 potential emergency room disruptions in more than 28 communities across the province since 2023. Saskatchewan has seen a downward trend in the number of temporary emergency room service disruptions over the past three years.

The Patients First Health Care Plan, released on March 9, 2026, contains more than 50 next steps to strengthen health care in Saskatchewan. These include initiatives to help stabilize and strengthen emergency room services, such as:

- Increasing nurse practitioner positions in emergency rooms to reduce wait times and improve patient flow;
- Expanding the number of communities eligible for the Rural Physician Incentive Program and the Rural and Remote Recruitment In-

centive Program;

- Expanding health career training opportunities in rural and regional communities, including new family medicine residency seats launching this year in Melfort, Nipawin and Yorkton; and
- Expanding the Virtual Physician Program.

When emergency room services are temporarily disrupted, signage will continue to be posted at the affected facility, and HealthLine 811 will have real-time information available. Patients and families are encouraged to call HealthLine 811 toll-free, 24 hours a day, for advice regarding service availability or to access health guidance from Registered Nurses and other qualified health professionals.

In any life-threatening emergency, 9-1-1 should be called immediately so paramedics can assess, treat, and transport the patient to the nearest available site for medical attention.

## GOOD NEWS

~

### THE FIRST AND THE GREATEST

By **DEB ANDERSON**  
Submitted

Setting priorities makes a difference. If I have a list of things to do today, the best thing I can do is thoughtfully consider which thing is the most important and label it #1. What is the next most important? Label it #2, and so on. By the end of the day, I may have had several interrup-

tions, but at least I got the most important thing on my list done.

A man once asked Jesus which of the commandments was the most important. His response: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment."

I put up a note "God First" and pon-

dered how to love my Creator. A person could speak words of honour and thanksgiving. I pieced together a set of songs that spoke of the wonders and beauty of the things God has made. Other songs declared God's goodness, power and love. Some days I add to this collection. Each day #1 on the list is to honor and praise the One who loves me and gave His life to ransom my soul.

My day seems to go better when I take a little time to do this. I have peace and confidence in times of stress. At the end of the day, I know I've done what's most important. Often Bible readings are added to this special time. The benefits to me

have been great — physical healings and being able to eliminate the "chaff" from my mind and heart.

"But," some may say, "that's the problem in the world today — radical religion." I don't see this as hurting anyone...I believe God's love extends to all people. Have you ever made something? Mothers love their babies, my neighbour values the hotrod car he created. Each human life is a wonder of creation. We honour Him who "made" us by valuing Him first, as He has asked us to do.

For 40 years, I attended church, but it was not until I invited Jesus into my heart that I was able to know and love Him.

## McDavid the best — and most valuable

The debate rages on among hockey fans about the merits of the Hart Trophy winner as the National Hockey League's most valuable player.

Is it the best player in the league? Or should it go to the player 'most valuable' to his team; in other words, how would that team fare without that specific player?

If the award goes to the best player, no voting is required; just give the Hart to Connor McDavid of the Edmonton Oilers. Like Bobby Orr and Wayne Gretzky in bygone eras, McDavid is head and shoulders above anyone else in the league.

But should he be named the most valuable player? According to NHL literature, the MVP award is presented to the player deemed most valuable "to his team."

An AI overview says "criteria (for the Hart) focus on a player's total impact, often combining high-level scoring, critical team contributions, and performance

on potential play-off-bound teams."

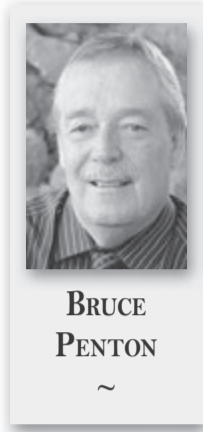
Take McDavid away from the Oilers and what's left? Not a bad roster, featuring Leon Draisaitl, Ryan Nugent-Hopkins, Zach Hyman, Evan Bouchard and Darnell Nurse.

Remove another top contender, Nathan MacKinnon of Colorado, and the Avalanche are still loaded with the likes of Martin Necas, Cale Makar, Brock Nelson, Nazem Kadri and others.

Nikita Kucherov, of Tampa Bay, who finished third in league scoring, was in on 44 per cent of his team's goals, but McDavid either scored or assisted on 48 per cent of the Oilers' tallies.

Besides, Kucherov has a talented group behind him — Jake Guentzel, Brayden Point and Brandon Hagel, among others.

Most valuable? San Jose Sharks' fans would suggest their team's young superstar, Macklin Celebrini, should be considered for the



BRUCE  
PENTON

award, considering his 115 points were almost double that of the No. 2 player on the team, Will Smith, who had 59. The exploits of Celebrini, who won't turn 20 until mid-June, however, weren't enough to pull his team into the playoffs, but his time will come.

And how about Matthew Schaefer — the stud defenceman of the New York Islanders, who will be a landslide winner of the top rookie award and will also gain voter support in the best defenceman category? Again, his terrific play had 'superstar' written all over it, but the Islanders still came

up short in the playoff run.

Most valuable? It will be a close race this year and McDavid will probably emerge the winner, because some of the voters will interpret the award as "best player" as opposed to "most valuable." The Oilers star will get many of those 'best player' votes and deserves to receive a good chunk of the 'most valuable' votes, too.

Without McDavid, the Oilers — who lost as many games as they won this season — would not be taking part in the Stanley Cup playoffs. Tampa Bay and Colorado, where the other two top contenders ply their trade, would still be among the post-season contenders.

So there's the decisive fact: It's McDavid — McD is the MVP.

fark.com headline: "Howie Rose to retire as Mets announcer after this season. Mets to mark the occasion by blowing a six-game lead with nine games left in the season."

Steve Simmons of the Toronto Sun: "Department of Ripoff: The normal return train from Penn Station to the Meadowlands in Jersey will rise from \$12.90 to \$150 during the World Cup."

Jack Finarelli of sportscurmudgeon.com, after news that Rams' receiver Puka Nacua had been accused of biting a woman on New Year's Eve: "Put Nacua in contact with any three random kindergarten teachers who have experience in convincing children not to bite the kid sitting next to them. He'll become a better person for it."

Headline at theonion.com: "Shaq Warns Young Players Not To Do Movie About Genie"

@LenHoc on X: "BREAKING: LIV Golf changing format from 72 holes to none."

Yahoosports.com, just before the NFL draft was held in Pittsburgh, a co-headquarter of the Kraft-Heinz company: "Heinz is offering the No. 57 overall pick a lifetime supply of

ketchup."

Comedy guy Torben Rolfsen of Vancouver: "The Kings beat the Canucks to vault into a playoff spot. Our gift to L.A.: Hollywood North, Hockeywood South."

Another one from Rolfsen: "Calgary Flames were the first team in a decade without a 50-point scorer. Flames, Canucks, Blackhawks ... they all score less than Borat at Lilith Fair."

From Super 70s Sports: Retired Hall of Famer Larry Bird to Charles Barkley during an NBA game in the 1980s: "Chuck, I need to talk to you. Y'all got a white guy trying to guard me, that's disrespectful. There's not a white guy on the planet that can guard me."

From theonion.com: "Carlos Alcaraz Credits Success To Tennis Being Easiest Game In The World. 'All You Do Is Smack A Ball And There's No Basket Or Tackling Or Anything,'"

Care to comment? Email [brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca](mailto:brucepenton2003@yahoo.ca)

## Sask. continues suicide prevention grants

By **MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
Submitted

For a second year, the Government of Saskatchewan is offering grants to community partners to support suicide prevention initiatives across the province.

The Suicide Prevention Grant Program encourages community partners to develop creative ways to support suicide prevention, with a focus on training and skills development, increasing awareness of resources, reducing stigma, and building capacity to mobilize community action.

Total funding of \$350,000 is available, with each successful applicant receiving up to \$10,000.

"The tragic loss of one person to suicide is one person too many," Mental Health and Addictions Minister Lori Carr said. "Addressing self-harm and suicide is a priority for our government. Through these grants, we are working together with partners to support the mental health of Saskatchewan residents."

Applications will be accepted from groups such as community-based organizations, Indigenous communities, school divisions, and municipalities.

Fifty-three groups received suicide

prevention grants in 2025-26, including Southeast Advocates in Estevan and Weyburn.

"This funding has allowed us to invest in critical suicide prevention training for our entire team," Interim Executive Director of Southeast Advocates Shannon Fodchuk said. "Through the Canadian Mental Health Association Weyburn branch, we are training our staff to recognize when someone may be struggling and respond in a meaningful, supportive way. As an organization serving vulnerable populations, this training is essential to ensuring we can provide safe, informed, and compassionate support when it matters most."

Applications for this second year of the Suicide Prevention Grant Program come as the province recognizes May 4 to 10 as Mental Health Week.

The grant program is part of Pillars for Life: The Saskatchewan Suicide Prevention Plan. Released in 2020, Pillars for Life serves as a guide for government and partners to improve and expand suicide prevention efforts in the province.

In addition to the Suicide Prevention Grant Program, several key provincial suicide prevention initiatives include:

- funding the community-led Roots of Hope Suicide Prevention initiative in five northern Saskatchewan communities;
- funding a provincial rapid access counselling for suicide loss support program through Family Service Saskatchewan, which supports the immediate psychological needs of families and friends of people who have died by suicide or survived with significant injury or trauma;
- support of a family engagement group to gather feedback from families who have experienced suicide loss;
- development and distribution of suicide prevention wallet cards;
- support for suicide prevention

public awareness campaigns to inform individuals that help is available for people thinking of, or affected by, suicide; and

- promotion of the national Suicide Crisis Helpline, 9-8-8.

This year, Saskatchewan is investing a record \$674 million in mental health and addictions, which includes \$2.3 million specifically for suicide prevention initiatives.

For information on how to apply for a Suicide Prevention Grant, visit [saskatchewan.ca/suicide-prevention-grant](http://saskatchewan.ca/suicide-prevention-grant). Applications are due by July 3, 2026.

To learn about resources available on suicide prevention and mental health, visit [saskatchewan.ca/suicide-prevention](http://saskatchewan.ca/suicide-prevention).

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# SLFN celebrates birthing lodge opening

By **JORDAN TWISS**  
Shellbrook Chronicle Reporter

After generations of waiting, childbirth has finally come home to the Sturgeon Lake First Nation (SLFN).

On Wednesday, April 29, the community and visiting dignitaries gathered in the Shirley Bighead Nihtāwīki and Ohpikihāwasowin Birthing and Childrearing Lodge to celebrate its grand opening.

Developed in partnership with Indigenous Services Canada, which has invested \$20 million and committed \$683,000 annually to support programs and services for families, the facility is named in honour of the community's former health director and First Nations healthcare advocate, who passed in 2023.

The birthing 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.

SLFN Chief Christine 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.

During her remarks at the grand opening, she explained what the birthing lodge means for the community.

"For too long, our mothers had to leave home to give birth, away from their families, their supports, and their ceremonies — a separation that echoes the losses our people have



Local leaders, elders, and visiting dignitaries cut the ribbon on the SLFN's Shirley Bighead Nihtāwīki and Ohpikihāwasowin Birthing and Childrearing Lodge. Photos courtesy of Tina Pelletier Photography

carried for generations," she said.

"Birth is not only a moment in time. It is the beginning of a relationship — to family, to community, to language, and to the land. When that beginning happens at home, in ceremony, it shapes how that child comes to understand who they are."

Last Wednesday's grand opening ceremony began with a prayer from Elder Margaret B. Ermine, before MC Heather Bear led the program filled with local leaders, Elders, and partners, and traditional music from Young Eagle Cree (Honour Song) and Iron Swing (Victory Song).

The lodge was officially opened with a ribbon cutting led by Shirley Bighead's husband, Senator Craig Bighead, and Elder Ermine, and guests were invited to tour the lodge and enjoy a community meal.

Attending on behalf of the Government of Canada, Minister of Indigenous Services Canada Mandy Gull-Masty shared words about the impact the lodge will have.

"Being able to give birth close to home, surrounded by family, tradition, culture and ceremony, will not only help mothers to experience deliveries in a less stressful and more familiar setting, but also welcome their children into a safe, welcoming, and loving environment," she said.

"In addition, facilities such as this lodge provide employment and training opportunities for Indigenous youth, including those from Sturgeon Lake First Nation, who choose to pursue careers in the healthcare industry without having to travel outside of their communities."



Senator Craig Bighead, husband of Shirley Bighead, says a few words during the grand opening ceremony.

## Believe it or not, spring is on its way

By **BERNADETTE VANGOOL**  
Sask. Perennial Society

While we patiently wait for the snow to stop and the temperature to rise, what can gardeners do to prepare for spring's arrival?

I for one have become impatient. Succumbing to the gardening bug, I have seeded some tomatoes indoors (even though I normally depend on others for my tomato transplants). I have also seeded some cucumbers (perhaps a bit too early) into Jiffy pots as they often do not germinate well in my garden beds. The jiffy pots allow you to transplant the seedlings into the garden without disturbing the roots, thus reducing transplant shock when transferring them to your garden.

Now that we are introducing new plants to our indoor space, is a good time to take stock of houseplants - inspect

them for new leggy growth and prune them back if needed. With the improved sunlight indoors, it's good practice to start to fertilize your indoor plants. Some can benefit from being turned once a week, so they don't get lopsided when they start growing towards the sun. As you are introducing new seedlings to the mix, it is also prudent to keep an eye out for pests, such as aphids, mealy bugs and those dreaded fungus gnats.

If you are like me, winter is a time when most

of our days are spent on or near the couch. I do make it a habit to go out for a walk each day, but that does not compare to the exercise you get while gardening. In preparation for the gardening season, a good practice is to get off your tush and get some exercise. Start with some easy stretches, some deep knee bends, maybe lift some weights. You don't have to buy weights. Just go to the kitchen and use some canned goods! Get those arms in shape. Remember, when you finally do

get into your garden, take it easy. You don't have to do it all in one day.

Next, a visit to the garden shed is in order. Inspect your shovels, pruners, lawnmower blades and hoes. All can probably benefit from sharpening - and the pruners will love some oil. Sharp, well-oiled tools are a joy to work with. Check your supply of garden gloves, stakes, tomato cages, peony rings and replenish where needed. I like to design my own hanging baskets - and those plastic pots need replacing every few years as the hangers tend to become brittle with age. You can also check to see if any wooden containers or raised garden beds need any repairs. Perhaps you can paint or oil the wood to extend their lifespan. If your peonies need staking, now is a good time to put your peony rings in place, rather than trying to get the stalks through the ring later.

Once the snow is gone you can dedicate some time to pruning woody shrubs and fruit trees. Start by removing any branches that were damaged over the winter. Next, remove all limbs or branches that are crossing or rubbing against each other. Then remove water spouts and suckers. In small shrubs like spirea, remove any dead branches from the centre and give them a bit of a trim to shape them. Spring flowering shrubs like weigela, lilac, mock orange and bridal wreath spirea are best pruned after they have flowered, as earlier pruning may remove all of this year's flowering buds. Roses can also wait until after they have leafed out. This way, it is easy to see which branches will be the most vigorous. Prune out the less healthy growth and dead branches.

Ornamental grasses and most alliums can now be cut back, before

the new growth starts pushing through the old. There's nothing worse than trying to selectively prune a mess of mixed stems. You can also trim back heliopsis stems, Joe Pye weed and other tall perennials and clean up the foliage of other perennials I generally leave last year's fallen leaves in place until late spring. Then I remove surplus leaf mulch and dead stalks that look untidy. When the ice is gone from the pond, I use the pond water to water the perennial beds and early bloomers such as hepatica and crocus. The roses by the driveway also get their watering from the pond. After a week, the pond is usually ready for a good clean and refill ready for the season.

Happy gardening everyone, and don't forget to smell the flowers.

This column is provided courtesy of the Saskatchewan Perennial Society (SPS; saskperennial@hotmail.com).



Crocuses are one of springs many beautiful blooms. Photo Credit: Bernadette Vangoool

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