

The

Spring 2011

CROW



Faraway home

Rural women step out

Blood in, blood out

Indian Posse founder Daniel Wolfe

Dark side of the lens

Tragedy and the journalist's job

The LaLoche project

Living colonialism



Journalism matters. And this book proves it.

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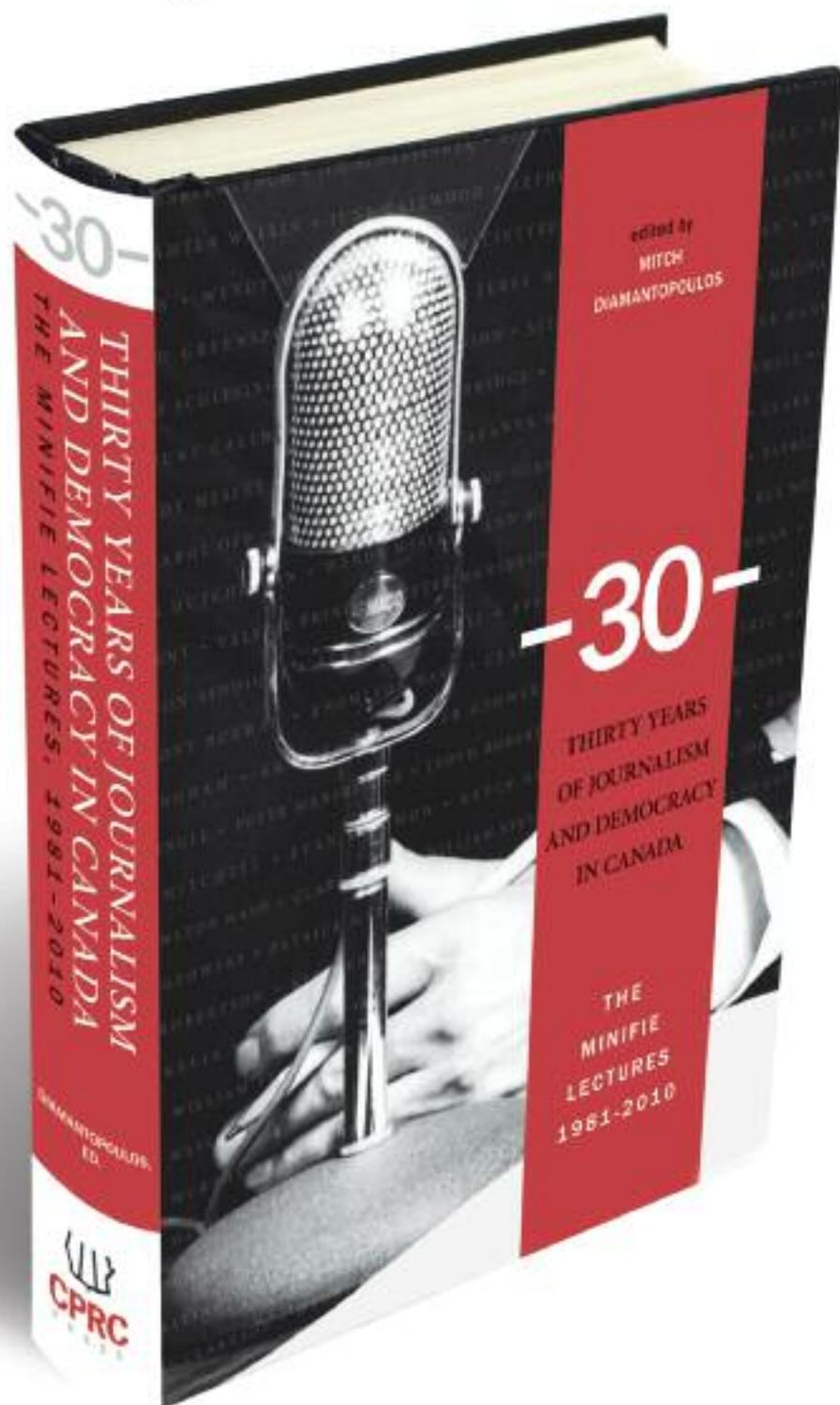
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Inside

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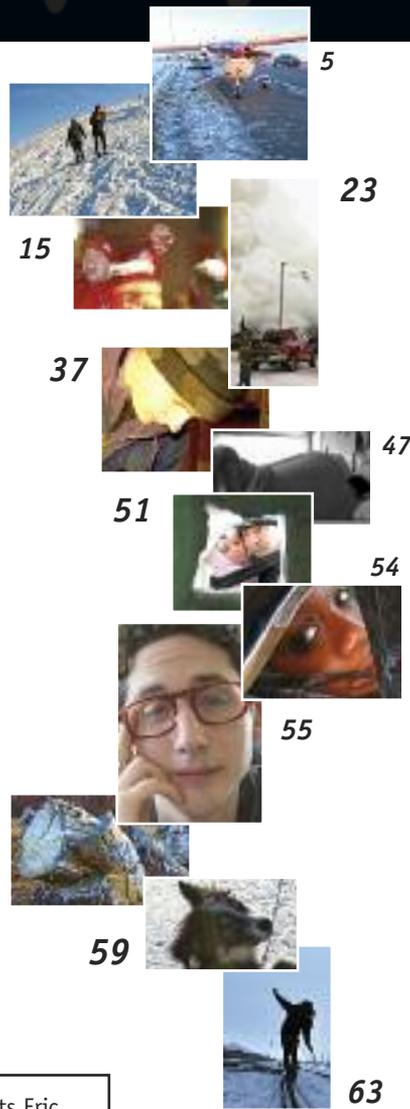
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Cover: Canadian Gothic: Journalists Eric Anderson and Leisha Grebinski pose for an updated version of an iconic portrait. The role of man and woman have been reversed, and it is Leisha who holds the pitch fork.

photo by Caroline Lavoie

Editor's Nest



You hold in your hands a magazine, made of paper and ink — and relegated to extinction not so long ago. But walk into any bookstore today and you'll notice magazine racks command a good share of real estate. And you'll notice people standing frozen in the midst of their busy days, captured by articles they merely meant to glance at, but now can't put down.

When the digital age dawned, media owners and advertisers alike showed little faith in magazines. The prevailing instinct was to shut magazines down as lost causes, or make them imitate the early Web: brief, politically brash, visually confusing and poorly fact-checked.

Readers knew better. They held steady and kept combing the racks. What were they looking for? Not a paper product, but a brand of journalism, writes Juan Senior, co-author of the 2010 World Report on Magazines. The brand includes excellent research, well-crafted stories, nuanced and informed viewpoints, arresting photographs, good production values, close editing and rigorous fact-checking. The physical results look, feel and smell great on paper, and aren't so bad on an e-tablet, either.

The brand fits well with the University of Regina School of Journalism's teaching focus on long-form documentary journalism. Our students study investigative journalism, produce broadcast documentaries and pursue specialized reporting in their advanced print classes. Every day, they are challenged to dig beyond the headlines.

In this vein, The Crow's goal is to uphold the quality of journalism readers expect in a magazine. This issue truly hits the mark. From cover to cover, there are stories that investigate, contextualize and bravely navigate difficult terrain, from the social to the personal. To craft their work, the writers looked outward to the world, and inward to themselves for perspective. The contributing photojournalists did the same, seeking out human experience in imagery.

The third contributor is you, the reader—the one with the imagination and personal experience to build on each story, and with the networks to pass ideas generated by these stories from person to person, creating new stories. And you're the one with the good sense to demand deeper journalism. This is your magazine. Dig in.

Patricia W. Elliott
Editor



Surprise landing

Engine failure forced pilot Denis Lamontagne and son Paul to land their small single engine plane on Regina's busy Lewvan Drive. A witness describes the scene on his cell phone. No one was hurt.

CAROLINE LAVOIE



Blood In, Blood Out

The rise and fall of Indian Posse founder Daniel Wolfe.

By Mike Raptis

On trial for murder, notorious gangster Daniel Wolfe sits in a Regina holding cell and tells an undercover officer he would rather die at the hands of his bro's than be taken out by a rival gang. It's the fall of 2009. The co-founder of the Indian Posse—a powerful street gang in Winnipeg that has spread throughout the Prairies—is soon found guilty and handed a life sentence for a deadly home invasion. He is to serve his sentence at the Saskatchewan Penitentiary, a maximum security prison housing a who's who of Western Canada's crime world.

At thirty-three, Wolfe is an aged man. He is dangerously thin, with long, ratty black hair, cracked skin, and dark, beady eyes. He has already spent over a decade in federal penitentiaries, so life on the inside is nothing new to him. He tells the undercover officer, "I'm gonna fuckin' terrorize the streets from the inside. I'll create monsters inside and send them out." Wolfe has done it before. He's called the shots behind bars—and plans on doing it again. He knows he will be serving his time with his Indian Posse brothers, with the 'compatibility' system the prison has in place. The system is supposed to curb prison yard violence by housing inmates together from the same gangs.

Little does Wolfe know the very monsters he had helped create will put an end to his short, tragic life.

Daniel Wolfe was born in 1976 in The Pas, Manitoba. Located 642 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg on the boreal plain, the town is known as Manitoba's 'Gateway to the North.' Like many prairie towns, The Pas—short for The Paskoyac—has a long history of hostility between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. The town has historically operated as a white enclave surrounded by the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, creating an atmosphere of prejudice and bigotry. Opaskwayak members were tolerated as customers but not welcomed into the community. As a result, they were generally unemployed and uninvolved in civic affairs.

Poverty, segregation, and substance abuse made up the social malaise at the time of Wolfe's birth, and its effects

penetrated the walls of his childhood home. He was born into a life of abuse and abandonment, his mother a drug addict, his father an alcoholic. The house of cards soon collapsed, leaving a young Daniel Richard and his older brother, Richard Daniel, to bounce around foster care before taking to the mean streets of Winnipeg. Born just eleven months apart, they were psychologically homeless, belonging to nobody but each other.

Daniel and Richard were not alone in the streets, nor did they want to be. For as much as they shared—their names, age, and interests—they also shared the story of so many other discarded kids in Winnipeg's North End. Once a working-class neighbourhood in the 1970s, the area had become a refuge for thousands of aboriginal people who arrived seeking a better life in the city only to find poverty and exclusion. By age twelve, the brothers were already drinking, getting high, and learning the violent ways of the city's emerging street gangs. When the first notable gang, the Overlords, splintered into rival factions in the late 1980s, the streets turned into turf—and the Wolfes turned to their friends. The brotherhood of two began to grow into a posse.

It was in this toxic cocktail of poverty, drugs, and violence that Daniel and Richard forged an identity for themselves and their native brothers. They called themselves the Indian Posse, a gang that would help aboriginals stand tall for what they believed in—even if it meant killing one another. It was a decree that may have started inside Winnipeg's Stoney Mountain prison, but the Wolfe brothers would bring the 'IP' to the streets in 1990. However clouded the message was, it was made a little clearer in 1994. Richard wrote an Indian Posse manifesto to be published in the Winnipeg Free Press. In part, it read: "If we have to kill other brother(s) and sister(s), then let it be, we will survive the war path in the future. We will join the great Spirit in the sky and we don't mean to disrespect (our) people but we all (have) something to prove for one another and it will be done if there is no other way to do it."

Winnipeg: Summer 1995. A record number of homicides has rookie reporter Mike McIntyre knee-deep in murder cases. The twenty-year-old has just been assigned the crime beat at the Winnipeg Sun newspaper, and throws himself into the action.

With a young photographer riding shotgun, McIntyre drives into a crime-riddled area of the city and pulls the car over. They turn a police scanner on and wait, sometimes overnight, for something to happen. "As calls would come in we'd go right to the scene, quite often getting interviews and pictures as things would happen," McIntyre recalls. "It was a real eye opener...a whole new world than what I was used to."

One of McIntyre's first murder scenes is the infamous killing of Joseph 'Beeper' Spence. McIntyre is sitting in his car just blocks away when a van pulls up in front of the thirteen-year-old, who is standing on a street corner with some friends. "You IP?" a Deuce gangbanger asks. Beeper—fresh out of grade seven, unaffiliated yet undeterred—steps forward. "Straight up...in full effect!" he brags. As a shotgun rises, Beeper starts to run—but drops as a blast is fired straight into his back.

"I'll never forget seeing Beeper lying on the ground...dead," McIntyre says. "We had gotten to the scene before the police did and it was absolutely chaotic. There were gang members involved in the shooting—Indian Posse gang members—and all kinds of people that were not happy to see us." The two scramble back to the safety of their car and wait for the police to arrive.

"That was a case that very much made Winnipeggers sit up and take notice there was huge gang activity going on," McIntyre says.

The Wolfe brothers soon make headlines again. In 1995 Richard shoots and nearly kills a pizza delivery man. That September, Daniel is sentenced to three years for threatening at gunpoint two witnesses to the shooting. After serving his time, in March 1999 Daniel is back in prison, sentenced to eight years for robbery following an attack to collect a gang debt.

By now the Indian Posse has grown to become the largest gang in Winnipeg, with the Wolfe brothers and other members controlling it from the inside. "Within the gang community there was a sense of respect and a sense of fear. Both brothers carried themselves pretty prominently," says McIntyre. "They were confident, they were cocky, and I guess that comes with where they were in the pecking order of the gang world."

In 2000 there were more than 1,500 identified active gang members in the Winnipeg police database, with over five hundred being Indian Posse. Police forces across the Prairies soon formed anti-gang units, and the prisons filled up fast. "It's the prison system that actually helped create the expansion of the Indian Posse and other gangs," says McIntyre. "What started to happen is as you have more gangs and more gang conflict...the problems on the street would spill into the prison." In the system, gang ties ensured protection.

McIntyre says that prison officials started looking at ways to curb the

violence within the walls, and started transferring gang members out of Manitoba to Saskatchewan and Alberta.

"Quite often these guys would get out, and instead of coming back to Winnipeg...their friends would come out to them," says McIntyre. "They started to see opportunities in these communities."

Blair Pelletier knows the gang life. After serving a life sentence for murder, Pelletier returns to Regina and walks downtown. It is May 2006 and—after being locked up for twenty-five years—he feels lost. The streets he once knew: gone. The people: unrecognizable. Going into prison Pelletier had four brothers. Now, he has one.

He wears sunglasses, paranoid that people will recognize him as an ex-con. Standing over six feet tall, weighing two hundred and fifty pounds, with long, braided black hair, Pelletier is hard to miss. Heads turn as he passes by. He's sixty-one and a specimen of good health, a rare sight on the streets. "The guys who were out here, who I knew...they were junkies or they were drunks...People that were my age looked like they were a hundred years old. That's why they were looking at me," he explains. Of the people he knew, he guesses over ninety per cent are dead.

Pelletier's parents were victims of the residential school system. His traumatized father packed up the family on a team of horses in 1952 and left the Cowesses First Nation for the bright lights of Regina. Blair was the youngest. "My parents didn't have the social skills for the city," he says. "They were just too much of reserve people, and the city swallowed them up." He and his brothers took to the streets, like so many other aboriginal youth, then and now.

Before Pelletier's time in prison, people wouldn't dare look at him twice. "You'd hear about the Pelletiers in Regina," he says. "There was only me and my four brothers, but we were organized." So too were other aboriginals, each clique having their own little wheels to turn downtown. They would set up shop and socialize, run their women, deal drugs, and sell stolen

goods. Among the mob were safe-crackers, bank robbers, and boosters. "Even though I grew up on the street, there was camaraderie there, it was a family," he recalls. You needed family to survive. "There's still people living in less than humane conditions and that's North Central," Pelletier says, referring to a tough Regina neighbourhood. With the highest rate of injection drug use in Canada, and a deadly HIV epidemic among aboriginal women, it's hard to argue against him. "Poverty breeds gangs. Aboriginals are the last people to become gangsters—we are a product of the system, but we keep greasing the wheels."

Though crime in Regina is at its lowest level in a decade, the city continues to have a festering gang problem. It has been estimated there are between four hundred and eight hundred gang members and associates now in Regina, with eighty per cent being of aboriginal descent. Country-wide, twenty-two per cent of all gang members are aboriginal, compared to an aboriginal population of 3.7 per cent. In prosperous First Nations communities—particularly in central Canada—gang activity is rare.

Gang activity seems to grow hand in hand with high rates of incarceration. "I was in every maximum security prison from Quebec to B.C. in Canada," Pelletier says. "A lot of people don't understand that's where gangs originated from—they pretty much still call the shots from within the walls."

With one year down and twenty-four to go, Pelletier begins to second guess his gang mentality. In July 1982 he sits in his cell at Archambault Institution in Quebec, fighting off a barrage of tear gas. The prison is in lockdown after inmates have attacked and killed three guards coming in from the exercise yard. "We were really getting it good in there and I started taking inventory and I'm saying to myself, 'What the hell—I'm sitting in jail doing a life sentence and I'm getting tear-gassed every day for something I didn't do.'"

Pelletier returned to the Prairies the next year, transferred to Edmonton Max. Then he was shipped to Kent Institution in British



Photo: Mike Raptis

Pelletier: Healing voice.

Columbia. One day he took out a piece of paper and wrote down why he did things. "I would write the answer, look at it the next day and I would laugh because I was only fooling myself."

"It was at that time I said to two friends who were working out, 'Come to my cell.' I had a big stash...drugs. I gave it to my best friend and said, 'Here, that's it.' That was November 24, 1984—and I've been straight ever since." Within the walls, he soon became a voice of reason, working hard to show his native brothers a more traditional way of life. "I was a stabilizing factor in the system. If they had a rowdy range they put me out there and the guys quieted down," he says. "That was out of respect—guys had respect for me because I was always trying to help them." Pelletier was the first aboriginal prisoner in Canada to be allowed to bring a sacred bundle into prison and keep it in his cell.

In 2000, Pelletier was transferred to Manitoba's Stony Mountain Institution, where he convinced the Manitoba Warriors, Indian Posse, and Native Syndicate to call a truce. One year after he left, the truce fell apart.

Daniel Wolfe—free for the first time in eight years, but under strict bail conditions—contemplates straightening out his life. He tells his parole officer in 2004 that he wants to "leave the gang, move away, and live up to the responsibilities." His plan is to return to his home reserve, Okanese First Nation in Saskatchewan, where he has support from elders and his mother, who has straightened out her life. In August of 2007 he returns to Saskatchewan to start a new life.

One month into his last shot at freedom, Wolfe is at a bar in nearby Fort Qu'Appelle when he runs into Bernard Percy Pascal and other members of the rival Native Syndicate. They exchange threats as Pascal insults Wolfe's IP tattoos. "They don't know what's coming for them," a witness overhears Wolfe saying.

After grabbing a gun, Wolfe and a sixteen-year-old IP member storm a nearby home and open fire on eleven people—

many of whom have no gang affiliation. Among the dead are twenty-four-year-old Michael Itittakoose and fifty-four-year-old Marvin Arnault, killed trying to protect his wife from being hit as she called 911. Three other men survive, including Pascal, shot nine times.

Back in jail, Wolfe takes one more shot at freedom. In 2008, he and five others plan and pull off one of the most high-profile jailbreaks in Saskatchewan history. Over a period that spans months, they dig a hole in the wall of the Regina Correctional Centre—with a spoon. He runs but there's no escape. After a dramatic takedown in Winnipeg, Daniel Wolfe is back in custody, this time for life.

January 4, 2010: Lunch-hour at the penitentiary. With its high brick walls and gun turrets on each corner, the building is somewhat of a landmark at the western edge of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. Sixteen inmates, including Wolfe, leave their concrete cells and shuffle along the epoxy-coated flooring toward a common area for lunch. The inmates—blood brothers of Wolfe—eat in full view of the guards. There's Ryan John Agecutay, one of five men Wolfe planned the jailbreak with. Some are Indian Posse, others are core members of the Native Syndicate Killers, a gang tied to the IP through a common enemy, Saskatchewan's powerful Native Syndicate. All are Western Canada's most dangerous, serving hard time for a litany of murders and shooting sprees.

At 12:40 p.m., Wolfe is suddenly in the middle of a barrage of fists and blades. The scuffle is so lightening quick that by the time the guards break it up, it's too late. Daniel Wolfe is a dead man, his blood running over the sterile floor. Six inmates are charged with the murder, including Agecutay, Wolfe's jailbreak partner.

Some say Wolfe's blood may soon spill into the streets of Canada's heartland.

Mike McIntyre, now an award winning novelist and crime journalist, reports that since the murder there has been a spike in gang activity in Winnipeg, with a lot going under the radar. "Every second or third day we're hearing about a drive-by shooting—there's a lot going on, but not many

arrests...It's tough to connect the dots and say who's going after who," he says.

"Wolfe had talked in court about how gangs were like the family he never had—of course it was the family that ultimately turned on him and killed him," says McIntyre. "Probably if you talk to some older gang members they would shake their heads and say, 'It's not how it used to be.'"

Blair Pelletier is one of the people shaking his head. The camaraderie that once existed is gone. "Indians killing Indians" is how he puts it. A recent presentation by the Regina Police Service Street Gang Unit focused on seven aboriginal street gangs operating in Regina, each in pursuit of money and power at whatever the cost.

It doesn't have to be this way. While a twenty-five-year sentence meant death for Daniel Wolfe, it gave life to Blair Pelletier. After his release, he started a company called Gray Bear Healing Voice and took to the road, speaking out about gangs in the aboriginal community. "I love seeing people respond to me, and how they respond. I start talking about my life, about crime, life in prison...it gets their attention." Pelletier has now re-settled in Regina, with a wife and kids, and works one-on-one with guys coming out of the Regina Correctional Centre—many of whom are gang members. Not only does he get them ready for employment, he teaches them cultural values. More importantly, he stands as proof that it's possible to step outside the gang life and survive. "They look at me and I tell them what's happened to me in the four years since I got out," he says. "I talk from experience." For Daniel Wolfe, the lesson comes too late. 🐾

Author Mike Raptis received the 2010 CTV Investigative Journalism Prize for this story.



Photo: Patricia Elliott



Summit

In Saskatchewan, a toboggan hill feels like the top of the world.

SEAN DUNHAM

Baby waste

Over one and a half billion diapers hit Canada's landfills every year. A few determined moms are changing the trend.

By Kim Nakrieko

She stands sixty-seven centimetres tall. She's surprisingly quick on her feet, racing the length of the room, dodging books, toys and a variety of shoes and socks she has strewn about the place. It's a wonder she doesn't fall. She wobbles, does a quick sidestep. Pauses to pick up one book for each hand. Sergeant Hippo's Busy Week for the right hand and I Love you Through and Through

for the left. Then she looks at me, big brown eyes wide, drops Sergeant Hippo's Busy Week from her right hand and with thumb and pointer finger together motions back and forth to her right hip. This is baby sign language for diaper. She's telling me it's time for a diaper change.

I smile and nod. She drops the book from her left hand and heads off full speed to the diaper table. She beats me to it and

is well into throwing cloth diapers, diaper covers, disposable diapers and washcloths over her shoulder and onto the floor when I arrive. Lifting her to the table, I face a decision I must make several times a day: "What diaper does Willa get this time?"

My selection is now inconveniently strewn about the floor. There are two kinds of cloth diapers to choose from in our house. One is easier. It's called a pocket



Photo: Kim Nakrieko

The Regina landfill. The average baby adds between five to seven thousand diapers.



Photo: Kim Nakrieko

Leslie Charlton's shop specializes in cloth alternatives.

diaper; made of highly absorbent polyester microfiber, it's easier to put on and just looks better. But we only have two of those, so I have to choose my timing for this diaper carefully. I might want it later if we go out. Then there is cloth diaper number two. It's pretty easy to use now that we're well into a year of using them. This diaper is what is called a pre-fold diaper. There are pants made of leak-proof polyester urethane laminate—breathable and easy to clean. They fasten with Velcro adhesive closures; no more pins and vinyl rubber pants for this generation of babies. The insert is a thick cotton liner that is three-folded and placed into the liner. They work well but are so bulky that many of Willa's pants and onesies don't fit over them.

I pause and consider. There is also the temptation of the disposable. The ones I have on the table are self-proclaimed environmentally friendly ones. Sold by Loblaws, this particular brand claims to use less water and energy than the average disposable. Disposables are easier. They're faster, smaller, and more absorbent. Unless there's real cause, the disposable won't need to be changed for a while. The pre-fold diaper will need to be changed a lot sooner, two hours tops. But there are other things to consider with the disposable—the environmentally conscious considerations. We try to keep

our disposable usage to about ten per week. If we maintain that number, and if Willa uses diapers until she's two and a half years old, then we're looking at 1,300 disposables being added to the local landfill on our behalf. That's a lot. But it's

"What diaper does Willa get this time?"

less than the five to seven thousand disposable diapers the average baby goes through in his or her diapering years.

North America is a consumptive place. Landfills are overflowing everywhere and garbage is a real issue. Disposable diapers are the third largest contributor to residential garbage, behind newspapers and food and beverage containers. Canada's largest urban centre, Toronto, includes disposable diapers in its citywide compost services. The province of Quebec acknowledges the environmental and financial impact disposable diapers have on municipalities. In an attempt to lighten the load, more than one hundred Quebec municipalities offer subsidies of \$100 to \$500 to families who use cloth diapers. It's worth it. By reducing waste by

one tonne, the amount a fully disposable-diapered baby produces in a lifetime, a municipality saves up to \$150 per diapering family each year.

Quebec is the first province to offer this to their citizens and, thanks to Martine Gauthier of Wendover, Ontario, it's not the only one. Gauthier has made it her personal mission to get the province of Ontario on board. A mother of one, Gauthier threw herself behind her cause after having her son. Not only does she petition municipalities in Ontario to follow Quebec's subsidy model, she also opened an online store, babygaiadiapers.com, to sell the products she believes in. So far Gauthier has pitched her cause to eight municipalities in Ontario. In the spring of 2010 the municipality of Clarence Rockland became the first to get on board, offering grants of \$200 to five cloth-diapering families. By summer, Gauthier had persuaded two more municipalities to ante up incentives for reducing baby waste.

It seems a no-brainer to support cloth diapering. But in Saskatchewan, where my family lives, the most recent census data shows that Saskatchewan's waste is up 4.9 per cent. Prince Albert is the only city that offers property line recycling. And no city in the province runs a compost program. When it comes to disposable diaper usage, my municipality doesn't consider diaper waste reduction as an issue on the table. Brent Rostad, the landfill manager with the City of Regina, says Regina has bigger problems to deal with first, mainly the lack of any citywide recycling services. Can't argue that point.

But here's the 'yuck factor.' Although it happens all the time, human waste isn't supposed to be placed in landfills. The World Health Organization banned the disposal of human feces in household waste in the 1970s. In fact, if you read the fine print on disposable diaper packaging, you will see that it is advised that you flush all waste in the toilet before tossing the diaper in the garbage. Seems that human waste carries a lot of bacteria. When human waste is wrapped up tightly and thrown in the garbage, it

sits and stews for the time it takes the diaper to decompose—an estimated five hundred years. As time passes, more water is absorbed and the diaper gets bigger. As the diaper expands with water, more water leaks out and the feces move through the diaper, out of the diaper and into the ground. Over one and a half billion diapers are disposed of in Canada alone each year—that’s a lot of poop making its way through the environment and carrying all kinds of potentially harmful bacteria with it.

Thankfully, people are starting to do something. Leslie Charlton is the owner of Groovy Mama, a Regina shop. When Charlton had her first child eight years ago, she was totally alone in her quest for cloth diapers. Armed with fabric and passion, she fashioned cloth diapers any way she could—and it wasn’t always pretty. They leaked and were not easy to use, but she managed. Over time, Charlton started to see her challenge as a business opportunity and she opened the first mom and baby store in Regina specializing in cloth diapers.

When you walk into Groovy Mama, one of the first things you see is the wall of diapers. There are all kinds of options on display, with every accessory you could

want or dream of for making cloth-diapering work for you, at any price. Charlton even collects and donates used diapers for low income families who want to try cloth diapering but can’t make the start-up investment. To spread the word,

Although it happens all the time, human waste isn’t supposed to be placed in landfills.

every few months she hosts cloth diapering information sessions, often inviting competitive sellers in the area to share the stage.

On a typical Wednesday evening, eighteen moms, dads and grandparents crowd into the small shop. Cloth diapering can seem complicated at first, she tells the group. It’s worth it, though, not only for the planet, but also for the pocketbook. The most expensive cloth-diapering regime can cost up to \$1,300 for the diapering lifetime of one child, about the same as buying disposables and wipes

at the cheapest place in town. However, going the more economical route with pre-fold diapers and cloth and water wipes lowers the cost to \$450 for one child. Add another child or two and, either way you slice it, both cloth-diapering options are cheaper than disposables.

Leslie holds up a sealed, leak-proof bag for cloth diapering on the move. There are a few moans from the crowd. Not everyone is convinced traveling with cloth diapers is the way to go. But if the sales at the end of the workshop are any indication, a significant amount of Regina landfill will be spared.

Like parents at the workshop, I want to be bold, but I have to be realistic. Sometimes I go for what is easy. At bedtime suddenly all bets are off and without thinking twice, I grab a disposable diaper. My reasoning has been that disposables are more absorbent and I don’t want Willa to wake up in a puddle of pee.

Then I met Sarah McGaughey. McGaughey never, ever questioned her feelings on disposable diapers, not once. McGaughey introduced me to the most environmentally responsible form of diapering there is—no diapering!

McGaughey has been on a garbage-free



Photo: Kim Nakrieko



Photo: Kim Nakrieko

“Which diaper tonight?”

quest since 2004. She was inspired by her own behaviour while living in Korea. Out of shyness, she found herself grabbing pre-packaged food at the Korean markets rather than bartering for fresh food like everyone else. She started to take stock in what she was consuming and the results were shocking enough to take serious action when she got home to Toronto. Since then, McGaughey and husband Kyle have lived garbage-free more than once, achieving a full thirty-one days in 2007. But when their daughter Aurora came along at the end of 2007, living garbage-

free became a lot more challenging.

They may no longer be garbage free, but they sure use a lot less ‘stuff’ than most people, producing an average of one small shopping bag of garbage a week—about one-tenth the national average.

When it came to diapering Aurora, McGaughey never once touched a disposable. While most parents go through eight to ten diapers a day, McGaughey, at most, used five cloth diapers a day, and sometimes none at all. What she did instead was a process called ‘elimination communication,’ a technique practiced

throughout the world for centuries. The premise is to retain an infant’s natural instinct to keep the nest clean. McGaughey and her husband learned to look for cues that newborn Aurora would give when it was time to empty her bladder or bowels. Soon mom and dad picked up on when Aurora needed to ‘go.’ While most parents balk at the idea of being tethered to their child’s toileting needs, McGaughey insists it wasn’t a big deal. She would even venture across

McGaughey has been on a garbage-free quest since 2004.

Toronto diaperless, hopping off the subway to deal with Aurora’s need to pee.

Here’s the big benefit. By age one, Aurora was fully potty trained, something most North American children don’t achieve until age three. My daughter Willa is already fourteen months and we haven’t even thought about potties yet.

Back home, I give it a try. As Willa prepares for her bath, I sit her down on her newly purchased potty. I repeat the word “pee-pee” over and over again and I’m pretty sure she understands what I’m saying. Whether it’s chance or understanding I’ll never know for sure, but just as I’m about to give up, she pees. As I hug and kiss her, she seems genuinely pleased with herself. She smiles, hops off the potty and slams the little plastic lid shut. She walks over to the bathtub and prepares for the next step of a new nighttime ritual.

As my husband takes over on bath duty, I begin the remaining preparations for bedtime. The bunting bag is laid out, her sleeper is ready and I have to make the decision I’ve made over four hundred times before: “Which diaper tonight?” I contemplate my options and decide tonight is the night we try a cloth diaper overnight. I lay it out and feel proud. Today was a disposable-free day. 🐾



The big win

People hit Toronto's Yonge Street after Canada takes the men's hockey gold medal at the 2010 Winter Olympics (top). In the midst of revelry, police tend to an injured man (bottom).

BARBARA WOOLSEY



Bad Fare

Driving cab is Canada's most dangerous job.

By Colleen Fraser

Photo: Adriana Christianson

It's four in the morning on a Saturday in Regina, Saskatchewan, and Sukrinder Singh has been on the road for close to seven hours. He gets a call from dispatch to head to the North Star on Highway 1 East, a motel with a fluorescent red sign advertising rooms for thirty-nine dollars a night. His fare is a young man in his twenties who has had a few drinks but doesn't look like much trouble. He asks Singh if they can pick up his lady friend in the east end on the way to their final destination in Hillsdale, a south Regina neighbourhood.

The woman they pick up is drunker, heartier and louder. Singh takes Ring Road to Hillsdale—a faster route he normally avoids since the additional kilometres mean a more expensive ride.

When they arrive, the man says he has to go inside. He's forgotten his money, but tells Singh that he can hold his expensive cell phone until he returns. The pair disappears into the house, closing the door behind them.

Several minutes later, Singh is still patiently waiting when the woman reappears holding a large bag. She gets into the passenger seat and says her companion can't pay the fare. However, she is willing to part with the bag of potatoes she has sitting in her lap. While he appreciates the offer, Singh declines, saying that he really needs the money more than her vegetables.

The woman starts getting agitated. She explains they don't have any way to pay, but that her boyfriend needs his phone back.

Singh gets embarrassed telling the next part. The woman suggests other options.

The thirty-three year old driver is happily married with two children, and he tells her so.

Angry, the woman grabs the cell phone and puts it somewhere he "morally cannot reach." Her drunkenness causes her to drop it on the floor, and after a scramble, Singh grabs the phone and tells her to get out of the car.

The ensuing assault makes him chuckle later—how embarrassing to tell his coworkers his swollen face was caused by getting clocked by a bad female fare. But there's a darker side. In the end, Singh gives the woman the phone and leaves empty-handed.

"What can you do?" he shrugs.

Singh decides not to go to the police. He has almost three hours left on shift, and the time it will take to file a complaint and meet with officers means money he is missing out on. He might know all of the details: addresses, names, descriptions—but he also knows nothing much will come of the investigation.

Singh understands the police do as much as they can. However, the culprits will get a slap on the wrist at best. It's his word against theirs.

So another assault and fare dodge goes unreported.

Regina is a small city, with a population just over 190,000; the chances are good that he will run into the man again. In the past, two situations arise: the man will be embarrassed and pay him for the dodged fare, and pay up front for the next one, or Singh won't let him into the car. It's a game of roulette, knowing and judging who is getting into the back seat

of your cab. There are no cameras in the cars to record events. There are no shields to protect the drivers from violent attacks. There is no GPS to record where they've been. There are no emergency lights on the top of the taxis to let other drivers know when there is a problem. Regina cab drivers are at the mercy of their fares. And Singh knows this for a fact. His father, Inder Singh, fifty-eight, has been violently attacked three times, almost losing an eye to a screwdriver four years ago. In August 2009 he almost lost his life to a trio of thieves who dragged him from the front seat and beat him with a hammer until he lost consciousness.

Driving a cab is Canada's most dangerous job according to Statistics Canada. In 2005, of sixty-nine workplace murders, eleven were taxi drivers. That's one more than the number of police officers killed. One in four taxi drivers are assaulted or robbed on the job at some point in their careers; almost that many had their vehicles damaged. It's especially dangerous in the Prairies, where Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg hold the top three spots for high crime cities. Robberies in the three cities are all at more than two hundred per cent above average.

In Regina, within the first three months of 2010, there were seven reported incidents against drivers. One particularly vicious weekend at the end of January saw it all, from robberies to passengers slashing one driver in the hand and another in the face. Four passengers distracted a cabbie so badly there was a collision, and the driver of the other vehicle, who was pregnant, had to have an emergency C-section. Of the seven

incidents in that one weekend, two have been cleared by charge and five remain unsolved. Winnipeg, 562 kilometres east of Regina, has faced similar attacks on drivers. At the end of January, one driver was pulled from his cab and beaten, sustaining irreversible brain damage.

These are only the reported incidents. Night drivers face fare jumpers who leave the car without paying, or they are assaulted, or they face aggressive customers most people in the industry would not have to put up with. A thirty-dollar fare often isn't worth time spent talking to police. Since drivers are contractors, it's just money out of their pockets.

This kind of ruckus doesn't happen every weekend, but Elizabeth Popowich of the Regina Police Service says when robberies do happen, they happen in spurts. If a criminal gets away with committing the crime once, they often don't stop until they are caught. One of Inder Singh's attackers was a teen who had been charged with assault on three different occasions for similar incidents against taxi drivers in Regina. After his father was attacked a third time and almost killed, Sukrinder Singh said the culprits were just let loose—caught by the police, kept in jail for three months, and then let go. He thinks the laws are too soft.

Popowich says that police can only present the evidence and they have no say in the outcome of a trial. She adds that the police are not in the business of forcing business decisions on local companies, but any kind of deterrent, like a shield or a camera, is a positive move, especially if it could provide evidence in a court case.

Winnipeg requires cameras, but there has also been a city regulation in place since 1989 to make shields mandatory. Because the majority of attacks were coming from directly behind the driver, the Taxi Board Commission of Manitoba decided to use a half-shield design.

But times have changed, and as of February, cabs will have a wrap-around

shield, where the driver is isolated from all other seats in the car. Ottawa, Calgary and some Toronto companies require their cars to have mounted surveillance cameras.

Even Calderdale, a small community near Halifax, Nova Scotia, is installing spy cams in their taxis after a string of violent attacks on cabbies. But while cameras can help determine the chain of events after the fact and act as a preventative measure,

The woman they pick up is drunker, heartier and louder.

it won't help a driver when a bad fare holds a knife to his or her throat. Other cities have offered solutions such as cashless systems, silent alarms and GPS, which allows cabs to be tracked at all times,

Meanwhile, Regina drivers have nothing. Singh has been fighting for shields since the first attack on his father, talking to media and making appearances at City Hall. It has all fallen on deaf ears he says, and he is frustrated that no one is listening.

Regina Cabs, one of the largest cab companies in the city, would not respond to repeated requests for an interview to discuss safety. Regina police chief Troy Hagen won't say there is a trend in attacks on drivers, but he will say that the city is committed to working with business owners and companies to improve safety.

The solutions aren't easy, though. When it comes to shields, most Regina drivers use their own vehicles, from town cars to hybrids. Developing a standard design would be nearly impossible, and some cars are so small that a shield wouldn't fit. Singh bought a shield for his own car—\$1,500 later, it sits in his garage because it caused too many problems with customers and other drivers. He felt isolated in the cab community because he was the only one with the device. And since his cab stood out, he was worried customers would specifically start requesting "any cab but the one with the

shield." Some drivers complain about the price tag as well—as contractors, the money for any safety equipment would have to come from their pockets.

One company that is considering taking preventative measures is Regina based Co-op Taxi. Manager Bubba Singh says the incidents have made the company investigate the costs of putting cameras in the cars that run under their forty licenses. He has been driving for four years as well, and recognizes the danger his drivers face.

If one company sets a precedent, it can't happen too soon. Shortly after I talked to Sukrinder Singh, there was another string of incidents against cab drivers in Regina. Three people were arrested in the city's north end after threatening a cab driver with a knife and trying to rob him. In a separate incident, a driver was roughed up by three males just before two in the morning. No money was taken, but the driver suffered minor injuries after being punched. The story was a headliner on the Regina Leader-Post website for less than four hours.

Singh used to drive the day shift so he could spend more time with his family. His father, an older and smaller version of him, would drive at night. They decided to switch after this last incident—the younger Singh knows it's more dangerous but he feels like he has more ability to defend himself. His English is stronger after sixteen years in Canada. He can sass the people back who call him "Bin Laden."

Singh also belongs to a new generation of drivers. His father has never had a cellphone and won't get one. But with blue tooth technology, his son can stay on the line with a fellow driver through the night. They monitor each other's fares. If something goes wrong, they can hear it and call for help.

Cab drivers have a job that puts them in close proximity with strangers on a daily basis. Sometimes it's four o'clock in the morning, sometimes the people are in sketchy areas and sometimes things go wrong. Singh knows it. He says the first thought that goes through his head when he gets behind the wheel is whether he'll make it home to his family by morning. 🐦

The dark side of the

*When disaster strikes, journalists have a job to do.
The psychological fall-out happens later.*

By Samantha Maciag



lens



It was mid-morning February 11, 2009. A few hours earlier, suicide bombs ripped apart government buildings in the capital city of Afghanistan. The attacks were set off by eight Taliban gunmen in north Kabul, killing twenty-eight civilians, injuring more than fifty and leaving behind both human and structural wreckage.

Globe and Mail correspondent Graeme Smith made his way unrestricted to the buildings in the area of multiple blasts. With cameras slung over each of his shoulders, a recorder in one pocket and a notebook in the other, Smith explored the area, trying to make sense of what happened. The blast had left everything coated in a film of beige, talcum powder-like dust that covers much of the ground in Kabul and most of Afghanistan. Beside him, a Soviet-era concrete building was partially collapsed from the force of the explosion. Three different blasts had left parts of the building hazy, a mess of concrete and grey dust.

Shaken police officers surrounded the scene where some of their colleagues were killed only moments earlier. Few civilians stayed to watch the aftermath. These scenes don't draw crowds the way they would in Canada, Smith explained later, but people do stop. "If there's any kind of ongoing situation people tend to disappear, so the streets will be pretty empty. But as soon as the threat has passed, people will amble out to see what's going on, but they're more casual about it."

A composed officer led him through the area. Pointing to a crater surrounded by burn marks, the officer told Smith this is where one of the men detonated. The officer pointed to fragments of clothing, a shoe with a foot still inside of it, part of a hand, a bit of hair, part of a scalp—that was the bomber. Turning to a bloodstain not far away, the man revealed the spot where his friend died. Each way Smith turned, shrapnel spray covered everything. But there was no odour. Kabul's dry air

mutes the smell of death.

Later, clambering around the second floor of the government building left partially in shambles from the explosions, Smith and New York Times photographer Lynsey Addario worked side by side. It crossed their minds the building could collapse around them. When you're a reporter covering a suicide bombing, there isn't time to worry about yourself, to digest what you're seeing—like soldiers you have a task to complete; you do your job. Smith explains: "You're talking to people, you're taking photos. You often don't really pause to get freaked out until much later."

Travelling to cover wars is not a new concept, but the rules of the game have changed. During World War I the writings of war were from men—stories of masculinity and national heroism. The writers didn't engage or participate. In 1917, London Daily Chronicle correspondent Phillip Gibbs wrote, "I was only a looker-on and reporter of other men's courage and sacrifice." Later, famed war photojournalist Robert Capa brought journalists even closer to the frontlines, coining the phrase: "If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough."

Capa was daring. "The war correspondent has his stake—his life—in his own hands, and he can put it on this horse or on that horse, or he can put it back in his pocket at the very last minute," he wrote about D-Day in his memoir, *Slightly Out of Focus*. "I am a gambler. I decided to go in with Company E in the first wave." His photographs from that day in 1944 are some of the most significant works of journalism. But his role as a witness came with a price, one his brother Cornell shares in the foreword to Capa's memoir: "It's not always easy to stand aside and be unable to do anything except to record the sufferings around one." Capa's memoir tells the stories of getting drunk, subsequent hangovers, gambling and women while he was working abroad. He paid the ultimate price later, killed by a land mine in Indochina in 1954.

In 1919, after serving in World War I, a new face joined the Toronto Daily Star as a

freelancer, staff writer and foreign correspondent. Ernest Hemingway wrote for the Star before moving through a variety of other publications. The most famous of his journalistic works are his files on the Spanish War. For Hemingway and his literary friends, drinking binges were frequent. In the 1960s, Hemingway began to mentally and physically deteriorate, and

"You often don't really pause to get freaked out until much later."

he failed one suicide attempt. After a second, he succeeded. On July 2, 1961, he shot himself.

Journalists are human. They laugh, they cry. They can be traumatized in ways beyond comprehension. The scars of war, natural disasters and daily trauma aren't always obvious—sometimes they aren't visible immediately, and other times, never at all.

The drive from the Dominican Republic to Haiti's capital only took an hour and a half. The core of the city was absolutely devastated. Thirty-three hours after the January 12, 2010 earthquake, Globe and Mail reporter Les Perreux reached Port-au-Prince. Buildings were reduced to rubble, bodies lay in the paved streets, and at times the smell of decomposition was overwhelming. The recovery efforts had yet to begin. A snaking trail, only wide enough for one vehicle, wound its way through the wreckage. Some streets were blocked off entirely. Every piece of open land was taken by displaced citizens camping out. "People were in shock. The streets were full of people, but it was strangely quiet," recalls Perreux. "In a lot of ways it felt like there were a lot of zombies in the street because people were just sort of wandering around uncertain about what they should do next."

Perreux began his journalism career in Saskatchewan, first at the University of

Regina School of Journalism, later at the Saskatoon Star Phoenix and the National Post. When the Post closed the bureau he was working for, Perreux started at the Canadian Press. During five years at CP, he made four trips to cover the Afghan war, travelled to Kashmir for the earthquake, Lebanon for the Israeli-Hamas conflict and to Vatican City for Pope John Paul II's funeral. He was hired by the Globe two years ago to cover Quebec's domestic news from Montreal. When the call came to go to Haiti, Perreux had a quick and easy conversation with his wife, Kim McNairn of CBC. The couple agreed the assignment was too important to say no, even with a ten-month-old at home. "You calculate your risks quite differently and you calculate what story is worth the risk in a completely different way," he explains.

Day one, after walking past hundreds of bodies and visiting the overflowing morgue, Perreux had seen enough death. He didn't seek out the mass graves. Told to empty his notebook, no area off limits, Perreux says he still didn't get it all. "The thing you can't capture is the scale of it. It's impossible to get across the scale of the disaster," he says. On his last day in Haiti, he met a twelve-year-old girl with compound fractures in each leg, the bones sticking out of her flesh. "If it had happened in a car accident here, you'd have a lot of rehab ahead of you, but you would live and probably your legs would probably be saved. But this girl, not only is it absolutely certain she lost both of her legs, but she probably died." The story never made it into his reports. "You can only talk about that so much and you can only talk about it in a certain way, or you lose people," he says.

Perreux isn't shy. He openly shares the stories of what he's witnessed, finding his philosophical outlook on death helpful. "Everybody dies, I guess. How it happens and how publicly it happens and how violent it is and how painful it is, are not of our choosing. It just happens." What bothered Perreux the most, though, were the sounds of people who were trapped and wouldn't get out alive and the number of injured people who could have survived

with timely medical attention, but didn't. "I wouldn't be surprised to have nightmares about that at some point," he says.

Trauma provokes different reactions from different reporters. Some people become anxious, others can't sleep and others become the newsroom grouch. Some journalists draw inward, others go out and get smashed with their friends. Dr. Anthony Feinstein says these reactions are common. But for some reporters, those who have had their lives threatened, the high level of risk can lead to nightmares and flashbacks, both signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Things can be even worse. Some people become hyper-vigilant, worried they are being attacked, even if they are safe. The earlier a journalist recognizes this behaviour, the better. Leaving it fester can lead to inability to work, relationships falling apart and general unhappiness.

Education is the remedy, says Feinstein. A psychiatrist for more than twenty years, he has spent the last ten years studying the effects of trauma on journalists. He also consults for Reuters, CBC, BBC and CNN. Feinstein acknowledges changes have been made inside organizations dealing with traumatized journalists, but says efforts aren't consistent. Attitudes and methods vary from newsroom to newsroom. Lately, training is starting to improve. Universities and colleges now offer special courses. War correspondents can take Hostile Environment Training. But there is more work to be done.

Journalists need to know the risks and consequences for their careers, Feinstein says. News managers need to be able to direct their staff toward counselling before their troubled behaviour affects the newsroom environment. "I think everything begins with education. If people are not educated about the topic, they're going to miss it," Feinstein says. He puts the onus on news organizations to make it easier for people to ask for help. "If there's no discussion at all within an organization about this, and sometimes there may even be a negative connotation

associated with this, then it's going to be much harder for the journalist to get help."

On November 18, 1998, Tara Singh Hayer, publisher of the Indo-Canadian Times, a Punjabi weekly printed in Surrey, British Columbia, was the first journalist to be assassinated in Canada. After surviving one attempt on his life that left him a

"You live right on the fault line."

paraplegic, Hayer was gunned down at home in his garage. The news was a shock for Vancouver Sun reporter Kim Bolan. Hayer was a professional colleague and source of hers, and Bolan had received her own death threat just eleven months earlier.

A reporter at the Sun since 1984, Bolan has devoted much of her career to the Air India Flight 182 terrorist bombings of June 1985 that killed 329 people. In December 1997, a threatening letter arrived in the newsroom, instructing her to change her coverage. She didn't. After consulting with police, she continued writing, understanding the sole purpose of a threat is to scare

someone. "If you were really intent on doing something, you wouldn't be announcing it in a letter or a phone call or a comment that you make out at an event or something," she says matter-of-factly. The death threats over her stories were frequent, so frequent that Bolan was placed under RCMP protective custody. Bulletproof film was installed over all her windows, video cameras monitor any activity outside of her home and a panic button is in place.

Admitting she has thick skin, Bolan describes herself as a "dog with a bone" when she's working on a story she feels strongly about. "When people start saying, 'You're brave or courageous,' that kind of annoys me because I prefer to see myself as kind of stubborn and committed," she says. Bolan compares her life to earthquake preparation. "They can tell you that you live right on the fault line and that something terrible might happen, but if it never happens, you start to relax again."

But the thing about fault lines is that they can open up anytime, anywhere.

There was no way for Mike Halstead to prepare for what he would experience on what started as a typical fall evening in Saskatchewan. It was 9:30 p.m., the weather seven degrees above zero with a light wind. Halstead, a reporter for Rawlco Radio's News Talk 980 CJME station in Regina, Saskatchewan, was enjoying a



Photo: Graeme Smith

conversation with a friend in a local restaurant over coffee when his work cell phone rang. Halstead's friends know him for his wry wit and uncanny sense of humour. But there was nothing funny about the night of September 10, 2004. On the other end of the line was the voice of RCMP media relations officer Heather Russell. There'd been an accident on the Trans-Canada Highway between Albert Street and Lewvan Drive, she told him, and they devised a meeting point.

Halstead grew up in southwest Saskatchewan's ranch country, a middle child, flanked by one older and one younger sister. When he finished studying communication arts at Lethbridge College in 1999, Halstead moved around to a few different jobs before ending up in Regina at CJME in 2003, where he covered city hall, general news, and what was about to be the most gruesome story of his career.

When Halstead arrived at the blocked perimeter of the accident scene he was surprised by the number of emergency vehicles. Russell greeted him grimly, without any information. She opened the door and lowered herself into the passenger seat of his 1994 Chevrolet Cavalier. They drove in silence up to the barricade, parked near a police cruiser and went in on foot. "We didn't know what to expect," Halstead remembers.

Despite the chaos of the scene, things were very quiet. The red, blue, yellow and orange glow of emergency lights illuminated their trek through a horrific scene—the cool air thick with the smell of diesel, gasoline, burnt rubber and metal. A jack-knifed semi in one area, a sport utility vehicle, smashed beyond recognition in another. Thrown bodies of young teenagers, not yet covered by the yellow blankets used by emergency personnel, lay metres from the SUV that once carried them. Four of seven teenage passengers died that night when their vehicle crossed the ditch and collided head-on with a semi hauling two trailers.

An hour later, Halstead went back to the station to file his stories. He left out the graphic details—listeners would get the gist of how awful the accident was. "I

don't think I slept more than an hour or two a night for the next four days," Halstead says. "I kept thinking about how the parents had last seen their children and then of how I saw them." And while the images and the scents of that night stayed with him—especially the smell of burnt rubber—Halstead didn't discuss what he'd seen with a psychiatrist or a

"I don't think I slept more than an hour or two a night for the next four days."

counsellor. "I kept thinking to myself, 'You're a journalist, you're supposed to be strong, you're supposed to expect this kind of stuff,'" he says.

The majority of journalists don't go into war zones or natural catastrophes. Like Halstead, they cover local issues, things like city hall and fender benders. But when something bad happens, they are first on the scene, along with the police and emergency workers. Jane Hawkes, a documentary filmmaker, was concerned that journalists may experience the same emotional fall-out as first responders, but with none of the professional supports. "I didn't feel—and many of my colleagues didn't feel—that in the journalism community enough was being done about that," she says. In June 2008 she and Cliff Lonsdale, former head of production for CBC News and lecturer at the University of Western Ontario's graduate school of journalism, launched the Canadian Journalism Forum on Violence and Trauma. The forum works with the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma and The International News Safety Institute. Together the groups are committed to the physical safety and emotional health of journalists. Hawkes says emergency professionals seem to do a better job of building a community of support. In the

old days of journalism, covering heavier topics led to addiction, depression and disintegrating relationships. Post-traumatic stress was experienced, but rarely acknowledged. Journalists were considered vicarious bystanders, not directly involved. That seems to be changing. "A lot of journalists have said to me, 'You know, twenty years ago, if we talked about this stuff, it would have affected the trajectory of our careers,'" Hawkes says.

Halstead dealt with his emotions from the accident by talking with colleagues and friends. It helped. His colleagues helped put his career in perspective and his friends, while they couldn't relate to what he was going through, provided comfort in their responses. "I can think about the accident now and not lose sleep," he says, almost six years later. "I just think of it as an experience that I'll never forget. It doesn't come back to haunt me."

The world continues to spin, life goes on. Kim Bolan now covers crime and gangs in Vancouver for the Sun, a topic for which she still receives the occasional death threat. Les Perreux is back in Montreal with his wife and baby, still reporting for the Globe and Mail. Mike Halstead left radio for marketing in another Saskatchewan city, but doesn't connect the career move to the accident. It was simply a case of "been there, done that, it's time for something new," he says.

"It's an amusing question, 'Are you okay?' Yes. I'm okay," says Graeme Smith, who is now following the revolution in Libya. It seems hard to believe, but Feinstein says if journalists say they are okay, they are. "I think they are, otherwise this profession would not function. When I'm talking about post-traumatic stress and major depression—these are nasty conditions that render a person dysfunctional. So if the majority of journalists had these conditions, the profession would fall apart and clearly it's not doing that," he says.

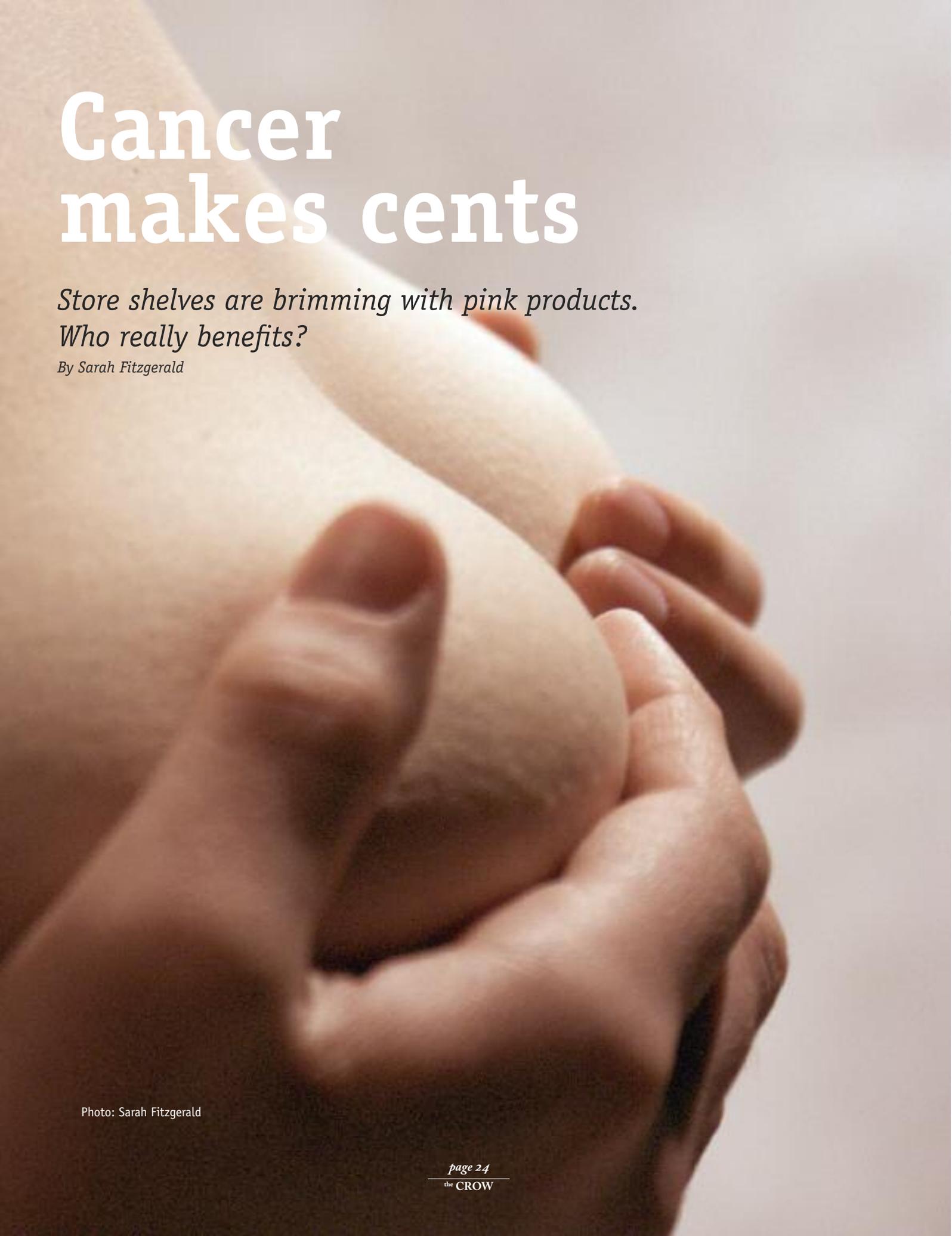
"My research has shown very, very clearly that the majority of journalists are fine." 🐦



Close call

A man escaped uninjured after a fire broke out at 5 a.m. in a Broder Street rental home.

COURTNEY MINTENKO



Cancer makes cents

*Store shelves are brimming with pink products.
Who really benefits?*

By Sarah Fitzgerald

Photo: Sarah Fitzgerald

November 27, 1996. Beams of sunshine steal into Fiona McGarry and Kelly Gatzke's resort hotel room, tickling their eyelids until they're summoned from slumber. Rising from their comfy bed, they dress for breakfast. Today's their third day at the resort, and the reason why they've made the journey all the way from Regina to the Sandals Royal Caribbean resort in Jamaica. They've spent a year planning and working towards this moment: their wedding. After breakfast, the two go their separate ways, Kelly to one of the resort's pools to hang out with some friends before getting ready, Fiona to a nearby beauty salon.

Returning to her hotel room, Fiona applies her make-up and slips into her simple white gown. Thinking back, she marvels at how far she's come. It was just eight years ago, when she was twenty-two, that she was forced to face death square on. Her doctors gave her only the slimmest hope of surviving brain surgery to remove a mass that was later determined to be a benign tumor. She pushes the thought from her mind and finishes getting ready, until a hotel staff member arrives to escort her to her room.

Moments later, standing in the middle of paradise, in front of the bluest water they've ever seen, Kelly and Fiona make their vows to each other. What they don't know, what they can't possibly know, is that their time together may be cut short.

In 2005, nine years after marrying the man of her dreams, Fiona McGarry-Gatzke was diagnosed with stage three invasive ductal breast cancer. And although McGarry-Gatzke's diagnosis came as a terrible shock to both her and her husband, her diagnosis wasn't unusual; invasive ductal breast cancer is the most common type of invasive breast cancer. That same year over twenty thousand other Canadian women received similar news from their physicians. In Canada, the average woman has a one in nine chance of developing breast cancer during some point in her lifetime. And of those, one out of every twenty-eight will lose her life to the disease.

Regardless of one's sex, the leading

cause of death in Canada is cancer. Nearly twenty-eight per cent of death certificates issued will have cancer listed as the cause of death. An astounding thirty per cent of all new diagnoses will centre around breast cancer. When it comes to breast cancer rates, Canada is second only to the United

...some pink products were nothing more than a marketing scheme...

States. Almost everyone knows somebody who has been touched by the disease. Breast cancer fundraising events and pink ribbon products have become part of our lives. Almost everyone wants to see the end of this horrible disease. No matter the store, there's usually some sort of pink trinket to be bought in support of finding a cure.

But it wasn't always this way. In fact, up until about twenty years ago, breast cancer was a very private thing, a personal tragedy, and most women diagnosed with breast cancer were looked upon as victims.

Then in 1983 American Express changed everything. It began with a campaign to restore the Statue of Liberty: for every transaction involving an American Express

"To me, it was akin to kicking a puppy."

card, a penny went to the project, plus a dollar for every new card issued. By associating their business with American patriotism, American Express was able to generate nearly two million dollars for the project. But that's not all. The campaign also generated a twenty-eight per cent jump in card transactions and increased the company's new customers by seventeen per cent.

Behold the birth of cause marketing.

By definition, cause marketing is when a

company or corporation partners with a non-profit organization, promising to hand over a specific monetary amount per unit of their product sold. Yoplait's Save Lids to Save Lives campaign, Avon's Flame Foundation products, and Ford's Warriors in Pink Mustangs are all examples of breast cancer cause marketing.

Before McGarry-Gatzke's diagnosis with breast cancer, she'd experienced some animosity towards pink ribbon products. They made her feel sad and all she could think about was how people were dying. But it wasn't until after her diagnosis that she started noticing some pink products were nothing more than a marketing scheme. And this made her furious. "To me, it was akin to kicking a puppy," she says.

In today's consumer-driven society, customers are no longer satisfied with a good product. They now want to buy from a company that shares their values, one that's considered a good corporate citizen. In North America, women do most of the daily shopping: they shop for themselves, their homes, spouses, and children. And studies show that women are more favourably disposed to cause marketing—they're willing to pay more if they think the proceeds will go to a good cause. According to an Opinion Research International poll conducted in 2000, more than two-thirds of the women questioned admitted they'd purchase a product linked to the fight against breast cancer. But what many don't realize is product-related donations aren't given purely out of the goodness of a company's heart. For most companies, it's part of their marketing strategy.

"Philanthropy is giving money no strings attached, whereas with cause-related marketing, there's an expected marketing return for it," says Anne Lavack, dean of the University of Regina's faculty of business administration. With a PhD in marketing, she's been involved in studying social marketing and, by extension, cause marketing for quite some time. Although cause marketing can be beneficial to both the profit and non-profit partners involved, the public should by no means consider it philanthropy, she says. There's a big

Behold the birth of cause marketing.

difference between the two.

One of the main reasons why many companies choose to become involved in cause marketing is the revenue spillover these campaigns generate. They hope customers will start buying their other products, too, and many do. A study conducted by Cone Communications of Boston revealed seventy-nine per cent of customers would probably switch brands to one that supported a cause, if everything else was equal.

Bracelets, earrings, cosmetic compacts, lettuce, clothes, cars, kitchen appliances, purses, luggage, books, cars, shoes, alcoholic beverages, coffee cups, pink ribbons—the list of pink products seems to be never-ending. And every October for the past twenty-seven years, pink ribbon products have been getting a boost during National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The month was launched in 1984 by AstraZeneca, a pharmaceutical company that produces a variety of medications, including some used in the treatment of breast cancer. The campaign, which has the support of Health Canada, is aimed at promoting mammograms—not prevention, but detection in its early stages, when it's ripe for pharmaceutical treatment. However, Canadians hardly need a special month to focus on awareness. Cause marketing is ubiquitous year round.

In Canada, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation is the major recipient of breast cancer cause marketing proceeds. Nearly nineteen per cent of the Foundation's revenue is generated from marketing

partnerships, and sixty-nine per cent is generated by events like CIBC's Run for the Cure.

Many pink ribbon products are purchased because people believe the money's going directly to researching a cure. But that's not always the case. The Foundation used to funnel donations through the Canadian Breast Cancer Research Alliance, which disbanded in 2010. Today the Foundation directly funds projects, and advises shoppers to check the purchase amount set aside for charities before heading to the till—the Foundation asks for at least ten per cent in its product agreements. As for heading off cancer before it develops, the Foundation does fund some studies into environmental causes, but the emphasis remains on detection and treatment.

It all helps in the long run, right? The answer depends on your view of the long run. Although breast cancer cause marketing generates millions of dollars a year, it may have a negative impact on direct donations. Lavack notes critics worry that corporations involved in cause marketing may ignore 'true philanthropy'—large charitable donations with no financial return attached.

Another concern is 'slacktivism,' feel-good activism that has little political or social impact. Consumers think they're helping end breast cancer when in fact the incidence has increased slowly, but steadily, since 1969. Meanwhile, many companies enjoying the good PR that comes with cause marketing use

Think Before You Pink

Think Before You Pink was created by Breast Cancer Action, a breast cancer activist group based in San Francisco, dedicated to ending "the breast cancer epidemic." The campaign centres around four questions a consumer should ask themselves before buying a pink product:

How much money actually goes towards breast cancer programs and services?

Where is the money going (to which organization)?

What types of programs are being supported?

What is the company doing to assure that its products are not contributing to the breast cancer epidemic?

The group advises if the answers to these questions are unclear, cannot be answered, or are contrary to the fight against breast cancer, leave it on the shelf.



Slacktivism: feel-good activism that has little political or social impact.

ingredients in their products that contribute to cancer. The exhaust fumes from Ford's "Warriors in Pink" Mustangs, for example, contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, chemicals known to cause cancer. Avon donated \$1.3 million to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation in 2001, yet continues to use chemicals like methylparaben, banned by the European Union for use in cosmetics because it's been linked to cancer. Studies show cancer is more prevalent in consumer societies. Linking cures to consumerism may be counterproductive.

"We have to question whether shopping in response to a disease that's linked to consumer lifestyles and toxic products is...effective. What kind of world do we want to live in? Do we want to live in a world where people vote with their wallets?" asks Samantha King, author of *Pink Ribbons, Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy*.

But not everyone sees cause marketing as a problem. Diane Christoffel, a fifty-four-year-old mother of two, was first diagnosed with breast cancer in June of 1995, and then again in 1999. She underwent a mastectomy, breast reconstructive surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, and lived to tell the tale. For Christoffel, breast cancer fundraising creates a camaraderie among those touched by the disease. She has no problem with companies profiting from pink products. "I think any little bit helps. These guys are great big multi-million dollar corporations, so we only get a

hundred thousand dollars, so what? That's a hundred thousand dollars we wouldn't have had!"

And when it comes to solidarity amongst breast cancer survivors, Christoffel and Mcgarry-Gatzke are in agreement. The day Mcgarry-Gatzke was diagnosed with breast

Instead of sadness, this sea of pink now brings me strength and hope. It is a reminder of all the sisterhood of pink warriors, bravely fighting with everything in their power to gain ground, one cell at a time.

cancer she wrote a poem called *Sea of Pink*:

To a certain point, even critic King agrees. The fellowship created around breast cancer has done wonders for the women struggling with the disease. Breast cancer has been brought into the light. It's now acceptable for women to speak openly about their diagnoses. But King warns this is a double-edged sword. She worries Canadian women are becoming "over-aware." Bombarded with cancer-related campaigns, some women are opting to remove healthy breasts as a preventative measure.

Another result of upbeat pink product pushing is an unjustly optimistic impression of the battle against breast cancer. What so many people forget is that this is a very horrible disease that remains very difficult to fight. "I just felt as though all my decisions had been taken away, and suddenly somebody else was driving this

very scary bus and I had no control," recalls Mcgarry-Gatzke.

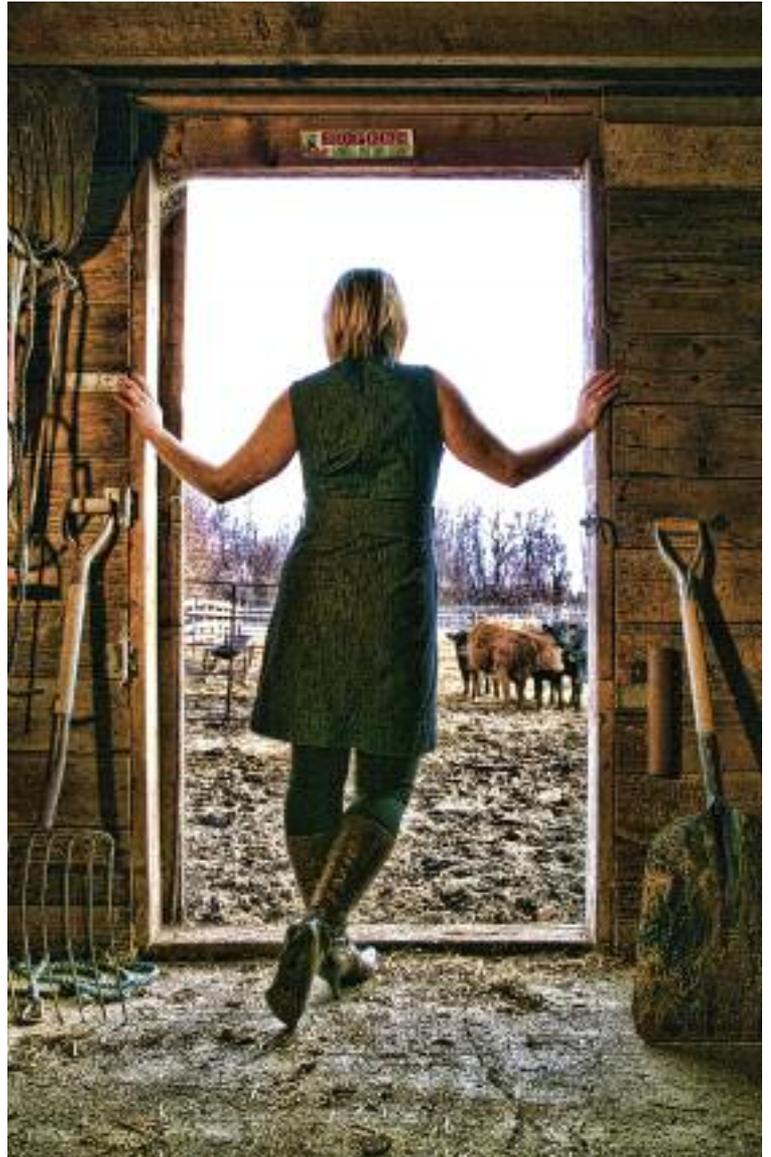
There are alternatives to buying pink products. Mcgarry-Gatzke's husband, Kelly Gatzke, started the Pink Warriors Foundation in 2006. Pink Warriors is a registered charity that donates one hundred per cent of its profits directly to research projects through the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. Mcgarry-Gatzke and her husband personally cover all administration costs to ensure every dollar they raise goes towards finding a cure. For Mcgarry-Gatzke, raising money at a grassroots level returned her sense of control. "I wanted to focus on that, and be this warrior that could fight (breast cancer) and not just be the victim." To date, the Pink Warrior Foundation has raised over one hundred thousand dollars.

Both Mcgarry-Gatzke and King agree that people need to start 'thinking before they pink.' A wise choice of action is to contribute to causes like the Pink Warrior Foundation that donate every penny they raise, or to save the money you would've spent on pink products and donate it directly to the research you feel is most worthy. King argues there's enough money out there already; what's needed is a reexamination of its distribution.

The truth is, Canadians live in a society driven by consumerism. Many of our livelihoods are based on the products people buy and so, in the end, buying's not all bad. But although there is such a thing as shopping therapy, it'll never succeed alone in curing cancer. 🐦



Photos: Sarah Fitzgerald



Far away home

Rural women do double duty for their families—but also for themselves.

*By Eric Anderson
Photography: Caroline Lavoie*

Merlyne Korsberg is smiling in the kitchen of her farmhouse. Another bottle of Merlot is being opened. Dinner dishes have been cleared after a meal of ham and scalloped potatoes. Her husband, Terry, has gone downstairs to watch television. It's been over a year since I've been in their home, a place that puts you at ease. It's a home where family comes first, and even as a guest you feel the comfort of their family. She fills my glass generously and sits down across from me at the table.

How Korsberg became the wife of a farmer and the mother of two daughters can be traced back twenty-eight years. In 1983, there were two jobs available in Saskatchewan for a lab and x-ray technician. One was in Uranium City, in the far north, and the other was a six-month position in the village of Climax, near the Montana border. A nurse in Climax had suffered a stroke and the hospital was looking for someone to temporarily fill in. Fresh out of school in Saskatoon, Korsberg simply wanted to work. She landed the temporary position in Climax.

When Korsberg drove down with her parents from Saskatoon, she thought she would never get there. Highway 37 carries on south and just when you think you've gone as far as you can, the town of Shaunavon appears, with a green highway sign promising Climax is another sixty kilometres down the road. Her first impression of Climax was hardly flattering. Main Street showed no signs of life: no parked cars and not a person in sight. A few stray cats and tumbleweeds ambled across the street.

"I'm glad it's you staying here and not me," her father said.

When there are only two jobs available in your chosen field, the ends of the earth will have to do. Besides, it was only temporary.

"I swore to God I would only be there

for six months," Korsberg says laughing. The first time she saw the Climax hospital, she thought it was a bowling alley. She never imagined she would work there for the next twenty years. But that's what happened. She met Terry during her first year; soon they started a family down the road in Frontier, thirteen kilometres west on Highway 18. If Climax is the edge of the world, Frontier is teetering over the ledge. Yet the village of 350 was the ideal

homesteaders and the women cared for the home. And so began the myth of the good farmwife. Taking care of the kids, keeping a clean home, doing the laundry, preparing meals—all these tasks were performed by the first women settlers and are still done by most farm women today.

But that isn't the whole picture. From the beginning, women took care of livestock and helped clear the fields. Injury reports reveal women suffered broken arms

"I swore to God I would only be there for six months."

place to raise their two girls, Tamara and Tanelle. In 2000, the family moved twenty minutes southwest to the farm that had been in Terry's family for generations.

Korsberg knew life on the farm would be challenging. Operating a farm is not easy, not with cattle and crops to manage, two kids to raise, and shift work at the hospital. There was also the isolation that comes with being on the farm. She doesn't hide the fact that when the kids were younger she felt at times quite lonely. It's easy to tell when Korsberg's mood becomes serious. The pace of her words slows to a crawl. The last word in a sentence is held a bit longer in her voice, as if it has taken her back to that specific place and time. But it doesn't stop her from starting a new train of thought. Korsberg is always thinking. Sometimes her thoughts drift outside the box, especially when it comes to what role a woman should play on the farm.

When the Prairies were settled in the latter half of the 1800s, most homesteaders were single men looking to start a new life. Women and children followed, but the laws at the time awarded land rights to men only. They were the

and legs, like their male counterparts, from chopping down trees. Women also suffered burns associated with wood burning stoves. Men never suffered such burns, an early sign of the lop-sided division of labour.

The women were no shrinking violets. Groups such as the Woman Grain Growers allowed women a chance to have their voices heard in political circles. Their work was valued, both in the home and out in the fields, so naturally women wanted a bigger voice in how the farm was run. But in the 1970s, larger farms became the standard. Field work formerly done by hand became the province of large machines. This left women on the sidelines, because it was the men who drove the large tractors and combines. Women were once again seen as housewives. The perception stayed that way for many years.

Then in the 1980s, at a time when farms were struggling to survive, women stepped up to the plate once again. As farm income plummeted, women's off-farm jobs in nursing, banks, local government offices, and schools kept family farms afloat. Their efforts are clearly visible today. A 2004 study that focused on the state of family farms in Saskatchewan showed sixty-seven

Women took care of livestock and helped clear the fields.

percent of women worked off of the farm to prevent their farms from “operating with difficulty or not at all.”

It’s a chilly February night in Caronport, Saskatchewan. Students, friends, and family have gathered at the Briercrest College gym to cheer on a volleyball match

between the hometown Clippers and the Lakeland Rattlers from Lloydminster, Alberta. I am sitting on a very old set of wooden bleachers waiting for Edith Fowler. We’re here to watch her daughter, Natasha, play for Lakeland. As Natasha begins to warm up on the court Fowler strolls in, ducking her head slightly through the door.

She slowly climbs up the bleachers; years of softball back-catching have taken their toll on her knees, but otherwise she is a strong looking woman. As we watch Natasha stretch with her team, I ask Fowler if she misses her daughter, especially when it’s her first year away from home. “Oh, God, yes.”

The Fowler farm is three miles north of Central Butte, a small community forty-five minutes northwest of Moose Jaw. For years Edith Fowler fit the myth of the farm wife. She drove her four children to hockey, volleyball, or dance practice, kept a clean home and yard, and prepared meals for her husband, Brian, when he was out in the fields. All that changed in 1996 when Brian suffered a massive heart-attack while combining. His sudden death was devastating for the family. Each child grieved in his or her own way, but Fowler didn’t have that luxury.

“They were hurting and crying and I felt I had to be strong to help them even though I was hiding my strength. Yet I had to keep their life going. All I wanted to do was die, but, I mean, I had to.”

Her new life not only consisted of growing crops but also running a seed plant. Brian started the plant in their yard as a way to clean their grain, but by 1996 it was attracting farmers from all over the area. Fowler was determined to keep the doors open. There were piles of paperwork to go through. Each type of seed had to remain separate, forcing her to quickly learn the difference between strains like Bethune and Vimy flax. There were also four children who were grieving for their father. Fowler would work in the seed plant throughout the days and evenings, come inside to tuck the kids into bed, and head back out to keep working. “One foot in front of the other” is a phrase Fowler repeats a lot when remembering those days.

People in Central Butte call her “Wonder Woman.” To Fowler, it’s just what she had to do. Today, as she watches her youngest daughter hit the court, she knows that stretching her limits benefited her children. She wanted her family to remain on the farm, and they did. It’s the reason why every night, after tucking the kids in,



Photo: Caroline Lavoie

she went back out to the seed plant to clean another load of grain—one foot in front of the other.

“We live in a very liberal, very individualistic society, that values individual accomplishments, individual identities, and it hasn’t always been that way,” observes Amber Fletcher, a gender studies lecturer at the University of Regina. Fletcher has studied the economic reasons that lead women to seek jobs outside the farm, but doesn’t discount the role of personal choice. “I wonder if that’s played into farm women wanting to get jobs off the farm—to seek their own individuality,” she says.

After twenty years at Climax hospital, Merlyne Korsberg was seeking something. In 2008, a job posting in the northern community of Stony Rapids caught her eye. She weighed the possibilities. Her youngest daughter, Tanelle, was a year away from university, there was a potential wedding to pay for with her other daughter Tamara, and the increase in salary would help make life a bit easier. Although the farm continued to do well, there was no denying a northern salary would provide more financial security. But for Korsberg, a career change was about more than the money.

She jokingly calls it a mid-life crisis. Call it what you will, Korsberg reached a point where she needed to step out of her comfort zone. “Fifty percent of the reason



Photo: Caroline Lavoie

often confronted by extreme acts of violence, some involving girls that were Tanelle’s age. Poverty and alcoholism were issues that reared their heads every day. Settling into the job, Korsberg knew the work she did only made a small difference. But working there gave her something her life on the farm could not.

“I was just so bored with my work. It may have been running from the emptiness for me. When Tamara left home a part of

After years of giving her time and energy to her children, the farm, and a hum-drum job, Korsberg is now claiming this to be her time. It’s been two years since she started up north and she has no plans to stop in the near future. “I’m doing it and sometimes it’s crazy and I shake my head, but I’m doing it,” she laughs. And she hasn’t stopped thinking outside the box. Korsberg’s bucket list includes nursing stops in northern British Columbia, Newfoundland, and Iqaluit. But Frontier will still remain home. She hopes her example will serve as a model for her girls. “I want them to be independent. I want them to have strong values and to be able to think for themselves,” she says.

As we finish our wine Korsberg admits she still has a role on the farm to play, and she does regret being away during some of Tanelle’s grade twelve year. In the end, it’s a matter of balance. She thinks about home every time she steps on the tarmac and boards the plane that will take her up north. Looking through the airplane window as the fields of wheat turn into lakes and forests, Korsberg knows what she is leaving behind. But she also knows what awaits her. 🦋

“I was just so bored with my work.”

I took the job is that I like to work,” she explains. “I like what I do and I was looking for challenge and experiences and this was just all of that rolled up in one.”

Korsberg’s job in Stony Rapids required her to be away from the farm for two weeks at a time, followed by two weeks at home. The first time the plane touched down in the small northern community surrounded by wilderness, she went into culture shock. At the hospital she was

me died and I thought, ‘I can’t go through that again when Tanelle leaves. I have to get myself a life. I’ve got to get something that gives me passion again,’ she recalls. Her pursuit of that passion was fuelled by the fear of falling deep into the myth of a traditional farm wife. She didn’t want to be the woman who never leaves the farm, ending up with no one to talk to but her husband. Her choice was clear: “I don’t want to be that person. So I’m not.”



Death becomes her

In a profession dominated by older men, Mallory Solie is an anomaly.

By Chelsea Coupal

Like most small town kids, Mallory Solie, twenty-four, spent her youth partying in gravel pits, barns and farmers' fields. She played softball. She cruised gravel roads at forty clicks an hour with the Red Hot Chili Peppers on the radio. She grew up on a farm fifteen minutes southeast of Vibank, a village of about four hundred people, fifty kilometres east of Regina. She graduated from Vibank High School in 2004 and moved to Regina that summer.

Mallory spent her first few summers in Regina working at the Emerald Park golf course, just east of the city. My younger brother worked with her. I knew Mallory, so I asked him how he liked her. He did—like her, that is. Most people do. She's happy and confident and quick to smile.

"She has weird eyes though, hey?" my brother said. "They look like wolf eyes or something."

Her eyes are actually plain brown, but she wears blue-tinted contact lenses to cover them up. The lenses turn her eyes a deep, dark blue, except for the rim right around her pupils, which remains her natural brown. When you sit beside her—as I used to in several university classes—it's hard not to fixate on them.

Recently, I ran into Mallory. She came into my workplace, Chapters, searching for books. She looked the same: exotic blue eyes, a thick bundle of wavy hair, and a constant smile. She told me she was no longer working in Emerald Park; she was working at the Regina Funeral Home in Regina's east end, along Highway 1. Right now, she was carrying out all sorts of tasks—transferring

bodies from where they died to the funeral home, meeting with families, planning funerals. But she had embalmed bodies, too. She was studying embalming at the local technical school, SIAST.

"Do you like it?" I asked in a tone of disbelief.

"I love it," she replied.

"But it must be, I mean, it has to be gruesome sometimes, doesn't it?"

"It is sometimes," she said. Discussing death and embalming in front of a shelf of glossy-covered books made me uncomfortable. It seemed inappropriate in some way. But not to Mallory.

"You have to embalm all different kinds of people before you can graduate," Mallory continued. "So I've seen quite a few suicides already."

I didn't say anything. Mallory switched the subject.

"So, do you have any books to recommend me? I loved that last one you told me read. What was it called? The Glass Castle."

"Yeah, that one's really good," I said as I led Mallory to the corner where the "G" fiction writers are shelved. I reached up and slid out a copy of *Helpless* by Barbara Gowdy. Maybe I suggested a book by Gowdy because she wrote a collection of short stories called *We So Seldom Look On Love* that I've never forgotten. The title story is about a pretty, blonde woman who works in a funeral home and makes love to cadavers. That story flashed through my mind as soon as Mallory told me she was studying embalming. I didn't tell her about it.

The Ancient Egyptians were among the first people to practise the art and craft of embalming. They believed a dead body needed to be preserved so the spirit could return to it in the afterlife. Part of the process included individually wrapping the fingers, toes, arms, and legs in strips of linen. This took place from about 6,000 B.C to 600 A.D. The iconic image of the mummy still exists in popular culture today, in movies and Halloween images.

The Egyptians weren't the only ones to embalm, however. Well-preserved bodies have been found in China. Embalming in Europe had a much spottier existence. A German chemist discovered formaldehyde in 1867. Soon after, its preservative properties were discovered and it became the starting point for modern embalming.

As for Saskatchewan, so far, no evidence has been provided on which funeral home was the first to use a preservative fluid to embalm a body in the province. Most times, in the early 1900s, the family members themselves acted as the morticians, washing and dressing and burying their dead relatives.

We're all headed for death, so embalming might seem like a safe career choice. Embalmers don't rely on the housing or stock market to stay in business.

Embalmers rely only on death. And death's a sure thing.

Or so you might think. While death is a certainty, embalming is not. People don't have to be embalmed. They can choose to be buried without being embalmed, or they can choose to be cremated. In 1962, only 3.58 per cent of Canadians were cremated. By 2002, the rate had climbed to 47.3 per cent.

Todd Lumbard, vice-chairperson of the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan, estimates that about fifty-five per cent of the bodies received by his Regina funeral home, Speers Funeral Chapel, are cremated. Twenty years ago, it was closer to ten or fifteen per cent. Lumbard acknowledges that cost is a factor—you don't need a casket or cemetery plot. But he believes the rising

cremation rate is more closely related to social change. Embalming delays composition, but there's a limit. With cremation, funerals can be delayed, notes Lumbard, which is convenient in a modern-day society when many families live far away from each other.

"Thirty, forty, fifty years ago, family units stayed in the same area. And now it's not uncommon for parents to be in Regina and three kids to be—one in Calgary, one in Vancouver, one in Toronto."

Christianity, the dominant religion in



Canada, traditionally opposed and discouraged cremation, but now many denominations allow it. Predominately Protestant countries built their first crematoriums in the 1870s. The Roman Catholic church didn't lighten its laws regarding cremation until the 1960s. Officially, it still prefers a traditional burial, but permits cremation, too.

And now Canada is becoming more multicultural.

In traditional Judaism, people don't cremate, but they don't embalm, either. They bury within twenty-four hours if possible. Same goes with Islam. In Hinduism, cremation is the norm. They believe in reincarnation, and that cremation will help the soul escape from

its physical existence.

Against the backdrop of these changes, the number of embalmers and funeral directors decreased by sixty positions in Saskatchewan between 2001 and 2006, according to Statistics Canada. According to Saskatchewan JobFutures' website, the sharp decline is not expected to continue, but aspiring embalmers and funeral directors should not expect many job opportunities in the coming years.

So I wondered about Mallory's future. She plans to dedicate the rest of her life to the dead, yet her favourite part of the job, embalming, might be dying itself.

Even she doesn't want to be embalmed. Mallory wants to be cremated, then buried.

Ironically, although embalming is on the decline, the formal education associated with the profession is only increasing and growing more formalized. Students used to have to be employed by funeral homes before being accepted into any sort of formal education program. Then in 2001, new legislation required a change in how embalmers and funeral directors were educated. A new council, the Funeral and Cremation Services Council of Saskatchewan, was created and started looking at educational institutions that could possibly provide a funeral services program. After discussions with several Saskatchewan education providers, SIAST put forward a proposal and the council approved it.

The course teaches Mallory how to preserve the dead through a combination of home study—online coursework and print correspondence—and work experience placements. The program is relatively new; SIAST introduced it in 2005. It consists of a twenty-six-week core program and the option of two specialties: funeral director or embalmer. Each specialty takes an additional sixteen weeks to complete. Mallory is currently finishing her embalmer specialty, but plans to take the funeral director specialty as well. The courses include everything from anatomy to the consoling of grief-stricken family members. Whatever the job prospects, clearly she sees a future in preparing us all for the inevitable.

Before she decided to study embalming, Mallory experienced a fair bit of death for a young person—and not just the typical deaths either.

In high school, a friend hung himself in a shed on his parent's farm.

Then, in 2007, one of Mallory's best friends, Chelsea McIntyre, died in a car accident when she was travelling home to Regina after a Saskatoon concert. McIntyre, twenty-one at the time, was the front seat passenger of the vehicle when it rear-ended a semi truck at the top of the hill entering the Qu'Appelle Valley. It happened after midnight, when the driver fell asleep at the wheel. Nobody else was killed.

McIntyre's family held a viewing for her before the funeral, which Mallory remembers clearly.

"She looked just like Chels. Chelsea was a girly girl. We all sat around her casket and her best friend, Shannon, was like, 'She even smells like hairspray. It is Chels.'"

Speers Funeral Chapel did a good job embalming McIntyre. Most people can't tell whether an embalming is good or bad, but Mallory can tell instantly now. There are two different kinds of skin dyes: tan and pink. Mallory thinks pink's the lazy way to do it. It's easier to see pink dye as it makes its way through the body, so the embalmer has an easier time telling when the body's completely filled with skin

colour. But the pink can look too pink. The bodies look like they're blushing.

It's tougher to see the tan dye through the skin, but it's a more natural colour.

Mallory's always wanted to work with people in a medical capacity. In high school, she thought she wanted to be a nurse or a paramedic. She eventually shifted her focus, however, and decided to become a coroner.

"When I told my parents I wanted to be a coroner, they're like, 'Well, why?' I said, 'I'm the only doctor who can't kill her patients.'"

She loved biology and watching television shows dealing with forensics. In 2006, she enrolled in general classes at the University of Regina, hoping to eventually major in biology.

At university, I sat beside Mallory through three different courses: English, psychology and interdisciplinary studies. We became friends, but the whole time, I knew Mallory had more guts than I did.

She put her hand up in class. I covered in my seat.

She expressed her opinion out loud,



Photos: Chelsea Coupal

even if it differed from the professor's. I kept quiet.

Often, after class, she tried verbally prodding me into the gym. I plodded home instead.

She took her studies seriously. She always completed her essays before I began. And when she studied for exams, she started well before me, too. But she's not all academic, all the time. I've bumped into her at every country kid's favourite Regina bar, the Pump Roadhouse. Usually, she'd be waiting in line for a drink, surrounded by friends. I'd scramble for something to say, find nothing and revert to, "How's university goin'?"

"I hate it," she'd reply, then burst out laughing, maybe because she knew I sort of liked it.

"You hate it?" I'd ask. Whenever I don't know what to say, I just repeat what the last person said in question form.

"Yeah, seriously. I hate it."

"Mallsssss, you don't hate it."

"I do. Who are you here with?"

After a year at university, she dropped out. Then, in 2009, Mallory and a girlfriend were on a flight to England, leafing through SIAST course catalogs. Her friend piped up, "Do you know SIAST has a funeral service program?"

When she finishes her course, Mallory will be an anomaly—a young woman in an industry dominated by older men.

In 2006, fifty-seven per cent of all funeral directors and embalmers in Saskatchewan were at least forty-five years old and only twenty-four per cent were female. Some of those numbers might change in a hurry, though, as SIAST's funeral services program has always been predominately female; the percentage of women enrolled in the program has never dropped below seventy-one per cent.

Women may be entering funeral services in greater numbers for several reasons, according to Joan Wassill, a practising embalmer, funeral director and former program head of SIAST's funeral services program. First, society's attitude towards women working in trades is changing. As

well, funeral services work has appeal because it allows women to help people when they're at their most vulnerable. And creative females may discover they have a natural talent for making people—even dead ones—look fresh and natural.

"Women bring into that area of work a whole new set of fresh eyes," Wassill says.

I thought of Mallory's eyes. I'd already

"Women bring into that area of work a whole new set of fresh eyes."

sat down and spoken with her about her chosen career path a few weeks previously. She talked about embalming methods, putting makeup on the deceased and what pushed her towards funeral services.

It was Family Day, in the afternoon. Mallory had just finished her morning shift at the funeral home. I was seven minutes early, but she was earlier. When I entered the coffee shop, Java Express in Regina's east end, Mallory was already seated, sipping coffee and leafing through a binder in front of her.

"I'm just reviewing for my last final coming up," she said when she saw me. "I'm not too worried about it though. It's going to be easy."

No matter how many times I've heard it, Mallory's voice tends to surprise me. It's deep, distinctive—not quite as deep as a radio host's or gravelly like a smoker's, just deeper than most women's. It lends her speech an assertive tone.

I bought coffee and sat down with her.

Mallory was dressed in black except for a brightly coloured scarf wrapped around her neck. Her naturally wavy hair was flat-ironed into submission. Her blue-tinted contact lenses were in, too.

She didn't look like an undertaker.

She touched dead skin that morning, though. She rubbed lotion onto a deceased person's hands and face to keep the skin moisturized and natural looking. As soon as someone dies, the skin dries out, so

lotion keeps it looking fresh in case the family decides on a viewing before the funeral. When Mallory told me that, I touched my own hands, dry and cracked from the cold. If I died then, I thought, Mallory would need to rub generous amounts of lotion into me.

I thought of my lips, too, smeared with pink gloss. If someone young or middle-aged is lying on Mallory's prep room table, she paints their lips in pinks and reds. If an elderly person is lying on the table, however, Mallory mixes together red and purple, something a colleague taught her; she told Mallory to check out older people's lips next time she went out in public. That night, at a viewing, Mallory looked at the sets of elderly lips in the room, and thought, "Oh, my God, she's right. Older people do have purpler lips."

A friend of mine works as a receptionist at Paradise Leisurescapes, a place that sells swimming pools and hot tubs. I can always tell when she hasn't showered before meeting me for drinks or supper because she smells like chlorine. Sitting in Java Express, I smelled fresh baking and coffee beans. I didn't smell death on Mallory. Granted, I've never smelled a dead person, and perhaps I might've noticed a smell had I met Mallory in a different, less scent-heavy place, but I doubt it.

Most death scenes don't smell at all, said Mallory. The rotting, festering smell people associate with death comes after the fact, when the body begins breaking down extensively. If someone dies in an accident, Mallory smells something salty and tangy—blood.

But it doesn't bother her.

The Regina Funeral Home has promised her a permanent part-time position after she graduates, so she's guaranteed at least some form of work in the future. Eventually, she hopes to open her own funeral home.

Her brother still hasn't warmed up to the idea of his sister dealing with dead bodies. When he discovered she was studying embalming, he told her she's never allowed to cook family meals again. Mallory's brother's a plumber. She said he deals with sewage and maybe she doesn't want him cooking her meals either. 🐦



Car love

Brent Yeske performs his daily routine of meticulously examining his new car in a cold garage.

KARIN YESKE



The La Loche Project

Our film crew wanted to be part of the solution. But for many La Loche residents, we were part of the problem.

By Kent Morrison

"It's cold out here, eh?"

From his spot perched on the snowy back step of his cousin's porch, Larry Montgrand pulls the collar of his faded, army green jacket closer to his chin.

It is a grey February afternoon in La Loche, Saskatchewan, a remote northern village not far from the Alberta border. Specks of snow swirl in the air. The legs of my tripod grind and stick as I fight to extend them to the ground. Even through my gloves the cold dark metal stings my fingertips as I adjust it to the appropriate height, to meet Larry eye to eye. He watches me as I continue to set up, his dark eyes as bleak as the dense fog that has covered the village since I woke up this morning. The air is so thick it smothers the noise from the street, leaving us in overshadowing silence.

COME TO

DOG HOUSE

"I'm usually not cold, but today I am cold," he says.

He wears a thin, tattered jacket. I'm told he wears it everywhere he goes no matter what season. In the summer he drapes it over his bare chest, but today a stained grey sweatshirt guards his skin from the elements. I know it isn't much protection. The neck of the sweatshirt is cut low, revealing a four inch scar just below where his throat meets his collar bone, one of many knife wounds he would show me later.

Just as I am studying him, he is studying me. He watches carefully as I click my Sony DSR-250

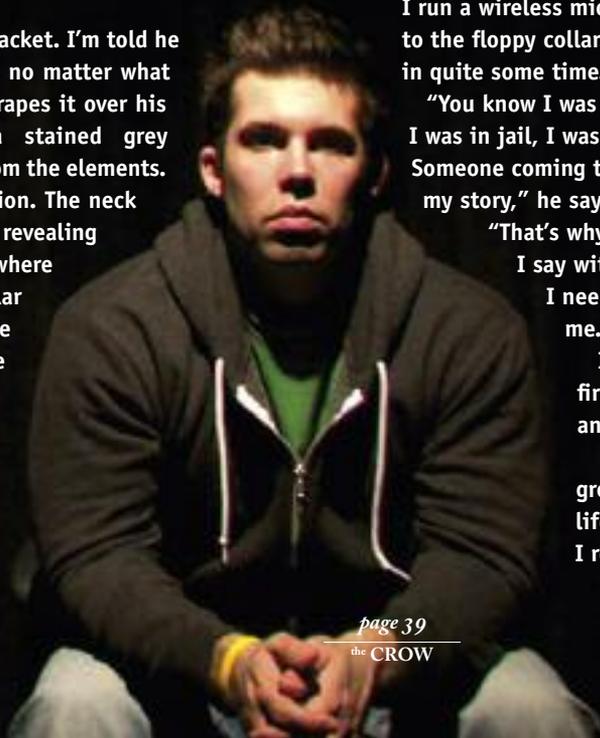
digital camera in place and keeps a cautious eye as I run a wireless microphone up his coat and attach it to the floppy collar. I can tell he hasn't had a shower in quite some time.

"You know I was thinking about this last time I was in jail, I was thinking about this, you know? Someone coming to me with a camera so I can tell my story," he says.

"That's why we are here, to tell your story," I say with a smile. He doesn't know that I need him much more than he needs me.

It was over a month ago when I first heard of Larry and I had been anxious to meet him ever since.

"I need a character who has grown up in La Loche, lives a tough life and can tell me about it," I remember saying to my friend



“This is the way life has been twisted.”

Tanner from inside a cramped phone interview booth at the University of Regina’s School of Journalism.

“I know just the guy. Everyone around here calls him Larry Monkey. He used to run this town and, oh, I bet he’s got some stories,” Tanner replied. I could hear him smiling through the phone; he used the tone someone uses when they are holding back more information than they probably should.

“If he’s sober he’ll be great.”

Ever since that first conversation I’ve been picturing Larry in my mind. What he looks like, what he sounds like, what he will say. The fact that he lives in a trailer with no address and no phone made it impossible to contact him before we got to La Loche. I didn’t even know if I’d find him once I got here. All I had was a character sketch and an idea of what I thought he looked like.

Yet here he is in front of me, willing to tell me exactly what I need him to and looking almost exactly like I thought he would. His black hair is pulled back in a ponytail, streaked with long strands of grey. He rests his hands on worn pants caked with dust and mud. The leathery skin on his hands is rough and cracked and his fingernails are stained yellow. When he talks his tongue seems to get caught in the gaping hole where his front teeth used to be.

“I just have to make sure you are in focus and make you look good,” I say. It’s the line I’ve said ever since I began interviewing people with a camera. Usually it lightens the mood and draws a smile from the person on the other side of the lens. Today the line seems out of place. Larry just nods. I wish I hadn’t said it.

In the beginning, the challenge of making a film about La Loche is what enticed me to do the story; I had no idea what I was in store for. So many things about the La Loche project took me out of my comfort zone. Racism, colonialism, poverty and despair are all subjects I have usually shied away from, but La Loche forced me to think about them every single day.

The idea was born in our JRN 411

Documentary Film class. I’ll admit when I first pitched the concept I didn’t know what I was getting myself into, but I knew I had a good story. With the help of five other group members, all of whom gave up their own story ideas to join the group, I turned the idea into a project that would become a half hour show. None of us had attempted to tell a story like the one in La Loche, but together we were able to come up with a focus we believed would have a big impact on the people of Saskatchewan and how we look at race and equality in our own province.

At the story’s core was the idea that problems in Canadian aboriginal communities are rooted in the way white people injected themselves into the communities and imposed their will. The process began nearly four hundred years ago during the fur trade and continues today, as white officials once again inject themselves into northern communities to fix the problems that their people caused. Of course, what complicated things even further is the fact that we, an all-white film crew, would have to inject ourselves into La Loche to tell the story.

La Loche lies near the Alberta-Saskatchewan border on the east side of Lac La Loche, directly north of the Clearwater River Dené Nation. Dené people make up most of the 2,348 villagers. Nomadic by nature, the Dené came to settle in La Loche when both the North West Company and the Hudson’s Bay Company established fur trading posts there in the late 1700s. When the fur trade abandoned the area nearly a century later, many residents were left without jobs or a source of income.

In 1949, Tommy Douglas’s provincial government introduced the Northern Administration Act. The Act stated that government jobs like teaching and nursing would be filled by white people brought into the community, until local aboriginal people, who were considered unfit to fill the positions, were properly trained. But the training never came. The best the government did was to make it mandatory for parents to have their kids enrolled in

school to collect their family allowance, an allowance many came to depend on because of the severe lack of job opportunities. The new regulations made the Dené extremely dependent on government services.

The struggle for employment continues today. Out of the 2,348 residents only 550 are in the labour force and only 405 have jobs. That leaves two-thirds of the community incapable or unwilling to be employed. Today 40.6 per cent of the community’s total income comes from government transfers. That’s twenty-eight per cent higher than the average for the rest of the province.

Izoom in on Larry’s weathered face. I know each wrinkle represents a lifetime of hardship. Childhood is a distant memory for Larry. He tells me he quit school in grade three because the teacher hit him. Since then he has been on his own in La Loche, literally fighting to survive.

Like most La Loche residents, he struggles to find a job. The problem is compounded by the fact that a lot of people aren’t trained to do anything. Many people did not graduate high school. As it has been since the Forties, essential service providers like nurses, teachers and policemen are mostly brought in from outside to work. But they don’t stay long.

Despite the minimal work opportunities, money isn’t an issue. Every few weeks the government provides unemployment and child tax credits that are enough to live on. The challenge for people like Larry is what to do with their time and their money. In a town that offers little to do, people make up their own entertainment. It usually comes from a bottle.

It’s hard to believe the quiet man in front of me has been in jail more than twenty times. But, from what I am told, the man in front of me disappears when he drinks.

“He’s a pretty bad dude,” one person said.

“He doesn’t even make sense, he even foams at the mouth,” said another. “I heard he got arrested once and kicked out the window of the police truck.”

I have no doubt that Larry Montgrand has a dark side, like many of us do. But now as I reach for the record button on my camera I gather the courage to ask the question I came here to ask, one that has troubled me since this project began.

"Why are you like this?"

Our crew set off for La Loche around six a.m. on Tuesday, February 9, 2010, a group of five travelling in two cars. As we wound our way north from Regina, I could tell everyone in the caravan was nervous yet anxious for adventure. By noon we stopped in Prince Albert for a late breakfast. Crammed into a booth in the back corner of the local Smitty's we discussed our game plan for the first evening in La Loche. It was then that my BlackBerry began to vibrate. It was an email from Georgina Jolibois, mayor of La Loche.

Dear Kent;

...I no longer support your request to come to my community and do a documentary. My council would like you and your team to come to a council meeting and address the group to thoroughly discuss your plan.

I hadn't spoken with Georgina in over a week. When we first began the project I approached her for help making contact with possible interviews in the community. She immediately volunteered to help us line up interviews. She gave us a long list of people and community projects that she felt would lend balance to our film. However, the last time we spoke, she asked me to give her some time to deal with a family tragedy. I respected her request for space, but the final week before our trip was a crucial time to solidify interviews. We proceeded with our preparation and set up our interviews without bothering Georgina. I thought we were making things easier for her.

Obviously, she read our actions differently.

I knew from our first conversations that La Loche's mayor wanted to exercise some influence over the film's content. Now it was clear she intended to stop us from



Photo: Karin Yeske

coming to La Loche. But appointments had been set; people were waiting for us, wanting to tell their story and the story of La Loche.

The trip began with high spirits. We all believed we were on the road to do the right thing. Now we were pegged as intruders before we even arrived in the village. As we got closer to La Loche we decided to get out our handheld camera to record a bit of the journey. Looking back at the footage now, it captures exactly how I felt as we rolled into the village. Dark grey clouds cast a bleak shadow across the entire village as we crept along the main street, La Loche Avenue. It seemed so cold and dark as we drove along, passing the post office and Trapper's bar on the right and the gas station and liquor store on the left. As we continued we drove up a slight hill into the rest of the community. At the top of the hill was the town office, Georgina's office, and the RCMP detachment. It wasn't until we got past these buildings and closer to the residential part of La Loche that we could see the last rays of the sun disappear beneath the frozen waters of Lac La Loche.

Soon we reached our destination, the place that would become our only place of solitude for the next five days. Tucked away down a slight hill behind the local church, barely visible from La Loche Avenue, lay a hidden bank of lakeside homes. This is

where the members of the RCMP live. Tanner had insisted we stay with him, half out of kindness and half out of necessity. There is just one motel in La Loche and I don't think anyone stays there.

We quickly unloaded the cars that we'd packed so carefully that morning. Three cameras, two tripods and two lighting kits soon took over Tanner's back pantry. Our luggage commanded the living room, but the biggest space consumer was food. There are no restaurants in La Loche and the local grocery store stock is scarce. We cooked supper and then Tanner took us all on a brief tour of the village, including a stop at the RCMP detachment. There we met a few of the officers and their wives; they were the only welcoming faces we saw that night.

By ten o'clock we were all exhausted; the ten-hour trip had taken a lot out of us. We sat in the living room that night and discussed our game plan for the next day. As much as we tried to prepare, none of us knew what to expect.

Even before we arrived in La Loche I knew Larry was the person I needed for this documentary. But it wasn't until he was sitting in front of my camera that I realized how important he was. It took nearly two days to find him once we got to La Loche. The first try came after spending the morning at La Loche Composite High



Photo: Karin Yeske

School. That day the school was having a career fair. Representatives from universities and employers across the province were there to inform kids about opportunities after high school. The principal knew we were coming, but when we arrived, we got an unexpected greeting.

"Hi, who are you here with?" asked an anxious man at the door.

"We're here from the University of Regina," I replied.

"Oh great, come with me I'll show you where to set up," he said, taking off quickly down the hall.

The stressed-out teacher assumed we were there to give a presentation on behalf of the university. We explained that we weren't. He suggested we do the presentation anyway. The U of R recruiters never did show up, but neither did anyone from Keyano College in Fort MacMurray, only two hours away.

Principal Stephen King was kind enough to tour us through the school that morning amid the chaos of the fair. The school had undergone a major face lift beginning in 2005. It now boasted an industrial kitchen, foods lab, welding shop and gymnasium. As I walked through the halls, the whole building felt like new. In fact, it was the nicest high school I'd ever been to. Still, the La Loche Community School struggles to retain students. Of the 1,510 residents over age fifteen, just 9.6 per cent have a high school diploma. The provincial average is thirty per cent.

Leaving the school, we stopped by Larry's place. He lives in a trailer in his cousin's backyard, but the trailer was empty. We knocked on the front door of the house.

"Is Larry here?"

"No."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No."

"Do you know when he'll be back?"

"No"

"Will he be around in the next day or so?"

"I don't know."

Though missing Larry was disappointing, the day would only get tougher. Our next stop was a place the locals call The Triangle. At the south edge of town on opposite sides of La Loche Avenue stand Trapper's Bar and the provincial liquor store. Beside the liquor store is the L.A. Sports Bar, open Thursday to Saturday. Together the buildings are the most popular spot in the village at night, especially when the government cheques arrive. According to locals, when the cheques come out, most people make the short walk up the street and take their money right to the liquor store.

That day about a dozen people were hanging outside, just behind the buildings in what they call "the jungle." As soon as we pulled up and took the camera out of the bag I could feel the tension rise. The welcoming smiles of teachers and students at the north end of the road were replaced by the questioning scowls of the jungle. For the next forty minutes I turned the camera on anyone who would let me. A man named Roy was happy to oblige me when I asked him why he comes down there.

"I'll be honest with you, I'm drinking wine," he said. An older man with a squinty face they called Popeye barked at me to turn off the camera and get away. "It's just a hobby for us," Roy continued.

The worst part about The Triangle is that it is clearly visible to anyone in the area.

During our visit, six different trucks pulled up, their passengers yelling at us to stop filming. I don't blame them. The Triangle represents everything wrong with La Loche. If I lived there I wouldn't want people to see what it's like either. There was no way to explain that capturing this environment would provide the contrast needed to show what was good about the village. At least, that's what I thought was our reason for being there.

Meeting Georgina Jolibois face to face was one of the hardest things I've ever done. She had left a voicemail on my cell phone while we were filming at the liquor store.

"I have heard you are at the liquor store filming and I request you meet with me right away," the message said. I knew she could see me down there from her office. It was just a block away.

When I met her she didn't shake my hand when I offered it. I felt her dark eyes in the pit of my stomach. She explained how she felt I had betrayed her trust and that we had invaded her community without proper clearance from the town council. I knew I didn't need her permission, but seeing someone that upset because of my actions was something I found very hard to deal with. The film's intent was to educate people about the exploited people of the north. Now I felt like the exploiter. I knew Georgina was just trying to protect her village; she didn't see merit in what we were doing. But I told her we had come to hear what people had to tell us, good and bad. I assured her we would carry on with the utmost respect to everyone in the village.

"I don't think there is anything you can do to help me."

It was the last time I saw the mayor during our stay in La Loche.

After missing Larry on Wednesday, we stopped by his trailer on Thursday. Again he wasn't there. As we turned away down the street my mind was racing. I knew finding Larry was a wild card, but I also knew I needed him to explain what we were seeing. We were nearly halfway through our trip and we hadn't even met him yet. But, just as we began to talk about a possible substitute for Larry, the man who lives without an address or telephone did the unexpected. He called us.

"I heard you were looking for me," he said.

I met Larry Montgrand at two o'clock in the afternoon on Thursday, February 11. It was the moment my perspective on colonialism changed forever. It became more than an idea you talk about in class or read about in books. Colonialism is real. It affects the lives of millions of people, people like Larry.

As we talked together on that snowy back step he told me all about his life in La Loche, the only home he has ever known.

"They didn't have no drugs, no alcohol when I grew up. It used to be beautiful, everything was there," he said. "We used to be healthy. But now look at us today."

Larry doesn't have a job or formal education but he understands the relationship between First Nations and white people better than anyone I've met, both at home and in La Loche. Why? Because he has lived it for fifty years. He'd been a good student until the teacher hit him, he told me. Since then he has struggled to survive in the village where he says he "belongs." When he was younger he slipped into a life of crime, spending a good part of his youth behind bars. Now he struggles to make money. He sets traps out in the bush to catch food. His tiny shack barely provides enough heat to stay alive in the winter. It's a story similar to many people living in La Loche and across Canada, robbed of their natural way of life and forced to assimilate to a completely foreign system.

As Larry tells me his story it is apparent that he doesn't want to be called a victim. He doesn't blame anyone for his way of life. He knows when two cultures share a single space there will be conflict. He doesn't think white people really meant all the harm they caused by moving in; they simply didn't understand the result of their actions.

"It's just the way we've been affected from the outsiders moving in," he said. "This is the way life has been twisted."

I met Larry for a second time on Friday, February 12. When we left him the day before, we did so with the promise that we would be back the next afternoon. I wish I could say it was for a noble reason, but the truth was that I needed to get video of Larry interacting in the town to give him a presence in the film. Once again he wasn't at his house, but we found him a few blocks away walking down the street, his faded green jacket open in the front and flapping behind him.

"Listen, I don't think I want to do this anymore," Larry said leaning in to the open window of my car. "A lot of people around here don't like that I'm talking to you."

He told us a few of his neighbours came into the backyard to scold him for talking to us, moments after we had left.

"I just wanted to get them out of there, but I couldn't touch them or I'd go back to jail," Larry said. Despite his firm voice, I could see hurt in his eyes.

Just as it has done his whole life, white presence in the community was making life harder for Larry. The human inside me said to leave Larry alone, let him go on his way and not cause him any trouble. But the filmmaker in me knew our documentary depended on getting shots of him in his environment. I convinced him to let me film him as he walked home. Then I asked if I could come to his trailer. I'm still not sure if it was worth it.

As we walked he told me more about life in La Loche. I could tell that he was trying to get back to his trailer as fast as he could. When we got within a block of the backyard I heard a loud banging. I looked up and saw a man standing in the window

of one of the houses. He gave us the finger.

"Do you think that finger was for me?" I asked him.

"No, that's probably for me," he replied. To me, that was worse.

Once we got to the backyard he took me into his home, a trailer just bigger than the bathroom of the house we were staying in. A thin sleeping bag hung in the doorway; I think it was the only form of insulation the place had. For the first time it was just Larry and me, alone in his world. Dirty dishes were piled on a small counter, the closet hung open just a foot from the bed. There were no clothes inside.

He told me about the times he had been stabbed. "Too many" to count, but the most recent scar, the one just below his throat, nearly took his life last year. I had heard that he'd been shot twice as well, but I didn't have the guts to ask him about it. When he was finished talking I put my camera down to my side. There was a long pause as he and I just looked at each other.

This man had just bared his soul to me, for consequences that could be much greater than the success of a simple film. But it was I who felt vulnerable. As we stood there I struggled for something to say.

I extended my hand. He shook it.

"Listen, Larry, if you ever need anything just let me know," I said.

"What do you mean?"

It was an empty offer. Both he and I knew it. Soon I would be gone and Larry would be back to the life he had just described to me.

"I don't know, I just want you to know if you need help, you can let me know," I said.

There was a long pause; Larry studied me one last time. I can only imagine how ignorant I looked and sounded.

"I don't think there is anything you can do to help me," he said. 🐾

Postscript: The resulting film, *Denendeh*, was chosen Best Small Budget documentary for 2010 at the Human Rights DocFest in Toronto. View it at www2.uregina.ca/yourblog/?p=566

Home is where the hope is

As Canada's first—and only—medical daycare in Canada, Hope's Home struggles to meet the demand.

By Jodi Gillich

Walking into Hope's Home for the first time, I was nervous. I had done the research; I knew the facts about the modest one-level building that housed the first—and only—medical daycare in Canada. I read the online testimonials; I spoke with a parent whose twin daughters go to the daycare. Hope's Home changes lives, everyone said. I could only go so far without seeing it for myself. But on that warm February day in the small prairie city of Regina, Saskatchewan, I was worried because I'm not what people would call "good with kids." I don't even know if I want children. And thinking about seeing kids in wheelchairs, with feeding or tracheostomy tubes coming out of their little bodies, set off a caution light in my head.

In the entryway, cubicles were filled with tiny shoes. Taking a deep breath, I stepped forward into a colourful, open room.

I was surprised to see so many adults. A young woman in her early twenties, I guessed, was reading a book to a few kids. A nurse was kneeling, talking softly to a little boy. A dad dressed in corporate casual waited for his child. A tall male staff member hugged a frail little girl in a

wheelchair, drawing her up and out of the seat and into his arms. He carried her down the hallway, and she looked over her shoulder at me; until that moment, I had never seen anyone literally beam. With an effortless grin, she radiated joy at simply being held.

Quicker than expected, my fear vanished.

Jacquie Tisher, founder of Hope's Home, had just graduated from nursing school when she gave birth to her first child, Acacia. Acacia was diagnosed with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, conditions affecting the spinal column and the brain, respectively. Now sixteen and paraplegic, Acacia spent the first year and a half of her life in the hospital. She underwent seventeen surgeries, coming close to death more than once.

Three years after Acacia was born, Tisher had her second child, Victoria. When Victoria was a toddler, Tisher decided to go back to nursing. Working in paediatric intensive care, she began to notice how many kids in the hospital were abandoned because of their special needs.

Enter Hope Dawn Marie, a medically fragile little girl with spina bifida—and a larger-than-life legacy. The Tisher family decided to foster Hope, who was living in the hospital. They planned to bring her home, but had trouble finding support for Hope's medical needs outside of the hospital. On February 3, 2004, before she could join her new family at home, Hope passed away at just ten months of age.

"The value of life is so huge," says Tisher.

Hope's short life revealed a need, and gave Tisher an idea.

In 2005, Tisher started a daycare in her home. Named for Hope, Tisher wanted to fill the gap in community care that existed for medically fragile children and their families outside of hospitals. She decided Hope's Home would accept medical and non-medical kids alike, from six weeks to twelve

years old. The first medical child at Hope's Home was a little boy with CHARGE syndrome—a complex pattern of birth defects that affects different children in different ways.

Within a short time, Hope's Home outgrew Tisher's house. The current 3,500 square feet of space is filled to capacity. There are forty-one children, twenty-eight with special needs, and a wait list. Add twenty-nine staff members, wheelchairs, standing frames and other equipment, and the need for space is dire.

Tisher's family has grown, too. Today she is a single mom to Acacia, Victoria, seven-year-old Isaac, and eight-year-old foster child Tyson. Tyson is hemiplegic—paralyzed on one side—tube fed and non-verbal, but learning to talk.

In a tiny office in the basement of Hope's Home, Tisher does her work surrounded by her children's pictures. Advocating for financial support has always been a huge part of her job. Costs steadily escalate as demand grows. With nurses, early childhood educators and developmental specialists on the payroll, salaries take up eighty per cent of the budget. And because the non-profit organization is the first of its kind in Canada, there is no model for funding. The service currently receives assistance from a mish-mash of three provincial ministries: education, health and social services.

"They can't stick us in a box that says, 'Well, this is who you are, and this is how you run and this is how we regulate you and these are the funding dollars that are available to you,'" says Tisher.

Administrative staff member Stephanie Kolhruss, whose nephew was Hope's Home's first special needs child, says most people agree the daycare is a good thing.

"We just need ongoing financial support to keep it going because we all know it's important," says Kolhruss. "It's a gift—now make it a given."



Photo: Michelle Austring

"The value of life is so huge." - Jacquie Tisher

Nurse Tara Lorenz doesn't want to work anywhere else.

A stay-at-home mom for two and half years, she knew the job was meant for her, and she told Tisher as much. She was hired on the spot.

"I think that feeling that you get when something is just right or meant to be, was how it was for us," says Lorenz.

Early childhood educator Tasha Smythe felt the same. She completed her practicum at Hope's Home, and was happy to be hired after graduation. She wanted to be a part of Tisher's pioneering daycare.

"To see that these children can come here and be kids; that they can get those opportunities that children their age can get as well and get that specialized care was really exciting for me," says Smythe, eyes shining.

Caring for two blind boys, tube-fed children, kids with seizure disorders, cerebral palsy, microcephaly, severe allergies, tracheostomy tubes, Type 1 diabetes and CHARGE syndrome—the days can be long and challenging. It takes a special person to work at Hope's Home.

"If it's not your passion and your love, people don't last for more than maybe

three hours, eight hours maybe," says Tisher. "They'll go, 'This is lovely, this is wonderful, I'm glad you're doing this, but I cannot.'"

Yet a daily schedule of small miracles and meaningful work is more than enough reward for some.

"We're a non-profit; we get paid less than everybody," laughs Kolhruss.

"Everybody could go anywhere and get more money, but nobody does. That says something."

Moms Shelley Patterson and Rachel Flemming agree: they don't know how they would have survived without Hope's Home.

In May 2007 Patterson—her husband Jed by her side—delivered twin daughters Jane and Molly eleven weeks early. While Molly was born typically, Jane suffered a haemorrhage on both sides of her brain. To relieve the pressure from the brain, a shunt was inserted into her head. The parents knew Jane would have medical issues, including cerebral palsy, for the rest of her life. That was just the beginning. Soon after birth, Jane began having infantile spasms; she got meningitis and developed

an inflammation of the brain ventricles, called ventriculitis, due to the presence of the shunt in her brain.

Patterson had to hold Jane nearly 24 hours a day. "She would just scream and cry," recalls the soft-spoken Vancouver native. She put her business, Dessart Sweets, on the back burner to stay home with her girls while Jed continued working thirteen-hour days driving bank bags to rural banks.

During her first winter, Jane spent three months in Regina's General Hospital and three-and-a-half weeks in the paediatric intensive care unit of Saskatoon's Royal University Hospital because of an abdominal abscess. For months after, Patterson would make countless trips between Regina and Saskatoon for appointments. It was hell.

She had heard about Hope's Home, but it wasn't until Jane and Molly turned two that she felt ready made the call. Tisher called back within a few hours, saying Jane and Molly could share a part-time spot with another set of twins.

On a Wednesday in early spring 2009, Shelley and Jed walked into Hope's Home. They both started crying.



Photos: Jodi Gillich

Colourful footprints (left); three boys enjoy snack-time (centre); and nurse Tara Lorenz with Reece Flemming (right).



Photos: Jodi Gillich

Parent Shelley Patterson with her daughter Jane (left); Joey Gadica, Hopes Home staff member with Zoe Stevenson (right).

"It's such a joyful place," says Patterson, tears filling her eyes again.

From the day she dropped the girls off at Hope's Home, Patterson had her life back. From running her business to doing things as simple as paying bills, she was herself again.

Single mom Rachel Flemming came to Hope's Home on a similar road. Due to a lack of oxygen at birth, son Reece was born legally blind, with spastic diplegia cerebral palsy—which affects the legs—and seizures. Like little Jane, Reece cried all the time and barely slept. He was hyper-sensitive to sound, making chores like vacuuming almost impossible. All his food had to be carefully pureed. Unable to work full-time, Flemming struggled to run an aesthetics business out of her home. She didn't know how she did it; she just did what she had to do.

"I lost my mind, because I was trapped. I couldn't do anything. It was constant crying and no sleep. I wasn't getting any sleep, either," recalls Flemming. She says she lost her independence, income and personality; she lost sight of who she was.

In March 2009, when Reece was a year-and-a-half, Flemming called Hope's Home and was offered a full time spot immediately. It was a lifesaver. Flemming took months to recover, mentally and physically. She slept. She mowed the grass and vacuumed. She started a full-time job that August. Today she's a working mother with a son in daycare, and that's what she likes.

Hope's Home has been good for Reece,

too. Since arriving, he's started eating regular food, and his hearing and touch have become desensitized; he is able to sit on his own, stand in a standing frame and crawl, even though he can't see where he's going.

*"We're a non-profit.
We get paid less than
everybody."*

Reece is extremely smart, Flemming says, and today is a happy kid, giggling and laughing all the time.

The staff members at Hope's Home are godsend—angels—Flemming says. She tells people that her son goes to the best daycare in the city. Looking straight at me, she adds that she will support Hope's Home until the day she dies.

Growing modestly amid such desperate need in a city of just over 190,000 people, Hope's Home is a model that Tisher, her staff and board of directors need to get right. They receive constant requests to set up Hope's Home locations in other Canadian cities. Only when funding is finalized and formalized can things move forward, explains Tisher.

"I'm a bit of full-speed ahead kind of girl, but you have to do it right. You can't just bulldoze your way through. It has to be done right and then things do move

quicker actually in the end," she says.

Staffer Kolhruss says she is constantly amazed by Tisher. She recalls the day Tisher strapped Acacia to her back and climbed a tree. "She was like, 'Every kid should climb a tree. (It) doesn't matter if your legs don't work, you're climbing a tree,'" says Kolhruss, a smile playing on her lips. "I was just, like, 'Only you would think of that.'"

Tisher may be a cautious planner, but there's always a bigger vision on the agenda, according to Kolhruss: "Every time I think we've sort of reached a plateau of almost excellence—'Well, we can't do anything better than this'—Jacquie will come around the corner and say, 'Guess what we're going to do this year?'"

When I sit down to write this story later, I can't stop thinking about the look in the eyes of people I had met. Until I visited Hope's Home, I had only seen that look a few times in my life—the look that said someone knew, without any doubt, that something was right, that Hope's Home is right. I don't think anyone could argue with that.

"What do you want people to remember you for?" I had asked Tisher.

She started to speak, then stopped. Tears filled her eyes.

"I don't know why I'm crying now," she laughed, reaching for a tissue.

A sudden realization washed over me and I let out my breath: this is right. At that moment, I was no longer a bystander, the stoic journalist. Hope's Home had changed my life, too. 🐦



Sleeper

Peter Nell snags the opportunity to sleep in on his day off.

HAILEY GREKE

Shadowlands

Dementia is on the rise in Canada.

By Rebekah Rowe



Photo courtesy the Burr family

Monday morning dawns frosty and bright in the prairie city of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Sparkling hoar frost ices the naked tree branches, and the temperature hovers around minus twenty celsius. The sun has just risen over the horizon, and everywhere, people are crawling out of bed to face the day.

Keith Burr is, at first glance, no different from any other early riser on this brilliant winter morning. A handsome man in his late fifties with only the suggestion of a belly, Keith is out of bed early by habit. After years spent traveling the roads as a salesman, a real-life Willy Loman, rising with the sun is as ingrained a morning habit as brushing his teeth or washing his face.

Keith pads down the hall to the bathroom and begins his morning routine: running a comb through his full head of silver-gray hair, brushing his teeth, gargling noisily, and using the toilet. Finished, he sets off for the dining room for his usual breakfast of cold cereal, milk and coffee.

But only minutes later, he's back in the bathroom again. He closes the door carefully and emerges a few moments later, drying his hands on the hand towel before flicking off the light and heading back to the dining room.

After only a few fidgety moments poised over his brimming bowl of Raisin Bran, he rises yet again and starts off for the bathroom. Before he can leave the room, a diminutive woman with kind eyes and a thick accent places a gentle hand on his arm.

"Keith," she says, her voice calm and reassuring, "you just went to the bathroom. You don't need to go again. It's time to sit down and eat your breakfast."

By 2038 more than 1.125 million people will be diagnosed with some form of dementia, accounting for 2.8 per cent of Canada's population. As baby boomers age, a wave of new patients will have serious economic consequences, according to *Rising Tide: The Impact of Dementia in Canada*, a recent report by the Alzheimer's Society of Canada. In 2008, the economic burden of dementia cost taxpayers \$15 billion; by 2038 it could cost Canadians a staggering \$153 billion annually.

Though most people are more familiar with the term Alzheimer's, the disease is actually part of a much larger group of disorders called dementias, which include such lesser-known afflictions as Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, vascular dementia and Pick's disease. One of Keith's neurologists has diagnosed Keith with Pick's, also called frontotemporal dementia, while the other neurologist remains on the fence. Dementia is a disease of many faces; its true character remains shadowy and

mysterious even to the experts of the geriatric medical community.

Perhaps this is why Alzheimer's and dementia are the most feared of all age-related diseases—it's difficult to fight what you can't understand. "We know what the end result is, but we don't yet understand what starts the process. We know about things that can exacerbate and increase the risk, but we don't yet know what switches on the pathophysiological process for dementia," explains Dr. Angela Juby, head of geriatric medicine at the University of Alberta.

What doctors do know about dementia is that the disease is a kind of atrophy of the brain caused by tangled deposits of proteins and dense plaques of cellular material and a peptide called amyloid-beta. These plaques and tangles effectively choke off oxygen-rich blood supply to various parts of the brain, resulting in a bewildering list of symptoms ranging from loss of balance to memory lapses.

The insidious damage is random and unpredictable, depending on how far the disease is progressed and which parts of the brain have been affected. The limbic system, which controls emotion and links memories to behaviours, is often the first part of the brain affected by dementias like Pick's Disease. This is why some of the earliest symptoms include irritability and depression along with difficulty finding objects or remembering how to perform familiar tasks like checking the mail or washing the dishes. Keith's family first noticed something was wrong when Keith forgot to buy Christmas presents for his children and grandchildren.

The hippocampus and temporal lobes, where Alzheimer's usually begins, are the

home of verbal and visual memories: words, faces, objects, and places. The temporal lobe in particular is responsible for new learning and long-term memory. When some parts of the brain are starved of blood, victims may be unable to remember recent events, even though they often retain a strong hold on memories from the distant past. Familiar faces, objects and places become confusing, and vocabulary skills decline.

"Particularly with Alzheimer's, the language centres of the brain are affected," says Dr. Juby. "People will have difficulty completing sentences. They'll go to say something, but they can't think of the word. Instead of saying 'pizza,' for example, they'll say, 'You know, that round thing with stuff on top.' They can't say what they want to say."

When the parietal lobes of the brain are affected, which happens as the disease progresses past the initial stages, the symptoms are often striking. Spatial relations and sequencing of activities are compromised, as are communications skills. Patients may substitute incorrect words in conversation, saying 'can' instead of 'car,' for example. Activities that require a logical sequence of actions become next to impossible, including writing a letter or typing email, getting dressed, paying household bills or driving.

As communication skills break down, the dementia patient becomes unable to understand what others are saying and to respond appropriately. Conversation becomes a virtual impossibility, and the patient finds himself or herself locked in a prison and unable to call for help or explain what is wrong.

Peter and Mary Forster sit in companionable silence, watching snowflakes filter down from a slate-gray sky.

"Coming down pretty good, isn't it, Mary?" Peter asks, patting Mary's hand. A clock marks time on the windowsill, surrounded by pictures of the couple's three sons, now grown to manhood. Peter and Mary are much like any other couple in their early seventies, enjoying the quiet

beauty of Fort McMurray's northern landscape. They eat dinner together every day and sit quietly, side by side, until nightfall, when Peter tucks the blankets around his wife, kisses her cheek and watches as she drifts off to sleep.

There is one marked difference which sets the couple apart from the other silver-haired seniors in Fort McMurray, spending their golden years together. Mary is in the

"We know what the end result is, but we don't yet understand what starts the process."

final stages of Alzheimer's disease and is wheelchair-bound, confined to the third floor of the Fort McMurray hospital.

Her home, once a tidy bungalow on a quiet street in Fort McMurray's downtown residential area, is now an acute care bed. Her friends are the busy nurses, two per shift, who care for Mary while attending to the needs of seventeen other patients and the occasional visitor.

This is life on the third floor. She waits, like so many others, for a bed to open up on the fourth floor, Fort McMurray's only continuing care facility for senior citizens who require medical care that families cannot provide.

There is still one constant in Mary's life, which has so drastically changed from the time of her diagnosis with early-onset dementia in 2003. Her husband is by her side, holding her hand and reading to her, feeding her lunch, and protecting her from the loneliness and despair which so often accompany this disease.

Peter is careful, when he leaves at night, not to say he's going home. "Her mind is there, she still understands, but sometimes you forget," he says. "So I don't say I'm going home. I say, 'I'm going shopping.' I say, 'I'll be back.' I say, 'Have a good night's sleep, sweetheart. I'll see you tomorrow.'"

Mary doesn't answer; she's largely lost

her ability to communicate, but her eyes remain fixed to her husband's face as he talks, and occasionally she responds to his gentle questions with a murmured yes or no. As the disease continued its terrible progress, destroying sections of her brain, she has lost virtually all of her short and long-term memory. But the heart, it seems, remembers.

Perhaps the biggest tragedy of Alzheimer's disease and other dementias is their degenerative nature; once neurons are destroyed, those parts of the brain cannot be repaired. A person cannot gain back the information that has been lost. But new research into a class of substances called growth factors, particularly one called nerve growth factor, or NGF, has suggested the possibility of repairing brain damage. Growth factors promote the health of nerve cells and improve their ability to grow new connections with other nerve cells. NGF specifically may keep nerve cells from dying as well as improving cognition.

Another theory that is garnering excitement in the medical community is the possible link between diabetes and dementia. Some researchers now believe dementia is a form of diabetes of the brain, and clinical trials have shown improvement in the cognition and memory function of non-diabetic Alzheimer's patients when given anti-diabetic drugs called glitazones.

New research has found two new possible biological markers in the skin of Alzheimer's patients: an easy-to-detect abnormal inflammatory chemical response, and the presence of abnormal levels of a number of proteins. Other markers which are already in use within the medical community are found in changes in cerebrospinal fluid. Prior to these discoveries, the only way to provide a definitive diagnosis of Alzheimer's in the vast majority of cases was during an autopsy. The implications for early detection and treatment of the disease are compelling.

Dr. Juby warns that, while new research is encouraging, a cure is still a long way away. "Until we can actually target what sets off the whole process, we're just dealing with the end results," she says.

Finding the key that sets off the process of dementia may be closer than ever. A research team at the University of Saskatchewan, under psychiatry professor Dr. Darrell Mousseau, received a Saskatchewan Research Chair grant of one million dollars to study the link between depression and Alzheimer's. The team's preliminary work suggests that an enzyme that causes depression may also cause Alzheimer's by weakening brain cells. Though the research is still in its infancy, identifying one of the early triggers of the disease will go a long way towards finding a cure.

There are no guarantees. When it comes to dementia, the determining factors are a complex mix that the medical community still doesn't fully understand. Hopes for a vaccine were dashed in the early part of the decade when human trials had to be halted due to brain inflammation in the subjects. But a promising new vaccine is already in clinical trials and hopes are high once again that a definitive prevention for Alzheimer's is around the corner.

Meanwhile, research suggests that using the brain by doing regular activities like crossword puzzles, taking up a new hobby, or volunteering may prevent dementia by increasing the number of connections between neurons in the brain. "Prevention is the best treatment we've got at the moment," Dr. Juby says. This includes staying physically healthy. "Anything that

increases your risk for vascular disease, heart disease or stroke increases your risk for dementia. The key message is that if you don't want to get dementia, you have to look after your health. Be active, control your weight and your diet, and the more social interaction you have the better. People have to be proactive—there is no magic cure down the road."

In 2008, the economic burden of dementia cost taxpayers \$15 billion; by 2038 it could cost Canadians a staggering \$153 billion annually.

And for now, even robust physical health can't stave off dementia's progress forever.

On some afternoons, Keith jogs with one of his caregivers. A former marathon runner and participant in the Seniors' Olympics, Keith's body has not forgotten the smooth rhythm of the road. His sneakers hit the snow-packed pavement noisily as his caregiver huffs along beside him, trying to keep up with Keith's steady pace.

Once or twice a month, Keith's son Evan

will appear at the nursing home. An elementary-school art teacher, he stops by the care home after school lets out. Keith doesn't acknowledge his son by name when Evan appears at the door, but there's a spark of recognition in his eyes.

After Evan eases his dad into his thick winter jacket and helps him put on his shoes, the two head off to the Zellers Family Restaurant for coffee. Evan does most of the talking, while Keith listens and mumbles an occasional reply. The department store café was a meeting spot for Keith and his friends, and this is why Evan brings him back here—he's comfortable here, he knows where the bathroom is, and the menu never changes.

On occasion, Evan is accompanied by his genial young wife Erin and their infant son Graham. Like any proud grandpa, Keith loves a visit from any of his four grandchildren. His eyes light up when Graham, a chubby baby with a shock of ginger-coloured hair, comes for a visit. Keith's hands, still strong and largely unmarked by age, handle the baby with gentle care, his cornflower-blue eyes fixed on the baby's brown ones. The sweet-smelling crown of the baby's head proves irresistible, and Keith bends to kiss his grandson with a delighted smile.

There will be no magic cure for Keith. His mental capacity continues to decline rapidly, and doctors estimate that he has, at most, five years left. What has been lost cannot be regained.

After Evan has returned his dad to the nursing home in the twilight hours of early evening, it's time to say goodbye. Because language has lost much of its meaning for Keith, he doesn't equate "goodbye" with his son's departure, and when Evan heads to the door to put on his shoes, he turns to find Keith right behind him, pulling on his own coat.

"No, Dad," Evan says, his voice gentle. "You're staying here. But I'll see you later, okay?"

"Okay," Keith replies, but remains by the front door, watching the tail lights of his son's car fade into the distance, until a staff member takes him gently by the arm and leads him off to bed. 🐦



Photo: Rebekah Rowe

Peter and Mary Foster.



Freeze Frame

Willa and Adam Holmes peer through an ice sculpture at Regina's annual Ice and Fire Carnival.

KIM NAKRIEKO

Fadaman

By
Emma
Ruthnum



Photo: Emma Ruthnum

On a dark Tuesday night, one building glows warmly as Eric Hill makes his way up a dimly lit Regina street. He walks up the four concrete steps of 1951 Toronto Street, turns the doorknob of the cherry red doors and pauses in a wash of soft orange light. Inside, he strips off his shoes, socks, jeans, and jacket. Soon a simplified version of himself stands on the wooden floor, clad only in a pair of blue cut-off shorts and a white t-shirt.

Gradually, other men arrive, filling up the room. They align themselves an arm's length apart in three rows, facing an east wall of mirrors. Rhythmic background music begins to pulsate. The only women present are the teachers, Heather Cameron and Fran Gilbo. Cameron starts the warm up with the men, leading them in a rhythmic jog around the room. The men smile as they run, leaving inhibitions behind. This studio is a judgment free zone.

"Hips!" yells Cameron.

The men pause, gyrate their hips, and continue jogging.

"Ribs!"

"Ribs?" A moment of confusion, some snickers, then the jogging resumes.

Hill has come to the FadaDance studio to learn how to dance. With no previous dance experience, he has become a 'Fadaman.' The program, a weekly event, gives the inexperienced mish-mash of Regina men an opportunity to try out something that defies male stereotypes—a choreographed dance routine.

Fadaman is one of the classes offered by the contemporary dance company, FadaDance, established by Misty Wensel in 2004. Embracing everything from fire dancing to world fusion dancing, the troupe features dancing so original it's hard to stick a label on it.

Teachers Cameron and Gilbo have been part of FadaDance since the beginning. Classically trained, Gilbo took ballet from age four until fifteen, and modern dance from age twelve until into her early twenties. Cameron, on the other hand, grew up Scottish highland dancing and didn't take her first contemporary dance class until later in life. Loving the new expressive dance style, she pursued a degree in contemporary dance from Montreal's Concordia University. She initially wasn't interested in teaching, but when she returned to Saskatchewan, FadaDance snapped her up. She quickly grew to love instructing the weekly classes, offered to kids as young as three, all the way up to adults.

The very first year FadaDance opened, Gilbo went to an international conference called Dance and the Child International. There she noticed a strong contingent of

male dancers from Finland. She discovered the Finnish secret was boys-only classes during those "peer pressure years where they would be more apt to maybe be told they are doing a girl thing." She learned that although the boys performed with the girls, the classes themselves weren't co-ed. Another observation Gilbo made was the inherent difference between the movement of boys and girls: girls enjoy twirling whereas boys just want to run and fall. If these movements are incorporated into dance, what you end up with is a stomping, jumping movement that comes quite naturally to boys.

Boys' classes were always part of FadaDance, right from the beginning. But the adult classes were another story, composed mostly of women and the odd brave male representative. Eventually men from around the community began whispering about the need for a men's-only adult class. By 2008 the whispers grew louder. But even though it was the men themselves who had approached FadaDance, Cameron remembers having to reassure them everything would be okay, they would be fine.

They started with a workshop, which grew into an eighteen-week class. The dancers came from all walks of life. There was a CBC radio editor, a restaurant owner, an engineer and a filmmaker, all with little or no dance experience. Gilbo was impressed by their willingness to start from scratch. "I think it's just unique, that it's men who enjoy dancing, coming together with no training—just a desire," she says.

Back at the studio, Hill and his classmates go over last week's steps. Lining up behind Gilbo, they begin with ninja runs. Crossing the studio, they stomp and pivot. Shaking the floor with each stomp, the men look like they are warming up to perform the traditional Haka dance

“This studio is a judgment free zone.”

with the New Zealand All Blacks rugby team.

A recent University of Regina film grad, the twenty-four-year-old Hill is the youngest member of the class. For him, Fadaman isn't that alien—he's been a member of Regina's arts scene for years. During the day, his time is split between working at a downtown coffee shop, Atlantis Coffee Co., and working on various film projects. The coffee gig is temporary until a full time film industry job comes along. A recognizable face around town, Hill is usually ahead of the fashion curve. Currently operating under the influence of the new-wave alternative band Vampire Weekend, his clothes have a New York feel, topped off with his signature oversized plastic-framed glasses and a curly brown coif kept perfectly in place.

Hill remembers his first Fadaman class. Their first dance movement was simple and easy to keep count to. Still, the men in the room seemed uncertain and nervous. Hill only felt at ease because he had come with his friend Justin Ludwig, owner of the Fainting Goat Restaurant. At the time, Ludwig and Hill were working on the set of a TV show, surrounded by male co-workers. Hill remembers the teasing, and feeling silly about being in a dance class.

What brought Hill back to class every week was the camaraderie. He was going through tough personal issues; being surrounded by older men with established families and careers was a positive environment. He found it inspiring to learn how to be a man in the world. The men gave advice to each other and discussed work projects. Hill likens the bond between the Fadaman dancers to a sports team.

One of his fellow dancers was Brian Webb, a jock from Winnipeg. Webb, who runs a web consulting business, never had any apprehensions about joining the Fadaman class. He didn't know how to

dance, but he knew his athletic training would be a benefit. At thirty-six, some maturity helped, too. When he was younger, he says, he was the stereotypical athlete who made jokes about the girls who attended the Royal Winnipeg Ballet School. Now he realizes they were “three times the athlete” he'll ever be. At the University of Regina, he played volleyball for the Cougars, and today he continues to play volleyball, soccer and hockey. The first Fadaman class he took was a test run. Skeptical coming in the door, he immediately appreciated the physical challenge. “Whether you're a man or a woman, you have to be accessing all of your coordination,” he says. He kept going back, missing just one class, due to an injury. His healthy, active lifestyle shows. He glows like someone who just got back from vacation, and looks much younger than thirty-six. You can see the dancer in him, too. He stands tall, carrying himself with equal parts strength and grace.

At the end of every Fadaman season, the troupe holds a recital to showcase what they've learned. At the 2008 recital, the men were a bundle of nerves. They wouldn't have the teachers counting them in, or the comfort of being able to watch their moves in the mirror. In the afternoon, they held a practice recital in the gym of Dr. Martin LeBoldus High School. It was a chance to get the final kinks out of their routine before the big adult performance and party at the Saskatchewan Cultural Exchange Society. The men wore sweater vests and ties and danced for an audience of students and parents.

Now evening had arrived and the pressure was on. They had no idea how the Regina public would receive them. Backstage the men pumped each other up like the team they had become. They had to make sure that their performance was flawless. When the music filled the air, they stepped on

stage, not knowing what to expect. Waiting for them was a barrage of excited screams. “It was kind of like watching that footage of the Beatles concerts,” remembers Webb. “You couldn't really hear the music so they turned (it) up.”

Perhaps they should have expected a wild reception, given the recent popularity of TV shows like ‘So You Think You Can Dance.’ What's going on in the mainstream media can help men cross over into new roles, according to Fern Hagin, a sociologist and lecturer with a background in mass media and communications. The popularity of reality dance shows has no doubt garnered added respect for men who dance.

For Hill, he's just doing what comes naturally. Around town, you can spot him at concerts and dance nights having fun with his friends, happy to challenge stereotypes. Likewise, Webb says he doesn't feel like a pioneer for all men. The ‘pioneer’ title belongs to Gilboy and Cameron, he says, for wanting to teach men to dance. As for himself, he just hopes he's setting an example. If he has a son some day, he hopes his son will become a Fadaman.

The men are now midseason and find themselves preparing for another recital. After a demanding class, they stay late to have their heads measured for aviator hats, part of their new costumes. Hill wagers his head is the biggest and cheers when he ties for first place.

After class, Hill checks his phone to see that he's missed two text messages from friends. They're waiting for him at a popular downtown restaurant. He gets into his car, turns up the music, and drives the few blocks down to the restaurant. Inside, he grabs a seat among his buddies and orders a Pabst Blue Ribbon, just like any other guy at the end of a hard-working day. 🐦



True Beauty

Pamela Halliday is a shoe-loving fashionista, but it's her spirituality and intelligence that defines her.

LEILA BEAUDOIN



The Graduate

U of R film grad Eric Hill, 24, splits time between serving coffee at Atlantis Coffee Co. and working on various film projects in town.

EMMA RUTHNUM

The skinny on fat

Scientists are taking a second look at the most maligned part of our diet. What they are finding may surprise you.

By Miranda Burski

Standing in one of her local Superstore's many aisles, Sharla Ulmer scans the shelves in front of her. Ulmer is determined to follow her diet; she's come this far, she's not going to give up now. Her wedding isn't until July, and that dress is going to fit the way she wants it to. Spotting a 'Low in Fat!' logo, she reaches up and pulls down a frozen dinner. The meal pictured on the box looks good, but she isn't sure that she trusts the low-fat ad.

Ulmer spent the fall of 2009 in Kentucky completing an optometry internship. While there, she set a goal to lose twenty-five pounds before the wedding. Her first attempt involved visiting the gym in her apartment building. She spent forty-five minutes on a treadmill every other day for about a month. She lost about four pounds. Not bad, she thought, but a long

way from twenty-five pounds. In mid-October Ulmer switched tactics. She joined Weight Watchers online and began tracking her fat, fibre, and calorie intakes. She

She set a goal to lose twenty-five pounds before the wedding.

learned not every product that claims to be low in fat actually is, and that fat is just one thing to watch out for. Now she flips the box over, scanning for the fibre and calorie counts. Fibre is good for you, while calories need to be limited. A quick look tells her it's not worth it. The fat value may be low, but the amount of healthy fibre is also low—and the calorie count is entirely too high.

Most people would have stopped at the 'Low in Fat' logo. Fat is the dietary culprit that tends to draw the most negative attention. Ulmer admits, though, that she isn't entirely sure why fat has gained such a bad reputation.

"Fats are important in our diet, so trying to cut them out completely is not the answer, but choosing our fats based on the evidence we have is important," advises Tracy Sanden, a public health nutritionist with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region. Some fats are good for you, she points out. The best are unsaturated fats, such as omega 3, found in fish oils, flax and in smaller amounts in grass-fed meat and dairy. Because they don't affect cholesterol levels, they've become known as 'heart healthy' fats.

Still, Sanden stresses they should only be included in a person's diet two to three times a week, and only within total daily fat recommendations.

The second commonly found fat is saturated fat. This is generally found in animal products and has been shown to increase bad cholesterol. The final group, trans fats, is generally found in processed foods. The common message about trans fats is that they raise bad cholesterol levels while lowering good cholesterol levels.

But wait. There are two types of trans fats: industrially made ones and natural ones found in beef and dairy products. While the industrially-made trans fats do tend to raise bad cholesterol levels, scientists are taking a second look at the natural version. "New research is showing a difference in how the body processes natural versus man-made trans fats," Sanden explains. The naturally occurring forms tend to occur in fairly small amounts, but evidence is growing that these small amounts could be beneficial for our health.

Some of the cutting-edge research is being conducted in Edmonton, Alberta. At the University of Alberta, Spencer Proctor is studying conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a natural trans fat found in dairy and beef products. Proctor is scientific director of the CLA Network, but CLA isn't the first natural fat he's investigated. He first began looking into the fats about six years ago, when he and his team experimented on the effects of vaccenic acid (VA) on lab rats.

VA is the predominant natural trans fat in dairy and beef products. Although most scientists recognize that VA could have some health benefits, not much research



Photo: Miranda Burski

has been done in the area. One of the biggest reasons for this is that it's difficult to purify the trans fat in order to study it. This didn't stop Proctor and his team from attempting to learn more about it, though. They began with a three-week experiment with a group of rats. Some rats were healthy and lean, while some were obese and at risk for diabetes and heart disease. Half the rats were fed a diet with an increased VA content, and all were monitored so the scientists could figure out how the VA was affecting them.

The results were significant. Under a VA-enriched diet, the healthy rats stayed healthy and lean. More interesting, the natural fats seemed to actually help the fat rats, lowering their blood lipids, and they had either positive or neutral effects on their immunity cells. The team also found that one of the greatest benefits of a VA-enriched diet could be the reduction of the build-up of fatty materials, such as cholesterol, along artery walls. Intrigued, they ran a second test, this time for sixteen weeks. The results came out the same.

Next Proctor decided to investigate CLA, which is formed by VA and is found in dairy and beef products. Already studies in the scientific community had found CLA may help fight cardiovascular disease, diabetes and, potentially, cancer. These days Proctor and his team are focusing on the effects of CLA in relation to polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), the leading cause of infertility.

Meanwhile, commercial interests have already been manufacturing and marketing synthetic CLA, mostly in the form of weight-loss pills. But while in some cases weight loss does occur, these results haven't been consistent. As with other trans fats, there seems to be a difference between natural and man-made versions, with more convincing evidence in favour of the real thing.

So what does this mean for consumers like Ulmer, who want to maintain a healthy diet but feel they don't know enough about fats to do it without help? There's the option of talking to

nutritionists, though they may not learn much detail about the possible health benefits of natural fats like VA and CLA. This, Sanden says, is because nutritionists won't change their advice regarding fats, or anything else we may eat, until they are entirely confident that the new information is solid. Meanwhile Proctor and other scientists are working toward

Without detailed labels, a shopper may see a high fat content and avoid a product that is actually a healthy choice.

accomplishing the first step: helping consumers better understand what's in their food. A lot of the confusion many consumers feel comes from the information listed on nutrition labels, Proctor says.

Currently the United States and the European Union allow companies to supplement their food products with CLA,

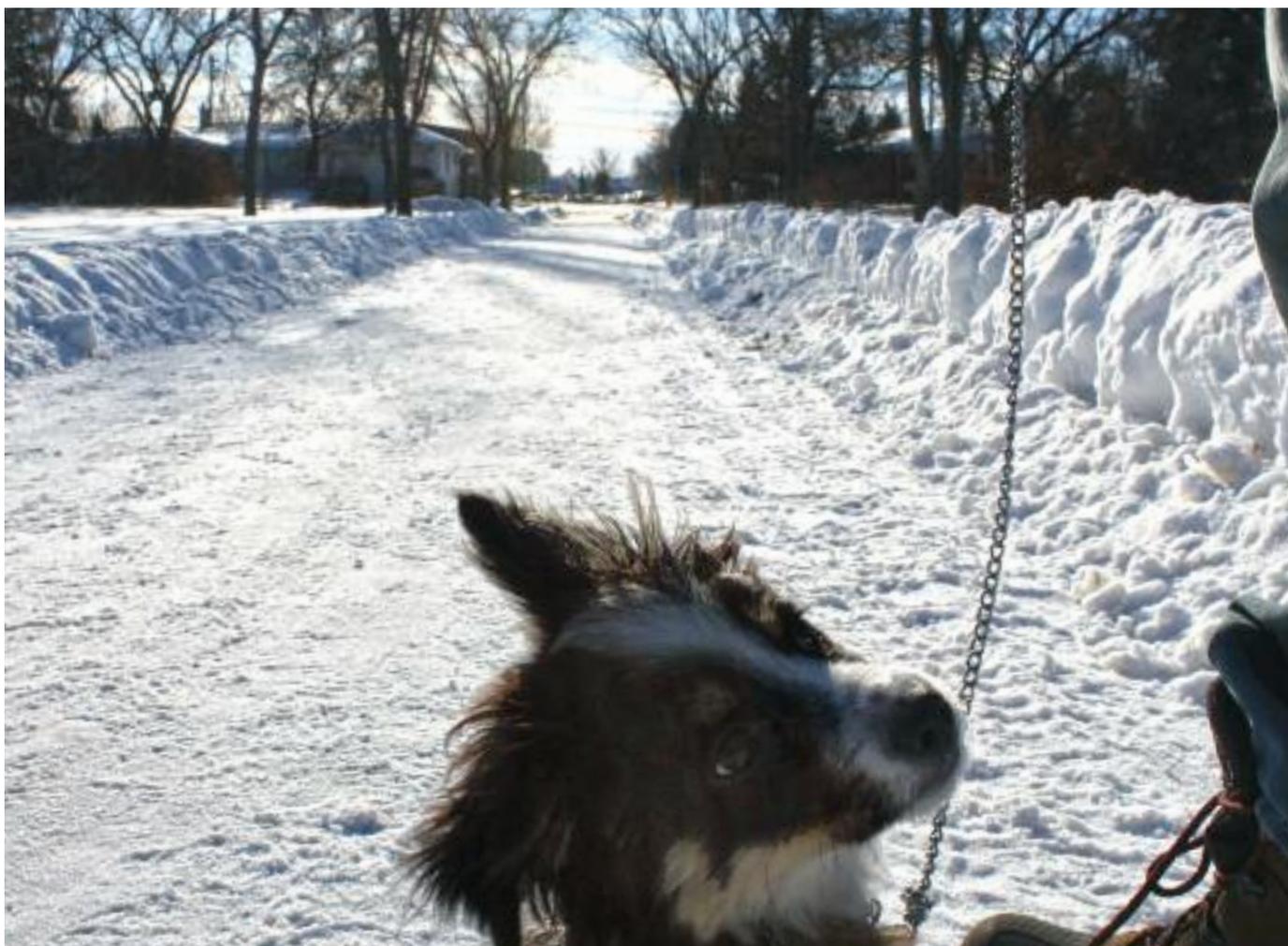
and some countries are even allowing food products containing extra, synthetic CLA to be labelled and sold as such. Canada has not yet followed the trend. Proctor argues that changes in food labelling need to happen, especially when it comes to the fats listed on nutrition labels. Most of the trans fat value listed on a product containing animal fats is actually made up of VA, and thus is more beneficial than people may realize, he explains. Without detailed labels, a shopper may see a high fat content and avoid a product that is actually a healthy choice.

But even if labels change or natural fats prove their benefits, nutritionists like Sanden won't change their core advice much. No matter what, it all comes down to balance, moderation and exercise. "Having a variety of foods from each food group and limiting the other foods, such as French fries, chocolate bars, et cetera, combined with regular physical activity is still the best way to go," Sanden says.

This approach worked for Ulmer. She reached her goal weight in December 2009, and has been maintaining that weight ever since. It wasn't easy but it was worth the challenge. She felt better, knowing her wedding dress was going to look and feel just right. 🐦



Photo: Miranda Burski



Dog's eye view

The world seems huge from the sight-line of a small dog,
but he would follow his people anywhere.

ADRIANA CHRISTIANSON



Refuge

A fallen tree catches the light of a freshly risen sun
at the Condie Nature Refuge, 145 kilometres northwest of Regina

ANNIE MCLEOD



Oppose!

By Myles Fish

The Saskatchewan Youth Parliament survived two World Wars and one Depression. Can it survive the Internet generation?

To the left, books about *The Berenstain Bears* and *Garfield* rest on shelves; to the right, antiquated computers, floppy disk drives and all. Save for the luminescent glow of a laptop screen, the room is pitch black. In the middle, amid a hodgepodge of blankets and pillows, are people. Young people. Young people with ideas. Young, politically active people. An endangered species for certain. This is one of the charms of Saskatchewan Youth Parliament (SYP). These giant

pandas of society, after a day of debate, form a smorgasbord of bodies on an elementary school library floor. They come here for Vespers, to hear some Simon & Garfunkel, a Sarah McLachlan song or two, perhaps a little Dylan. Officially it's a time for reflection, personal and spiritual. In actuality it's a glorified cuddle fest. Sure, you have your snorers and your lonely souls tucked in behind the magazine rack, but this is when all the sixteen-year-olds' flirting comes to fruition.

Early the next morning, far from the library love shack, our young politicians sit in a cavernous gym, dressed to the nines. Most of the boys wear real ties—only a few still use clip-ons. Matt Leisle, fifteen years old, future SYP premier, stands and the Speaker of the House intones: "I recognize the Member from Swimming Against a Swift Current." Members pick their own constituency names. Leisle wanted to be 'the Member from I'm Dumber Than You' but it just didn't fly. Now he takes a breath, faces the Speaker and launches into a proposal to reinstate Pluto as a planet. Or maybe the resolution is about annexing North Dakota. He's done in three minutes. There were some laughs, a handful of "hear hears!" Sitting back down, he's happy. The grade eleven student from the village of Morse, Saskatchewan, population 284 and falling, is active in student council and every sport available. Yet a forgotten dream of becoming the next Tommy Douglas lingers. In truth, he came here to talk nukes and net neutrality, not North Dakota. But he likes the joke resolutions; they're a nice break. His jokes panned out, his confidence steadily builds. Maybe he'll see his mug on billboards one day after all.

But first, as it turns out, Matt Leisle has to save the Saskatchewan Youth Parliament from a bankrupt, memberless, ignoble end.

The youth organization that would eventually evolve into SYP began in 1912 under the moniker Older Boys' Youth Parliament. In only the second year it became the Older Boys' Congress. Nearly two hundred and fifty boys gathered in Regina that year. Mayor Robert Martin called them "the hungriest bunch" he had ever seen. It was not their appetites Martin spoke of, but rather the "mental and moral food" they sought. The organization was founded on Christian values. Martin's challenge to the assembled youth was printed in the *Regina Leader* the next day: "He said that these people coming to our fair Province from Southern Europe were valuable assets to the country as they were extracting wealth from the soil, but they did not have the same standard of morals and it was up to the churches and Sunday Schools of the land to set these people an example." The reporter added, "If the enthusiastic gathering last evening is any indication...a new day has dawned for the boyhood of the West and a movement has been set afoot which will leave its imprint on generations to come." Unfortunately, the boys apparently weren't hungry enough: the organization folded shortly after.

In 1923 the youth assembly was reborn under TUXIS, a United Church movement

similar to the YMCA. Sessions continued, taking a break for the Great Depression and World War II between 1930 and 1945. Re-emerging as the Saskatchewan Older Boys' Parliament, the mandate remained strongly religious. The members' oath stated participants must not be users of alcohol, drugs, or "a habitual user of tobacco." Further, they had to be members of a Church School. "The central purpose of this parliament is to help boys be Christlike," declared the proclamation. But the parliament began to evolve. After much debate, smokers were allowed entry.

Among the alumni, certain names stand out: Prime Minister John Diefenbaker, Saskatchewan Premier Lorne Calvert, Dateline NBC correspondent Keith Morrison, federal Opposition House Leader Ralph Goodale and Saskatchewan Lieutenant-Governor Gordon Barnhart. Mimicking society at large, the Sixties were a transitory period for the parliament. It could also be called the Golden Age. Many of the organization's most well known alumni came out of this decade.

Arriving at Saskatoon's University of Saskatchewan, a youngster from the town of Saltcoats, Gordon Barnhart, befriended Jack Hilson and Ned Shillington, two members and future Saskatchewan MLAs. The boys, who lived in the same residence,

would regularly sit around and debate issues, Barnhart arguing on behalf of whatever viewpoint was underrepresented. After a little convincing, Barnhart joined the Older Boys' Parliament. He was struck by the intelligent viewpoints of other Saskatchewan youth. "I thought the debate was of good quality, it was respectful—even if sometimes heated. There weren't cheap shots. You beat them with rationale, with logic," he recalls. Barnhart ran for Leader of the Opposition after his first Session. When it came time to vote, he found himself running against future federal MP Simon de Jong. "Here I have the ballot with his name and mine and I'm thinking, 'What do I do?' because to vote for yourself is kind of conceited," he says. "But then I thought if I don't have confidence in myself, then who will? So I voted for myself and won by one vote. Simon later went into federal politics, so I guess it didn't hurt him too much." Through the boys' parliament, Barnhart would meet the Speaker of Saskatchewan's legislature. Four years later, the Speaker offered him the job of Clerk of the Legislature. At twenty-three, Barnhart became the youngest to hold such a position in the entire Commonwealth.

Long before he served six years as premier of Saskatchewan, Lorne Calvert came to the Older Boys' Parliament as a high-school student. At the time, the opening debate would always be something called the Canadian Flavoured Postage Stamp Act, which proposed flavouring stamps with maple syrup. Other debates, however, were much more serious. There were debates on pollution and the Vietnam conflict. Another questioned whether women should be allowed to join the organization. "I found myself in the awkward position of having to play an opposition role to that debate and trying to suggest good reasons why women ought not be (admitted)," laughs Calvert today. All the while, his girlfriend at the time was observing the debate from the Legislative gallery. "It didn't impress this certain young woman who didn't understand the niceties of parliamentary debate. 'I had to do it,' I kept saying. 'Well, no, you didn't

have to,' was her response." There weren't any further dates after this.

Females and non-Christians were finally allowed entry in 1972 and the name was changed to Saskatchewan Youth Parliament. Over the next three decades, SYP would enjoy strong membership numbers and financial stability. The youth of Saskatchewan continued to be ahead of the curve on social issues. In 1986 they

"I see young people very much engaged, but not in the traditional engagement place that we call the legislature."

passed a resolution eliminating public smoking and forcing violators to donate fifty dollars to a heart, lung, or cancer research society.

Christmas Session, SYP's marquee event, was held every year at the end of December in Regina's Legislative Building. Arriving at his first Session in 1988, Matt Leisle was blown away. The fifteen-year-old kid from Morse, a town that defines small-town prairie life, had joined the group at the urging of a teacher who was an SYP alumnus. In Morse, going to school with the same nine classmates all his life, he pretty much knew what to expect from people. Not here. Scanning the youngsters from across the province sitting (a few dozing) in the seats of the province's MLAs, he knew a new world awaited. During Session, all the traditional pomp and ceremony was on full display. It felt like the real thing. For a wide-eyed newbie, there was no way to tell the organization was about to enter its darkest hour.

He recalls how he was just happy to sit back and listen. His main forays into speaking that first Session were updating

everyone on the progress of Team Canada at the World Junior Hockey Championships. Wearing a jersey of his beloved Calgary Flames, he would rise and read straight out of the newspaper about our triumphant boys on the ice. They were likely the most popular speeches of the entire week.

Leisle attended eight more sessions, offering up progressively more dynamic speeches. Farm aid was his baby, but you couldn't sneak any resolution by Leisle without hearing his opinion. As Leisle evolved, his peers elected him to leadership positions five years consecutively.

But all the while, the backbenches were emptying out. There were sixty-eight participants at Leisle's first Session. For most of SYP's history, you could count on at least eighty; some years there were one hundred. Four sponsoring bodies were on board: the United Church, the Anglican Church, l'Association jeunesse fransaskoise, and the Knights of Columbus. With twenty seats allocated for each group, the annual event was so popular that there were often more applicants than seats, and some would be turned away. But in the late 1990s, things changed. Smaller congregations and tighter belts led the United and Anglican churches to pull out. Then the francophone group began their own youth parliament. With only the Knights of Columbus still involved, numbers dwindled. In 1999 only fifty-five registration fees had been received at the deadline and the group seriously considered canceling Session for the first time since World War II. To make matters worse, in a two-year period the SYP blew \$4,500 from its bank account. Then the Cabinet split into two factions, each intent on weeding the other out.

The ship needed to be righted. Call Leisle the pilot.

There is always a noticeable reverence whenever someone speaks of the Matt Leisle era. Most of the members only know of him through funny stories about funny stories Leisle once told to the admiring crowds. At any event, he was almost never alone. And why would he be—if you were

out of earshot, you ran the risk of missing a yarn about some small-town cabaret gone wrong or the legend of the lighthouse. These were stories you'd repeat. If you were driving through some small town in southwest Saskatchewan, to help kill the time you'd say 'Hey, remember that time Matt...' If there's such a thing as a celebrity within the SYP world, Leisle fit the bill. Everyone has faults, but you didn't notice his because you were too busy laughing at whatever he had to say. That's not to say the man was strictly a jokester though—far from it. The common perception is that Leisle saved SYP. In reality, he was merely one in a concerted team effort.

But every team needs a leader, and he was our man.

Leisle in his element is Leisle on a ball diamond, beer in one hand, mitt on the other. But, starting New Year's Eve 2002, the SYP's Leader of the House needed to be a guide, fiscal maestro and conciliator all in one. Maybe he wasn't perfect, maybe it was out of his control, but one year later, numbers were still down and there was a mere one hundred dollars in the bank account. To an outsider, it might seem Leisle couldn't hack it sitting in the chair of Walter Scott and Tommy Douglas. SYP, the oldest youth parliament in the country, was on its way to rock bottom. It might have hit it, ninety-one years after it began, if Matt and his finance minister hadn't drunk beer. A lot of it.

The two university students agreed to deposit three dollars into a jar every time either went out drinking. So there was Matt, week after week, downing a pint at Saskatoon's O'Shea's Irish Pub. Thankfully, university and beer mesh well, and the jars quickly filled with loons and polar bears. By the end of the year, there was \$440 in the jar. SYP stayed afloat.

Barely.

In 2007, only thirty-eight people

showed up to the annual session, an all-time low. Today it remains a struggle to draw in over forty. Tables used to have to be brought into the chamber to seat everyone; now one-third of the MLAs' desks sit empty. And it's not just in Saskatchewan where interest is faltering: only twenty-three members attended Alberta's 2008 session; the forty-four

“Like love, democracy will withstand any threat except indifference or neglect.”

registrations received in 2009 were seen as a major victory. Why? Perhaps it has something to do with the fact that barely one-third of Canadians age eighteen to twenty-four voted in the 2008 federal election, over twenty per cent below the average. “I see young people very much engaged, but not in the traditional engagement place that we call the legislature,” suggests Calvert. “The debates are going on, but not in traditional forums.” Facebook campaigns and online petitions are the new arena for action.

But to Calvert, now principal of St. Andrew's College at the University of Saskatchewan, no matter how much today's youth are engaged in politics through the Internet, SYP remains of enormous benefit. It is a network, and a forger of real-life experience. “Some will, through SYP, find their way into elected office. But the many who do not will carry with them that experience into every other field,” says Calvert.

Barnhart, who, along with serving as

clerk of both the Saskatchewan Legislature and the Canadian Senate, has served as a democratic governance consultant to developing nations, credits SYP, along with Air Cadets, as the two things which most formed him into the person he is today. “What a shame it would be to let this good thing die,” he laments. Having extensive experience in countries where people are willing to die for the right to free speech and free elections, Barnhart hopes Saskatchewan youth will realize the importance of democracy and governance. He has a favourite quotation: “Like love, democracy will withstand any threat except indifference or neglect.”

Though recent trends suggest SYP may not exist far beyond its centennial in 2012, Leisle is relentlessly hopeful. At twenty-seven, he's on the SYP executive, no longer taking part in active debate but concentrating on keeping the institution alive. He has BCYP in British Columbia to look to as an example. The BC group manages to fill its session seats nearly every year, drawing ninety-five members and a waiting list that hovers around thirty. SYP had numbers like that before, Leisle knows—why not again? The group has already survived false starts, a fifteen-year hiatus, and near financial ruin. Why not one more crisis?

“I've never thought about it not surviving. I don't think (it can die off). I think there'll always be enough to keep it going. SYP is one of those things that just can't die. There's just something about it that it'll always scrape by. Whether it's fate or good luck, there'll always be someone who comes along at the right time,” Leisle says.

When you fall from one hundred to sixty to forty members, you're nothing if not a sinking ship. Matt Leisle is prepared to follow it down if he has to. But you can bet he'll be hard at work plugging every hole to keep SYP afloat. 🐦



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